

Sweet Wife 321

Chapter 321 The Lost Child

Besides their marriage, Natalia heard of something odd before new year.

The lost child of the Kawn family was suddenly found.

This news got out two days ago, which was the reason why they didn't have time to prepare the wedding.

To be honest, it was not so surprising that they found her after years of searching.

But the thing was, the woman they found was someone she knew.

Nancy laughed angrily after reading the information Nancy gave her in front of the computer.

Jessica was such a pain in the ass.

The missing girl of the Kawn family?

How could that be her!?

She knew Jessica better than anyone.

She was not the girl gone missing but the bastard of Aleena and Philip.

When Aleena came to the Dawson family, she did a DNA test to prove Jessica was Philip's biological daughter in front of everyone. It couldn't be fake.

So, why would the Kawn family make such a mistake?

Natalia was puzzled.

Most members of the Kawn family were astute and calculative. And Jessica couldn't pull this trick all by herself.

What was going on?

Natalia was doubtful and decided to find the answer herself.

Therefore, she went to the company for Archie during the lunch break.

At that time, Archie had just ended a meeting. His eyes brightened up at her presence.

"What's wrong?"

Natalia told him what she heard about Jessica.

Archie had already known the news but he wasn't concerned about the Kawn family. Until now, he didn't realize it was Jessica.

He frowned while Natalia said, "Jessica couldn't be Miss Kawn's child. I'm 100% sure that she's Aleena's. What I don't understand is why the Kawn family pretend that they don't know that and claim Jessica as their child when they can easily figure it out."

Archie thought for a few seconds and looked her in the eyes, "You really wanna know?"

Natalia nodded.

"Then you'll know tonight."

"..."

Archie didn't explain too much to her.

Then, Brian walked in and reminded him that the guests for the meeting at noon had arrived. Natalia didn't want to bother him so she left.

In the evening, she finally knew what he meant.

Natalia was a little uneasy on the way.

"Won't it be weird if we show up out of blue?"

Archie smiled and said, "Although there has been tension among the four families, we are not actually at war. Uncle Wilson is pretty close to our family so it's normal that we go to the Kawn family to congratulate them. Also, everyone knows the relationship between you and Jessica. It will be weird if you act like you don't know or care about anything."

Natalia felt uncomfortably awkward.

"Now it sounds like we are going there not out of curiosity but for revenge."

Archie raised his eyebrows.

"If you say so."

Natalia was stunned.

Archie explained, "Your sister is not an easy target. Her parents were dead because of you and you put her precious grandmother in jail. She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth and now she's nothing but a loser. You must be the one she hates most.

"But it's been so long since the last time she made a move. I don't think she would get past all these dramas. She's onto something and wants to knock you down with one shot. She is an unpredictable risk for you. Now that she shows up, we should go and see what game she's playing."

Natalia finally saw the problem.

She had to admit that if it weren't for him, she wouldn't think this far.

Though she hated Jessica, she didn't really want her to die.

Because Jessica attempted to do bad things to her but she didn't succeed either way.

The worst thing she had done was stealing Shawn from her.

But based on the facts, this was actually kind of good for Natalia.

Otherwise, she would still be cheated by that bastard.

Natalia was not a saint but she could never be too cruel.

After what happened to the Dawson family, everyone thought Jessica was a vicious liar.

Her career was ruined and she got divorced.

Her life was already a hot mess.

That was why she didn't want to do anything else to her. As long as she behaved herself, Natalia wouldn't care more about her.

But now she heard what Archie said, she was finally alarmed.

Natalia thought for a while and frowned.

"I'm not so sure anymore. Is there a chance that Jessica is actually Yvonne's child and the DNA test result that Aleena gave was fake?"

Archie chuckled and pinched her nose, "No. Philip might be dumb but your grandmother isn't. She could tell if that was a lie."

Natalia nodded in relief.

They soon arrived at the Kawn Mansion.

When they got off the car, they were surprised to see a green Land Rover. Natalia recognized that car. It belonged to Ein Bissel.

Ein was 45 years old. He has a powerful military and political background.

And he was no longer content with their family's social status and wanted to be better than the other three families.

Natalia and Archie looked at each other and walked into the house.

"Congratulation, Mr. Kawn! It's been more than 20 years! You finally found your granddaughter!"

Chapter 322 An Honest Mistake

The second they stepped in the room, they heard Ein's loud voice.

The living room was crowded with people who came to congratulate them. Every member of the Kawn family was present.

In Egitin, any sign of gossip would quickly spread away.

Natalia and Archie were a little late. The Bissel family and the Nixon family were already there when they arrived.

Looking depressed, Max seemed to be forced to stay there by his father.

And when he saw Natalia and Archie, his eyes suddenly brightened up.

"Guys! You're here!"

Archie and Natalia went forward with their hands held tight.

The butler of the Kawn family was an old man named Greg. He was busy greeting people in the living room and didn't realize that the young couple had come.

He came to greet them in surprise, "Welcome! I'm honored to have you here, Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy!"

Archie smiled and introduced him to Natalia, "This is Mr. Greg. He was like an uncle to me. The Kawn family and our family have been friends for many years. I used to come here very often when I was young."

A woman chipped in, "Yeah, I remembered Mr. McCarthy and Miss Selena Kawn had an engagement when they were little. If things had gone well for them, they could have been a lovely couple..."

Before she even finished her speech, the whole room went weirdly quiet.

That woman was a middle-aged woman from a wealthy family.

When she noticed that everyone stopped chatting, she was stunned. She realized something and immediately covered her mouth.

Her husband besides her glared at her and hastily apologized.

"I'm so sorry for that, Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy, it's just a slip of the tongue. She didn't mean that."

Natalia smiled, "It's ok, Mr. Perry. Mrs. Perry was just telling the truth. Archie and I are already married. Of course I wouldn't mind this kind of things."

Mr. Perry was finally relieved and he began to flatter her politely.

Wilhelm Kawn was in his late eighties now. He hadn't been feeling well because he had lots of injuries fighting at war when he was young.

Right now, he was sitting on the couch, looking at this young couple.

"Archie and his wife are here? Come!"

The couple quickly went forward.

Mr. Kawn looked much older than Archie's grandparents though they were at the same age.

He had a good look of the two minors and smiled.

"You two look like a happy couple. Archie, I haven't seen you for a long time. How are you doing lately?"

