

Sweet Wife 331

President's Sweet Wife

Chapter 331 You Really Are Silly

Archie had gotten ahold of the news too, but compared to Natalia's worry, he looked at it more openly.

"If the young man has his own ideas, he wouldn't compromise for family. If he does, then it proves that he never had the ability and will to become independent in the first place. If not Jessica, he would have married another woman anyway for profit and exchange of interests. There's no difference.

Natalia was still a little worried.

"But she's..."

Archie looked at her deeply, grasping her hand tight.

"Don't be afraid." He said lightly, "The Bissels and the McCarthys are on opposing sides to begin with. And with everything that woman's done to you, whether or not she marries into the Bissel family, she's never going to become friends with you. So with her dead set as your enemy, whether or not they get married makes no difference at all."

Natalia lifted her head to look at him, her fine brow showing a bit of anxiety.

"Is it really all right? If the Kawns really stood by the Bissels, can you handle it alone?"

Archie smiled.

He reached out, tilted her face up, and stroked her cheeks with his fingers, saying softly after a while, "So long as you stay by my side, I can handle it."

Natalia started.

The man's gaze was so gentle and so firm, brimming with inexplicable force, that her heart eventually stilled.

She reached out and took his waist, leaning her face against his chest.

"I'll always stay by your side. No matter what happens, we'll always be together."

Archie smiled happily.

"Don't worry. Even if the Bissel family tries anything, it won't be in these couple days. They'll at least wait until after the holidays to move. So enjoy this holiday to yourself, okay?"

Natalia nodded and finally said "okay".

...

Meanwhile, in Julio.

Naturally, the Kawn family was bustling with activity over the holidays as well.

As a major enterprise tycoon of Julio, Brandon had an endless stream of people coming to visit.

And as the young master of the Kawns, James had to stay and deal with business as well.

The house servants were so busy they were going insane. From the living room to the kitchens, they worked nonstop.

With that, Victoria, who had nothing to do, became the most leisurely person in the entire house.

She couldn't be bothered to go liaise with anyone, so she didn't go downstairs, even taking her lunch in her room.

Brandon was too busy socializing to pay attention to her. James, though, did send someone up to ask her if she wanted to go down and mingle. A lot of seniors from the company had come around, and she could have at least greeted them.

Victoria, though, refused.

She'd never thought of taking part in the company. With her father and brother there, it was entirely enough.

So she couldn't be bothered to go talk to those people as well.

James was exasperated, but he knew his sister's temper, so he didn't force her.

Because there were so many guests and Victoria wouldn't come out and help, they lacked a mistress hosting the household, and even with all their servants, the workload was too much.

Brandon decided to up and rent a compartment at a nearby five-star hotel, getting ready to take everyone out for dinner.

Victoria didn't want to go and stayed in her room watching TV.

Brandon was still feuding with her, so he ignored her. There were servants at home and already finished meals, so she wouldn't starve to death. The minute it was time, he took everyone out.

Hearing the rabble fade, Victoria shut down her laptop, closed her eyes for a moment, and came out wearing slippers.

Seeing that she was finally coming out of her room, one of the servants greeted her.

"Where are you going, madam?"

Victoria waved it off. "No need to worry about me. I'm just taking a walk."

Seeing that, the servant didn't ask about it and turned to leave.

Victoria went to the office and looked around.

She couldn't find her contract.

She knew that even though she was flesh and blood with Brandon, it really didn't matter to the man if he got down to business.

If she wanted to get back into acting free of her father's control, she had to find that contract.

But even after searching the entire office, she couldn't find a single trace.

After searching for a while, Victoria lost her patience and stood. She was about to call and ask if her brother had seen the contract, but the moment she turned around, she saw James standing there in the doorway.

She jumped, thumping her own chest.

"James! What are you doing? You scared me half to death."

James shook his head helplessly.

He strode over, rearranging the places Victoria had messed up, then said, "Don't waste your effort. Dad's keeping that contract to himself. Without his permission, no one can get their hands on it. He's wary of you, so why would he leave something like that at home?"

Victoria blinked, then frowned.

"Even you don't know where it is?"

James shook his head, honest. "I don't."

Victoria was a little angry.

"What is he trying to pull? Does he really want to force me into a corner?"

James chuckled.

"That's going a bit far, you know. Dad only wants the best for you."

Her expression cold, Victoria looked pointedly to the side.

Seeing her barbed and on guard, James sighed.

"We all objected to you being with that man for our own reasons, but you didn't listen and just had to elope with him. You even got pregnant with his child. Forget all that. But have you ever given us a single call throughout this entire year? Have you ever even dropped us a line? Dad's not mad at you and that man. He's mad that his daughter that he raised for so many years is putting the family through this for one man. Wouldn't you feel sad if it was you? Wouldn't you feel disappointed?"

Victoria's eyes reddened.

She bit her lip and wiped them.

After a while, she mumbled, "It's not that I didn't want to contact him."

But every time she called back, she'd get yelled at. After a while, she just couldn't be bothered to ask for another scolding again.

James had to laugh as he shook his head again.

He reached out and patted her head, sounding quite helpless.

"You really are silly, my silly little sister."

Victoria whimpered, not sure what to say.

James turned around and produced a contract from a nearby drawer, handing it to her.

Victoria froze, took it, and looked at the contents, her eyes widening in shock.

“Didn’t you say you didn’t know...”

James shrugged. “I really didn’t know and I didn’t steal it for you. So if Dad asks about it, you can’t sell me out, or I won’t acknowledge you as my sister anymore.”

Victoria trembled, then rushed up and gave James a hug.

“Thank you, big brother.”????

Chapter 332 Let Her Go Free

James smiled and held her, patting her back.

“If you really want to thank me, next time you see Dad, stop butting heads with him from now on. You’re not a child anymore; you’re a mother yourself. It’s time you wised up a bit.”

Victoria felt her heart ache and her nose grow sour as she nodded, eyes red.

James had snuck back midway, and he was still rushing to meet people at the hotel, so he didn’t stay long. He exchanged a few more words with Victoria and left.

With the contract in hand and to avoid the old man coming back and finding out in the night – therefore starting another argument – Victoria wasn’t about to linger at home. She packed up her things and got ready to leave.

Unexpectedly, just as she finished packing, a servant called from outside the door, “Guest for you, madam.”

She blinked, not sure who would come for her at this hour in Julio.

She’d come back in secret and hadn’t shown her face in daytime, so even most of the guests didn’t know she was back.

Besides, she’d kept things low-profile this time. Even her old friends and classmates shouldn’t have known.

As she wondered, a heavy series of footsteps came from outside.

Followed by a few light knocks.

Victoria hadn’t thought that they’d bring them straight to her room. She frowned, displeased, and got ready to open the door, but it opened on its own. A familiar figure appeared in the doorway.

Victoria’s eyes widened.

Charlie?

What was he doing here?

Blast!

Victoria's eyes darted up and she rushed over, pulling the door shut before the man could enter.

But it was too late.

