

## **Sweet Wife 241**

### **Chapter 241 Letting It Slip**

But then she'd received Elsa's call.

Now that she'd gone missing for so long, Elsa and all her colleagues were probably worried out of their minds. So she had Archie answer the call and reassure her a bit.

Elsa had followed her over from Century. The two had been colleagues for years, and she knew what Elsa was like. Naturally, she trusted her.

And Elsa had shown that that trust wasn't misplaced.

Although she now knew that she was back, she only kept it buried deep and didn't tell anyone.

Even with Julia waiting outside, she simply made up an excuse and sent her away.

When Julia left Star Entertainment and went back to find Jessica, she'd told her the entire process and result of going to Star to look for Natalia.

Hearing that Julia's persuasion hadn't succeeded, and she hadn't even seen Natalia, Jessica started panicking right away.

"How is that possible? She should have escaped; how hasn't she made her return yet?"

Julia didn't understand it, either.

She frowned, musing, "Maybe something went wrong? Or someone took her mid-way, so she hasn't come back?"

"That can't be!"

Jessica shot the possibility down without even considering it.

At first, even though she hadn't seen Natalia escape with her own eyes, the four brutes who'd been knocked unconscious in the chamber were there.

Then she'd found that Archie McCarthy had also emerged in the area with his men. If that was the case, Archie had to have taken Natalia away.

So what was going on?

Jessica was very troubled.

She didn't understand it. Since she was back and knew what she'd done to her, Natalia should be making her stand against her.

Why would she hide and pretend she wasn't coming back?

Jessica and Julia thought for a whole night with no conclusion.

Until the next day, when news leaked on the internet that Natalia's disappearance was intimately linked to Jessica.

The proof – a roadside CCTV recording showing the last rental car that Natalia went on before her disappearance, registered to one of Jessica's drivers several months ago.

What kind of a coincidence was that? Natalia got on a car and disappeared, with that same car's owner being a driver under Jessica.

With that, no one could believe Jessica was innocent.

Furious speculation and discussion sparked on the internet.

All voices chipped in with their own versions of the story. The more imaginative of the bunch took out the drama the two had displayed from earlier and crafted a basic plot.

Everyone then realized how messy and convoluted these two's relationship were.

On one end, Natalia was accusing someone of framing her, on the other end was Jessica implying to the internet that Natalia was going after her husband.

But with Rosa's video, the internet believed in Natalia's innocence in what had happened before.

Jessica, on the other hand, had released a formal statement through her agency claiming that she was being framed and would reserve the right to prosecution, but hadn't ever produced any proper evidence to prove her innocence. Many people disapproved.

And with this leak, everyone was about done with her.

Some well-meaning fans had already gone after Jessica.

Demanding that she let Natalia go, tagging the police on social media and howling for justice.

Seeing the comments online, Jessica's panic intensified.

Not just her – Julia was getting antsy as well.

"Didn't you say you cleaned up all your traces, Jessica? How is there a video?"

Jessica had no explanation.

"How should I know? I already sent people to clean up the scene, how would I know where they found another video?"

Julia almost lost it at that, but she forced herself to calm down before saying, "All right. The good thing is, they've only found that that driver is related to you, and nothing else. So long as we insist that you haven't ever contacted that driver after he left your employment, we can pin everything on him. He acted alone and remains completely unrelated to you. With no other proof, as much as they doubt your story, they can't say anything."

Jessica nodded, then sat bolt upright.

She blurted, "Wait! Now that they've found this video, that driver's probably in custody now. What if he rats me out?"

Julia looked at her in disbelief. "You're not telling me you went to him personally?"

Jessica scratched her head in an ill mood. "What else could I have done? Ever since Rosa sold out to that bitch, I don't have anyone near me I can trust to do this stuff. If I don't get it done personally, am I supposed to just find some random person to do it for me? Isn't that even more dangerous?"

Julia knew she was speaking the truth.

But she was still angry.

Looking at Jessica's defeated state, though, she couldn't say anything about it in case it triggered her.

Finally, she waved her hand impatiently and said, "Fine, I'll send someone out to poke around. Get some money ready these couple days. If that driver really got caught, you'd need a pretty large sum to seal his mouth."

Looking exhausted, Jessica slumped down on her chair, clutched her head, and nodded.

Julia left.

Feeling that her most important piece had been sucked out of her, Jessica lost her energy.

She hugged her arms around her head and sat there for a long while before lifting her head.

Looking at the lavish decorations in the house, she finally walked over and picked up her phone off the dresser.

She stood there, took a deep breath, and dialed a number.

"Grandma, it's Jessica. I've got something I want to discuss. Is now a good time?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Ever since Jessica had married off, this was the first time she'd gone back to the Dawson household.

The atmosphere in the living room was oppressive, so oppressive that it felt far too rigid.

Clara and Philip sat at the head position, Aleena on a sofa at the side, Jessica on a single-seater armchair. None of them spoke.

Jessica had already explained the situation and why she needed money.

She hadn't filmed much for almost a year. The money she'd made before had mostly been invested into Century Entertainment, so she didn't have that much money on hand now.

It would have been even harder to get money from Shawn.

Forget him interrogating her about kidnapping Natalia, he'd probably refuse even if she just asked him for money.

If that was the case, she should just go to her own family.

That was why Jessica had come home.

## **Chapter 242 Highest Authority**

Clara sat there, her expression dark, still trying to recover from the shock of the news.

Aleena looked worried as her eyes darted at everyone. She tried to say something, but after several attempts, she couldn't muster the courage to get it out.

Because of the way she'd come to her position, even if Clara accepted her, Aleena rarely had a say in the Dawson family.

Much less in a situation like this.

So she looked pleadingly at Philip, hoping that he could take a stand for Jessica and say something in her favor.

But Philip had always been fearful of Clara. Not to mention that Jessica had gone ahead and kidnapped someone this time. That was a crime.

The good thing was that Jessica had now been married off, which meant that many things could be pushed off of him. If the Dawson family still involved him in the end, he didn't know how much backlash he would have to deal with.

Thinking of that, he shot a resentful glare at Jessica.

Jessica hadn't expected him to take such an attitude. Her temper flared, clogging her throat. She felt like she had a volcano building in her chest, ready to erupt.

After a long while, Clara spoke.

"Is there any other evidence than that driver of yours?"

Jessica shook her head.

"None, I'm sure of it. I've taken care of the four other people in that cellar in secret. I'd also given that driver enough money to make a run for it after the job was done and taken care of the car myself. I didn't think his license plate would get caught on camera."

Hearing that, Clara nodded.

"If there's no other evidence, that's good. At the end of the day, if they've found the driver, they don't have any actual proof pointing to you. Wait it out for a while, and I'll have your father ready some money for you. Don't get involved in this personally. Leave it to Julia. She knows what to do."

Jessica nodded to show her understanding.

Seeing Clara's approach, Aleena relaxed.

Turning, she looked at Jessica and worried, "What about that recording online now? And the video where Rosa testifies against you has to be doing some damage to your career; have you thought about how to deal with it?"

