

Chapter 616 Unexpected Encounter

Davin finally grasped Maxine's plan. With both hands, he received the Medical Codex as if it were sacred.

Maxine's eyes fixed sharply on his, her voice cold and firm. "Elliana is clever—too clever. You cannot make a single mistake. Report to me first and wait for my approval before acting. This time, I will shape Elliana into what I need. There will be no second Rita."

"Yes, Ms. Griffiths." Davin acknowledged the order and took his leave.

Elliana, meanwhile, had no clue she had just become Maxine's new target. After finishing her call with Milton, she set out for Ublento Medical University as planned.

Now that she knew Davin—the founder of the Enlightenment Institute—was the man whom her mother had contacted all those years ago, she realized there was nothing left for her at Ublento Medical University. Her goal was clear. She had to earn her place at the Enlightenment Institute. The surest path lay in the Enlightenment Institute's yearly talent exam.

Hailed as the supreme temple of medicine in Ublento, the Enlightenment Institute held this exam once a year, opening its doors to students from the university and accomplished medical professionals alike.

This year's exam was only a week away, and registration was still open. Without hesitation, Elliana decided to apply.

As an affiliate, Ublento Medical University was tasked with organizing the exam. A special registration desk had been set up on campus to handle applications from both students and outside professionals.

Elliana rode into the university, parked her motorcycle, and made her way straight for the registration site on the first floor of the library.

When she arrived, a long line of hopeful candidates stretched across the

hall.

Each year, hundreds signed up, but only a select few were chosen. Most came simply for the experience, knowing the Enlightenment Institute only accepted the best of the best.

Elliana found the end of the line and took her place, settling in for the wait.

As her gaze drifted toward the front, she did a double-take. The professor overseeing the entire process was none other than Murray. What a twist of fate—running into her old nemesis here. Had she enrolled at Ublento Medical University as Elliana, Murray would have made her life miserable. But as Lilah, she was nothing more than a stranger to him. He had no reason to trouble her now.

She was still lost in thought when a sudden tap on her shoulder startled her. From the firm pressure alone, she could tell it was a man.

Turning around, she froze. Quentin stood right behind her, smiling warmly. Quentin—top of his class in business from an elite overseas university, heir to the Hudson empire. But why on earth was he here, at a medical school?

Questions stormed through her mind, but she held them back. To Quentin, she was Lilah, a stranger.

And yet, his eyes told a different story. They carried a warmth and familiarity that unsettled her.

Then, breaking the silence, Quentin spoke. "Elliana," he said softly, "what a coincidence."

Elliana stiffened. His voice was just as warm as she remembered, his features just as refined and gentle. But he had called her Elliana. How could he know?

Her thoughts spun. She replayed every memory she had of him. There was no way he could have linked Lilah to her true self. How had he pierced her disguise?

As if sensing her confusion, he reached out and lightly ruffled her hair. "You've grown up," he said with a smile. "But your face, your little

expressions... They're the same as when you were small. I knew it was you the moment I saw you."

When she was small? She'd been playing the part of a useless, ugly girl since she was five. If Quentin remembered her from when she was little, he had to be talking about the time before that.

Before she turned five, her mother had arranged her engagement to Raylan. Because of that, she had visited the Hudson estate quite often. And yes, she had seen Quentin there many times. Quentin was Raylan's age, and the three of them spent much of their childhood together. She remembered clearly—Quentin had always been her shield, stepping in whenever someone tried to pick on her.

Their paths had separated when her charade began. She hid away in the Jones family backyard, while Quentin went abroad to study, and they drifted apart.

Years had passed. Childhood had slipped away. Her engagement to Raylan had collapsed in ruins. Quentin had long faded from her memory. Yet, here Quentin was, showing her the same kindness he once did.

For a moment, she thought of ending the ruse. She even allowed herself a faint smile, ready to admit the truth.

But before she could speak, Quentin leaned close, his breath brushing her ear. "The truth is, I've always known. That whole act of being useless and ugly—I saw through it. I've kept your secret all along," he whispered.

He pulled back, his bright smile unwavering.

Elliana's smile faltered as she searched his face. Her heart raced. Never had she imagined Quentin could be so perceptive. He had carried her secret all these years without a word. The revelation hit her hard. The gentle boy she remembered was not the man standing before her now. If he knew her act, what else might he know?

A chill crept down her spine. Behind that polished kindness, a far more dangerous man could be hiding.

He wore his mask, and she would wear hers. Her smile returned, calm and composed. "How did you know?" she asked lightly, concealing the storm raging within.