

## God of Milfs 521

Chapter 521: You're A Good Man

But then, unexpectedly, Camila's lips curved into a slow, sultry smile that caught both of us off guard.

Whatever frustration lingered evaporated, replaced by a mischievous glint in her eyes. Without warning, she stepped forward, closing the space between us, her hand intimately sliding into mine.

"Actually..." She began softly, her voice dripping with playful sweetness. "You might have a point, Bella."

I barely had time to react before she pressed her body against my side, her plump chest lightly brushing against my arm. Her touch was warm and deliberate, and her fingers tightened around mine as she tilted her head up to look at me, a teasing smile tugging at her lips.

"Do you know why my pants are wet, Bella?" She asked, her voice low, her words laced with mock innocence. She paused, clearly savouring the moment, then leaned in closer as she said, "Because I couldn't handle it. All that love Kafka gave me? It was just too much. His hands, his mouth, his tongue, his everything—I couldn't help myself and exploded all over the place."

Her words were utterly shameless, and the playful, provocative tone only added to the intensity. She then kept her gaze locked on mine, enjoying the way I tensed under her teasing confession.

"You were so passionate, Kafka..." She continued, her voice almost purring now. "...so relentless when you're focused on me. It's overwhelming...in the best way."

Her words dripped with exaggerated sweetness, every syllable laced with intent, and she didn't look away, savouring the effect her teasing had on me. I could feel the tension in my body, the warmth of her against my arm, but before I could even think of a reply, a sharp voice broke through.

"Me too!"

Camila and I both turned, and there was Bella, her face flushed with what could only be described as jealousy. Her hands were balled into fists, her lips forming a pout that was equal parts childish indignation and exaggerated drama.

"You think you're the only one he's showered with love?" Bella declared, stepping forward with a huff.

She then grabbed onto my other arm, wrapping her smaller hands around it and pressing herself close. The warmth of her touch mirrored Camila's, though her movements carried a distinct energy of defiance.

Bella then tilted her head up to meet my gaze, her eyes sparkling with a mix of jealousy and determination. "It was you, Daddy!" She accused, her voice rising. "You made me wet myself too! Don't even try to deny it!"

I blinked, completely taken aback, while Camila's eyebrows shot up, her expression shifting into something between amusement and surprise.

"Oh really?" Camila slowly dragged out, tilting her head as she regarded Bella with a teasing smirk. "And how exactly did he do that?"

Bella turned to her, clearly unwilling to back down.

"Because he's so unrelenting, like you said! The way he focuses on you?...Hah! That's nothing compared to how he was with me. His love was overwhelming—so much that I couldn't take it anymore and did s-some embarrassing things." She tightened her grip on my arm for emphasis, her cheeks burning with the theatrical nature of her confession.

Her dramatic tone filled the room, and I could feel the warmth of her touch, the sincerity of her playful accusations despite the exaggerated nature of her words. Bella's eyes sparkled with determination, daring Camila to rise to the challenge.

Camila, never one to back down, smirked knowingly. "Oh, sweetie." She said, her tone syrupy sweet with a sharp edge. "That's cute, really. But it's nothing compared to what he did with me."

"W-What do you mean?" Bella's expression faltered slightly, but her grip on my arm didn't loosen.

Camila stepped forward, her eyes locking onto mine with a teasing glint that immediately put me on edge. She slid her hand over mine, intertwining our fingers, her touch deliberate and warm. With a playful sigh, she leaned into my side, her voice dropping into a soft, intimate tone.

"Your 'overwhelming love, Bella? That's nothing." She said, tilting her head slightly to glance at me. "This man is so pitiful, so hopelessly in love, that he couldn't keep his hands off me...even when I was on the phone."

"What?" Bella's eyes widened.

"Oh, yes." Camila continued, her smile growing as she leaned further into me, her chest brushing against my side. "I was trying to have a perfectly normal conversation, and here he was, unable to resist himself. Feeling me up, kissing my neck, touching me like a love-crazed fool." She let out a soft, dramatic sigh, her hand pressing against my chest. "I had to fight him off just to finish the call, and at the end of it, I was an utter mess."

Bella turned her gaze to me, her jaw dropping slightly. "Daddy..." She said, shaking her head slowly, her expression a mix of disbelief and judgement. "You're such a pervert! Playing with the daughter and then immediately going after the mother...Only a fiend like you would act like that!"

I opened my mouth to defend myself, but before I could get a word in, Bella squared her shoulders.

"But!" She said, her tone regaining its confident edge. "I'm not losing to you, Mom."

"Oh? And what's your big story, hmm?" Camila raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

Bella straightened up, her cheeks flushing an even deeper shade of red as she took a step closer, still holding onto my arm as she coyly said, "H-He taught me how to shave."

Camila blinked, momentarily thrown off. "Shave?"

Bella nodded in a fluster, a shy smile playing on her lips.

"N-Not just my legs or anything basic like that. He helped me shave down there in my i-intimate place. He even did it for me." She shot me a quick glance, her eyes sparkling with mischief. "He

was so focused, so careful. I mean, he made sure everything was perfect, and I'm basically smooth as a baby's head down there."

Camila tilted her head, her lips twitching as though suppressing a laugh as she asked me, "Is that true, Kafka?"

I scratched the back of my neck, caught between a sheepish grin and a shrug. "She asked for help, and I helped her out." I said simply, trying to sound casual.

Camila let out a soft chuckle, shaking her head as she didn't react the way Bella or I had expected her to react.

"Well, well." She said, her tone teasing. "If you're so good at helping her, maybe next time you can help me too."

"Mom!" Bella gasped, turning to her mother with wide eyes, unable to believe what she was asking for.

"What?" Camila said innocently, a wicked smile curving her lips. "If he's already fine with helping out when it comes to such matters, why not take advantage of it?" She turned to me, her smile softening slightly but still brimming with playfulness. "You wouldn't mind helping me out, would you, Kafka?"

I sighed, feeling the weight of their playful bickering settling squarely on my shoulders.

Bella was glaring at her mother, her face flushed with determination, while Camila's cheeky smile only grew wider, brimming with confidence. It didn't take a genius to see where this was headed—a full-on catfight if I didn't step in.

"Alright, alright." I said, holding up my hands as if to halt an imaginary storm. "That's enough out of both of you."

Before either of them could retort, I acted swiftly. I grabbed Bella by the shoulders, pulling her closer, and planted a quick kiss on her forehead.

Kiss~

Her face turned an even deeper shade of red as I moved to Camila, cupping her cheek and giving her the same treatment, a soft kiss that caught her off guard.

Kiss~

Then I went back and forth—foreheads, cheeks, anywhere I could land a kiss—until both of them were too flustered to keep up their banter.

Kiss~ Kiss~ Kiss~

Kiss~ Kiss~ Kiss~

"Stop fighting." I said firmly but warmly, stepping back to look at both of them. "There's plenty of love to go around. You don't need to compete for it. Got it?"

Bella blinked, her wide eyes darting away from mine as she mumbled, "I-I wasn't fighting." Her hands fidgeted at her sides, and she glanced at Camila briefly before looking at the floor, clearly flustered.

Camila, on the other hand, gave me a gentle smile. The playfulness in her expression softened, replaced by something deeper, more meaningful.

She reached out and touched my arm lightly, her fingers warm against my skin. "You really do know how to handle us, don't you?" She said softly, her tone affectionate.

"Hmph! Of course! Or else I would've already been torn apart by your little fights and would've been left in pieces." I shrugged, trying to keep my voice light.

Camila's smile grew, and she shook her head slightly. "You're a good man, Kafka." She murmured, almost to herself. "The right man, me and Bella were lucky enough to meet."

Bella glanced up at Camila, then at me, her lips twitching as if she wanted to say something but couldn't quite find the words.

Unable to handle how both of them were looking at me with such a tender look in their eyes, I clapped my hands together, breaking the moment before it got too heavy as I said, "Alright, enough mushy stuff. Didn't you both have a surprise planned for me?"

That got their attention. Camila straightened, and Bella's eyes widened in realisation. The tension between them broke like a popped balloon.

"Oh!" Bella exclaimed, looking slightly panicked. "We almost forgot!"

Camila cleared her throat, brushing a stray strand of hair from her face as she regained her composure. "Yes, but...not like this." She said, gesturing to their damp, dishevelled clothes. "We need to change first. Can't exactly set up a surprise looking like we've been through a storm."

"Good idea. I'd hate to ruin whatever you've got planned." I smirked, seating myself back on the sofa.

Camila reached down, picking up the package and cradling it in her arms. She then turned to Bella, her tone brisk but kind as she said, "Come on, Bella. Let's get ready."

Bella hesitated for a moment, casting one last glance at me before nodding. "Right." She said, her voice quieter now like she was nervous about what they were going to show me.

The two of them then headed toward their room, Camila leading the way with the package in hand. As Bella followed, she glanced over her shoulder, her expression caught somewhere between flustered and thoughtful.

I watched them go, shaking my head with a small smile. Whatever they had planned, I had no doubt it would be memorable seeing as to how nervous and excited both of them were...

Chapter 522: It Belongs In A Store

A few minutes later, the sound of the door opening made me look up.

Both Camila and Bella emerged, freshly dressed, looking far more composed than before—at least on the surface.

Bella clutched something behind her back, her hands visibly fidgeting, and her expression was a mix of nervousness and anticipation, like she wasn't sure how I would react to the surprise.

Camila, on the other hand, walked with her usual grace, but the way she occasionally bit her lower lip gave her away.

Whatever this surprise was, it had both of them on edge, and I couldn't help but feel a growing curiosity.

As they approached, I got up from the sofa and folded my arms, giving them a playful smile.

"I'll admit." I said, breaking the silence. "When you two said there was a surprise, I was half expecting you two to come out naked and wrapped in ribbons. You know, as the surprise itself...Little disappointed, honestly, since that isn't what I'm seeing."

Camila stopped in her tracks and tilted her head, a teasing smile tugging at her lips.

"Oh, don't worry." She replied smoothly, her voice carrying that soft, mischievous tone I knew all too well. "I'll save that surprise for your birthday that's coming soon and give you the best birthday present ever."

Her words hung in the air for a moment, her smile daring me to react. I laughed, shaking my head as I said, "Well, that's the first time in years I've actually been excited about my birthday."

Camila chuckled, but Bella let out a soft groan, clearly embarrassed by the exchange. "Mom, don't tease him so much...He might actually strip us naked one day and wrap us in ribbon for his satisfaction." She muttered, though her tone lacked any real bite.

I then straightened up, raising an eyebrow. "Alright, alright." I said, letting the moment pass. "So, if it's not ribbons, what's this big surprise?"

Camila turned to Bella, gesturing subtly in her direction. Bella froze for a second, her eyes widening as she realised both of us were now looking at her.

"What? Why are you staring at me?" She blurted, her voice rising slightly.

"Because..." Camila said patiently, though her smile carried a hint of amusement as she stared at the present behind her. "You're the one holding it. Go on, show him."

Bella hesitated, clutching whatever it was tighter behind her back. She glanced at me, her cheeks flushing slightly, then back at her mom and then me.

