

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress!

Chapter 401[939 words]

(Author's POV)

Amelia's public response regarding Zoey joining the cast of *Treatment Diary* caused the heat of the incident to skyrocket once again.

The internet instantly split into two opposing, hostile camps, arguing fiercely across every platform.

Because of Amelia's confident message, a significant portion of netizens began to suspect there was a hidden story behind Zoey and Wayne's messy breakup.

They impatiently looked forward to the "shocking truth" she promised to announce later, their curiosity piqued to the maximum.

However, another group firmly believed that Wayne had already been tried and convicted in the court of public opinion years ago.

They thought this was nothing more than Amelia forcibly whitewashing a stained actor to build hype for her unreleased new drama.

Some even maliciously speculated that Amelia was keeping Wayne as her sugar baby, casting dirty aspersions on her motives.

Despite the skepticism from these detractors, Amelia's true identity as the "Shadow Healer Lily" had already been exposed to the world.

Coupled with her crushing, undeniable victory in the music field, she had accumulated a fierce and devoted fanbase.

These fans worked tirelessly online, charging into battle for her like a disciplined army.

They were going head-to-head with trolls and haters, refusing to let any slander stand uncorrected.

As a result, any topic related to Amelia shot to the top of trending lists without spending a single dollar on promotion.

This kind of organic, self-generating buzz was the sort of thing other struggling artists would sell their souls for.

Countless entertainers teetering on the edge of obscurity watched the screen with eyes red from jealousy.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere inside Gale Entertainment was one of utter, desperate chaos.

The company's stock price continued its avalanche-like collapse, wiping out millions in value within hours.

Alpha Arthur York's phone was almost blown up by angry shareholders demanding answers for the financial disaster.

Accountability questions rose one after another, drowning him in immense pressure.

To turn the tide and save his crumbling empire, Arthur decided to make a desperate gamble.

He planned to exploit the heating public opinion around Zoey and Wayne to forcibly hype his own upcoming drama, **The Rising Storm**.

At the same time, he intended to use the opportunity to smear **Treatment Diary** as an inferior production.

He instructed the marketing department to purchase a brigade of paid online commenters to flood the forums.

Then, he tried to order his daughter, Jade York, to post on social media promoting the official start of filming for **The Rising Storm**.

However, Jade turned a deaf ear to his commands, showing absolute defiance.

She directly hung up the phone without saying a single word to her father.

Flustered and exasperated by her rebellion, Arthur had no choice but to turn his pressure onto the show's male lead, Yves.

He demanded that this actor, who had always been known for having zero scandals, speak up publicly to save the project.

In Arthur's view, as long as **The Rising Storm** could finish filming and go online first, they would seize the market initiative.

Forced by his boss's coercion, Yves posted a brief message on social media: "Ready to start filming."

Although this attracted support from a group of die-hard fans, it also ignited a massive war between the fanbases.

Arguments about the comparison between the two dramas and controversies over plagiarism made the situation increasingly chaotic and vicious.

Just as the war of public opinion was at its peak, Jade suddenly posted a statement on social media that shocked the entire network.

“I have decided to withdraw from the role of female lead in *The Rising Storm*. Please do not mention it again.”

This news was like a depth charge dropped into a calm lake, instantly detonating the entire internet.

Arthur frantically dialed his daughter’s number, his fingers trembling with rage, but not a single call connected.

Subsequently, he sent a long text message filled with venomous threats and insults.

In the message, he cursed Jade for being greedy and kicking him while he was down.

He threatened her menacingly, trying to use money to control her one last time.

“If you don’t immediately post claiming your account was hacked, I will change my will right now!”

“I will transfer all shares under my name to your cousin!”

“You won’t get a single penny from the York family!”

Facing her father’s financial threat, Jade showed no fear whatsoever.

She sneered at the screen and replied with cold, burning determination.

“Fine! I’ll burn it all down and take you with me.”

“A cheating bastard, betrayed by his own mistress.”

“Raising another man’s son for over twenty years – you deserve every bit of this.”

Immediately after sending the reply, she took a screenshot of Arthur’s flustered and exasperated threatening message.

She posted it directly to social media with a simple, damning caption: “Here is the reason.”

The comment section completely boiled over with shock and excitement.

Netizens expressed sympathy for Jade having such a profit-seeking, ruthless father.

At the same time, the conversation confirmed the previous rumors that Hugh York was actually the butler's illegitimate son.

The direction of public opinion instantly reversed completely against Arthur.

Gale Entertainment's reputation fell to rock bottom, destroyed by its own leader's family scandal.

The Rising Storm completely collapsed due to the double blow of the female lead quitting and the investor's dirty laundry.

Amelia saw Jade's post on her tablet while sitting in the safety of the Stone house.

The corners of her mouth rose slightly in a knowing smile.

She remembered the information Silas had investigated and compiled earlier regarding Jade's personality.

The outside world had evaluated Jade with a specific, accurate phrase.

"A she-wolf who doesn't bow to anyone."

It had to be said that Jade truly had determination and courage.

For the sake of revenge, she was willing to personally send Gale Entertainment, into the abyss.

She refused to keep living as a kept wolf, surviving on scraps of false prosperity that Arthur dangled over her head.

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Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 402[1,493 words]

(Amelia's POV)

The internet was still burning from the fallout of Jade's statement. Gale Entertainment was in absolute

chaos, their stock plummeting by the second. Arthur York was probably breaking every vase in his office right now. But strangely, as I watched the disaster unfold on my tablet, I

found myself hoping they wouldn't cancel *The Rising Storm*. I actually wanted them to keep filming.

The public currently saw Yves, the male lead, as a saint. He was the "Movie King," untainted by scandal, the only thing holding that production together. But I held the cards that would destroy him. I knew the truth beneath his perfect mask. He was filth. He hadn't just cheated; he had abandoned his mate while she was pregnant with his pup. That kind of betrayal was unforgivable in our world. If I released that information now, it would just be another headline. But if I waited until the movie was finished? Until they had poured millions into production? Then, it would be a death blow.

