

Chapter 541 Self-reproach

Since Elliana had adopted her new identity as Lilah, the daughter of an overseas tycoon, Milton had built a picture of opulence around her. In his mind, their mother had left the Campbell family only to flourish in secrecy, shielding Elliana within a private empire far from harm.

Not once had he imagined Elliana's life marked by isolation and pain. The notion struck him like a punch to the gut. What could've possibly gone so wrong? His chest tightened as his thoughts spiraled.

For years, Milton, along with his father, had scoured every corner, driven by a desperate need to protect his mother and sister from any suffering. The moment he laid eyes on Lilah, polished and living comfortably, he'd felt a surge of peace, a long-awaited answer to countless prayers. But now, that fragile peace lay in ruins. The idea that Lilah and their mother had been suffering all along, while he was clinging to the fantasy of their safety, left a hollow weight pressing against his ribs. Self-reproach curled around his sorrow like a noose.

But Elliana had no clue of his thoughts. She studied him with unreadable eyes, her expression hard as stone. "Do you remember anything about your mother?"

"Of course, I do," Milton answered softly, a flicker of hurt in his gaze. "How could I possibly forget her?"

Elliana let out a bitter laugh. "So you remember her, but not enough to hate the man who'd hunted her like prey? Seems to me you and your father get along just fine. If that's the kind of son you turned out to be, maybe she should've saved herself the agony of bringing you into this world."

Milton's brows furrowed. His mind raced, connecting dots with jarring clarity. His voice turned grave. "Lilah, you've got it wrong. It wasn't our father who hunted her—it was our grandfather."

The line etched between Elliana's brows deepened, uncertainty clouding her expression.

Milton's gaze flicked briefly to Cole, who lingered just a few feet away, and then scanned their surroundings. He understood her skepticism. "This isn't the right place to talk," he said quietly. "We need to talk somewhere else."

He reached for her hand, and this time, she didn't pull away. Curiosity about her mother and perhaps something far more urgent compelled her to follow.

As they passed Cole, Milton stopped and leaned in, his voice dipped in ice. "Stay away from my sister."

The warning landed with weight, but Cole didn't respond. His hostility toward Milton had already dissolved into something far more complicated. His eyes never left Lilah. So this was her. The girl his mother had handpicked for him years ago. The one who had gripped his attention from the very first moment, without even trying. If he'd known it was her whom his mother intended for him, he'd never have wasted time on someone like Wanda. Now that he knew, he had no objections in marrying Lilah. None at all.

Oblivious to Cole's silent storm, Milton gave Elliana's hand a reassuring squeeze and led her away, the past and present colliding with every step.

Walking beside Milton, Elliana cast a glance over her shoulder to look at Cole. His stare was scorching, unreadable to anyone else, but not to her. She recognized that look. He was falling hard for her. That one brazen move—climbing into his car to flirt with him—had actually worked. She'd captured his heart.

She understood his thrill. The woman his mother had chosen for him and the woman who haunted his every thought were one and the same. No wonder he looked like he'd just won the lottery.

And for a heartbeat, she felt triumphant. Even with his mind fractured and memories blurred, his heart had led him right back to her. His instincts hadn't changed. She hadn't even had to try; he was hers from the start. One glance, one word, and he would've melted in her hands all over again.

But she didn't want to make another move on him. Not now. She was still burning with rage. How could he remember everyone else, even Paige, the woman he couldn't stand, but not her? Seething, she shot him one

last glare, sharp as shattered glass, followed by a scoff full of contempt. Then, she turned away without hesitation.

Cole didn't move. He stood rooted in place, eyes locked on the corridor where she'd vanished, heart hammering against his ribs.

That look she gave him struck like lightning, white-hot and electric, rattling him down to his bones. He felt breathless and unmoored. Was this what falling in love actually felt like? Apparently, it was that easy. All it took was her crashing into his world, nestling in his arms, and scolding him like a child, and suddenly, his entire existence revolved around her.

She left, and his appetite vanished. Sleep became a joke. Every man she spoke to felt like a threat. He hated the silence she left behind, hated how every hour without her dragged like a week. She uttered harsh words to him, and he'd still trail after her like some sad, desperate mutt. Damn. Why was he so pathetic?

The word pathetic echoed in Cole's head, bouncing around until it lost its sting and left him with nothing but the urge to laugh at himself. A low chuckle slipped out, dry and self-deprecating. Were all men this pathetic when they fell in love?

He actually paused to consider it. The answer came swiftly. Probably. His mind drifted to Allan and how the latter turned into a stammering, lovesick wreck the moment Ava entered the room. Yeah, Allan was no better. If anything, he was worse.

That realization was oddly comforting for Cole. Maybe his current state wasn't some colossal personal failure. Maybe it wasn't about him at all. Maybe it was just biology. The natural order of things. A glitch in the male operating system that triggered when the right woman appeared. And honestly, it was no biggie as long as he could be with the woman he desired.

Elliana, of course, remained unaware of the emotional spiral and strange rationalizations unraveling in Cole's mind. She simply kept walking beside Milton and then slid into the passenger seat of his car without a word.

Milton climbed into the driver's seat and shut the door behind him, the soft thud sealing them in. He turned to her, his expression earnest. "Whatever you're thinking, whatever questions you've got, just ask and I'll

< Chapter 541 Self-reproach

 +120 Points at most

tell you everything. No more confusion, no more doubts. You deserve the truth."




Our ads aim to provide better support for authors.



