

Taming A Billionaire

#Chapter 131 - One Hundred And Thirty-one : Isabella Left - Read Taming A Billionaire Chapter 131 - One Hundred And Thirty-one : Isabella Left

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Maya's POV

Isabella is a terror, the girl is impossible! I spent the whole night nursing her to good health. It was almost as if I was her maidservant instead of ex-nanny.

Thanks to her, I pulled an all-nighter, tending to her royal highness, and went to bed in the early morning after she successfully slept off without waking up and whining about the itchiness.

Hours later, I groaned and turned to the side when the hot sun filtering through the window hit my face.

Hot sun? Was it afternoon? Just go to bed, Maya.

For sure, I slept off but sometime later felt something tickle my ear. I murmured incomprehensible words and scratched that itchy area, before returning to sleep.

Not long later, the tickling sensation moved to my nose making me swat it away with my hand but the mischievous tickler was persistent until I decided enough was enough.

The first thought in my head was Isabella: she was the only person capable of pulling such a prank.? But I was short of words when I made contact with blue eyes and sexy red lips pulled to the side in a smug smirk.

Eden.

I sat upright, "What the f*ck !"

Seeing Eden lounging on my bed while twirling a feather nonchalantly in his right hand, did nothing to ease the irritation on my face.

Why did he wake me up from my beauty sleep? I didn't want to go back to Isabella's tortures!

"You're such a heavy sleeper " he provoked me, first thing in the morni...afternoon?

Looking out the window and checking out the walk clock, told me it was mid-afternoon. How long did I sleep exactly?

Eden continued, " I was beginning to wonder if you were Sleeping Beauty "he grinned cheekily and added," I was contemplating waking you up with a kiss "

"Eww" I scrunched up my face, giving him a look of disgust. I hadn't even brushed my teeth yet, why would he want to kiss me. I trembled, Eden was definitely abnormal.

Ignoring the weird pervert, I went into the bathroom and did the early morning ritual - brushed and bathed. Yet, I was surprised when I walked into my room to discover Eden had not left, what was he still waiting for?

"Even if I'm signed under your company, I still deserve some privacy. Wouldn't it be a scandal if this goes out to the media? "

He stood to his feet after receiving my criticism, but not to leave; Eden was walking towards me with an odd gleam in his eyes.

I had washed my hair, so I wrapped it with one of the wet towels to prevent it from dripping water on my body while my bare body was secured in a red thick bathrobe, tied to the side with its sash.

I didn't take my eyes off him neither did I step back, just watched him intently and wondered what he was up-to.

Eden kept on stepping towards me until we were in close proximity. He lowered his head while I had no choice than to lean back, the pose straining my waist.

I blinked confusedly "What are you doing? "

His eyes rove over my body in a way that made me shiver, "Imprinting your size in my head "

My eyes went wide while my cheeks flushed from shock and I found myself abruptly returning to my straight pose without him leaning back and so bumped into him.

His hand came around to hold me on the waist in order to hold me in place but his action further molded me against him.

Our noses were touching and he was staring me straight in the eyes, this awkward yet intimate pose made my heart slam against my chest as it went into double time. I could feel his hand on my body and it was moving downward slowly, en route to my bum.

"Nice try " I grabbed his wandering hand and squeezed it to the point of causing him pain but he didn't show it on his face and instead smiled up at me which irked me.

"I need to know your body proportions since you would be under me in the future in case of events where I would need to send outfits "? Eden explained righteously.

"Wow " I exclaimed dramatically, " You're the most hardworking CEO I've ever seen, you're the best. " I gave him a thumbs-up and continued with heavy sarcasm.

"A president who takes the time to check his worker's body size must be given the Nobel prize "

He laughed at my words but didn't give me a reply.

"So you personally examine the sizes of all the female artists under you?" I ridiculed him

Eden chuckled, flashing his neatly arrayed set of white teeth "No, I don't. But I am willing to offer privilege services to a certain person"

I rolled my eyes upwards, that cheesy line wouldn't have made my heart skip a beat in the first place even if he was serious with me.

Having seen that he failed the first attempt, Eden's other hand moved to complete the job but I warned him with a sweet smile.

"Touch my ass and I promise you that your doodle won't be able to manufacture more kids after I squeeze the life out of them " Came my threat which failed miserably when he replied.

"It will be heaven if you squeeze me as tight as hell, when can you start, I can't wait?" Eden winked at me suggestively.

"Y-you.."

My mouth hung open from shock, why was he making a joke out of my words?

"Dress up and come downstairs," He said to me, letting go of my waist finally.

But it was strange, I couldn't help but feel disappointed when I couldn't feel his warmth anymore. God, what is wrong with me? I must be crazy.

"I made something for you to eat since you have been sleeping half of the day, you have to feed that flat stomach " he commented, eyes fixed on my stomach whose appearance was pumped by my big robe.

My mouth watered at the thought of eating Eden's food, he was insanely talented in that area.

They said, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach " and I guess that rule applies to me too.

I was a huge foodie and since I hated cooking, I hardly let go of anyone who knows how to cook. Sadly, that rule doesn't apply to Eden - I love his food, but not him.

You give that trickster a little chance and he would take over. Well, I'll just fix my eyes on him and figure out what he wants from me.

Nik once said to me that Eden likes to manipulate his ex's and then use them to plot against him. It was interesting and thrilling, I couldn't wait to see how the foxy Eden would pit me against Niklaus.

"And by the way, " Eden who was about to leave, turned around once he remembered, "You don't need to concern yourself with Isabella anymore "

My brows knitted together in confusion, "What do you mean?"

"Niklaus took her away "

I couldn't tell which one was more shocking, the fact that Isabella left without saying goodbye? or the fact Niklaus arrived without even saying "Hi". It was obvious he knew I was here, Eden must have informed him of his daughter's illness.

But why was I so concerned about his visit? We weren't together anymore neither does he need to recount to me his whereabouts. Gosh, I need to get used to this.

"He came to take his daughter by himself? " I asked out of curiosity, nothing else.

"No, he sent his people "

I snorted inwardly, typical Niklaus. Doesn't he know the way to his daughter's heart was by giving her his time and attention?

At this rate, their improved relationship would crumble down to level zero. I sighed, why hadn't he learned anything from me throughout my stay with him.

Isabella was a special kid, she craves love and attention even if she pretends not to want it. She had an attitude? Yes, but that was just the games she played in order to draw attention to herself.

I was supposed to feel happy that I? would no longer suffer Isabella's torments yet, I felt disappointed and cheated. I spent the whole night taking good care of her and the little imp left without a thank-you nor goodbye.

My face fell, "Alright " I told Eden with a gloomy expression, at least he would leave me alone.

"The little brat left a message though " My face lit up the moment I heard him disclose the information

"She left a message?! " I asked excitedly.

"Yes and I quote,' Tell Maya that she has been a worthy and excellent caretaker and for that, she has gained a loyal ally - but that doesn't mean I'm apologizing for drawing on her face. Goodbye. ' and that's all "

"That's all?" I asked Eden, surprised.

" Totally "

I burst into laughter.

That was so like Isabella, no doubt; so concise and cool. She probably did not wake me up so I could have a sound sleep. The girl was so caring, that is if you could see beyond her apathetic demeanor.

I just pray that Niklaus would have the patience to deal with her slowly, hopefully.

Chapter 132 - One Hundred And Thirty-two: I'm Not Going To Give Up On You

Nik's POV

I looked up from my document when Judy walked in with the signatory stonily severe look on his face, does this guy ever smile?

Lately, plunging myself into my work was the only thing saving my sanity here. I had to wake up from this spell Maya cast on me which was why I was retracing my step; tracking the spot I had derailed from who I was.

Thanks to everything that has happened, I have roused from my dream. Love? happiness? They were not meant for me; a cross I have to carry for being Niklaus Spencer.

"Stop. Ten meters away " I ordered Judy as soon as he tried to take a step further. I watched his brows furrowed in confusion and finally, realization.

I pulled out my drawer and brought out my sanitizer which I used to spray the air and my hand.

"I am vaccinated, you know, " Judy pointed out gruffly.

"My daughter was vaccinated too but look how it ended" I reminded him with my fingers interlocked together as I placed my hand on my desk.

"How's my daughter?" I asked the main question that has been hogging my mind.

"She's home, sound and safe "

"Did she put up a fight?" I questioned him curiously, having known Isabella would not make it easy for them.

"Surprisingly, no," Judy answered gazing into the distance, there was a thoughtful look on his face.

I laughed at him, "Don't be fooled by her calm front. Isabella is my blood, I know her from inside out. That's just the calm before the storm."

Why was I even explaining her to him? Judy has been with me for a long time now and seen the magnitude of destruction my daughter was capable of.

"Give her enough space but don't dare take your eyes off her, don't ever let your guard down even for a second " I instructed Judy to pass the message to his men.

"If that's all, you can leave " came my instant dismissal when I received a gut feeling he was about to say something else that would stir my heart.

Face lowered, I was glancing through a file with divided attention when Judy said

"I couldn't see her when I arrived to take your daughter because she was sleeping. Apparently, she had pulled an all-nighter taking care of your demanding daughter "

Just as I thought, Judy would surely bring up Maya. When did he start opining about my love life?

I looked up at him expressionless,

"So? How's that my business?"