My thoughts were interrupted by the buzzing of my phone. The screen lit up with a video call request. It was Theodore. I tapped the accept button immediately, a smile touching my lips.

"Busy night?" Theodore asked, his voice warm and deep. He was sitting in his study, the golden light of the lamp highlighting the sharp angles of his face.

"Just watching the fireworks," I replied, leaning back against my headboard.

"You certainly know how to light a fuse," he chuckled. "Since you arrived, the entertainment industry has

been livelier than it has been in decades."

"Is that a compliment?"

"It is," he said, his golden eyes sparkling. "You should write a book about this. Using yourself as the prototype."

I laughed softly. "I actually thought about that. Maybe I'll start the story with the day we met."

"Does that make me the male lead?"

"Who else would it be?" I teased. "Unless you want me to cast someone else?"

"Don't even think about it."

We shared a quiet moment of comfort, the distance between us fading. But soon, Theodore's expression grew serious. The playfulness vanished, replaced by the sharp, calculating look of the Alpha King's heir.

"Did you see Zoey?" he asked.

I nodded. I recounted everything Zoey had told me about the pressure she was under. Theodore listened without interrupting, his brow furrowing slightly.

“They used her,” he said finally. “It was a test.”

“To see my reaction?” I asked.

“To see your bottom line,” he corrected. “And to confirm what you know.”

“Zane Jenkins,” I whispered the name.

“After tonight, Zane knows that you are aware of the Drake family’s backer.”

The atmosphere shifted, becoming heavy.

“Amelia, you need to be careful,” Theodore said, his voice dropping an octave. “I know he’s dangerous.”

“He’s not just dangerous. He’s powerful.” Theodore leaned closer to the camera. “He will warn you first.

He’ll try to intimidate you into stopping.”

“I won’t stop.”

“I know. And when the warning fails, he will strike.”

A cold shiver ran down my spine.

“But he likely won’t target you directly,” Theodore continued. “He knows you are guarded. He knows you are strong.”

“Then who?”

“Your parents,” he said grimly. “Or Jaxon and Seraphina.”

My heart skipped a beat.

“Zane holds power that dwarfs Griffin Drake,” Theodore explained. “His influence reaches into the highest levels of governance. He can arrange accidents. He can destroy businesses with a signature. He can make people disappear.”

I clenched my fists.

“To truly take him down, we can’t just fight him head-on,” Theodore said. “We need to find his political rivals. We need balance.”

I looked at the man on the screen, seeing the genuine worry in his eyes.

“I will find a way,” I promised, my voice steady. “I won’t let my family get hurt. I have a plan.”

Theodore nodded slowly. “Good.”

“Amelia, listen to me. Deal with the Drakes. Deal with anyone beneath my station. Do whatever you want to them.” His eyes burned with intensity. “But anyone above me? Anyone like Zane? I will handle them. I will use everything I have to protect you.”

“Goodnight, Theodore.”

“Goodnight, Amelia.”

I ended the call, but sleep didn’t come. I walked over to the terrarium. Green, Black, and White were awake, waiting for their meal. I dropped the food in, watching them strike with lethal precision.

Zane Jenkins. What methods would he use? Kidnapping? Poison? Explosives? My mind raced through every horrific possibility. I couldn’t let my guard down for a second.

The next morning, the anxiety still lingered. I walked downstairs, the smell of breakfast wafting from the kitchen. I stopped at the doorway. Seraphina was at the stove, humming a soft tune. Jaxon was beside her, trying to steal a piece of bacon. She slapped his hand away playfully, and he chuckled, kissing her cheek.

There was something aching domestic about the sight of them – quiet, warm, and utterly ordinary in the best possible way. It was a scene of perfect peace. And it terrified me. Because I knew how easily it could be shattered. I made a silent vow right then and there. No matter what dirty tricks Zane used, I would shield them.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang. A moment later, Lance walked in. He was limping, favoring his left leg. His face was bruised from yesterday’s beating, but he had plastered a bright, fake smile on his face.

“Good morning!” he chirped, sounding entirely too cheerful.

Seraphina and Jaxon froze. They shot each other a bewildered look. This was the man who had been

thrashed yesterday. How did he have the face to show up here like nothing happened?

“Lance!” I called out, putting on my own mask of delight. “Come over here. Have breakfast with us.”

Lance flinched. The smile faltered for a second.

"I... I'm not hungry," he stammered.

"Nonsense," I said, my voice leaving no room for argument. "Sit."

He looked at me, seeing the threat in my eyes. He swallowed hard and sat down. I pushed my full plate toward him.

"You got hurt yesterday," I said sweetly. "You need to eat more to recover your strength."

(Author's POV)

Lance stared at the plate of eggs and bacon as if it were a loaded gun. Amelia watched him, her gaze heavy and unblinking. He didn't dare refuse. With trembling hands, he picked up the fork. He ate quickly, shoving the food into his mouth without tasting it.

"Thank you," he mumbled between bites.

Seraphina stood by the counter, watching the scene unfold. She couldn't help but think that her daughter looked less like a host and more like an Alpha breaking a disobedient wolf. It was a display of pure dominance.

Lance finished the last crumb and put the fork down.

"I'm done," he whispered.

"Good," Amelia said. "Wait for me outside. You're driving me to work."

Lance looked as though he'd just been granted a stay of execution. He practically leaped from the chair.

"Yes, of course," he said, scrambling out the door before anyone could change their mind.

Amelia stood up calmly.

"I'm off," she told her parents.

"Be safe," Jaxon said.

Amelia walked out of the villa, closing the heavy door behind her. The morning sun was bright. Lance was standing by the car, his posture relaxed. He thought the ordeal was over. He thought he was safe now that he was out of Jaxon's line of sight.

Amelia walked up to him. He turned to open the door for her, that fake smile returning to his lips. Amelia didn't get in the car. Instead, she pulled her arm back and drove her fist straight into his face.

Thud.

Lance stumbled back, clutching his jaw.

"You..."

"You dare refuse to eat inside?" Amelia asked, her voice dropping to a freezing whisper.

"What?" Lance gasped, blood trickling from his lip.

"If my parents weren't there, I would have broken your jaw at the table."