His hand clutched the door by the side and with only a bit of force, he pushed it open.

"Charlie? Have you gone mad? What are you doing here at a time like this?"

Victoria was going frantic.

Charlie didn't speak.

He pushed his way inside, still looking as cool and collected as ever, his cold gaze falling on her.

His stare made Victoria feel strangely unsure.

No one had known that she'd come back to Julio other than Helen and Natalia.

So she'd naturally hid it from him as well.

Vicky was only back for a short while and had returned to Othua a while ago. As her junior, Charlie obviously had to escort her.

So, before he'd gone, he'd told her to stay at the mansion without going anywhere before he came back.

Unexpectedly, the moment he left, she'd come running back.

It was clear with Charlie's temper how angry he'd be this time.

But Victoria didn't think she was at fault!

She had her own things to deal with, and he wasn't her master, so why did she have to listen to him completely?

Thinking of that, she raised her head to him.

Then she heard the man's cold voice, "I've come here from so far away, so aren't you going to let me sit down?"

Victoria didn't have a rebuttal for that.

She could only turn around and let him in.

Inside, Charlie didn't rush to speak, and examined the décor of the room slowly.

It was luxurious and cozy inside.

As the only daughter of the Kaur family, Victoria naturally had the love of her father and brother, so even without a mother, she didn't have it worse than any girl with a complete family.

Charlie looked over the scene for a while and walked to the bedside sofa, sitting down.

Victoria felt inexplicably nervous. Considering that this was the Kaur household and anyone could come back and reveal his identity, she grew even more nervous.

After falling silent for a while, she prepared herself and stammered, "So what brings you here?"

Charlie's lips parted. "Do you really not know why I've come?"

Victoria didn't dare look him in the eyes. Lowering her head, she said quietly, "How should I know."

"Ha!" The man laughed, his laughter quite frigid.

Victoria panicked as he laughed.

For this time, he'd stayed close to her and the baby. Even though his temper hadn't been the best, but overall, he hadn't treated her too badly.

Sometimes, he'd even given her the illusion that they'd gone back to those short, happy days from years ago.

So she did feel somewhat guilty for leaving without saying anything.

Charlie kept his face cold as he muttered, "If I didn't come over to look for you this time, were you really prepared to just leave like that and never come back?"

Victoria's heart wavered along with his words.

She lifted her head slightly and looked at his glacial features, where a bit of anger was gathering.

And she felt herself grow even more unsure.

"No. Joy is back there, and I have to go back."

"So it's just for the child?"

"..."

Faced with the man's interrogation, she didn't know how to reply.

None of her answers seemed right.

A nameless sense of bitterness spread across her chest.

"What else? Why else would I go back, Mr. Peck?"

Charlie chuckled lowly.

"Fine. Seems like I've been too nice to you these days, Victoria. You've forgotten who and what you are!"

Victoria's expression changed.

The next second, her chin had been grabbed and her entire body was pressed up against the door.

Charlie's eyes were dark as he glared at her, as if he wanted to devour her whole. His teeth were gritted. "If not for the fact that you were the baby's mother, you have no idea how many times you would have died already."

Pain jolted up her chin as Victoria began to explain.

But a brief pause later, she changed the topic.

She looked up at him determinedly. "Yes. I deserve to die in your eyes. I betrayed you and lied to you. But if that's the case, why did you come back to me?"

Charlie floundered.

Victoria smiled bitterly. "I'll admit that I was at fault five years ago. But I should have given back enough during those five years! Now, you know full well your Stevenson family can't accept me, so can you leave them for me? Can you give up the Stevensons and everything they stand for? You can't! See, that's the biggest issue between us. I'm aware what type of person I am and what my identity is. That night, you came to me on your own, but left me to deal with all the consequences myself! I lost everything just for loving you, Charlie Peck! My career, my life, my family! And you? You're still the high and mighty young master of the Stevenson family. You're still the head of the Stevenson enterprise. You can still stand up tall in the spotlight. If we really got together, the only chip I have is your love. But if I lose it one day, what do I have? You go on and on that I shouldn't have left you, Charlie, but have you thought about why I left? I'm tired of it all. I'm begging you, let me go! Let me go free, and let yourself go free too!"

Chapter 333 Feelings for Him

Charlie shook.

Victoria had wanted to say those words for a long time, but kept it all in without daring to let them out.

Now, blurting it all out, she felt her chest clear as she wrung her hand loose and walked to the side.

She took a deep breath, feeling her eyes sting. She kept the tears down by force.

She chuckled self-deprecatingly. "And stop hanging on to those things from five years ago. A lot can change in five years. Who says I'll be willing to be with you now? I stopped loving you a long time ago. Oh, and you don't know, do you? I have a boyfriend now. He's great to me, so you don't have to worry about my future."

Charlie's pupils shrank.

"What did you say?"

Victoria turned to him, thrusting out her chest and saying confidently, "I said I have a boyfriend now. His name's Max and he's the young master of the Nixon family of Egitin. You must have heard of him, right? That's the kind of opportunistic woman I am. If you Stevensons can't have me, I'll find some other backer instead of dying on your tree."

Charlie laughed coldly.

He nodded again and again.

“Good. That’s very good.”

His eyes grew bloodred, shining with dark, cold light.

Victoria clenched her fists and growled, “Then you can leave now, can’t you!”

But the man didn’t leave. Instead, he approached her.

And he pushed her up against the wall.

Victoria started, glaring at him. “What are you doing, Charlie? I’m warning you, this is my home! If you do anything out of turn, my father won’t let you go!”

“What am I doing?” Charlie gritted his teeth. “You think you can lie to me like that? You think that I’m as stupid as you imagine, stupid enough to spin around in the palm of your hand?”

Victoria’s face changed.

“L-Let me go.”

“No!”

One of his hands shot out and clamped down on her chin.

Victoria hissed as pain shot up her jaw.

Then the man’s face expanded in front of her.

Victoria’s eyes widened.

An icy, soft touch came down on her lips. He was so fierce it seemed he wanted to eat her up whole.

Victoria had never thought that, at a time like this with all the vitriol she’d spewed at him, he could still do something like this.

Victoria felt her jaw begin to ache.

She mumbled a few protests and tried to shove him off.

But he grabbed her hands and pressed them up against the wall over her head.

Unable to struggle further, Victoria felt a wave of sourness. Her eyes reddened, about to leak.

Charlie, too, was getting frantic.

She really thought he was such an easy person to fool.

She couldn’t even think of a better excuse.

Didn’t she know that, ever since she’d appeared again, he’d thoroughly investigated everyone she knew and everywhere she’d been in these five years?

He knew perfectly well who she’d contacted and what people were at her side.

Did she really think he was so easy to lie to that she'd use such a flimsy lie?

Come on!

He knew that she wasn't dating Max. She'd never seen any other men within these five years.

But hearing her say that Max was her boyfriend out loud still drew out a surge of jealousy.

That's why he needed to punish her fiercely.

Victoria had been pressed up against the wall originally, but somehow, she found herself in his tight embrace, one of his hands against the back of her head.