I deadpanned. "Nobody forced her into taking care of Isabella. Also, aren't there maids at Eden's place, who would have taken care of my daughter? She was the one who decided to be a goody-two-shoes. But wait a minute"? I trailed off, then laughed while loosening the tie on my neck - God, it was suffocating me.

"Does she want payment for her services?"

"Of course not!" Judy denied my accusation with a look of disgust, "She wasn't even awake when I took Isabella away! " he defended her.

"Good for her then, "I remarked nonchalantly and began to organize my already neat desk. I just needed to do anything to keep myself busy.

"From now on, don't feed me gossip about her daily life unless she's really in danger of dying, understand? " I warned him strictly.

"Understood " He reluctantly concurred and turned to look but stopped midway, his lips moving as if he wanted to add something.

I cocked a brow, "Anything else? "

"Nothing " Was all he said and turned his back to me, without knowing I heard him mumble under his breath, "I hope you don't regret this."

Oh, I was regretting it already; regretting ever meeting that girl named Maya.

Like the wind with no direction, Maya came into my life and blew me off my feet; made everything I was used to looking so different and colorful.

She should've left me to wallow in my hedonistic lifestyle. At least then, I knew what I wanted and expected; was in control of my life and heart.

Maya took me to a whole new world and now I was lost in it with no clue how to steer around it nor find my way out.

My heart hurts as if someone was squeezing it repeatedly. Everywhere feels so suffocating but I couldn't flounder nor keep on with this dark cloud over my head. I had my family to support and billions of workers depending on me for their paycheck.

Someone walking into my office jerked me from my miserable thoughts. My expression shifted when I saw Tina walk in with a charming smile on her face.

She was dressed so sexily today that only a blind man would pass her by without turning around to get a second look - I guess I was blind then.

She was wearing a red ruched bodycon dress that showed off her surgically enhanced womanly curves. Her blonde hair fell over her shoulder in waves as she struts confidently into my office with her silver chunky hoop earrings dangling from her ears.

"What are you doing here? "? I asked as soon as she took a seat on my sofa situated in the middle of the office.

"I heard you haven't had lunch yet" She averted my question and began to set the dishes on the glass table.

Tina went on, "I contacted your secretary and found out that you frequent that restaurant across the road. Thankfully, you haven't eaten yet, so I thought of getting you something on my way here "

"You did well " I commended her and saw the self-pleased twinkle in her eyes.

"Enjoy your meal then, don't leave anything behind, " I told her, picked up a contract that has been awaiting my approval for a long time from my desk, and glanced through it.

"H-huh? I don't understand? " There was a trace of confusion on her face.

I was amused inwardly, Tina was trying hard. Did she think I was joking when I said she could get the title but not me?

Lowering the contract paper, I glanced up at her with a disapproving frown, "I hate distraction when I'm working and don't drop food on the floor, uncleanliness disgust me " I reprimanded her and went back to my work without giving second thoughts to the disappointed look on her face.

I was so immersed in my work that I didn't notice she was still in my office until an hour later when I stopped to stretch my stiff neck.

"You're still here?" I asked in between a yawn.

"Are you done? " She asked back.

"Are you done with your meal?" I asked her back too.

Tina sighed, she just realized I wasn't that same old Niklaus that always indulged her.

"When can we talk about the engagement party? We have a lot to arrange: the foods, theme, guests to invite, and so on "

"That's right " I agreed with her.

"You haven't even put a ring on my finger " She showed me her fingers to prove her point and I couldn't help but wince at the claws she fixed on those manicured hands - hope, she never uses that on me

"The ring was never supposed to be on your finger " I reminded her, just for clarification.

Tina scowled at me, "Are we really going to have this discussion right now? " she rose to her feet angrily, "You're my fiancé and I have every right to get a ring from you! " She insisted.

I ignored her, I had no time nor strength to waste my saliva on her anyway. So, I simply checked the time on my limited edition watch and began to pack.

"What are you doing? " She asked, her voice a bit shaky with apprehension.

"What does it seem like I'm doing?" I retorted without looking at her.

"You can't be leaving! we haven't even discussed the engagement party " She yelled at me then smiled in a coaxing manner, "Unless we can stop in a restaurant and go over the details "

I picked up my cell phone, left my office desk, and approached her while adjusting my necktie.

Tina tried to help but my deadly glare stopped her midway as her idle hands went back to its resting position.

"Sorry to disappoint you but I have a sick daughter to take care of at home. "

"B-but - " She was still saying when I interrupted her.

"So you can go over the details of the engagement with my secretary

- the both of you hit it off on the first encounter since he was able to tip off my favorite eating spot to you; so it wouldn't be difficult communicating your ideas to him, right? "

"You!" Tina fumed and raised her clenched fist at me but still couldn't hit me while I stared down her hateful glare.

"Yeah, me. What are you going to do about it? " I goaded her purposely.

"I'm not going to give up on you if that's why you're continuously irking me" She resolved through gritted teeth.

"Sure, knock yourself out then, " I said to her without concern before my eyes settled on the food on the table, she didn't even take a bite.

"Do you know some people live below a dollar a day? Yet here you are, wasting hundreds of dollars" I chided her but she snorted and looked away.

Shaking my head, I proceeded to take a step when I remembered,

"Ahh, that's right "

She stared up at me curiously.

"Isabella has chickenpox, so mind the way you hang around me. We don't want those nasty itchy sores ruining your skin, do we? "

Chapter 133 - One Hundred And Thirty-three : Anything Wrong, Darling?

Maya's POV

"Have a taste" Eden urged me to have a spoonful of his mouth-watering dish set before me and I complied gladly.

"How is it? " He asked, dragging his seat towards me which produced a loud squeaking sound with an anticipatory look on his face.

I chewed the food slowly and carefully. Putting on a poker face, my head was tipped to the side as if in deep contemplation, purposely keeping Eden on tenterhooks.

"Hmm" I sighed heavily with a disappointed look and saw his face fall, does this guy have no faith in his cooking at all?

Without warning, my face brightened with a cheeky grin as I gave him a thumbs-up, "Delicious "

I watched Eden breathe in relief with his hand pressed over his heart, "God, you kept me in suspense! To be frank, I didn't taste that " he confessed causing me to cast him a doubtful glance.

"No way! "

"I'm serious "

"This is insane " I expressed my surprise with my mouth filled with the delicious delicacy. My eyes rolled to the back of my head in delight as the rich sweetness exploded in my taste bud.

"Your cooking skill is on a god-level " I praised him, some of the food flying out my mouth in the process.

"Fine, close your mouth, and eat then. Talking while eating is a bad habit " He chided me playfully.

I obeyed without complaint, it was unladylike talking and eating - well, I've never been a lady anyway.

I had no problem with the food save its name: Oven-roasted chicken with country vegetables in a reduced honey dijon glaze over long-grain white rice - yep, catch your breath while pronouncing that.

"You should be my cook once you quit your job, " I told him after flushing down the food with a glass of water.

Eden cocked a brow at me, "From a masseur to a cook, that sounds interesting. At least, it's satisfying to know that I've got everything you need in a man " He told me with a positive smirk.

I scoffed at him," Hoho, such confidence! I hope you remember these words after you've failed miserably"

He drew closer with a playful twinkle in his eyes," Does this mean you're permitting me to court you ?"

"In your dreams sweetheart " I wrinkled my nose at him.

Eden and I continuously bantered throughout the meal and did I forget to mention - dessert - until he dropped a piece of unexpected news.

"You're free to leave for the city tomorrow, the scandal has been cleared "

I looked up surprised, "Huh? "

"You're free to return tomorrow henceforth without fear of being harassed by the paparazzi and angry netizens "

I blinked, "The scandal has been cleared at last? That quickly? "

"Yeah, that quickly " Eden acquiesced, satisfied with his progress.

He quickly added," Aren't you happy?"

"Yeah, home at last! Of course, I'm happy, why shouldn't I be happy? " I said, flashing him a smile that didn't touch my cheeks. I couldn't help but feel that I just lied through my teeth.

Don't get me wrong, I was delighted I would no longer experience cameras being shoved to my face or my hair pulled from behind, but there was a twinge of disappointment in my heart.

It was so hard at first after the breakup with Niklaus, but the days that came afterward were magical. I was happy and for once, connected with people who liked me the way I was without pretense.

They were real and I was real: the face drawing prank was not funny but I liked it - I'm not a masochist by the way - the dinner fight, the massage, snake episode, and many others; it warmed my heart.

This place was like a wonderland placed in an ice globe which would be shattered come tomorrow when everyone goes back to their normal life.

"Alright, I'll leave for the city tomorrow then. But before that, I need to take the kids out "

"Take them out? "

"It would be a loss if I don't take a tour of the countryside before leaving. Besides, I promised to treat the kids for helping me with Isabella's handwork on my face " I explained to him.

Eden agreed, "Fine, I'll give you a tour then "

"What? "

"No one knows this place better than I do "

I thought over it, having Eden with us wouldn't be so bad. We wouldn't need to worry after security or fear of being bullied by any local tyrant.

I was sure of holding my own at worst, until help arrives but with the kids around, they would become a liability.

Another perk of Eden coming with us : we would spend all we want without worrying about exhausting his wallet - sigh, it's so good to be rich.

Done with my meal, I announced the news to Pedro and Anabelle who were estactic with joy at the thought of leaving the house; both viewed the beautiful property as a prison notwithstanding the electronic gadgets provided to keep them busy.