Lance stared at her. The humiliation finally snapped his control. He dropped the facade. His face twisted into a mask of pure hatred.

"You bitch!" he screamed.

He lunged at her, his hands reaching for her throat. He wanted to strangle her. Amelia didn't even blink. She caught his wrist in mid-air, her grip like a steel trap. With a fluid motion, she twisted his arm and swept his legs out from under him. Lance hit the ground hard.

Before he could scramble away, Amelia stepped on his chest. She put her weight behind it. Then, she kicked him in the head.

"Showing your true colors already?" she mocked, looking down at him. "You couldn't even keep the act up for five minutes."

Inside the house, Jaxon and Seraphina heard the commotion. They hurried to the door, looking out to see their daughter standing over the screaming man.

"You're dead!" Lance shrieked, his voice cracking. "You're a dead woman! When my brother Griffin finds out, he's going to kill you! He'll have you fed to the pack piece by piece!"

Amelia laughed, a cold, sharp sound. "You lasted a little longer than I expected," she said. "But not by much."

Lance gritted his teeth, his eyes bulging with rage. "Griffin just underestimated you!" he yelled. "Once he heals, the Stone family is finished! He's going to destroy everything you love! He'll sell you off to the lowest bidder!"

Amelia raised her foot and stomped down hard on his face.

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 405[1,225 words]

(Author's POV)

Amelia woke from a light nap on the plush sofa in Theodore's private quarters at the Crimson Moon Pack headquarters. She stretched her limbs, feeling the stiffness leave her body, and checked the time. It was late afternoon. Just as she was gathering her things to return to her own office at Stone Botanicals, her phone buzzed on the coffee table.

The caller ID flashed "Mom". It was Seraphina.

Amelia picked up immediately. "Mom?"

"Amelia, you need to come home right now," Seraphina's voice was tight with anxiety, trembling slightly. "Griffin Drake is here. He brought a dozen men. They are blocking the main gate and demanding we hand over Lance."

Amelia's eyes narrowed, but a corner of her mouth quirked up into a cold, amused smile.

Griffin's timing was impeccable.

If he had arrived even an hour earlier, things might have been complicated. But she had moved Lance out of the Stone estate just this morning. She had calculated that Griffin, suffering from the explosion injuries she had orchestrated, would be bedridden for at least another week. She hadn't expected him to be desperate enough to drag his broken body to her doorstep so soon.

"I'm on my way," Amelia said calmly. "Don't open the gate until I get there."

She hung up and grabbed her coat, wrapping a thick scarf around her neck to ward off the winter chill. She stepped out of the private partition into the main office where Theodore was reviewing documents behind his massive desk.

"I have to go back to the Stone house," Amelia announced, pulling her gloves on.

Theodore looked up, pausing his pen. "I thought you were heading to the company?"

"Change of plans," Amelia said, her eyes glinting with anticipation. "Griffin is at my parents' house. He's looking for Lance."

Theodore's expression darkened slightly at the mention of the Drake family, but seeing Amelia's confident demeanor, he relaxed. He knew she had the situation under control.

“Be careful,” he said. Then, as she reached for the doorknob, he spoke again. “Don’t forget about Saturday.”

Amelia paused and looked back. “Saturday?”

“I’m taking you to meet a few friends,” Theodore reminded her, his golden eyes warm. “We have a reservation at Silver Hollow for dinner.”

Amelia blinked, then smiled brightly. “Right. I haven’t forgotten. I promise I’ll dress up for the occasion.”

“You don’t need to,” Theodore murmured as the door clicked shut behind her. He stared at the closed wood, a faint smile touching his lips. His friends already knew she was extraordinary, she didn’t need silk or diamonds to prove it.

At the gates of the Stone River Pack House, the atmosphere was tense.

The Drake family butler stood before the iron bars, his face red with indignation. The Stone family guards stood like statues, refusing to budge or acknowledge his shouting.

“If you don’t open this gate immediately, I will call the authorities!” the butler threatened, spitting on the ground. “This is kidnapping! This is illegal detention!”

The guards remained silent.

Furious, the butler pulled out his phone and dialed the police. “Yes, I need to report a crime. The Stone family is holding a member of the Drake family against his will. Yes, we fear for his life.”

After hanging up, the butler marched back to the black luxury sedan parked on the roadside. He leaned into the open rear window.

“Master Griffin, I’ve called the police,” he reported, wiping sweat from his brow. “They are on their way.”

Griffin sat in the shadows of the backseat. His face was pale, and bandages were visible beneath his collar. In his hand, he tightly clutched a gold brooch with the Drake family crest. It was his mother

Octavia’s favorite piece of jewelry. He had spent hours polishing it himself, waiting for the day she would be released from prison so he could pin it on her coat.

He stared at the closed gates of the Stone estate with venomous hatred.

Thirty minutes later, a white limousine glided down the street and pulled up smoothly beside the Drake family's convoy. The window rolled down.

Amelia leaned out, her sapphire eyes sparkling with mock surprise.

"Well, well, if it isn't Griffin," she drawled, her voice carrying clearly in the crisp air. "Long time no see. What happened to your face? Those bandages look fresh. Did something... blow up in your face?"

The butler bristled. "Watch your tongue, Miss Stone!"

"I'm just expressing my concern," Amelia laughed, though her eyes were cold as ice. "It looks painful."

"Enough," Griffin's voice was raspy, like gravel grinding together. He turned his head slowly to glare at her. "Where is Lance?"

"Lance?" Amelia tilted her head, feigning thought. "Oh, my dear cousin. Yes, he was here."

Griffin's hand tightened around the brooch until the metal dug into his palm.

"He came to visit my mother a few days ago," Amelia said casually, checking her nails. "But he left today"

"You're lying," Griffin hissed.

"Why would I lie?" Amelia sighed dramatically. "To be honest, it was a pitiful sight. When he arrived, he was covered in blood and bruises. If I hadn't taken him in and treated him, he would have died in a ditch somewhere."

Griffin flinched. The thought of Lance—his own blood—being broken and battered clearly struck a nerve.

