

Taming A Billionaire

#Chapter 161 - One Hundred And Sixty-one: No One Would Stop Her Today. - Read Taming A Billionaire Chapter 161 - One Hundred And Sixty-one: No One Would Stop Her Today.

Chapter 161 - One Hundred And Sixty-one: No One Would Stop Her Today.

Isabella's point of view

An evil smirk twisted my mouth to the side, what did father take me for? He was becoming careless around me. Well, who cares, it was working for my good anyway.

I stared over his phone in my grasp, my smirk broadened into a grin, I bet he never expected that.

When he threw me over his shoulder earlier causing me to scream, I used that opportunity to slip my hand into his back pocket and took out his cellphone.

That was an easy trick for me anyway since I've been going out for training, moreover, Niklaus was distracted else he would have caught me.

We have this secret camp where most of Spencer's train - mostly males though, Grandfather thinks that aspect of the business is not meant for women but I'm the only exception; the future first female heir.

We have these instructors who train us but sometimes Grandfather's friends from the military come once in a blue moon to give us some fighting tips and test us.

Lately, I've been missing out on my training on purpose since I was pretty mad at Grandfather - if it wasn't for his schemes, Niklaus and Maya would have been married already.

Sadly, my revenge plans have been adjusted. I've been so obsessed with revenge against my father that I'm ignorant to see that the house was on fire and I might get burned real soon if I was not careful.

The problem? Finding a mother?

Whether I hated Niklaus or not, it was obvious my position was threatened by Tina. I didn't need to profile her, just her eye shape alone spelled greed.

So I'm on a new mission "GNMT" which means 'Get Niklaus And Maya Together' but it seems that would be a lot harder to achieve than my vengeance plan.

There was a lot of factors working against me:

Grandfather: I seriously don't get why that old man dislikes Maya. He used to be my number one person but right now, he's at the bottom. Yeah, we can rearrange that position when he's ready to listen to me.

Christina: The legendary witch and my supposed future evil stepmother. She's a huge stumbling block in my plan and I can't just move her because she has two major supporters - Grandfather and father.

Eden: That sly old uncle and Annabelle's father whose motive is still unknown. But judging from what I saw in the countryside, I think he feels a lot more for Maya than he intends - I'm so not going to lose to him!

Niklaus: My stupid father who thinks women are his playthings- thankfully, Maya has changed that. Sometimes, I loved the way Maya left him so he could feel the same pain he inflicted on women's hearts. But then if she leaves, who's going to perform the mommy role?

Ugh, so annoying. I can't believe I'm the one cleaning up his mess - wish I had a say in who was going to be my father.

Maya: My target and number one person at the person - that special position in my heart may change at any time. She claims to be smart but so dumb, determined, badass, stubborn, and a big softie at heart. She's so ignorant when it comes to love and handling my father, it's so irritating - I might go crazy while getting them together.

I thought of many plans and decided to try one I see in novels a lot - getting them drugged with aphrodisiac. That one would be the fastest route to get a baby sibling which would then force both idiots to get together

Sadly, those drugs were harder to get than it looks. Even if I got it, I've set a bad record that father doesn't trust to eat anything I make - It would have been easier if Maya was here.

Now, with my father's phone in hand, I would get the hell out of this suffocating house - just hope he doesn't find out till I make my escape.

To stop me from visiting Maya, that man kept me away from all communication gadgets.

"Hello, who is this?" Annabelle's voice came from the other end.

A wry place twisted my lips, her father was kind enough to leave her with her cellphone.

"It's me, Izzy, " I told her. She was probably confused since I was calling with Niklaus' phone.

"You have a cell phone? How surprising"

Yeah, how surprising. I was always the one at the receiving end of every punishment.

"What's your status?" I asked, ignoring her gloating tone.

"Code yellow" Came her reply which made me facepalm, was that even a punishment?

If I was given that same lenient punishment, I would have made my way to Maya already. What was I expecting from Anabelle anyway?

"I'm going to Maya, are you interested?" I offered but her response wasn't what I expected.

"What?!" She sounded shocked, "You're causing trouble already?"

"Why? You don't want to see Maya?"

"Of course, I want to see Maya but daddy says it's dangerous out there and I don't want him to worry" she explained meekly.

"Alright, miss goody two shoe" I taunted her, "Sit back and enjoy being daddy's girl, I bet you'd receive the daughter of the year award"

I was about to end the call when I heard, "Wait"

Smiling inwardly, I asked, "What?"

"I would go with you but on one condition"

My brow rose interestedly, "What is it?"

"If we get caught, the blame is on you" Anabelle demanded.

I snorted, she thinks she's smart? Let's see how this goes.

"Alright, if we get caught, I'll tell your father that I kidnapped you from your house, threatening to shave your hair if you don't come with me. How does that sound?"

"Mmm, that's fine"

"Then you, what are you going to do for me?"

Now's my turn

"Huh? I don't understand"

Yeah, she was supposed to be confused.

"You're coming to see Maya remember? "

"Didn't you - "

"I took all the blame but I'm not going to be the only one at loss. I only suggested we visit Maya which you could have rejected, yet you didn't.? What are you going to do for me for busting you out of that place?

Yeah, I'm a devil and I know it but there's no such thing as free favor in this world. It's give and take, dear cousin."

There was a moment of hesitation on her part as she thought of what to do for me - she knew I was high maintenance and childish favors wouldn't work on me.

"I've thought hard but I don't know what to give you, Isabella" She complained.

"Fine, owe me a wish then " I suggested nonchalantly.

"Wish? Cool, I owe you a wish " she agreed readily.

Perhaps she would have reconsidered that decision if she had seen the spooky smile crossing my features right now.

"Alright, now remember a deal is a deal, " I noticed her just in case.

"Of course" she acquiesced.

What a simpleton.

"Get ready, we'll there before you know it "

I heard the roar of a car and walked over to my window; Niklaus had left already - time to plot my departure.

Having waited a few minutes, I began to type: "Send Isabella and her cousin to the hospital as soon as possible.No questions asked"

"Now, send "

I clicked on the send message icon after inputting the receipt's number aka the head guard in charge of here.

"Successful" I grinned, rubbing my palms together gleefully while anticipation coursed through my veins.

A few minutes later, I heard a voice coming close to my door, someone's here - for me.

A knock came

Oh, he didn't try forcing his way in? His luck.

I disabled all the booby traps and answered the door.

"What now?" I pretended to be oblivious to what's going on.

"Come down, your father needs you at the hospital" he answered grumpily while his eyes ran over my room which was opened halfway.

"Alright" I went with him without a fight which surprised him - after activating the traps of course.

I had dressed up before he came, no need going through my wardrobe again.

"Yes, get her ready, we would be there pretty soon"

He was making a call, probably to Anabella's people.

"Yes, thank you" He ended the call.

I eyed his cellphone and in the guise of trying to get his attention, knocked the device to the ground.

"F*ck!" He cursed and picked it up as he examined the broken phone whose screen was now showing white nothing else.

"I'm so sorry" My hands flew to my mouth from shock, "I never meant to do that, I just wanted to inquire if that was Anabelle you called?"

He glared at me with gritted teeth, the urge to spank me on the bottom visible in his formed fist but he wouldn't dare to - my father would kill him by hanging.

"James" He called another guard who was watching the area.

"Take her " He commanded and gave further instructions.

"You" He pointed at me with an accusing look, "Don't cause any trouble!" Came his warning.

"Whatever" I replied and followed after the guard who ushered me into the car.

I knew the head guard would be the first Niklaus would alert once he discovers his phone is missing - which was why I destroyed it.

Father was smart, he'd figure out I'm the one who took it.

The journey was very quiet, this new guard didn't say a word to me - perhaps he was severally instructed to?

Tsk, tsk, I was not a bad kid, just focused on what I wanted but everyone's treating me like a criminal.

As expected, he made a stop at Annabelle's place, who was ready to leave and joined me at once.

"How did you do it?" The talkative asked me as soon as she climbed into the car.

I glowered at her pointedly, was she trying to get me into trouble here? Especially now my eyes connected with the guard's through the rearview mirror, he was also performing the role of a driver.

"Figure it out yourself," I said.

Anabelle took that as a cue and shut her trap, I wondered what her intellect was used for?

Minutes passed but my brain was in hyperactivity, processing thoughts afterthoughts.

Niklaus should have found out about his cellphone by now and would try to contact the head guard and if it doesn't go through, would call other guards who would call this guy - No! I had to do something.

"Can I use your cellphone? I need to call my friend" I asked him.

" You can use mi -"

I pinched Anabelle on her laps, so hard tears escaped from her eyes. Can't this girl think before she speaks or was she relaxed because I agreed to take all the blame?

"No, I don't trust you," said the guard who didn't notice what transpired between Anabelle and me.

"Please, I'm not going to do anything stupid. I just want to call my friend Pedro, he comes to our place steadily and you might even know him. Also, I promised to put it on speaker, so please?"

He didn't respond for a while and when I thought to apply plan B, sighed, and handed the phone to me.

"I want to hear your conversation," he said firmly.

No problem.

And so, Anabelle and I spent the next minutes enthusiastically speaking to Pedro who didn't fail us by picking on the first ring.

Unknown to the guard, I blocked out other calls that came in secretly.

No one would stop me today.

Chapter 162 - One Hundred And Sixty-two : Thank God Eyes Weren't Bullet

The third point of view

Nik knew there was no other person who could have stolen his phone without him noticing than Isabella - she was the only one he had been careless around.

That girl was going to be the death of him.

He contemplated sending Isabella abroad but that was probably a wrong decision, who knew what she would do over there? It was better she did all her mischief where he had his eyes on her.

Niklaus called the head guard in charge of his place but it didn't go through, he tried over and over and yet no response - Isabella, again.

His daughter was smart, she figured out the head guard would be the first person he would contact and must have done something to thwart their communication.

He was mad, this daughter of his was putting herself in danger and it enraged him greatly.

They were alive because Sakuzi rescued Maya, God knows what would have happened to them if Maya wasn't around.

"Thank God, you're here" Niklaus breathed a sigh of relief when he bumped into Judy in the passageway.

He was just about to contact another member of his guard to figure out the amount of damage his daughter has done this time when he met him.