 I want no ads >

100,0%

15:37 



Chapter 542 More Formidable Than He Could Ever Imagine

Milton's sincerity had begun to quell Elliana's wariness, allowing her to think more clearly. Back when her mother parted ways with Arthur, Milton had already celebrated his sixth birthday. She, in contrast, hadn't yet entered the world—her life still waiting to begin. Years must have stretched between her mother and Arthur. Their past held secrets she desperately needed to uncover.

Piecing together her swirling thoughts, Elliana spoke with quiet resolve. "I want to understand what actually happened between your father and my mother."

The words "Your father and my mother" hung in the air. Milton could only stare, unsure whether to smile or sigh. He was overjoyed to have found his sister, only to hear her draw a line down the middle of their family, dividing the whole family in two—her and their mother on one side, him and their father on the other. He understood, though. She was working from a lifetime of misunderstandings, all of which he was determined to set right.

With a gentle hand, Milton tousled her hair and offered a steady, "Alright." Patience colored his voice. "I'll tell you everything."

Then, Milton began, weaving the story of Arthur and Rita, laying out every detail for Elliana to see.

As he spoke, Elliana listened intently, her gaze fixed on him with sharp, unwavering intensity. Her eyes were like probes, searching for any hint of deception. If he had tried to lie, she would have sensed it at once.

When the story came to an end, a weighty silence filled the space. Elliana accepted his words. Nothing about his tone or story rang false, and all the pieces fit neatly together, forming a complete picture.

Once more, Milton reached over, this time smoothing her hair with careful tenderness. "Is there anything else you want to ask?" His words



were gentle.

Tears brimmed in Elliana's eyes, the world before her going blurry. She felt happiness and grief twist together deep inside her heart.

A sharp ache rose in her chest for her parents, once deeply bound to each other, only to have fate pull them apart. She felt sorry for her mother most of all, forced to flee and live a life on the run.

Yet, beneath the sorrow, something brighter surged through her. It was pure relief. She was no longer drifting through life on her own. A father and a brother, both loving her and never giving up the search, stood by her side at last. No longer was she the abandoned girl without a place to belong. She finally had her roots. Her family was none other than the legendary Campbell name, with a father at the helm of the mighty Sun Group and a brother, the patient and gentle soul sitting beside her, set to inherit the family business. She had a family. Finally.

Milton's palm resting on her head brought comfort that sank deep, filling the hollow spaces in her heart with gentle heat. A single, tremulous word slipped from her, thick with longing. "Milton!"

Unable to hold back, she hurled herself into his arms. Her face pressed against his chest, and the tears she'd hidden for years soaked into his shirt.

After their mother vanished, everything had changed. She'd been forced to grow up fast, turning from a frightened child into someone who could survive anything. She'd become a fierce leader, known as Death Thorn. Softness and tears had long been luxuries she couldn't afford. But in Milton's arms, her defenses finally gave way. For a moment, she was just a little girl again, letting all her pain and loneliness rush out in a broken plea. "Why didn't you come for me sooner?"

Milton's embrace tightened. His hand moved in soothing circles on her back, his voice rough with regret. "I failed to locate you sooner," he whispered. "You should never have had to wait so long, never suffered so much. I'm sorry."

Time seemed to slow as they clung to each other. What passed between them was both breathtaking in its simplicity and staggering in its depth. It was a reunion only the lost and found could truly understand.

All those hard years were written in the lines of their faces, yet blood had drawn them together, making every second of their embrace feel as natural as breathing. The ache of separation melted in the simple truth of their connection.

When the tide of emotion finally subsided, Milton eased away, searching her face. "Tell me, where is Mom? Is she safe?"

Elliana's face dimmed with sadness. "She's gone missing," she answered quietly. "Mom left me behind in Ublento when I was five years old. Since then, it's been complete silence. No word, no sign."

Elliana began telling Milton about her past, choosing her words with care and leaving out more than she revealed. Details about the Star Society and the Thorn Rose never crossed her lips. Family ties and shared blood did not erase the need for secrecy; everyone carries truths they choose to keep hidden.

Milton sat quietly, each part of her story hitting harder than the last. By the time she stopped talking, he stared at her, wide-eyed. "Lilah... no, Elliana," he said, stumbling over the words. "You and Cole..."

Elliana offered a quick, tight nod. "That's exactly it. I'm Cole's 'ugly ex-wife.'"

Out of nowhere, a loud bang rang through the car when Milton punched the steering wheel. Every bit of bitterness he felt toward Eva and Wanda came crashing out. Twenty years ago, Eva had come close to ending his mother's life. Now, both Eva and the daughter she'd taken in had set their sights on his sister. There would be no running from what they'd done.

And as for Cole, Milton would never stand by and let him hurt his sister again.

"Listen to me, Elliana. Eva and Wanda won't get away with this," Milton declared, his tone steady but threatening. "They used our family's name to hurt you behind my and our dad's back, and I will make them face the music."

Elliana simply shook her head, her lips curling into a cold, self-assured smile. "I can handle them myself. You really don't have to step in." She looked him right in the eye, her gaze turning sharper. "I only staged my

fake death so I could get away from what I thought was the Campbell family's hunting. Now that I know Eva and Wanda have no actual influence within the household, nothing holds me back anymore. Dealing with them is just a piece of cake."

Seeing the steel in her eyes, Milton felt a surge of pride, almost leaving him breathless. He reached over and patted her head, but this time, he did it with respect. He realized he still hadn't seen everything Elliana was capable of. Her presence practically filled the car, hinting she was a force to be reckoned with, perhaps even more formidable than he could ever imagine.