At that, Jessica's rage intensified.

She'd been so confident sending Rosa to frame Natalia. Look where she was now.

As if she'd been slapped hard across the face.

She gritted her teeth and snarled, "That bitch betrayed me. I won't let her go!"

Philip scoffed. "What else can you do but let her go? Now that she's willing to testify in Natalia's favor, Natalia will definitely protect her. Natalia's no worry by herself, but what if Archie gets involved? You want the Dawson family to go to war with McCarthy?"

To that, Jessica's words caught in her throat, and she had no idea what to say for a moment.

However powerful the Dawson family was in Julio, they couldn't dare stand up to the McCarthy family.

They were the highest authority in Egitin, after all.

Forget them, even the Millers and the Kaurs shied away from offending each other.

Jessica lapsed into silence, and Clara waved Philip off impatiently.

"All right, all right. You're her father but you always say such discouraging things."

As she spoke, she turned to look at Jessica.

"Head back for now. I'll have your father send you the money. Remember to discuss things with Shawn after you get back. Discuss between the two of you if anything comes up. Don't hold it in."

Jessica nodded.

After she left, Aleena finally relaxed and got up, heading to the kitchen to make dinner.

But just as she stood, Clara called out to her.

She stared Aleena in place, none of her earlier gentle kindness in her gaze as she said coldly, "Come with me. We need to talk."

Aleena paused, then nodded.

"Sure."

The second floor. Clara's bedroom.

Her body relaxed as she reclined on her rocking chair, looking at Aleena in front of her.

"Jessica's stepped in it this time. Other people don't, but I know Natalia. Her play's encompassed Jessica entirely this time. Anything off, and Jessica won't recover from this."

Hearing that, Aleena's brow furrowed with worry.

"Do you have any thoughts, Mom?"

Clara nodded.

"You remember the necklace Natalia got back from me that time?"

Aleena jolted. "I do, why?"

"That's an important memento of her mother's. A pity it's a fake."

Aleena's eyes widened in shock.

Clara took out a redwood box from a side drawer.

Opening the box revealed an antique ruby necklace inside, wrapped in a silk sheet.

"This is..."

"Does it look similar?"

Aleena hurriedly nodded.

"At first, Kiera thought nobody knew that she'd switched the child. A shame. How would I not remember how a Dawson looks like? She might have been a baby in the cradle, but her nose and her eyes look nothing like Philip's. Does she really think I'm blind? But since the child came from good stock, I decided it wouldn't be a bad thing to raise her. Just a girl at the end of the day. If she brings us glory and wealth one day, it wouldn't have been for nothing. But that damn brat turned out to be just an ungrateful traitor! All those years of affection wasted on her. If she doesn't care for it, then I have no further need to protect her."

Clara was still speaking, but Aleena was already shocked beyond words.

She'd guessed a little as to Natalia's background, but only a vague outline, not this much detail.

She'd thought that the old woman hadn't even found out about it, but she'd known all along.

Not just that, it was all part of her plan!

Aleena went slightly pale, cold sweat running down her temple as she felt a chill crawl up her spine.

Clara acted like she hadn't seen her face and continued, "Now that this has happened with Jessica, if Archie really does follow up, even our family can't protect her. So her only choice now is to really become that woman's daughter in Natalia's place if she wants to rid herself of her tainted reputation, and help the Dawson family on our way up the ladder. Wouldn't you agree?"

Aleena didn't know how to react. After a pause, she nodded awkwardly.

"You're right."

"Then you understand what you have to do, don't you?"

"I..."

Understanding something, Aleena's eyes widened in disbelief.

Clara looked at her, her face shadowed, her eyes bright and glaring with imperious authority.

She opened her mouth and didn't manage to get anything out for a long while.

Finally, she lowered her head.

"I understand."

**Chapter 243 Survival**

The rumors of Jessica hiring kidnappers to abduct Natalia continued to ferment online.

Along with the recording from before and Rosa's testimony, things really started to heat up.

Soon enough, Jessica's reputation in entertainment circles was in shambles. There were still people who believed she was innocent, but before a mountain of evidence, most people chose to believe their own eyes.

So voices against Jessica on the internet had grown in multitude.

That afternoon, Jessica was lying at home resting when she received a call from Nancy.

Someone had gone to the police station and asked for the driver. That someone was a renowned lawyer within the industry.

Since guilt hadn't been established yet, the driver did have the right to see a lawyer, so they couldn't do anything about that.

There was too much involved in this business. The media was on a hair trigger and poised outside the police station, itching to dig up just a bit more inside news.

So at this time, Natalia absolutely couldn't show her face. That went for Archie, too.

She thought for a while and said, "Let them meet, then. It's fine."

Nancy was a little worried.

"If that driver changes his testimony, it could be bad for your position."

Natalia smiled coldly.

"Relax. I've already decided to bring Jessica to rock bottom, so that's not the only card up my sleeve."

Hearing that, Nancy loosened up.

On the other side, Julia heaved a sigh of relief after finding someone to take care of the driver.

Then, that night, the police released another statement.

It announced that they'd found the crime scene where Natalia had been kidnapped. To go with it, they'd even released the photo and address of that cellar.

They made it evident in the announcement that, even though they'd tried their hardest to find the place, the perpetrators seemed to have caught on and moved the victim away.

In other words, Natalia was still missing.

Julia looked at the photos and almost lost it with sheer terror.

She hurried back to Jessica to confirm.

When Jessica saw the leaked photos, she was stunned as well.

It wasn't possible!

She'd destroyed the whole crime scene and wiped away all traces of her or Natalia ever being there.

How could they have shot those pictures?

The cellar in the photo was exactly the same as the one Natalia had been held in.

On the operating table in the center, there were still faint signs of a struggle.

And the final shot was one of a ring.

The police stated that the ring had been recovered from the crime scene. After confirming with people close to Natalia, they'd confirmed the ring wasn't hers.

That was to say, this ring very likely belonged to the mastermind of the kidnapping.

The image quality of the ring was extremely high. The gleam of the heart-shaped diamond on it was clearly visible.

All Jessica felt was cold, as if someone had dunked ice water over her head. She started shivering.

H-how was that possible?

Did-didn't she break that ring a long time ago?

Rosa had even said she'd go and have it fixed, so how could it appear here?

Rosa?!

She thought of something and widened her eyes.

That damn brat! They were working together to frame her?

Jessica was about to lose her mind, but no matter how she felt like she was in the clear, people still posted photos of when she'd attended previous events.

And enlarged her hand, putting the heart diamond ring in full view.

"Man! This woman's lost her mind; she really kidnapped Natalia?"

"That ring's a keepsake from Shawn Miller, right?"

"Seems so, I remember there being an interview where she said it herself. I'll dig it up."

Soon, they'd found that video on the internet as well.

It was the one where, not long after Natalia exposed her affair with Shawn, Shawn had given her the ring for their engagement.

A sharp-eyed reporter had noticed it and asked about it when Jessica was being interviewed.