"I need your help" He told Judy who wasn't surprised.

Each time he was summoned, it was either to rescue a Spencer or clean up their mess.

"What happened this time?" Judy asked

"It's Isabella, she probably left the house and on her way here. But I need to get my hands on her before she barges in on Maya" Niklaus requested.

"Alright" Judy agreed.

"Thanks, man"

Starting yesterday, Judy was no longer his subordinate or worked for the Spencers anymore. He was now a freelance mercenary he paid to guide Maya in secret.

So it was a favor, Judy did this for him.

"You're welcome," He told his former boss and turned to leave when he remembered something.

"By the way, your father came to see your ex-woman. I called but you didn't answer" He informed Niklaus.

Niklaus hated that word, " ex-woman" when applied to Maya but he couldn't do anything. They weren't together anymore and that was reality!

"Yeah, I know. Thanks for telling me," he appreciated his ex-bodyguard who resumed his duty of protecting his ex-girlfriend immediately. With him watching over Maya, he'd be able to relax a bit.

Judy didn't say a word and left. He didn't leave for the lobby or entrance, rather hid and waited at the edge of the hallway leading to Maya's hospital room.

If the kids were here for Maya, then they would pass through this path undoubtedly.

Five minutes passed, yet nothing.

Ten and fifteen minutes afterward, and yet still no sign of them. He had thought of reconsidering his position and head downstairs when he heard, undoubtedly childish voices coming his way.

"Why did we have to run out of the car?" Anabelle asked her cousin whose eyes were darting around, searching for God knows what.

Before the guard who drove them to the hospital could lead them inside, they had already escaped while he parked the car.

"What are you looking for?" She continued to ask.

"Well, unlike you my dumb cousin who's chatting her time away, I'm doing something resourceful with my brain. Father knows I'm coming, he must have a surprise in store for me" Isabella told her sarcastically.

She instructed "keep your eyes and ears open, sense any trap and we make a run for it"

The girl walked down the corridor with caution but Anabelle was relaxed.

"What do you mean, trap? Relax, nothing is going to happen -"

Anabelle was still saying when Judy appeared from his hiding place, grabbed Isabella was the closest to him on her collar before capturing the other niece who attempted to escape.

"Gotcha!" Judy exclaimed triumphantly.

Isabella slapped her forehead, how could she have forgotten him?! Well, one wouldn't blame her, she'd tried her best here.

Judy pushed Anabelle towards her cousin and gripped both of their tiny wrists together in one hand while his free hand dug into the pocket of his denim for his phone.

Isabella eyed his move, he probably wanted to call her father and inform him of his captives but it seems he has no idea that she stole his phone.

She stared at his Iron grip used to restrict their movement, then eyed Anabelle and mouthed, "Are you ready?"

Her cousin blanched with shock,

"You're not serious, right ?" She mouthed back.

"It's now or never"

Judy put the phone to his ear and was pretty surprised when he heard Niklaus' ringing tone. But where?

To his shock, it was here - the kid had it on her, no wonder he could not connect earlier.

The moment he glanced down, two of his fingers were twisted in a way that made him wince in pain.

His eyes hardened and he growled, "You devils!"

He charged at them but he never expected that those devils would lift their legs and kick him in the place where the sun never shines.

"Sweet Jesus," Judy groaned, his hand flying to his crotch that was on fire, he slid to the ground.

"Oh my God, did we damage him?" Anabelle asked, fear in her voice as she watched that huge man drop to the ground and moaning in pain.

"No, we decapitated him. Now, run!" Isabella commanded and both fled since it was obvious Judy would end their tiny life once he got to his feet.

Meanwhile, in Maya's room, the precarious Tina still refused to let her have peace of mind.

"Since you've given up on Niklaus, does that mean you'd come to our engagement party?" She inquired sincerely but Maya knew she was just rubbing her victory at her face.

"Of course, why wouldn't I come?" Maya agreed to her invitation, she refused to show she was hurt by the stunning news.

It wasn't even up to a month since they broke up and he was throwing an engagement party, already? Why were they in a hurry to get married? Was Tina carrying his child by chance?

Such atrocious thoughts ran through her head even though her expression was as calm as a stagnant lake.

"I'm so glad" Tina faked a relief with her hands pressed over her chest, "I thought with the breakup, you would loathe him but it seems you're an understanding person"

Oh, she loathes him, Maya thought. But she loathes his father more than him which was why she would sell her soul to the devil just to bring him down - enough of people messing with her!

Maya laughed, "Thank you for your compliment, Christina. It just seems childish cutting off all contacts with an ex-boyfriend, after all, Niklaus and I could still be very, very, good, friends "

Her words were innocent at least to some people, not to Tina who had read the hidden meaning.

Christina's face turned ugly, her nostrils flared, her eyes fierce and darkened with her nails digging into her fist.

But this was a game of pretense, she couldn't let her emotions show.

She gave Maya a sheepish grin, "That's very thoughtful of you, perhaps we could be friends and who knows, be my bridesmaids at my wedding too?"

Maya's face changed but she returned the honor, "Oh no" she pretended to be considerate, "I don't think I'm worthy for that position"

Tina went on, "I wouldn't mind really" she waved it away, as it was nothing to her.

"No, I don't think that's a good idea. I've slept with your fiance, so being your bridesmaid and being in close vicinity with him might cause us to fall into temptation" Maya said with phony worry while giving out too much information.

Tina's smug expression froze.

Maya saw that but she went on with her sympathetic act "I don't want to be the reason someone's marriage is broken up, alright?"

She poured more fuel to the burning fire and truthfully, it pleased her - being a villain was amazing.

This was just the beginning, she would pay those who offended her back in their coins.

Maya had trusted and waited on karma for years yet those who mistreated her - and still mistreating her - were still living fine and her? Nothing.

Now she would change her destiny by herself!

Christina's mask cracked this time and it took her a lot of will not to rush at Maya, grab her by her hospital gown and slam her against the wall.

She and Niklaus slept together? Of course, that was expected, both had been together for months and she had sensed the attraction between them right from the day one she became a live-in nanny.

Moreover, Niklaus' sexual appetite has always been the stuff of legend but it still made her furious thinking about it. Ever since he broke up with Maya, he hardly even kept her company talk more touch her.

Just like the law of attraction, the man she was just thinking about made his entrance into the room.

The tension in the air told Niklaus that something intense went down and the way both women were staring at him made him uneasy.

"You're back," Maya said, "Tina here was just telling me about your engagement"

Maya smiled at him but Niklaus could feel an uncountable number of invisible knives projected his way.

Women's wrath was deadly, thank God eyes weren't bullets.

Chapter 163 - One Hundred And Sixty-three: Apologize, Isabelle.

The third point of view

Maya was mad at him, that was for sure - and expected. He would be too if he was in her shoe: they slept two days ago and now, he's announcing his engagement -Tina broke the engagement news to her technically.

Well, she would have heard it sooner or later anyway.

F*ck, this was a mess up. Things were getting complicated, the more he tried to make things clear, the more he kept getting tangled in the web of misunderstanding.

"You're here" Tina smiled up at him.

She left her seat and walked over to him, looping her arms around his and led him to Maya's bedside.

There wasn't another seat closer to the bed, the couches were at the far end of the room so Tina sat on the only available seat while he stood beside her.

Their eyes met and he gulped, memories of the passionate night they shared swarmed his head.

He wished there was a way they could talk about what happened between them nights ago.

Sex to him had always been to satisfy his bodily urges. But that night with her? It wasn't just sex they had, he made love to her and he had bared his soul.

He was sure she felt it too - that connection that night - he could see it in her eyes - her eyes never tell lies.

It would be paradise if he could relive that night or better, spend more nights with her, and show her just how much he loved her.

But it was impossible, she even said it herself "it was a mistake" they were vulnerable at that moment and had given in to their desires without thinking it through.

Also, he couldn't put her life in danger anymore - at least until he has become the new family head and held unquestionable power.

Sakuzi might have saved her life but next time, he might be the one putting a bullet through her head.

Tina felt uneasy with the air in the room, Niklaus and Maya were gazing at each other but she knew there was more to that stare like they were communicating secretly or something.

"Is something the matter?" She purposely asked, breaking their cryptic communication.

"How are you doing?" He asked Maya, ignoring the disruptor by his side.

"I'm fine" Maya replied in a polite yet distant tone. She added briskly, " congratulations on your engagement"

Niklaus frowned, he could sense the ice in her tone and she had put up her walls.

"By the way, I invited Maya to our engagement and she's very happy to join us on such a glorious day. Isn't that right, Maya?" Tina threw at her.

Niklaus' jaw ticked, he turned towards her awaiting her answer.

"Of course" Maya smiled, " I can't wait for such a day to come, you both are a wonderful couple - a match made in heaven "

More like 'hell', Maya contradicted her statement mentally.

Niklaus had a passive expression on the surface but inwardly, he was boiling with anger. He knew he had no claim to Maya but why was she sounding like she'd given up on him?

The thought of her getting over him aggravated him to the core, he just needed a bit of time. Why couldn't she give him that?

"Thank you" Niklaus managed to say.

With Tina scrutinizing his every move like a mother hen, he couldn't say a word carelessly. Who knew what that witch would rouse with it?

"Do you know the best part?" Tina started again, "Maya's considering being one of my bridesmaids at our wedding, isn't that amazing?"

His hardened gaze met Tina who was grinning from ear to ear, she was intentionally doing this.

It was obvious Maya wouldn't agree to such a ridiculous request.

Both of them dislike each other, Tina was the major factor resulting in their break-up.

Why then would she agree to be her bridesmaids in a wedding to her ex? Only a crazy person would do that.

"Is that true?" He asked.

"Yes," she answered with no care.

His jaw clenched together, " Why would you do such a thing?"

Maya cocked a brow, "Excuse me? I'm afraid I don't understand your question"

"Maya!" He called her name through gritted teeth.

She chuckled, "I'm afraid that there has been some sort of misunderstanding here, Niklaus."

He stared at her with blazing intensity, why was she behaving like this?

Maya went on, "I believe that we were a couple, but that was in the past, we are not together anymore.." There was momentary haste, her voice was clogged from emotions.