"He told me the injuries were your doing," Amelia added, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "He said you beat him within an inch of his life."

"That is slander!" the butler shouted, stepping forward. "Master Griffin would never—"

"Oh, please," Amelia cut him off with a sharp look. "Griffin kicked his own aunt Lyra out of the family. Beating up her son seems perfectly in character, doesn't it?"

Before the butler could retort, the wail of sirens cut through the air. Two police cruisers pulled up, lights flashing.

A stern-faced officer stepped out and approached the group. "We received a report of a kidnapping."

“They are holding my cousin inside,” Griffin said, pointing a shaking finger at the Stone house. “I want you to go in there and get him.”

The officer looked at Amelia. “Ma’am, we need to search the premises.”

Amelia raised an eyebrow. “Do you have a warrant?”

The officer paused. “Given the urgency of a missing person report, we can conduct a search to ensure safety. We will file the paperwork later.”

“So, no warrant,” Amelia stated flatly. “You want to barge into a private residence based on the word of a man who is known for his vendetta against my family? That sounds like an abuse of power, officer.”

The officer shifted uncomfortably. He turned back to Griffin. “Mr. Drake, are you absolutely certain he is inside? If we go in and find nothing, this could be considered harassment.”

Griffin looked at his butler. The butler swallowed hard. He hadn’t seen Lance, but their intelligence said Lance had entered and never left. It had to be true.

“He is inside,” the butler insisted, though his voice wavered slightly. “She is just stalling.”

Amelia watched them for a moment, letting the silence stretch. Then, she smiled—a dangerous, predatory smile.

“Fine,” Amelia said, turning to the stone-faced guards at the gate. “Open it.”

The heavy iron gates groaned as they began to swing inward.

“The police can come in,” Amelia announced, stepping out of her car and smoothing her coat. “Griffin and his lackeys can come in too. I have nothing to hide. I am not afraid of anyone searching my home!

She gestured grandly toward the sprawling estate

“Come and see for yourselves, the challenged, her eyes locking onto Griffiris. “See if I have kidnapped or detained my dear cousin?

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 404[874 words]

(Griffin’s POV)

“What do you mean missing?” I roared, my voice cracking under the strain of my injuries.

The butler, usually so composed, looked down at his polished shoes, his hands clasped tightly together. “Master Lance came to visit while you were sleeping,” he stammered, sweat beading on his forehead. “He saw your condition and flew into a rage.”

I gripped the bedsheets, my knuckles turning white. “Go on.”

“He swore he would handle the trouble for you,” the butler continued, his voice trembling. “He said Miss Stone needed to pay for what she did. I tried to stop him, Alpha. I begged him to wait until you were recovered.”

“And?” I hissed, feeling a vein throb in my temple.

“He brushed off my warning and stormed out,” the butler admitted, looking miserable. “He wouldn’t listen to reason. I was worried he would be reckless, so I sent men to follow him immediately.”

“If you had men on him, why is he missing?” I demanded, my voice rising to a shout that echoed in the sterile room.

The butler winced. “He... he shook them off. Master Lance is cunning when he wants to be. My men lost him within the hour.”

“And you waited until now to tell me?” I threw a glass of water off the bedside table. It shattered against the wall, sending shards skittering across the floor.

“I didn’t think it was my place to disturb your recovery with Stone family matters,” the butler said, stepping back. “You were in critical condition. I didn’t want to add to your burden, so I waited.”

“You fool!” I screamed, ignoring the searing pain in my chest. “Do you know who Amelia Stone is? If anything happens to Lance because of your delay, I will not forgive you.”

I threw the covers off my legs. A sharp agony shot through my ribs, making me gasp, but the rage burned hotter than the pain.

“Alpha, please, you need to rest,” the butler cried out, rushing forward.

“Help me up,” I ordered through gritted teeth, struggling to sit. “We are going to the Stone house to find him.”

(Amelia’s POV)

The scent of medicinal herbs filled the quiet room. I focused entirely on the acupuncture needles in my hand, carefully inserting them into Theodore’s paralyzed legs.

Suddenly, the phone on the desk buzzed. It was Marcus.

Theodore glanced at the screen but didn't answer immediately. He let me finish the row of needles before picking up.

"Speak," Theodore said calmly.

"Victor is downstairs," Marcus's voice came through. "He is demanding to see you."

Theodore checked his watch. "Let him wait."

"Understood."

"Thirty minutes," Theodore added before hanging up.

Exactly half an hour later, the heavy oak doors banged open. Victor stormed in, his face purple with rage.

"Theodore!" Victor bellowed. "You treacherous snake!"

Theodore sat in his wheelchair, cleaning his glasses with a silk cloth. "Good afternoon, cousin."

"Don't play dumb with me!" Victor slammed a stack of papers onto the desk. "My shipment from Africa

was seized at customs this morning. They found contraband hidden in the ore containers!*

"That sounds unfortunate," Theodore said, his golden eyes cold.

"Unfortunate? It's a disaster!" Victor shouted. "The entire batch of rare metals is confiscated. You did this.

You planted those goods."

"Do you have proof?" Theodore asked, his voice dropping.

"I don't need proof!" Victor paced around the room. "The family meeting is coming up. Your headquarters' performance has been mediocre, while my African metal business flourishes. You wanted to sabotage our numbers before the review."

Theodore finally looked at him. "If I wanted to destroy you, I wouldn't use such a clumsy method. Check your own people. Perhaps your subordinates took a bribe."

Victor gritted his teeth. "I will investigate. But mark my words. If I find even a trace of your involvement, I am going straight to Alpha King Gideon."

Victor stormed out, slamming the door.

I waited until his footsteps faded. Then I stepped out from the medical partition.

“What do you think?” I asked.

Theodore turned his wheelchair to face me. “Victor’s men are experienced. They wouldn’t make a mistake like that. This has Zane Jenkins written all over it.”

I crossed my arms. “You knew, didn’t you? You knew Zane would target the African business.”

“It was inevitable,” Theodore admitted. “The energy and finance sectors are too hard to touch. But the African transport line relies on corrupt officials. It is the easiest link to break.”

“You want to use this to weaken Victor’s control,” I realized.

