

Divorce 1271

Chapter 1271 Finally Reunited

Finally Reunited

Two hours later, we went to the airport and returned to Foswood, heading straight to the Klinein Hospital.

Upon arrival at the hospital, we found that everything had been arranged. The top expert team arranged by Atlas was waiting in the hospital, ready to conduct a comprehensive examination on my father.

Loak was admitted to the intensive care unit, and I comforted Anya. I led her to the room arranged for Loak, urging her to rest as soon as possible. Until then, I waited anxiously outside the examination room, awaiting the results of the examination for my father.

Every nerve in my body was still tense. I still didn't know my father's condition or if he could stand again.

There were still many mysteries waiting for my father to unravel. The Pierce family's vendetta had yet to be avenged. The reason the non- organization had been trying to find my father, as well as the involvement of Stella and so on, had not been answered yet.

Too many things were related to him, making him the focal point of the entire incident.

Perhaps it was because I hadn't rested well these days, but I had a splitting headache at this moment, and my ears were ringing.

I paced back and forth outside the examination room, massaging my temples.

The examination was very detailed, and it wasn't until three hours later that the experts came out.

After obtaining all the data from the examination results, the doctors consulted Atlas's opinion and administered an antidote to my father. Now all we could do was wait for him to wake up naturally.

In the doctor's office, several top experts gave a summary report. His physical condition was not optimistic, requiring treatment and recuperation. Whether his legs could still be treated depended on various indicators of his body, which needed further examination.

I was very worried. I really hoped he could stand up again.

Two hours later, he finally woke up.

When he opened his eyes, he recognized Atlas and me at a glance, his lips trembling for a long time.
"Atlas... am I dreaming?"

Atlas immediately bent down to look at him. "Dad, this isn't a dream. Stella and I have brought you back. You're safe now. No one will dare to imprison you again."

Perhaps it was because Atlas called him "dad" or maybe it had been too many years since we last met, my father stared blankly at Atlas for a long time before speaking.

Then, his eyes slowly moved to me. "Stella, are you my dear Stella?"

At that moment, I couldn't control my emotions anymore. His words finally gave me confirmation that I

was indeed his daughter and that at one point in time, I was Stella.

I couldn't believe that my father recognized me.

I bent down and hugged him, leaning gently against his chest. "Dad, I'm Stella. We'll never be apart again."

Upon hearing my words, he stretched out his weak arms and hugged me tightly. The two of us hugged each other and cried our hearts out.

From his reaction, I was sure that he already knew the fact that my mother was no longer alive.

Because my father had just woken up and his body was extremely weak, such a large emotional fluctuation caused him to faint again.

I panicked and shouted, fearing that he would be taken away from me like this. I couldn't help feeling lost.

The doctor quickly came forward to check on my father, and I watched the process anxiously.

After the examination, the doctor told us to let him rest as much as possible and try to not let him get too emotional for the time being.

"Everyone should leave now. You know he's safe, so let him rest for a while. It's good for his body." The doctor ushered us out.

Atlas quickly seized the opportunity

to persuade me to rest. As I turned around, the world seemed to spin, and I fell backward uncontrollably. I only heard Atlas's exclamation

before losing consone

Chapter 1272 Unexpected Joy

Unexpected Joy

When I woke up, the sharp scent of hospital disinfectant filled my nose. Groggily turning over, I collided with a warm body.

I quickly opened my eyes to find Atlas lying beside me. Staring at him in confusion, I struggled to grasp what was happening.

He looked at me with a tender smile and gently kissed me. "Good morning, sleepyhead. Are you finally awake?"

Still dazed, I mumbled, "What time is it?"

"It's 7," he replied softly.

"7?" I blinked, suddenly realizing it was evening. But why did it still seem like dawn outside?

"7 p.m.," Atlas clarified.

I gasped, glancing outside and then back at him.

"It's 7 p.m.? Then... where's Dad?" Uncertain, I asked, trying to make sense of it all.

"He woke up briefly, then dozed off again. The doctor says he's finally getting some real rest," Atlas informed me in a gentle tone.