Their joy knew no bounds that they rushed their preparation and went out of the house in a twinkle of an eye, waiting expectantly by the driveway for us to arrive.

I didn't put much into the dressing, just a black and white spaghetti strap gown with a pink bomber jacket and sneakers.

"Hey "

"Hey "

We checked each other out, Eden was wearing a slim cut t-shirt with a Commuter Trucker Jacket, milk-colored chinos, and white sneakers and his hair was sexily messy as if someone tousled it all day long.

"Let's go," He said.

I was expecting to pick one of his expensive cars but I was speechless when he rode out of the garage with a red pickup truck.

What the...

"Are you coming or not? " Eden flashed me a knowing grin, he went simple today on purpose.

Well, a beggar has no choice. Maybe, being low-key was not such a bad idea, I didn't want to attract attention by the way. Who knows who might be lodging in this village?

We all climbed into the truck and drove off. Perhaps, if that prankster called Isabella was still here, I would've put my guard on but I didn't; Anabelle was such a good kid and we belted out? popular songs till we reached our destination.

The local market was bustling with activities, vendors exhibited their products while dust particles filled the air as people walked up and down the place.

"I want this and this and this and this "Anabelle binge requested for anything that caught her eyes and Eden would have indulged her, had I not refused.

I managed to convince the little girl to choose the stuff that was practical for her needs and age and not just because it pleased her eyes.

Afterward, we trudged into the clothing line and that was where the senseless spending began.

Compared to the high-end ones found in departmental stores, the clothes bring sold here were obviously lower quality, but were colorful and handmade.

Eden didn't listen to me this time , not to mention the fact he didn't even bargain for the price and just spent his money on whatever articles of clothing he thought would look good on everyone.

My head throbbed, this is why you should never send a rich man to the market! I cried inwardly - This trader was going to be wealthy overnight.

But why was I even complaining? It was his money, not mine. Moreover, I get to gain from the shopping too.

"Young man, you should get this for your beautiful wife " Another seller dragged him to his stall; surprisingly, Eden followed the middle-aged woman sheepishly.

My face burned at the mention of "Wife" . Where did this woman come from? How could she surmise I was a married woman? Do I look like a married woman?

"I'm not his -? " I tried to refute her claim but she didn't even let me speak.

"Shh, don't be embarrassed " The saleswoman hushed me, " You must be the type since your husband is not saying anything "

Eden muffled his laugh with his palm by my side while I glared at him and? mouthed, "Tell her it's not true "

"Stop denying it already " She hit me on the shoulder playfully, " You can deny your husband but not your children "

My jaw dropped this time.

The talkative seller stretched her neck out to catch a glimpse of Pedro and Anabelle who were still making their choices in the previous stall.

"Especially that small one, the girl; she's your perfect copy except she took her father's eyes " She observed.

Eden was enjoying this, I could tell from his snicker ; he didn't even make an effort to clear this misunderstanding.

"Though the boy doesn't take after you nor your husband, he must have resembled someone from your family, hehe "

"They are not my children! I'm not married yet !" I screamed inwardly, why was this woman such a loudmouth?

"You wanted me to get my wife something from your shop" Eden reminded her the main purpose of coming here .

But he hooked his arm around my waist and brought me closer, pressing me to his side.

Suddenly, an? evil thought crossed my mind: I reciprocated his embrace by wrapping my arm too around his waist but pinched him so hard his face contorted.

"Is anything the matter? " The saleswoman noticed the ugly look on Eden's face.

"No " I answered quickly and faced him, " Is anything wrong, darling? "

Chapter 134 - One Hundred And Thirty-four : Resist Your Beautiful Wife's Body At Night

Maya's POV

"Is anything wrong, darling?" Eden saw the hidden evil smirk on my face and shivered, while I increased the pressure on his skin.

His face changed into a grimace as the pain intensified, let's see how he would snicker again.

"You look as if in pain, do you need help? " The gossip seller asked in concern and that's when I put my acting skill in action.

Eden sucked in the pain and shook his head sideways in reply.

"Honey " I released him and clasped his face with my palms, "Is it the heat? Do we need to leave? "

"Heat? "

I put on a pitiful expression, " My husband can't stand staying in the sun for too long, so I think we have to leave "I explained and tried to drag him away, wanting nothing more than to leave this stall.

"Oh no," Eden resisted openly, " I'll just take off my jacket " he peeled off his jacket as he spoke while I clenched my fist by my side.

Fine, let's see who would win this battle! May the best actor win!

I took the jacket from him the way a loving, dedicated wife would and hung it on my arm neatly while I placed my other hand tenderly on his shoulder.

"But we can't stay here any longer, your health is more important. Let's leave, alright? " I persuaded him.

Eden squeezed my hand on his shoulder with affection, "Don't worry about me, my love. We've postponed this shopping for too long and now we have got the chance to do it, I'll sacrifice my health for you, alright? " He took my hand and placed a kiss on the top of my palm.

"You don't need to worry about me, I'm stronger than I look, okay? "

The shopkeeper cooed, "Oh my God, the two of you are a perfect match made in heaven! "

Both of us put on a fake smile but I was boiling with frustration inside, he defeated me in this game.

"You know what?" She continued, " I have something the both of you are going to love, " The woman told us animatedly with a chortle that made the hairs on my arm stand on edge.

I had a feeling I wasn't going to like the outcome of whatever this prying woman had in mind. But I was curious too, what did she have that was so different from what her neighboring stalls were selling?

There was an odd twinkle in her eyes that made me tremble, "Give me a few minutes, I'll be back " She said and walked further into her stall, shoving away the clothes hung on hangers for a display to customers out of her way.

Once she was out of earshot, I faced Eden with a posture that spelled trouble.

"My love, huh? "

"Darling, huh? " He responded with the same tune.

"I didn't even know you were such a good actor?"

"I manage a big entertainment company, how do you expect me to survive in such an industry if I can't mask my looks and intentions? "

I took a step closer with a firm look on my face, "So what's your intention in bringing me to this store? "

He rolled his eyes, " What's the fun if I tell you now "

I jabbed my hand on his chest "Eden, I swear to God if you're planning something evil on - "

"Why do you think I would do evil to you? " He asked with his gaze fixed on me which made me uncomfortable.

I looked away, "Niklaus said I shouldn't trust - "

"Toss what Niklaus told you aside, do you trust me, Maya? " I was taken aback by the directness of the question. The sudden turn of events left me speechless; this wasn't how it was supposed to go.

"I-I..."

"Think from your heart " He gripped my face and fixed my gaze on him as I stared into his heated orbs that showed his vulnerability at the moment.

I was shocked when I came to a startling realization, did Eden fall for me?

No, that couldn't be, I shook my head internally. Though Eden was not a crowned casanova like Niklaus, he sure has had his share of women over the years.

Why would he be interested in me? He probably just wanted to use me to accomplish his revenge on his cousin. There was no way on earth he would be sincerely captivated by me!

"Eden, you're a good person and I'm not just saying it to flatter you or bootlick but these past few days, I've been able to see beyond your exterior ..." I wet my lips when I trailed off.

"And? " He urged me to continue.

"And you're a good father too. I grew up with my parents but didn't feel any bond with them. But you and Annabelle? Even a blind man can sense the love and dedication you have for her and I respect you for that but - "

His eyebrows rose "But? "

"Something is unsettling about you "

He drew nearer, "What is it? "

I took a deep breath and said to him "You're like a viper, going through the hardship of stalking your prey, waiting patiently for the best time to strike your target. And when you do, each move is deadly "

"Honey, she's here " Eden started the act again and looked away before I could read his expression.

" You guys are so made for each other " This shallow woman started again.

"Where is it? " I asked straightaway ignoring Eden who was basking in her flatteries.

"Here, it is, " She said and brought out the long-anticipated item.

When he saw it, Eden looked away and began to cough with flushed cheeks.

My jaw dropped while my eyes almost bulged out of my socket, I swear to God...

"I promise you that with this sexy lingerie set that you won't be able to resist your beautiful wife's body at night. It would enhance her curve..."

She boldly demonstrated with her own body while holding out the blackish-red underwire lace bra which came in a set with the three-piece thong that had a garter belt and stockings.

A vivid blush crept up my neck as my imagination ran wild. What in the world...

"With her fair skin" The storekeeper went on and this time placed the bra on my chest, using me as a model.

"And this not too bright yet dangerous color, the desire won't be suppressed for long with the both of you alone in your chamber "

I gulped and didn't even dare look Eden in the eyes; my eyes were attached to another store outside cause I was dying of embarrassment.

"I can assure you that if you come to my store by this time next year, you would have a twin baby in your arms" She winked at us suggestively.

I tried to gulp, but the saliva went down the wrong pipe causing me to enter a coughing fit.

"I'm sorry but my wife is awfully shy so we won't be needing that " Eden tugged me towards him and began to rub my back.

"We would be leaving "

The woman was flabbergasted, "If you don't like this one, I can get ..."

Eden abruptly reached out and took whatever clothes he could grab from the ranks before dumping a pile of bills in her palm.

"This should cover it all, right? "

She was dumbfounded at the amount of money given to her and began to stutter, "T-this is... "

"Keep the change, " He told her and signaled the kids and we hurried out of the place after the clothes were packed - thankfully, I had recovered from the coughing fit.

People gave us the looks cause each of us carried numerous large paper and polyester bags; we would have looked like escapees from a mental institute if not for the fact we were dressed properly.