Under the sheet, she dug and clasped the bedspread tight as if drawing strength from it while fighting against the tears that threatened to spill from her eyes but she didn't let her emotions show as she continued.

"Now, you have a lovely lady by your side and I'm not a petty person to keep on hanging onto an owned man" she emphasized that word, "owned"

Niklaus didn't say anything nor take her eyes off her; his glance was so nerve-racking that she was close to buckling under the pressure.

It was as if his eyes compelled her to tell the truth and she almost did, had not the door to her room burst open and two recognizable troublemakers burst in with a shriek.

"Maya, save us! "

"He's gonna kill us!"

What the hell.

They ran towards her and almost slammed into her if Niklaus did not hold them back on time.

With that speed and momentum, both kids would have ruptured her sutures if they had successfully bumped against her.

As if the surprise was not enough, an angry Judy leaped into her open room.

His hair was disheveled, his weight was unevenly supported as if he hurt his leg or something and angry veins were sprouting from his forehead.

What in the world have these two devils done this time?

Judy was fuming, those kids almost destroyed the source of his future bloodline. God, it hurt like hell!

Once he got his hands on them, he would spank them hard on the bottom so that they wouldn't be able to sit properly for days.

Niklaus watched the two kids take cover behind him and guessed what happened from the way Judy walked one-sidedly.

His anger reached its limit but before he could take out his wrath on them, he heard,

"Drop to the ground and give me a ten !"

"No, Maya, hear us out - " Isabella tried to explain but she was interrupted.

"Do it now! No excuses! "

Tina watched in surprise as those kids who hardly gave ear to her instruction got down on all fours and began to do the push-up as commanded.

Envy filled her heart, why were they always listening to Maya? What was so special about that woman?! This wasn't normal anymore, black magic must be at work now - perhaps Maya was a witch.

How else could the kid's firm loyalty be explained? How could Niklaus and Eden be so dedicated to her? Why was everyone so damn attracted to her? Why was it always Maya! Maya! Maya?!

If one had stared at Tina's eyes that moment, they'd been scared of the murderous intent in there.

"Lower your body until your chest? touches the floor!" She boomed at Anabelle.

The girl in question looked up with a sympathetic look; she batted her eyelashes, her blue eyes entralling anyone who stared at it just as a tear dropped down her cheek.

But Maya didn't pay her any attention, "Slacken again and I'll increase your punishment " came her threat.

Anabelle felt chills climb down her spine and had no choice than to do as said - that trick would have worked on her father, Eden.

Aish, Maya was so mean today!

The push-up was no big deal to Isabella who performed it with ease and in no time was done.

"What now?" She asked Maya smugly.

Maya narrowed her eyes at this little haughty brat who clearly didn't understand the implication of what she did.

"Apologise"

"No way" she refused.

"Is not a request but an order, Isabella" Maya growled at her which caused the girl to frown.

It was just a kick, nothing else, why was everyone so hung up on it?

"I did it because he stopped me from coming here" Isabella excused herself.

"Your argument does not change nor cover up the fact that you almost destroyed a grown man's genital. If personal reasons solved all problems, then there would have been no need for the court of law. We would have excused our way out of every crime ever committed!

How would you feel if I purposely broke your late mother's pictures and claimed I did it because I couldn't stand the sight?"

Isabella growled a warning.

"See? It was just talks but you're affected" Maya pointed out.

She continued, "Just because you're rich and can get away easily with a crime doesn't give you the right to treat others as toys and garbage.

"That money was given to you by the heavens as a gift to help the less fortunate while living your life to the fullest.

"Being rich is a privilege, a rare blessing that others are willing to kill just to possess it, so don't abuse it. Moreover, karma is a bitch; what goes around, comes around.

"People you treat as trash today might be the ones to help you at your lowest point tomorrow. Never look down on people because tomorrow is unpredictable."

The room was dead silent, no one made a single comment nor noise, her heartfelt words touched them greatly-Maya had spoken from the bottom of her heart.

She caught her breath, "Now apologize, Isabella "

Chapter 164 - One Hundred And Sixty-Four: Love From Sakuzi

The third point of view

A word they say is enough for the wise, but perhaps some people were just so damn stupid.

Everyone was touched by Maya's words, even the stone-hearted Isabella couldn't help but feel guilty save Tina whose envy grew enormously.

The seed of hatred had already been sowed in her heart, so no matter what Maya did or said, it was all gibberish in her sight.

"I'm sorry but I disagree with you"

Everyone's head whipped around to the source of the opposition - Tina, ugh!

"Excuse me?" Maya narrowed her eyes at her.

"Being rich is not a privilege but an effort. That money we spent to our fullest didn't just fall from the heavens, we worked extra harder than the average human and got to this position and status -? it's our sweat and blood not some gift from some supposed entity above.

Moreover, this world has been unfair and would never be fair. This is a jungle and only the survival of the fittest can fit in! He's furious because of what Isabella did to him? Then, let him go toil hard, make some money, become powerful, so people could tremble at the sight of -"

"Alright, time out " Niklaus grabbed her arm, ready to drag her out of the room.

"No, let me finish!" Tina flung her arms off his grip as she glared daggers at him.

"Is she the only one who has the right to talk here?" She focused angrily on Maya who calmly folded her arms across her chest and watched the dramatic scene.

"My words are nothing because you all treat it like air! What's so good about this damned wretched illegitimate daughter of a whore - !"

A hard slap accompanied her words.

The slap stung her cheek, and Tina gasped, a hand on her cheek out of shock rather than pain.

Everyone went still, they heard it; the cracking sound that slashed through the room - no one surmised Niklaus would do such a thing.

"Y-you hit me? " Tina choked, the tears wouldn't let her speak properly, "For her?" She asked in disbelief.

Niklaus stared down at his palm, he had never hit a woman, this was his first time and on Tina of all people?

But he couldn't help it, he was so angry and what terrified him the most was the fact he wouldn't mind doing it again if she hurt the feelings of Maya once more.

"I warned you," His voice was gruff, yet guilt hit him - she was still a woman and God! he despised turning out like his father.

"I hate you" Tina spat, then walked past him and intentionally shoved against him.

His eyes connected with Maya's

"Why are you staring at me that way?" She questioned his odd look, "You slapped your fiancée right in front of everyone, shouldn't you go after her?"

Niklaus gulped, he had searched Maya's face for any trace of approval or something - heck, he defended her, he deserved some praise? Applause? - but all he got was a mock disappointment.

Goodness, Niklaus! Maya was playing him.

He strode towards the door - not to comfort Tina but to go knock off some steam.

Even with them gone, the room was silent and awkward for a while until she broke the silence.

"Where were we?" Maya asked the kids.

Anabelle pointed to Isabella who slapped her finger away with a grimace.

"Isabella apologize"

"Anabelle too, she kicked him" Izzy dispersed the blame accordingly.

"I'm so sorry mister, I promise not to kick you in inappropriate places next time?" Anabelle was quick to apologize but Maya picked on her words.

"Are you trying to say you'd kick him in other places the next you have a confrontation?"

"

"Of course not" She shook her hands, "I would never kick you again, cross my heart" Anabelle swore.

"No, problem. I'll perish the thoughts of cutting those feet and using them to prepare dinner for now " Came Judy's response that made Maya scowl at him.

Tsk tsk, no wonder everyone - kids included - was so scared of him, the man had no clue how to gloss over his words.

"Isabella?"

The girl pressed her lips stubbornly, refusing to say a word.

"Before the count of three Isabella, don't make me repeat myself" Maya warned her, but the girl was determined.

Maya rubbed her chin thoughtfully, "Hmm, maybe I should tell Anabelle that you have a star-shaped mole on your - "

"No!" Isabella screamed, stunning both Judy and Anabelle.

Her reaction now made them curious about the secret that they would have turned the apology down and heard the juicy story instead, had it not been that Isabella was quick and sharp.

"I'm sorry" Isabella apologized right away.

"I didn't hear you " Judy cleaned his ear with a finger in a mocking gesture.

Isabella bit down on her lips and would have spat something sassy in return if she hadn't seen Maya's warning gaze.

"I'm sorry!" She screamed.

I hope that blasts your eardrums, Isabella wished.

She glowered at Maya and couldn't believe she would have revealed her secret if she hadn't apologized.

Isabella had a large star-shaped mole on her buttcheek and Maya found out about that during the chickenpox episode - she hated the scar on that awkward spot.

Imagine if Maya had told Anabelle; then Anabelle tells her friends in class; her friends in the class tell their friends in other classes; the second generation friends tell their other friends!

Soon the news would spread across the globe and everyone would know that Izzy Spencer has a mole on her butt.

Aaah! She couldn't imagine that nightmare!

"Thank your lucky stars this time," Judy said to Isabella who stared back with the same intensity.

He shook his head pathetically, he just hopes this girl changes before she becomes the next president when she grows up else, they may as well just reinstall Adam as the president, the girl was almost his clone- character-wise.

"Thank you, Maya" He bowed to the girl who had now earned his respect.

Judy knew Isabella didn't apologize wholeheartedly but Maya fought for him earlier and he was moved- Niklaus, doesn't know that he has lost a rare gem.

Both of them didn't know each other, just met a few times in the past when she was together with Niklaus and had shared pleasantries, nothing else.

Yet, she defended him.

What more could he ask for than to protect her with his life.

"Are they both a threat to your health? Do you need me to clear them away?" Judy offered.

Maya didn't know whether to laugh or cry, the way he spoke about the two daredevil teens made it seem as if he was talking about scrapes.

The kids took cover beside her bed which made her chuckle, "No, you don't need to worry about them, I can handle the children" She assured him.

"Alright, if you say so. I'll be outside if you need my help" he informed her and left.

"Oh Maya, you look so beautiful today. Did you use make-up? Take a look at your smooth pimple-free skin" Isabella began to fawn over Maya who was not deceived by her act.

Maya knew it was just an attempt to take her mind off their mysterious arrival which was foiled when she asked, "How did you two get here?"

The room went silent.

"Hopefully, I'm talking to humans, right?" She demanded an answer.

Anabelle pointed at Isabella as usual, "The blame's on her, I'm innocent. I was on my own and she came along"

Her excuse would have fooled others but she knew these kids more than their parents do, like the back of her palm.