She still knew to resist when they first started.

But this man had such good technique, and the two hadn't really practiced in those five years.

As they kissed, she slowly lost the urge to fight.

Feeling her change in his arms, Charlie's eyes finally grew warm.

He'd always known that she had feelings for him.

But he couldn't say how much, and to what degree.

So the two had treated each other like hedgehogs, wanting to get close but keeping their distance, afraid they would hurt each other.

Up until now, with them in each others arms, she was falling completely.

The true sense of touch and intimacy steadied his heart.

He was like that, but wasn't it the same for Victoria?

For five years, she kept to herself and paid the price. She'd given up too much and been through too much.

Sometimes, she'd complained, had regrets and cried, wondering that, if she hadn't fallen for him in the first place, she could have avoided ending up like this.

But... if she hadn't fallen for him, she wouldn't have had Joy.

If she hadn't fallen for him, she wouldn't have had those sweet memories she would remember for the rest of her life.

And how was love something she could control?

If she could force herself not to love him, then why had countless people failed to court her all throughout these five years?

Why was it that it was always him who appeared in her mind whenever she woke up deep in the night?

Her heart ached and she trembled in his embrace, a boiling hot tear sliding from her eye.

He might have been kissing her and thoroughly moved, but he did still keep an eye on her reactions.

Knowing that she wasn't refusing and seeing her pain and agony and longing for what it was, he was sure that she still felt the same way as she did five years ago.

And because of that, he didn't miss that one tear.

The man sighed lightly and released her, rubbing that one droplet from her cheek.

It was an incredibly gentle gesture, as if he was coming up on a long-lost treasure.

Victoria, though, cried even harder. All those years of resentment erupted from her in an instant.

Ever since she was small, she'd been the apple of everyone's eye. Who hadn't spoiled her rotten and gone along with her whims?

But him, only him, had caused her nothing but trouble the moment he appeared. And she'd given her heart to him, only him, even bearing her a son out of wedlock.

Now he was treating her like this.

The bastard!

Victoria sobbed but couldn't move, locked in the man's arms.

A strange sensation came from her hips, itching and numb, like she was being tickled with feathers.

She felt strength leave her body.

At that moment, Charlie lifted his head.

As he looked at the wavering woman, a satisfied smirk crawled up his handsome brow.

Victoria opened her eyes, looking foggily up at him.

Her eyes were misted over with emotion, and she looked vulnerable as an innocent kitten.

The man's throat tightened.

As he lowered his head, she recovered her wits and pushed against his chest.

"Mhm, don't..."

"Yes?"

He cocked an eyebrow.

Victoria blushed furiously. They'd been arguing, so how'd they end up like this?

What was this situation?~~~~~

President's Sweet Wife

Chapter 334 Starting Over

The sounds of the servants moving around came from outside the room. Someone stopped outside the door and murmured, "Are you all right, madam?"

Victoria stiffened.

Obviously, the servants had heard the sounds coming from inside and come over, worried.

She glared at the man in front of her and motioned for him to loosen his grip.

But Charlie treated it like he hadn't seen it and kept his hand on her waist, trapping her between the door and his body.

Helpless, Victoria simply said, "I'm fine."

The servants were dubious but didn't ask questions and left.

When they were all gone, Victoria glared at Charlie again and growled, "Let go."

Charlie looked at her calmly and didn't release her. Instead, he leant forward, getting even closer to her.

His powerful pressure made Victoria's heart hammer as she shrank back.

Charlie suddenly chuckled.

"You've got feelings for me, Victoria."

Victoria trembled.

As if it was set in stone, Charlie grabbed her chin again and tilted her head up at him. His eyes were dark. Much of his iciness had faded, leaving a mysterious, indecipherable emotion.

"Do you know what I've been thinking all these years?"

Victoria was in a daze and didn't speak as she stared at him.

Charlie stroked the skin on her jaw and murmured, "I've always been wondering why you left me when you loved me so fervently in the beginning. Were none of your words true back then? Were you really with me just for the thrill; the great lady of the Kaur family matching up with a poor kid who has nothing..."

Past memories rushed in like the tide.

Five years ago, Victoria had still been young. And being young and fiery, the moment she saw Charlie, she'd taken a liking to the cool, unbridled young man.

But at that age, even if she liked him, how could she say it out loud?

The more she liked him, the more conflicted she grew, and the more twisted it got.

She loved him to death inside, but simply had to act like she didn't care.

After all, she was the grand lady of the Kaur family.

All the friends around her, all the people by her side, were the upper crust of Julio.

Even Natalia had been the star of the Dawson family before Kiera's incident.

Rich people compared each other often in their circles. One day, when someone asked her if she really was getting together with an impoverished peasant brat and started mocking her.

For some reason, she'd blurted out that she was just having some fun with her, so what was so shocking about that!

Her opponent provoked her, saying that she'd only marry some brat from a farming village and become his housewife for the rest of her life. She'd panicked and said she'd never marry some country bumpkin. She was a Kaur lady, and their relationship now was just for the thrill of it. How could that peasant boy ever be a match for her?

She hadn't meant it that way.

She just wanted to say that the young man she'd acknowledged wasn't an impoverished peasant brat.

He had brains. He had guts. He had spirit.

He was a shining jewel, no comparison to those truly roughshod country rubes.

So she believed that one day, he'd prove that he was a match for her with his own ability.

But she'd never had a chance to explain it all.

Charlie had been standing at the end of the alley, having heard all the arrogance she'd displayed in the heat of the moment.

Up until today, Victoria had never forgotten how cold and shadowy his eyes had looked.

As if, in that single instant, he'd pushed her far away. The two had been so close, only a few paces away, but that distance was an eternity, impossible to breach.

The next day, Charlie had vanished.

At only a week before their final exams, he'd left, not even leaving a single word behind for her.

Victoria had been angry then. She'd hated him.

After all, she'd been pampered all through her life. Everyone had treated her as the apple of their eye.

But this man was leaving her just after a few words, without even saying anything. How could he?

Back then, he'd searched for him frantically, calling him, even sneaking to his old home to look for him.

But she'd turned up with nothing.

Then, by chance, she'd heard the girls she'd been arguing with before gossip that someone had seen Charlie outside the country. Seems like he was with a woman too.

She didn't believe it. When the exams were over, she ignored her father's opposition and chased out of the country.

It was a car race. His brow was still cool, but it ran with energy. His driving with swift and steady, taking the top spot without question.

He'd opened the door, gotten out, and embraced a girl close by.

A happy, contented smile blossomed on his face, stabbing into her eyes like blades.

How stupid of her!

The regret, panic, worry, longing and conflict she didn't want to admit and thought was love might as well have been an insignificant shower in the eyes of someone else.

There she'd been on one side of the ocean imagining how painful it must have been to hear those words. But here he was, coming into his own, a beauty in his arms, not once taking her words to heart, not once feeling sad over her.

She didn't show herself and slunk back, thoroughly disappointed.

