

## Chapter 610 Distaste

The rift between Rita and Miguel was a wound that could never heal. She longed for freedom. He longed to possess her. While she didn't feel like reciprocating his feelings and tried to dodge him as much as possible, he poured all his passion into the futile pursuit.

The tension had boiled over when Rita turned twenty.

At Maxine's command, a wedding had been arranged to bind Rita and Miguel, but Rita had shattered the plan. On the eve of the ceremony, she had fled—and she didn't go alone. She'd carried the Medical Codex with her.

When Maxine learned of Rita's escape, fury had consumed her. She'd ordered a worldwide hunt.

But Rita had been no easy prey. Despite the vast number of skilled operatives dispatched by the Griffiths, she'd slipped through their fingers, a ghost in their own web. For years, she'd vanished, until a trail finally appeared.

Rita hadn't just hidden. She had started over. She'd married Arthur Campbell, son of the mighty Sun Group's leader. Together, they had a son, Milton, six years old, and another child on the way.

To the Griffiths, this was the cruelest betrayal of all. Rita had been raised for one purpose—to bear their heir. Yet, the children she bore carried Campbell blood.

Neither Maxine nor Miguel had let this slide. Maxine had doubled her efforts, vowing to drag Rita back at any cost. But the Campbells were no common family. A direct clash could expose the Griffiths' shadowy existence. The retrieval had to be swift, silent, and unseen.

Maxine's solution had been ruthless—stage a fake death. If Rita "died," she could be taken without the Campbells suspecting a thing. Yet, the operatives had failed. Even pregnant, Rita had fought them off and vanished again.

Years later, the chase had led to Ublento. At that time, Rita had already brought her baby into this world, and the little girl had become five years old.

Desperate to evade the Griffiths' reach, Rita had forged another life, this time as the wife of a simple man named Darin, tucked away in quiet seclusion.

Ublento was no place for rash moves. Its strict laws and watchful police left no room for reckless kidnappings. So once more, the Griffiths had planned an "accident." But the mission was, once again, a catastrophic failure.

In her desperation, Rita had made an unthinkable choice. She'd left her daughter behind.

With Rita vanished into the wind, Maxine and Miguel had been haunted by a grim thought—what if, when they finally caught her, she could no longer bear children? What would be the point?

Their anger had turned toward Rita's abandoned daughter. For a fleeting moment, they had even considered killing her to sadden Rita. But that thought had withered when news reached them. Rita's daughter had been burned in that "accidental" fire, scarred and left with a broken mind. To the Griffiths, she was useless. Not worth the risk. Besides, a murder in a city as secure as Ublento was a foolish risk.

With Rita gone for good, the perfect heir Maxine had coveted for so long became a distant dream once more. She grieved this loss for years, and the matter of succession was shelved indefinitely.

But the relentless march of time had forced her hand. As she grew older, she knew she could not delay any longer. She turned to the family's distant bloodlines for any suitable candidate. Her choice fell on Katrina, a descendant of the Griffiths family. Upon being chosen, Katrina began to address Maxine as "Grandmother."

But Katrina was no Rita. She lacked Rita's brilliance and strength. Maxine knew it, yet there was no better option.

To secure the line, Maxine brought in a boy of mysterious origin. When grown, he would be Katrina's partner. That boy was Jules. As for where Maxine found him, no one ever knew.

Maxine ruled with iron resolve. Her daring and her cruelty silenced every voice of doubt. None dared to oppose her.

But fate had its own plans. Though raised together, Jules and Katrina grew to despise each other. The thought of marriage repulsed them both, though they never dared show it.

Pulled from their thoughts, Jules and Katrina exchanged a fleeting glance before quickly looking away, the distaste on each of their faces palpable.

Then, a sound shattered the tension. Maxine laughed. Not a cold chuckle, but true laughter, bright and startling.

Jules and Katrina froze. Maxine hadn't laughed in years, not once. They had just reported a failed mission. Why was she laughing now?

As the question hung in the air between them, Maxine murmured to herself, "Rita... Your brilliance never ceases to amaze me."

Katrina suddenly doubled over, her body wracked by a violent coughing fit that ended with her spitting a spray of blood onto the floor.

The harsh, wet sound drew Maxine's eyes. Her mind replayed their report. Jules had been injured by Cole. Katrina, by Elliana.

Maxine's concern had gone straight to Jules. She had all but dismissed Katrina's injuries. But the truth was written on the floor in blood.

Maxine's gaze lingered on Katrina, unreadable. Then, with a flick of her fingers, she commanded, "Katrina, come closer."