“Yes,” Theodore said. “But it is dangerous. Regardless of the truth, Victor will go to Gideon. If the charge sticks, my standing as the heir would crumble. Even if I prove I’m innocent, you would inevitably be dragged into the crossfire.”

“I’m not afraid,” I said.

Theodore smiled faintly. “I know. But we need to strike back. We must use his political enemies.”

He wheeled himself over to the massive floor-to-ceiling window. “I found it. The opportunity we need.”

I walked over to him. “What is it?”

He looked down at the traffic-filled streets below. “He will serve as the representative of the patrol team.

He will host an internal review starting next April.”

“How long?”

“One and a half months,” Theodore said. “Four months – more than enough time to dig up every last piece of dirt on Zane Jenkins and bury him with it.”

I stood beside him, looking out at the same view. “Good. I’ll gather the evidence. You handle bringing it before Gideon.”

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He stared at the closed gates of the Stone estate with venomous hatred.

Thirty minutes later, a white limousine glided down the street and pulled up smoothly beside the Drake family's convoy. The window rolled down.

Amelia leaned out, her sapphire eyes sparkling with mock surprise.

"Well, well, if it isn't Griffin," she drawled, her voice carrying clearly in the crisp air. "Long time no see. What happened to your face? Those bandages look fresh. Did something... blow up in your face?"

The butler bristled. "Watch your tongue, Miss Stone!"

"I'm just expressing my concern," Amelia laughed, though her eyes were cold as ice. "It looks painful."

"Enough," Griffin's voice was raspy, like gravel grinding together. He turned his head slowly to glare at her. "Where is Lance?"

"Lance?" Amelia tilted her head, feigning thought. "Oh, my dear cousin. Yes, he was here."

Griffin's hand tightened around the brooch until the metal dug into his palm.

"He came to visit my mother a few days ago," Amelia said casually, checking her nails. "But he left today"

"You're lying," Griffin hissed.

"Why would I lie?" Amelia sighed dramatically. "To be honest, it was a pitiful sight. When he arrived, he was covered in blood and bruises. If I hadn't taken him in and treated him, he would have died in a ditch somewhere."

Griffin flinched. The thought of Lance—his own blood—being broken and battered clearly struck a nerve.

"He told me the injuries were your doing," Amelia added, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "He said you beat him within an inch of his life."

"That is slander!" the butler shouted, stepping forward. "Master Griffin would never—"

"Oh, please," Amelia cut him off with a sharp look. "Griffin kicked his own aunt Lyra out of the family. Beating up her son seems perfectly in character, doesn't it?"

Before the butler could retort, the wail of sirens cut through the air. Two police cruisers pulled up, lights flashing.

A stern-faced officer stepped out and approached the group. "We received a report of a kidnapping."

“They are holding my cousin inside,” Griffin said, pointing a shaking finger at the Stone house. “I want you to go in there and get him.”

The officer looked at Amelia. “Ma’am, we need to search the premises.”

Amelia raised an eyebrow. “Do you have a warrant?”

The officer paused. “Given the urgency of a missing person report, we can conduct a search to ensure safety. We will file the paperwork later.”

“So, no warrant,” Amelia stated flatly. “You want to barge into a private residence based on the word of a man who is known for his vendetta against my family? That sounds like an abuse of power, officer.”

The officer shifted uncomfortably. He turned back to Griffin. “Mr. Drake, are you absolutely certain he is inside? If we go in and find nothing, this could be considered harassment.”

Griffin looked at his butler. The butler swallowed hard. He hadn’t seen Lance, but their intelligence said Lance had entered and never left. It had to be true.

“He is inside,” the butler insisted, though his voice wavered slightly. “She is just stalling.”

Amelia watched them for a moment, letting the silence stretch. Then, she smiled—a dangerous, predatory smile.

“Fine,” Amelia said, turning to the stone-faced guards at the gate. “Open it.”

The heavy iron gates groaned as they began to swing inward.

“The police can come in,” Amelia announced, stepping out of her car and smoothing her coat. “Griffin and his lackeys can come in too. I have nothing to hide. I am not afraid of anyone searching my home!

She gestured grandly toward the sprawling estate

“Come and see for yourselves, the challenged, her eyes locking onto Griffiris. “See if I have kidnapped or detained my dear cousin?

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 406[
1,643 words]

(Author’s POV)

The moment Amelia swung the gates open, the Drake family butler felt the first cold finger of doubt crawl up his spine.

She was too calm.

Too cooperative.

He glanced at Griffin, who sat rigid in the backseat, jaw set with stubborn fury. Griffin didn't look at him. He just gave a single sharp nod.

"Go," Griffin ordered through clenched teeth. "Get in there."

The butler swallowed hard. He had no choice now. They had come this far. He couldn't back down in front of the police.

"Move," he barked at the officers, squaring his shoulders and following Amelia's white limousine through the gates.

He just hoped to the moon that Lance was actually inside.

Amelia parked in the stone-paved garage and stepped out, smoothing her coat. She led the group through the landscaped courtyard toward the East House.

The front door opened before she even reached it. Seraphina stood in the doorway, her amber eyes wide with anxiety. Her hands were clasped tightly in front of her.

"Amelia-" Seraphina's voice was barely above a whisper.

"Mom." Amelia reached her immediately, taking both of her mother's hands and squeezing them firmly.

"It's fine," she said quietly. "Trust me. Nothing is going to happen."

Seraphina exhaled shakily but nodded.

Amelia turned back toward the waiting group. Her eyes landed on Butler Paul, who stood at attention near the entrance.

"Paul," she said crisply, "please escort the officers through every room. Give them full access. They're looking for my cousin Lance."

Butler Paul gave a composed nod. "Of course, Miss Stone."

The officers filed into the villa, their footsteps echoing on the marble floors.

Amelia glanced back at Griffin. He stood at the edge of the courtyard, slightly apart from the others. His face was tight with pain beneath those bandages. Moving clearly cost him.

He wasn't going to follow the search team inside.

Good.

Inside her mind, her wolf Ava let out a low, contemptuous snort. *Foolish Alpha. He walked straight into this himself.*

Amelia agreed completely.

