

Wife Mask 411

Chapter: 411

Ublento Hotel had several branches across the city, and one was conveniently just behind the Evans Group. Any branch was her playground. It gave her the perfect chance to knock Lance out and then infiltrate the Evans Group network.

Lance, oblivious to her plan, beamed, "Perfect! It's almost lunchtime anyway. Let's go."

He motioned for her to walk with him, but Elliana stopped him with a raised hand. "Wait. I'll go first. You follow a little later."

Lance frowned, confused. "Why?"

Elliana gave him a look. "You really don't know how jealous Cole gets?"

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Right as her patience wore thin, the screen flashed with a mocking note from Jody. "Searching for something, Mrs. Evans? Maybe I can lend a hand."

Elliana froze. Her gaze snapped to Lance—he hadn't stirred, still sprawled out and oblivious. Realization dawned on her. She'd chased the wrong suspect again. Jody had addressed her as "Mrs. Evans," meaning he'd seen through her disguise.

Just who was this man, anyway?

Another message from Jody popped up. "Honey, you only had to ask if you wanted access to those files. As your husband, I'd have handed them over without all the cloak and dagger—no need for all this sneaking around."

He continued, "Tell me, if I hadn't caught on today, would you have gone through every last person at the Evans Group with your knockout routine just to flush me out?"

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Working in tandem, she realized, would prove more efficient than them searching for the truth behind each other's backs.

With a fond grin, Cole pinched her cheek. "Tell me, what's your next move?"

"Podgend is my destination. I plan to confront Victor there," she said.

His mouth curved in agreement. "Podgend, huh? I was planning to go there too. How about we set off together?"

Elliana gave a quick, enthusiastic nod. "Of course."

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His words filled her heart with warmth. And she knew-if she ever found her mother, Cole would be the first person she'd bring along. She wanted her mom to see who she married. A strong, remarkable man.

After a brief silence, Elliana spoke. "Fifteen years ago, the night the Jones estate caught fire, Victor had shown up. I think he's somehow connected to my mother."

Cole turned to her sharply. "Your mother?"

Cole's openness encouraged Elliana to confide in him. She said quietly, "I have this feeling that my mother is still alive. Back when the fire swept through the Jones estate, she hadn't been trapped inside. She had hidden me somewhere safe and then walked straight into the flames herself. I think she used the fire as a distraction so she could get away from whoever was after her."

Surprise flickered across Cole's face. After their wedding, he had made sure to look into everything about Elliana's past. His research showed that her mother kept to herself, and most people thought she was just a regular woman who did not measure up to Darin. That belief made sense since Darin later had an affair with Kiara. Yet, hearing Elliana claim that her mother was running from someone did not add up. Most people never found themselves in that kind of danger. Maybe her mother, just like his own, had secrets no one ever saw.

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Once Adah returned from Apricot Blossom Village, Elliana met her discreetly at the Ublento Hotel and held a meeting with the team who would join her for the trip to Podgend.

Cole made sure to push aside every urgent commitment, so when the seventh evening arrived, he swept Elliana away under the pretense of a business trip to Podgend. The stated purpose was to handle negotiations.

Their private jet waited for them at Regal Grove. Right before they were about to board, several uninvited guests made their appearance.

Jason arrived first.

At the sight of him coming closer, flanked by men in black, Elliana could not hold back a slight smirk. Whether it was the effect of the medicine she had given him, or perhaps just his strong body built up over years, he managed to recover with surprising speed in only a week.

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Elliana curled her lips in mild annoyance and gave Allan a look. "Is it really that bad, Mr. Shaw?"

Allan kept staring through the window and didn't bother responding.

Unable to help himself, Manley jumped in on Allan's behalf. "Why wouldn't it be? Elliana, your friend isn't Allan's type at all. And that isn't the worst part. The worst? His grandfather even threatened to go on a hunger strike unless he married Adah. That's a lot of pressure for Allan!"

Everyone broke out Laughing at the same time.

With an annoyed look, Allan turned and snapped at Manley, "Can't you stay silent for once, for Christ's sake!"

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A heavy iron gate blocked their path, but the lock was picked in seconds, and they slipped inside.

What looked like an ordinary house doubled as Victor's restaurant in front, with his private quarters hidden in back.

The courtyard door creaked open, letting the group into a pitch-dark living room.

Rain dripped from their clothes as they blinked into the darkness, no lights, nothing but the sound of the storm.

Suddenly, thunder cracked and lightning flashed, Lighting up the space for a single, electric heartbeat.

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Victor's smile lingered as he nodded and disappeared into the bathroom.

The door shut with a quiet click, leaving Elliana and Cole staring at it, every muscle tensed as they waited.

Thunder rattled the glass, the storm's fury never letting up outside.

A moment later, they heard the faucet running, and then everything went quiet.

They stood ready for Victor's return, but the minutes dragged on with no sign of him.

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A soft mechanical click broke the silence, and the sink began to rise, inch by inch.

Cole's attention snapped to the movement, and the rest of the team—Myles, Aron, and Hugh—halted their search, all eyes on the unfolding scene.

Up the sink went, bringing part of the floor with it, until a perfectly square opening was revealed beneath, about a yard across.

Nobody would have guessed that such an ordinary-looking sink concealed a hidden entrance right under their feet. A narrow staircase descended into the opening, illuminated by light seeping up from below.

"Victor must have slipped down here." Elliana concluded. "He probably turned on the faucet to muffle the sounds and buy himself a few extra seconds."

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But Cole didn't respond. When Elliana turned to him, she found his attention glued to the trunk of a nearby tree. Something about it had him completely absorbed.

Unable to help herself, Elliana moved closer, tracing his line of sight to a rough carving etched into the bark, a venomous serpent symbol. She wondered why Cole was so fixated on a simple drawing. It seemed like it was just the work of a bored kid.

"Does this symbol mean something?" Elliana asked.

Cole stood rooted to the spot, eyes locked on the serpent carving, as if it had cast some kind of spell over him.

Elliana stepped closer, her fingers brushing his sleeve as she said softly, "Darling?"