But what Eden never expected was for me to kick him at the back of the knee.

"What was that for ?" He groaned in pain while hopping on one foot.

"What was that for? " I sneered, " Sexy lingerie? a night together in our chamber? Baby twins? Ring a bell? " came my reminder.

The kids laughed at our episode.

"How's that my business? " Eden questioned me with irritation while rubbing that painful spot.

"You knew what that woman was up-to! "

"How would I know? "

"You said and I quote, 'What's the fun if I tell you now? " I reminded him firmly.

Eden gave me a stupid look, "I was just teasing you! You've been with me for days, yet you still can't differentiate between my playful and serious words?! Moreover, how would I have known she was talking about that goddamned sexy thong " he said in an outburst that vexed me.

"Now I can't get the image of you in that lingerie on my bed out of my head " He mumbled under his breath but I heard him.

My face began to heat up and I fanned myself with my hands. Why was it suddenly hot? Gosh, I hope I never see that woman ever again!

Chapter 135 - One Hundred And Thirty-five : What Could Possibly Happen?

Nik's POV

There was no need guessing if Isabella was up or not, the sight of the numerous men standing guard in the living room was evidence; Judy might have taken my orders a bit strictly.

About ten men were standing straight and alert as the little devil called my daughter, watched a documentary with a bored expression.

Perhaps I was worrying over nothing, the sight of the security men made it look like they were guarding the world's most wanted criminal rather than my ten-year-old daughter.

I lifted my hand, signaling them to leave which they obeyed, giving me privacy to speak with my daughter.

I sat beside her on the sofa which sank slightly beneath my weight and alerted the prankster of my presence.

Isabella barely gave me a side glance before she grabbed the remote, flipping through the channels.

I cleared my throat to gain her attention once again but she ignored me this time.

"Hey "

Isabella glared at me, " Don't talk to me " She said to me and went back to watching the television. But I could tell she couldn't focus on the program anymore.

I scratched the side of my head, how was I going to deal with this situation? If Maya was here, this would have been a whole lot easier.

Oh yeah, Maya leaving the house was the reason for this treatment in the first place. I failed to fulfill the promise I made to her - making Maya her mother. It looks like I'm in for a bumpy and stormy week from henceforth.

My eyes settled on the sores on her body prompting me to grab her hand without warning, receiving an intensified glare in return.

Isabella tried to pull back her arm but I refused to let go saying, "You told me not to speak to you, not touch you, " came my clarification.

"Y-you "

Her red angry face announced her defeat, she was tongue-tied. Isabella huffed and threw her face the other way.

I smirked in victory. I was her father and king of trickery; who does she think she inherited her intelligence from?

Examining her body, I discovered the red, fluid-filled blisters were emerging and spreading; why wasn't this thing healing?

Won't this destroy her delicate skin? A trace of panic crossed my features, this was the first time seeing my daughter this sick.

Yeah, Kay and I had taken care of her the first two years she came to us, but my ex-wife had been the one who spent more time with her as expected.

Even as a child, I don't remember this little devil ever getting sick cause she was given the best medical attention money could ever buy. Moreover, Isabella had always been a strong kid, it's still quite a shock to know that she was easily conquered by chickenpox.

Just then, Amanda walked past us but stepped back upon noticing my presence. There was a look of surprise on her face when she saw me with my daughter.

Yeah, I knew what she was thinking but I'm just trying to act the role of a father; I'm not an emotionless bastard. Besides, I don't want to waste Maya's sacrifices in bringing both of us together.

"You're welcome home, Sir Nik" She welcomed me and continued "Dinner would be served "

"Alright, give me a few minutes, I need to wash up " Isabella tugged her hand free as soon as she felt me slacken them.

I rose to my feet but did not forget to warn her, "Be a good girl, I'll be back soon for dinner "

Her response was a snort which I was used to already. In fact, a snort was a good thing which meant you still had a redemption chance.

Due to the fact I couldn't keep my dear daughter waiting for long, I hurried up in the bathroom, changed clothes, and was down in the dining room in no time; though Isabella was seated already.

It seems Amanda applied some sort of white lotion on her body that made my daughter look like a ghost especially with her hair let down like that.

"It's called calamine lotion, " Amanda explained while filling my glass with water when she saw me scrutinizing my daughter from her head to her feet.

"Don't worry, it's not hazardous to her health as far as she doesn't swallow it or put it in her eyes " She assured me upon seeing the concerned expression on my face.

"Is there not a better medication that poses no danger risk? " I asked, still worried.

Isabella was quite tactile, what if she touches that thing smeared on her body and then mistakenly puts it while rubbing her eyes?

"I'm not a kid, I can take care of myself," said Isabella with a vexed look. This was the first word she said since dinner was served - quite encouraging.

"Yes, sir Niklaus " Amanda supported her, "I can always flush it with lots of water if she mistakenly gets it into her eyes and seek immediate medical help "

Amanda tried her best to convince me but the "What if?" scenario still plagued my mind.

"You don't have to worry about anything, the lotion would help relieve the symptoms and prevent skin infections "

"Fine" I agreed at last just to satisfy Amanda, the woman can be persistent in defending anything she was passionate about.

I hardly got over the lotion episode when I discovered that Isabella's food was different from mine; It was too plain.

"Why aren't we eating the same food? " I was surprised.

"Ah, about that, Isabella has to avoid hard, spicy, or salty foods that can make her mouth sore "

I was mystified, why was there too much restriction with this sickness? I had no clue what or how to help her out.

"Are you complaining? " Isabella's abrupt comment made my brows furrow.

"You thought it was that easy? Well, for your information, the woman you disposed of spent the whole night taking care of me " My daughter spat with anger in her orbs.

I sighed, at the end of everything it still comes down to Maya.

"You thought parenting was ABC? " Isabella sneered

"I don't remember complain-"

This little devil interrupted me as she dropped her spoon, "Enjoy your meal"

"Sit back down! " I ordered, as soon as she shot up from her seat but Isabella as usual disrespected me by walking past me.

I sprang up angrily to give her a piece of my mind for her rudeness, but what happened next was a wonder; I found myself on the ground.

Strange enough, the fresh air hit my butt and slight pain. What the hell! Apprehension and denial gripped my heart as I traced my bum only to discover it was empty - like bare.

I glanced up when I heard a shriek and saw Amanda cover her face with her palm as she announced, "I'll go get help " and zoomed away.

Slowly, everything began to make sense. I was a victim of my daughter's prank, again; Isabella glued my bottom to the chair.

I had not glanced at my seat thoroughly before sitting down earlier because I was in a hurry to have dinner with my sick daughter as a normal loving father would.

Even when the seat felt funny, I had not given it much thought after all, what could possibly happen? Isabella was a prankster but she was down with an itchy disease, so she wouldn't have time to play a prank on me or so I thought.

Standing abruptly with anger, the momentum must have ripped me from the seat leading to the fall.

Other than my ripped pants and briefs, I'm fine - wait a minute, I think I'm missing a few butt hairs; thankfully, it wasn't my genital.

I peeled off my shirt and wrapped it around my waist, that was enough exposure for today - Amanda would need holy water to cleanse her eyes.

Still, yet, anger was boiling through my veins but I had to think of what Maya would do if she were here, calm down first? Remind me that Isabella was still a kid?

My gaze rested on the dining chair that brought me to the floor which now had my fabric stuck on its surface. I was truly amazed, where in the world had Isabella gotten that glue and what great timing?

My daughter who I was trying hard to show love, took advantage of my sympathy and pranked me, I had a feeling this was just the beginning. Was this how my days were going to look like from now on?

My anger dissipated when I understood Isabella was taking out her anger on me for failing to uphold my part of the deal - yeah, I'm douche so I deserve this one.

With a deep sigh, I left the dining room before Amanda returned, heading straight into Maya's room and lay down on her bed.

I found out recently that sleeping in her room was the cure to my insomnia caused by my haunted dreams. Whenever I lay down here, I have a peaceful dream like never before.

Sleep eventually took me away.

I woke up the next morning, washed up before heading to the kitchen for my usual coffee.

But I was stunned beyond measure when I walked into Isabella preparing coffee.

"Good Morning dad "

I froze. What did I just hear? But she didn't allow me to recover from my shock because she continued.

"I'm sorry for last night which is why I made you your coffee in advance as an apology, " Isabella said and lifted a glass of dark rich coffee to me which smelled good.

"Don't worry, it's not poisoned " This sly little girl flashed me a cute smile when she saw the hesitant look on my face.

"If you don't want to drink, just pour it down the sink." She told me but I was still gaping at her specially made coffee.

I was in a dilemma, drink, or don't drink?

Chapter 136 - One Hundred And Thirty-six : Give In To Temptation

The third point of view

There was no way on earth he was letting her return to Niklaus, Eden thought. Maya was different from other women he has socialized with in the past and present; she was like a breath of fresh air, no wonder Niklaus fell hard for her.

Perhaps he liked her - no, he liked her but not to the extent of being called love and he wanted it to remain that way, he still had great plans for her.

But as perfect as Maya was, she had too many flaws: she was intelligent yet naive; headstrong yet unwary. Albeit what she had gone through in the hands of some people, she still had faith in same damned humanity

It was hard to believe that people like her still existed but Maya had extremely bad luck to have associated with Spencers; his family was a hellhole filled with betrayers and selfish people.