She turned back to Seraphina and linked their arms together. "It's freezing out here," she said brightly.

"Let's go inside and wait."

She steered her mother through the front door without a single glance back at Griffin.

Let him stand alone in the cold.

An hour passed.

The search team reassembled in the courtyard, their expressions flat and professional. The lead officer approached the butler with a neutral look.

"No one matching the description was found on the premises," the officer reported. "All rooms have been checked."

The butler's face fell. He stared at the officer, then at the villa, then back again.

He had nothing to say.

Griffin's expression shifted from tense anticipation to something dark and dangerous. The color drained from his face, leaving it pale and stiff beneath the bandages.

The front door opened. Amelia stepped out, a slight smile playing at the corner of her lips.

"Nothing?" she said, pressing one hand to her chest in mock astonishment. "How surprising."

She let the sarcasm hang in the air for a beat.

"Of course you found nothing," she continued, her voice sharpening. "Because I haven't illegally detained anyone."

She reached into her coat pocket and pulled out her phone. She held it up with a calm, deliberate smile.

“I called the police too, by the way.”

The officers from the first wave exchanged glances.

“You reported a crime?” the lead officer asked, frowning.

“Yes,” Amelia said simply. “I reported Griffin Drake for violent assault against my cousin Lance.”

A second police vehicle turned through the open gates and rolled to a stop in the courtyard. Two more officers stepped out.

Amelia walked toward them, unhurried and composed.

“Thank you for coming,” she said. She turned back toward the group and raised her phone. “I have evidence.”

She pulled up the footage on her phone and handed it to the senior officer.

The first clip was from a dashcam. Lance stumbled into the frame, his face swollen and split, his clothes torn and dark with blood. He could barely walk.

The second clip was interior security footage from inside the villa. It showed Amelia in her medical room, carefully applying moonshade herb compresses to Lance’s wounds. Her movements were methodical and gentle. There was no coercion. No violence.

Then came the audio recording.

Lance’s voice, hoarse and trembling, filled the courtyard.

“Griffin did this. He beat me. I’m not lying. He beat me himself.”*

The officers listened without a word. The courtyard went completely silent.

(Amelia’s POV)

I watched the officers’ faces as Lance’s voice played through the speaker.

Shock. Then grim recognition.

One of the newer officers looked up from the phone with sharp eyes. “Miss Stone, where is your cousin now?”

“He left this morning for medical care at another location,” I said. “He was afraid to stay. Given what you’ve just heard, I think that’s understandable.”

I turned to face Griffin directly.

“I’ve presented three pieces of evidence,” I said. “Dashcam footage of Lance’s injuries. Security footage proving I treated him, not harmed him. And a recorded statement from Lance himself confirming who hurt him.”

I kept my voice even, but I let my eyes say everything else.

“I’d like to formally request that the police take Griffin Drake into custody for questioning.”

Griffin’s face had gone the color of old ash. He stared at the phone in the officer’s hand like he wanted to smash it.

“That recording is fabricated,” he said, his voice tight and controlled. “She forced him to say that. Lance was under duress.”

“Under duress,” I repeated. “Interesting theory,”

“I want to see five days of your security footage,” Griffin said, his eyes cutting to me. “All of it. Every camera in this house. Then we’ll see what really happened.”

I tilted my head slightly.

“Actually, that’s a reasonable request,” I said pleasantly. “I keep very thorough records. It’s a habit I developed after being framed one too many times.”

I glanced at the officers.

“However, if we’re pulling security footage,” I added, “I’d like to formally request the same from the Drake estate. If Lance went missing under suspicious circumstances, we should check where he was last seen, shouldn’t we? Drake Pack’s cameras should show us exactly what happened to him before he arrived here.”

The butler’s face turned an ugly shade of red.

“You conniving little-”

“I beg your pardon?” I looked at him with wide, innocent eyes.

“She’s twisting everything!” the butler exploded, his composure shattering. He stepped forward, jabbing a finger in my direction. “This woman is a manipulative, scheming-”

“I’d like to add slander to the list of charges,” I said calmly, turning to the officer beside me. “Please note that the Drake family butler has just publicly defamed me in front of witnesses and law enforcement.”

The officer nodded, already writing in his notepad.

The butler sputtered, his mouth opening and closing like a fish.

The senior officer stepped between us and addressed Griffin directly. “Mr. Drake, given the evidence

presented today, there is sufficient grounds to bring you in for questioning regarding the assault allegations. We’ll also need you and your butler to accompany us to the station.”

Griffin went very still.

Then something shifted behind his eyes. The cold calculation of a man who had spent his whole life getting what he wanted through intimidation.

He looked straight at me.

“If anything happens to my cousin,” he said, his voice dropping to something low and vicious, “I will make every single person in the Stone family pay. Do you understand me? Blood for blood.”

The officer beside him immediately stepped forward. “Mr. Drake. That is a direct threat. I strongly advise you to stop talking.”

Griffin didn’t look at the officer. He kept his eyes on me.

I held his gaze without blinking.

The officer placed a firm hand on Griffin’s arm. “Sir. Now.”

The officers also turned to me.

“Miss Stone, we’ll need you to come to the station as well to provide your statement and submit the security footage for official review.”

“Of course,” I said immediately. “Happy to cooperate.”

I glanced at Griffin. He was watching me with barely contained fury.

“Paul,” I called over my shoulder, “please have someone pull and copy the last five days of security footage from every camera on the property.”

“Right away,” Butler Paul replied.

Griffin’s jaw tightened. He turned to his butler and spoke in a low, sharp undertone. “You go with them.

Watch everything they pull. Don’t let them touch anything.”

The butler, still red-faced and fuming, gave a stiff nod.

I shrugged. “Fine by me. I have nothing to hide.”

A few minutes later, the footage was packaged and ready. Griffin fell into step behind the officers, moving stiffly. Every step looked like it cost him.

I went back inside briefly to find Seraphina waiting in the hallway.

Her eyes were full of questions.

“Is it really alright?” she asked quietly. “Going to the police station with him?”

