

Chapter 710 Debt

Elliana was certain that the one that Maxine had previously deployed to eliminate her was Katrina—the woman currently positioned as the Griffiths family's chosen successor.

When Elliana dropped this revelation, both Cole and Jason looked at her with raised eyebrows and obvious confusion written across their faces. Despite being quite sharp themselves, they were completely lost trying to understand her reasoning.

The logic just didn't make any sense. If Maxine was really obsessed with getting her hands on the babies growing inside Elliana, why would Maxine send her own chosen successor to murder Elliana? That attack hadn't been staged or fake in any way. The brutality behind Katrina's every move had been absolutely genuine—she had been dead serious about ending Elliana's life.

Noticing the bewildered expressions painted across their faces, Elliana couldn't help but laugh softly. "You're both struggling to understand Maxine's strategy because you're approaching this from a male perspective. Men and women don't always process situations the same way. Since I'm a woman myself, I have a much clearer understanding of the game she's orchestrating."

Cole and Jason looked at each other briefly, silently acknowledging that she had a valid point.

"Maxine has never been truly satisfied with Katrina as her successor," Elliana explained. "She only selected Katrina for that position because there weren't any better alternatives available at the time. Now that she's become fixated on claiming my unborn daughter as her own, she's absolutely determined to replace Katrina with my baby girl. However, removing an established heiress from power is an enormous undertaking for a family as influential as the Griffithses—if executed poorly, it could easily trigger internal warfare and complete chaos. The most elegant solution to this problem is to arrange for the current heiress to 'vanish' under circumstances that appear completely legitimate and justified."

Understanding flooded through both men simultaneously as the pieces finally clicked into place.

Jason released a low whistle of grudging admiration. "So Maxine's actual objective all along was to manipulate you into killing Katrina for her. She must have extraordinary confidence in your combat abilities."

Cole, on the other hand, let out a harsh, bitter laugh. "That woman is absolutely depraved. To accomplish her goals, she's perfectly willing to be this merciless toward her own family members!"

Ruthless. Heartless. Monstrous. Within seconds, these descriptors became permanently attached to Maxine's name in Cole's mind. A wave of anger and profound shame washed over him as he realized he shared even the smallest genetic connection with someone capable of such calculated cruelty. How could anyone this morally bankrupt be considered fit to lead an entire family?

The fundamental values that guided the Griffiths family stood in complete opposition to everything the Evans family believed in.

Cole's mind turned to his mother, who had been forced into a life of constant hiding and running from Maxine's relentless hunters all those years ago, and to his grandmother, who remained imprisoned in the Griffiths family's underground cells even now. His hatred for Maxine burned brighter and hotter than ever before.

Irritation pricked at Cole. He hadn't even begun to settle old debts with Maxine, and already she was setting her sights on his unborn daughter with Elliana. Perfect. He was curious to see what other schemes the old witch thought she could pull off. Even if she decided to leave him alone, he would hunt her down himself. She wanted to exploit his unborn daughter as a tool to destroy the Campbell family? Well, he would respond by first obliterating the Serpent Society—that festering disease—from existence.

No one watching Cole could possibly detect the cold, deadly determination that was taking root deep within his heart.

Elliana carefully slid the ancient book she'd been examining back into its designated spot on the shelf. "We've uncovered all the secrets that were hidden away in this vault," she announced with finality. "It's time for us to return to the surface."

Being four months into her pregnancy meant her body was starting to enforce its natural limitations. The smartest decision was to head back home, where she could rest properly and wait peacefully for her babies to arrive. An ultrasound scan had already revealed the wonderful news—she was carrying twins, one boy and one girl. After her children were born, she was genuinely curious to see how Maxine would dare try to steal her daughter away from her.

Elliana wasn't frightened by the possibility of Maxine coming for her daughter. If anything, she worried that Maxine might not show up at all. She was actually looking forward to their inevitable confrontation.

Cole and Jason returned the ancient volumes they'd been studying to their proper places on the shelves before standing and trailing after Elliana as she headed toward the exit.

When all three of them climbed back up into the daylight world, they discovered something unexpected waiting for them beneath the massive tree. Someone had arranged a wooden table there, and it was covered with an impressive spread of hot, freshly prepared food. A folded piece of paper sat prominently in the center of everything.

The message had been written by Maxine herself, and the words managed to sound both falsely sweet and deeply threatening at the same time. "My dearest Elliana, given your sharp mind, I'm certain you've already figured out my intentions after uncovering the secrets in the cave below. This future heiress is a debt that your mother left unpaid—and now it falls to you to settle that account in her place. Make sure you eat plenty. I wouldn't want my precious successor to go hungry."

After scanning through the note, Elliana released a harsh, humorless laugh. She crushed the paper into a tight ball in her fist and threw it away before settling down at the table to eat.

Her stomach was genuinely growling with hunger, and she knew the babies developing inside her needed nourishment as well. The timing of this meal was actually perfect. She had absolutely no concerns about the food being laced with poison or anything harmful. If anything, Maxine was probably even more worried about the safety of the baby girl than she herself was.

Once they'd all finished eating their fill, the three of them climbed aboard the rescue helicopter that had been patiently waiting for them and took

off, watching the thick forest disappear beneath them.

They made a stop at a hotel first to clean up and get some much-needed rest before finally catching their flight back to Ublento later that same evening.

When Jason learned that his supposed death had destroyed Irene's mental stability, a complicated tangle of sadness and remorse flooded through him. He acknowledged that this was the inevitable consequence after all the terrible things she'd done, but she was still the woman who had given birth to him, and knowing she was suffering caused him genuine pain. He immediately departed for the Evans family estate to check on her condition.

Elliana and Cole, meanwhile, had different priorities pulling them in another direction. They went straight to the secure location where Katrina and Jules were being kept prisoner, eager to question the two and extract whatever information they could about Maxine.

Following Elliana's explicit instructions, both Katrina and Jules had been locked up at Rosewood Villa, where Adah and the Four Guardians kept constant watch over them.

Elliana hadn't returned to Rosewood Villa in almost a full month, having chosen to remain at the Evans estate throughout that entire period. When Adah and the others received the message that Elliana was returning from Yadnard, they were absolutely thrilled, gathering together at the front gates well ahead of time to properly welcome her home.

Heather had thrown herself into preparing an enormous, elaborate feast. Her enthusiasm for cooking had noticeably dimmed during the long weeks of Elliana's absence, but the moment she heard Elliana was coming back, she channeled every ounce of love and skill she possessed into creating this special meal.

The people who worked under Elliana's leadership held deep affection and respect for her, and she reciprocated those feelings genuinely—particularly when it came to Heather.

That was exactly why, before making the trip to Rosewood Villa, Elliana had deliberately asked Cole to make sure Hugh came along with them.

Cole had immediately understood what she was trying to accomplish.

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Not only had he ensured Hugh joined them, but he'd even taken the time to remind Hugh to dress in something nice for the occasion.



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