And she'd boasted about it with pride.

To show them how delicately the diamond had been cut, she'd even raised her hand to the camera to get a better shot of the ring.



She'd never expected it to be used against her like this today.

Jessica went completely pale and staggered back, stumbling into the sofa.

Julia was at a loss for words. She massaged her head and sighed.

"Didn't you say you destroyed all the evidence? What's this about, then?"

Jessica shook her head.

The extreme terror and helplessness reddened her eyes.

"I don't know. I'd already had someone destroy that cellar and removed everything including that operating table. Why did it show up here?"

She paused, then looked at Julia, her face white.

"She must have planned all of this. She already expected me to kidnap her, which was why she got those photos? Those pictures weren't taken after the incident, that's impossible! And she couldn't have found that ring in the crime scene! They're collaborating to plot against me – it's a trap, and I jumped right into it!"

Julia made a slight, mocking sneer.

"Even if it was a trap, didn't you jump into it yourself?"

Jessica had no words.

Noticing Julia's dissatisfied tone, her face sank.

"Even you're saying this about me? Are you so disappointed in me that you're leaving me, too?"

Julia blinked.

Truth be told, she had it worse now despite her background in the industry.

The new generation surpassed the old. Her ability was already behind compared to the younger managers and representatives. Be it in experience or in their way of thinking, the times had caught up with her and even overtaken her.

As things stood now, Jessica was one of the best artists under her charge. If only for her own future, she couldn't let Jessica get ruined.

Considering that, Julia sighed.

"Don't take it the wrong way. I didn't mean it like that."

She paused, then said, "It's not looking good for us right now. Do you have any thoughts?"

Jessica shook her head.

"I don't know. My head's a mess right now."

Julia thought about it, brow furrowing.

"If it really had been Natalia's plot like you said, the only solution now is to find her. So long as we prove that she's fine and walking free, then all the rumors will be dispelled without any effort, and..."

Her eyes gleamed, a cunning light flashing through them.

"If we do this right, we could flip the board and turn it all around."

Jessica started and looked at her. "What do you mean turn it all around?"

"Heh! Think. What if they found out that Natalia wasn't just fine, but started this whole show on her own and bought out the police to join in with her, all just to frame you, chase you out of the entertainment business, and take everything you have right now. What do you think they'll say then?"

## **Chapter 244 Off to the Island**

Jessica's eyes widened in shock.

"You mean..."

Julia snickered.

"The one thing that people hate the most is collusion between the rich and the powerful. So what if Natalia has Archie at her back? The better Archie treats her, the more everyone feels like the wealthy can do whatever they want. That way, people will begin to hate her. And you really think the McCarthy family is sitting steady on top of Eqitin with no rivals? Please! Everyone knows how many people have been after that position. If the McCarthy family gets put under public scrutiny from this, they would have to get involved on the inside too. With pressure put on him within and without, let's see what Archie will pick – the interests of his family, or one woman?"

Jessica was stunned into a daze.

After a while, she reacted, her expression overjoyed.

"I've got it now! So the most important thing now, Julia, is finding Natalia, right?"

"Yes. We have to prove she's not missing at all. This way, everyone will believe that she was lying all along!"

Jessica nodded.

"All right, I've got it. I'll try to find her right away."

\*\*\*\*\*

While Jessica tried to unearth Natalia wherever she was.

Natalia had already received the news.

After all, since the driver had exposed it, she'd guessed that Jessica would probably be coming for her.

She couldn't stay in the McCarthy household. Even though Jessica wasn't bold enough to intrude here directly, this was too big of a target to stay undetected.

Natalia was considering where she could hide when Ariana called.

“What are you up to now, Natalia? How are you holding up?”

Old Mrs. McCarthy had called Archie’s phone and told her to pick up.

Seemed like Archie was afraid the old woman and the child would get worried, so he’d told them about the situation beforehand.

Natalia replied hurriedly, “I’m fine, I’m at home. What about you? How have you been lately?”

“I’m doing well, but Anne misses you and keeps raising a ruckus about seeing you. If you’re free someday, I can take her over to play with you for a couple days?”

“That’s...”

Natalia was in a bad spot.

There was far too much going on right now. She needed to force Jessica and the rest of that family to admit their crimes against her mother, so she absolutely couldn’t show herself.

But Anne...

Seemingly sensing her hesitation, Ariana added in a rush, “I bought an island in the south recently. The scenery is great there, and I had someone open a hotel there too. The chef was previously responsible for the national feasts, and his cooking is top of the line. Whenever you’re free, how about we all take a holiday on the island?”

Now that she’d gone that far, if Natalia didn’t get it, it would have all been for nothing.

She hastily replied, “All right, I’m good whenever. I’ll leave the schedule to you.”

“If that’s the case, let’s go with tomorrow. I’ll have Archie bring you here.”

“Okay.”

With the deal set, the old woman hung up.

Archie looked at her expectantly from the side. Seeing that she’d hung up, he hurriedly asked, “You agreed, then?”

Natalia nodded. “Yeah, she says to go tomorrow.”

“Ah.”

The man’s eyes flickered, his thoughts a mystery.

Curious, Natalia asked, “She says she bought an island in the south? Buying up a whole island takes plenty of money, right? Is she trying to break into the tourist industry?”

Archie waved it off casually.

“No. She’s just getting on in years, so she wants a place down south to spend the rest of her days.”

“...”

All right, then! She just didn’t get how rich people thought.

Buying up a whole island just for yourself to stay in – heh, wasn't that something!

The old lady had incredible follow through, too. The moment she decided on it, she had Archie send them over right away.

Early morning the next day, Natalia flew all the way to the island.

The island did have beautiful scenery, and a beautiful name to go along with it – Fortuna Island.

The way Ariana told it, there were plenty of rare birds on the island. Because of overhunting from nearby fishermen and the current state of the ecosystem, they were facing extinction.

Ariana had bought the isle in part to give them a quiet, peaceful habitat.

Anne had already heard the news that Natalia was coming over, and she'd been excited as could be from early in the morning.

When Natalia arrived in earnest at noon, she rushed to greet her.

Natalia hadn't seen her in a while, so she naturally missed her a great deal. The moment mother and daughter met, they hugged each other tight and snuggled against each other for a long while before they released each other.

Ariana looked her up and down and said caringly, "My, you've grown thin, Natalia. I heard you were kidnapped; how are you? Are you hurt?"

Smiling, Natalia shook her head. "I'm fine, just a little shaken."

The wound on her hand wasn't deep, and after a few days' rest, it was basically fully healed.

Afraid she'd worry Ariana and Anne, she'd taken the bandages off before she arrived. A faint line could still be seen running across her palm, but it wasn't as bad as it had been, so it wasn't frightening.

Hearing that, Ariana relaxed and nodded.

Then she led the couple in.

There was only one hotel on the island, and the old lady had already prepared their room beforehand.

Natalia retired to the room with Archie and rested for a while, only coming out for lunch.

William wasn't feeling well, as always. He hadn't come with them this time.