Archie answered, "All is well, Mr. Kawn. Thank you for asking."

Wilhelm patted on Archie's shoulder and sighed, "Your grandparents came by a few days ago. Your grandpa and I had a fight and now he's not talking to me these days. Tell him not to be so grumpy!"

Archie chuckled, "I promise I'll tell him."

When they were young, William and Wilhelm were best buddies.

Both of them were a little childish, which was why they were fighting even though they were in their eighties.

Wilson was sitting next to Wilhelm. He smiled and said, "Archie, why don't you and Natalia stay here for dinner? Everyone is here tonight."

Archie nodded, "We would love that."

As they were chatting, a woman laughed in surprise from behind.

"Wow, everybody's here! Archie! Natalia! Hi!"

Archie greeted her back, "Lovely to see you, Aunt Tracy."

That was Wilson's wife, Tracy Kawn.

Tracy was raised in a literary family. Her parents were both famous artists. People would assume that their daughter would be meek and quiet, but she turned out to be pretty outgoing and passionate.

Natalia didn't know her well but she had definitely heard of her before.

Although she had a fiery temper, she was actually a very nice person. And she was also very close to Archie's grandma.

She asked, "Why are you guys still standing there? Come and sit! Dinner will be ready very soon. Let's have a lovely evening tonight!"

"Where's Jessica? She hasn't come down here." asked Matthew.

Tracy smiled, "She had been greeting people all afternoon. She must be exhausted. I'll let her know when dinner is ready."

Matthew nodded.

After a few minutes, it was time for dinner.

Jessica finally appeared. Natalia hadn't seen her for a long time. Jessica was wearing a white sweater and a cashmere skirt. Her brown hair was nicely curled. She looked cute and delicate, nothing like what she used to be several months ago.

With the maid's help, she slowly went down the stairs and greeted everyone.

"Pardon me for being so late. I was sort of tired and I overslept. I'm sorry."

People started to exchange pleasantries with her. Jessica was smiling the whole time and eventually she fixed her eyes on Natalia.

Natalia stared back at her calmly.

Jessica paused and then walked towards her elegantly.

"Fancy seeing you here, Lia."

Natalia raised her eyebrows.

This was different from what she expected.

She thought Jessica wouldn't dare to see her again. But she was wrong.

If Jessica looked so comfortable with it, then Natalia had nothing to fear.

She smiled back at her and said, "Long time no see, my dear sister. Looks like you're doing fine these days."

Jessica was grinning and looked quite genuine.

"Yeah. Not as good as I used to be, but good enough. I didn't treat you well before. But what's past is past. Hope you could move on and have a wonderful life."

Natalia laughed, "Of course. It's not what it used to be anymore. You used to be my father's bastard and now you've become the lost child of the Kawn family who's finally found. I surely wouldn't hold on to the past."

The living room was deadly silent.

President's Sweet Wife

Chapter 323 Put Her on The Spot

Since both Natalia and Jessica were celebrities, the Dawson family scandal got viral on the Internet, which was why a lot of people present knew about what happened between those two girls.

When the Kawn family announced that the child was Jessica, people were shocked from the beginning.

They didn't know how to ask their questions because it seemed too personal.

At this moment, everyone looked at each other puzzledly and were extremely curious.

Mr. Kawn didn't know how Internet worked and didn't like hanging out with the minors. So he had no idea what was going on on the Internet.

Hearing what she said, he asked, "Natalia, you know Jessica before?"

Natalia turned around and smiled at him, "We were much more than that."

Wilhelm was even more confused.

But it was a little inappropriate to say too much on such an occasion. Wilson frowned and winked at Tracy.

Tracy came forward, trying to ease the tension, "Time for dinner! How about going to the dining room first? Dad, I cooked your favorite dish today."

Wilhelm snorted, "Today's a big day! Jessica is back and so many guests are here. Don't pay all the attention to me."

Tracy quickly answered, "Yeah, but you're the lucky star of our family, of course we cared about you most."

Then she told Wilson and Matthew to help Wilhelm sit on his wheelchair.

Wilhelm had been in a wheelchair for two years because of his poor health.

He rolled his eyes and said, "Stop flattering me. I'm nothing but an old sack of bones. You don't need to care about me that much."

Tracy laughed, "What are you talking about?! Honestly, I think even the fresh meat on TV can't compare with you."

Wilhelm asked curiously, "Fresh meat? Why are you comparing me with meat? Of course I'm better than meat!"

Tracy guffawed, "Dad, you're so out of date."

Someone next to them explained, "Mr. Kawn, fresh meat doesn't actually mean meat. It refers to those young pretty boys nowadays."

Wilhelm finally understood what she meant and burst out laughing.

The topic was quietly changed and Wilson asked everyone to enter the dining room.

Though some people were still curious, they were too awkward to say anything else and follow his guidance.

The dinner was going well.

Everybody was onto something but they all shut up in front of Wilhelm.

After dinner, Jessica wanted to have a walk with Wilhelm in the backyard garden, but he refused.

Mr. Kawn patted her hands and said gently, "There are a lot of kids at your age. You should spend more time with them! Have fun!"

Jessica looked worried, "But you..."

"I'm fine by myself. I'll just ask Greg to accompany me."

He smiled and waved at Greg.

Jessica gave in and said politely, "Thank you, Mr. Greg. Grandpa, I'll come for you later."

Mr. Kawn giggled, "Great. Take your time. I'll went to bed after the walk."

Jessica nodded and left.

From distance, Natalia was standing there and looking at this.

Archie came from her behind and glanced at Jessica over there.

"What are you thinking?"

Natalia said worriedly, "I was wondering, who came up with this idea? Why would they want Jessica to pretend to be Yvonne's daughter?"

“Of course it’s Uncle Wilson.”

Natalia shook her head.

“This is way too important. If it’s only his idea, other people will definitely know something was wrong, especially Uncle Matthew”

It was known to all that Wilson and Matthew didn’t get along well. In tradition, if Mr. Kawn passed away, the next host of the Kawn family would be Matthew because he was the elder son.

But he was too ordinary comparing with Wilson. That was why he regarded Wilson as his competitor.

If Wilson did this by himself, Matthew would never cooperate because it wouldn’t benefit him anyway.

Archie raised his eyebrows.

“So, what do you think?”

“I think the whole family except Mr. Kawn are acting.”

Archie thought for a while. Natalia turned around, only to see someone familiar was walking in.