As time passed, she'd buried that romance deep inside, never once displaying it, never once letting anyone know.

Victoria's thoughts drifted far. As time flowed ever onwards, it burst up against the current. For an instant, looking into the man's eyes before her, she saw the youth of the past.

Charlie was still speaking.

His voice was low and hoarse.

"I'd given up on you once. I thought that with time and distance, I could chance everything, including my infatuation and love for you. And I did it. For four years, I seemed to really forget you. I could date, flirt with, and even bed other women. But why is it that when it came to crossing that final line, you would always appear before me? Did you put a curse on me? Such that I'd never love another woman, even feel repulsed from simple bodily contact? For a while, I even wondered if I was a normal goddamn man. But now, with you appearing again, it proves that I am. You know it better than anyone, Victoria. There's a voice deep inside me that rejects every other woman outside because it still hasn't let you go. It hasn't forgotten you. It belongs to you. Will you still have it now? Could you forget the rights and wrongs of the past and accept it again; love it again?"

Chapter 335 Getting Signed In

Victoria burst into tears.

Like beads on a severed rosary, they rolled down.

Something was crushing her heart. Something sour and swollen. An indescribable feeling welled up, shaking her to her core.

Charlie sighed and wrapped her in his arms.

Victoria sobbed even harder. She grabbed his clothes and buried her face in his chest, weeping like a child.

Five years. Four years of being apart, a single night of madness one year ago, and then giving birth to Joy on her own.

The emotions, the grudges, the sins between the two of them had almost exhausted her completely.

She'd wanted to give up. She'd wanted to take the child and run, to have a calm, peaceful life, free of the grips of something as hurtful as love.

For that, she'd even given up on her identity as a lady of the Kaur family. Given up on her father and her pampering.

But at a time like this, he was coming and saying something like this to her. Asking something like this of her.

Was he doing it on purpose?

Did he just not want her to be happy, coming here with the stick and the carrot so she wouldn't give up on hope entirely, leading her on like a fish on the hook.

By what right?

Just because she still liked him a little bit?

The more she cried, the more the agony dug at her. Whimpering, she balled up her fists and hammered at him.

Charlie didn't resist. He stood there, allowing her to let it all out on his unmoving frame.

After a while, Victoria grew tired, and her tears stopped.

She'd been about to get out from his arms, but the man pressed a hand against the back of her head and kissed her deeply.

Victoria's heart trembled and she gripped his clothes, her body growing weak.

After a long while, Charlie released her, took out his phone and made a call.

"Get the car ready and prepare the information we need to register for marriage, then wait downstairs..."

Victoria's eyes widened. Before she could react, the man had finished his commands and hung up.

Panicking, she demanded, "What was that about?"

Charlie put his phone away, looking at her seriously.

"Will you marry me, Victoria?"

"..."

"Let's ignore everything else and get married. Your family, my family, our mess of a past – we were so concerned about them before so we couldn't have the ending we wanted, only managing to exhaust each other. But we're not young anymore, and Joy needs a complete family. So let's throw it all out the window and get married. Everything will solve itself when we do, okay?"

Victoria froze there, rooted to the spot for a long while before shaking her head.

“N-no.”

“Why not?”

Her face changed slightly and she forced her heart to harden.

“Why are you proposing now of all times, Charlie? Don’t say that it’s because you love me, because I don’t believe you.”

Charlie’s face sank too.

He stared at her, his old iciness seemingly creeping back into his eyes. But he held it in and murmured, “Then why do you think it is?”

Victoria bit her lip and didn’t reply.

Charlie suddenly laughed.

He reached out, stroking her face, voice low and clear. “You hurt me once five years ago, Victoria. So I left you for four years as revenge. You came to me on your own that night, one year ago. Are you trying to hurt me and abandon me again?”

Victoria trembled.

She clenched her fists, feeling her nails dig into her palm, the pain reaching her heart.

Charlie’s eyes cooled completely as he looked at her with a shadowed gaze.

“But I’m not the Charlie Peck of five years ago now. I won’t let you leave again. You’re getting married with me no matter what, got it?”

Victoria opened her mouth, about to say something, then gave up.

Charlie patted her cheeks, satisfied. His voice was soft. “I’ll love you, Victoria. Just like how you loved me in the beginning.”

“...”

After a few minutes, Charlie’s phone rang. It was his assistant.

“Everything’s ready, sir.”

“All right. I’m coming down.”

With that, he took Victoria with him out the door.

The servants didn’t know Charlie and only thought it was strange that he was taking Victoria with him out.

Victoria knew that it was the last nail in the coffin now. Knowing full well this man’s intentions, for some reason, she didn’t want to refuse. Reason told her that her father would come back after a while, and that it wouldn’t end well for her once he caught wind. After all, with so many servants in the house, they couldn’t possibly hide the fact that Charlie had been here.

But another voice was leaping for joy. It was a small spark, but powerful enough to consume all reason.

Soon, Charlie had taken her in front of civil services.

Because they'd made preparations, the workers there were ready when they arrived.

The signature and the photograph were done all at once.

In less than twenty minutes, it was finished.

Coming out of the office and getting in the car, Victoria looked at the marriage certificate. It didn't feel real. She felt like she was in a dream.

It was unbelievable.

Then her hand fell empty as the certificate was snatched away.

She started, looking confused at the man next to her.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm keeping it for you."

"Why?"

"So many questions."

The man didn't brook argument and took both certificates.

"..."

Why did she feel like she'd completely stepped in it this time?

Thinking of Charlie's identity, she thought of a loophole.

Carefully, she asked, "So... is that legally binding in the nation?"

Charlie shot her an icy look.

"What do you think?"

"..."

Okay! She really had stepped in it.

Did he put a spell on him? She was just home, wasn't she?

Why did she come on out and sign a certificate with him out of nowhere?

Victoria wanted to crawl in a hole and die.

Probably because of her complicated emotions, the trip back seemed to go quicker. Soon, they were back at the Kaur family mansion.

Victoria opened the door and was about to get out when Charlie stopped her.

A while later, the assistant walked over with some luggage.

"I've got it, sir."

Charlie nodded and had him put the things in the trunk, then drove off out.

Victoria's eyes widened, her expression changing.

"What are you doing, Charlie Peck? Why did you take my luggage?"

As Charlie drove, he smirked.

"We're married now, so shouldn't you call me something else?"

Victoria choked.????

President's Sweet Wife

Chapter 336 Husband and Wife

The man tilted his head to look at her. Under his gaze, Victoria couldn't hold it in and complained, "That proposal wasn't romantic at all, and there was no wedding, so I won't admit it. Quit dreaming."

Charlie shrugged nonchalantly. "That's all right. If the law admits it, it's fine."

"..."

Soon, the car arrived at the airport.

Looking at the tickets that the man had already prepared, Charlie hesitated.

Thinking of the reaction Brandon would have after catching wind of all this, she followed him onto the plane.

She knew that there was no going back after some choices.

Even though she was saying she didn't admit it, she must have, somewhere deep inside her, accepted it all.