“Yes,” I said, and I meant it. I squeezed her hands once. “Trust me, Mom. This is exactly where I want to be.”

She searched my face for a long moment, then exhaled and nodded.

I kissed her on the cheek, grabbed my bag, and walked out to the waiting police vehicle.

(Amelia’s POV)

The police car was warm inside, but the atmosphere was anything but.

Griffin sat across from me, the butler wedged in beside him. The bandages wrapped thick around Griffin’s

forehead looked even more pronounced under the harsh interior lighting.

I settled into my seat, crossed my ankles, and looked over at him with an expression of polite concern.

“Griffin,” I began, keeping my voice soft and conversational, “you never answered my question earlier.”

He didn’t respond.

“How did you get those injuries?” I pressed. “That looks like it really hurt. Were you in some kind of explosion?”

The tendons in Griffin's neck went rigid. Beneath the bandages, I could see the faint pulse of a vein jumping at his temple.

"Are you done?" he said, each word forced out from between clenched teeth.

"I'm just worried about you," I said, and let a small smile settle on my lips. "Especially given the timing. Octavia was just taken to the police station not long ago, just like your uncle Carlos before her. And now here you are, injured this badly, being taken in yourself."

I tilted my head slightly.

"That really is a lot of bad luck for one family."

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 407[1,594 words]

(Amelia's POV)

Griffin's face darkened with every word I spoke.

His jaw tightened. His nostrils flared. The vein at his temple pulsed visibly beneath the bandages.

Then he snapped. "Amelia." His voice dropped to something low and vicious. "Don't think just because we're in a police car, I won't dare kill you."

I looked at him.

Then I let out a soft, almost sympathetic sigh.

"But Griffin," I said gently, "even if we weren't in a police car, you still couldn't kill me."

I tilted my head slightly, letting the words settle.

"Besides," I added, "the Drake family's situation right now is really quite dire. The way things are going, the whole family is heading toward complete ruin."

Inside my mind, Ava let out a bright, contemptuous snicker.

Look at him. All that rage and nowhere to put it.

Griffin's eyes went wide. Every muscle in his body went rigid.

"Amelia!"

His voice exploded through the small car cabin, raw with fury and something that sounded uncomfortably close to desperation.

The officer in the front passenger seat turned around sharply.

“Enough!” he said, his tone flat and authoritative. “Miss Stone, please stop provoking the suspect.”

“Of course, Officer.” I straightened immediately and folded my hands in my lap. “My apologies.”

My expression shifted into perfect, cooperative politeness.

Griffin stared at me.

I stared straight ahead.

Ava was still laughing.

The police station came into view about twenty minutes later.

The moment the vehicle rolled to a stop, I stepped out and left Griffin behind without a second glance. I pulled out my phone and typed a quick message to Theodore.

His reply came almost immediately.

Already here. Look to your left.

I looked up.

Marcus was pushing Theodore’s wheelchair across the pavement toward me, moving with his usual efficient stride. Theodore sat with one arm resting on the armrest, his golden eyes already fixed on my face.

“You’re here,” I said, genuinely surprised.

“Victor’s shipment situation,” Theodore said simply. “The police needed my statement regarding the cargo seizure. I finished about twenty minutes ago.”

He glanced past me toward the police vehicle, where Griffin was being escorted out by two officers.

“That’s an interesting sight,” Theodore said, his brow lifting slightly. “Griffin Drake walking into a police station. Voluntarily?”

“Not exactly voluntarily,” I said.

I gave him the short version. Griffin had reported me to the police, intending to use the search of the Stone villa to expose Lance's location. Instead, the search had turned up nothing.

And I had used the opportunity to present three pieces of evidence proving Griffin had beaten Lance into a near-critical state.

Now Griffin was the one being brought in for questioning.

Theodore was quiet for a moment.

Then he laughed.

It was a low, genuine sound, and it transformed his entire face for just a second.

"A perfect reversal," he said.

"I thought so," I agreed.

We stood there for a moment, the cold night air around us, and I felt something warm settle in my chest.

Then Theodore's expression shifted back to its usual composed calm.

"The family elders have already heard about the cargo incident," he said. "I need to take Victor back to the Crimson Pack House and report the situation to the Alpha King directly."

I nodded. "Go. I'll be fine from here."

He held my gaze for one more second.

"Don't let them keep you too long," he said quietly.

Then Marcus turned the wheelchair, and they moved away into the evening.

I watched them go for just a moment.

Then I turned and walked into the police station.

The investigation took hours.

The officers were thorough. I cooperated with everything, answering every question calmly and providing my security footage without hesitation.

Eventually, the lead officer came back with the results of their review.

“Miss Stone,” he said, setting a folder on the table between us, “the surveillance footage from your property confirms that Lance Drake was brought to the Stone villa. However, the footage also clearly shows that he was transported away from the premises early this morning.”

I nodded. “That’s correct. I arranged for him to receive proper medical care elsewhere. Given the severity of his injuries and the threats made against him, I felt it was the safest option.”

The officer’s expression remained neutral. “The footage also confirms your treatment of his injuries. There is no evidence of any unlawful detention.”

From the room next door, I could faintly hear Griffin’s voice rising.

He was not taking this well.

The officer continued. “However, we also pulled surveillance from the Drake Pack territory to verify the timeline of Lance’s injuries.”

I kept my expression steady.

“The footage shows Lance leaving Drake territory without any visible external injuries,” the officer said.

I absorbed that.

So Lance had been careful. He had left the Drake estate without showing a single mark. Whatever Griffin had done to him, it had happened somewhere the cameras couldn’t see, or the footage had already been cleared.

A flicker of frustration moved through me.

I pushed it down.

Careful man, I thought. *Careful, reckless, complicated man.*

The officer closed the folder. “Without footage of the assault itself, and without Lance present to give a formal statement, we cannot directly attribute his injuries to Griffin Drake at this time.”

I exhaled slowly.

“I understand,” I said.

It wasn’t the outcome I had wanted. But it wasn’t a loss either.

Griffin was still here. Still being held. Still being questioned. And without Lance's location, there was nothing he could do about it.