But Ariana was as talkative as ever. She was approaching her seventies, but her righteous, childlike heart still remained.

Knowing what Natalia had gone through, she was barely holding it in and hollering about getting even for her.

Natalia just laughed at her adorable nature, but she also knew that this was Ariana's way of treating her as one of her own. The mark of concern moved her all the more for it.

"No need to get involved, Grandma. Natalia has her own plan."

Midway through Ariana's spiel, Archie couldn't sit by and interrupted.

Ariana glared at him.

"You've got some nerve saying that, haven't you? What kind of husband are you; not even protecting your wife properly? What are your brains for if you're having her do her own dirty work at a time like this?"

The old lady did not hold back when it came to roasting her own grandson.

Archie scowled. Seeing that, Natalia hurriedly explained.

"It's not that he's not helping me, Grandma. I'm keeping him out of it."

As she spoke, she outlined her enmity with Jessica and how her mother Kiera had died.

Including how, five years ago, she was kicked out of the Dawson family, and how Jessica and Aleena had taken over all of her properties, making it difficult for her to even retrieve her mother's mementos.

Hearing that, Ariana flew into a rage.

"What a disgrace! Is there still justice in this world? How is a family this shameless still around?"

Natalia scoffed mildly.

"Family always complicates matters. No one else is to blame. I was just too young and naïve five years ago and didn't think hard enough. If I'd just been smarter about it then and realized something was off with Mom's death, I wouldn't have needed to go through all this today."

Her heart aching for Natalia, Ariana patted her hand soothingly.

Then she recalled something and asked, "You say that your mother only left you with a necklace when she passed away?"

## **Chapter 245 A Bit of Jealousy**

Natalia nodded.

"That's not right," Ariana frowned. "Logically speaking, with the mistress and her bastard daughter already taking her place, she should have had an inkling of what was going to happen to her and left her own daughter something more than just a necklace."

"Grandma, you mean..."

"See, if I was your mother and I knew my enemy was gunning not just for your father but the properties of the household, I would have transferred a portion of the property to your name first. That way, even if something were to happen to me, you wouldn't be as worse off as you could be. Wouldn't you agree?"

Natalia blinked.

It wasn't that she hadn't wondered about it before, but her mother was already dead, so it was pointless to wonder.

And as far as she knew, when her mother was still alive, a lot of property under the Hawkins name had already been taken over by Philip and Clara.

Kiera had been a mild-mannered lady, and she didn't like to squabble.

Because of that, even though that mother and son duo had developed an increasingly voracious appetite, eventually even changing the Hawkins name to Dawson, she hadn't spoken up.

And she didn't know if it was an illusion or not, but Natalia had always felt that her mother had something on her mind.

Sometimes, she'd unconsciously display feelings of guilt towards Philip.

That might have been why Philip's behavior grew more and more rampant.

Natalia frowned, deep in thought.

Unwilling to allow her to linger in the sorrows of the past, Archie interrupted the topic.

"All right, it's time for lunch. Enough with the doom and gloom. Here, Natalia, try this hairy crab."

As he spoke, he peeled a crab himself and put it in Natalia's bowl.

Natalia recovered her wits and nodded.

On the other side, Anne chimed in. "Daddy, I want to eat the crabby too."

Archie looked at her and scraped off a little bit of crab roe for her.

The girl looked at the tiny chunk of crab roe in her bowl and raised a fuss.

Pouting, she huffed, "I don't want it! I want a crabby that Daddy peeled, as big as Mommy's!"

Then she pointed at Natalia's bowl.

Natalia found it hard not to laugh at that.

Archie grew stern.

"Don't you know your own body? The doctor says you can't eat too much seafood. I'm cutting you some slack for your Mommy even letting you have this much. If you don't want it, give it back."

And he really stretched out his hand to take her bowl.

Seeing that, Anne snatched her bowl away.

Her bright eyes watered as her pout grew, looking especially pitiful.

"Bad Daddy, stealing my crab. I'm not sitting with Daddy anymore."

With that, she hopped off the stool and ran up next to Natalia, sitting down next to her.

"I'm sitting with Mommy now."

She deliberately looked up to smile at Natalia.

Natalia felt her heart melt as she patted her head in a comforting gesture.

She put some meat in Anne's bowl, soothing, "If you can't eat crab, Anne, how about some roast meat? Roast meat is good too."

Anne nodded and spooned the meat into her mouth, eyes crinkling in satisfaction.

"Thank you, Mommy, the meat Mommy gives me is good."

As for Archie – "..."

Who was it who'd rather die than eat roast meat, then?

Now that the mother was here, the father was left forgotten!

Looking at the mother and child snuggling up against each other, he felt a surge of displeasure.

A bit of sour jealousy.

Ariana was glad, though. She'd been worried that Natalia wouldn't get along well with Anne. Looks like she'd been overthinking it.

She didn't know how Anne's mind worked. She'd devoted all those years and all that effort to find a good mother for her.

Anne just didn't like any of them. Even that child from the Kawn family – such a sweet and gentle girl – only got a "barely decent" from Anne and no real approval.

Until she met Natalia, at which point a back door apparently had opened. Ariana had never seen Anne so well-behaved.

The old lady was glad.

Curious, Natalia asked, "I only knew that Anne's body was in poor shape before, but not any of what was going on. Does she have a disease? Or was she always sickly?"

When that subject came up, the expressions of the family around the table changed subtly.

Archie's face remained still, while Ariana sighed.

"It's a long story. Anne's different from normal children; she..."

Natalia leant in, listening closely.

"She wasn't born from a normal pregnancy but through an artificial womb. A test tube baby. There were some issues, so the child has never been in good health."

Hearing that, Natalia was quite shocked.

She'd always thought that Anne was a memento of one of Archie's previous girlfriends?

But she was from an artificial womb?

Natalia had never seen it herself, but she'd heard of artificial wombs on the news while out of the country.

Apparently, some medical genius had simulated a pregnant environment for the baby to take up the burden of women giving birth.

She didn't think it had actually succeeded!

Natalia's expression of care and concern for Anne grew even more now.

She'd been through enough already, but it turned out she didn't even have a mother!

If that person who donated an egg could even count as a mother.

Natalia felt a surge of deep regret that she hadn't treated Anne a little better so far.

Anne was a bit confused herself, not understanding why the atmosphere among the adults had sank.

She blinked, then tugged on Natalia's sleeve.

"What are you talking about, Mommy?"

Heart aching, Natalia bent over and hugged her, soothing, "Nothing. You're a good girl, Anne."

Anne let her hold her in her arms and didn't move, staring sweetly up at her.

She wasn't completely in the dark. It was just that she didn't understand the finer points.

For example, she knew that they were talking about her background, and that Natalia was hugging her because she felt bad for her.

But she didn't think she had anything to feel bad about.

Daddy had already told her she had a Mommy. Her Mommy was the most beautiful woman in the world.

Daddy even had pictures of Mommy on his computer. The moment Anne saw Natalia, she'd recognized her right away.

And Daddy had said that even though she was different from normal kids, that was just in the way she was born.