Accepted the willingness and authenticity in that certificate, and the true voice buried in her heart.

It was four in the afternoon by the time they arrived in Equin.

Victoria's phone had been off on the plane, so she hadn't received any calls.

But the moment she stepped out of the plane, her phone started ringing nonstop.

Some calls were from Brandon, while others were from James.

She hesitated and didn't take her father's calls, instead taking her brother's.

The moment they connected, she could hear James' outraged voice.

"Victoria! Have you lost your mind? You know full well that Dad doesn't agree with what's between you two, and you still brought that man to the house? Where are you right now? Get back here this instant!"

Victoria sat on the car, head bent, expressionlessly poking a hole in her ragged jeans with her finger.

“We’ve gotten married.”

“What do you mean married? Stop beating around the... what did you just say? You...”

James’ reaction was delayed, and he went quiet for a few seconds. Victoria didn’t need to look to tell that he was probably blowing his top. She choked on her words for a moment, then blurted, “James, I’m all sorts of frazzled right now and I don’t want to argue with Dad right now. Smooth things over with him for me, please. After a while, when he’s calmed down and digested the news completely, I’ll bring Charlie with me back and talk with him face-to-face.”

James was so enraged that he started laughing. “You’re really trying to strike out now, are you, Victoria! Smooth things over for you? How the fuck am I supposed to smooth this over? Did you even think about me now that you’re trying to ask forgiveness before permission? I fucking stole that contract for you only for you to turn around and get married to that Peck boy, so now how the hell am I supposed to break it to Dad? Are you trying to get me killed?”

“I’m sorry, big brother.”

“Don’t call me that! Turning your back on family for a man – I don’t have a sister like you!”

That stung. Victoria did know that James was only saying that in the heat of the moment, but her eyes still reddened.

She lifted her head and looked out the window, forcing her eyes wide to keep the tears from falling.

“You’ll always be my big brother, James. Even if you don’t admit it, I’ll be relying on you. Please take care of the family. Don’t worry, I’ll look after myself. When Dad’s anger fades, I’ll come back. Let’s leave it at that. I’m hanging up. You take care of yourself too.”

She said, and hung up swiftly, as if saying another word would break her.

Charlie sat to the side all throughout the ordeal, looking on without speaking.

The car fell into an awkward silence.

The silence was only broken until they reached the doorway to the mansion.

“We’re here, sir.”

Charlie nodded, opened the door, and got out.

Victoria rushed out without even thinking.

Back home, Victoria went back to her room right away, while Charlie set down the luggage and followed over as well.

There were only two of them in the house now. Victoria didn’t lock the doors, and Charlie got inside the bedroom without issue. She was sitting there in front of the window, her face streaked with tears.

His eyes dimmed a little.

But he didn't go over to comfort her. He knew that comfort alone didn't work for some things.

Brandon Kaur didn't like him, and he didn't like the Kaurs, either. And this type of dislike couldn't be changed just from either side conceding.

She had to choose.

Victoria cried for a while, felt a little better, then saw him standing in the doorway with his arms crossed and puffed up.

"What are you doing here?"

Charlie raised an eyebrow.

"This is my home, so why can't I be here?"

Victoria laughed with sheer frustration.

"You've got some nerve. This is a house that Natalia prepared for me. Forget you, even I wouldn't have the balls to say that it's my house!"

Charlie's face didn't change as he said, "If you like it, I can buy up this house. Or if you'd prefer someplace else, you can pick it."

Victoria floundered.

As her temper flared, she shoved him.

"Get out and go back to your own home. This place has nothing to do with you."

Charlie suddenly took her hand.

She jolted and looked up at his serious gaze.

"I mean it, Victoria. Wherever you are is my home. I won't accept anywhere else."

Victoria trailed off.

A sour sensation crept up her heart. It was a complicated feeling.

She retracted her hand, eyes darting to the side, not daring to look him in the eye.

Her tongue, though, was just as unforgiving as always. "Please, who'd live together with you, anyway!"

Charlie didn't split hairs and only chuckled. "Husband and wife are one. You should understand something that simple."

"..."

She was struck speechless for a moment.

Seeing her defeated look, Charlie laughed.

He leant over close and teasingly pinched her face, murmuring, "Now call me darling."

Victoria glared at him ferociously.

“Don’t even think about it!”

With that, she ignored him and turned around towards the bed.

The man wasn’t angry at the cold shoulder, instead chuckling lowly.

After a full day of running around, he was tired, too, and didn’t want to tangle with her verbally. He took his clothes and went to shower.

A while back, Charlie had come and gone a few times before, so there were his clothes here.

Victoria laid exhausted on the bed, gritting her teeth. She shouldn’t have been as weak as to soften at a critical moment and accept his request.

Now she was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Thinking of everything that had happened, she suddenly found herself dazed.

Were they really married?

Why didn’t it feel real at all?

She pinched her own arm. It hurt. This was real.

She sighed, grabbed a nearby pillow, and covered her eyes with it.

After a while, the bathroom door creaked and a certain someone emerged.

She took the pillow off right away and turned to look at the man fresh out the shower.

He wasn’t wearing a shirt and only had a white towel around her, revealing a large swath of honey-colored muscle. The lines across his body were firm and beautiful, each piece seemingly carved by the gods, sensual but not exaggerated.

For some reason, even though she’d seen that body more than once, every time she laid eyes on it, she couldn’t help but blush.?????

Chapter 337 Sleep with Him Awhile

Getting a good look at her reaction, Charlie’s eyes crinkled with pleasure.

“Like what you see, Mrs. Peck?”

He asked, lifting his arm and toweling pearls of water off his hair.

Bright red, Victoria cleared her throat awkwardly and bit her lip, lying through her teeth, “Nobody’s looking at you! Shameless bastard!”

With that, she turned around and faced the other way, ignoring him deliberately.

The way she meant an entirely different thing to what she said really revealed a lot about what she felt.

Charlie’s mood suddenly improved, and the pressure that had come along with him faded by quite a bit.

He dried his hair, then took the towel off and clambered into bed.

Victoria was still confused when she suddenly felt a ball of heat approach.

She panicked, sat up, and looked at the man as he spread the blankets and clambered in.

Victoria shrieked, "What are you doing?"

Charlie raised his eyebrows innocently. "Sleeping."

Victoria glared at him. "Don't you have your own room? Can't you go back there if you want to sleep?"

Charlie shook his head helplessly, explaining with utmost patience, "We weren't married before so we slept separately. But we're legally husband and wife now. What husband and wife would sleep separately?"

"..."

She knew it!

Huffing, she tugged the sheets inwards and growled, "Well, you can't sleep now, either. It's broad daylight, so what are you sleeping for?"

Charlie chortled. "Then why are you allowed to sleep?"

"I... I'm in a bad mood and I'm not feeling well, okay?"

Charlie squinted.

Then he reached over.

"Where aren't you feeling well? Show me."

Victoria stiffened. That had only been an excuse, she wasn't really feeling ill.