Eden was sorry to Maya; she had such a beautiful heart, but he had larger plans and she was a huge factor in it. His success and failure depended on her and he was going to take a step starting tonight.

But first, he had to break down Maya's wall around him. His mouth curled to the side in a smile, Niklaus wouldn't know what hit him.

"Daddy" Anabelle shook his arm, attracting his attention.

He looked down, "What is it? "

She pouted her lips and rubbed her stomach while casting her pitiful eyes on him, "I'm hungry "

"Get into the car then, let's find a restaurant? " He said to his daughter.

But his cute daughter refused, "I want that " She pointed to a Burger and Fries food stand not far from them.

"Both the food and its location is unhygienic " Eden rejected her idea with disgust but heard Maya snort by his side.

"You rich people and your beratings" She rolled her eyes," Millions of people consume food there every day and haven't died already. Besides, the stomach can't speak what it eats "

"My daughter's health is far more important " He replied to her defensively.

"Anabelle won't die from just a day of eating street food; anyone meant to die would die, healthy or not. Well, protect her all you want, I'm going to fill my stomach with relatable food" Maya decided after lecturing him.

She directed her next question at Pedro."Are you coming along boy or are you waiting for the classic high-end restaurant?"

Eden sensed the mockery in her voice but didn't say anything.

Pedro grinned, "I'm coming with you"

Her face brightened, "At least the little boy knows a good food unlike someone here " She subtly taunted him while leaving with Pedro.

He was firm on his decision but his resolve dwindled when Anabelle kept up with her tantrum and the fact Maya looked in his direction while taking a huge bite out of this mouthwatering hot dog.

He gave in to the temptation.

Eden normally had such dishes but it was always prepared by world-renowned chefs or bought from five-star restaurants, not from a lowly graded roadside food cart.

Negative thoughts about the food flooded his mind as he had his first bite with a grimace on his face. He chewed cautiously, it wasn't that bad.

And that was how Eden wolfed down serving after serving till his stomach had no space to accommodate another.

"So much for, 'my daughter's health is far more important' " She ridiculed Eden animatedly after they were done with their food.

Eden let her mock him to her heart satisfaction, he deserved it a bit but he still wouldn't give up on his belief.

He had grown up in the countryside, seen what poverty looked like, and the poor living standard of people; how clean was the cooking apparatus? Cooking environment? What health measures were put into preparing the dish? - He had a good reason to worry about the food.

"We should leave already," Maya announced, looking up at the sky; It was evening.

"We still have one more place to stop before going home," Eden told her.

"Where is that? "

"It's a secret "

She narrowed her eyes at him suspiciously, "I hope you're not planning on - "

"Don't you even trust me one bit? " He interjected.

"Try again " She patted him on the shoulder and added, " In your next life"

They got into the car and drove off but Maya knew she shouldn't have trusted him cause they found themselves trudging through a meadow minutes later.

"Where in the world are you taking us? " She complained, already tired of walking.

"We're almost there! " He shouted, ahead of them.

"You said that ten minutes ago! " She reminded him.

"Don't worry, we're here already " he said with a hint of excitement in his voice.

Maya's brows narrowed together in confusion, what could get him this happy? So she and the kids hurried after him and that was when she saw it.

"Wow " Maya breathed, taking in the clear azure pool staring back at her. The water was breathtakingly surreal that she just stared in awe.

Eden's lips tilted to the side as he watched the look on her face, he knew she was going to love it; simple things moved her.

"How is this possible?! " Maya exclaimed.

The pure spring water was hidden in the meadow and was so blueish green that one could forget to breathe while staring at it, so beautiful.

Then out of the corner of her eyes, she saw Eden begin to take off his clothes, her hands flying to her face.

"What are you doing? "

"What do you think I'm doing? Do you think I came here to just admire the wonders of nature?" He said while undressing till he was in nothing but his shorts.

"If you can swim, there is no harm in taking a dip. After such a long walk, the feel of the cool water on your skin would be rejuvenating " He persuaded her.

"I didn't come with any swimming clothes, " Maya excused herself.

But his eyes rove over her body in a way that made her uncomfortable, her hands across her chest protectively, "What are you thinking, pervert? "

"Just come in your undies, you're not the only female here " He tipped his head to the side indicating a few villagers swimming on the other side of the spring.

No way, getting into that water with him was a bad idea.

"But I can't go home wet," Maya protested, happy to know she had something tangible to evade him.

"We have clothes in the car, remember? " Eden's knowing smile told her he knew her plans.

Shit! she fell into his trap, Maya realized late.No wonder he was into buying them clothes without checking the price tags; he already planned everything.

"The kids! " Maya remembered," Someone has to look out for them, they can't - "

She was still saying when Anabelle and Pedro jumped into the water with a delighted shrill.

Oh, they could swim.

"You were saying? " The smug smirk on his face irked her.

"I can't - "

"Are you going to tell me you can't swim? You who grew up in the countryside? "

So annoying, she has run out of excuses.

"Don't tell me you're chickening out?"

"I'm not chickening out! "

"Then what? " His eyes expressed mischievous mirth as he asked, "Don't tell me you're shy to strip in front of me? "

Her face flushed, "W-what shy? I'm not shy! "

Eden drew closer, bent towards her ears, and whispered, "You don't need to be shy about anything, love. I've already seen you naked, remember?"

Her blush deepened, how could she forget that embarrassing bathtub incident; he thought she committed suicide.

Incited to prove she wasn't a chicken, Lia took off her jacket faster than Eden's eyes could capture, then peeled her dress from over her head till she was in nothing in her matching blue undies.

"Like what you see? " She winked at the stunned Eden and got into the water.

Eden blinked while his heart went to his chest, why was it slamming hard against his chest? Gosh, it must be his body's natural attraction to a half-naked woman.

Eden was right, the water was cool against her skin and she liked it.

"Maya! " She heard Annabelle scream her name and turned around only to have water splashed at her face.

Anabelle giggled, "Gotcha "

Maya wiped her face with her hand before splashing the little girl in return which turned into a game as the others joined in too.

They didn't stay in the water for more than thirty minutes since Eden was concerned over his daughter catching a cold.

She was genuinely surprised Eden didn't try any silly move in the water like touching her inappropriately or getting a good feel of her body in the guise of playing - maybe, he wasn't as bad as she thought.

Eden knew how many times he had to drag his eyes off her body or fight his hand from touching her. Yes, he persisted; there's no doubt he was sexually attracted to her, which man wouldn't?.

Eventually, he drove everyone home and the kids who were elated for a day well spent slept off without having dinner.

Eden was in the wine cellar, his hand trailing along the bottom of the wines arrayed on the racks.

The girl might be comfortable around him but she was still cautious. Gladly, she loved wine, so he needed a wine strong enough to loosen her up; make her susceptible to his charms.

It was time to initiate his plan: getting Maya to bed.

The only way he could fully control Maya was to make her unable to escape him, tie her down to him. Once he took her to bed, the guilt wouldn't let her return to Niklaus and the rest of his plan would fall into place.

Maya wouldn't suspect a thing, the wine would be blamed for their passionate night together.

A crooked smile found Eden's lips, he can't wait to get started.

Chapter 137 - One Hundred And Thirty-seven : The Trap Tonight

Maya's POV

Annabelle and Pedro were exhausted by the time we got home, they went to bed at once without dinner.

Everyone was leaving tomorrow, it was Monday. The kids had to go to school; Eden to his workplace and I back to square one.

Well, it was not exactly square one since I now had money unlike before. I wasn't that same Maya who couldn't afford to change her wardrobe at intervals; who had to survive on poor, insufficient meals; I wish Andrew was here to see my notable progress.

Since he wanted a rich girlfriend, I would have rubbed my resources all over his face. It was rude of me to say this but the breakup benefited me financially.

But still, I missed him; no money in this world would substitute Niklaus's presence even though he's an asshole. God Maya! stop wallowing in heartbreak.

I was alone with my thoughts when the sofa dipped slightly, Eden sat down beside me.

"Hey"

"Hey"

My attention was focused on the wine in his grip and the two wine glasses in his other hand.

He pulled out a small sturdy stool from beside the couch and dragged it to the front of us, placing the wine and glasses on top of it.

"Why the sudden wine? " I asked in surprise. Days ago, he was mad at me for drinking wine in a bathtub, now he was offering me a drink.

"You're leaving tomorrow, why don't we drink to that? " Eden suggested, "Or we can drink to you surviving and clearing the scandal? "

"I'll rather toast to leaving tomorrow then, just because the scandal was cleared doesn't mean people won't stop talking. I just pray this doesn't affect my audition" I sighed.

"Don't worry, Isaac is a partial person" Eden informed me while removing the cork, "Just impress him with your acting skills and you're good to go " he passed a glass to me which I took.

I swirled the rich red liquid before bringing it to my lips and took a sip while Eden scrutinized me closely.

"Whoah, this is strong " I pointed out while staring at my glass."Why didn't I see this one that day? "

"It's my cellar, I know where the good stuff is stocked " Eden answered while drinking.

Swallowing the rest in one gulp, I set my empty glass down on the stool but Eden was quick to refill it.

His quick gesture made me eye him questioningly, why was he so eager to serve me tonight?

"Tonight is your last day here, have some fun " Eden explained himself as if he knew the question on my mind.

Scratching my chin, I discovered his words made sense: I was returning to that hellhole of a city tomorrow, so why can't I enjoy this last night?