Relief flooded through me. So, it was all real-my biological father was truly back.

With a surge of happiness, I sat up abruptly, ready to get out of bed. Atlas's hand shot out to stop me. "Careful there, don't rush."

"I need to see my Dad," I exclaimed eagerly.

He gazed at me with affection and warmth in his eyes. Maybe there was even a little lust in them.

I playfully slapped his arm. "Hey. We're in the hospital, remember? Watch your expression."

Then, I attempted to get out of bed again, but he held me back. "Hold on, you can see your dad later, but let's get something straight first. Don't get too worked up. Get up, grab a bite, then go see him."

"Oh. I'll just take a peek at him and come back to eat." I bargained. "I'm not even hungry."

I was lying. I woke up starving, and the last meal I had was yesterday morning. That meal made me feel like I was chewing wax.

Now, I was famished.

"No bargaining with me. Eat first.

The doctor says he might sleep for a while longer this time." Atlas got up and helped me. "You need to eat properly, or else our baby won't get enough nutrients."

"B-Baby?" I looked at him in astonishment, feeling a bit dazed. "What baby?"

He smiled brightly and gently rubbed my abdomen. "You're pregnant. We're going to have a baby."

"What?" I was taken aback, staring at him in disbelief, stuttering, "W-Who said that?"

This news was quite sudden, leaving me unsure how to react.

I was pregnant with Atlas's child? Our child was on the way?

He was going to be a father? No wonder his expression was so gentle, and he was unable to hide his pride.

My mind raced, recalling the last time I had my period. I had completely forgotten about this.

"Of course it was the doctor who

said it, but the baby's position is a bit

unstable. You need to be careful, avoid getting too emotional, eat on time, and..."

"I can't do anything, and I can only lie in bed, I, right?" I retorted, looking at him. He had said too many things I couldn't do.

He kissed my lips. "Exactly."

"Is what you said true?" My hand instinctively rested on my abdomen as I looked at him seriously. "Are we really having a baby?"

He nodded contentedly. "It's my fault. I almost made a big mistake. Arnold was right, I shouldn't have let you go to Cirencester." "You just realized?"

As Atlas's words trailed off, Arnold swaggered in through the door.

Chapter 1273 How Bloody

How Bloody

Arnold strutted in with indifference, voicing his reproach for Atlas. "I told you that you shouldn't have let her go there. Look at how precarious it turned out. It's almost cost my nephew's life."

"Atlas, let me tell you, you're too arrogant. If something were to happen, you'd regret it big time, wouldn't you? Besides..."

Atlas and I exchanged a glance, both of us chiming in unison, "Enough."

Seeing the synchrony between us, Arnold pointed at me angrily. "You're just heartless."

I laughed and collapsed into Atlas's embrace. At that moment, I felt incredibly happy. It was no wonder I couldn't control the urge to vomit when I smelled blood at Navi's base.

Just thinking about it made my stomach churn, and it felt like that bloody odor was assaulting me again.

"Ugh..."

I clamped my hand over my mouth, feeling the sweat beads forming on my forehead.

Atlas immediately tensed up, swiftly jumping out of bed to carry me to the bathroom, where I retched.

He gently patted my back as he watched me with concern. There was hardly anything left to throw up. My stomach was already empty.

With tears and snot streaming down my face, I collapsed exhausted in Atlas's arms, gasping for air. It wasn't until fresh air flooded my lungs that I felt better.

He gently placed me back on the bed while Arnold hovered nearby, incessantly asking, "How did this happen, Atlas? Look how pale she is. Is being pregnant this tough? I..."

"Shut up," Atlas snapped, silencing Arnold immediately.

I caught my breath and said to Atlas, "What about my food? I'm hungry."

That was when Arnold remembered he was still holding a thermos.

"Here! This is the soup I bought from Green Cottage, along with some snacks."

As soon as I heard it was porridge from Green Cottage, I pointed at it and told Atlas, "I want the soup."