"Y-You...You better not say anything mean about it, okay?" She muttered quickly. "Seriously, Daddy. Everyone put a lot of effort into this."

I blinked, taken aback by the sudden defensiveness in her voice. "Hey." I said softly, giving her a reassuring smile. "I won't say anything bad. I promise."

"...So, come on, let me see. I'm dying to know what the surprise is."

Bella bit her lip, clearly still nervous, but after a moment's hesitation, she stepped forward.

Slowly, almost reluctantly, she brought her hands out from behind her back, revealing a medium-sized basket.

Inside, nestled carefully in shredded paper, were several small glass jars. Each jar seemed to hold a different sauce, the contents ranging from vibrant reds to creamy yellows and even deep greens.

Bella's pretty blue eyes trembled, her fingers curling nervously around the basket as she handed it to me.

And as soon as I caught sight of the contents—jars filled with rich, colourful sauces—I couldn't help but feel a surge of excitement.

"Wait a second..." I said, leaning in closer to get a better look. "These are Camila's sauces, aren't they?" My voice carried a note of enthusiasm, and I turned to Camila, my grin widening. "These are your sauces, right? The ones you always make at home?"

Camila raised an eyebrow, her lips curving into a small, knowing smile. "Maybe." She said coyly.



"Oh, come on, don't play coy." I teased, reaching out to pick up one of the jars. It was a deep red tomato sauce, thick and vibrant, the kind of homemade goodness that you could practically taste just by looking at it. "These are definitely your sauces. I'd recognise them anywhere."

I held the jar up, admiring the care that had gone into it, then glanced at Bella. "You have no idea how much I love these, Bella. The first time I tried one of your mother's sauces..." I paused, letting the memory flood back, then looked at Camila with a playful but genuine grin. "It was incredible. I couldn't stop devouring it...I remember finishing the entire jar in one sitting and practically begging for more."

Camila's cheeks flushed slightly, and she let out a soft, almost shy laugh, though the warmth in her expression showed how much she appreciated the praise. "It wasn't that good." She said modestly.

"Oh, it 'was' that good and so much more!" I insisted, holding up the jar as evidence. "I remember thinking, 'This is the kind of sauce that ruins you for anything store-bought.' And now..." I gestured to the basket. "Now you've given me an entire collection of them? You two really outdid yourselves."

Bella's nervousness seemed to ease at my enthusiasm, and she smiled a little, though something about her expression caught my attention—almost like she was holding back from mentioning something that I had missed out on.

"So, this is the big surprise?" I asked, looking between them. "A basket full of your amazing sauces because you know how much I love them?"

But even though I was excited at the moment, both mother and daughter had rather varying reactions that didn't suit the situation.

Camila tilted her head slightly, watching me with an unreadable expression, while Bella's face shifted into something I couldn't quite place—was that dismay?

"Thank you." I continued, completely ignoring the shift in mood. "This is seriously one of the best surprises I've ever gotten. I'll make sure to use them with every meal. There's so much here, I could probably go weeks without running out!"

I chuckled, expecting them to share in my excitement, but when I glanced at them once again, I froze.

Both of them continued to stare at me, their disbelief practically radiating through the room.

Camila's once-playful smile had softened into a thoughtful, almost amused expression, while Bella looked like she was holding back a groan. Her lips were pressed into a thin line, and her hands clenched tightly at her sides as if she couldn't decide whether to laugh or scold me.

Bella then leaned slightly toward Camila, her voice dropping to a whisper, though it was loud enough that I caught bits of it. "Why's he getting so excited over a bunch of sauces, Mom?" She asked, with an incredulous tone as she eyed me up in amusement. "He hasn't even realised what the actual surprise is yet!"

Camila chuckled softly, her eyes flicking toward me as her lips curved into a warm smile. "That's what's so great about him, Bella." She replied, her tone affectionate. "It's why I love him so much. He doesn't need grand gestures to be happy. He'll take the smallest thing from us and treat it like it's gold...That's just who he is and why I wouldn't choose anyone else over him."

Bella blinked, her expression shifting as she considered her mother's words. She glanced at me again, her earlier frustration easing as a small smile tugged at the corners of her mouth.

"Yeah." She murmured, nodding slightly. "I guess that's true."

By now, I was fully aware they were talking about me, and the heat rising to my cheeks was undeniable.

"Hey..." I said, clearing my throat and trying to break the moment before I turned entirely red. "What are you two whispering about over there?"

Camila's eyes sparkled with amusement as she looked at me, tilting her head slightly. "Oh, nothing." She said innocently, though the hint of a smirk betrayed her.

Bella, however, let out an exasperated sigh, crossing her arms over her chest. "Seriously, Daddy? You still haven't figured it out yet?" She asked, her tone somewhere between disbelief and teasing, and then continued to reveal, saying, "The sauces aren't the main surprise!"

I frowned, glancing at the basket in confusion. "T-They're not?" I asked, scratching the back of my neck. "Then...What is?"

Bella groaned, throwing her hands up. "You're so dense sometimes!" She exclaimed, stepping forward and pointing at the jar in my hand. "Look closer at the label! It's not just about the sauce; look at the label on the jar itself!"

Frowning slightly, I brought the jar closer to my face.

At first glance, it still looked like any other jar of homemade sauce, but as I studied it more closely, the details began to pop out.

The label wasn't just handwritten like I thought it was—it was a full, professionally designed label.

Tiny, adorable illustrations of tomatoes, basil leaves, and garlic surrounded the text, giving it a playful yet polished look.

The name of the sauce, 'Tomato Basil Bliss', was written in bold, curly script that practically screamed, 'buy me'. It looked clean, charming, and, above all, incredibly professional.

I blinked, turning the jar over in my hands, the glossy finish of the label catching the light.

"Wow!~" I said softly, the words spilling out unconsciously. "This is...really good!" I traced the edges of the label, admiring the tiny details—the shading on the tomatoes, the perfectly balanced layout of the ingredients, and even a little tagline at the bottom that read, 'Handcrafted with love.'

"It's so professional, you two...I can't believe that you actually made this." I continued, almost talking to myself. "...It looks like it could be sold in a store."

The moment I said those final words, a flicker of realisation hit me like a lightning bolt.

My eyes widened, and I slowly looked up at Camila and Bella, who were standing side by side, both grinning from ear to ear.

Their expressions were almost identical—wide smiles, sparkling eyes, and a shared look of anticipation, as if silently asking, Well? How's the surprise?

#### Chapter 523: Creating Everlasting Bonds

"W-Wait..." I said, glancing between them, then back at the jar. My voice rose slightly in disbelief. "Are you telling me...y-you're actually going to sell this? As in, These homemade sauces of yours are going to be in stores?"

Bella's smile grew even wider, and she clasped her hands together, bouncing slightly on her heels.

"That's right, Daddy!" She said excitedly. "Isn't it awesome? Doesn't it look like it belongs on a store shelf?...I mean, look at the design! It's so cute! I would buy it in an instant if I saw it."

Camila stepped forward, her expression calm but her eyes sparkling with pride. "We wanted it to look professional." She said warmly, glancing at Bella. "Every detail had to be just right—the labels, the colours, even the font. We wanted it to stand out but still feel approachable."

Bella nodded enthusiastically. "And not just the look, but the sauces themselves. We worked so hard on the recipes—perfecting them, making sure they were just right. We even did blind tastings to pick the best versions!"

Camila smiled at Bella, her voice soft with a motherly pride. "We've already bottled an entire supply." She added. "Thousands of jars, ready to go. Everything's labelled, packed, and prepped."

"And guess what?" Bella cut in, her excitement bubbling over. "It's going to hit local shelves next week! Can you believe it?" She let out a soft laugh, her cheeks still pink with excitement. "We've already talked to a few shops, and they're all really excited about it. The sauces are getting their own display and everything!"

Camila nodded, her voice filled with quiet satisfaction. "We've worked out the distribution, set up the packaging, and even made sure the pricing was competitive. Everything's been lined up. All that's left is to see how people respond once it's in stores."

I stared at them, completely overwhelmed by the torrent of information they'd just thrown at me. My head felt like it was spinning, struggling to catch up with everything they were saying.

Holding up a hand, I blurted out, "Stop, stop! My brain's about to explode. You two are giving me way too much to process."

Camila's soft laugh broke the tension, and Bella giggled, covering her mouth with one hand. They exchanged a glance, clearly amused by my dazed reaction.

"Well..." Camila teased. "I guess that means the surprise had the intended effect."

Bella nodded, grinning widely as she said, "Yeah, I don't think we could've shocked him more if we tried."

I shook my head, still in a daze as I set the jar back into the basket. "Okay, hold on." I said, my tone more incredulous now. "What brought this up? Why did you suddenly decide to start a sauce business out of nowhere?"

Camila tilted her head, her smile softening into something more personal. "Out of nowhere?" She echoed, amusement flickering in her eyes. "How can you say that, Kafka, when you're the reason I started this in the first place?"

"Me?" I blinked, my confusion deepening. "What did I do?"

She nodded, stepping closer and resting a hand lightly on my arm.

"You...It was most definitely you." She said with certainty. "I mean, how many times have you told me how good my sauces are? How they'd blow the competition out of the water if they were sold in stores? I've lost count of how often you've said it."

I opened my mouth to respond, but she continued, her voice warm but firm. "

It wasn't just once or twice, Kafka. You've been saying it so much that my ears almost went deaf. Every time you had one of my sauces, you'd go on about how much better they were than anything you'd ever bought." She chuckled softly, shaking her head. "At first, I just thought you were being sweet, but you kept saying it. So much that the idea got stuck in my head."

Bella nodded in agreement, chiming in, saying, "Yeah, and when Mom finally brought it up to me, I was like, 'Why not?' It sounded fun."

I glanced at Bella, still processing Camila's words, but she looked away quickly, her cheeks faintly pink. Camila caught the movement and smiled knowingly before adding, "And I think part of the reason Bella was so quick to agree was because the idea of working anywhere else didn't appeal to her much since she's going to finish university soon."

"Mom...Don't say that." Bella groaned softly, the colour of her cheeks deepening.

Camila gave her daughter a reassuring smile but didn't relent. "She's always been more introverted, especially after what happened at her University. So the idea of starting something at home, where she could work on her own terms, was perfect for her. It felt safe. And she's been a huge help with everything—testing recipes, designing labels, keeping me sane through it all."

Bella looked down, fiddling with the hem of her shirt. "It just...made sense, you know?" She said quietly. "Working with Mom, doing something we both love—it felt right. And I didn't have to worry about being around strangers all the time."

Camila gently squeezed Bella's shoulder, her voice filled with pride. "And she's been amazing. This wouldn't have happened without her."

I stood there, staring at the two of them, my chest tightening as their words sank in.

"So, let me get this straight." I said slowly, looking at Camila. "You started this because of something I said a few encouraging words?"

Camila smiled, nodding as she said, "You didn't just say it, Kafka. You believed it. And that belief gave me the confidence to try."

Bella chimed in, her voice softer now but still carrying that familiar spark of pride. "And now it's real. We're actually doing it. All thanks to you, Daddy."

I ran a hand through my hair, letting out a soft laugh as I looked at the basket of sauces again.