She cocked a brow, "Really? So Izzy here threatened to pull out your hair if you don't come with her?"

"Umm," Anabelle nodded with a pout.

Liar, Maya thought but the little girl was a better actress than Isabella.

"Is that true?" She asked Isabella this time.

"Yes, it is" she added, "Why? You don't think I'm capable of doing it?"

Since Isabella was so willing to take the blame, they must have struck a deal then, these kids!

"Sure, go ahead and touch a strand on her head, see if I won't tell the world about the mole" She dared that arrogant kid.

"Is this how you treat me after risking everything just to see you?" Isabella raised a tantrum and wrapped herself around Maya.

Maya pushed her away playfully, "Pish, go away!" and knocked the girl on her head, "Do you know you risked both of your lives by coming here?"

She flicked Anabelle on the forehead instead, "What were you guys thinking?"

"I was thinking of how much I love you" Anabelle the sweet talker scored, as usual, melting Maya's boiling heart instantly.

Maya blew air noisily before ruffling their hair, the kids were so sweet but in an annoying way.

"By the way" Isabella started, "I think Niklaus is damaged"

"Huh? Damaged?" Maya was flabbergasted.

"He's so weird lately, I think he's mistaken me as you; lovesickness must have gotten to his brain" Isabella described the situation with all manner of seriousness that Maya couldn't find a room to doubt her.

She was intrigued, "What did he do?"

Isabella answered, "He kissed my eyes and forehead every time he saw me; he attempted to feed me the last time we ate together; Niklaus now thinks I'm a cuddly bear because he hugged me a lot recently and lastly, he blew dry my hair for me. Who knows, next time he might read me a story and cuddle me to sleep?" She shrugged.

"Huh? How's that weird, my papa does that to me every time?" Anabelle was confused too.

Maya facepalmed mentally, of course only Isabella would think her father's change in attitude as creepy. Well, one wouldn't blame her because the sudden affectionate acts were foreign to her.

She was just about to answer the poor girl when her door was opened and a nurse walked in with a bouquet.

"Someone sent this to you"

Maya frowned, "Who is it?"

"It came with a card," the nurse pointed out.

Maya took the flowers from her and checked the card.

"Wishing you a speedy recovery, princess - love from Sakuzi "

The hell.

Chapter 165 - One Hundred And Sixty-five: Princess

The third point of view

Andrew prayed that in his next life he would never get to encounter any woman named Maya.

His screams tore through the dimly lit room as he was being tortured. Sweat covered his face and his pants were soaked thoroughly - he even peed on himself.

"I'm so sorry, I had no idea she belongs to you" Andrew apologized profusely but the man in question cleaned his ear nonchalantly as if he wasn't being referred to at all.

Bad luck has been trailing after Andrew lately. He hardly avoided incarceration after his public exposure incident and got away with a one thousand USD fine, probation, and community services.

Andrew had just finished the last of his services and was going home when a bus crossed him. A dark bag was dropped over his face and he was whisked away, only to find himself in captivity.

He couldn't remember how many days it has been but the tortures have been quite vivid. Nonetheless, they fed him well but tormented him harder.

Why were they doing this to him? Because he broke up and disgraced Maya in public.

Andrew often had a feeling Maya wasn't as virtuous as she looked.

That pretentious whore must have launched herself a rich and powerful sugar daddy who was currently torturing him; she was taking vengeance on him.

"You had no idea she belongs to me?" Sakuzi chuckled, a cigarette hanging from his lips with the smoke shifting and swirling around his face.

"Yes, I didn't have an idea" Andrew nodded, snot blowing from his nose with each exhale he took.

His chest was bare, leaving him clad in nothing but his trousers with both of his hands cuffed to the wall, no space wherever to stretch.

On a closer look, one could see whip and burn scars on his pale skin, evidence of the tortures he had been through - some wounds were torn and fresh while the others had healed already.

"So now you know, what are you going to do about it ?" Sakuzi asked him with amusement playing on his face.

The boy was like a rat trapped with no means of escape while Sakuzi was the big bad cat preying on him. He was enjoying the fear reeking off him, it pleased him.

Andrew gulped, he didn't know what to answer.

"I asked a question," He repeated.

His heart hammered against his chest, "Once you release me, I'll find her and apologize from the bottom of my heart"

His face scrunched up, "Just that?"

"I'll get on my knees - no, kowtow to her thousand times until my forehead splits and bleed "

He smirked, "That sounds tempting" his eyes collided with Andrew's, all smiles disappearing from his face, "And what if I don't release you?"

Andrew shivered, this man was a devil; he wasn't giving him any option here.

Here the man was, sitting on the seat with a devil may care attitude and the wisp of thin pale smoke curling around him - he wasn't even older than his father.

"What are you going to do if I don't release you?"

Andrew didn't answer, there was only one response in his mind but once he said that, his life would be ruined and that devil knew that judging from the elated look on his face.

No, he can't do that, he's the only male of his family- He can't become a gang member.

Sakuzi relaxed into his seat "What? Cat got your tongue?"

But he still refused to answer.

Sakuzi stubbed out his cigarette with his feet, then gave a sign to Emerald who was standing by the door to teach the boy a lesson.

Andrew's eyes widened and he began to panic as soon as he caught sight of the giant heading towards him threateningly.

"I-I serve you," He said at once.

"Did you say anything?" Sakuzi gestured to his ear.

"I'll serve you!" Andrew screamed on top of his lungs briskly just as Emerald threw back his hand, prepared to crack his face with a blow.

"Stop" Sakuzi halted Emerald, "Let him go" came his order.

With a growl, Emerald slapped his chest with the back of his hand and that took the breath out of his lungs. It was so painful, was he going to die?

"Emerald?"

Emerald saw the warning gaze from Sakuzi and took a step away, his murderous gaze still trained on Andrew.

Sakuzi took out another cigarette and lit it, handing back the lighter to one of his men settled behind him.

He stood to his feet, walking over to Andrew who was shaking with fear. A grin broke out across his face, he grasped the boy's cheeks and watched him jump out of his skin.

"Welcome to the gang" He slapped Andrew's cheeks playfully, "I hope we work out just fine and what do you say to that?"

"T-thank you? " Andrew more liked questioned.

Sakuzi tilted his head, "Thank you what?"

"Thank you, sir"

"Goodboy" he patted his cheek again before giving further instructions, "For now, you'd be in training until Princess returns"

Andrew's brow furrowed together in confusion, "W-who's princess?"

Sakuzi gave him a stupid look before he snorted, " You're so stupid"

He shook his head, and clicked his tongue, "Who did you offend that brought you here?"

"Of course, I offended Maya... " He faltered as realization dawned on him, "Maya is your"

"Bingo"

Being flabbergasted was an understatement, Andrew didn't know how he felt anymore. All this time, he had been thinking Maya was his sugar baby or something without realizing she was his daughter instead.

But how was that possible? Maya had lived a difficult life and during his relationship with her, all he knew was that she was an illegitimate...

Andrew gasped, shocked. This wicked, scary man was Maya's father? No need, his future was a goner.

If Andrew had known earlier- if someone, anything, had somehow told him this was how he was going to end up, he would have fled away from Maya as if the devil was on his heels.

"Once she finally comes home, you'd serve her"

Andrew swallowed nervously, he was doomed.

"You would do anything she wants - including warming her bed - though I highly doubt she would want you for that, considering that my daughter has a high taste in men," Sakuzi said and forcefully clutched a handful of Andrew's hair drawing a yelp from his lips.

"You're the only mistake she made," He said checking his features out, "You made a pass but you're inferior quality"

Andrew had never felt more humiliated in his entire life than now- not even doing the exposure incident - right now, he was being checked out like merchandise- a sex toy - all for Maya.

He was mortified. The thought of being trained as a plaything for someone yet to occupy her position as a princess of this Mafia gang disgusted him.

"But don't worry" Sakuzi went on,

"We'd work on you. Give us a year and you wouldn't be able to recognize yourself in a mirror " he assured him.

"What if I don't want to?" He said but bit back his tongue when he saw the coldness that appeared in Sakuzi's eyes.

Sakuzi took a long puff from his cigarette and blew the smoke on his face causing Andrew to start a coughing fit.

"Your opinion doesn't matter anymore, son" He gripped his jaw tight, "In here, I'm the god and my words are final. So unless you want to make six feet your new home, my orders would not be defiled ever again."

This was the end, Andrew summarized, there was no more future for him.

"Don't look so downcast, there's more to being a Mafia. We live our life to the fullest but when duty calls, it's to the death. Have a nice stay "

Sakuzi waved him goodbye with Emerald following after him.

"Release him, welcome him to the gang. He's one of us now " He ordered his men just before he left the prison.

"Have you sent the flower to the princess?" Sakuzi asked Emerald as they walked through the hallway.

"Yes"

He laughed, "Who knows what her face would look like?"

"I don't know since I wasn't able to see her face" Emerald answered straightforwardly.

"You don't need to, I can already envision it," he told the giant who hardly had a smile on his face.

"When is she going to return to us?"

"Don't know yet but I can tell it's fast approaching. The Sakuzi blood in her is beginning to surface, she can't escape her bloodline " He answered, just as they walked into a room that led to an underground warehouse.

Unless one had a blueprint of the house it was hard to figure out that there was a warehouse this large in here.

There were men unloading weapons from boxes filled with hay which was probably used as camouflage to escape inspection from national intelligence.

"Wouldn't it be better if you just told her you're her father?" Sakuzi asked him.

"No" he answered firmly, " She's soft at the moment. Princess has to grow up and get desperate for blood before I can take her in " he answered him while checking one of the guns.

Suddenly he glanced up at Emerald with a smile as something clicked in his head, "By the way, I need you to send another message"

"To who"

He cocked the gun "To someone special"

Chapter 166 - One Hundred And Sixty-six: Maya Would Regret Ever Knowing Her

The third point of view :

"That stupid boy has been seeing some stakeholders behind her back?!" Madam Queen roared as soon as the information came to her.

She stood abruptly from the chaise lounge, phone pressed against her ear with a vivid look.

