

Chapter 686 Quarreling

Jules emerged from the shadows like a specter materializing from the void.

Katrina's features hardened the instant she recognized him, irritation flashing across her face like lightning. Her voice cracked through the air with whip-like precision. "What brings you here? Did I not make myself crystal clear—stay away from me and keep your meddling hands off the hunt for Elliana?"

Jules had weathered her arctic temperament and razor-sharp tongue for countless years. He fired back with matching venom, his words dripping with contempt, "My survival within the Griffiths dynasty hangs in the balance here. Why the hell should I just listen to you? You declare I cannot interfere, so I should simply bow and obey? What kind of fool do you take me for?"

They had quarreled since childhood—bitter confrontations that erupted whenever their paths crossed, as natural as storm clouds gathering before thunder.

Katrina fixed him with a withering stare, refusing to waste another syllable on his presence.

The silence stretched between them like a taut wire until Jules shattered it. "Now that Elliana's true identity as Stellara has been laid bare, do you still intend to kill her?"

Katrina's gaze flickered toward him, uncertainty dancing behind her eyes for the briefest moment before she masked it with practiced indifference.

The cruel irony of their situation would have been laughable under different circumstances. These two souls, who despised each other with burning intensity and could barely tolerate sharing the same air, harbored an identical admiration for Stellara's songs. Stellara's music had captured both their hearts, transforming them into devoted worshippers at her artistic altar.

Earlier, when Elliana had shed her disguise, revealing herself as their beloved musical idol, both Katrina and Jules had felt their worlds tilt on their axis.

"Katrina, why aren't you saying anything?" Jules pressed, his voice cutting through her defenses.

His relentless questioning ignited her temper like a match struck against dry kindling. She lashed out with unbridled fury, "What decision I make is none of your damn business. Mind your own damned affairs and disappear from my sight!"

"Never!" Jules snarled back, reckless abandon coloring his features. "Listen carefully, Katrina. Should you dare raise even a finger against Stellara, I will make you suffer consequences beyond your darkest nightmares!"

Katrina studied him with growing rage, astounded that he had emerged from the darkness solely to wage war against her own mission.

Jules' voice descended into darker territory, each word weighted with unshakeable resolve. "The Griffiths family dragged me into their complex dynamics when I was nothing more than a helpless child. I never knew my parents or where I came from, and on top of that, I was forced into an engagement with you. Every day since I learned to walk has been painted with misery and suffering. Stellara represents the only beacon of light that has ever pierced my darkness. If you attempt to extinguish that light, I will tear you apart with my bare hands!"

Katrina's fury erupted like a long-dormant volcano finally finding release. "Jules, I never imagined someone as twisted as you would dare claim possession of any light whatsoever. And now you have the audacity to threaten me over it? Magnificent! I am dying to witness the full extent of your capabilities. Show me exactly how you plan to orchestrate my destruction!"

Before her final words finished echoing through the stone forest, Katrina raised her arms in preparation for mortal combat.

Jules responded with equal ferocity, cold laughter spilling from his throat as he assumed a fighting stance that promised no quarter would be given.

As the two prepared to collide in deadly earnest, the black-clad subordinates surged forward to intervene in the brewing catastrophe.

"Please calm down a bit. If some scores must be settled between you, could we perhaps postpone it until our current mission reaches completion?"

"Quarreling is one thing, but why must fists become involved in your argument?"

"We have gathered here tonight with the sole intention of eliminating Elliana, yet before our mission can even commence, you two stand ready to murder each other. Should you both perish in this foolish conflict, how do you expect us to proceed without your guidance?"

"Our enemies remain unaware of our presence, while you two, who should be commanding this operation, prepare to stab each other. When word of this spreads, you will become the stuff of legends—cautionary tales whispered among professionals!"

"Forget what outsiders might think—when Maxine learns of this debacle, her rage will ensure you two are in for a tough lesson!"

Their words carried a harsh truth despite their blunt delivery, cutting through Katrina's and Jules's fury with surgical precision.

Both Katrina and Jules froze in their tracks, their murderous intentions cooling under the weight of brutal logic.

Katrina straightened her sleeves with sharp, angry movements, her glare boring into Jules like twin daggers. "Stellara's melodies have been my sanctuary for years, and I have proclaimed my devotion to her artistry at every opportunity. Yet tonight, Elliana must die by my hand, regardless of her true identity!"

"Katrina, have you abandoned your humanity entirely?" Jules exploded, his voice fracturing with disbelief. "Years of listening to Stellara's music, declaring yourself her faithful admirer whenever the chance arose, and now you scheme to murder the very idol you once cherished? What kind of heartless beast are you?"

Faced with his insult, she hurled her response back at him like a weapon. "Should she continue breathing, my own life will cease. And don't forget

that our fates have become entangled threads in destiny's tapestry. When survival stands in the balance, what value does idol worship truly hold?"

She regarded Jules with the contempt one might reserve for a particularly dim-witted creature. "Have you forgotten that your existence remains tethered to mine through bonds you cannot break? If Maxine strips away my position as heiress, do you honestly believe your life within the Griffiths family will become a pleasant stroll through paradise? From where I stand, you appear to be the one diving headfirst into hell's gaping maw by persuading me not to take Stellara's life!"

Jules found himself robbed of speech, his arguments crumbling to ash in his throat.

The assembled assassins struggled to contain their amusement, silently agreeing that the two deserved some lessons to grow more mature.

Meanwhile, upon the stage, the concert continued its mesmerizing journey through musical landscapes.

Two hours had elapsed since the evening's grand opening when Taylor's voice finally began showing signs of recovery from whatever had silenced it.

Unfortunately, his vocal cords remained too damaged to produce the pure notes his art demanded. Each attempt to reach his usual range failed, leaving him frustrated and desperate.

He consumed water as if it were liquid salvation, praying that hydration might somehow accelerate his healing process enough to allow him to join his beloved idol upon that sacred stage.

In that moment of desperate hope, an otherworldly voice materialized within the confines of his consciousness, its words reverberating through his mind like distant thunder. "Taylor, a new mission awaits."