

## Chapter 722 Salvation

"Sophie's will was made of steel. She endured every episode and survived them all, though each one left her covered in new scars and blood. And even..." Victor's voice broke, turning into a faint whisper. "She learned how to live with the illness, but the cost was beyond belief. She broke every finger, her legs, her ribs... Everything. She even ruined her own face."

When he finished, his words gave way to choking sobs.

Cole trembled, grief surging through him. His eyes were red, heavy with pain. For fifteen long years, he had searched endlessly for his mother while carrying the burden of being the Evans head—and the constant fear of inheriting Psychoprenia himself.

He had suffered, yes, but never had he imagined that his mother's agony had been a thousand times worse. Still, he had been the fortunate one. He had met Elliana—his savior. She had cured him and freed him from that nightmare.

Silence filled the place like a weight, none of them able to speak through the ache in their throats.

Elliana was just as moved, though she forced herself to stay calm. She was close to giving birth; too much emotion could bring on labor too soon.

"Victor, regarding Cole and me being registered as husband and wife in Podgend... Was that you and Sophie's doing?" Elliana asked softly, steadying her voice.

Deep down, she already knew the answer before Victor answered. Victor had always been loyal to Sophie. He would never make such a decision without her approval.

At her question, Victor's composure faltered. "I—I..."

"It's fine," Elliana said gently, offering him a calm smile. "You can tell me. I was furious back then, having my marriage registered without my consent. But now, Cole and I are truly happy, and soon we'll have two

beautiful babies. I hold no grudges."

Relief softened Victor's face. "Sophie managed to live with her illness, but she couldn't bear the thought of Cole going through the same suffering. She wanted to give him one last chance... A miracle."

"So she thought of me," Elliana spoke quietly. "She knew I'd inherited the Medical Codex, that I'd become Dr. Atkinson. She hoped I might create a real cure for Psychephrenia. So she tied Cole and me together—by force?"

Victor gave a weak laugh. "You're as sharp as ever. Nothing escapes you. If you need to blame someone, blame me. Please, spare Sophie. She's already paid too much. For her son's life, she allowed herself to be selfish for once."

But Elliana's expression held no trace of anger. Instead, she smiled warmly. "You don't have to worry. I meant what I said—I'm not angry. If anything, I'm thankful. You gave me such a wonderful husband."

Cole's heart clenched with a mix of guilt and gratitude. His marriage to Elliana hadn't begun with love—it was born from his mother's desperate plan. Yet, Elliana had never resented him. She had loved him, cured him, and was now carrying his children. She was his light. His salvation.

"Thank you, Elliana," Cole murmured, pulling her into his arms and pressing a kiss to her forehead.

Elliana sank into his embrace. The anger she'd once held over their forced marriage had long faded, replaced by peace. Without Sophie's so-called selfishness, she would never have known this joy. How could she ever blame Sophie?

"Victor, please go on," Elliana said softly, bringing the talk back to Sophie. The past was settled. What mattered now was the present.

Victor nodded. "Sophie didn't just survive her illness," he said. "She built her own small power base. It wasn't much compared to Podgend's great powers, but it kept us safe."

Elliana smiled faintly. That much influence was no small feat. To register a marriage in Podgend took real power—perhaps not equal to the great groups like Thorn Rose, Blaze Wildfire, or the Serpent Society, but

impressive nonetheless.

"Victor, you still haven't said where my mother is," Cole cut in, his patience thinning. He had asked that from the start, but Victor had avoided answering, choosing instead to tell the story of Sophie's life after leaving Ublento.

Victor's face darkened. "That's why I came. She's been taken. We don't know if she's alive or dead. I came to ask for your help to save her."

Cole's body went rigid. "What happened?"

Victor's tone turned grim. "Not long ago, a group of unknown attackers struck without warning. They destroyed everything and took her. My search led to one place—SerpentFang."

The name hung in the air like poison. SerpentFang. It was a place of shadows in Podgend, ruled by unseen hands. No one knew who truly controlled it, but one thing was certain—SerpentFang was a name to fear.

Cole's eyes hardened, a dangerous spark in them. Now more than ever, he had to find his mother.