"Send their name to me, I need to pay them a special visit" she ordered and ended the call.

Her fist was clenched by her side from anger while the other clutched the smartphone tight. That bastard dares to take what doesn't belong to him?

This woman was no other than Tina's mother who was currently being disturbed by that devil's spawn her husband raised outside their marriage.

Had Queen known what she knew today, she wouldn't have allowed that boy to live till now. She wouldn't stay alive and watch that illegitimate seed take what doesn't belong to him.

She had worked for the growth of the company alongside her useless husband, her labor would not be in vain.

But Queen was bitter inside, all these wouldn't be happening if that thing called her husband had kept his prick in his pants.

What was insufficient about her? She was beautiful and though she had gone down in age - she was in her late forties - but hardly could wrinkles be seen around her face.

She maintained her body and shape with her resources; go to the best spa, hired a diet coach, and eat a healthy amount of food, working out like there was no tomorrow - doing planks, yoga - what has she not tried on? Yet that man still betrayed her.

"Men can never be trusted, never give your whole heart to any man" she always told her daughter, Tina, " Love is nothing but old men's fable, child. Take what you want while you still have the opportunity"

Take her for example, she had given Mike her husband her heart yet he stepped on it like a piece of rag, sharing his heart instead with the lowlife that birthed that nuisance who was giving her a massive headache recently.

She sacrificed everything and made him who he was today! If it wasn't for her, he'd probably be nobody! But how did he pay her back? By degrading himself with that scum.

Fine, she would deal with that trivial son of hers and teach her a lesson to choose a war worth her capacity.

Just as Queen began to concoct her plan in her head, the entrance door was banged so hard she nearly jumped out of her skin.

Wondering who wanted to bring her house down, she was stunned when her precious pearl strode into the house fuming.

"Christina?" She watched her daughter climb up the stairs leading to her room.

Queen was puzzled, her young and only daughter was not in the mood and she had visited her in this condition.

Who knew what happened?

She was still thinking when the startling sounds of things crashing awakened her from her thought. The noise came from upstairs - to be precise, her daughter's room - which made her hurry up the stairs at once.

Opening the door to her daughter's room, her hands flew to her mouth from shock as she saw Tina throw whatever she could get her hands on to the ground.

"Christiana " She called, but she ignored her.

Tina instead grabbed the photo of her that was taken when she was two from the wall, smashing it to the ground and drawing a shriek from her mother's lips.

"What are you doing, Christina?!" Queen was now afraid of her, her outburst was no longer normal.

"I want to kill her !" Tina grabbed a little stool and hurled it towards the window.

"Christina!" She gasped in horror, watching the chair break the window and made its descent downstairs - hoping to God it didn't hit anyone.

"I want her to die! Let her just die!"

This time she ran to her daughter, engulfing her in a tight hug which stopped her from moving, throwing, or smashing more stuff.

Christina burst into tears on her Queen's shoulder, digging her sharp nails into her mother's arms till they drew blood yet Queen didn't seem to mind as she comforted her.

Queen had an idea of her daughter's anger management issues but she never thought it was to this extent.

It was obvious that Tina had taken her looks from her mother, the both could be mistaken for sisters instead of mother and daughter - thanks to Queen taking care of her skin. Same blonde hair, height, Tina would have been her mom's clone if she hasn't changed some of her features surgically.

"Is okay, my precious pearl" she wrapped her arms around her tighter before rubbing her back while the other smoothed her hair.

"He slapped me for her" Tina cried out which tugged at her heart painfully.

This her daughter hardly cried, she was a strong woman and could only express her emotion by letting off some steam. Since she cried this time, whatever grievance that was committed against her must have been unbearable.

"Niklaus hit me "

Queen's face scrunched up, that man again? What did her daughter see in that womanizer?

Sure, he had a powerful background but her daughter was a fine lady and still had time to find men two times better than him both in status and appearance - sincerely, she doubted Tina would find any in this city; the young man was the best so far.

Regardless, her daughter has the right to some happiness.

Tina eventually calmed down and Queen got to hear the whole story from her which made her sigh in disbelief mixed with disappointment - her daughter had suffered so much.

Her daughter's story was no different than hers but Tina still had the opportunity to correct everything before it was too late.

Queen grabbed her daughter's hands affectionately, both were sitting on the chaise and facing one another.

"Break up with that man, leave him at once," she told her daughter.

The anticipated look on Tina's face twisted into a dejected one. She had been expecting her mother to help out, respect, and support her in fighting against that illegitimate witch called Maya.

"You can't be serious," Tina laughed, dryly.

"Of course, I'm dead serious here, my child" Queen explained desperately,

"That relationship is toxic for you, leave while you still can"

Tina pulled free her hands from her mother's clasp as if stung by a bee. She stood to her feet, walked in circles, then tousled her hair before bursting into hysterical laughter.

"Christina?" Her mother watched her this time, unsure of what to make out of this situation but she was sure of one thing as she said, "I think we need to see a therapist, your anger is getting out of control "

"I understand my anger perfectly!" Tina roared at her, "But what I don't understand is you not supporting me!"

"Of course, I have and would always side with you. If I don't back you up, who then would I assist? "

She gritted her teeth, "Then why are you asking me to give up on Niklaus?"

Queen stood up, walked over to her, and placed a hand on her shoulder, pressing it tenderly, "Some battles are not worth dying for "

Tina had hoped this time that she had successfully changed her mother's mind until she heard her comment. She didn't care about others' opinions- not even her father's - all she wanted was her mother's.

But it seems the woman was beginning to go soft-hearted. She swatted her hand off her shoulder in an exasperated manner.

"Then I'll rather die knowing I won than living like a coward" she spat, her chest heaving with anger.

"I don't care about that bastard, it's you I'm worried about here" Queen pointed out.

"He hit me because of that lowlife and you expect me to give up?" Tina shook her head in disappointment, "Mom, you always taught me to never give up on the things that matter to me" came her reminder.

Queen hit her on her arm, vexed.

"You stupid child, I told you to fight for the things you desire, not kill yourself over a man!"

"Then you got it right, he's my desire and I would not give up on him. I would not lose to that lowlife, Maya!"

" Christina!"

" Mother!"

"Get your head back in gear!"

"My head is alright, mother. Moreover, how are you any different than me?"

"Excuse me?"

"You're fighting against that woman too, remember?"

"Of course, I'm trying to take back what rightfully belongs to me - to us"

"Same thing here, mother. I'm taking back what that bitch stole from me"

"Christina, please stop" her mother pleaded desperately, "Unlike me, you still have time not to make the wrong choice as I did. I've made a lot of mistakes and I'm spending the rest of my life correcting it- that illegitimate fool would not reap where they didn't sow - so please, leave the war to me. Just find a decent man - anyone but that Niklaus - I won't quibble," she added, "Please"

There was a calm look in her eyes and Queen was so grateful that her words finally got to her daughter.

But that eyes abruptly hardened and settled on her with blazing intensity.

"I'm sorry mother, but I've gone too far to stop" she went on, "Moreover, you should know how much I hate illegitimate spawns. Goodbye and see you the next time I visit"

"Christina! Christina Devon, come back here this instant!" She called after her but the person in question sauntered away.

Queen broke into tears, everything was her fault. If she hadn't pampered her so much and ingrained into her mind the winning mentality, things would have been different.

Now, her daughter was hell-bent on winning a battle that was obviously not favoring her.

The moment Tina stepped out of the house, she called Kimberly at once. A look in her eyes and one could see the burning murderous intent there, her fury was flowing like molten mountain lava this time.

"Hello?"

"I need Maya to suffer" she went straight to the point without wasting time.

"Probably another time, right now I don't have anything on - "

"It was not a request but an order" Tina's voice was cold - literally a minus 273.15 degrees celsius if measured.

"Fine, I'll do it "

"And do it fast, my patience is thinning by each growing seconds"

"Alright, your honor" Kim said sarcastically and ended the call.

Tina didn't care about her rudeness as far as she got the job done. At this juncture she didn't care whether Niklaus finds out or not, right now she already had a backer- Adam would stand by her.

A sardonic smirk tugged her lips to the side, Maya would regret ever knowing her.

Chapter 167 - One Hundred And Sixty-Seven: La Mia Farfalla

The third point of view

"What's my next schedule?" Angela asked her secretary who was standing before her with a tablet in hand.

"None at the moment ma'am, save the women's empowerment conference that has been pushed to tomorrow, they apologize for the impromptu notice"

"Fine" she sighed, pressing her temple out of fatigue. She was the guest speaker for that event which she was pleased had been adjusted. Right now her head was throbbing, she needed rest.

"If there's nothing else, I'll need you to ..." she was still speaking when her office door was opened and her husband came in.

A smile tipped her mouth, "You can leave now" She asked her secretary to give them some privacy.

Hardly had the door close, did she stand from her swivel chair, and walked over to her husband who was staring at her with an amused look.

"Today must be a lucky day for me" she teased him, "What brings this handsome man to my office?"

"Can't a husband take in the sight of his beautiful wife while she works?"

Angela smiled and kissed him briefly, " Seriously sweetheart, what brings you here"

Though in his early fifties but it was clear that Alfred was a very handsome man during his prime and the intelligence in his eyes hasn't been shadowed by his age.

With dark wavy hair that was carefully picked and gelled back by a professional stylist, he had piercing brown eyes that looked like warm chocolate and was quite tall.

Alfred walked with a gait that commanded respect and not terror, unlike most men in power.

But that meekness was not to be taken for weakness, cause just like any other person in such a position, they would do everything to keep that seat.

"Come on, have a seat" she directed him to the settee so they could have a proper discussion.

"No, I'm going to be brief" Alfred tugged on her hand to keep her from moving.

"Okay, go on. I'm all ears "

"Lately, I discovered we've been so busy that we don't have time to work on our personal life," he said.

"So?"

"So, would you go on a date with me? I want to take you out after work"

"Sure, anything for my husband" she promised him with a delighted glint in her eyes.

He pecked her on the lips, "I'll pick you right after work"

"I'll be waiting"

Alfred left for his office while Angela went back to her seat, feeling as if she was on cloud nine. She was filled with anticipation and thinking about the date brought a smile to her lips.

