

Chapter 714 Venomous Woman

Following a careful and detailed examination, Elliana's initial theory was proven correct. The substance that had caused Katrina's memories to retreat to childhood came from the Medical Codex. This meant only one thing—the person responsible for drugging Katrina was Maxine herself.

Maxine had certainly earned her fearsome reputation through decades of operating at the very center of the Griffiths family's power structure. Her strategic mind worked like that of a chess grandmaster, with every action carefully plotted out several moves in advance. Anyone whose thinking was even slightly less sophisticated would find themselves trapped at every turn by her elaborate schemes.

Poor Katrina had been the perfect pawn in Maxine's game.

Maxine had played both sides perfectly. She'd sent Katrina to kill Elliana, hoping Elliana would kill Katrina, saving her the trouble of getting rid of Katrina herself. But Maxine always had a backup plan. She'd already slipped the drug into Katrina's system before sending her out. The plan was simple and vicious. If Katrina failed and got captured, the drug would kick in and erase everything she knew. No memories meant no secrets could leak out. Maxine's soul was colder than ice and twice as deadly.

But for all her scheming, Maxine had overlooked one crucial possibility—Jules would end up in Elliana's hands. He'd already spilled everything about Gearveil Hall.

At that moment, Katrina reached out and gently tugged on Elliana's sleeve, her eyes beginning to well up with tears. "You won't hurt me, will you?"

The drug had wiped away everything that made Katrina dangerous. The killer was gone. What remained was just a scared child with nowhere to go. She looked so small and broken.

Elliana bet that as a child, Katrina had never dreamed of becoming the Griffiths family heiress. Maxine had forced that life on Katrina, breaking her down and molding her into someone cruel through years of pain and training. Now, Katrina was that little girl again.

Elliana let out a soft, sad sigh as her thoughts drifted to her mother, who had been taken in by Maxine as a young child and groomed to become an heiress through similar methods. She could only imagine the grueling training sessions and terrible suffering her mother must have endured—probably very similar to what Katrina had experienced. Had her mother also spent long nights staring up at the stars during those painful moments, wondering what her real parents looked like? Had her mother dreamed about where her true home was, or whether anyone was searching for her?

"Mom..." Elliana whispered inwardly, feeling a sharp pain lance through her chest. Even now, she had no idea where her mother was, whether she was alive and well, or what kinds of hardships she might currently be facing.

The thought of Rita suffering somewhere made Elliana's heart race with desperate urgency. She couldn't afford to waste another single moment—she needed to find her mother as soon as possible.

Elliana rose to her feet and turned to address Adah, "Katrina's mind has been reset to her childhood state. She no longer poses any danger to us. Take that tracker off her ankle and let her out of this basement. She can go anywhere she wants in the villa."

With those instructions delivered, Elliana turned and walked out of the room without looking back.

Adah glanced over at the bewildered Katrina and then knelt to study her carefully for several moments before reaching out to unlock the metal shackle fastened around her ankle.

The moment the restraint clicked open and fell away, Katrina's entire face lit up with joy and affection for the person who had freed her. "Does this mean you're not going to punish me anymore?" she asked hopefully, her voice filled with the innocent trust of a child.

"Yeah, that's right," Adah said with a casual shrug. "As long as you behave yourself and don't cause problems, I won't lock you back up



down here. But you need to be on your best behavior—if you dare make any trouble, I'll drag you straight back to this basement and put that shackle right back on your ankle."

"No, no, no! I promise I'll be really, really good!" Katrina said frantically, her words tumbling over each other in her desperate need to convince Adah. "I'm the most obedient kid you'll ever meet—just please don't hit me, and I'll do absolutely anything you tell me to do!"

Adah just shrugged, turned on her heel, and headed toward the basement stairs. After hesitating for just a second, Katrina scrambled to her feet and hurried after Adah like a nervous puppy afraid of being left behind.

Outside in the garden, beneath a breathtaking canopy of glittering stars, Elliana turned to face Cole with determination written across her features. "I need to go to Gearveil Hall," she announced quietly but firmly.

Even though she was pregnant and knowing full well that Gearveil Hall was essentially a nest of vipers waiting to strike, she had to make the journey. Finding her mother wasn't optional—it was essential.

Every single day that Rita remained missing was another day that Elliana's heart would be twisted up with worry and anxiety, making it impossible for her to live with any real peace or happiness.

Cole understood her resolve completely, as his own thoughts were constantly drifting to his own mother. "Then we'll go together," he said without hesitation.

He knew that Maxine was obsessed with the unborn daughter growing in Elliana's womb. No matter how dangerous Gearveil Hall might be, it seemed unlikely that Maxine would actually try to kill Elliana while she was carrying such a precious baby girl. That thought provided at least a small measure of comfort.

Back inside the villa's spacious first-floor living room, Elliana gathered Adah, Clifton, and the others to give them detailed instructions about managing things during her absence. Then, she began preparing to head to the Evans family estate.

Damian pulled out his phone and called Heather, telling her in no uncertain terms that she and Hugh needed to stop whatever romantic

activities they were engaged in and get back inside the house immediately.

Heather and Hugh had disappeared into the sprawling backyard gardens quite some time ago, and no one had seen any sign of them since—nor did anyone particularly want to imagine what they might have been doing out there in the darkness.

About ten minutes later, Heather and Hugh finally made their reappearance in the living room.

The sight that greeted everyone was absolutely shocking.

Heather looked perfectly composed and fresh, her clothes completely neat and unwrinkled as if she'd just stepped out of a fashion magazine. Hugh, on the other hand, looked like he'd barely survived being caught in a violent tornado. Several buttons were missing from his expensive black suit jacket, his pink dress shirt was torn in multiple places and hanging awkwardly, his carefully styled hair was an absolute disaster, sticking up in every direction, and his face and neck were absolutely covered with what appeared to be dozens of small hickeys that formed a constellation across his skin.

It was painfully, embarrassingly obvious which one of them had been in complete control of their outdoor encounter.

Adah, Clifton, Kieran, and Damian all grimaced and looked away in unison. Just trying to imagine what had taken place out there in the garden was enough to make their eyes hurt and their faces flush with secondhand embarrassment.

Damian found himself cursing Heather silently in his head with every profane word he could think of. That woman was an absolute savage! Couldn't she see how thoroughly she'd ravaged poor innocent Hugh? The man looked like he'd been mauled by a wild animal!

Just moments ago, Elliana's mood had been heavy and serious due to the dangerous journey ahead. But the absolutely ridiculous spectacle of Hugh's disheveled appearance made her burst out laughing despite herself. She had always known that Heather was tough, bold, and fiercely independent in every aspect of her personality. Now, it was crystal clear that Heather preferred to be completely in control when it came to her romantic relationships.