Seeing that man reach over, she couldn't hide it and sat up.

"Fine, fine. I'm not ill, I'm not sleepy, either. If you want to sleep that badly, then go right ahead. I'm going out."

With that, she threw off the sheets and got up.

Unexpectedly, just one second later, her entire body was picked up and a warmth surrounded her. She'd already been stuffed inside the blankets and the man had come lying in swiftly, wrapping her in his embrace.

Victoria, outraged, snarled, "Charlie Peck!"

Charlie shushed her and soothed, "Don't fuss. Lie down with me for a bit. I promise I won't do anything."

Victoria wanted to struggle, but with the man's arms clamped around her like a vice, what could she do?

She was fuming and turned around to glare at him.

But the moment she turned her head, she came face to face with the tired bags under his eyes. With them closed, the bruised, puffed up skin was so obvious even though she hadn't noticed.

Maybe because he really was tired. The moment he got in bed, his tightly strung nerves relaxed. Combined with the faint, familiar fragrance in his arms, his entire body loosened, and the fatigue he'd been hiding revealed itself entirely.

Victoria paused, the snaps that had already come up to her throat deflating like a punctured football.

She didn't know where he'd been and what he'd been doing these past two days to end up this tired.

Couldn't have been anything fun.

She suddenly felt a bit of pity as she murmured, "Let go of me for a bit!"

Then she tried to struggle again. This time, Charlie didn't force it and loosened his grip a bit. Only a bit, though, to get her more comfortable. She still couldn't run away.

Victoria tried several times to no avail and gave up.

Forget it!

This wasn't the first time, anyway. If he wanted to hold her, he could hold her. It wasn't going to kill her.

With that in her mind, Victoria didn't struggle any longer. She went quiet for a while and said, "It's not comfortable if you sleep like this. If you're really tired, sleep properly. I'll keep you company beside you without leaving."

She really didn't plan on leaving or lying to him.

But the man still refused.

"No. I feel better holding you."

With that, he buried his face in her hair and took a deep breath.

Victoria's whole spine tingled.

His embrace was so hot it singed the breath out of her.

The air drifted with a faint scent that only belonged to him; the smell of agarwood.

Her restless heart miraculously calmed down.

With a strange sensation of warmth.

The sun was bright and beautiful outside, while nothing around made any noise but the pair's shallow breathing.

She laid there in his arms, as if time had rewound to five years ago, to those countless days and nights where he'd held her in bed just like this.

Victoria closed her eyes and suppressed a wave of sorrow.

As if noticing the emotions of the woman in his arms, Charlie kissed the top of her head with his eyes still closed, murmuring, “Don’t overthink it. Just sleep!”

His tones were light, rarely gentle.

His arms around her were strong but not too tight, simply because he didn’t want her to go.

Victoria felt an even greater surge of sadness and didn’t speak.

A few minutes later, even breathing came from behind her.

She stirred and tried to turn around, but the moment she moved, the arms around her tightened.

She could only lie there. A moment later, she called softly, “Charlie...”

“Mm?”

The man’s voice was muddled, as if he was at the brink of exhaustion.

She pursed her lips. A few seconds later, she sighed internally, exasperated. “It’s nothing. Sleep!”

The man smiled contentedly and hugged her tighter before drifting off peacefully.

She’d thought it’d be difficult to fall asleep tonight.

But, only half an hour later, Victoria had drifted off too.

In her dreams, she felt something stroking her face with a warm touch.

Then she heard the man’s low, sighing voice.

“Don’t ever leave me again, Victoria.”

Her eyes stung and she buried her slender face in the pillows, tears of either joy or sorrow leaking out without a noise.

...

It was only the day after that Natalia caught wind that Victoria was together with Charlie and had registered as a married couple.

It was the morning then, and Charlie and Victoria had gone to her doorstep to pick Joy up. Seeing them together, Natalia had been surprised, but then Victoria had explained their relationship.

Because they were good friends, Natalia had already known that Victoria had always liked Charlie, even chased after him for years.

So she was naturally happy for the two of them now that they had ended up together.

But before her happiness could fade, she’d heard that Joy was actually Charlie’s son, and the man who’d gotten Victoria pregnant and started the whole fiasco with her family was also Charlie!

Natalia was not okay with that.

Chapter 338 It Really Is You

After all, she knew how much Victoria had suffered this year.

She'd also cursed whoever had done this countless times – whichever heartless man had put her Victoria through this, not taking responsibility or even showing up for the child.

Natalia's face sank right away and her expression wasn't pretty.

She knew that there was probably some inside situation to get the two to tangle around like this, but she still couldn't resist a few snarky comments.

Charlie didn't mind. He knew that Natalia had a good relationship with Victoria, so he didn't take those little things seriously.

After picking Joy up, Charlie brought Victoria home.

It didn't sit completely with Natalia that Victoria was just being with him like this, but it was their private affairs, so she didn't butt in too much.

Thankfully, Victoria had gotten her contract back and she was ready to return to work after a few months. With James' help, the original contract under the Kaur's company could be thrown out. But Brandon was still angry, especially after knowing that she'd gone and married Charlie without his go-ahead. He even let the word out that anyone who signed for her would be opposing the will of the Kaur family!

Brandon meant to boycott her.

With that, many companies who'd been interested in her stayed their hand.

After all, even though Victoria was famous, she was also known for having an independent streak a mile long and refusing to go with the company's arrangements. You could never be sure if it was a good thing or a bad thing signing up with an artist like this.

Furthermore, however well Victoria had maintained her secrecy for going out of the country and giving birth, some rumors had still leaked out.

Nobody thought it was necessary to offend Brandon over a ticking time bomb like this.

So Victoria's plan to get back into entertainment was stalled. After catching wind, Natalia didn't even say anything and signed her on in the name of Star Entertainment straight away.

Archie didn't have an opinion on that. Natalia was his wife. Her friends were his friends.

Victoria, though, was depressed over this incident for a while.

In this father-daughter fight, Brandon wasn't the only one suffering. She, too, hurt the same way.

If there had been a third option, none of them had wanted to let it go this far.

Natalia couldn't be of any assistance there, so she could only sigh helplessly.

Today, she'd just so happened to have invited Hamlin and another investor for lunch. Hamlin had a new film that he wanted her to star in, and was about to communicate to her early on about the role.

Natalia and Hamlin were old acquaintances, and because the investor knew Archie, he was polite to her too.

The meal went well, and so did the discussion.

Natalia had promised to go watch a serial cartoon with Anne, so she didn't linger after the meal. She said her platitudes with Hamlin and the others and left first.

In the carpark, she was getting ready to head to her car when the sound of an argument came around the corner.

Her car was parked only a short distance away from the corner, less than ten meters. Because there was a concrete pillar in the way, they couldn't see her there, and vice versa.

Only, the voice was a little familiar, so she stopped, curious.

It was a woman and a man arguing.

The woman was saying, "Who do you think you are? Even if I'm pregnant, it's got nothing to do with you! If you know what's good for you, scram! If someone snaps a picture of this, I won't let you off easy!"