"Let's toast to your returning " He suggested and refilled my glass, handing it to me as he lifted his glass.

"To your well spent holidays in the countryside, " He said with a hint of laughter.

Chuckling, I lifted my glass in his direction and concurred," To my well spent holidays then "

We clicked glasses, then drank.

"You're a good drinker " Eden drew attention to my drinking capacity, he was quite observant this night.

I waved it off, "I'm nothing compared to my grandmother. You should see her, even up-to-now I still can't beat that old woman in a competition; she's a drinking demoness "

"Shouldn't she refrain from drinking due to her age? "

I snorted, "I told her so but each time she replies and I quote 'An old woman is never too old to perform her favorite dance step; age can never stop what a person is used to' and she moves to the next drink "

Eden smiled slightly but that was all and that caught my attention, I faced him asking, "What's your dream?"

He was surprised, I could see it in his eyes when he glanced up at me. He gulped and looked away leaving me puzzled, did I ask something I wasn't supposed to?

Weird, I didn't find anything wrong with the question nor too personal considering our close relationship.

"You don't have to answer if you don't want to " came my remark while taking another glass, I could sense I made him uncomfortable.

Eden shifted uneasily in his seat and just when I was about to change the topic, he answered.

"I don't have a dream"

" Huh? "

There was a trace of confusion mixed with disbelief on my face, what is he talking about? Who in this world doesn't have a dream?

"That's impossible "

"Once you're born in the Spencer family, you already have a role; there's a paved path waiting for you to follow " he answered with an apathetic demeanor but I could tell he was just masking his feelings, this was his most vulnerable state.

I kept the glass on the stool, took his hand without warning, and placed it on mine.

There was a rollercoaster of emotions on his face while watching my gesture, it was obvious he was bottling his feelings.

"I'm not going to press further if you don't want to open up but you should know this; everyone deserves to be happy and that includes you.

"Sometimes duty wins over our desires and it's hard to retrace those baby steps but find an equilibrium, a point where you can balance both and make yourself fulfilled " I pep talked to him and boomed a warm smile afterward.

For a while Eden was lost, he stared at me without blinking, making me think my motivational speech damaged him.

"Hey, you okay?" I waved at his face when he withdrew his hand from my clasp with lightning speed.

Eden coughed and looked away, he looked flustered or so I thought, his next statement belied it.

"You should keep that crap for people who need it, not me. How do you know I'm not happy with what I'm doing? Must I have such a childish fantasy to be happy? "

I made faces and punch gestures at him when he wasn't looking but behaved myself when he turned around.

So frustrating! Couldn't he just say thank you for my words of encouragement? Did he know how much I racked my brain just to come up with those?

Just him wait, when I become a celebrity and get invited to seminars, these words of mine would become powerful and I'll copyright it just to rub it on his face.

I grabbed the wine I had grumpily filled and tried to take a drink but he snatched it away from my grip abruptly.

"What now?! " I whined, flinging my leg in the air and shaking my body in a childish fit.

"No more drinking for you " Eden declared firmly.

"You're seizing my drink because of my speech? What's so wrong with what I said?!"

"Everything," he said with no emotion. How did he turn from a sweet company to this cold, petty,? annoying frenemy that quickly?

"You're narrow-minded, I just gave you a good talk nothing else " I pouted my lips in a mean moue while targetng the wine glass he held above his head.

That drink was the last from the bottle and I had purposely taken everything without leaving any for him, hehe - it was not much though, but half bread was better than none.

"Go to bed" He ordered and that was it.

In that moment of distraction, I reached for the wine but Eden was quick to counter my intention; sadly, the glass slipped from his hand and fell to the ground, shattering to pieces.

"Satisfied now? " He asked sarcastically with a raised brow.

I made a scoffing sound and pushed away from him but I made a mistake. Forgetting the fact that I drank beyond my limit, I shot up to my feet and my world swirled.

Never did I expect that he would catch me. I blinked and shook my head to clear the fuzziness, God, I was drunk.

Suddenly, Eden carried me off my feet drawing a startled scream from my lips while I held onto him for dear life.

He shook his head with a mocking smirk and began to head to God knows where.

I panicked, "What are you doing? Where are you taking me? "

He stopped and gave me a lewd grin, "What do you think? Of Course, I'm taking you to my room so we can have a steamy and passionate time together. Imagine the fun we would have tonight " Eden whispered into my ears seductively, causing my throat to dry up as I watched his lewd grin evolve into an evil one.

"Put me down, " I said to him but he ignored me and continued his joyous journey.

"Put me down now! " I barked and when he refused, bite into his arm hard causing him to wince and he had no choice than to drop me.

"Ouch " I winced as my bum hit the hard floor. I glared up at him with anger as tears threatened to well up in my eyes, that was really painful.

"You're welcome by the way, " Eden remarked sarcastically as he began to climb down the stairs.

Wait a minute - stairs.

That was when I realized he dropped me right in front of my door; I was too drunk and furious to observe my surroundings earlier; he was just playing me, tsk how annoying!

I stood to my feet, dusted my bottom before heading to my room with no idea that a simple motivational speech saved my ass tonight.

Chapter 138 - One Hundred And Thirty-eight : Paving Her Way

The third point of view :

"At this rate, you'll grow wrinkles all over your face " Kim attempted to calm the agitated Christina who was spacing up and down her office in a fit of anger.

"Shut up! "? Tina spat at her with a fiery glare.

Kim helplessly pressed her lips together, she swore never to joke with that pretentious witch ever again. Rolling her eyes when the witch heiress was not looking, she cursed her over and over in her heart.

Kimberly checked the time on her wristwatch and bit back a profanity when she discovered it was mid-afternoon - today was a waste.

All because of this stupid woman, she calls a busy lawyer to her company and does nothing but throw a tantrum over a man. Unlike Tina who sits in her office and orders people around, Kim had an actual job to return to.

There was no doubt that she would be K-Group heiress because her parents would never hand over the company to Maya. Kim has no competition still, she has to prove to her father that she was worth it else a substitute CEO would be appointed.

Fine Kimberly, take a deep breath, you shouldn't erupt in anger and do something stupid; you still need Tina to succeed, play it cool.

On the other hand, Tina was fuming in anger, she just wanted to transfer her aggression on someone right now.

She couldn't even understand why she called Kim in the first place? Perhaps, looking at her face reminds her of the root of all her problems: that idiot was the sister of that devil spawn called Maya.

Though, they were technically half-sister but who cares! As far as both come from the same womb, they were no different.

K-Group was not on par with Debra Group but that didn't mean she could assault that gold digger physically and go scot-free; Kim was an attorney and had her contacts.

There was no doubt Debra would win the lawsuit if Kim pressed charges against them - Tina had powerful relatives in different tiers of government.

But the buzz generated by the scandal would ruin the company image, threatening her position as the heiress.

Tina was her parent's only child but there was an illegitimate brother as a result of her father not keeping his d*ck in his pants.

Yes, her parents showed preferential treatment as expected; he was not pureblood but her brother was dearly loved by her relatives, posing a huge threat to her.

Underneath that cunning innocence, Tina was sure that the scum of a brother would strike once given an opportunity, which was why she needed Niklaus desperately.

Yes, she loves Niklaus with all her heart but he was essential in solidifying her position; being the madam of the Spencer Group was one hell of an accomplishment and a fairytale every woman fantasized.

Tina would never let go of him, no other woman but she deserves Niklaus.

Once they get married, she would merge both companies, and then, no one would question her authority - not even her family.

Tina glanced up at Kim thoughtfully, for now, she would torture her slowly and subtly to fulfill her bloodthirst moreover, her dirty jobs needed a cleaner.

"Are you done now?" Kim asked her when she plopped down on the sofa in her office.

Tina smirked and spoke with a haughty tone, "Why? Do you want to leave already? "

"I'm not supposed to leave? " Kim retorted, the gleam in her eye, and her tone was apparently a challenge.

Both eyes met and collided, they knew what was on each other's mind. Why not?

The two of them were selfish and sly individuals who had to join forces to accomplish a common goal: eradicate Maya. Other than that, there was no love lost between them.

Kim knew she was just a pawn in Tina's ploy to destroy her half-sister from the initial start, so she had no right to complain about the unfair treatment meted out on her.

But that doesn't mean she would allow herself to be treated like a rag doll, she had her own limit too.

Tina knew she was endangering herself by colliding with someone as smart as her - if not smarter. But sometimes, the most dangerous place was also the safest place.

Beside to defeat her enemy, she needed someone who knew her from inside out; household enemies were the best.

"So Niklaus humiliated you? " Kim changed the topic, arguing with Tina was not going to lead her anywhere.

Rippling anger coursed through Tina's vein, she clenched her shaking fist and bit down on her bottom lips, she would never forget today!

She had thought Niklaus was joking when he had told her to discuss the details of the engagement party with his secretary; he truly meant it.

Earlier she had tried calling his line but he refused to pick up, so she decided to go find him in his office.

Sadly for her, Tina was denied entrance to his office by his security and was directed to his secretary instead.

Remembering that morning incident brought back the anger, she had never been disgraced like that in her entire life!

Kim's lips tilted upward, it seems anger and jealousy were the only emotion that could ruffle this cool-headed pretender.

"So what are you going to do? By chance, don't tell me you would take that humiliation lying down?"

Tina sprang to her feet and scoffed under her breath, "You talk as if you don't know me "

"I know, but you can't touch Niklaus, you might as well just sign your death certificate, " Kim told her but was subtly inciting her to take action.