Atlas glanced at Arnold and ordered, "Bring it here."

Arnold happily handed it over, muttering, "I knew you'd like it, so I calculated the time and rushed to bring it over. I'm quite..."

"Why are you so chatty?" I teased

Arnold. "Hana might avoid you altogether with that mouth of yours. If you want to talk, tell us about Denton's situation. Maybe I'll be more interested in that."

I gave Arnold a playful glance while Atlas opened the thermos and poured the soup for me.

Atlas handed me the bowl of soup and said, "You only notice he's a chatterbox now? He can talk all day by himself."

I almost burst out laughing.

Atlas quickly rubbed my back. "Let's not talk about it. Just eat your food."

I stopped laughing and looked at him, asking, "Aren't you eating?"

"I already ate. Just focus on eating, okay?"

"You said talk too much, but if no one responds to me, should I just not talk at all? You two older ones rushed off without me and now you're lecturing me?" Arnold was not done yet.

"And you, you heartless thing! I thought I had you, that we could get along, but you still find fault with me, don't you?" He complained at me.

"How could I ever get tired of you? Tell me, how's Denton doing?" I gulped down the soup, which was savory and delicious.

Atlas then brought over the dishes he had prepared for me.

I ate heartily, wolfing down the food. I was really hungry, and I wanted to see my dad as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Arnold updated me on Denton's situation.

"For now, Denton is still playing it

cool. Seems like he just returned to the country, hoping to leverage some family connections for his business. This guy's cunning. It's going to take some effort to deal with him." Arnold reported to Atlas.

Then, he suggested, "Atlas, what if we offer Denton a little temptation?"

Chapter 1274 Reflecting on the Past

Reflecting on the Past

"I have a plan." Atlas asserted confidently.

"What plan?" Arnold asked.

"I'll tell you tonight."

"Okay." Arnold nodded.

I felt uneasy. I put down the spoon in my hand and looked at Atlas. "Atlas, aren't you getting too comfortable at deceiving me? Has it become a routine for you now?"

Atlas's smile was charming as he sat down behind me. "No way, I can't keep it from you this time. You need to know our entire plan to work with us. But with so many people around in the hospital, we need to be careful."

His reasoning seemed sound, and after a moment of hesitation, I glanced at the door and nodded. "Alright then. But remember what you said." After finishing my meal, I pushed the small table away. "I need to go see my dad."

Atlas, seeing that I wasn't pressing further, accompanied me to my father's room. Luckily, he had just woken up. When he saw us enter, his eyes lit up, and he seemed to regain some spirit.

"Stella, you're awake."

His voice was hoarse. I quickly took a cotton swab, dampened it, and wiped his lips. "Dad... are you feeling uncomfortable anywhere?"

He shook his head quickly and grabbed my hand, studying me. "Don't worry about me. How about you? Are you feeling okay?"

Upon hearing his words and seeing his anxious expression, I knew he must have found out about my pregnancy.

Seeing my hesitation, he said gently, "Atlas has already told me. I know you two are married now."

I glanced at Atlas and nodded earnestly to my father. "Yes. We're married, Dad."

"Good. This was Lucille's and my

wish, as well as the wish of Atlas's parents. You two have been inseparable since childhood, and we all hoped to see the day you get married and continue the friendship between our families. It's just a pity..."

He couldn't continue. I quickly grasped his hand. "Dad, don't worry too much. We are together now."

Atlas stood by my side, and my father reached out to him. Atlas offered his hand to my father. My father placed my hand in Atlas's palm, and Atlas understood his intention, holding my hand firmly.

"Take care of her forever and ever." My father's words were simple but meaningful. He feared that calamity.

"I will. Stella is my treasure. I won't

let go for a moment." Atlas

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embraced me, making a solemn promise. "I'll take care of her and our children. That's what Lucille

instructed me before she left."

Tears welled up in my father's eyes. "If it weren't for that secret, I would never have wanted to live and get humiliated for so many years. I would have gone to Lucille long ago.

