

Chapter 689 Taylor's Missing

Cole immediately noticed the tension written across Jason's face. "What happened?"

Jason glanced over his shoulder cautiously before stepping closer and lowering his voice to barely above a whisper. "I've just discovered approximately fifty men dressed in black clothing positioned throughout the stone forest, roughly a hundred meters to the east of this location. Every single one of them has this dangerous, lethal energy about them—I'm certain they're professional killers."

"Did you manage to get any photographs?" Elliana asked.

Jason pulled out his phone and handed it to her. "I captured a few shots from a distance. I couldn't risk getting closer without being spotted."

Elliana took the device and used her fingers to zoom in on the shadowy figures in the images.

With no clear idea of who targeted the Evans family, these photos represented their only lead.

Jason's phone was a specially modified, top-of-the-line model equipped with an exceptionally powerful camera. Even taken from far away in poor lighting conditions, the images were remarkably clear and detailed.

After carefully studying each face in the photographs, Elliana finally looked up with recognition dawning in her eyes. "These men are from the Serpent Society."

While most of the faces were unfamiliar to her, two stood out immediately: Katrina and Jules. They had attacked her in a narrow alley some time ago, and she and Cole had managed to overpower them during the confrontation. She'd gotten a close look at both of their faces then, and their features were burned into her memory.

Since Elliana had already filled the others in about the dangerous organization known as the Serpent Society, Jason immediately

understood how serious this situation had become. His expression grew darker with worry. "So it's possible that the Serpent Society was responsible for implanting that chip in Taylor's head?"

Elliana's mouth formed a tight line. She couldn't provide him with a certain response. There was no concrete evidence directly connecting the chip they'd discovered in Taylor's head to this particular organization, and she wasn't about to make accusations based on speculation alone.

"It's certainly within the realm of possibility," Cole interjected thoughtfully, "but we can't be completely sure of their involvement yet. For now, let's just keep them under careful observation. If they don't make any moves, we won't either. My instinct tells me they're waiting for the crowd to disperse completely before they take any action."

Jason nodded his understanding. "That makes sense."

At that moment, Lance rushed over, his face flushed with exertion and his voice tight with barely controlled panic. "We have a serious problem— Taylor has completely disappeared."

Everyone immediately turned their attention to him.

"What exactly do you mean by that?" Cole demanded, his voice deadly serious. "Give us the details."

Lance took a shaky breath as he tried to compose himself. "I was following Taylor at a discrete distance, exactly as you instructed. I watched him enter the men's restroom, so I positioned myself outside to wait for him to come out. After quite a bit of time had passed and he still hadn't emerged, I decided to go inside and check on him. The entire restroom was completely empty. He had vanished without a trace."

Vanished without a trace? A full-grown man didn't just disappear into thin air like that. Something was definitely very wrong. Without wasting another second on discussion, Cole was already moving with determined strides toward the restroom in question.

Elliana and Jason fell into step right behind him, their faces set with grim determination.

After exchanging a worried glance with each other, Emmanuel and Lance hurried to catch up with the group.

When they reached the restroom, they conducted a thorough search of the entire space, checking every single stall and corner.

The restroom was a permanent fixture of the venue, constructed with solid masonry walls. The only alternative exit was a small, high window positioned well above head height.

Taylor had clearly entered through the front door and had never been seen leaving the same way, which meant he must have somehow exited through that window. There was no other logical explanation—people couldn't simply walk through solid brick walls.

Following a quick examination of the interior, they moved outside and circled around to the rear of the structure. As expected, the soft earth beneath the window showed clear signs of disturbance, with a confused pattern of multiple footprints scattered across the ground.

The evidence pointed to an inescapable conclusion. Taylor, his mind no longer operating under his own control, had been removed from the premises under the chip's influence. A pampered young man from a wealthy family like Taylor would never possess the physical skills or training necessary to climb out of such a high window and disappear so silently into the night. Someone with professional expertise had clearly been here to extract him.

But the question remained—where had they taken Taylor? The restroom backed up directly against the stone forest, and the footprints vanished completely once they reached the tree line.

Emmanuel's voice cracked with fear. "What are we supposed to do now? Where could they have possibly taken Taylor? What are they planning to do to my son?"

"Stay calm, Emmanuel," Jason responded in measured tone. "The person behind this conspiracy is primarily targeting Cole. Taylor is simply being used as a bargaining chip. They won't eliminate their leverage until they've achieved their main objective."

Lance placed a supportive hand on his father's trembling shoulder. "Jason's absolutely right, Dad. We need to keep our heads clear if we're going to rescue Taylor."

Emmanuel understood the logical reasoning behind their words, but this

was his youngest son they were talking about. Staying calm felt impossible when his child was in mortal danger. His gaze moved to Cole with an unspoken request for assistance.

"I believe the mastermind will make contact with me very soon," Cole said with quiet confidence. "For now, the best thing we can do is wait for them to reveal their hand."

Elliana turned toward Jason. "Have you observed any changes in the Serpent Society's positioning?"

Jason quickly checked the surveillance feed he'd established on his phone and shook his head grimly. "Nothing at all. They're maintaining their exact same positions, and there's no sign of Taylor anywhere within the range of my cameras."

"So we're not dealing with just the Serpent Society tonight," Elliana reasoned out loud. "Whoever abducted Taylor represents a completely separate organization."

Cole nodded with grim understanding. "That matches my assessment of the situation."

A sense of overwhelming frustration descended upon the entire group. The Evans family was a global powerhouse with generations of accumulated wealth and influence, which meant they had inevitably made as many dangerous enemies as powerful allies over the years. With such limited information available, identifying their mysterious opponent felt like trying to locate a single grain of sand in an endless desert.