The man sounded pitiful, his tones pleading.

"I know I've done wrong, but for the sake of the child, can't you forgive me just this once? You don't want the baby to be born without a father, do you?"

"Ha! Born? Aren't you thinking too much, Maxwell? When did I say I was going to give birth to them? And you think you've got the right to be the child's father? Dream on! A worm who doesn't even know where his future leads has no right to be my baby's father!"

"Selena! How could you say that?"

"I'm speaking the truth! I don't like you at all, Maxwell Cohen, so please face reality! That night was only an accident, so can't you treat it as such? Just go about your business as if nothing's happened, and stay out of my way!"

"I know I'm good for nothing, Selena, and my career is ruined even after finally getting a good start. But my feelings are true. Trust me, I'll definitely work hard to show you good results, and I won't have you suffer in my wake..."

"Enough!"

Selena barked. Seemed like Maxwell had grabbed her hand and she had wrenched it free, backing off by a step and walking outside the angle of the concrete pillar.

Seeing her, Natalia ducked into her car.

The car windows had been specially treated and appeared black. The outside was visible from the within, but one couldn't see inside from without at all.

The car door made a slight slam as it closed. Selena paused and looked over, her expression darkening.

Natalia didn't say a word and treated it like nothing had happened as she started the car.

The car backed up smoothly and rolled outwards.

Seeing the license plate number, Selena's face changed. Maxwell had wanted to tug at her and say something else, but she flung him off again.

"I'm warning you, Maxwell! Not a word about this to anyone, or I really will kill you!"

"Selena..."

"And! This child is only a byproduct of an accident. I won't keep them, and you don't get to play the father, so stop dreaming. We don't live in the same world. If you tangle on like this, it won't end well for either of us. If you'll just let go, I'll pay you enough to get away from here and start a new life. Money, or continuing to spiral down like this – it's your choice! Think it through, then give me a call. That's that."

With that, Selena got in her car, slammed the door shut, and sped out.

Looking at the taillights in the distance, Maxwell clenched his fists, eyes going bloodred.

Natalia didn't make it out too far when a red Ferrari forced her to a stop.

A minute later, a knock came on her car window. She rolled it down and saw Selena's delicate features.

"It really is you?"

Selena's expression wasn't pretty.

A little exasperated, Natalia raised her hand and greeted her. "Hey! Long time no see, Miss Kawn."

Compared to her upbeat tones, Selena's face was practically a storm cloud.

She looked around, then muttered, "Are you free to let me in to talk, Mrs. McCarthy?"

Natalia smiled wryly. "There's no need for that. I don't think we have much to discuss."

Coldly, Selena said, "I've never harbored ill intentions against you, Mrs. McCarthy. Even when you took Archie away, I'd only ever given you my blessings. Why treat me like a stranger?"

Chapter 339 No Need for Threats

Natalia pursed her lips, thought about it, and agreed.

"Fine. Come on in."

Selena parked her own car behind and got in the shotgun seat of Natalia's car.

Natalia found it a bit awkward that it was the second time she was bumping into Selena and Maxwell's affairs.

And doing it twice consecutively – forget Selena, even she herself couldn't believe that it was a coincidence.

"What did you want to talk about, Miss Kawn?"

Even though she knew, Natalia still asked.

Selena didn't look at her, keeping her cold gaze in front. "Did you hear our conversation?"

"Ahem!"

Natalia coughed embarrassedly and hastily explained, "Not deliberately, really. I was coming down to get my car, and didn't think you two would be here too."

Selena looked at her, a bit of mockery in her eyes.

"So you did hear it all, then?"

"..."

She had to scowl at that attitude. "Fine, I'll admit that I heard it, but don't worry. It's got nothing to do with me, so I won't tell."

Selena frowned subtly, then said coldly, "That had better be the case."

Natalia was a little exasperated.

Selena continued, "Really, I don't have anything to do with him. He's just chasing after me incessantly. You're a woman too, Natalia, so you should understand how I feel. I don't even like him, and I don't want this child. So the public can't know about us."

Natalia's lips twitched.

"If you don't like him, then why'd you come together?"

Selena floundered.

Her face changed slightly but she didn't explain.

She took a deep breath and looked at Selena seriously. "I'll owe you for it if you keep this secret. Anything you need afterwards, just tell me. On the other hand, though... you know what I mean."

Natalia chuckled.

"You don't need to threaten me. After all, you can't threaten me."

Selena didn't reply.

Natalia put a hand casually on the car window, looking at her with a half-smile.

"I'm keeping your secret because you have nothing to do with me. I'm not such a gossipmonger that I'll go around blurting your love life to anyone who listens. That's all. Anything else and, forgive me, Miss Kawn, but you're just overthinking it."

Selena's expression darkened right then and there.

She didn't like how carefree Natalia was being, or the way her lofty tones seemed to squash her beneath her feet.

She was supposed to be the lady of the Kawn family, while this woman was just a peasant who'd climbed her way to where she was using Archie McCarthy as a foothold. How dare she talk to her in such tones?

But Selena's years of training in manners weren't for nothing.

She nodded calmly.

"All right. Since you've said that much, I can relax. No matter what, I do owe you one, and I'll pay you back one day."

Natalia smiled and didn't say anything about her words.

With everything made clear, Selena didn't linger in the car and got out after opening the door.

"Goodbye, Mrs. McCarthy."

Natalia waved her off.

When Selena had left, she started her car and continued driving.

It was nine at night by the time she got back.

Anne had almost fallen asleep waiting for her. Hearing the footsteps, she rushed out of her room.

"Mommy! You're finally back."

Natalia looked at the girl, who was so sleepy her eyes were drooping. Heart aching, she jogged over and picked her up.

"I'm sorry. Mommy was late. Are you tired, Anne?"

Anne yawned and hurriedly shook her head. "I'm not sleepy. I was waiting for Mommy all this time."

Natalia kissed her face and carried her back to her room, laying her down on the bed.

"Great. Mommy's going to watch the show with you now. Let's go to bed after one episode, okay?"

Anne agreed obediently.

One episode of the cartoon didn't last long, and it ended soon enough.

Natalia tucked her in and came out. She couldn't find Archie, so she asked Mrs. Dottie as she came back from the garden, "Where's Archie, Mrs. Dottie? Has he still not answered?"

Mrs. Dottie looked a bit troubled and sighed. "Sir came back at seven, then seemed to have taken a phone call and rushed out."

Natalia started.

"What's happened?"

Mrs. Dottie shook her head.

"I don't know the details. Seems like the old master of the Kawn family can't hold on anymore. Our old man gave sir a call and had him go over to take a look."

Natalia's heart jolted.

Wilhelm Kawn wasn't in the best of health, but he hadn't gotten worse in this time.

Why had he suddenly taken a turn for the worse?

The four families had a delicate relationship right now, but the two old men of the Kawn and McCarthy families were friends of several decades.

Conflicting interests between their families were one thing, but their personal relationship was another. If Wilhelm really wasn't doing well, it was reasonable for William to take Archie over to visit.