"I owe her an apology for letting her betray her family, yet I was unable to give her and Stella a stable and happy life. It's all my fault, damn it." My father looked pained and was wiping his eyes.

"Dad, let bygones be bygones. You must live well and watch our children grow up happily. That's the meaning of your survival," I comforted him softly. Atlas sat on the chair beside his bed and looked at him. "Dad, since they can't see it, you must watch over our happiness and grow with us."

"Dad, what kind of secret are you talking about?" I was curious and couldn't wait to know what happened back then.

My father remained silent for a long time before saying to Atlas, "Help me sit up."

The nurse quickly came over, but Atlas stopped her and personally adjusted my father's bed.

Looking at Atlas and me, my father told the nurse, "You've worked hard. I want to talk to the kids privately."

The nurse nodded and went out. I knew whatever my father wanted to discuss was significant, so he dismissed the nurse.

Chapter 1275 Top Secret

Top Secret

After the nurse left and closed the door, Atlas spoke solemnly, "Dad, rest assured. Everyone here is on our side."

When sitting up, my father appeared even more frail, which tugged at my heartstrings.

He looked at us with adoring eyes.

"Celine orchestrated the past events in collaboration with the leader of the organization. Later, Celine bribed Clark. To give that plane crash a perfect and logical conclusion, I was replaced by one of the organization's men to make everything look seamless," my father explained.

"How did you find out they swapped you in the plane crash?" I asked, puzzled.

"At first, I had no idea. It was later when I saw the reports of the event, that I found out about it. But by then, the crash had happened long ago." My father's expression was despondent as he spoke. "Later, I got confirmation from Clark."

"How did you know about Mom's death?" I asked. Though I didn't want to bring up that topic, it was important information we needed.

"Before sending me to Navi, Clark confessed everything to me. He told me these things while Celine was hunting him down," my father said.

"He told me that Celine and the organization designed everything. But turns out it was Lucille who noticed the flaw. That's why they killed her." As my father spoke, he began trembling.

I was worried and quickly reassured him, "Dad, please don't dwell on it."

"Stella, your mom sacrificed her life for me. She was originally a princess from Yare, but gave up everything to be with me. Yet, she met such an end. How can I not think about it? It's all my fault."

He finished speaking and fiercely punched his leg. I grabbed his hand.

"But I have a duty. I can only live on, clinging to life without dignity. I had only one thought in mind, which was to meet you all again. Otherwise, I would have gone with Lucille long ago."

My father cried like a child. I hugged his frail body as he trembled severely.

"Dad, your health doesn't tolerate such emotional fluctuations. You have to listen to the doctor." I comforted him like a child, constantly patting his back where his backbone felt brittle.

My nose tingled, but I took a deep breath. I was afraid that if I cried, he would feel even more distressed.

After a while, he calmed down his emotions and continued in a soft voice, "Atlas, Celine's motive for the killing was not the Pierce family's fortune but your dad's BZ plan."

"The BZ plan?"

Atlas fell into deep thought. Then he looked up at my father and said, "I vaguely remember him mentioning the BZ plan. But after my parents' deaths, it was never brought up again. I was young then, so I didn't pursue it further. What kind of plan was it?"

My father looked at Atlas with a serious expression. "Atlas, the BZ plan was a treasure plan. It took Louis and me twelve years to compile a global map of mineral deposits and a mining plan. The plan was called the BZ plan, but it was just a plan between us."

My father's words shocked me and Atlas, and we exchanged glances.

"No one else knew about it?" Atlas and I asked simultaneously.

I had only learned about the mining business when Ardie mentioned it to me last month. Before that, I had no idea about Atlas's many mining interests.

But from my father's words, it was evident that even Atlas was unaware of the BZ plan.

Chapter 1276 A Great Regret

A Great Regret

My father wasn't surprised by our reactions at all.

He continued solemnly, " This mineral distribution map represents the global mining landscape. We could control three-fifths of the world's total mineral resources if we could implement mining operations in Torado alone. That doesn't include mining operations in other continents."

His words left us both speechless.