She was going through one of the documents out of the piles on her desk when her secretary came in again. But this time, she had a bouquet of roses in hand.

Angela blushed, she didn't have to guess since her husband must be the one who sent it over.

"This is for you, Ma'am" Her secretary passed the flowers to her.

"Alfred shouldn't have bothered" she tugged a lock of hair behind her head in a coy manner.

"I'm sorry ma'am but that's not from the president"

Angela's smile ceased, "Is not from Alfred?"

She shook her head, "I'm afraid no, ma'am "

" Who then?"

"I have no idea but it was passed from the front desk with instructions to be delivered to you personally. I've checked it and there's no bug nor harmful object - so far the flower's safe. It came with a delivery card, perhaps you could read it and I can help you trace whoever sent it? "

"Don't worry, you can leave. I'll call you if I need help in tracing it "

"Alright, ma'am " The secretary bowed and strutted out of her office.

Angela frowned, she hardly received flowers without knowing the sender but she picked out the stylishly folded? card, opened it, and read

"Like migratory birds, my soul has flown back to you. How are you, La mia farfalla."

All color drained from Angela's face as soon as she read, "La mia farfalla" and her breath began to come in gasps.

When did he come back? Why was he back? What does he want from her again? Haven't they settled everything back then?

Just then, her phone beeped with a notification.

"Did you receive my flowers?"

Angela's soul almost flew out of her body when she saw the message, it was him! How did he get her number?

She looked around her room as if checking for a camera secretly recording her. Who was she kidding? Getting her contact was just a piece of cake for him.

With clammy and shaky hands, she typed, "What do you want from me?" and sent it to him.

But a reply came in instantly as if he'd been waiting for her response this while, "I missed you, is that a valid reason?"

Angela swallowed nervously, sweat beaded her forehead and she squeezed her eyes shut for a while before reopening them with a deep breath.

"I have nothing to do with you, don't contact me ever again!"

A response came in immediately as usual "Have a meal with me, I'm waiting"

Angela could have rejected his invitation but she knew him, it was a decree. Even if she ignored him, Valentino would still have his way, there was no escaping him.

Moreover, that man was crazy. There was a possibility he would come to get her by himself which she dreaded. She was a married woman and of high status, she needed to avoid ugly and unnecessary rumors.

"Fine "

"Should I come to pick you up?"

"That crazy man" she cursed through gritted teeth and answered back, "I'll come to you, just send the address to me "

Angela's heart was slamming against her chest, who knew what that mad guy had in store for her?

She had just received the address and was going through it when a knock came on her door and was swung open before she could react.

"Mom - "

Kimberly stopped short when she saw the panicky look on her mother's face. She watched her dump something into the paper bin beside her desk and stood abruptly.

"What is it?"

"I was wondering if you could help me out - "

"That should be once I'm back " Her mom cut her off before she was done speaking, arranging her desk.

"Are you going somewhere?"

"Yes," she answered briskly much to her surprise, rummaging through her handbag for God knows what.

What was so important that had her mom in a haste like this? Kim wondered.

"Where are you going?" She asked, hoping for an answer.

"None of your business. I'm your mother and you're my daughter, so I don't answer to you, rather it's the other way around."

Kim frowned at her mother's sharp tone. She knew her mom quite well and unless something was bothering her, her tongue never turns acidic.

Her eyes fell on the dark rose on her mother's desk, "Dad sent you flowers? It's so beautiful"

"Sure, you can have it, " Angela offered it to her and walked past Kim in a hurry before she could question her further.

Kimberly was flabbergasted, her mother gave her the flowers dad sent her? That woman that was so possessive of her husband? Strange.

Something was fishy, mom wouldn't give her this flower...unless it wasn't from dad.

Kim at once left the room and walked to the secretary, "Who sent flowers to my mother?"

The secretary stood up, "I have no clue, is there a problem?"

"The bouquet is not from my father?"

"No, there was no information about the sender. Though it came with a note and I suggested to madam to have it traced if she could make out any information from the card"

At once, Kim's mind flashed back to that time she saw her mom tossing something into the bin.

"Thank you and this conversation remains between us, " Kim warned the secretary.

" Sure " she nodded

Kim strode back to her mother's office and headed straight for the bin. It wasn't hard to recognize the crumbled card thanks to its fancy design.

"La mia farfalla?" She frowned, then picked out her phone from the pocket of her pants and searched up the word.

"An Italian word for, 'my butterfly?' "

A lot of thoughts went through Kim's head but she still couldn't connote it with her mom's odd behavior until an absurd thought came into her head: her mom was cheating on Dad!

Her eyes widened from shock, but how was that possible? It sounded stupid but what could explain the flowers and the romantic message.

No, she has to find out.

Kim hurried out and entered the elevator that led to the lobby, just as she reached outside to watch her mom's car drive away.

"Taxi!" Kim flagged down one at once, "follow that car" she directed him as soon as she stepped in.

Kim was so obsessed with tailing her mom that she was quite disgruntled when a call came into her phone.

Tina, what bad luck.

"Hello"

"I need Maya to suffer" Her royal highness ordered without even asking about her wellbeing.

Kim was irritated, does this woman think she was her dog?

"Probably another time, right now I don't have anything on - " she was still answering but Tina cut her off rudely.

"It was not a request but an order"

Kim could sense the coldness from her tone, something must have happened for her to be this pissed off but what could she do? She had nothing to bring the downfall of Maya at the moment.

"Fine, I'll do it " she reluctantly agreed, else that witch wouldn't let her rest.

"And do it fast, my patience is thinning by each growing seconds"

What an audacity

"Alright, your honor" she snarked and ended the call with no care. That rich witch was beginning to get on her nerves and it was irritating her.

Moreover, she had a car to chase.

Immediately she turned her gaze back to the road, Kim was shocked when a car came out of nowhere and crossed them.

Had the driver not being alert and stepped on the break, they would have crashed into that car.

"Who's that mad man?!" The driver climbed out of the car angrily for a confrontation.

Before the matter could be settled, Kim had lost her mom's car. Damn it!

Chapter 168 - One Hundred And Sixty-eight: Valentino Armani

The third point of view

In a high-end restaurant with a bold red and black decor giving it a vivid and sexy ambiance, sat a handsome middle-aged man sipping a cocktail with no care in the world, enjoying the soft jazz music playing in the background.

To many people, he looked simple and normal but only a few knew the cruelty that lay beneath that gentle demeanor. His eyes twinkled with excitement and he readjusted in his seat as soon as his sight fell on the woman who walked into the restaurant.

The building had elegant modern touches, Angela noticed that as soon as she walked through the revolving door. But she didn't like the color setting, it was too romantic- who was she kidding, it was sinful.

The color was just too hot and provocative which wasn't surprising, that was Valentino's style, that incubus!

Their eyes connected instantly, it wasn't hard to find him since the restaurant was empty with just a few workers present; he must have rented the whole place - If he doesn't own it.

Walking over to the table, Angela took that opportunity to take a good look at him.

Valentino had aged, that was for sure. Yet he only lost that boyish charm, right now he looked so tempting and attractive with a matured vibe.

His previous black hair has been dyed gray and he wore it in a messy quiff. He was wearing a black button-down shirt that clung to his body with the first three buttons left open and revealing his toned chest. The sleeve was rolled up, exposing tattoos running down the length of both arms.

Angela was not going to lie, she felt her heart miss a beat especially now she found him more attractive than ever but she knew that was his tactics. That fox, his daughter shouldn't be any different than him.

Speaking of the daughter, she hoped he had not found out about Maya. Well, he wouldn't know anyway, he would think it was Alfred's.

"What do you want?" She asked as soon as she reached the table, standing over him with an apathetic expression.

Valentino looked up at the woman who was displeased at him but he smiled, she looked almost the same over the years; dark hair, black eyes, and those tall model-like legs

that were wrapped around his waist that night, many years ago. She indeed takes care of them well since it hasn't lost its charm.

"Sit "

That was a simple order from him which she obeyed, occupying the seat grumpily.

Angela looked around her environment, she wasn't comfortable here. It would be a scandal if she was caught with a man in this kind of romantic setting moreover, with a man like Valentino.

"You don't need to worry, you're safe here," he told her

"What do you mean?"

"You're not being followed, my men took care of those tailing you and you can be rest assured that those in here are my people" he gestured at the workers in the counter and kitchen.

"I was being followed?" Angela was shocked.

She had been careful not to get discovered on her way here, how was she still....

"Your daughter Kimberly, she's quite a smart one," he chuckled.

She panicked, " Hope you didn't do anything to her?"

"Is that how lowly you think of me?"

She heard the disappointment in his tone but his face was expressionless, there was no way to figure out what was going on in that head of his.

Angela groaned, rubbing her head tiredly. That daughter of hers was too smart for her good and now she would have to deal with her endless questions once she gets home.

"What do you want, Valentino?" Angela asked straightaway.

"Only you can make my name sound this sexy," he flirted with her.

Her cheeks flushed which she hated, this man had no power over her and she wanted to prove that! He was beating around the bush, wasting her time.

"Since you won't behave then, I'll stick to Sakuzi" this time she caught a flicker of annoyance across his face, but it was gone as soon as it came.

Of course, this man was no other than Valentino Armani. Sakuzi was just the title bestowed on whoever was the boss of the gang or whatever, Angela didn't care to know.

"Sure, you can call me anything that befits you" he added, " You always know how to pronounce them the right way"

She frowned at him "I have no time for your games Armani and mind the way you talk to me, I'm a married woman" came her reminder which didn't daunt him at all.

"I guess you forgot you were a married woman the night you came to me" he also jolted her memory a bit.

Angela swallowed but she refused to be intimidated, "That was a deal which has been sealed, so quit messing around with me!" She warned him furiously.

"Really? So you felt nothing that night?"

Her pulse quickened, " I don't know why you're bringing this up but I'm a married woman, I have no interest in other men"

"Would you come to me if Alfred was out of the picture?" He asked her, staring her straight in the eyes.

Angela's eyes widened and her lips quivered, she knew his definition of "out of the picture"

"You would not lay a hand on Alfred!"

"If I wasn't Sakuzi, would you have been with me instead?"

The unexpected question took her by surprise but the answer was obvious.