"I don't even know what to say." I admitted. "You two are incredible."

Camila shook her head, her smile growing as she raised a hand to stop me.

"No, Kafka. It wasn't just the two of us." She said, her tone warm but carrying a weight that made me pause. "We had help. A lot of help."

"Help? From who?" I frowned, tilting my head.

She hesitated for a moment, as if preparing to drop another bombshell, then said, "From Nina...And both your mothers."

The words hit me like a freight train.

"W-Wait...What?" I blurted, my eyes widening as I looked between her and Bella.

Camila let out a soft laugh, clearly enjoying my reaction. "That's right. Your moms and Nina helped us make this happen."

I stared at her, my brain struggling to keep up.

"You're kidding." I said, though I already knew from her expression that she wasn't. "How? When?"

Camila's expression softened as she began explaining. "Well, to start off, when I first mentioned the idea to Bella, she loved it. She jumped right in, working on the labels, the designs, and even setting up the website. All those cute details on the jars? That's her doing."

Bella flushed slightly, crossing her arms as she muttered, "It wasn't that big of a deal."

Camila raised an eyebrow. "Oh, please. You spent days obsessing over the smallest things—fonts, colours, illustrations. You wanted it to be perfect."

Bella bit her lip, her face reddening more. "Well...I-It does look good, don't it?" She admitted, glancing at me for approval.

I nodded quickly. "It looks amazing, Bella. Seriously, it's so professional—I wouldn't believe you designed it if I didn't know better."

Her eyes turned limpid at my words, but her smile widened.

"And then there's Abi." Camila continued. "She took over all the logistical work. She's the one who figured out how to scale the recipes, manage the inventory, and get everything organised for distribution...She's been an absolute lifesaver."

"My Mom?" I said, my eyebrows shooting up. "She actually helped with this?"

Camila chuckled. "More than helped. She basically ran the numbers and laid out the entire plan. Her degree in logistics was exactly what we needed to make this work. She's been incredible."

Before I could process that, Camila added, "And Nina—well, you know how she is."

"What did Nina do?" I tilted my head, already anticipating a wild story.

Bella burst out laughing before Camila could answer.

"Auntie Nina ran the town; that's what she did!" Bella exclaimed. "Mom told her we'd need suppliers for the raw ingredients, and she just went all in. She called, visited, and practically forced people to help us. You know how she can be with that fiery personality of hers."

Camila nodded, her tone affectionate. "She's been a whirlwind. Every time we thought we'd hit a roadblock, she'd show up with a new supplier—or rather, she'd drag one along who couldn't say no to her."

Bella grinned. "At one point, she got into a shouting match with a jar supplier who tried to overcharge us. By the end of it, not only did he lower the price, but he also offered to deliver them for free."

I laughed, shaking my head in disbelief as I said, "That sounds exactly like Nina. She doesn't take no for an answer."

"Exactly." Camila said. "And that's why we have the best—quality ingredients and jars, all thanks to her."



I was still reeling from everything they'd told me when Camila's expression softened further, her tone becoming almost reverent. "And finally, there's Olivia." She said quietly.

I froze, my chest tightening at the mention of my second mother. "Mom?" I asked, my voice barely audible.

Camila nodded, her smile softening. "She's the one who found the manufacturers for us. When I told her about the idea, she didn't hesitate for even a second. She used her connections, reached out to people she trusted, and made sure we partnered with the best producers. She said..." Camila paused, her expression turning tender. "...If it's for our family, it has to be perfect."

I felt a lump in my throat, but before I could say anything, Camila continued, "And the thing is...We hadn't even really met before. She's so busy, yet she still helped us. She made time, pulled strings, and got everything lined up. Honestly, she's amazing."

She paused, her expression turning a bit playful.

"Though, I'll admit, she's also a little scary. But in a good way. She's one of those people who gets things done, no matter what."

I didn't say anything, but I thought about it—my mother, the woman who could command a room with just a look. If even Camila thought she was intense, she must've left quite an impression.

"So that's why my Mom back at home has been so busy lately." I murmured, piecing things together in my head. "And why Nina's been acting so suspicious."

"Yep! Auntie Nina was terrified you'd catch on. She kept saying things like, 'He's going to figure it out any day now.'" Bella giggled.

And why didn't anyone just tell me? I could've helped out, you know." I raised an eyebrow at her. "

Before I even finished my sentence, Camila shook her head firmly, cutting me off as she said, "Absolutely not."

"Why not?" I blinked, surprised by her quick response.

"Because..." She said, crossing her arms and giving me a sharp look. "...if you were involved, you wouldn't have let anyone else do anything. I mean, you're so overcompetent, Kafka, you'd have finished everything in a day and left the rest of us feeling useless."

Bella nodded in agreement, her grin widening. "My mom's, right. You would've swooped in, handled everything perfectly, and we wouldn't have learnt anything or had any fun."

I opened my mouth to argue, but the way they both looked at me—Camila with her confident smirk and Bella with her cheeky grin—made me pause.

Finally, I sighed, running a hand through my hair as I said, "Okay, fine. I might've taken over a bit."

"A bit?" Camila teased, raising an eyebrow like she didn't hear what I said at all.

"Alright, a lot." I admitted, laughing. "But still, I could've saved you all some stress."

Camila shook her head gently, her smile gentle but firm.

"It's not about the stress, Kafka." She said, her voice warm with meaning. "This was about more than just getting the job done. The whole family worked together to make this happen. Every single one of us came together to accomplish something as a team...That's what really matters."

Her words hit me like a wave, and I paused, letting them sink in.

In that moment, I realised her true goal wasn't just about making a business or even crafting the perfect sauces that she can make. She had brought everyone together—people with their own lives, schedules, and differences—and made them part of something bigger for the sake of uniting our family.

A sense of closeness, a shared purpose.

My chest tightened as I looked at her, my heart swelling with admiration.

Camila wasn't just thinking about the present; she was planning for the future, creating bonds for our family that would last a lifetime...

#### Chapter 524: A Family Of My Own

"Speaking of family..." Camila suddenly said, her voice light with a hint of mischief. "...there's something on the label that I think you missed, Kafka."

Confused about her words, I furrowed my brow and looked down at the jar in my hands. I turned it slightly, scanning the label more closely.

At first, it was just the same beautiful design Bella had created, with the cute illustrations and the playful font. But then my eyes caught something at the very top of the label.

"Kafka's Family Sauces..."

I froze, my breath catching in my throat. The brand name was prominently displayed right underneath, simple yet striking.

My eyes widened in disbelief as the realisation hit me like a bolt of lightning.

"K-Kafka's Family?" I whispered, my voice barely audible.

I slowly looked up at them, my expression a mix of shock and awe. Camila and Bella were both grinning widely, their faces filled with pride and anticipation, as if waiting for my reaction to fully set in.

Bella was the first to speak, her excitement bubbling over. "How's the name, Daddy? Pretty cool, right?" She asked, practically bouncing on her heels. "At first, we were going to call it the Vanitas Family, but...We thought it wouldn't feel as personal. Not as intimate, you know? So we kept it as 'Kafka's Family'...What do you think?"

Hearing those words, my heart raced even more. I couldn't believe what I was hearing—or seeing.

They had named the entire brand after me, centred it around the idea of family, and made it something so deeply personal.

"W-Why?" I managed to say, my voice trembling slightly. "Why name it after me? Y-You could've chosen so many other things, so why did you choose my silly name?"

Camila stepped closer, her hand resting lightly on my arm. Her voice was soft but steady as she replied,

"Because you're the reason we did this, Kafka. Your love for this family, your belief in all of us, it's what brought this to life...You're the heart of this, whether you realise it or not."

Bella nodded, her grin softening into a warm smile.

"It's true. You're always the one who brings people together, Daddy, just like you did with me and my mom."

She paused, her cheeks tinging pink as she glanced down at the jar in my hands, then back at me.

"Y-You're like...the magnet that keeps everyone close to each other, Daddy." She added, her voice quieter but filled with sincerity. "You're the one who ties this family together...S-So it's only natural that your name is up front."

I stared at her, speechless. The weight of her words, the sincerity in her voice—it all hit me at once. I found it hard to breathe, and I had to take a deep breath to steady myself.

Camila stepped closer, her smile filled with warmth and pride. "She's right, Kakfa." She said softly. "This family...It wouldn't be what it is without you. You've always been the heart of it, even if you don't realise it."

I looked between the two of them, my heart swelling with so many emotions that I didn't even know where to begin. My gaze dropped back to the jar, the words 'Kafka's Family Sauces' staring back at me, making everything feel even more real.

My voice was thick as I finally said, "I-I don't even know what to say to you two. T-This...This is incredible."

Camila smiled, leaning in slightly. "Just say you're proud of us." She whispered, her eyes gleaming with affection.

Bella smirked, her voice filled with playful teasing as she added, "And that you're okay with being the face of the brand, Daddy. Because there's no going back now!"

Camila then noticed the trembling look in my eyes, which made her step closer and tilt her head at me, her smile equal parts teasing and affectionate.

"Oh, look at him, Bella. He's already such a grown-up, but he looks like he's going to cry." She teased, her tone warm and light, but with a knowing edge.

"What? No!" I shot back instinctively, wiping at the corner of my eye. "I'm not crying. It's.....dust or something. The label probably has glitter or..." I trailed off, unable to stop the lump rising in my throat.

Bella giggled at my attempt to cover it up. "Uh-huh, sure. You're not crying at all." She said, crossing her arms and watching me with that cheeky grin.

Camila raised an eyebrow, her expression gentle even as she kept her teasing tone. "Oh, Kafka. Just admit it. It's okay to feel overwhelmed, you know. You don't have to hold it all in."

But I couldn't admit it —not out loud. Because in that moment, my mind wasn't in the room anymore. It was somewhere else entirely.

I thought about the boy I used to be.

Alone...Unwanted...A child cast away into a world that didn't care if I survived.

I remembered those endless, cold nights, the emptiness that had been my constant companion, and the quiet ache in my chest every time I realized there was no one waiting for me, no one to care if I succeeded or fell apart.

And yet, here I was now. Somehow, despite everything, I had this. A family...A real family.

A woman who had poured her heart and soul into bringing people together and a daughter whose lightness and creativity could fill any room with warmth.

I had people who cared about me so much that they'd worked in secret, rallying my entire family to create something beautiful—not for themselves, but for me.

The thought hit me like a wave, and I couldn't hold it back anymore. Without another word, I stepped forward and pulled them both into my arms, wrapping them in a strong, unrelenting hug.

Hug~

Bella yelped in surprise. "W-Whoa—Hey!" She exclaimed, her voice muffled against my chest. "You're hugging me too hard, Daddy! I can't breathe!"

But I didn't let go. My arms tightened around both of them, and I felt the warmth of their presence, the weight of their love anchoring me in a way I'd never thought possible. My throat burnt, and I blinked hard to keep the tears at bay, but they spilt over anyway.

Camila laughed softly, her voice low and soothing as she wrapped her arms around me in return.

"Just let him be, Bella." She said gently, her hand stroking my back. "Men don't show their emotions like this often. When they do, it's better to embrace it before it slips away."