The rest was all the same. If they had to split hairs, then she was probably different in that she was prettier and cuter!

### **President's Sweet Wife**

#### **Chapter 246 Refusing Bail**

While Anne thought her sweet thoughts to herself, Natalia didn't know how she felt, and only felt her heart hurt the more she looked at the girl's innocent bearing.

The two hugged for a while and separated. Worried she would get hungry, Natalia made to feed her, but Archie stopped her.

The man's face was stern. "Don't pamper her. Let her eat herself."

Natalia jolted, about to say that the child was still young.



But Anne took up her spoon herself and helped herself to a mouthful.

As she chewed with puffy cheeks, she said, "I'm grown-up now, Mommy. I can eat myself, so I don't need someone to feed me now."

At that, Natalia had to laugh. Warmth surging into her chest, she tapped Anne lightly on the nose.

"All right. Good girl, Anne."

Anne smiled happily.

Ariana looked at the comfy scene and smiled herself.

After the meal, the family all retired to their rooms.

Anne started whining for Natalia to tell her a story, so Natalia took her to her own bedroom.

Archie had come out in a hurry this time, and plenty of work wasn't done yet, needing his personal attention. So the moment he went back to his room, he'd started working again.

Ariana was tired as well. She'd always had a habit of napping, so she exchanged a few more words with them and went back to her own room to sleep.

It was a peaceful and beautiful afternoon.

On the other end, though, Jessica was having a far worse time of it.

She'd been searching for Natalia everywhere with nothing to show for it. The driver she'd bought out before had also reneged on their deal and directly accused her of paying to have Natalia driven there.

The driver had also given up the bank records between the two, claiming that before Natalia had gone missing, Jessica had wired a tremendous amount of money to the driver's account.

Examination showed that that money really had gone out from Jessica's account.

The police didn't hide any of the news. The moment they confirmed it, they made it public.

The news made another wave on the internet.

But this time, Jessica didn't respond.

That night, several police officers appeared at the Miller household and took Jessica away.

Because people had suspected Jessica for a long time and the online outcry against her was huge, many tabloid reporters had already been lying in wait outside the Miller household.

Fearing, of course, that they wouldn't get here in time to make any news if they stayed at their offices.

Unexpectedly, they'd actually scooped up something.

Seeing the policemen escort Jessica out of the Miller household, the reporters worked themselves into a frenzy swarming up for questions.

But the police were on the case, so naturally they weren't going to get the chance.

It didn't take long before the reporters were blocked off and Jessica was shut inside a police car.

But even with that, the reporters were satisfied.

Even though they'd missed out on the interview, with just photos and videos, they could make a killing off of views.

That night, news of Jessica being taken into police custody spread like wildfire.

Accompanied by the photos of her getting taken out of the Miller household. If there ever was a cut and dry case, this was it.

Even Jessica's most steadfast fans were stunned at that.

They couldn't have fathomed that their little fairy, their gentle big sister, would really have gotten taken away by the police.

Someone raised the question-

Taken away by police... didn't that mean that Jessica really had something to do with this?

All the evidence that had leaked online previously was true, then?

Of course, someone tried to shoot it down.

Getting put in custody didn't mean she was guilty. Maybe she was just cooperating with the investigation.

But that was debunked quickly enough.

Jessica had been taken away in cuffs. Who got handcuffed for just cooperating with the investigation?

With that, even the final wave of fans trying to defend Jessica found themselves at a loss for words.

While those fans mourned their dying love in silence-

Jessica was being interrogated in the police station.

She'd never considered that the driver would snitch on her, so she'd been brought here without any preparation.

Right now, she felt nothing except for fear and panic, so how could she say anything about it?

And Julia had already warned her that she absolutely couldn't speak the truth.

So because of that, she clammed up further. A whole half-hour after she arrived at the station, she remained completely silent and didn't say anything other than that she wanted her lawyer.

Seeing her attitude, the police knew that she was a public figure, so they couldn't do anything extreme. They could only allow her to see her lawyer.

Not long afterwards, Julia arrived with a lawyer.

With his help, Jessica managed to get out a stammering statement.

Even though a lot of it didn't line up and it wasn't believable at all, the lawyer prosed that she'd suffered too much cyberbullying earlier, causing her mental and physical state to become unstable. That got them through for a while.

Quickly afterwards, Julia put out a request for bail.

But the request was denied by the police.

Because Natalia still hadn't been found, and as a major suspect, Jessica had great value.

And she hadn't explained the evidence away properly, too. They couldn't let her leave before they found Natalia.

Julia heard that and panicked right away.

The photos of Jessica being taken away by the police had already been taken. If she didn't get out tonight, then talk outside would intensify exponentially, to the point where she didn't know what rumors would be flying around.

The most important thing was that she didn't have the confidence to have Jessica stay here alone. If this confinement went on, she could buckle under the pressure and spill the beans.

But no matter how anxious Julia was, facing the completely impartial police, there was nothing she could do.

Jessica, too, was getting distressed. She looked at Julia, afraid she was going to leave her there.

Her voice trembled as she said, "You have to find some way to get me out of here, Julia. I don't care how much money it takes. I'm not staying here."

Julia frowned, out of options.

"I can't think of anything right now. This has gotten too big for me to handle."

She paused, then muttered, "They took you from the Miller household. Can't the Miller family do something?"

Jessica jolted.

When she'd been taken away, Shawn and Henry hadn't been home.

But it had almost been an hour since then. With the internet abuzz like this, they wouldn't be in the dark.

But they hadn't appeared yet.

Julia continued, "With all the years the Miller family has been putting down roots in the city and all the power they have, they must have a way to deal with this. Besides, one of them is your husband, the other is your father-in-law. If anything really did happen to you, it would affect the Miller family reputation too. They can't leave you out to dry."

## **Chapter 247 Overthinking Everything**

With Julia's reminder, Jessica finally reacted.

She murmured, "Right. As long as I'm still Shawn's wife, I'm still part of the Miller family. They won't leave me like this. Make a phone call for me, Julia. Call Shawn."

Julia nodded and went out.

Not long later, the phone call was done.

She walked in and said to Jessica, "Mr. Miller is on the way with his father. They must have already heard the news of your arrest. He said they were almost here when I called him."

Hearing that, Jessica heaved a sigh of relief.

Luckily enough, she still had the position of Mrs. Miller.

As much as Shawn didn't love her anymore, out of consideration for the Miller family's reputation, he couldn't stand by and watch her become a convict.

Julia stayed with her for a while. Not long later, Shawn and Henry arrived.

Jessica saw them and felt all her pent-up emotion burst out of her chest.

Her eyes reddened and swam with tears as she exclaimed, "Dad! Shawn."

Henry was the same as always, with his lukewarm expression. He nodded.

"You two talk. I'll go and pull some strings over there."

Shawn nodded.

The Miller family did have connections in Julio, after all. Everyone knew that Jessica's identity was special, so they didn't disturb them.

They emptied out the whole interrogation room to let them talk.