"If I realized you called me here to reminisce, I wouldn't have wasted my time in coming here"

The chair squeaked when she pushed it back and was on her feet when his next question made her stiffen.

"When were you going to tell me about my daughter?"

Angela turned around, painfully slow with a pale expression and wide eyes. Did he find out already?

Just then, the waiter came to their table and served their feet, easing the apprehensive environment a bit.

"Sit back down, Angela, and enjoy your meal. The steak was freshly prepared in the kitchen the way you loved it - not too tender, not too hard"

Angela knew Valentino wouldn't poison her but as tempting as that broiled steak with mustard sauce looked, she couldn't stomach it - she was so nervous.

Unlike her, Valentino was calm while digging into his meal, yet she didn't trust that calmness. He was like a sea whose tide rises without warning.

"When did you find out?" She asked, disturbed by his silence.

"So you do admit you had a child for me?" He murmured, then brought a piece of steak to his mouth, chewed on it before wiping his mouth with the table napkin.

He continued, " I almost killed her"

There was a flash of shock in Angela's eyes but she was quick to hide it.

"She has a special relationship with my enemy"

" Niklaus " she pointed out.

"You know about that?"

"Their relationship isn't exactly low-key," she told him. Moreover, how could she forget about someone that almost bankrupted their business?

"I was hoping to use her as some sort of leverage against him until I looked into her background and her surname hit me. I looked further and found out she was related to you but something else hooked me: her eyes.

"It looked nothing like yours but mine and the fact she took after my mother facially told me something was amiss. It was quite easy getting her DNA and did the test with it and bam!? She turned out to be mine, how joyous "

"Congratulations, you solved the big award" she deadpanned, " Do you need an award too?"

"Why didn't you tell me we had a child?"

"I had a child for you" She corrected sternly, "Don't make it seem like we were a couple"

"We would have been a couple if you had agreed but you were ashamed of marrying a Mafia leader"

"Gosh, Valentino!" She was exasperated, "You were married for Christ's sake!"

"I was willing to divorce her for you!"

"I don't want that kind of love!"

Both stared at each other hard, breath fast with chest heaving.

Valentino reached out and took her hand which was on the table. Tingles coursed through her body upon contact causing her to withdraw her hand but he wouldn't let her.

"So" he began, intertwining their fingers together, " Without that deal, you wouldn't have ever thought about me"

Yeah, that deal. That was the huge dent in her otherwise perfect life - the root of all this problem.

"Whatever we had is in the past, Armani. Forget about me" she pleaded through blurry eyes, tears were threatening to spill from her eyes.

She was tired of living on edge, always anxious of that secret coming to light.

"Oh don't worry, I've forgotten about you"

That statement was like a bullet hitting her heart, what was he talking about?

Valentino played with their intertwined fingers and with a smile playing on his lips, he remarked

"As you said, I was recollecting about the past "

Her blood ran cold, he had been fooling around with her this while? Angela's expression shifted into anger and she tried to pull her hand away but he held it tighter to the point of hurting.

"You're hurting me" she cried out.

"Oh, it's hurting you?" he pretended to be oblivious to her discomfort, " I didn't know you understood the? sensation of pain considering the fact you've been hurting her all her life"

"What in the world are you talking..." Angela faltered, realizing he was referring to Maya.

"You aborted her too but she held on " he chuckled, "She's as tough as me"

Angela gulped, she was getting scared of his attitude, not to add the pain he was inflicting on her by pressing her fingers on an unnatural angle.

She couldn't take the pain anymore and yelled his name, "Valentino!"

"Angela!" He shouted back at her, his fluctuating emotions playing out on his face at last, "Were you that ashamed of me?"

"Please?"

"I could understand you keeping her a secret for the sake of your god-damned marriage but assaulting her? That's totally unacceptable"

Angela screamed, just as a cracking sound was heard - one of her fingers was broken.

He finally let go.

She moaned in pain, tears gathering at her eyes as she cradled her affected palm as a whole.

"I heard your daughter is beautiful," he observed.

"Do not hurt Kim, please"

"So Alfred's daughter is precious and mine isn't?" He laughed mirthlessly

"I'm so sorry " she stood from her seat and crawled towards Valentino, holding his leg in a pleading manner while tears streamed down her face.

"Forgive me, it was my ignorance. I was too scared of Alfred finding out what I did and took out my frustration on her"

Valentino looked down and though his heart was moved, he didn't show it.

He bent and grasped her face, lifting it to his eye level, "You are lucky I once loved you but above all, thanks for giving me princess"

He kissed her on the cheek and stood, pulling his feet from her grasp and walked away without a care - but not without signaling his men to take care of her broken finger.

Yes he loved her, but without fear, no one would respect him.

"Where do we go, Sakuzi?" His chauffeur asked as soon as he got into the car.

"A place normal people go " he was feeling nostalgic after this meeting with her.

The chauffeur was confused, what was their boss talking about?

"Sir? I don't understand - "

"Just return to the base "

" Alright"

Meanwhile, Angela was still sitting on the ground out of shock. She couldn't believe Valentino would do such a thing to her. Well, he always had that darkness inside of him.

She was quite startled when she felt someone approach her, rousing her from her thought. The strange man carried a first aid causing her brow to scrunch up, Valentino caused her pain and also repaired the damages.

Why was he confusing her? No, this was not the time to get confused, she had her family to protect. She had not gone through the suffering all these years for nothing!

Chapter 169 - One Hundred And Sixty-nine: Motherly Affection

Maya's point of view

After the awkward episode between Niklaus and his girlfriend Tina, plus Judy's departure, the kids and I were left alone to bond at last.

I must say, it was quite comforting and fun having both of them around, though Isabella always found a way of taunting Anabelle.

At first, I found Isabella's bullying cruel and unfair but taking a good look at it, I found out it was Isabella's special way of showing her affection - yeah, you heard me.

Isabella had problems with conveying her emotions, so torturing people was her way of showing and drawing attention - I just had to make sure she doesn't go over the limit.

There was nothing we could do save gossiping and until we were exhausted did Anabelle take a glance at my fingers, suggesting they paint it.

"Count me out, that's so lame" Isabella, of course, rejected the idea right away.

Anabelle and I gave her a dirty look, "What's so lame about it ?" The little girl inquired out of curiosity.

"Sitting and watching paints get plastered on your nails, how boring can it get?" She clicked her tongue.

"Painting is an act, a reflection of our personality"

"Yeah, yeah, your inner personality is so striking" Isabella deadpanned, eliciting a glare from me.

"Fine then, since you think it is childish, let's see who's going to paint Maya's nails better - I take the right hand, you take the left" She challenged Isabella.

"Deal" the thrill-seeker acknowledged as usual.

"Whoah, whoah, what the hell is going on here?" I asked in confusion.

The kids started a competition before I could even comprehend what was going on.

"Whose nail are you both about to experiment on?"

Both cast their intense gaze on me, their stare was so intimidating. When did both of them begin to be in cahoots?

"I'm not trying to be a party pooper" I defended myself, "But you have no apparatus, so nail challenge? Off! "

I was so happy about the turn of events, my nails were one of my beloved body parts. I treasured it so much that I wouldn't allow it to be a tool for these devils to gamble on.

"Oh don't worry, leave that to me" Anabelle assured me with a smile that made me anxious.

Right before me, Anabelle made a call, requesting nail painting materials.

I went pale, these kids were not kidding.

An amused snort made me turn around only to spot Isabella's smug expression, she understood my hesitation - that I was doomed.

I suddenly wished at that moment that these kids were not some rich brat, rather normal children from average homes - but wishes weren't horses.

It didn't reach up to twenty minutes before Anabelle's request was delivered. Aish! This was so annoying.

They helped set up the supplies: professional tissues, q-tips, nail polish remover, nail clippers, nail file, cuticle stick, and numerous nail polishes in diverse shade.

I felt like crying when I saw those expensive items about to be wasted, my collection wasn't even half the number nor quality.

"Shall we begin?" Anabelle tested Isabella's readiness.

Take a good look at these kids, what about my readiness? My fingernails were about to be sacrificed for their contest - my precious nails* tears* that took years to be treated to this level -? yet no one's asking about my mental well-being; I was about to break down.

"I was born ready" Isabella replied, a fire of determination burning in her orbs.

"I'm not ready" I cried internally, these kids don't even have an idea of what to do, my poor nails *sob*sob*

"Go!"

The moment both kids started, I shut my eyes tight, unwilling to witness the destruction of my chelae. Though occasionally, I did steal sneak peeks at their handiworks.

I was impressed, the kids were something else - their fathers should be proud of them.

Isabella had a serious look on her face as she filed my nails with a glass file starting from the side to the middle and giving my nail a square finish.

To be honest, a look at Izzy with the way her lips were pressed together and eyes focused on the task, one would think she was working on an important project for the president of the country.

Anabelle on the other hand was relaxed and had an excited glint in her eyes with a smile tugging at her lips. She took off an excessive nail polish on a finger and was careful not to smudge it.

The difference was clear between both youngsters. Isabella was hell-bent on winning the prize without savoring the feeling of doing something productive, unlike Anabelle who clearly enjoyed what she was doing with the prize still in mind.

Above all, I was stunned.

All this while, I was worried about the safety of my nails for nothing - the kids were amazing.

For some reason, seeing them do this little yet heartwarming gesture brought tears to my eyes; I felt a sense of accomplishment.

Over the months, Anabelle had gone from being a rich brat who boasts about her make-up company to applying nail polish on my fingers while Isabella had turned from being a vengeful introvert to an extrovert who now helps humanity - with her pranks in-between.

They weren't my kids but I felt some motherly bonds towards them and it kinda hurt me that I'm going after Isabella's grandfather, Adam.

"Done"

"Done"

I was awakened out of my thoughts, glancing down at their handiworks as a lopsided grin graced my features.

Anabelle painted my nails shiny pink with little red crystals which she achieved by sprinkling glitters which became attached to the polish while wet, giving it a cool effect.

"It's beautiful " I admired it much to Anabelle's delight - even though it looks like Barbie in a pink world. But hey, who am I to criticize her efforts?