“Miss Selena, you’re back!”

Greg was about to take Mr. Kawn to the garden when they accidentally bumped into Selena.

Selena forced a smile and greeted, “Grandpa.”

Mr. Kawn was clearly in a mood when he saw Selena.

“Why are you home so late? Don’t you know your sister’s back? Did you do this on purpose to put her on the spot?”

Selena froze.

At that moment, Jessica heard the conversation and ran towards them.

“Grandpa, don’t blame her,” she stepped in front of Selena and explained, “Selena is a celebrity. She tried her best to make it home tonight. I’m not embarrassed and please don’t be mad at her.”

Mr. Kawn wasn’t so mad anymore. He glanced at Selena impatiently and scolded, “Why are you still standing here? Go and greet the guests!”

Selena lowered her head and answered, “I will, Grandpa. I’m going in.”

She went into the room hastily.

President’s Sweet Wife

Chapter 324 The Truth

After Selena was gone, Mr. Kawn looked at Jessica smiling, “Jessica, Selena is a little too quiet. Don’t be upset with her. It’s just who she is.”

Jessica curved her lips and said, “Of course. We’re family.”

Wilhelm nodded and asked Greg to take him to the Garden.

Natalia was stunned.

"She's pulling the same tricks again and no one's seeing what she is up to. Acting so innocent and tame. Disgusting."

Archie sneered, "Perhaps most people see things with their eyes, not with their hearts."

Natalia raised her eyebrows.

She turned to Archie and laugh, "So, Mr. McCarthy, do you see things with your heart?"

Archie looked down and chuckled wickedly, "I only see you with my heart."

He grabbed her hands and laid them on his chest.

"It's beating for you right now. Can you hear it?"

Natalia's face got red instantly. She hurriedly withdrew her hands and said, "Ewww!"

Then she walked inside the room in a rush.

Archie seldom got her shy like this. He guffawed and followed her inside.

Natalia figured that she must dig in and find out what truly happened.

And in order to find the truth, they needed to ask Wilson.

Wilson knew that Jessica was Natalia's half-sister and they wouldn't be able to fool Natalia, so there was no need to lie to her.

When they found Wilson, he just went out of the tearoom with Ein.

He was surprised to see them, and then he said, "Archie, Lia, I thought you were in the living room with other kids."

Archie didn't say anything.

Natalia smiled, "We were having a walk in the garden and came here by chance."

She glanced at Ein. He nodded to her and said to Archie, "I heard that you have acquired several large enterprises in succession recently. Good for you."

Archie replied coldly, "I thought the Bissel family are normally more interested in politics. I didn't know you would care about our business so eagerly. Thank you for your attention."

Hearing that, Ein laughed awkwardly, "Well, we're family friends, right? Of course I would care about you. But don't misunderstand me. I meant well. I just wanna say that you've done a great job."

Archie curved his lips.

"Then, thank you."

There had been several conflicts between the Bissel family and the Kawn family although they were still pretending that everything was normal.

They both knew each other's intention.

Ein left after saying goodbye to Wilson.

Then, Wilson turned around and said to Archie and Natalia: "I assume you came to ask me something, didn't you?"

Natalia nodded.

Wilson grinned, "I guess so. It's better to clear things up anyway. Follow me."

He led them into the tearoom.

Mr. Kawn had a passion for tea art, which explained why the tearoom was decorated in exquisite taste.

The colors were classy and perfectly balanced. Even the antique tea table was made of sandalwood. Before the tea was boiled, the refreshing scent of tea was already in the air.

They sat down at the table. Wilson began to make tea while saying, "I knew you would come, but you came much earlier than I expected. Please don't embarrass me in front of so many people. I know a lot of them have already known and they are hoping that you two will come and ask for explanation."

Natalia smiled, "If you have known we would come to you and still decided to bring Jessica to Egitin, then you must be one hundred percent sure you could deceive everyone."

Wilson frowned and glanced at her.

Archie was sitting next to her emotionlessly, twirling his wedding ring.

After a few seconds of silence, he sighed, "Never mind. I'll tell you."

He got up to serve them tea, then he sat back down and continued, "The truth is, Jessica is not Yvonne's child."

Natalia froze.

Although she'd known it was impossible that Jessica was her daughter, she was still surprised to hear Wilson finally admit it.

Wilson said in a deep tone, "Except for my father, everyone in our family has known about this. We've reached a consensus that we should make him feel happy and content in his last days. It really doesn't matter that Jessica is not Yvonne's daughter as long as my father believes she is."

He paused for a while and kept on talking, "And Jessica might be the last person who knows where that child is."

Natalia was confused.

However, it seemed that Wilson didn't want to give any further information.

Archie was not interested in the lost child. He was more curious about the behavior of the Kawn family.

"So, you chose Jessica to pretend to be the child. But have you ever considered about her reputation? Sooner or later, someone will tell Mr. Kawn about her scandals. How are you going to explain that to him?" said Archie.

"Like what she said, what's past is past. There's not much time left for him. I will keep the Kawns' mouths shut. As for other people, my father will not believe their words anyway." said Wilson.

Archie laughed derisively.

Natalia asked, "So the doctor said Mr. Kawn doesn't have much time left?"

Wilson nodded.

"The cancer had spread to the liver. My father refused chemotherapy. He has only two months to live."²

Chapter 325 All in Vain

Suddenly, everyone in the tearoom fell silent.

Though Natalia was not familiar with Mr. Kawn and had only spent a couple of hours with him, she was still sad to hear this terrible news.

"Uncle Wilson, I'm sorry."

Wilson smiled, "It's life. Nobody is immortal. My father has been suffering from illness for years. To be completely honest, this might be a big relief to him now. But ever since Yvonne's child went missing, she had been in a trance. Even when she later adopted Selena, she still couldn't move on, which was probably why she couldn't even make it to her 40th birthday.

"My father couldn't let it go. These years he has been constantly busy with family affairs and didn't even have time to search for the child. That is why he is so eager to find Yvonne's daughter. He doesn't want to have any regrets.

"Actually, it doesn't matter anymore whether the child is fake or not. If he thinks she is real, then she is real."

After he finished, the three of them were silent again.

Natalia didn't know what to say.

She finally understood why Archie said getting the lost child back might not be a good thing.

Other than Wilhelm, no one wanted her back.