Bella hesitated, her body stiff for a moment before she let out a resigned sigh.

"Fine." She muttered, her tone softer now. Slowly, her arms came up to return the hug. "But he's squishing me." She grumbled under her breath, though I knew she was happy to be in my embrace at the moment.

I honestly couldn't speak. The words were stuck in my throat, drowned out by the sheer weight of the moment. All I could do was hold them tighter, feeling the overwhelming mix of gratitude, love, and disbelief coursing through me.

At that moment, my mind replayed Camila's words: You're the heart of this family. And Bella's: You're the magnet that ties us all together.

How had I gone from being a boy no one wanted to the man standing here, surrounded by love and warmth I'd never dared to hope for?

How had I been so lucky to find people who didn't just see me but believed in me, who loved me enough to make me the centrepiece of something so incredible?...Who knows?

Camila's hand then rested lightly on my cheek, drawing me out of my thoughts. She leaned in close, her voice barely above a whisper. "You've given us so much, Kafka. This was just our way of giving something back to you."

Bella, still pressed against me, muttered, "Yeah, Daddy, and you better not forget it. This wasn't easy, you know."

I let out a choked laugh, my voice trembling. "I don't deserve any of you." I managed, my words coming out rough and raw.

Camila pulled back slightly, just enough to meet my gaze. Her eyes were warm, shining with the kind of love that could break through even the darkest memories.

"Don't say that." She said firmly, her smile gentle. "You deserve all of this and more. And we'll keep reminding you of that until you believe it."

Bella nodded against my chest, her earlier teasing replaced with sincerity. "You're stuck with us now, Daddy. No takebacks."

I laughed again, pulling them both tighter one last time. My tears were flowing freely now, but I didn't care.

For the first time in years, I didn't feel like I had to hold anything back.

As the moment stretched on, Camila leaned her head against my shoulder, her arms still wrapped around me. Bella relaxed fully into the hug, her own arms tightening as if she'd finally understood the importance of what we shared.

And there I stood, one man overwhelmed by the love he never thought he'd have, holding two of the many women who had given him a family he'd always dreamed of, while they hugged him back with everything they had to give.

But just as the mood was settling into something serene and beautiful, a sudden knock echoed through the house, followed immediately by the sharp ring of the doorbell.

The sound cut through the quiet moment like a blade, making all three of us stiffen.

Camila pulled back slightly, her brows knitting together. Bella straightened, glancing toward the door with wide eyes.

There was nothing inherently alarming about a knock or a doorbell, but something about it—about the timing—sent a faint shiver down my spine.

I exchanged a glance with Camila, whose expression now held a flicker of unease. Bella shifted on her feet, biting her lip.

I don't know what it was, but something told me this wasn't going to be someone delivering good news...

Chapter 525: He Wants Blood

Ding-dong!~ Ding-dong!~ Ding-dong!~

The loud, insistent knocking was quickly followed by another sharp ring of the doorbell, its urgency grating against the quiet warmth that had settled moments before. Bella groaned, breaking the tense silence as she turned toward the door.

"Who the heck rings a doorbell like that?" She muttered, crossing her arms. "It's so annoying. Do they think we're deaf or something?"

She glanced back at her mother, expecting some agreement, but stopped short when she saw her face.

Camila stood still, her usual composed demeanour gone, replaced by something Bella rarely saw—unease. Her face was slightly pale, and her eyes held a ghastly, almost haunted look, like she had just seen something she couldn't quite believe.



Bella blinked, startled. "Mom?" She asked, her voice softer now, the earlier annoyance forgotten. "What's wrong? Do you...do you know who that is?"

Camila seemed to snap out of her daze at the sound of Bella's voice. She inhaled sharply, straightening her posture as if to pull herself together. A faint flush of embarrassment touched her cheeks as she realised she'd let her emotions slip.

"It's nothing." She said at first, her tone attempting to be casual but failing to mask the tension behind it. She then turned her head slightly toward Bella, avoiding direct eye contact, and continued, "There are only two people who ever used to ring the doorbell like that."

"Two people?" Bella frowned, confused.

Camila's lips curved into a faint, strained smile.

"One of them..." She said slowly. "...was you."

Bella blinked, her confusion deepening.

"Me?!" She exclaimed, pointing to herself in disbelief.

Her mother nodded, the faintest flicker of humour returning to her expression. "Yes, you. You always used to hammer the doorbell like your life depended on it....You were impatient to a fault."

Bella's face immediately turned red, and she crossed her arms defensively. "That was in the past!" She said quickly, her voice rising slightly in a fluster. "I don't do that anymore!"

Camila raised an eyebrow, the corners of her lips twitching, but the humour faded as quickly as it had come.

Ding-dong!~ Ding-dong!~

Her eyes flickered back toward the door, her expression once again growing tight. Bella, noticing the shift, felt her own stomach knot.

She opened her mouth to ask about the second person but stopped midway.

Something in her mother's body language, the way her feet moved restlessly and how her eyes didn't quite focus, made the answer click in her mind.

Bella's breath caught in her throat. Her eyes widened, and she turned slowly toward the door, dread settling like a stone in her stomach.

"No...It can't be." She whispered.

As if on cue, Camila and Bella spoke simultaneously, their voices quiet but filled with unease.

"Your father."

"Dad."

The words hung in the air, heavy and charged, as they turned to look at each other. Bella's face mirrored her mother's, a mix of fear and exasperation, as if they both knew exactly what kind of storm was about to walk through the door.

Their synchronised response only seemed to cement the reality of the situation. They exchanged a long look, both understanding without words that this was going to be troublesome, to say the least.

But then out of nowhere, Bella froze, the words she had just spoken ringing in her ears. "Ah! Oh no!...I-I should have said that—" The moment the word 'dad' slipped out of her mouth, she realised she had crossed a line she hadn't meant to.

Her face drained of colour as she turned sharply toward Kafka, who was standing quietly behind her.

Her heart leapt into her throat. "D-Daddy..." She stammered, her voice trembling. "Don't...Don't do anything hasty, okay? Just—just calm down for a second, alright? Please!"

Camila blinked, confused by Bella's sudden panic when she seemed alright just a moment ago. "Bella?" She asked, her brows furrowing. "What exactly are you talking about? Why are you acting like this?"

Bella didn't respond to her mother. Instead, she tightened her grip on Kafka's arm, as if she were physically trying to hold him back.

The urgency in her movements, the fear in her eyes—it was almost as if she were trying to keep a beast from breaking loose.

Camila's confusion only deepened. Kafka wasn't the type to react impulsively, even in tense situations. He always had a calm, measured approach, his natural composure a steadying force in their lives.

...So why was Bella acting like he was about to go on a rampage?

"Bella, what's gotten into you?" Camila asked, her voice more insistent now. "It's just your father at the door. It's not like—"

She stopped mid-sentence, her words dying on her lips as she turned to look at Kafka.

The moment her eyes landed on him, a chill ran down her spine.

Kafka was completely still, standing like a statue in the middle of the room. Bella clung to his arm, but it was clear that her grip wasn't what was keeping him in place.

His face, usually so warm and expressive, was eerily blank. His features seemed carved from stone, devoid of emotion.

But it was his eyes that made her blood run cold.

The light in his gaze—the spark of kindness, warmth, and humour that always defined him—was gone. In its place was an empty, abyssal void.

His eyes stared unblinking toward the door, their cold, detached focus making it seem as though he were peering through the very fabric of reality itself.

It wasn't anger, Camila realised with a jolt. It wasn't even rage...It was something far worse.

It was nothingness.

Her heart raced, goosebumps crawling over her skin as she instinctively took a step back. "Kafka..." She whispered, her voice barely audible.

Bella, still clutching his arm, glanced between him and her mother, her fear mounting. "Mom." She said quickly, her tone urgent. "Don't say anything to provoke him. Please. He's not like—he's not like this often, but when he is..."

She trailed off, unable to finish, her grip tightening on Kafka's arm.

Camila's hands trembled slightly as she tried to process what she was seeing. This wasn't the man she knew, the man who smiled through difficult moments, who always carried himself with calm strength.

This was someone else entirely.

Bella, however, was watching him closely, her brow furrowed. Despite how terrifying he looked at the moment—his eerie blank expression and those dark, abyssal eyes—she realised something important.

He wasn't doing anything hasty. He wasn't moving toward the door, wasn't lashing out. He was simply...sitting there, a silent storm waiting to erupt.

Gathering her courage, Bella tightened her grip on his arm and gently tugged him toward the sofa. "Come on, Daddy." She said softly, her voice trembling slightly but firm. "Sit down. Just sit, okay? Don't do anything. We'll handle this, alright? I promise."

He didn't resist her pull, didn't speak, or even look at her directly. He allowed himself to be led to the sofa, his movements mechanical, like he wasn't entirely present. Once he sat down, Bella knelt in front of him, her hands resting lightly on his knees.

"Look at me." She coaxed, her voice softer now. "You don't need to do anything. Just let us handle it, okay? Please."

His eyes flickered, a faint crack in the impenetrable wall of his demeanour. He didn't respond, didn't give any sign that he'd heard her, but he also didn't move. Bella sighed, the tension in her own shoulders easing just slightly.

She stood slowly, brushing her hands on her thighs, and turned to face her mother. Camila was still rooted in place, her expression a mix of confusion and unease as her eyes darted between Bella and Kafka.

"What's going on?" Camila whispered, her voice trembling slightly. "Why does he look like that? Like...Like he's going to kill someone?"

She said it as a joke, hoping to lighten the suffocating atmosphere, but the moment the words left her mouth, Bella froze. Her shoulders tensed, and she turned back to her mother with a serious, almost wary look.

"Mom..." Bella began hesitantly, her voice low, as if afraid to say the words aloud. "That's because he does want to kill someone."

Camila's body shook, her eyes widening at the revelation that seemed so absurd to her ears.

"What?!" She whispered, her voice sharp with disbelief. "Who?!"

Bella glanced at Kafka, who remained seated on the sofa, staring ahead with that same blank, unsettling expression. She then took a deep breath, as though bracing herself, and finally said,

"Who else?...It's Dad's life that he wants to end."

Camila's heart sank, a chill running down her spine as she heard about her daughter talking about her husband's death. "Your father?" She repeated in a whisper, her voice almost cracking.

Bella nodded, her hands fidgeting slightly as she continued, "Yeah. That's why he looks like that. That's why he's so quiet. He's holding it in, but I know him. He's thinking about what he'd do if he got his hands on him."

Camila let out a short, uneasy chuckle, trying to shake off the tension.

"You're joking, right?" She said, her tone light, though there was a faint tremor in her voice. "No matter how much he might not like your father for... Well, for how he's been, Kafka wouldn't go so far as to kill him. That's a bit much, don't you think?"

Bella hesitated, her lips pressing into a thin line. "If it was just that—if it was only about how Dad's treated me or you—then yeah, maybe you'd be right. It wouldn't be a big deal." She paused, glancing at Kafka again, her voice lowering. "But that's not the reason he's so worked up at the moment."

Camila frowned, her confusion deepening. "Then what is it?" She asked, leaning closer to her daughter. "What's got him so angry that he'd look like...that?"