I lifted my other hand to my face to get a good glance at Isabella's artwork but what made me do a double-take was not the neat nor mysterious purple she used, but rather the golden-colored words she stylishly designed, "Tigress"

My heart missed a beat, that was the nickname Niklaus normally calls me when we were still together.

I glanced up but Isabella looked away that moment, whistling nonchalantly as if she had no clue of the storm she raised in my heart.

Anabelle was surprised at my shocked expression. But as humans would always be curious creatures, she took a look at it.

"Tigress?" She frowned at Isabella in a disapproving manner, " Why is Maya a tigress? She ain't an animal!"

Isabella gave her a bored look, "You should go ask the inventor of that name or interrogate the bearer who loves it "

"Seriously? " I didn't know what to say, this girl always has a way of putting me in a tight spot.

"You're a tigress, Maya?" The ever-curious Anabelle glanced up at me for answers.

"No, it's just a stupid nickname " I answered curtly.

"But Isabella says you love it," she observed.

I sighed, " I don't like it yet I have to live with it " I quickly added, " It's just like Isabella calling you 'bimbo'. Do you like it ?"

"Of course not" she answered briskly

"Yet you have to live with it "

"Only because she keeps calling me that, " Anabelle replied pointedly, eyes settled on Isabella.

"So that's it with me too "

Phew, sometimes I was lucky this girl wasn't as smart as that little devil else I would have run crazy. Having two Isabella? The thought alone gives me the creeps.

At that moment, a knock sounded on my door before it was opened, and in came Anabelle's people which made her face fall. They were to take her home which could only mean one thing, they found out Isabella's prank.

"Hey, go with them. I'll ask your father to bring you with him whenever he visits " I was quick to comfort Anabelle when I saw the reluctance on her part - she was ready to put up a fight.

She gave me a doubtful look, "Promise?"

"Promise" We sealed the deal with a pinky swear which made her boom with joy.

"Alright" she left my side and went to her people who had been watching our interactions with keen interest.

"Bye, Maya. Get well soon"

"Yeah, bye" I waved back and as soon as the door closed, I pounced on that little devil, tousling her hair playfully - a gesture she hates.

"Why do you like putting me in precarious situations?" I asked.

Isabella wriggled out of my grip with a pout while smoothing her disheveled hair, "What's the fun of life if you don't live dangerously?"

"That's for you, some people want a simple and stable life "

"Yeah, people like you" She sassed.

I didn't retort back, just shook my head sympathetically, Isabella was unredeemable.

"Thank you"? I appreciated her for the special nail painting. That girl was such a big softie yet she refuses to admit it.

"Yeah, whatever" came her signatory comment as she ushered herself over to my couch and lay down.

We laid in silence for a while until I questioned her, "You do know I'm not going to end up with him, right?"

Chapter 170 - One Hundred And Seventy: Isabella Fights For Maya

Maya's point of view

We laid in silence for a while until I questioned her, "You do know I'm not going to end up with him, right?"

The environment shifted, I could sense the tension brewing in the air but what could she do? I'm sure Isabella always had a feeling that a relationship between me and her father was impossible.

"So you're going for Eden?"

The question was abrupt and I was so shocked my eyes widened to the size of saucers. I don't remember telling her about my plans, how could she have guessed correctly?

"How did you know that, " I inquired.

"Someone who's had a taste of power doesn't exactly give up; the feeling is additive" came her simple reply which left me speechless.

I wasn't sure of what to think anymore but one thing crossed my mind, this girl was an alien. Was it humanly possible to be this smart because I doubted genes had something to do with this issue anymore?

Isabella's intelligence quotient frightened me, it's as if she had already seen through my plan before I even planned it.

Over the years I've dealt with ten years olds but none of them were as smart as her, it was marveling yet fear-inspiring.

"I'm not greedy for power, I just need him for something personal" I clarified to her.

I have seen what the taste of power did to a lot of people; like Angela who denied her mother just to get in the good grace of her influential friends.

"You're going for revenge then and I'm supposing grandfather is your target since you're too soft to hurt Niklaus," remarked Isabella.

"And I'm guessing you'd try to stop me"

"Who's going to stop you?"She gave me a dirty look and pointed to her chest, "Me? Am I crazy? Why would I stop such an interesting show from happening"

Now I was dumbfounded, the girl was on nobody's side. I thought I was her best person and since I was going against her grandfather, she'd tried to talk me out of it or something, but this answer was seriously too demoralizing.

She continued, "It's already obvious my grandfather is going to win so I'd sit back with popcorn and enjoy watching you get your ass kicked"

I said determinedly, "I'll die trying"

Isabella turned her head towards my direction, "While fighting against a monster, it's better one evaluates themselves and check if they hadn't become the monster they're hunting down"

"I know my past, I wouldn't get carried away with power"

"Let's hope so cause I'd hate to be disappointed in you" The little kid pointed out.

"Aren't you angry that I'm going after your grandfather?" I asked out of curiosity, so far she hasn't shown her sheer dislike of my pending plan.

"I don't need to be angry over a plan that's bound to fail. Moreover, the Eden I know wouldn't let him use him like that unless he's getting something out of it so you're going to need all the luck you can get"

Perhaps, it was a bad idea to discuss my plans with this little imp. Why were all her responses pessimistic?

"Fine, just watch me" I declared, readjusting in my bed.

"You're playing with fire Maya, there's still time to give up"

Oh, she cares now.

"This isn't about getting hurt anymore, my dignity is on the line here and I'm going to make Adam regret ever tossing me aside"

"I can't believe this but was this what I sounded like during my vendetta against Niklaus?" She brought up the question out of nowhere.

"No, yours was worse and always backed up by your actions," I said to her before it dawned on me, "Wait, you don't hold a grudge against Niklaus anymore?"

Isabella snorted, "Yep, turns out I was played by both parents - They need the parents of the year award," she said sarcastically and continued, "Now it's just me living my life. If that woman wants revenge, she could get her ass off the grave and come get it herself"

I was surprised, was this the same Isabella I knew? She sounded so mature and confident with a hint of rudeness in-between. So she wasn't avenging her mother's death anymore?

"Niklaus loves you," I told her but she just rolled her eyes, "I mean it, that man views you as the best thing in his life even if he realized it late"

"Sure"

But her uninterested response bothered me, Isabella didn't believe a word I said; it probably sounded like noise to her ears.

"Hey," I called to her, "Look at me," I demanded the girl fixed her gaze on me which she obeyed without me repeating myself twice

"You're the only family Niklaus has left and though he finds it hard to communicate his feelings, your well-being is always the first thing in his heart. You're the best thing that has ever happened to Niklaus, little one"

We laid that way, gazing at each other as my words sank into her head.

"I wonder sometimes, why do you even care?" She chuckled bitterly, "I've thought over it but I still don't get it? Are you a natural busybody or goody-two-shoes cause leave the nanny duties aside, you've always been like this since day one we met, always trying to put us back together? Why do you try at all?"

"Because I see myself in you"

"What?"

"I grew up without feeling the love of my parents though I had one - literally. I was just like you but not as stubborn to this extent, you're impossible Isabella but the point is... I know that feeling: the abandonment,? loneliness, and the urge to just hurt anyone with a smile on their face" I felt nostalgic going through my childhood.

"The fact that others have a smile makes you want to slap it off their faces; you want to hurt them but then the world itself doesn't stop smiling. You try to do everything to grab their attention and sometimes go the extra mile in doing so yet, they don't understand. Only those who bear the cross know how heavy it is.

"I understand how you feel Isabella and I can assure you, you're not alone. Unlike me, you have a father who indulges your ridiculous whims and pranks. So congratulations miss, you're loved"

I got to admit, I was scared when Isabella didn't reply for ten minutes. She just kept staring at me without saying a word that I would have termed her catatonic if not the fact she blinked her eyes reflectively.

Did I damage her by chance?

"You do know this is why I hate you?" Isabella said something at last much to my relief.

"Of course, you hate me, " I admitted ironically.

I sent a warm smile her way but she groaned, tucking her face in the crook of her arms.

Isabella was just too prideful to admit? I was one of the people close to her heart.

And so I spent the next minutes teasing and bonding with Isabella when another knock came on my door making me cry inwardly.

I didn't know I was this famous, everyone wanted to see me but I was not surprised when Grandmother came in. I had been expecting her presence since morning but her escort was not on my guest list - Kimberly.

I pressed my temple, I wasn't in the mood for a fight, and the pain coming from my chest confirmed that.

"Grandmother"

"You child!" she broke down as expected and hugged me after gauging my injuries.

"I'm sorry" I patted my grandmother's back.

Sigh, I was now the one comforting the person who came to visit a patient, how funny could this get?

"I thought you died"

"I didn't die," I told her.

Some people wished I died though and as a matter of fact, my eyes settled on Kim who looked like she was forced into coming here.

Our eyes collided, her eyes roving over my body as she took in my sickly appearance and was clearly satisfied by what she saw thanks to the smug smirk pulling her mouth.

But as soon as Grandmother pulled away, Kim's self-pleased expression shifted into a sympathetic one.

God, I felt like throwing up and it disgusted me to think that I'm sister with this "specimen"? - I borrowed that word from Isabella by the way.

"Thank God you're okay, sister"? Kim took her turn in hugging me.

Seriously, I felt like bugs were crawling all over my skin which made me try to limit my contact with Kim but that witch refused to let me go.

"I wonder what I would have done if you died?" She continued with her act, her heart touching words prompting Grandmother into crying harder.

"How about dancing over my grave? That was just one of the many things you would have done if I was dead" I whispered to Kim while grandmother was trying to compose herself.

"Funny but why didn't you die? I would have cried the hardest at your funeral" she whispered back still in the guise of hugging me.

We stared at each other eyeball to eyeball until I felt a sharp pain in my stomach.

"Sister, are you okay? You look pale" Kim continued with her act while sweat beaded my forehead.

It was Kim. She purposely jabbed me on the stomach with her elbow before letting go of me.

"Maya!" Grandma shrieked at the sight of the blood seeping into my hospital gown.

But before anyone could call for help, Isabella who had been ignored all this while did the most unimaginable.

She grabbed the full water bottle resting on my vanity table and hurled it at Kim, the can of water connecting with her face.