After all, Wilhelm was not in good condition. No one knew if he had made a will or not. If the child was found, there would be one more heir, even if she was just a woman with no background.

Sometimes rich people were just incredibly cold-blooded.

Natalia and Archie had already known the answer and didn't want to talk anymore.

They stood up and took their leave.

Wilson walked them to the door.

At the door, he looked at Natalia. He wanted to say something but hesitated.

Natalia knew what he wanted to say. She said calmly, "Rest assured. I will mind my own business if she minds hers. Let bygones be bygones. I've taken back what belongs to me. After all, she got nothing in the end, and I don't want to waste more time on her."

Wilson was relieved to hear her say this.

"If so, thank you for your understanding."

Natalia nodded slightly and left with Archie.

It was still kind of early when they went back to Pinewood Manor.

They didn't eat much at the dinner. Seeing them back, Mrs. Dottie made some dumplings for them, which were Natalia's favorite.

When eating, Natalia kept drifting away.

Archie glanced at her and said, "If you're not comfortable with that, I can take you back to the Kawn Mansion and expose her lies."

Natalia was stunned and then quickly explained, "Oh, I'm not thinking about her."

Archie raised his eyebrows.

"Then what's on your mind?"

Natalia hesitated for a second and said, "I was thinking why Mr. Kawn was so distant to Selena. I've always heard that he was super nice to her. Is it because Jessica is back?"

Archie was confused.

"And that's what you've been thinking about?"

Natalia nodded, looking quite serious.

"That's not your problem. You don't need to worry about her."

Natalia didn't know why he got mad.

"She is your ex-girlfriend or might even be your first love. She had been in love with you for so many years and you don't even bother to care about her a little bit. That is kind of cruel. Yet you think that I was being nosy."

Archie froze.

Natalia didn't like to rake up the past, but every once in a while, she couldn't help making fun of him on things about Selena.

He put down his spoon and looked her straight in the eyes, "Let me get this straight. I have never admitted that she was my girlfriend because it was all just jokes made by our parents when we were young. Moreover, even if she were my ex-girlfriend, we would have broken up for many years. We are

total strangers now, so I have no obligation to care for her. And as my wife, you shouldn't care for her either, understand?"

"..."

Natalia didn't want him to really get mad. She tried to smooth things over by saying, "Honey, don't be so sensitive. Everyone has an ex these days. I had a relationship before I met you as well. I'm ok with that kind of stuff."

Hearing that, Archie was even more depressed.

Just then, Mrs. Dottie came in.

"Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy, Miss Kaur is here."

Natalia was stunned.

She checked the time and found out that it was ten o'clock at night.

Ever since Victoria returned to Egitin after giving birth, she had been laying low and rarely went out this late except for parties.

Why would she come here so late at night?

Natalia walked out of their room, feeling confused.

As soon as she got into the living room, she saw Victoria coming in with her baby in her arms, followed by her help Helen, who was carrying a large bag of stuff.

"Victoria," she went over and asked with concern, "What happened? Is everything alright?"

Victoria smiled, "Everything's fine. I hope I didn't disturb you by showing up this late."

Archie came up from behind. He took a look at Victoria and said to Natalia, "You girls talk, I need to get back to the study."

Natalia knew that he was intended to leave them two besties alone, so she nodded and said yes.

After Archie went upstairs, Natalia asked Victoria to sit on the couch. She glanced at the sleeping child in her arms and asked, "It's freezing outside. Why are you bringing him here so late?"

It was December in Egitin. The snow on the road was very thick. How could a little child bear this kind of extreme weather?

Victoria sighed and said, "What choice do I have? He has to come here anyways. Instead of Helen dropping him off tomorrow morning, I'd rather bring him here myself."

"What?"

Victoria looked her in the eyes and asked, "Lia, can you do me a favor?"

Natalia nodded with no hesitation, "Anything you ask for."

"Help take care of Joy. I gotta return to Julio."

Chapter 326 Taking Care of the Child

Victoria had naturally listened when Natalia analyzed what had happened with her.

So she knew that she had to go back to Julio this time.

Only, she could go, but the child couldn't come with her.

First, the child had only just recovered from a serious illness. He was far too young to bring along in case anything else happened with his body.

Second, Brandon hadn't allowed the child into his doorstep, after all. Any arguments or friction could put the kid in the line of fire.

Hearing Victoria's concerns, Natalia agreed.

She nodded and said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of Joy. Go back and deal with what you need dealt with for now. I promise, when you return, he won't be missing a single hair on his head."

Victoria smiled gratefully.

"I trust you, of course."

She paused, looked longingly one last time at the child, then handed him over to Helen and rose. "It's getting late. I need to get back. Have Helen stay here to look after him with you for this time, all right? She's brought him up until now. She knows his temper and has the experience."

Natalia nodded, agreed, and had Mrs. Dottie get Helen and Joy settled in before getting up and escorting Victoria out.

"What time's your flight tomorrow?"

"Eight in the morning."

"Want me to take you?"

"No Need."

Victoria hesitated, then sighed.

"I hope it goes well this time. I'm tired of this year-long grudge, but I won't back down over the child. I don't hope for my father to forgive me, but I wish he'd let go and let me walk my own path."

Hearing her words, Natalia felt heavy as well.

But she still hugged her encouragingly.

"It'll go well. I believe in you."

After seeing Victoria off, Natalia went back to the rooms and checked in on Mrs. Dottie.

Mrs. Dottie had already taken Helen and the kid to the guest room and was sorting out their accommodations.

Thankfully, Anne came by often, so there was plenty of things for children in the house.

Besides, Victoria had had Helen bring all the daily necessities over, so they weren't pressed at the moment.

With everything settled in, Natalia checked on Joy.

The kid was sleeping well. Even now, it didn't seem like he would wake.

The little bundle curled up in the cradle like a cute, tiny angel.

She felt her heart warm as she tucked him in and said, "I'll be troubling you to look after him alone tonight, Helen. I'll find someone with the experience taking care of children and have them come over to give you a hand tomorrow. This way, you can take turns."

Helen smiled hurriedly. "No, no, it's fine. I've taken care of Joy for this long and I'm used to it. I'll be fine even if I went at it alone."

Natalia smiled and didn't reply.

After arranging everything, she went upstairs to look for Archie.

Archie was in his writing room. Seeing her come in, he asked, "It's done?"

"Yeah."