She gestured vaguely toward Kafka, who remained as still as a statue, his dark gaze fixed in the direction of the door like he couldn't wait to get his hands on the person behind it.

Chapter 526: Egotistical Husband

Bella hesitated again when she heard her mother asking about what happened, her face clouding with an emotion Camila couldn't quite place—Shame? Fear? Disgust?

Finally, Bella shook her head, looking down at her hands. "There's no way I can tell you the actual reason, Mom." She murmured. "It's honestly revolting... You'd feel the same way he does if you knew."

Camila's heart skipped a beat, her concern deepening. "Bella..." She said softly but firmly. "I'm your mother. If something's happened—if it's that serious—you need to tell me. I can't help if I don't know."

Bella glanced at her, her expression pained, and shook her head again. "I can't, Mom. Not now. But I'll say this..." She took a deep breath, her voice trembling slightly. "It's the reason I ran back here. The reason I left and...why I started hating Dad."

Camila's heart clenched at her daughter's words, the weight of them heavy enough to make her chest ache. She opened her mouth to press for more, but Bella cut her off, her voice lowering further, almost as if she didn't want Kafka to overhear.

"It's so bad, Mom." Bella said, her hands gripping the fabric of her shirt tightly. "When I told Daddy about it one day offhandedly...He didn't say anything at first, but I could see it in his face. He was gripping his hand so hard, he started bleeding. And the way he looked..."

Bella's voice wavered, and her gaze flicked briefly toward Kafka, who still sat eerily still on the sofa.

"...He looked like he wanted blood."

Camila's stomach dropped, her mind racing. The image Bella painted—Kafka, so enraged that he hurt himself, so controlled yet radiating that kind of terrifying anger—was almost unimaginable.

Yet, as she glanced at him now, seeing the blank expression on his face and the void in his eyes, she realised it wasn't so far-fetched.

"What did you tell him?" Camila asked, her voice quieter now, but no less firm. "Bella, whatever it is, I need to know. This is about your father. I—"

"I can't tell you, Mom." Bella interrupted, her tone desperate. "I just...I can't. Not now. It's too much."

Camila wanted to push further, wanted to demand answers; this was her husband they were talking about, after all—but the look on Bella's face stopped her. Her daughter looked shattered, raw in a way she hadn't seen before.

After a long pause, Camila exhaled deeply, nodding reluctantly.

"Alright." She said softly. "Not now. But we're going to talk about this, Bella. I need to know what's going on."

Bella nodded silently, her gaze dropping to the floor.

Camila then turned her attention back to Kafka, who still hadn't moved or spoken. His eerie stillness sent another shiver through her, but the incessant ringing of the doorbell pulled her focus. She straightened, her expression hardening as she turned toward the door.

Her husband was still out there, ringing the doorbell like a madman. Whatever this was, whatever chaos was about to unfold, she knew they couldn't avoid it much longer.

Steeling herself, Camila took a deep breath, glancing back at her daughter. "Stay with him." She said quietly, nodding toward Kafka. "I'll see what he wants."

Bella hesitated but nodded, moving closer to Kafka as Camila took a deep breath, steadying herself as she approached the door.

Her heart pounded, not from fear but from the sheer weight of what she was about to face. With a determined look on her face, she reached for the doorknob and pulled it open.

Open~

Standing before her was a middle-aged man with glasses, his hair greying at the temples and a permanent grumpy look etched onto his face. His posture was rigid, his sharp eyes scanning the space beyond her like he already expected something to go wrong.

This was the man who had once been the love of her life...Once.

But time and truth had stripped away the illusion she'd fallen for.

The charming, considerate man she'd believed him to be was nothing more than a façade. His true self—the man standing before her now—was someone who valued her not for who she was, but for what she represented.

A trophy wife to flaunt, a caretaker for their daughter, and a convenient figure to maintain the image of a perfect family.



For years, she had coped, forcing herself to endure for Bella's sake, convincing herself that she had no choice. She had buried her unhappiness, her resentment, and even her dreams beneath the weight of her responsibilities.

But then Kafka had come into her life.

He had shown her what it meant to live again, to dream, to feel love and respect. He had given her a second chance at happiness, something she had thought impossible. And with that second chance, the carefully maintained mask she had worn for so long had shattered.

What remained now was only contempt—for the man who had ruined so much of her life.

As she stood face to face with him, those feelings surged within her, and a flicker of disdain flashed in her eyes. It was brief, but it was enough.

Her husband's expression faltered, his usual grumpy confidence shaken for a moment. He looked at her, confused, almost wary, as though he didn't recognise the woman standing before him.

Camila quickly masked her emotions, knowing this wasn't the time or place to act out.

Kafka's unsettling silence in the other room and Bella's guarded tension all reminded her that she needed to keep her composure—for now.

"Welcome back." She said, her tone polite but devoid of warmth. "Why didn't you let me know you were coming?"

Her husband adjusted his glasses, clearly caught off guard by her straightforward tone. "I don't need to call ahead to visit my own home." He said sharply, his voice carrying an edge of irritation. "This is still my house, isn't it?"

Camila paused, forcing herself to maintain her composure. "Technically, this is my family home registered under my name...But I guess it's your house as well." She replied evenly, folding her arms across her chest. "But a little notice would've been nice. It's called courtesy. I'm sure you've heard of it."

The corners of his mouth twitched, clearly not expecting her directness. He opened his mouth to respond but stopped short, his gaze drifting over her shoulder.

"Is Bella here?" He asked, his tone softening slightly, though his expression remained tense.

"She's here." Camila replied calmly, stepping slightly to the side but still blocking the doorway with her hand on the frame. "Though I doubt she's going to be thrilled about this unexpected visit."

He frowned, his thick brows furrowing, but he didn't say anything right away. Instead, his eyes flicked back to hers, and for a moment, his expression softened, almost as if he were trying to gauge her reaction.

Camila resisted the urge to let her thoughts spill out. She had long since learnt to keep her feelings hidden, especially when it came to him.

Once, she had coped with his dismissive attitude because she thought she had no choice because of Bella, because of her own insecurities. But now, she wasn't the same woman she used to be.

Still, she wasn't here to pick a fight. She had to stay steady for Bella's sake and her own.

"Are you coming in or not?" She asked, tilting her head slightly, her tone casual but still a bit dry.

He stepped forward, muttering, "I didn't realise I needed an invitation." as he crossed the threshold.

Camila didn't respond, closing the door behind him with a quiet click. She kept her expression neutral, her posture calm, but her mind was already racing.

This wasn't going to be an easy conversation, and she could only hope the man in the other room wouldn't escalate things further.

Her husband stepped into the house, his sharp eyes scanning the space with the same critical gaze she remembered from years ago. He adjusted his glasses and made a faint noise of disapproval in his throat.

"This place is dusty." He muttered, running a finger along the edge of a shelf and inspecting it like a disappointed schoolteacher. "Don't you clean? It's not like you're doing anything else all day."

Camila bit back the first retort that sprang to her lips, keeping her tone level as she replied dryly, "I clean just fine. Maybe it's your glasses that need cleaning."

He shot her a look but didn't comment, instead glancing toward the window. "And that mailbox outside? It's still broken. How long has it been like that? Months? Years? Do you even care about maintaining this place?"

Camila folded her arms, leaning against the doorway. "It's functional. The postman doesn't seem to mind."

He shook his head, muttering something under his breath, and continued his critique as his gaze swept the room. "And the smell in here..." He sniffed the air pointedly, wrinkling his nose. "It's too floral. It's overwhelming. Don't you have something more...neutral? Something less cloying?"

"Maybe you've just been away too long to get used to it." Camila replied smoothly, though her nails dug into her palm behind her back.

His frown deepened as he walked further into the house, his hands in his pockets as if he were inspecting a hotel room he didn't approve of. Finally, he turned to her, his tone brisk. "Is dinner ready?"

Camila exhaled through her nose, her patience already wearing thin. "I'm making pasta...It should be done soon." She said, thinking that it was for Kafka, who she had made the dish to commemorate telling him about the sauces.

At this, he stopped and turned to her fully, his brow furrowing in displeasure. "Pasta?" He repeated, his voice filled with distaste. "I don't like pasta."

Camila pressed her lips together, her fingers tightening at her sides. "I've already started cooking it."

"That doesn't matter. Just make something else. It's not that hard." He waved a hand dismissively.

Her jaw tightened, but she forced herself to stay calm as she said, "It will take time. Dinner won't be ready right away if I start over."

"Then take the time." He said, brushing past her as if the conversation were already over. "It's not like I'm asking for much. Start over and make something I actually want."

Camila watched him walk toward the living room while feeling like she wanted to pull her one hair out.

For a split second, the mental image of a vase smashing against the back of his head flashed through her mind, and she almost smiled at the thought...Almost.

But she knew better.

With a sharp exhale, she turned and followed him, her steps quick but quiet. Her chest tightened as they neared the living room. Bella was in there. And so was Kafka.

As much as she wanted to let her frustration boil over, she couldn't afford to lose control—not now, not when the man sitting in that room was the last person her husband should provoke.

Chapter 527: You've Grown Taller

Her husband stepped into the living room, his critical gaze now directed at Bella and Kafka. Camila trailed behind, her heart pounding as she prepared herself for whatever was about to unfold.

She had braced herself for chaos as her husband entered the living room. She had expected sharp words, confrontations, or even Kafka losing his composure completely. But when she stepped into the room, she was met with an unexpected and eerie silence.

Nothing really happened at all, but the absence of noise was unsettling.

As her eyes scanned the room, she finally caught sight of Kafka, and what she saw left her momentarily stunned.

He was lying back on the sofa, his head tilted slightly to one side, his eyes closed. His face was still set in that unnervingly blank expression, the tension in his jaw and furrow of his brow making him look almost menacing even in sleep.

But with his eyes shut, there was something disarmingly boyish about him, as though all the weight he carried had temporarily eased in his rest.

Camila blinked, her mind racing to understand what she was seeing. This wasn't what she had expected at all. Kafka wasn't the type to simply disengage like this, especially not in a situation like this one.

Before she could even think to ask, her gaze shifted to Bella, who was standing nearby, her arms crossed and her expression calm but guarded. Bella met her mother's confused look with a slight nod, the faintest hint of a knowing smile on her lips.

Camila's shoulders relaxed as understanding dawned. Somehow, Bella had coaxed Kafka into resting, diffusing the tension before it could explode. She didn't know how her daughter had managed it, but a wave of relief washed over her, and she let out a quiet sigh.

Her husband, however, had noticed Kafka as well. His brow furrowed as he stared at the man on the sofa, his expression shifting between curiosity and something harder to place—disdain, maybe even a flicker of unease.

"Who's this?" He asked sharply, his tone cutting through the quiet. His eyes narrowed as he studied Kafka, as though trying to piece together why the sight of him made his skin crawl.

Camila's chest tightened. She opened her mouth to respond, but before she could, Bella stepped forward.

"Dad..." Bella said, her voice steady but carrying an edge of forced politeness.

Her father turned to her, his inquisitive look lingering. "Bella..." He said, his tone softening slightly. "You're here. I didn't think you'd be home."