Immediately, Atlas asked, "So when Archie mentioned that my father wanted to discuss something with him before his passing, it was about the BZ plan? He said he was in an important meeting at the time and couldn't make it to Foswood as my father had suggested.

"They planned to meet at another time. But before that meeting could take place, the tragic news of my parents' deaths in the plane crash arrived. Archie has always regretted that. He said my father sounded really serious at the time."

"Yes, that was the plan. Do you know why your father focused his business in Torado and ended up in Foswood?"

"To leverage resources and gain support from influential figures," Atlas summarized concisely.

My father slapped his thigh. "Exactly. He intended to leverage Archie's power and mutual support to implement the BZ plan smoothly while ensuring that the mineral resources remained in our country."

"Everything seems to make sense now," I commented.

My father continued gravely, "We meticulously evaluated all the heads of state. There was no better option than Zydan, especially since Archie is a selfless man of great integrity, admired by the public for his moral character."

"No one can deny that. When I was at my lowest, the Hansen family sent me to the Beringer family in Foswood for refuge, which saved me from being hunted down. The Beringer family has protected me since then," Atlas said emotionally.

"That's why we decided to focus on Zydan after thoroughly examining all the heads of state. This was also the real reason why your father decided to be based in Torado.

"But the survey results were not entirely complete at the time. We didn't want to formally discuss anything with Archie until all the surveys were completed and

plan was fully developed. y the

father and I only decided it was time

to talk to Archie about it when..." My father's expression turned sorrowful.

"Archie always regretted not being able to attend that meeting, but there was a national conference at the time, and he couldn't miss it." "So the date was changed." My father nodded.

Atlas also nodded. "But in recent years, I've been involved in quite a bit of mineral development, inspired by the mining businesses my father left behind. It allowed me to see the true value of the industry."

"You've inherited your father's wisdom, Atlas. I thought that the Pierce family was doomed, but we need to thank the heavens for you." My father was becoming excited.

"It looks like my plan coincides with yours. Most of the mineral resources I've developed have contracts with Zydan, and almost all of them are discreet. Only a few in Pharica are my personal businesses."

This was the first time I had heard Atlas talk about this.

It turned out what he had told me last time was true. He and Archie did have a plan. No wonder Archie valued him so highly.

After a moment, my father

continued, "After we summarized

the survey results, we didn't rush to implement the mining plan. Instead, we made some long-term plans. Louis and I knew we weren't mature enough to carry out that project.

"We deliberated for a long time and finally decided to start implementing our plan in Torado. The mineral deposits were most concentrated

there, the policies were favorab

and the environment was safe. We made detailed analyses, ranking, categorization, and comprehensive planning for distribution on other continents, preparing to realize our plan step by step.

"So, my father developed a few sites before his passing just to test the waters?" Atlas asked.

My father looked very pleased and nodded approvingly.

"Yes. Exactly. We spent two full years getting this plan ready for Torado." My father spoke of the business cautiously, which showed how much they valued it at the time.

Chapter 1277 Information Leak

Information Leak

"Since it was a long-term and highly confidential plan, we didn't dare discuss it with anyone else. A lot of businessmen would have been eager to get involved. But it would bring not only wealth but also disaster to many." My father was not exaggerating.

Even now, any mention of mineral development would make many people prick up their ears and become sensitive to the situation.

"Only the two of us knew about this plan, and only we were involved in planning every step meticulously.

"But somehow, the news leaked at some point." My father frowned. "I never figured out where the problem was, even after so many years."

"Why do you say that?" I asked, intrigued.

I noticed Atlas had been deep in thought. I was certain he understood the details.

"One day, Celine got her father to negotiate with Louis out of the blue. She said she could put the Pierce family's business aside, but she wanted to do something of her own. You know what that was? She wanted to manage the mining sites in Urosia herself."

"Urosia?" I scoffed. "She was greedy."

My father nodded. "Louis denied her request, which displeased their father."

"There were only two of you, but there were so many mines. How could you possibly cover them all?" It seemed impossible to me.