Natalia thought about it. "It'll be two days until the holidays. Victoria might not be back until after the festivities. Since there's not too much going on right now, I want to have Anne come over and keep Joy company."

Archie didn't have an opinion on that suggestion.

"Sure. I'll leave it up to you."

The following day, Natalia went and visited the old household.

Seeing her, Anne was naturally overjoyed.

Knowing that there was a little brother waiting for her at home, her eyes lit up.

"Did you finally make a little brother for me with Daddy, Mommy? Then am I a big sister from now on?"

Natalia had to laugh as she poked her nose. "Don't make things up. That's your Auntie Victoria's child, but Mommy and Auntie Victoria are friends, so he's your little brother too."

Anne finally understood.

"Then when are you giving me a real little brother, Mommy?"

"..."

Er...

To the side, Ariana and William couldn't hold back their amusement. Ariana chuckled, "If you didn't raise a ruckus about going to live with Mommy every day, Mommy and Daddy would be able to give you a little brother very soon."

Hearing that, Anne pouted discontentedly.

"I've lived away from Mommy for so long, but it's still not long enough? If that's the case, I don't want it anymore."

She said, and turned her head sulkily to the side, releasing a humph.

Natalia found it unbearably cute and smiled, "There's twenty days in the winter holiday and you can spend it all with Mommy. Aren't you happy?"

Anne's eyes brightened for a moment, then she looked at her dubiously.

"Really? You're not lying to me?"

Faced with the child's doubt, Natalia suddenly lulled.

She felt an inexplicable sense of sorrow.

This child had been through too much. She didn't have a mother to accompany her from when she was small. Archie loved her enough and was patient enough, but he was far too busy at the end of the day. The people who spent the most time with her were only Ariana and William.

That was why, deep in her heart, she must feel so extremely insecure.

Natalia sighed lightly and crouched down, hugging the girl into her arms. Her voice was soft. "Really. When you get better, you'll be with Mommy every day from now on and we'll never be apart again. How's that?"

Anne cheered up instantly.

"That's great. I know Mommy is the best."

Seeing that, Ariana's eyes grew moist at the side.

Natalia really was the best.

She'd thought it would be hard for Natalia to accept the child before.

But clearly, she was really treating Anne like one of her own, with not an ounce of selfishness.

Thinking of that, Ariana said, "Anne, come with me."

As she spoke, she headed upstairs.

Natalia got up, a little dubious, but still followed her over.

Ariana brought her all the way to her own room.

In the old McCarthy household, there was an aged servant who took care of Ariana by the name of Murphy. Everyone called her Mama Murphy most days. She'd been with the old lady since they were young, so she had her trust.

Right now, she was tidying Ariana's room.

Seeing them come in, she stopped what she was doing and beamed, "Madams, you're here."

Ariana nodded and didn't send her off, directly ordering, "Bring me the sandalwood box in the drawer."

Mama Murphy made an assenting noise and hurried to the task.

Taking Natalia's hand, the old lady sat down on her chair and spoke. "You got to know Archie early, Natalia, and didn't hold a wedding, so I didn't get the chance to give you anything. But I really do like you as a granddaughter-in-law. With you here, be it Archie or Anne, I can leave them safely in your hands."

Hearing that the start of the conversation wasn't going where she thought, Natalia frowned.

Chapter 327 Treat It as a Coincidence

At that moment, Mama Murphy had taken the box and walked over.

"Found it, madam."

Smiling, she handed the box over to the old lady. Natalia took one look and saw it was a deep brown sandalwood box, engraved with delicate patterns. A high-end piece, obviously.

Ariana opened the box. It was inlaid with a dark red silk brocade, and on the brocade, there sat a classic-looking sapphire necklace.

Natalia's eyes shot wide as her face changed slightly.

For no other reason that the design looked very familiar, almost like...

The old lady took out the necklace and sighed, "This was from a long time ago, when I was still young. Your Grandpa got it from an antique merchant by chance, and we hadn't known each other long. He gave me the necklace as our engagement gift. You're a good kid, Natalia. I don't have much to give you, but I'll give you this necklace. I hope you and Archie can be like us, and spend the rest of your lives together in harmony and peace."

Natalia frowned. There was no joy in her expression as she stared off into space.

Noticing her bearing change, Ariana was a little surprised as she called, "Natalia."

Natalia jerked back to the moment.

She floundered for a moment, then forced a smile. "What did you just say, Grandma?"

Ariana had to frown as well.

She didn't continue on the topic and said concernedly, "Are you all right? Are you feeling sick anywhere?"

Natalia shook her head.

Pursing her lips, she hesitated and said, "I'm fine. Just remembered a few things after seeing this necklace all of a sudden."

Ariana was taken aback.

"Oh? You don't mean to say you've seen it before?"

That couldn't be possible. After all, ever since William had given her the necklace decades ago, she'd hid it away carefully. Outsiders couldn't have seen it.

But Natalia nodded.

She reached out and unclasped the necklace she'd always been wearing.

"Look at this, Grandma."

Natalia was holding the same, classic-style necklace, designed very similarly to Ariana's, only the sapphire had been switched for a ruby.

Ariana was instantly stunned.

Not just her, but Mama Murphy, looking on at the side, was also stunned.

"What – what's going on..."

Mama Murphy was at a complete loss for words. This necklace was an heirloom from previous royal families. There was only one of them. How could an identical copy exist?

Natalia didn't know about the history behind the necklace, but seeing their reactions, she could tell that something wasn't right.

After a while, Ariana reacted, her face darkening slightly, "Where did you get this necklace?"

Natalia didn't hide it and told her about how her mother had died, leaving her this memento.

Ariana heard the story and fell into doubt.

Frowning, she reached out after a while and said, "Can I have a close look at the necklace?"

Natalia nodded.

Ariana took the necklace, examined it, and visibly relaxed.

"This is a fake. It's delicately made and looks like a classic relic, but look closely and you'll find that a lot of places are new. This isn't a remnant of a previous royal family but a recent forgery."

Natalia was astonished.

This was something her mother had kept for her. She'd seen her mother wear it from when she was small, and she'd deliberately left it to her after she passed. It shouldn't be a forgery.

Still, Ariana was dead sure, and Natalia didn't have a better explanation at the moment, so she could only let it rest.

Coming out of the old lady's room, Natalia took Anne and Archie home with her.

Knowing that she had a little brother in the house now, Anne was overjoyed and wanted to play around with him.