"Well, I'm on a break right now, so it's only natural I would come back home." Bella replied, her voice clipped but polite. She forced a smile onto her face, though it didn't reach her eyes. "It's good to see you."

It wasn't good to see him...Bella hated the sight of her father—the man who had caused her so much pain and driven a wedge into her life.

She hated being in the same room with him, hated the memories he dredged up just by existing.

But she was smart enough to know better than to let her disdain show. She had to keep up the image, playing the role of the dutiful daughter, if only to keep the fragile peace intact.

Her father, however, seemed oblivious to the weight of Bella's discomfort. His sharp eyes studied her, his lips twitching slightly into something resembling a smile.

There was pride in his gaze, but not the kind born from love or admiration. It wasn't the pride of a father cherishing his daughter for who she was.

No, his pride was colder, more clinical. He looked at her as if she were a product he had created—something that had grown to meet his expectations.

Bella had become a smart, beautiful young woman, someone who could meet the world with poise and grace. To him, she was a trophy, an extension of his image, just like Camila had once been in his eyes.

And one couldn't help but wonder—if Bella hadn't met his standards, how would he view her then? What kind of twisted, conditional love would he offer?

The thought made Bella's stomach churn, but she kept her expression neutral, her forced smile still in place.

Her father's smile widened slightly as he took a step toward her.

"You've grown so much since the last time I saw you." He said, his tone almost fatherly, though it carried an edge of self-satisfaction. He reached out to stroke her head, a gesture meant to appear affectionate but carrying an undertone of possessiveness.

But Bella moved quickly, stepping back just before his hand could make contact. "That's only natural." She said smoothly, her voice calm but distant. "It's been so long since we last met."

Her father's hand hovered in the air for a moment before he lowered it, a flicker of something—confusion? Irritation?—crossing his face. He studied her, his gaze narrowing slightly as though trying to figure out what was different.

She had always been polite, fond even, during his visits in the past. But now, there was a distance, a guardedness he wasn't used to. Something was off.

Still, he chose to brush it aside, chalking it up to her having grown up.

"Of course." He said with a faint chuckle, adjusting his glasses. "You're an adult now. Things change."

Bella didn't respond, her forced smile unwavering as she kept her gaze steady on him.

Her father's gaze then landed on the figure reclining on the sofa, and his expression hardened almost instantly. His sharp eyes took in Kafka's relaxed posture, the way he lay back with his eyes closed, and a faint sneer curled on his lips.

"Who is this?" He asked, his tone dripping with disdain. "And why is he carelessly sleeping in my living room?"

Bella twitched at the way her father spoke about Kafka, her forced smile threatening to falter. She hated how dismissive and condescending he sounded, but she forced herself to remain calm.

"That's Kafka." She quickly said. "He's the boy next door. He moved in recently."

"And what's he doing here when his home is next door?" Her father raised an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed.

"He's been helping out around the house." Bella replied, keeping her tone steady. "He's been a big help."

Camila stepped in then, her voice calm but with a subtle firmness. "He really has. With you being away so often, it's been nice to have someone around who can lend a hand."

Her husband's eyes flicked to her, narrowing slightly at her words. There was an unspoken tension in his gaze, a mix of irritation and something deeper—something closer to insecurity.

Bella noticed the shift in his expression and decided to add more, trying to steer the conversation. "He's actually been helping me with my university project." She said, her voice casual. "We've been working on it for hours, and I guess he got tired and dozed off."

Her father's sneer deepened. "What kind of man falls asleep when he's supposed to be helping? And you're saying he's capable of helping with your project? Are you sure he even has the ability to do that?"

Bella bit her lips in frustration, but she kept her smile plastered on her face. "He's very capable, Dad...Don't underestimate him." She said, her tone colder now.

"Capable enough to ignore his surroundings and sleep while the man of the house arrives? That's insulting. He hasn't even bothered to introduce himself." Her father let out a scoff, his disdain clear.

And then, all of a sudden, he started moving toward Kafka, clearly intending to wake him. "I'll fix that." He muttered.

"Dad." Bella interrupted sharply, stepping in front of him and putting a hand on his arm. "There's no need. He's just tired. Let him rest."

Her father stopped, his frown deepening as he looked at her. "No need?" He repeated, his tone incredulous.

"Please." Bella said, her voice softer now, though her eyes were firm. She gestured to a chair. "Sit down. Why don't you tell us how work's been going? I'm sure you've been busy."

Her father hesitated, glancing back at Kafka one more time, his eyes focusing on his face that looked too young to even bother about. And then finally, with a faint huff, he turned and sat down, though the tension in his posture made it clear he wasn't letting it go entirely.

He adjusted his glasses and leaned back in his seat, his expression shifting to one of smug satisfaction.



"Work's been excellent." He said, his voice filled with pride. "I've closed some major deals recently—big clients, high stakes, the kind of work only someone with my experience can handle. My boss is thrilled. He's even been dropping hints about a promotion."

Bella nodded politely, her forced smile returning as she listened. "That's great, Dad." She said, though her tone was more automatic than genuine.

Her father went on, his voice growing louder and more arrogant as he continued to detail his accomplishments.

"It's not easy being a sales manager, you know. You have to be sharp, strategic. People think they can just walk in and do what I do, but they'd crumble under the pressure. It takes a certain kind of person to succeed at my level."

Bella nodded again, her gaze flicking briefly to Kafka, who remained motionless on the sofa. A part of her couldn't help but wonder if he was really asleep or just choosing to ignore everything happening around him.

Camila, standing to the side, remained silent, her arms crossed as she watched her husband boast. Her expression was neutral, but Bella could see the faint flicker of annoyance in her mother's eyes.

As her father continued to talk, Bella's mind raced, trying to think of ways to keep the peace and prevent the situation from escalating.

For now, she focused on nodding along to her father's words, keeping him distracted and away from Kafka—at least for the moment.

Chapter 528: Don't Talk To My Mom Like That!

Her father leaned back in his chair, a smug smile still plastered across his face as he continued his obnoxious monologue.

"I just closed a big deal with a university." He said, his tone oozing self-satisfaction. "They've been looking for someone who can deliver results, and naturally, they came to me. It's going to bring in major profits for the company."

He then paused, his smile faltering slightly as his sharp eyes turned toward Bella. "Speaking of university..." He began, his tone shifting. "I heard something interesting."

Bella stiffened, her forced smile fading as she met his gaze.

"I heard you've decided to stay home for the rest of the semester instead of going back." He continued, his voice calm but with a pointed edge. His expression grew solemn, as though the very idea displeased him deeply. "Is that true?"

Bella hesitated, glancing at Camila for a moment as if searching for reassurance. She knew her father hated anything that didn't align with his expectations, and staying home was definitely one of those things...But there was no point in lying.

"Yes." She admitted softly. "It's true."

She opened her mouth to explain, to tell him that she had a valid reason for her decision, but before she could finish, he raised a hand to cut her off.

"There's no reason for it." He said firmly, his voice growing colder. "None at all!"

Bella blinked, stunned by how quickly he dismissed her. "But Dad—"

"You're an adult now, Bella." He interrupted, his tone growing stern. "You can't afford to be so childish anymore. Whatever your reasons are, they don't matter...You need to face your problems, not run away from them."

Bella's lips parted in protest, her feet pattering in a restless manner as she argued, saying, "B-But I'm not running away...I-I—"

But before she finished her sentence, her father slammed his hand down on the arm of the chair, his voice rising. "Enough! I don't want to hear any more excuses!"

Both Bella and Camila flinched slightly at the sharpness of his tone. Camila's eyes narrowed, but she remained silent, watching the exchange carefully.

Her father leaned forward, pointing at Bella as if scolding a child.

"Do you have any idea how this makes me look, Bella? My daughter, staying home, refusing to go back to university? What will people think? They'll think I raised a failure, that I couldn't even keep my own daughter on track!"

Bella's heart sank, her chest tightening as the weight of his words hit her. She had expected him to be disappointed, maybe even angry, but hearing him reduce her struggles to nothing more than an embarrassment to his image made her stomach churn.

"I-Is that all you care about?" Bella asked quietly, her voice trembling.

Her father didn't seem to hear her, or if he did, he ignored it.

"I've worked hard to build a reputation, Bella. People look up to me. They respect me. And now you're putting all of that at risk because you're too scared to go back and face reality?"

Bella's hands trembled, her gaze dropping to the floor. The father she had once adored, the man she had looked up to as a child, now felt like a stranger.

Camila's jaw tightened, her patience fraying as she stepped forward. "Enough." She said sharply, her voice cutting through the tension like a blade.

"What? What do you have to say?" Her husband turned to her, his frown deepening.

"She's not a child anymore. She can make her own decisions." Camila said, her tone steady but cold. "And this isn't about your reputation. Whatever Bella's reasons are, they're hers, and you don't get to belittle her for making a decision about her own life."

He scowled, clearly not expecting Camila to intervene. "You're not helping her by coddling her, Camila." He snapped. "She needs to grow up."

"And she will." Camila shot back. "But on her terms, not yours. You don't get to control her anymore."

Bella glanced at her mother, her eyes wide with a mix of gratitude and surprise. Her father, however, glared at Camila, his expression darkening as if he wanted to argue but couldn't find the words.

For a moment, the room was thick with tension, the silence broken only by the faint sound of Kafka's steady breathing from the sofa.

Bella let out a shaky breath, her heart still pounding. The man she had once idolised now felt like nothing more than a hollow shell of what she thought he was. And as she met her mother's gaze, she realised. Camila understood that feeling all too well.

Her husband then scoffed, leaning back in his chair with an air of arrogance. "You don't need to butt in, Camila." He said sternly, his voice dripping with disdain as he turned his gaze on Camila. "I was having a conversation with my daughter. A woman like you has no place in this discussion."

He looked down at her as if she were beneath him, his words carrying the same dismissive tone he'd used countless times before.

Camila's lips twitched violently, her fingers curling slightly at her sides, but before she could respond, Bella shot to her feet.

"Don't talk to Mom like that!" Bella exclaimed, her voice rising as she glared at her father. Her forced politeness was gone, replaced by genuine anger. "You have no right to speak to her that way!"

Her father's eyes snapped to her, his face darkening. The sight of Bella standing up to him seemed to ignite something in him, and he rose from his seat, his towering frame looming over her.

"Don't you dare take that tone with me, young lady!" He shouted, his voice booming in the small room. "I'm your father, and I'll decide what's right and wrong in this household! You don't get to tell me how to speak or act!"

His sudden aggressiveness made Bella take a step back, fear flickering across her face for a moment as his voice filled the room. The tension crackled like a live wire, and for a second, it felt as if the air had been sucked out of the space entirely.

But before he could say another word, he froze.

A cold, firm hand rested on his shoulder, gripping it with just enough pressure to make him aware of the strength behind it.

The touch wasn't just physical—it sent an icy shiver up his spine, the kind that made his instincts scream danger.

Then, he heard the whisper.

Low, calm, and chilling in its precision, it came from just behind him.