"That was the most crucial step. We divided the tasks by continent and assigned someone we trusted to oversee each site. They didn't know each other, so they couldn't communicate."

"How is that even possible?" I exclaimed.

I looked at Atlas. He didn't refute what my father said. It seemed he could probably do the same.

"We expended a lot of manpower, resources, and effort, and it was all done with great caution." My father seemed tired. He shifted, and I quickly added a blanket behind him to make him more comfortable.

"Do you want to get some rest, Dad?" I asked tentatively, worried about his health.

He shook his head and continued,

"During those ten years, Louis and I

I

developed the business while tirelessly conducting surveys, especially when selecting those candidates. It was quite a challenge, which explains why we traveled around the world so much."

As soon as he said that, I saw Atlas's gaze drop slightly.

I understood why.

We must have disliked our parents' frequent business trips. We didn't have many opportunities to be together, which was why the photo of us playing musical instruments and singing together was so precious.

"It was necessary to ensure funding

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in this area too. Louis was very astute. He secretly operated several small-scale mining operations, which was enough to provide us with the funds needed for this while making the business thrive and diverting attention from the real focus.

"Celine initially thought that Louis was successful because of the Pierce family business, but she couldn't benefit from that.

"People are often shortsighted, especially women like Adeline. Once she was part of the Pierce family, there was no peace at home. She hated how she only had a daughter though."

Adeline? I had to meet this woman.

"They've been planning to regain control since the day their father was forced to hand over Pierce Corporation to Louis because of external pressure. She still hasn't given up, even now. Grandpa has urged me to bring Chloe back several times... Oh, that's Stella's current name."

I nodded, confirming Atlas's words.

"He's been wanting us to come back for a meeting. I've hesitated for a long time, but I had planned to take Chlo back to Nocturnia recently. Now that she's pregnant, I've changed my mind," Atlas said.

As soon as I heard that, I immediately tried to reassure him. "I'm fine. There's no need to worry."

My father pondered momentarily. "No, we need to approach this cautiously. You don't understand that woman."

Chapter 1278 Locked in a Secret Room

Locked in a Secret Room

My father glanced at me. "She plotted against Atlas's grandmother, and she saw Louis as a thorn in her side just after entering the Pierce family. Louis didn't care about the Pierce family's business originally, but he reluctantly took over the Pierce Corporation to provide cover for his mineral exploration."

"I see."

I sighed and poured a glass of warm water, handing it to my father. I noticed his lips were dry again.

He took a sip before continuing. "He personally straightened out the Pierce family and put them on a legitimate track. His own company had already been established after he graduated, and it was doing quite well when he took over Pierce Corporation."

"Could Clark have leaked the news? Was he the trigger?" I questioned skeptically.

My father thought about my question for a moment, then shook his head. "No."

He was surprisingly sure that it wasn't Clark.

He then gave his reason. "He joined the company at least three years after that."

"Are you saying someone else knew about the mines?" Atlas's gaze was intense as he stared at my father.

"Yes. That must have been what happened." My father nodded earnestly. "At the time, we ruled out anyone who could have possibly known about it, but we couldn't name anyone."

"Could it have been one of the survey team members you sent out?" Atlas asked softly.

"The survey teams were led by only five people, all of whom we trusted implicitly. I don't think it was any of them. Plus, each site had its own records and maps. Louis and I visited every site personally, so it took over ten years for us to do this."

My father fell into thought, murmuring, "And later, those maps were each collected separately."

"Clark started to work for the Pierce family's business three years after the incident. At that time, Louis had already renamed his own company to ATL Empire." He seemed to remember this very clearly.

"Clark was meticulous and serious."

He was in dire financial straits at the time. He was also my classmate.

When he saw me doing well with Louis, he kept trying to get close to me. I took pity on him and let him do some minor tasks for me. Since he was really good at his work, I let him do more."

Atlas pondered momentarily before saying to my father, "I have him in my custody now. it seems I need to interrogate him thoroughly."

"He's in your custody?" My father was surprised. "No wonder I never saw him again."