Natalia had Mrs. Dottie and Helen keep a watch on them so they didn't go on too late, then went upstairs.

Back in her bedroom, she washed up and took out the two necklaces, placing them side by side as she sat on the bed, musing.

Archie came back sometime during that and saw her sitting there, hand on her chin, looking troubled. He cocked an eyebrow.

"What are you looking at?"

He walked over and sat down opposite her.

Natalia pushed the two jewel boxes in front of him and said, "Look at these two necklaces."

Archie raised his brows, a little surprised.

Of course he'd seen the ruby necklace that Natalia always wore.

Knowing that it was a memento of her mother, it wasn't anything strange.

But the necklace on the side was Ariana's, and because the old lady had treasured it, she rarely took it out. As a man, Archie didn't pay too much attention to this sort of thing, so he actually hadn't seen this necklace too often.

Looking at the two necklaces side by side, he thought for a while and asked, "Grandma gave you this one?"

Natalia nodded.

"Grandma says that this is something from a previous royal family that Grandpa stumbled upon and gave to her as a wedding gift. She just gave it to me, but didn't think I already had one. The one my Mom left me. But Grandma says this one's fake."

She said, and took up the ruby necklace.

Archie took it and looked it over.

He hadn't paid too much attention to jewelry for women, so he didn't notice.

Looking at it closely now, he found that this necklace was made recently. Forget previous royal families, it wasn't believable even for Kiera to have worn it for decades.

He couldn't help frowning.

Natalia sighed, frustrated.

“My mother wouldn’t have lied to me, and I never understood the meaning behind her leaving me this necklace. Does it really have something to do with Grandma?”

Archie shot her a look.

The look wasn’t bright or dim, and seemed thoughtful.

Natalia didn’t know how to respond to the look, nor did she know what he meant.

After a while, Archie sat the necklace down and said, “I remember that the old woman of the Dawson family had kept this back then. She might know something.”

Natalia jolted, then her expression sunk.

“Forget it. She wouldn’t tell me even if she knew.”

Archie didn’t say anything about that.

He fell silent for a while and took up both of the necklaces, remarking, “If that’s the case, then there’s no need to overthink it. It’s just a necklace and won’t affect anything. Just think of it as a coincidence.”

Natalia thought about it and felt it made sense, so she left it up to him.

Settling down, she went back downstairs to check on Anne and Joy. After tucking both of the little children back to their rooms in bed, she retired to her own room

Chapter 328 One Happy Family

A few days later was a big holiday.

A day of festivities around the nation.

Since they were in Eqitin, they had to celebrate together, so that afternoon, Natalia brought Anne and Joy back to the old household.

It was the holidays, but Archie still had some business to take care of in the office and wouldn’t get back until later.

Natalia gave him a call beforehand and had him get back to the old household right after he was done instead of heading back to Pinewood Manor.

The old household was bustling activity. It was rare for them to get back together like one big happy family.

Ariana was overjoyed recently. You couldn’t blame her. In past holidays, either Archie was overseas or Faye couldn’t make it back. Even if they came back, having only four people there made it feel a bit lonely.

This year was different. Seeing her children and grandchildren surround her, Ariana felt a surge of warmth and appeared younger by several years.

It was the holidays, so as a McCarthy, Faye did have to come back for such a big day.

Considering Natalia, though, Ariana did ask her about it indirectly to the side.

Natalia didn't have too big a grudge against Faye. Faye had only had to leave the country because of the prospecting incident, so it didn't have too much to do with her.

Now that the prospecting scene was about dealt with, it was natural that she'd come back.

Natalia smiled and soothed the old lady. Seeing that she was fine with it, Ariana relaxed.

That afternoon, Faye was on Natalia's heels as they went back to the old home.

The two bumped into each other as they entered. Faye still looked as proud as ever, but with her recent blow, she didn't act out as much. As unwilling as she was to see her, she simply scoffed and headed inside without saying anything.

Natalia didn't bring it up against her.

She felt that it really wasn't easy for someone who was almost forty to still behave like a teenager.

Of course there was the pampering of the McCarthy family, but also because she was pure and believed anything anyone said, her mind often couldn't turn corners.

Getting mad with someone like this would accomplish nothing other than making oneself uncomfortable.

Natalia always treated herself well. If she wouldn't benefit from it, she couldn't be bothered to do it.

The old household hung with festive decorations and looked more joyous than ever.

After going in, Natalia had Anne go play around herself. Helen and another servant in the old household took care of Joy, while she herself went into the kitchens to look for Ariana.

For the most important festival in the year, the old lady had always liked to get down and dirty herself to make something nice for the family. This was a tradition of decades.

And considering Eqitin was far north in the country and cold, at this time of year, it was popular to eat dumplings.

Since Ariana and Faye had grown up in the north, they were naturally no strangers to the dish.

But Natalia had grown up in Julio. Being a city in the south, she didn't have dumplings or noodles too often.

So she was the only person in the entire family who didn't know how to make the darned things while everyone else could.

She was a little embarrassed, while the old lady simply smiled, "If you want to learn how, come over and I'll teach you."

Faye looked at her, wanting to poke fun, but paused, thought of something, and didn't speak.

Not noticing her expressions, Natalia heard Ariana's words and swallowed her lack of confidence as she washed her hands and bit the bullet.

Other than the servants, there were only the three of them wrapping dumplings.

Archie came back at half past five and started playing chess with William.

Ariana slowed down her movements and said, "Look here. Put this meat in here, then pinch it here, hold it still in the center with your left hand like an axis. Follow up with your right hand and circle around it to make a pattern. That makes it both pretty and delicious. Try it."

Natalia stared at the old lady's motions and got the basics.

She nodded. "Okay. I'll give it a try."

But somethings were easier said than done.

She'd never known that it was this difficult to wrap dumplings.

The dough almost looked alive in the old lady's hands, following her every whim.

But in her own hands, they either stayed stubbornly still or ended up horrifically deformed as she pinched them.

Putting too little meat in there ended up with a deflated center, but too much and it burst out.

She grew a bit frantic.

Seeing that, Ariana burst out laughing.

"It's no rush, take your time. It's easy! Try doing a few more and you'll pick it up soon enough."

Natalia blushed, feeling clumsy for the first time in her life.

Seeing the old lady twist her neck, she put her own dough down. "You must be tired, Mom! I'll help you up to rest a while."