Jessica sat on her chair, all her sourness and resentment turning to tears and rolling down her cheek.

Shawn sat across her, looking at her coldly.

"You don't think that you can solve everything by crying after making such a huge mess, do you?"

Jessica froze.

She put away her tears, lifted her head, and looked at him with misty eyes.

"I'm sorry for the trouble, Shawn. Thank you for coming to get me out. I promise I'll keep it low-profile from now on."

Miller smirked.

"From now on?"

He sneered. "We'll talk about the future later. Let's go back to the present."

Jessica nodded and pleaded, "Julia already requested bail earlier, but they wouldn't let me. You have to do something, Shawn."

Shawn nodded back.

"I can get you out, but you need to cooperate with me, all right?"

Jessica nodded hastily.

"What do you need, Shawn? Anything you ask for."

Shawn chuckled mockingly. "Where's Natalia?"

Jessica was left speechless.

Her face changed, and the high-tension string in her brain snapped. Something buzzed inside her and exploded.

She looked at him in disbelief. "Even you think I've hidden Natalia away?"

Shawn looked at her coldly. "I know what kind of person you are. I also know full well how much you hate Natalia. On account of us being husband and wife, Jessica, if you tell me her whereabouts today, I'll save you. How's that?"

Jessica suddenly found the whole situation absurd.

She'd never come across something so ridiculous in her life.

In her most dire straits, her own husband was forcing her to give up the location of another woman before he would save her.

Jessica laughed out loud, her laughter growing more and more deranged as her tears fell.

She looked at Shawn like she was at a clown show.

"You don't really think that Natalia will come back to you at this point, do you, Shawn?"

Shawn's brow slashed downwards viciously.

This one touched a nerve.

"That has nothing to do with you."

"Yes, of course it doesn't have anything to do with me! I'm just your wife in all but name now, so you can divorce me any day you want? But who do you think you are? You think that even if you force Natalia's location from me and swoop in to save the day, she'll thank you graciously for it and reignite your lost passion? Are you really this stupid, Shawn Miller? Forget imagining if Natalia would leave Archie and choose you, but you couldn't ever get your wish just from the fact that I don't even know where she is!"

She burst out cackling dementedly after she finished.

Shawn's face went purple. Clenching his fist tight, he suppressed his rage enough to keep himself from hurling this madwoman into a wall.

“You mean you don’t know where she is?”

“Of course! If I’d known, would I still be stuck here?”

“You’re lying! You kidnapped her!”

“Yes, that’s right, I kidnapped her, but she escaped midway. What? You’ve been thinking of her so much, but she didn’t tell you how to contact her and where to find her? Hah! Look at what a joke you are! You’re here overthinking everything while she’s off having a great time somewhere! I’d always thought I was the dumb one, but turns out you’re an even bigger moron!”

At her mockery, Shawn’s handsome face turned an array of different colors.

His clenched fist crackled, knuckles white from exertion.

Finally, he sucked in a deep breath and stood.

Looking at the weeping, laughing woman whose body had gone slack, Shawn’s gaze had with it a bit of disgust.

“You’re mad!”

With that, he went out without a trace of longing.

In the end, Shawn Miller didn’t end up bailing Jessica out.

Julia didn’t know what was going on, but she could see that something wasn’t quite right between the two of them.

She was a woman of vision. After spending so much time in the industry, she knew exactly when to cut her losses.

Jessica had gotten herself to this point and deserved everything she was coming to her. If even the Miller family was abandoning her, as her agent, there wasn’t anything she could do to save her even if she wanted to.

So Julia simply dropped a few official lines with Jessica and left as well.

Jessica sat there like her soul had gone out her body, looking like a completely different person.

She didn’t try to keep Julia at her side or ask for help.

She just sat there, head bent, and grunted woodenly.

Seeing her state, Julia knew that Jessica’s life was ruined. She’d had a bright future ahead of her, but never managed to take her mind off the small grudges between two people, and paid for it with herself.

She’d helped her plot along the side, but overall, she had wanted the best for her. She’d never wanted to lay her this low.

Finally, she sighed helplessly and turned to leave.

When everyone had left, two officers walked over to escort Jessica to where she would be held temporarily.

## Chapter 248 Pulling Strings

Jessica suddenly stopped while she was walking out.

She turned to look at one of the policemen and muttered, "I want to make another call."

Impatiently, the officer glared at her. "How many calls have you made today? You really think someone's going to save you? Quit dreaming and settle down. Clear your head and confess; that's the only way to go, got it?"

Jessica sneered coldly.

She stepped suddenly to the side and smashed her head towards the wall.

Startled, the two policemen reacted quickly and restrained her.

"Have you gone nuts? What are you trying to do?"

"I want my phone call!"

They had no reply to that.

Finally, one of the officers waved his hand.

"Fine, fine, let her! She's really lost it."

As she'd wanted, Jessica got her call.

She clutched at the phone, her fingertips trembling.

For privacy, she had the officers leave before making the call.

On the other end, a gentle female voice picked up the line.

"Hello, who is this?"

"It's me."

The receiver went silent for a while.

Followed quickly by lilting laughter. "I thought you'd already been locked up, but you can still make calls? Not half bad."

Jessica scoffed. "You've got a hand in this as well. If I don't get out of this, you can forget having a happy ending yourself."

"Oh, is that a threat?"

"You said it'd be fine, but I ended up like this. As allies, shouldn't you bail me out of this?"

"Allies? What do you mean allies? I don't understand what you're talking about. Do you have any evidence that can prove I helped you with this, Jessica? I only chatted with you for a while and called you a few times. I didn't do anything else. How could you frame me like this?"

Hearing her lofty tone and how she almost seemed to relish in her misfortune, Jessica's teeth clacked with audible rage.

"You're part of the Kawn family of Egitin. Aren't you afraid I'll spill the beans on you? You'll never be able to walk around freely again."

The woman on the other end simply sneered.

"Everyone knows that I am a good little girl the Kawn family has always loved. Everyone knows that I'm not in good health and rarely get involved with outside affairs. As for you, you're a lying, cheating mad dog who crawled her way up to the position and tried to do away with your sister. Who do you think they'll believe between the two of us?"

"You!"

The woman continued, "Oh, and I forgot to tell you. I actually quite appreciate your sister. She saved my life a long time ago, but she doesn't remember me. I think that people should know to repay their debts, so I gave her a bit of a hand and pulled some strings. Don't be so resentful. If you didn't have any ill intentions to begin with, you wouldn't have been used by me. You should be grateful that nothing happened to Natalia, you know. Otherwise, you wouldn't have had the opportunity to even make this call. All right, that's all I have to say. Look out for yourself going forward."

With that, she hung up.

Jessica's anger swelled.

She'd never thought they'd play her like this!

Then she recalled those words from a few moments ago.

A long time ago, Natalia had saved her life...

Repay their debts... pull some strings...

She jolted upright!

A venomous snake seemed to crawl up her spine, chilling her back, sending shivers down her body.

She understood!

She understood it all now!