"You saw him?" I asked.

"He contacted me on the day of the incident, saying that information about an investment proposal had been leaked. He wanted to explain things to me urgently, so he came to see me. I thought it was serious, so I went to meet him without hesitation."

"Did Atlas's father know you went to see him?" I asked.

"No, he didn't. It was early in the morning, and we were in a hurry, so I didn't even have time to inform Louis and his wife.

"I thought I would meet Clark then head back, since there was plenty of time. We had booked a flight back to Nocturnia that day because it was Atlas's birthday. We were going back to celebrate."

I glanced at Atlas. This was a pain that would last him a lifetime.

"I went to see Clark. When we met, he saw that I had rushed over and gave me a glass of water to help me catch my breath. But before we had finished discussing things, I suddenly passed out."

My father was gritting his teeth and clenching his fists at this point.

"After I woke up, I realized I had been locked in a small dark room. No matter how much I screamed, no one responded. I immediately sensed something was wrong. Everything that had been on me, including my clothes, was gone, but there was enough food and water in

that small space.

"It seems it had been planned in advance. He flew back to his business trip destination afterwards. He pretended he had been drunk in his hotel the whole time to cover up what he had really done," Atlas said.

"That bastard! This is all my fault. I didn't know I hired a despicable man like that for the company." My father regretted it deeply.

"I banged on the walls until my arms were swollen and shouted until my voice was hoarse, but it was no use. I didn't even know how long I was in there because it was pitch black inside. There was only a dim little lamp that made it impossible to distinguish day from night I finally saw Clark when all the food was nearly gone."

Chapter 1279 I Must Stay Alive

I Must Stay Alive

"He smirked and told me that Louis and Tammy had died in a plane crash, and I was 'dead' along with them," my father choked.

"At that moment, I passed out. When I woke up again, I wasn't in that small dark room anymore. He had moved me to a bamboo building deep in the mountains with two guards."

"Did you know where that was?" I asked, my heart aching with anger. I wanted to kill Clark.

He shook his head. "I had no idea. I didn't even know how far we had traveled. I'm sure they used something on me. My head was spinning when I woke up.

"I wanted to leave. I wanted to verify what Clark said. I simply couldn't believe that Louis and his wife could have died in a plane crash. They were so alive in my memories."

My father choked up again, and he clutched the bedsheet tightly with both hands. "He was my closest friend. We understood each other very well. We still had so much to do, including the BZ plan. How could he leave just like that?"

By now, my father's neck and face were red from crying, and I rubbed his back anxiously. "Dad... Dad, please don't do this. We don't have to talk about it anymore. We'll wait until you feel better to talk about it. Atlas, call the doctor."

But my father grabbed my hand desperately while shaking his head vigorously. He took a deep breath and shouted, "Atlas, come back! I'm... I'm fine. Let me continue."

He gasped for air, struggling with his emotions. I reached for the water, but Atlas stopped me. "Don't give him any water yet. He might choke on it."

I continued to rub his back nervously until his emotions stabilized, then Atlas handed him the glass of water. "Don't worry. I won't let anyone involved in this incident get away. You have my word, so please don't be sad anymore."

My father stared at Atlas. "I can't accept it, Atlas. How did it come to this?"

He wiped his face. "Let me speak. I've been holding this in for almost 20 years. My health is declining, and if you hadn't rescued me, I probably wouldn't have had much time left. There's not enough time left

"Please don't say that, Dad. You have to stay with us for a long time." I leaned closer to him.

He rubbed my head, saying, "Silly child."

"I've kept this secret for so long and been so anxious the entire time. I just want to pass this on to our descendants. Your parents and I are really proud of you, Atlas."

After he finished speaking, he started crying again.

My father looked exhausted. Atlas stood up to lower the bed, but my father quickly waved and gestured for him to let it be. After a while, he said, "It's just that it's been too long. I lost confidence once, but when I thought about Louis and Tammy, I knew I couldn't die. I had to stay alive!"

I couldn't help but ask again, "How did you end up in Navi's hands?"