The old lady had been happy to get up early, so she'd worked all through the day already.

Ariana nodded.

"All right! Once the dumplings are done, take Anne to the square over there to watch the fireworks. And get Archie to stop playing chess to take Natalia over too. There a bunch of the kids who grew up here over there and it's great fun. Don't leave the young ones at home."

Nodding, Faye took her gloves off.

Only then did Ariana take her arm and go upstairs to rest.

Natalia continued to tackle the dumpling dough. They'd made enough for the night, but she didn't want to give up.

She'd always been good with her hands and picked up anything she put her mind to. She didn't think she'd be losing to a bit of flour.

No, she had to get it right.

As she struggled, a chuckle rang out from behind.

She jumped, turned around, and saw Archie standing behind her, looking at her motions and holding in his laughter. Seemed like he'd been holding it in for a while.

Natalia went red and turned around, mumbling, "How long have you been here? Why didn't you say anything?"

"I said something, but you were too focused wrapping dumplings and didn't notice."

The man walked up and looked at her failed products, unable to help laughing. "You're using too much force. With the right technique, you don't need too much strength. Look, it's all twisted now."

Ariana had just laughed at her, and she was feeling down enough, and now he was coming over to poke fun too.

She felt a surge of embarrassment and snapped, "Well, then you do it if you're so great!"

Archie cocked his eyebrow and actually went and washed his hands, put on his gloves, then started wrapping dumplings.

Natalia stared.

The snowy white dough came alive in his broad palm.

Soon enough, he produced a pretty-looking dumpling.

Her eyes bugged out.

Archie winked at her.

Utterly defeated, Natalia said dejectedly, "Why can't I pick up something that looks so simple?"

Chapter 329 Legally a Couple

The man smirked. "I told you, you need the right technique."

Seeing her still frowning, troubled, he put down his dough and walked behind her.

Encircling his arms around her body, he handed her a sheet of dough and held her hands, teaching her motion by motion.

"Look there. Don't press down on it too hard, otherwise you can't turn it. With this hand, twist it just a little, and you get the pattern. Now, with that feeling, turn and pinch. Isn't that simple?"

To her surprise, having him literally teach her hands-on made it really easy.

Taking her hand again, Archie taught her how to wrap several dumplings in the same matter.

When they got to the fifth one, Natalia couldn't hold it in and said, "I'll try one myself."

Archie blinked and nodded. "Sure. Go ahead."

She took the dough carefully and started pinching with the same feeling as when he'd just taught her.

Soon, she'd made a dumpling.

It wasn't as perfect as when he'd taken her hands, but you could at least call this a normal dumpling.

She was overjoyed as she raised the dumpling to his eyes, beaming, "Look, I've got it!"

Looking at the woman's simple, happy smile, her joy infected him, and his own contentedness leaked out of his deepening gaze.

He nodded. "I have a smart wife."

The sudden compliment embarrassed Natalia.

She rearranged her sidelocks and chuckled, "You taught me well."

She'd forgotten that, having wrapped dumplings for the entire while, her hands were covered with flour. Her gesture brought two white streaks across her cheeks.

Like a shy kitten.

Seeing that, the man's eyes deepened further as he pressed a hand against the back of her head and kissed her hard on the lips.

The kiss was far too sudden. Natalia jumped, then looked around in a panic.

She bumped him off with her elbow, stammering, "What are you doing? This is the old household! Grandma and Aunt Faye are outside!"

Archie chuckled. "So what?"

Natalia glared at him.

"You've got some nerve saying so what! What if they see us?"

"We're a legal couple, Natalia. They can't do anything about a kiss."

"..."

He said that, but Ariana and Faye were both there, and even if William wasn't showing himself, he could come over at any moment.

If they really saw her, she would probably die of shame.

Archie knew that she got flustered easily. Seeing her blush down to the roots of her ears, he smirked and stopped teasing her.

Taking off his gloves, he said, "It's still too early for dinner. How about I take you out for a walk?"

Natalia looked at the time. It wasn't even six yet, so it really was early.

So she nodded. "All right."

The two put their gloves away and went out hand in hand.

In the mansion area near the old McCarthy household, most of the people living there were from the four great families.

Over a decade ago, when they'd started moving out of the barracks, eighty percent of them had moved to this area. So this was basically another set of barracks.

The two walked out, where passersby all greeted Archie.

"Hey there, Archie!"

"How are you doing, Archie!"

"Where you headed, Archie?"

"Coming out for a walk with the missus, eh Archie!"

There were all sorts of greetings, but it was clear that everyone here knew him well compared to how people greeted him outside.

Archie only nodded back and didn't reply, maintaining his cool aura.

But even though his face remained expressionless towards these people, his eyes were warm, not cold like towards other people.

At that moment, a young boy walked over.

He was very obviously a boy because he'd dyed his hair bright yellow. With his punk metal outfit, it was obvious he was a teen rebel.

Rushing over on a skateboard, his eyes lit up as he saw Archie.

Putting his foot down, he skidded to a halt and yelled excitedly, "You're back, Archie!"

Archie looked at him, his cool gaze warming even further.

"Yeah. What are you up to?"

"Getting ready to go out and play."

The boy's gaze fell on Natalia, and he was roused again.

He winked knowingly at Archie.

"So that's your gal, then, Archie. When's the wedding? Invite me along for the booze."

Archie smiled. "Soon."

Natalia blinked, but before she could react, Archie had tugged her forward.

Behind them, the boy laughed and shouted, "Okay! Be sure to tell me then, and I'll be your best man!"

The two had walked out a certain distance already. Natalia was a bit taken aback as she turned to look at the boy, asking Archie, "Who was that?"

"The youngest of the Bissel family."

"Oh?"

To be honest, Natalia had heard more than she'd seen of the Bissel family.

Of the four great families, she was naturally more intimate with the Kawns. And with Max there, she was also close as could be with the Nixons.

But for the Bissels, she'd never met a single one of the current generation until now.

She'd only just looked on the head of the family, Ein Bissel, last time at the Kawn family gathering.

It was said that Ein had three sons. The eldest was in the military, while the second son was in business, with the both of them elites among the younger generation. But there wasn't too much information on youngest son, who didn't seem to command too much attention in the family.

Seemed like this young man was that legendary youngest Bissel, then.

Natalia was thoughtful but didn't ponder it for too long. The pair arrived at a nearby square.