Tina threw her head back and released an evil cackle that made the hairs on Kim's arm stand on edge.

Her eyes darkened, "Yes, you're right, I can't touch Niklaus but I can harm the little bitch he treasures - body and soul."

Kim stood to her feet with a white sheet of paper in her hand, this was the moment she'd been waiting for,

"Thought so too which is why I have this important news" She handed the paper to Tina who had a curious look on her face.

Tina snatched the list from her grip and went through it, a rollercoaster of emotions playing out on her face all the while she glued her face to it.

Suddenly, she began to laugh till tears escaped her eyes, the back of her palm was pressed against her mouth, it was that amusing.

"Wait, she would be auditioning for the lead role this week? " Tina asked in disbelief.

"It appears so "

Frost touched Tina's eyes, " She would not make the list, not on my watch, I'll make sure of it "

"No, she would audition" Kim decided, causing Tina to raise a brow in her direction.

"Excuse me? "

Kim felt the chill coming her way but remained calm as she explained

"According to my sources, Niklaus had been the one who recommended her for the role and when met with opposition from other top artists who got hold of the news, he almost ended their contract had Eden not mediated. Wouldn't we also attract trouble if we stop her? "

Tina had been ready to deal with that idiot when she fearlessly opposed her, turns out she had a good reason for doing so.

"So you're trying to say, we should give that bitch the illusion of losing, then when she rises to the peak of her career, we drag her to the bottom "Tina surmised.

Kim nodded.

Tina worked her jaw while her eyes moved upward in thought," No doubt, it's a great plan but I'm not satisfied "

She moved towards Kim until they were standing face-to-face. Both were of the same height though Kim was three inches taller but Tina covered it up with her heel.

"I need to torment Maya, make her suffer, and feel pain! Put her in her place and show her where she truly belongs " The heiress emphasized by fisting her hand as if she was crushing something.

"Of course, I thought of that "

Tina was surprised, "You did? "

Kim smiled warmly at her," You can have all the fun you want with her by investing in the movie; become one of the investor "

Tina was happy with her suggestion until she discovered a flaw, "No, Nik would discover my plan right away"

"Who said you had to invest by yourself? "

"What? "

"In your circle, don't you have friends that would help you out with this little favor?"

"Yes, but - " Suddenly her face brightened, " Of course, this is brilliant - " A knock at the door interrupted her, both eyes rested there.

" Come in "

Immediately, a man walked into the room and the ever sharp Kim didn't fail to capture the anticipatory look on Tina's face as her sixth sense tingled.

Her brows narrowed together in suspicion, she could sense the sexual tension between these two; wasn't she now together with Niklaus? Was Tina Debra two-timing?

Tina cleared her throat after a moment of gazing at her male visitor, "You can leave now "

As expected, she was being dismissed; Kim realized she has fulfilled her role for the day and was being discarded.

Although burning with anger still, she passed a sweet smile on her face saying, "Alright, see you later " and left, but not without taking a good look at the "guest".

Kim had already profiled that little bitch; she always needed someone or something to transfer her aggression when agitated.

And judging from the fact she had a male alone in her office? It was obvious what would go down there in a few minutes; thankfully, she had her plans.

"You're late," Tina told Fernando who ignored her, crossing the distance between them.

"You always call me when you want to vent your anger " He pointed out while playing with her hair.

Tina cocked an arrogant brow," And do you have any problem with that?"

Fernando chuckled, then wrapped his arms around her waist and drew her flush against him; making sure to rub her against his obvious erection.

Tina gasped, pleasure zinged through her body while her throat dried up from delicious anticipation.

Seconds later, clothes were thrown in different directions and angles.

Minutes later, the lustful moans and grunts of couples going at it filled the room.

Tina closed her eyes as sensation after sensation rocked her body.

Fine, since Nik wouldn't reciprocate her love, she would do whatever she wanted; his money would do the rest of the motivation.

Unknown to both, Kim who had returned to her office in the guise of grabbing a forgotten item was filming their intense unadulterated sex scene.

She laughed a crooked smile, for sure there was a probability Niklaus wouldn't break up with Tina even if he sees the video but the seed of distrust has already been sown; Kim was slowly paving her way.

Chapter 139 - One Hundred And Thirty-nine : So Much For Trusting Isabella

Nik's POV

"The deep blue necklace and earring set is suitable for both youngsters and matured people though it comes in other color variations but this..."

I was in a meeting with my workers but stopped paying attention thirty minutes ago, why? My stomach was acting up, which was odd.

Strange, I haven't even taken anything into my stomach since morning unless...

My eyes flew open at once, so far the only thing I consumed was the coffee my daughter Isabelle prepared for me.

You've got to be kidding me, don't tell me Isabella really put something in the drink to upset my stomach; wasn't the specially prepared coffee a peace offering?

Ugh, a painful pang hit me.

I felt the urge to vomit, not to mention the cramps on my stomach made things worse.

For support, I grabbed the desk so hard I would have crushed it -? if that was possible - fighting off the painful groan from escaping my mouth while beads of sweat decorated my forehead.

Damn you Isabella, this is not funny.

"Sir Niklaus are you okay, you look sick?" Asked one of my executives sitting beside me who noticed something was wrong with me.

But his question attracted the others who pinned me with their curious gazes.

"He's right." said another, who turned around to get a good glance at me "You look pale and sweating profusely " He observed correctly.

I would have barked and ordered them to mind their own business, then focus on the meeting but I felt the urge to have a bowel movement.

"Meeting adjourned " I sprang up-to my feet without warning, surprising everyone by dismissing the meeting that barely began.

With huge yet careful strides, I skedaddled out of the office eliciting shocked gasps from everyone who thought I was kidding when I ended the meeting abruptly .

They all knew I never joke with my meetings which was why they always came prepared; an unfruitful meeting results in a firing spree.

Moreover, this was the first time in history I dismissed a meeting because of my personal reason, so? the full-fledged gossipers resumed their speculation as soon as I left.

If only they knew my daughter put something in my drink that waged war with my intestines - if only they knew.

In the hallway, I sprinted to my office and didn't even spare a look at the workers who greeted me on the way or my surprised secretary who stood to her feet puzzled - the CEO was running with his hand pressed against his butt.

Inside my office, I turned the doorknob and ran into my bathroom; lifted up the toilet lid effortlessly, zipped and pulled down my pants as I began to stress my rectal area.

I thought I was going to die. No doubt, I was experiencing an upset stomach brought about by Isabella's crude prank and diarrhoea was just one of the many symptoms.

Great, just when I decided to trust my dear daughter, she wasn't going scot-free for this one!

I spent two hours in the toilet before I was able to move a muscle without sprinting back to the toilet whenever the urge to defecate overwhelms me.

Face scrunched up,I walked carefully back to my office, movement as slow as a tortoise while my hand was pressed on the side of my bare stomach.

I had managed to take a bath in order to wash off the sweat accumulated during the intensive excrement but it didn't aid my sore rectal area, that comes with diarrhea.

The crooked smile on Judy's face irked me to the extent I glared at him and snatched my shirt from him; he brought a change of clothes to me. I had called him during my joyful ride in the toilet - note the sarcasm.

Judy handed an over-the-counter loperamide hydrochloride

which I gulped down with a glass of water without wasting time, the drug would help control the diarrhea.

"Isabella really did a number on you today" Judy snickered but I had no time nor energy to quibble with him.

So I ignored him and lay down on the bed he had ordered into my office, with my face hidden in the crook of my arm - that was the end of work? for today.

It would have been better resting at home but that little devil didn't go to school today because of the chickenpox, she was home; I didn't want to see her face at the moment.

"Since you don't feel nauseous anymore, you should eat something. Doctor Sam said you should take a clear liquid diet for the first twenty-four to thirty-six hours "

I yawned in both hunger and exhaustion," Fine, just order something for me "

My head moved to the side, watching Judy wrinkle his nose as if he smelt something unpleasant in the air.

Yeah, that's right, I farted, so what? This was my office and as far as I know, everyone had freedom to express themselves which I just did.

Judy didn't say anything, instead his stoic expression returned while he fanned his hand towards his face.

"Order your men to conduct a search in Isabella's room, they should be thorough and remove any weird item; kid's toy or not? Get rid of it as far as it looks suspicious " I commanded Judy.

First, it was mixing fenugreek seeds with my coffee beans; secondly, glueing my butt to the chair; thirdly, putting excessive laxative into my coffee drink; the next could be catching my balls in a trap.

What amazes me the most was how and where she gets those stuffs from? which was why my men had to comb through her room meticulously.

My daughter was smart; if she really took after me, then she would hide them in a place that was easy to spot yet ignored.

Isabella was becoming a terror day after day. I get the fact she's mad at me because of what I did to Maya and our failed agreement, but this was getting out of hand.

If I hadn't hurried out of the meeting room in time, I would've defecated in my pants and get labeled as the "poop CEO" by those gossipmongers

"Alright, " Judy answered.

He was about to leave but remembered something, "That's right, Tina came earlier as you expected."

"Not surprising" I mumbled uninterestedly.

I was at home sipping the coffee the little devil made for me when Christina called. As usual, I ignored and silenced her call before heading to the company.

Having known Christina has a knack for pestering me, I had ordered them strictly not to let her into my office once she arrived and just as I thought, she did come.