"You'd better sit down and relax..." The voice said, each word deliberate. "...That is unless, of course, you'd like to experience the feeling of your face going through that coffee table and the glass cutting all the way into your wrinkly skin."

The voice was so quiet that it almost didn't sound real, but the weight behind it was undeniable.

He turned his head slightly, and his blood ran cold.

Out of nowhere and without him even noticing, Kafka was standing behind him, his usually relaxed demeanour replaced with something far more menacing.

His eyes, which had been closed just moments ago, were open now—and they were empty, devoid of warmth or humanity.

It was as if he were staring into an abyss, and the abyss was staring back.

Kafka's grip on his shoulder tightened ever so slightly, not enough to hurt but enough to make it clear that he wasn't bluffing.

Camila's husband swallowed hard, his throat dry as fear seeped into his veins. He had always prided himself on his authority, his ability to control situations and people with his presence alone.

But in that moment, standing in Kafka's shadow, he felt small.

The room was silent except for the sound of his shallow breathing. Bella stared at the scene, her fear of her father melting away as she watched Kafka. She had seen him like this before—calm, composed, but radiating a dangerous energy that made it clear he wasn't someone to trifle with, so she wasn't too taken aback.

Camila, on the other hand, who had been standing frozen near the edge of the room, watched with a mix of awe and unease. Kafka's intervention was unexpected, but the way he carried himself—the quiet dominance, the razor-sharp edge in his voice—was something she hadn't fully grasped until now.

"Sit." Kafka repeated, his voice even softer now, but somehow even more terrifying.

Bella's father froze for a moment, his pride bristling at being ordered around, especially in his own home. He snorted as he glared up at Kafka, his anger simmering beneath the surface.

"Just who do you think you are, you little brat!?" He said, his voice sharp but faltering slightly. "Coming into my house and ordering me around like you own the place—...!"

He cut himself off, not by choice but by instinct.

There was something about Kafka—something in his presence, in the way he looked at him without a hint of emotion—that made the rest of his words catch in his throat.

He wanted to fight back, to curse him, to say something that would put this boy in his place. But the cold, unyielding look in Kafka's eyes, the quiet power he exuded, made him hesitate.

For all his bravado, he couldn't summon the nerve to speak to Kafka the way he wanted to.

Instead, he scoffed, leaning back slightly as if to mask his discomfort. "Why should I listen to you?" He muttered, his tone dismissive.

Before he could finish the question, Kafka moved.

With a single, fluid motion, Kafka's hand on his shoulder pressed down. It wasn't aggressive, but it was firm—unyielding, like a weight he couldn't resist.

His legs gave out beneath him, and he found himself seated again, his back hitting the chair with an audible thud.

The shock of being physically forced into submission left him momentarily speechless. He looked up at Kafka, his face a mix of disbelief and humiliation, but Kafka didn't even glance at him.

Instead, Kafka stepped away casually, his movements deliberate but relaxed, as though nothing unusual had happened.

"You shouldn't shout at your daughter like that." He said, his tone calm but with an edge of quiet authority. "And you should try listening to her before jumping to conclusions."

His words hung in the air as he moved to the sofa, sitting down beside Bella with an air of complete indifference to the tension in the room. He leaned back slightly, his posture relaxed, as though he hadn't just brought the household's self-proclaimed patriarch to heel.

Bella's father, however, was seething, his face flushed with anger and humiliation as he asked in his mind who in the hell this boy was who was ruining his perfect family.

#### Chapter 529: Apologise To Her

He glared at Kafka, his voice trembling with fury as he demanded, "Who do you think you are to tell me how to speak to my own daughter? This is my house! I'll say whatever I want to her!"

He jabbed a finger toward Kafka, his tone rising.

"And don't think you'll get away with this. You put your hands on me! I could call the police right now and have you arrested for assault."

Camila's lips pressed into a thin line as she stood to the side, her face neutral, but inside, her mind was filled with disdain.

'Coward.' She thought bitterly. 'Hiding behind the police because he can't handle being put in his place.'

Kafka opened his eyes lazily and tilted his head slightly to look at him.

"You call yourself the 'man of the house.'" He said, his voice calm, almost conversational, but it carried an edge that made the room feel colder. "...and yet you can't even sort out a simple family problem without threatening to call the police. That's what you resort to? It's embarrassing."

The words landed like a punch, and Bella's father's face turned an even deeper shade of red. "You've got some nerve—"

"More nerve than you, apparently." Kafka interrupted, his voice still calm but now carrying an unmistakable weight. He then leaned forward slightly, his elbows resting on his knees as his sharp eyes bored into the old man before him, and continued saying, "You call Bella your daughter, but do you even know what that means?"

"...A father isn't supposed to shout at his child like she's some kind of failure just because she doesn't meet your precious standards."

Bella's father flinched, his mouth opening to respond, but Kafka didn't give him the chance.

"You treat her worth like it's tied to what she accomplishes. Like she's some trophy to polish and show off," Kafka continued, his voice more solemn now. "You barely know her. You're barely present in her life. And yet you think you have the right to scream at her and demand she fall in line for the sake of your ego?"

The room was silent except for the sound of Bella's father grinding his teeth. His hands tightened around the armrests of the chair, the tips of his fingers scratching the smooth leather.

Kafka straightened, leaning back again as if bored by the man's silent rage. "Here's what's going to happen." He said simply. "You're going to apologise to Bella for shouting at her. And you're going to promise her you won't ever do it again."

Bella's father's head snapped up, his eyes wide with indignation. "Apologise?" He spat. "To my own daughter? For what? For telling her the truth?"



Kafka's eyes narrowed slightly, and he tilted his head as if studying him. "For treating her like she's an object instead of a person." He said softly, the quiet menace in his voice unmistakable.

Bella's father was about to argue, his mouth already open, but the way Kafka looked at him—cold, unflinching, and entirely unimpressed—made the words die in his throat. For a moment, the room felt suffocating, the tension so thick it was hard to breathe.

Finally, with a sharp exhale, Bella's father clenched his jaw and muttered, "Fine." His voice was low, barely audible, as though each word physically pained him. "I'm...I'm sorry." Kafka raised an eyebrow, waiting. His eyes trembled, and he ground out the rest of the words through clenched teeth. "I'm sorry for shouting at you, Bella. It won't happen again."

Bella didn't look up. Her hands were clasped tightly in her lap, trembling slightly as she stared at the floor. The apology her father had forced out meant nothing to her.

It wasn't genuine—it never could be. It wasn't about her; it was about his pride, about getting the moment over with so he could feel like he'd won.

The room was tense, the air filled with the unspoken. And just as the silence threatened to stretch too long, Kafka spoke, ordering another favour.

"Now apologise to Camila." He said, the words cutting through the quiet like a blade.

Camila blinked, her head snapping toward Kafka, startled. "What?" She said, her voice faint with disbelief.

Bella's father's reaction was immediate and preposterous as well. He scoffed loudly, his lips curling into a sneer.

"Apologise to her?" He repeated, his tone dripping with mockery. "For what? For telling her to keep her mouth shut when she kept on barking like a dog?"

Camila's expression tightened, but she remained silent, her lips trembling like she was holding herself back from choking him out. Bella also flinched at the remark, a spark of anger flashing in her eyes, but she didn't speak either.

Kafka, however, didn't flinch. He tilted his head slightly, his gaze locking onto Bella's father with unnerving steadiness.

"Yes." He said calmly and then continued saying, "For that too. And for everything else, like coming into her life with your worthless existence."

The room seemed to freeze. Bella's father stiffened, his face flushing with a mix of anger and humiliation when he heard the degrading words thrown at him.

"What did you just say?!" He hissed, his voice trembling with fury.

Kafka's expression didn't change. He remained calm, his posture relaxed, as he repeated, "I said, now listen carefully since I don't want to say it again—You should apologise to Camila for coming into her life with the worthless existence of yours."

Bella's father's hands curled into fists, his entire body tensing as though he were about to lunge forward. "You—"

"You what?" Kafka interrupted, his voice colder now, his tone cutting. "What are you going to do? Prove me right by acting exactly like the selfish, prideful man you've always been."

The older man snapped to his feet, his chest heaving as he glared down at Kafka. "You have some nerve, you unruly brat." He spat, his voice rising. "Do you even know who you're talking to? I'm her husband! I'm her father! This is my house, and I'll—"

"Enough!" Camila stepped forward, placing herself between Kafka and her husband, her hand on his chest to stop him from advancing. "Calm down." She said firmly, her voice steady despite the tension in the air.

Her husband looked down at her, his nostrils flaring. "He insulted me. Scolded me in the worst way he can." He snapped, his voice low and dangerous. "Do you expect me to just let that go?"

"Yes." Camila replied without hesitation, meeting his gaze head-on. "He's young. He said some hasty things. Don't make a big deal out of it."

"Hasty?" He repeated incredulously, his voice rising again.

Camila shook her head, her tone softening slightly as she tried to diffuse the situation. "He's close to Bella." She explained. "They're close friends. He stood up for her because he cares about her. That's all this is."

Her husband gritted his teeth, his eyes flicking back to Kafka, who remained seated, watching him with a quiet intensity that made the room feel unbearable to be in.

Camila's voice lowered, gentler now but still firm.

"Sit down." She said. "Take a moment and collect your thoughts. Let me finish dinner, and we'll talk when everyone's calm."

Her husband hesitated, clearly torn between his simmering anger and the realisation that escalating this further would only make him look worse. He glanced at Kafka one more time, and the look in the younger man's eyes—the sheer lack of fear, the cold confidence—seemed to make him reconsider.

With a sharp huff, he stepped back and dropped into his chair, muttering under his breath. "A kid like him doesn't know how the world works." He said bitterly.

Camila ignored the remark, her shoulders relaxing slightly now that he was seated. She turned to Bella, her expression softening.

"Take care of Kafka, will you?" She said quietly, her hand brushing Bella's shoulder. "Make sure nothing happens while I'm in the kitchen."

Bella nodded slowly, her gaze flicking between her father and Kafka.

Camila hesitated for a moment, her eyes lingering on her husband, who sat stiffly in his chair. Finally, she turned and walked toward the kitchen, her steps deliberate and calm, hoping nothing would happen while she finished up dinner.

Silence descended upon the room once she left, thick and oppressive. Kafka sat on the sofa, his posture relaxed, but his eyes were fixed on Bella's father with an emotionless stare.

It wasn't a glare, nor was it overtly hostile—it was just cold, unyielding, and impossible to ignore.

Bella's father fidgeted under the weight of that gaze, his hand tightening around the armrest of his chair. He tried to meet Kafka's eyes, but the intensity was too much. His gaze flicked away, landing somewhere near the coffee table, then at the far wall, avoiding the younger man altogether.

Bella, sitting beside Kafka, felt the silence gnawing at her nerves. She glanced between her father, who looked visibly uncomfortable, and Kafka, whose steady stare hadn't wavered once. The atmosphere was unbearable, and she couldn't take it anymore.

Turning to Kafka, she cleared her throat.

"Hey, Da—...I mean, Kafka." She said, almost referring to him as 'Daddy' when her actual father was sitting there. "So, you know that project you helped me with?"