From start to finish, it had all been Natalia's trap.

Everyone in there, even those bodyguards that Kawn had introduced, were probably all people that Natalia knew.

Otherwise, she couldn't have gotten pictures of that room!

She'd been wondering how, despite having been injected with drugs, Natalia could take down four well-trained men and escape.

Now she knew. The men hadn't been taken down. They'd let her escape!



Realizing the truth, Jessica felt an endless cold resound throughout her being.

She hugged her arms to herself and slid slowly down the wall, trembling slightly, her teeth chattering.

Outside, the two officers saw her state through the glass and jumped with shock. Thinking something had happened with her, they ran inside.

Seeing that she was fine and just a little disturbed, they relaxed and escorted her back to the room.

That night.

Natalia was sleeping deeply when her phone beeped.

She squinted, picked up her phone drowsily, and took a look.

An unfamiliar number had sent her a text with only one simple sentence.

"It's been a long time, Seven."

Natalia froze.

With a conscious jolt, she woke up fully.

She held up her phone and looked at the number, but after she thought for a long while, she didn't remember who it was.

Her memory had always been good, and she was even more sensitive to numbers. To have no recollection of this number at all meant that it was someone who'd never contacted her before.

Who was it?

Next to her, Archie woke up from the commotion and reached out with his arm, hugging her. "What's going on, dear?"

Natalia's face changed slightly and she shook her head.

"It's nothing."

She turned and looked down. Under the dim light, the man's eyes were closed and he was clearly still sleepy.

Natalia smiled and said, "I'm going to the bathroom."

She started rolling out of bed.

Unexpectedly, Archie sat up too.

"I'll come with you."

Natalia chuckled.

The bathroom was right there in the room, and not far to boot. This man...

She pushed him back down.

“Go back to sleep. I’ll be right back.”

She didn’t give him a chance to respond and slinked away.

Going into the bathroom, she locked the door, pulled out the text, and dialed the number on it.

A dull drone came from the other end. The line was dead.

Natalia paused.

Only a few people knew her as Seven.

And those people wouldn’t send her a message like this at such a time.

Besides, she’d left them for years. Even K had wanted her to stay out of the recent internal affairs of the organization and stopped contacting her.

Who was it?

She had no answer. Outside, seeing that she wasn’t coming out, the man was calling for her already.

“Are you ok?”

Hastily, Natalia replied, “I’m fine. Coming out now.”

She put away her phone, washed her hands, and opened the door. Turned out he was standing right outside.

Natalia jumped. “What are you doing?”

Archie shot her a sullen look.

“I thought you’d fallen into the toilet and couldn’t get yourself out. So if you didn’t come out, I was getting ready to go in there and fish you out.”

“...”

This clingy idiot!

## **Chapter 249 She Wants the Truth**

The next day, Natalia received a call from Elsa.

Jessica’s arrest was big news, so naturally, the Dawson family was aware of it.

Even last night, they’d caught wind of the arrest even earlier than Shawn. They’d wanted to gauge the Miller family’s reaction at the time, so they’d held their horses for the moment.

Then they found that the Millers weren’t just leaving Jessica in there, but when asked about it, they were even saying that Jessica deserved what she’d got with the crime she’d committed.

With the Miller family caught up in the mess, the board of directors utterly shaken and the Kalaneige sponsorship they’d paid a fortune for lost to the wind, they were letting her off easy.

It would be kind enough of them to let her go so easily, so why would they even think of some way to bail her out.

Henry had even told them that if Jessica got out unscathed, that was fine, but if she really had committed a crime, the Miller family was definitely not going to protect her.

By that point, Shawns' marriage with her was out of the question. They needed a divorce.

The Dawson family was outraged. Clara had even shattered her teapot out of rage and pointed at Henry, speechless.

Finally, with the Miller family turning their backs on them, the Dawsons could only leave helplessly.

They'd only just left the Miller household when they headed to Star Entertainment.

Natalia had received Elsa's call because the Dawsons were raising a ruckus there.

Plenty of outside media had come, and with all the celebrities working at Star, this wouldn't be good for the company or for other celebrities if it went on.

So Elsa was forced to take a risk and call Natalia in secret, asking her for a plan.

Natalia thought about it, then said, "Give her the phone."

Elsa's eyes widened in shock.

"Is that... all right? There's so many reporters out there."

"It's fine. Call her to the side. Remember, get her alone. If even one extra person is there, don't give it to her."

Elsa thought about it and agreed.

She called Clara to Natalia's office alone, then locked the door and gave her the phone.

"Take it!"

Clara was astonished. She didn't think they'd really put her in contact with Natalia. Looked like the ruckus worked.

Thinking that Natalia was afraid of her, she took the phone and in thoroughly unpleasant tones, said, "Damn brat! You know fear after all, do you? I thought you'd have the guts to stay hidden."

Over the line, Natalia frowned.

She really didn't know why this old woman thought that she could still speak to her on such a pedestal after so much had happened.

She scoffed.

"Looks like you still haven't considered who has the advantage here, taking such a tone... it's a little uncomfortable to hear. How about we chat another time?"

Clara blinked.

Only then did she realize that it'd been difficult even getting this call today. She couldn't let this chance slip.

So she reined in her temper, refined her manners, and said, "Fine, we'll leave those words. Talk! Why did you frame Jessica? And how would we get you to show your face? Don't think I don't know that you haven't gone missing at all. You've just hidden yourself away to ruin my Jessica!"

Natalia's face fell, her gaze dimming.

My Jessica?

A long time ago, she'd been their Natalia too.

Memories rushed in like a tide. She didn't understand it. Clara and Philip had been so good to her before. Three generations of the family living together in contentment.

Then Aleena and Jessica had shown up and everyone had changed.

With her mother gone, she'd gone from the beloved granddaughter to the abandoned granddaughter.

Tossed aside like a useless pawn, nobody would even look at her straight.

But it didn't matter now.

Maybe she would have cared before and chased after the reason, but she understood now that some things happened for no reason.

She didn't care anymore.

Thinking of that, she took a deep breath and growled, "If you want me to appear and clear Jessica's name, it's not impossible."

Clara held her breath and asked nervously, "What do you want?"

"I want her and Aleena to confess the truth behind how they arranged my mother's death!"

"What?"

Clara jumped.

Her face changed. "What truth? I don't know what you're talking about."

"You'll get it. If you ask them in person, for Jessica's sake, I believe Aleena won't hide anything from you. You've only got the one chance. You'd better take it."

With that, Natalia hung up.

On the other end, Clara was still dazed.

She hadn't thought that Natalia would have wanted that, of all things.

Faintly pale, cold sweat ran down her back.

She knew!

She knew everything!

How could it be?

They'd been so secretive back then. Everyone who knew was either dead or had left Julio. How could she have found out?

Clara was stunned.

Seeing her distraught look, Elsa didn't know what Natalia had said to her to get her in such a state.

But she didn't ask about it. She simply sent them out and said, "Well, that's enough of your ruckus. Mrs. McCarthy really isn't here. If you keep making trouble here, I'm really going to call security, so please hurry up and leave! Don't keep this farce going until it gets ugly. It won't look good on any of you."