Since Christina was so enthusiastic about the engagement, she should take-up the preparation - I wasn't interested one bit, she could do whatever she wanted - while I provide the finance.

"She was quite furious " Judy informed me.

I snorted, "Tina has always had quite a temper but that's none of my business - I just pity anyone who is on the receiving end of her aggression."

"For how long would you stall time? "

I sat upright, "Excuse me? "

"It's obvious you don't want to marry her which is why you're being so cold and unresponsive to her, but for how long do you think this tactics would work?" Judy questioned me seriously with our gazes locked.

I worked my jaw, "You're so interested in my private life lately "

"I'm not trying to pry nor be a busybody but am concerned over you - "

"Your concerns are appreciated but that's all, thank you " I interrupted him.

Judy bit the inside of his mouth and just when I thought he would leave, he went ahead to add, "Maya changed you and she deserves an applause for that. You're much better now than the previous Niklaus who was an asshole. I pray you don't deviate from this path else all her sacrifices would be in vain "

"If? you're done - "

"Have a nice day " He dismissed himself and left while I watched with a dumbfounded expression.

Judy was becoming fearless because he knew notwithstanding my countless threat, I would do nothing to him ; he's my most trusted henchman so I couldn't do without him at the moment.

I sighed and laid back on my bed just as my phone rang, alerting me of a incoming message. I couldn't identify? the sender but opened the video? sent to me which sure looked interesting thanks to it's thumbnail.

For the two minutes or so duration the video lasted, I forgot to breathe. Suddenly, I burst into a boisterous laughter - one that shook my body and brought hot tears to my eyes.

It was interesting, she had given up that easily?

Since Tina was back to sleeping with Fernando, it only meant one thing: she has given up on veering for my love and attention; she now wanted my power, nothing else.

Though Christina was the heiress to the family business but rumours of her illegitimate brother being more suitable for the position was rousing and now, she was desperate to keep her seat.

I rewatched the video with a smirk, seems the Oldman's favoured daughter-in-law is losing her value.

Fine, let's watch how this plays out.

Chapter 140 - One Hundred And Forty : Eden Likes You

Maya's POV

Why was my room upside down? Oh wait, it wasn't, just a trick of the eyes. A piercing pain shot through my head causing me to groan as I sat upright - wonderful, I was having a hangover.

Just how many shots did I take last night? It felt like a hammer was constantly banging on my head; I swear I'm never drinking again.

In that horrible state, I dragged my sorry ass to the bathroom and did an intense brushing plus wash up. Now my head was clear, I came to realize that I was a fool by drinking with Eden last night.

Eden was a good yet sly one, what if he had taken advantage of my drunkenness and did something to me? I hit myself on the head, you stupid girl! That fox tempted you with wine and you fell right into it.

I could only imagine the kind of death stare Niklaus would give me if we were still together and he happens to hear of this; he would surely look for a way to teach me a lesson.

Weird, but thinking of Niklaus brought tears to my eyes , I missed him like crazy. At first, I was just tearing up next, I began to cry heart-wrenching sobs that wracked my body.

I missed him terribly: his voice, touch, face, every part of him. I longed to run my hands through his dark silky hair; kiss that sexy yet wicked lips of his; even those furrows on his face when he sleeps and watch him flaunt his bare chest.

My heart tightened, it felt like the air in the room was insufficient to support my lungs; was this what heartbreak feels like? Like someone was squeezing your heart, repeatedly stabbing you?

I experienced heartbreak when Andrew broke up with me but it wasn't as raw, as intense as this one.

With Niklaus I was real, I didn't have to hide who I was; I bore my soul to him. Perhaps, that was why it hurt too much now.

Gosh, stop being this way Maya, it's pathetic! Niklaus and you are just not meant together. Besides, why weep over a man that didn't feel the same way for you.

Yeah, that was right, crying over a man was the last thing I've ever imagined myself doing. Moreover, the man I was wasting my tears on, was probably in bed with another woman.

The thought of Niklaus in bed with a woman-Tina or not - made my veins boil and my lost senses to return.

keeping my emotions in check, I washed my tears stained cheeks and headed downstairs- today was my departure.

The house was surprisingly quiet when I walked into the living room, then I remembered today was a Monday. The kids must have left much earlier to make it to school on time.

"You're up, " Mrs.El said as soon as she spotted me.

I nodded a response while rubbing my temple with my hand, the crying must have aggravated the headache.

"Sir Eden guessed you would develop a hangover from drinking too much last night. So he prepared a hangover soup for you, alongside some medication" She informed me, gesturing to the direction of the dining room with her head.

"How nice of him " My gaze searched around," Where is he? "

"He left already"

"Left? " I was surprised.

"He took the kids back to the city and was sorry he wouldn't be able to accompany you back. But don't worry, he sent a chauffeur for you "

"Alright " I gave her a wry smile and settled in for breakfast. But I couldn't help but think Eden avoided me on purpose.

Since there was no one to keep me company or entertain me, the meal was rather short and boring. Once I was done, I headed to my room and packed up without wasting time.

"Thanks for taking care of me these past few days," I said to Mrs. El as soon as I was good to go.

"No, of course not " She replied humbly, "I was just doing my job "

"You did well at your job then" I complimented the housekeeper, expecting her to receive the praise in good faith but was surprised when she asked instead.

"Can I plead for a favor? "

"S-sure "

"Please take care of Sir Eden "

I blinked, wasn't expecting that one.

"Eden might look strong but he's extremely insecure and fragile inside. Moreover, you're the first woman he's ever brought here - he thinks of this place as his sanctuary, where he can be himself "

I shook my hands "I think you're misunderstanding something here, Eden and I are not -
"

"He likes you" She announced and I stiffened, I probably didn't hear right.

"That night he thought you committed suicide, I saw the desperation in his eyes; he was scared of losing you " She explained but that didn't convince me one bit.

Anyone who witnessed such a startling traumatic scene would react the same way Eden did, it wasn't a concrete proof to support her claim.

I wanted to rebut her statement but having known it would lead us nowhere but more arguments, I gave in just for peace to reign

"Fine, I'll look out for him " I agreed.

Watching out for Eden and dating him were two different cases, no big deal.

"Till we meet again " I waved goodbye to her, walked outside to meet the chauffeur already waiting for me.

"Morning miss " He greeted me which I responded to and he opened the door as I climbed into the car.

The journey home began but my thoughts were in chaos, I couldn't get whatever Mrs.El said out of my head.

Eden liked me? No way, that was impossible. This must be one of his ploys to make me fall for him or something.

It was a long ride to the extent I fell asleep but made it home in one piece without getting kidnapped or trapped by reporters.

I took in the appearance of my apartment which was neatly arrayed but the dust was evidence of my absence.

My eyes settled on the bed which marked the starting point of my relationship with Niklaus a month again.

It was on that bed where he proposed we dated and I the foolish girl fell under his charm and sugary tongue and agreed with no hesitation; so much for taking a risk.

I tugged the cover off the bed and dumped it in the garbage bin. The best way to move on was to stop dwelling on the past, that was what I was doing - I wouldn't let the past haunt me.

Rolling up the sleeve of my shirt and tied my hair back in a ponytail, I began to clean up my apartment. By the time I was done, took a bath and all, it was late. So I ate dinner and went to bed.

That was pretty much my routine for the past two days: sleep, wake, wash, eat, study my script, answer Eden's incessant calls - he was worried I might have clumsily killed myself.

My audition was finally tomorrow, I was busy practicing the role I wanted to play when the doorbell rang.

I didn't bother to check through the peephole since I was sure it was probably Eden's people. After sending over the cellphone he promised to me, he wouldn't stop with his goodies.

Usually, I send back his gifts with a "Thank-you but I don't need them" note but that aggravated the situation because the more they came.

The game was childish, tiring, and irritating but it was pleasing to know that there was a person out there who remembered someone named Maya was in existence, unlike my family.

Opening the door with a vexed groan, I was already prepared to send back the delivery man but I was surprised to find...

"M-mom..? " The words slipped out of my mouth mistakenly. What mom? Mom, my butt!

Still, my jaw dropped, this was totally unbelievable. My eyes must be deceiving me, I thought, and had to pinch myself on the thigh to confirm I wasn't hallucinating.

Kim's mom barely responded and looked down the stairway while tapping her heels on the floor impatiently as if waiting for someone who was wasting her time.

I opened my door wider and peeped out, that was when I saw her: my grandmother.

"Grandma? Granny?! " Surprise and disbelief gleamed in my eyes.

I almost shoved Kim's mother out of the way, hurrying down to my grandma who I welcomed with a bone-crushing hug.

"Granny!" I squealed in delight, wrapping my arms tightly around her while dropping sloppy pecks on her face.

"I missed you " I tightened my hold when she tried to get away.

"Oi! " She cried out and knocked me on the head which prompted me to let go of her with a wince.

" What? " I pouted.

"Look at this kid, do you want to send me to an early grave? Don't you know my waist is now as fragile as an egg? "

I scoffed in disbelief "Fragile my ass"

Granny tried to keep a straight face which failed miserably. "You girl " She tousled my hair playfully while I flashed her a warm smile.

I took my granny from the maidservant assisting her, helping her climb the rest of the stairs. My grandma was quite aged, she could only walk with a cane.

I led her into my apartment and wasn't surprised to see Kim's mom checking my place out with a scrunched up face and a disapproving look.

Today was surely going to be a blast.