Kafka's eyes shifted to her, his expression softening slightly, the coldness in his gaze melting away like snow on a warm spring day.

"Yeah, the you were struggling with since you had no team members." He said simply.

Bella smiled, relieved to have found something to talk about.

"Well, my professor loved it." She said, her voice growing more animated as she spoke. "Like, he really loved it. He said it was one of the best submissions he's seen in years."

A faint grin tugged at Kafka's lips. "That's great, Bella." He said, his tone low but genuine. "Congratulations."

Bella's eyes lit up at his words, her excitement bubbling to the surface.

"Thanks! But that's not all." She continued, leaning forward slightly. "He showed it off to the dean. The dean! Can you believe that? Apparently, he was so impressed that he called a meeting with the entire department just to showcase it."

Kafka raised an eyebrow, his grin widening just a fraction. "Really? That's impressive." He said.

"It was insane." Bella said, her words tumbling out in a rush. "I didn't even know until I got an email from the dean's office saying they wanted to use my project as an example of innovation for our department." She paused, her cheeks flushing with pride. "And, get this—they're even talking about giving me an award for it."

Kafka's grin softened into a quiet smile as he listened, his eyes never leaving hers. "You deserve it...You put a whole lot of sleepless nights into finishing it." He said simply.

Bella's smile widened, her excitement undeterred.

"And that's not even the craziest part." She added, her voice rising slightly. "Apparently, a couple of companies heard about the project through the dean, and they're interested in buying the idea."

"Companies?" Kafka blinked, a flicker of surprise crossing his face.

Bella nodded eagerly. "Yeah. I mean, nothing's finalized yet, but they're already setting up meetings to talk about licensing and everything. It's...it's overwhelming, but it's exciting, you know?"

Kafka turned towards her slightly, his smile lingering. "I'm happy for you, Bella." He said, his voice quiet but sincere. "You worked hard for this. You earned it."

Bella felt her heart swell at his words. She wasn't sure why, but hearing his approval meant more to her than anything else. She ducked her head slightly, a small, bashful smile forming at her lips.

"T-Thanks..." She murmured, her voice softer now.

But just as she thought the pressure in the room was finally easing, her father let out a sharp snort, destroying the moment like he was dropping a bomb on a peaceful valley.

"You shouldn't trust him, Bella." He said, his tone laced with disdain. His eyes flicked toward Kafka, narrowing. "Men like him don't help for no reason. He probably has no good intentions. You'd be smart to keep your distance."

Bella stiffened, her blood boiling at his words. The sheer audacity of him to say something like that about Kafka, of all people.

Who was he to judge anyone's intentions? After all the damage he'd caused, after everything he'd done—or hadn't done—as a father?

Her mouth opened, ready to argue, ready to demand who he thought he was to say something like that about someone who had done nothing but help her. But before she could get the words out, she noticed Kafka turning his head, his movements slow and deliberate, as if he'd been waiting for this moment.

The smile on Kafka's face wasn't warm or amused—it was cold, mocking, and razor-sharp. His eyes carried an unsettling calm, the kind that made Bella's father falter slightly in his seat.

Bella's heart skipped a beat as she watched Kafka's expression shift.

For some reason, she just knew—without him even speaking yet—that her father was about to regret his words.

Kafka didn't need to raise a hand or his voice. He wasn't going to lash out physically or lose his composure.

No, he was going to dismantle him.

He was going to make her father wish he'd never spoken, with nothing but carefully chosen words that would cut deeper than any blow, and she swallowed hard, instinctively bracing herself for what was coming next...

Chapter 530: Digging His Own Grave

Bella's father had no idea what he had just done.

Kafka turned his head slowly, the corners of his lips curling into a sharp, mocking smile—the kind someone gives when they're staring at something insignificant, something beneath them.

It was the kind of look that made her swallow hard, instinctively bracing herself for what was coming next.

Her father had stepped into a battlefield he wasn't prepared for, and even though Kafka wasn't going to lay a finger on him, Bella knew—she just knew that the words he was about to say would cut deeper than any physical blow.

But when Kafka spoke, his tone was calm, even casual. "Ignore my true intentions with your daughter for now, sir." He said politely, waving a hand like he was brushing off the accusation. "Let's simply talk hypothetically. If I were to say that I was interested in Bella...If I wanted to be with her, to spend the rest of my life with her...Would you accept it?"

Bella's pretty blue eyes widened, and they sparkled like uncut sapphires.

Her ears turned bright red, and her breath hastened as the words settled in her mind.

'If he wanted to be with her...If he wanted to spend his life with her.' Her thoughts spiralled before she could stop them, her mind conjuring images she had never dared to imagine before.

A wedding...A quiet, beautiful moment where she stood beside Kafka, slipping a ring onto his finger.

The warmth of his hand around hers...The sound of vows spoken softly between them.

Without realising it, she glanced down at her fingers, as if expecting to see an engagement ring already there.

But before she could get lost in the dream completely, reality came crashing back when her father let out a snicker.

"What kind of question is that?" He scoffed. "Of course, I wouldn't accept it. There's no way I'd allow my daughter to be with someone like you."

Bella's momentary daze shattered, and anger flared in her chest. Her father's words struck a nerve, an immediate indignation rising within her.

'Allow? Give permission? Who was he to decide who she could and couldn't be with?'

She was just about to snap back when Kafka subtly raised a hand, gesturing for her to stay calm. It was small, almost imperceptible, but the message was clear: Let me handle this.

Bella clenched her fists, biting her tongue as she forced herself to stay quiet.

Kafka, still smiling, tilted his head slightly. "Oh?" He said, his tone light, unbothered. "And why is that? Is there something possibly wrong with our union?"

His voice was steady, unshaken, but Bella could tell—this wasn't a simple question. This was a trap. A carefully laid one.

And her father had just walked straight into it.

Her father scoffed, shaking his head in disbelief, his earlier anger shifting into something sharper—contempt. He leaned forward slightly, pointing a finger directly at Bella as he spoke.

"What kind of question is that...I mean, just look at her." He said, his voice laced with derision, as if the very idea of Kafka being with Bella was laughable. "Look at my daughter and tell me how you could possibly think you deserve her."

Bella stiffened, the weight of his words sinking into her skin like needles. She knew what was coming, could feel it in the way he was looking at her—not like a father admiring his child, but like a man listing off the specifications of a prize he had acquired.

Her father straightened, crossing his arms over his chest, his voice filled with smugness as he began his tirade.

"My daughter...She's brilliant." He said. "Top of her class all throughout school. She got admitted into one of the most prestigious universities in the country, something people twice as smart as her couldn't even dream of. And she didn't just get in—she excelled. Professors talk about her, admire her."

"...Do you have any idea how hard that is to achieve?"



Bella's gut twisted.

"And she's not just smart—she's talented." Her father continued, as if reciting from a list. "Athletic. Always at the top of her game. She competed and several won medals in so many different sports. Every teacher, every coach, always said she was the best at whatever she did. She can hold her own anywhere, whether it's on the field or in a debate."

Bella's fingers curled into her lap, a deep discomfort creeping up her spine.

"She's got presence as well." He went on, his voice practically glowing with self-satisfaction. "Social, even with random strangers, well-spoken enough to even win an award for her speeches and debates, and charming when she needs to grab the attention of the people around her."

"She literally walks into a room, and people immediately notice her. She commands respect, and she's got class, the kind of grace and refinement you can't just learn overnight."

The more he spoke, the more detached Bella felt from his words.

"And look at her." He gestured toward her, his tone shifting into something bordering on indulgent. "She's beautiful. Not just pretty, but striking. She could walk into any high-class event and turn heads. She's the kind of woman men aspire to have by their side."

Bella's stomach churned with disgust.

He wasn't praising her. He wasn't talking about her with the pride of a father who loved his daughter for who she was.

He was listing her off like she was some trophy. An asset. A perfectly polished gem he could show off to the world as proof of his status.

The way he spoke about her achievements—her intelligence, her skills, her beauty—none of it felt real.

It wasn't her he was proud of...It was the image of her. The perfect daughter. The one that made him look good.

Bella swallowed, bile rising in her throat.

Her father turned back to Kafka, his expression smug. "Now, tell me." He said, his voice dripping with condescension. "How could someone like you ever think you're worthy of her?"

The words echoed in the room, thick with arrogance. He truly believed what he was saying.

Truly believed that Bella was his creation, something he had moulded into perfection, and that no one—especially not Kafka—was good enough to touch something he had made.

Bella's hands trembled slightly in her lap, her nails digging into her palms.

She wanted to speak. Wanted to scream. Wanted to tell him that she wasn't his to show off, that all of her accomplishments weren't for him, that everything she had worked for wasn't about making him proud.

But she didn't get the chance.

Before she could even open her mouth, her father's attention shifted, his gaze snapping back to Kafka like a predator setting its sights on weaker prey.

"And you, little boy." He sneered, his tone laced with unfiltered contempt. "What exactly do you have to offer? What do you have that makes you think you can even breathe the same air as my daughter?"

Kafka said nothing. He simply watched him, that same infuriatingly calm smile still resting on his lips, like a cat toying with a mouse that didn't realise it had already lost.

Her father mistook that silence for submission.

It only emboldened him.

"You think a little bit of looks is enough?" He scoffed, waving a dismissive hand in Kafka's direction. "I'll admit, you're not completely unfortunate-looking. But what does that even matter?"

"A face won't feed you. A face won't get you anywhere in life. And judging by how you carry yourself, you don't have anything else."

Bella's fingers twitched.

Her father smirked, leaning forward slightly, his confidence growing. "You look like someone who barely made it out of school." He said, his voice dripping with mockery. "Like some dropout who wasted his life running around with a bunch of ruffians, scraping by, doing God knows what just to get through the day."

Bella stiffened, her neck twitching like she was holding back an outburst.

"You have no class whatsoever." Her father continued, shaking his head. "No manners. The way you sit, the way you talk, the way you look at me—it's obvious you don't belong anywhere near this kind of life."

"...You probably don't even belong to a decent family, do you?"

Bella sucked in a sharp breath, her chest tightening.

Her father let out a cruel chuckle, shaking his head again. "I'd bet good money that you can't even get through the ABC without stumbling." He said, his tone filled with mockery. "Tell me, boy—do you even know what the alphabet is?"

He leaned back, laughing to himself like he had just delivered the ultimate insult. He thought he was winning, thought he was stripping Kafka down, humiliating him, exposing him for the "nothing" he assumed he was.

And yet—Kafka didn't flinch.

He didn't tense.

He didn't glare.

He didn't so much as blink.

He just sat there...Smiling.

Not a forced, clenched smile. Not a bitter, restrained one.

But a slow, deliberate smile that was genuine in its amusement, like he was watching something truly entertaining unfold before his eyes.

And that was the moment Bella realised—her father wasn't humiliating Kafka.

No.

Kafka was letting him talk.

Letting him dig his own grave.

Letting him build himself up, higher and higher, just so he could rip it all away in one swift, brutal moment.

Bella swallowed hard.

Her father had no idea...He had no idea what was coming next, and neither did she.

But what she did know was that her father wasn't going to be the same man he was after this fateful night that was about to change his life for the worse...