Philip didn't think much of Natalia, so he naturally didn't think much of Elsa, who worked for Natalia, either.

He was about to retort when Clara stopped him.

Seeing something was off, Aleena whispered, "What's wrong, mom?"

"Nothing."

Clara shook her head, looked at the media outside, and said mildly, "Let's go back. We'll discuss things back home."

With that, they finally left.

Elsa waited until she was sure that the group had really left before calling Natalia.

Natalia simply told her not to worry, then gave her some more orders concerning the company and cut off communication.

The Dawson household.

The atmosphere inside the living room was unnaturally still. Everyone sat there without speaking.

Clara had already gone over the phone call and Natalia's request.

That was the cause of this eerie silence.

Philip sat there, face tight, eyes like a bloodthirsty wolf, gleaming with a cold, cruel light.

Aleena clenched her fingers and said, voice trembling, "We can't give up on Jessica no matter what. If she really goes to prison, her life is ruined. I can't sit by and let that happen."

### **President's Sweet Wife**

### **Chapter 250 Surprise Attack**

Her voice was pitiful. Philip, exasperated, snapped, "You're not seriously thinking of going and telling her the truth about what happened five years ago?"

Clara chimed in, "Natalia's saying that much, but I've thought it over. If she's fine, she can't hide forever. She's just trying to get one over on us right now, and might not know everything. So long as we hold fast, she can't do anything about us. As for Jessica, I'll send people to take care of it. She'll have to put up with it for a while. Still, with her special identity, she shouldn't suffer too much. As long as she can hold under pressure and doesn't admit to anything, we should be fine."

Hearing that, Aleena couldn't believe it.

"That's a huge 'should', Mom! That means that it's possible for her to crack and admit to the crime! Jessica's never been through hardship growing up; how could she stay in a place like that?"

Clara looked at her impatiently.

"Didn't I say I'm sending people over to take care of it? She made this mess herself, so it's good for her to stew a bit right now. That way she'll remember not to go out and cause trouble again someday!"

She grunted with displeasure.

Aleena didn't have a reply for that.

After a while, she tried, "Didn't you say last time that over at Eqitin..."

Clara frowned.

"I'm already in contact with that side. I'll hear back in a few days. Don't tell Jessica for now, just in case she causes some more trouble if she can't hold it in. Don't worry. If my contacts are secure, nothing will happen to Jessica. By then, if the Millers come up and ask us to be family again, we'll be having none of it."

Aleena relaxed a little and nodded.

"All right. Your call, Mom."

\*\*\*\*\*

Meanwhile, Natalia couldn't have imagined that she'd meet someone who should never have appeared on Fortuna Island.

Selena ran right into her the moment she arrived at the hotel.

She was wearing a simple white shirt with straight trousers underneath. With her hair in a ponytail, she looked fresh and energetic.

Seeing Natalia, she seemed surprised as well.

"I didn't think I'd see you here, Mrs. McCarthy."

Natalia smiled slightly. "I think it's quite a coincidence too, Miss Kawn."

Selena's eyes lit up.

"All that drama outside over your disappearance and your kidnapping – I'd thought it was true, but now it seems like..."

She didn't finish the sentence, but her meaning was obvious.

Natalia's head was starting to hurt.

Sometimes life just gave you a surprise attack out of nowhere.

She calmed herself and beamed at her.

"Are you here to look for Grandma, Miss Kawn?"

Some things weren't worth hiding if they'd been revealed already.

But she wasn't in the mood to deliberately explain things to Selena.

Still, Selena was smart enough to not ask too many questions. She simply chuckled, "Yes, I heard that Old Mrs. McCarthy is here, so I'd come to find her. I didn't think I'd meet you."

"Grandma is still in her room. Need me to bring you over?"

"No need to trouble yourself, Mrs. McCarthy. I can head to the front desk and ask them myself. If you're going out, I won't trouble you."

Natalia nodded and didn't stay to chat. She turned around and left.

Selena looked at her receding back and grinned, a bit of playfulness flashing through her eyes.

Ariana couldn't have imagined that Selena would come to the island at a time like this.

She'd bought up this island for a while now, and pretty much everyone at home knew about it. But they were normally busy, and not many people would visit this small island. Even if they did, they'd tell her beforehand, so she hadn't paid attention.

She didn't think that that small lapse would put such a damper on Natalia's plans.

Ariana was tremendously guilty, but Selena acted like she hadn't seen anything.

The moment she saw her, she said happily, "I was just filming nearby and decided to stop here on the way since you were here. You won't blame me for not notifying you, right?"

Ariana gave a small smile.

"How could I? I'm happy you're here; of course I wouldn't blame you."

She said that, but her face looked a bit strange.

Selena pretended like she hadn't noticed. Going over to Anne, she took out the gifts she'd lovingly prepared beforehand and played around with Anne.

Anne had just woken up after napping with Ariana and remembered that Natalia had promised to teach her how to swim in the afternoon.

But she was nowhere to be seen, so Anne was in a panic. She saw Selena, but she didn't have the patience to deal with her.

The girl took the gifts, said a casual thanks, put her shoes on and jogged outside.

Ariana was worried and ran out after her.

“Where are you going, Anne?”

“I’m going to find Mommy. Mommy promised to swim with me.”

Ariana stopped her hurriedly.

“Be a good girl, Anne. Your Mommy left because she’s got things to do. How about having her teach you to swim after she gets back?”

Anne’s eyes reddened with frustration right away.

“I don’t want to wait. Mommy promised me when she tucked me in. She said I would see her if I woke up and I could go swimming with her. Mommy wouldn’t lie!”

Ariana looked at the state the child was in and couldn’t really say anything at the moment.

Natalia had promised to take her swimming when she woke up.

But she’d slept lightly today, and with Selena coming over, she’d gotten up half an hour early.

With the way things went normally, it’d normally have taken her until two thirty to wake up. By that time, Natalia would probably be done with business and back here already.

Ariana didn’t have an explanation.

Seeing that, Selena crouched and looked at Anne gently.

“Mrs. McCarthy is busy with something else right now, Anne. How about your auntie Selena teach you how to swim instead?”

For all these years, Archie hadn’t had too many women around him. First off, he didn’t have too much interest in such matters. Also, Anne had a peculiar personality and she seemed to hate the women who appeared around him.

Selena was an exception.

It wasn’t that Anne really liked her, but at least she didn’t push her away and treat her like an enemy the way she did other women.

So she’d always thought that she held a special place in Anne’s heart.

Besides, since Ariana had tried to match Selena with Archie before, she’d had quite a lot of time to develop a bond with Anne.

Which made Selena even more confident that Anne liked her.

However, this time, Anne was looking at her with some contempt.

“I don’t want Miss Kawn. You don’t look as good as Mommy, you don’t look as patient as Mommy, and most importantly, you’re not as pretty as Mommy! I don’t want you to teach me, I just want my Mommy!”