Natalia thought about it and said, "I've got it. If there's nothing else, get back early and rest."

Mrs. Dottie nodded and left.

Natalia went back to her room, washed, and not long later, Archie returned.

It was early in the year and still cold up north in Eqitin. The night air seemed permeated with thin frost.

Natalia heard the engine of the car and knew the man was back. She got out and went downstairs, feeling him bring the cold in with him even from a distance as she shivered.

Archie paused and went back in, closing the door. Looking at the thin pajamas she had on, he frowned.

"Why are you dressed so lightly?"

Natalia rubbed her arms as she took his coat. "How much am I supposed to wear at home, anyway? How did it go? Is old man Kawn all right?"

Speaking of that, Archie's face fell slightly.

"They got him back, but it looks like he won't last much longer."

Natalia stared for a moment. With the Kawn family's status, the doctors they had access to were the peak medical teams in the entire world. If even they were saying it was done, it really was done.

She didn't know Wilhelm too well and didn't have too many ties to the Kawn family, but she still felt a twinge of regret at the news.

She didn't stay down for long, though. Recovering, she said, "There's hot soup in the kitchen. Mrs. Dottie kept it warm just for you. I'll go get you some."

Archie nodded.

President's Sweet Wife

Chapter 340 A Disgraceful Sight

Natalia brought the soup over. It was Mrs. Dottie's special recipe. She'd busted it out because Natalia hadn't been feeling too well. What with the cold and how busy Archie was, the soup was to warm them both up.

Natalia had already had some, so she just sat there keeping Archie company and watching him dig in. "With old man Kawn in such a state, I'm sure the Kawn family is getting messy!"

At that, Archie sneered.

"Forget messy, it's a disgraceful sight."

Natalia chuckled.

"There are a lot of Kawn family members. The second and first uncles aren't born from the same mother. Add to that all the branch families, and there has to be plenty of sibling rivalries. Thankfully the old man was fine this time. He should be preparing for after his passing for the sake of the family's survival, so it shouldn't get too out of hand."

Archie nodded. "I hope so."

He paused, then thought of something and looked at Natalia.

"What?"

"Nothing."

Archie seemed to find something funny. He chuckled, then said, "The Bissels sent someone over too. Know who it was?"

"Who?"

"Ontario Bissel."

Natalia froze.

"Seems like the youngest of the Bissels isn't too repulsed by Jessica. In fact, the two seem to be getting along just fine. If nothing goes wrong, the marriage might be set."

Natalia floundered for a while, not sure what to say.

"Does Ontario... know about Jessica's past?"

Archie nodded. "He knows. But according to him, everyone has a past. So he doesn't mind. He's ready to look to the future with Jessica, maybe even meaning to find true love."

The phrase "true love" blasted across Natalia's mindscape and she had no idea how to reply.

"A young master of the Bissel family marrying a woman who's already been married once. Fine. But marrying a woman who's already been married once with a reputation this horrible? And the Bissels are okay with it?"

Archie scoffed.

“He’s not an only son. Besides, old man Kawn is giving up 15% of the company’s shares as a dowry. Forget the Bissels, not a single man in Eqitin wouldn’t be tempted.”

Natalia shot him a look.

“Oh? Then you’re tempted too?”

Archie paused.

He looked up at her seriously.

Then he smiled brightly and took her hand. “I’m only tempted by you.”

“...”

She knew this man wouldn’t take it seriously!

Rolling her eyes at him, she took her hand back. “Fine, back on track. With what you’re saying, the marriage between the Kawns and the Bissels is guaranteed, then? Old man Kawn was willing to give up 15% of the shares as a dowry and the rest of the family has nothing to say about it?”

Archie thought about it and shook his head. “They found her back. That 15% was originally Yvonne Kawn’s share. With her gone, those shares would naturally pass to her child. It’s a pity that Wilhelm always thought this was a blood granddaughter when it turns out to be a fake. He’s still alive and still gets his say over what to do with the share, but who knows with whom those shares would end up when he’s gone. A fight will probably break out by that point. In summary, the Kawn family is a mess, and it might not be a good thing for the Bissels to get involved.”

Natalia nodded, agreeing.

The two chatted a while longer until the night dragged on and they went back to their rooms to rest.

Meanwhile, the Kawn household.

With Wilhelm having just been recovered from the edge of death, the family heaved a collective sigh of relief.

After an intensive checkup by the doctors proved that the old man was really no longer in immediate danger, they relaxed.

Having endured through the night, everyone was tired. After seeing to the old man, they went back to rest.

The doctors naturally had to stay and continue tending to the old man. But other than the doctors, by Wilhelm’s order, Jessica stayed too.

“Come here, Jessica. Sit next to your Grandpa.”

Wilhelm lay in bed, waving to Jessica. Jessica hurriedly approached.

“How are you doing, Grandpa? Are you still feeling ill?”

The old man shook his hand.

"I'm fine. These old bones won't last much longer no matter how they treat me. I know that much."

Hearing that, Jessica's eyes reddened.

"Don't say that, Grandpa. You're a good person, and you'll live long."

Wilhelm chuckled.

"Silly girl."

Even though the doctors said he was out of danger, old man Kawn's body was still weak. Even his voice was hollow and forced.

He reached out, patting Jessica's head, saying softly, "Whether I live long or not doesn't matter. What matters is you, Jessica. What plans do you have for your own future?"

Jessica heard it and showed a helpless look in her eyes.

"I... I just want to stay with you, Grandpa."

Old man Kawn laughed. "What would you stay with me for? Forget how much longer I can hold on for, but if I'm not longer around, you need to have your own life."

Hearing that, Jessica teared up again.

Wilhelm held off on the topic immediately while sighing internally.

This child was far too kind. Heaven only knew what she'd suffered to end up so sensitive.

He sighed and changed the subject.

"How do you feel about the young master of the Bissel family who came over tonight, Jessica?"

Jessica started.

She looked at him with watery eyes, not quite taking his meaning.

Wilhelm squinted and smiled kindly. "The Bissels are a top family of Eqitin. Like us Kawns, they're about a century old. When the old man of the Bissels were still alive, he was great friends with me. Besides, that Ontario lad has a good personality. Sunny, honest, not like those playboys out there. If you were to be with him, he should take good care of you. I can rest easy too. What do you think?"

Jessica blushed, lowering her head as if she wanted to bury her head into the ground.

"I-I don't know."

The old man burst out laughing.

"Don't be shy. Men and women all get married when they grow up. It's all quite normal, no!"

Jessica forced a smile.

"Grandpa, I don't want to marry anyone right now."

Wilhelm froze, frowning.

“What is it? Do you not like him? Or do you like someone else?”

Jessica hurriedly shook her hand. “No, no, I-I...”

She bit her lip, looking as if it was tremendously difficult for her to say. Her eyes reddened, her entire being emanating vulnerability, making onlookers want to protect her at first glance.

Wilhelm couldn’t take it and urged, “Do you have some other worries?”