"That's a long story. After I woke up, they didn't let me out of that room at all. I was helpless, so I had to give up struggling and pretend to be friendly with them. I was even kind to the

two guards and did whatever they asked. I ate when they fed me and forced myself to sleep when I had time. I had to conserve my strength. I had to escape.

"I would talk to the guards whenever I could, but they wouldn't answer any of my questions. I was confused until I later discovered that they were both mute."

"Both of them?" I found it hard to believe.

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Always Prepared to Escape

"Yes. They weren't naturally mute. Their tongues had been cut out."

"How cruel!" I couldn't help but exclaim.

"I spent every day looking for an opportunity to escape. I didn't even know where we were or what time it was. But judging from the environment and vegetation, it seemed like we were in Southeast Torado."

"He really put a lot of effort into this." I gritted my teeth in anger.

"But to me, it didn't matter where I was. What was terrifying was that I didn't know what was happening outside those mountains. I didn't know if Clark's words were true.

"I didn't see Clark for a long time. I threatened those two guards later, saying I wanted to see him. I had no choice, so I resorted to a hunger strike. I had to find out what was happening outside.

"If it was true that Louis and Tammy were dead, how had their death been handled? And what about ATL Empire? To be honest, I was more worried about Lucille. I had no idea how she would have reacted to the news of my death. And you two..." My father's lips trembled violently.

I could hardly imagine how hopeless he must have felt at that time.

"Every day felt like an eternity to me. I didn't know how many days had passed, and they didn't even give me proper clothes to wear, let alone shoes. My hair and beard grew longer, and I looked like a wild man."

I looked at my father, feeling an overwhelming sense of pity. He must have lost all sense of dignity and pride.

"Clark is such a bastard!" I clenched my fists tightly.

Atlas's expression was grim. He had been listening silently to my father's story.

"My threats worked. I finally saw Clark after three days of my hunger strike. He brought me all kinds of reports about the incident, including pictures of the plane crash. I felt utterly hopeless, and I wished I were dead.

"I wanted to confront Clark, but he tied me up and taunted me, saying they couldn't find anything incriminating against him because everything had been orchestrated by Celine and had nothing to do with him."

I saw Atlas's hand clench involuntarily.

"He even said I owed him my life. If he hadn't taken me, I would have died along with Louis."

"That just proves that Celine had already bought him off. I refuse to believe Celine didn't know about this. If she hadn't known, how could the Non- Organization have replaced you? I can't believe that scoundrel dared to take credit for that!" I said angrily.

Atlas hurriedly tried to calm me down. "Don't be angry. I'm here, and I'll make him pay."

"I was furious, and I cursed him, calling him shameless and despicable. But it was no use. I knew it too. He left me with a threat. 'You'd better behave yourself and stay alive. Otherwise... your wife, daughter, and that kid from the Pierce family will be in danger.'"

"Why didn't Celine show up?" I asked Atlas.

"The plane crash has always been controversial. The Hansen and Lively families were investigating it too. She didn't want to take any action so she ordered Clark to hide your father. If things were exposed, she could easily escape any

consequences. I believe Clark hadn't realized your dad's true value yet."

Atlas's explanation made a lot of sense.

"But Clark's words made me suddenly realize something. Both Louis and Tammy had passed away, and the children were in danger. It was clear that they were afraid of me dying from the way they reacted to my hunger strike." My father's narrative perfectly matched Atlas's analysis.

I nodded. "Looks like Clark had a lot of autonomy back then. He could do anything as long as you stayed alive."

"Yes, his actions showed that they

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wouldn't let me die. I'm sure they wanted me to stay alive to find out more about ATL Empire, including the BZ plan. Celine might not have known about the BZ plan at the time, but she definitely wanted to disrupt APL Empire's business."

"Yeah, ATL Empire is Celine's sore spot."

"I was determined. I thought I needed to escape and take my wife and you kids together with me to somewhere safe, so I pretended to be indifferent. I saved my strength and worked out in secret, preparing to flee at any moment."