

Chapter 765 Miguel Was Alive

After revealing Rita's origins, Maxine fell silent.

Elliana leaned down and held her fingers beneath Maxine's nose. Nothing stirred. She pressed her palm against Maxine's chest, searching for the familiar rhythm of a heartbeat, but found only stillness.

Maxine was gone. The most formidable and iron-willed leader the Griffiths family had ever known had reached her final moment—a life painted in glory and shadow, recklessness and profound, aching solitude.

Elliana released a quiet sigh and drew a white handkerchief from her pocket, draping it gently across Maxine's face.

She despised Maxine. Pity didn't come easily, and perhaps it never would. But she had accepted the Sovereign's Orb, and with it came obligations. Leading the Griffiths family, even temporarily, meant honoring the dead. Arranging the former leader's funeral now belonged to her. Whatever darkness Maxine had carried, she deserved this last shred of dignity.

Elliana rose slowly to her feet. Sophie and Aubrie moved in unison, bowing deeply before her. "Greetings to the new family leader," they said, their voices hushed and reverent.

Elliana hesitated, caught off guard, before steadying herself and acknowledging them. "There's no need for such formality."

The Griffiths family hadn't shown either Sophie nor Aubrie much kindness, yet they still regarded themselves as part of it. With Elliana now at the helm, it felt only right for them to acknowledge the new family leader with due respect.

Once Sophie and Aubrie straightened, they exchanged a brief, hopeful glance. Elliana might have resisted the role of the family matriarch, but for them, her ascension felt like a quiet triumph.

Elliana's gaze drifted to Maxine's body, still resting in the snow, before returning to Sophie and Aubrie. "What are the burial customs for a



Griffiths leader?"

"Cremation," Aubrie answered. "We scatter the ashes into the sea. The exiled princess established that tradition when she rebuilt the family, and it's been held ever since. It applies to all of us, not just the leaders."

Sophie chimed in, "The princess had her reasons. After the Griffiths Dynasty collapsed, the imperial tombs were ransacked. Grave robbers didn't just steal jewels and treasures—they desecrated our ancestors' remains. The princess saw it as a grim lesson and refused to let future generations suffer the same violation."

Elliana inclined her head slightly. "Bring Maxine onto the plane. We'll transport her back for cremation and select a day to scatter her ashes across the waters."

To Elliana, this tradition, at least, carried wisdom. Among the Griffiths family's labyrinth of cruel and twisted laws, it emerged as a rare stroke of foresight.

Clifton, Kieran, and Damian stepped forward together, lifting Maxine's body with careful hands and carrying her away into the gathering dusk.

A deep, trembling sigh from Adah fractured the quiet.

Elliana turned toward Adah, concern softening her features. "What weighs on you?"

Adah stared at the empty imprint in the snow where Maxine had lain, sorrow threading through every word. "I never found the chance to ask Maxine about my mother's background. Not that it would have changed anything. My mom was merely your mother's housekeeper, invisible to the Griffiths family. Maxine probably never gave her a second thought."

Elliana rested a warm hand on Adah's shoulder. "How Maxine viewed your mother means nothing. My mother cherished your mother as a true friend, perhaps the truest she ever had. Once we locate my mom, we'll unearth every answer you've been searching for."

Adah nodded, and then her expression transformed. "Speaking of which, did Maxine reveal anything? About your mother's true origins?"

The question suspended itself in the frigid air like a held breath, and suddenly, every pair of eyes pivoted toward Elliana, all of them waiting



with an intensity that bordered on hunger. The question had haunted each of them.

Maxine had stolen Rita away and cultivated her like some rare, precious bloom. That alone whispered of extraordinary lineage—suggested that Rita's parents must have possessed qualities that transcended the ordinary. Rita's own striking beauty and formidable talents testified to that inheritance.

Now, they craved the truth with an almost painful desperation.

For Sophie, who had once walked beside Rita as her closest companion, the question carved especially deep.

Surrounded by faces she trusted implicitly, Elliana found no reason to guard the secret any longer. She drew a steadying breath and began, "Maxine revealed that my mother was..."

A sudden disturbance shattered the moment like glass. They spun to witness a figure materializing from the same direction Maxine had emerged earlier.

It was Miguel. Somehow, he was still breathing. He looked utterly ravaged. Battered and disheveled, he lurched toward them like something barely clinging to life, a phantom of the imposing figure he'd once cut. Yet, his eyes blazed with ferocious intensity, locked onto the ornate box nestled in Elliana's grasp.

Miguel halted several paces away from Elliana, thrusting out a hand that trembled with equal parts exhaustion and determination. "Surrender the Sovereign's Orb to me," he commanded, his voice grinding out like stone scraping stone.

He had wagered everything for this prize—spilled his own blood, danced at death's threshold. All for the Sovereign's Orb and the intoxicating power to bend the Griffiths family beneath his will. He refused to simply stand witness while Elliana claimed what burned in his chest as rightfully his.

"I am a descendant of the Griffiths family!" Miguel snarled, fury sharpening every syllable into a blade. "Their blood flows through my veins like fire! The Sovereign's Orb and the mantle of leadership belong to me. Relinquish the Sovereign's Orb immediately!"



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But the Sovereign's Orb alone wouldn't satisfy the hunger consuming him.
He wanted Elliana as well.



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