It was crowded and bustling with activity.

With the festivities, there was a spot just for fireworks. It was the daytime and the fireworks weren't as effective as they would have been at night, but because of the fun atmosphere, many people went over to play.

With Archie holding her hand inside his own coat pocket, Natalia was warm and snug.

Looking at a roadside stand selling roasted chestnuts, she piped up. "Let's go over and buy a snack!"

Archie nodded and led her over. They bought up a handful. Then Natalia's phone rang as they paid the bill.

She took up her phone. It was Victoria.

Smiling, she told Archie, then went to pick up the call.

Victoria had called simply to tell her how things were going in Julio and ask how Joy was doing.

Natalia told her everything.

With Helen looking after him and having several experienced mothers in the household with Ariana and Mama Murphy and a couple others there, there was plenty of people looking after Joy, so there was no need to worry.

Chapter 330 A Powerful Alliance

As for Victoria's situation, it wasn't the best, but it wasn't the worst either.

After all, it was his own flesh and blood daughter. Brandon was angry, but he didn't shut her out.

And with James there to smooth things over, at least the two could sit down at the same table and eat together.

Still, Brandon wasn't budging over the contract and obviously wanted to put pressure on her again.

Victoria sighed over the phone. Natalia didn't know what else to say other than to take it slowly.

This was between a parent and child, and she was an outsider. There wasn't much she could do for her.

Victoria didn't talk for too long with her. She hung up a few minutes later.

Natalia walked around for a while longer with Archie and went back.

The dumpling feast at night was boisterous and peaceful.

On a day like this, even someone as obtuse as Faye knew to rein it in without upsetting Ariana, so the atmosphere was joyous overall.

Because they'd gone too late with the festivities, Natalia and Archie stayed the night at the old house.

Early the next morning, they were woken by a barrage of firecrackers.

They were in the city, which technically forbade letting firecrackers loose, but William just had to set some off and smuggled in a couple small ones.

After all, they had to start things off with a bang.

Anne woke early. She was young but didn't frighten easily. Seeing the firecrackers go off, she wasn't scared. She alternated between putting her hands on her ears and clapping as she laughed.

Having just gotten up, Natalia looked at the happy atmosphere at the side of the window, nudging the drowsy man beside her. "It's time to get up, Archie. Look, Anne's already up."

Archie frowned, dissatisfied that they'd interrupt their beauty sleep this early. He reached out with a long arm and dragged Natalia back in.

"If they're awake, they can have fun themselves. Sleep with me for a while longer."

Held in his arms, Natalia smiled exasperatedly. This was a special day. With that much noise, Ariana had to be up already. They still had to pay their respects and couldn't get up too late.

So she reached out and tickled the man's armpit, urging, "Grandma and the others are up too. If you sleep in, they'll laugh at you. Come on, up and at 'em."

Archie didn't reply and simply hugged her tighter.

He was always disciplined and stern with himself, and rarely slept in like this.

Natalia tried for a while and he still didn't budge. Knowing that he'd slept late last night, she couldn't bear to force him out, so she waited a while for him to fall asleep before carefully slipping out of his grip, getting dressed, and heading out herself.

As expected, it was bustling inside the yard.

William was there playing around with Anne, and the Kawn and Nixon families had sent people over too.

The families were used to visiting each other for the festivities. The people coming were young, but they did bring a fresh bit of joy to the place.

Upon entering, Max first greeted the old lady and the old man, got his presents, then came in and saw Natalia coming out. "Happy holidays, Natalia! Where's Archie?"

Natalia chuckled. "Still sleeping. Why are you here so early?"

"I come around at about this time every year so I'm used to it."

Natalia gave him a present she'd prepared, just to be polite.

Max didn't mind. He took it and went inside to find Archie.

From the Kawn family, on the other hand, Wilson and Selena had come around.

Probably because they knew that Natalia had a history with Jessica, no one was tasteless enough to send Jessica over.

Natalia greeted Wilson first, then went to find Ariana.

At noon, the two families stayed for lunch.

After lunch, Max found an opportunity to whisper to Natalia, "I'll tell you a secret. You know Jessica Dawson, who just went back to the Kawn family?"

Natalia looked at him, raising her eyebrows. "What?"

"I heard that last night, the Bissel family just sent someone over to the Kawn family and proposed a marriage with none other than Jessica."

Natalia blinked.

Max winked, clearly basking in it a little.

"They're dead set on marrying up with the Kawn family. You have to hand it to the Bissels. The Kawns just got her back and they immediately tried to snap her up before anyone else could. Who knows if the one they've found is the real lady of the Kawn family? At the end of the day, with the old man dead and all their eggs having been put in one basket, they'd have ended up with nothing. As for the Bissels' youngest, it's a shame for the pure boy."

Natalia thought for a while, recalling the young man with the sunny disposition she'd come across on her walk with Archie.

Jessica was marrying him?

Just thinking about it brought unpleasant chills down her back.

"Do they know about what Jessica's done?"

Speaking of that, Max's smile grew even more sinister.

"How would they not? The Dawson family affairs were all over the internet. Anyone who wanted to find out just needed to look. There's no hiding it."

Natalia frowned.

"Then why are they letting the young man marry her?"

Max chortled.

“Why else? For children of a noble family, especially on the level of the four great families, the individual doesn’t matter. The family profits come first. As much as the young master doesn’t like it, he can’t hold up against the pressure from his old man. No matter how fiercely he protests, he’ll probably have to compromise later on. Except for Archie, who in this generation isn’t involved in all the tug-of-wars of our families’ interests?”

Max was uncharacteristically serious this time around. There was a hint of sadness to his voice.

He almost seemed like he felt sorry for the boy.

Natalia thought about it and clapped him on the shoulder.

“Don’t get too down. I wouldn’t say it about anyone else, but for someone who behaves like you do, no family would dare marry off their daughter to you. After all, marriage is a double-edged sword. If you get along, you make a powerful alliance, but if you break apart, you could end up as enemies. With that many nice women outside and you basically as a huge pitfall, no one with a brain would jump towards you, so relax!”

At her teasing, Max rolled his eyes, exasperated.

“I gossip with you out of the goodness of my heart, and this is what I get? Hmph, see if I spill anything else next time around!”

With that, he crossed his arms and marched off, steaming.

Natalia grinned, but after a while, the grin began to fade.