I was released just before eight o'clock.

Griffin was not.

The last thing I heard as I walked out was an officer informing him that until Lance Drake's whereabouts could be confirmed, he would remain in the station for continued questioning.

I stepped out into the cold night air and felt the tension in my shoulders ease just slightly.

The East House was warm and bright when I got home.

Jaxon and Seraphina were both in the living room, sitting close together on the sofa. The moment the front door opened, Seraphina was on her feet.

"Amelia." She crossed the room quickly and took both of my hands. Her eyes searched my face. "Are you alright? Did they find anything? Did they figure out that you were the one who-"

"Mom." I squeezed her hands firmly. "Breathe."

She exhaled shakily.

"I'm fine," I said. "And no, they didn't find anything that pointed back to me."

I sat down across from Jaxon, who was watching me with steady grey eyes.

"The relevant surveillance footage has been wiped," I said. "I had someone handle it before I even walked into the station. The police have no trail leading back to me."

Seraphina pressed a hand to her chest. "Thank the moon."

"But the evidence I submitted against Griffin is legitimate," I continued. "The dashcam footage, the security recording of me treating Lance, and Lance's audio statement. All of it is real. The police just can't prove Griffin was the one who caused the injuries because Lance was careful enough not to leave any visible marks before he left Drake territory."

Jaxon leaned forward slightly. "And Lance himself? What do we do with him going forward? Do we keep him where he is indefinitely?"

"For now, yes," I said.

I thought back to Griffin's face in that police car. The fury. The desperation underneath it.

“Griffin was rattled today,” I said. “More rattled than I expected. He came all the way here with a search warrant, injured, barely able to walk, just to find Lance. That tells me Lance matters to him in a way that goes beyond family loyalty.”

I met Jaxon’s eyes.

“That makes Lance valuable. He might be the one card that can force Griffin’s hand when we need it most.”

Jaxon studied me for a moment. Then he gave a slow, approving nod.

Seraphina looked between us both, then finally let out a long breath.

“Alright,” she said quietly. “Alright. Then let’s eat. Agnes left dinner warming in the kitchen.”

She reached out and touched my cheek briefly.

“You look exhausted,” she said.

“I’m fine,” I said again. But this time I smiled when I said it.

The three of us moved toward the dining room together, and for a few hours, the weight of everything lifted just slightly.

(Theodore’s POV)

The great hall of the Crimson Pack House was never a comfortable place.

But tonight it felt particularly suffocating.

Alpha King Gideon sat in the main chair at the head of the room, his white hair and piercing golden eyes giving him the look of something ancient and immovable. The authority he radiated wasn’t loud. It didn’t need to be.

It simply pressed down on everything in the room like a physical weight.

Victor sat on the sofa to the right, his body pitched forward, elbows on his knees. His eyes were sharp and predatory, fixed on the middle distance with the focused intensity of a wolf that had already decided on its target.

I sat beside him, my face perfectly still.

Gideon broke the silence.

“The African non-ferrous metals shipment,” he said, his voice low and deliberate. “Seized by authorities after prohibited materials were discovered during inspection. I’ve been informed.”

He looked between us both.

“What exactly were the prohibited materials?”

Victor’s jaw tightened. “Someone deliberately mixed radioactive substances into the ore shipment.”

The fury in his voice was barely contained.

Gideon’s brow furrowed deeply. “What remediation steps have been taken?”

“We’ve begun pulling surveillance from the mining site and the logistics chain, Victor said. “We’re cross-referencing every anomaly in the transport records.”

Then his eyes shifted.

He turned to look directly forward, his gaze hardening into something sharp and vicious.

“Grandfather.” His voice rose. “I came here today to say this clearly. I want to formally investigate

Theodore’s communication records and financial movements over the past three months.”

He let that land.

“I strongly suspect Theodore is the one who orchestrated this from behind the scenes.”

Inside my mind, Logan let out a single low, cold laugh.

This foolish cousin of ours, Logan said. *Baring his throat to the wrong wolf entirely.*

I said nothing.

I simply looked at Victor with a flat, expressionless gaze.

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 408[
1,546 words]

(Author’s POV)

The sound of porcelain hitting wood cracked through the great hall like a whip.

Gideon had set his teacup down.

Not gently.

“Enough.” The Alpha King’s voice was low, but it filled every corner of the room. “Victor. What you just said is absurd.”

Victor flinched.

“You’re telling me,” Gideon continued, his grey eyes sharp and cold, “that when our family’s overseas business suffers a major blow, your first instinct is to point a finger at your own cousin? You want to investigate Theodore?”

Victor’s mouth opened.

Then closed.

He said nothing.

The silence stretched for a long, uncomfortable moment.

Gideon stared at him with the kind of patience that wasn’t patience at all—it was controlled contempt.

Victor looked down at his hands.

But the fury in his chest hadn’t gone anywhere. After a few seconds, he pressed his lips together and lowered his voice.

“Even if Theodore didn’t personally arrange for the shipment to be seized,” he muttered, “he can’t be completely disconnected from it.”

He turned his head and shot a hard, venomous glare at Theodore.

Theodore didn’t react. He simply sat with his hands resting in his lap, his expression perfectly calm, his golden eyes fixed somewhere in the middle distance.

Gideon’s brow furrowed. “And what exactly do you mean by that?”

Victor let out a short, bitter sound. “Grandfather, you know exactly what I mean. You’re just choosing not to see it because you’ve always favored him.”

Gideon’s jaw tightened.

But before he could respond, Theodore spoke.

“I’ll explain for him,” Theodore said.

His tone was even. Almost helpful.

“Victor believes that I may have offended someone powerful within the werewolf council. And that by doing so, I’ve dragged the pack into the fallout.”

Victor’s head snapped up. His eyes went wide.

“That’s-” He pointed a finger. “Yes. Exactly that.”

He pushed forward in his seat, his voice rising with barely contained anger.

“Amelia has been tearing through Northgate City like a storm. She publicly exposed the backers behind the Drake family. Everyone in the capital knows about it now.”

He spread his hands, as if the logic were obvious.

“She only dares to act that recklessly because she has Theodore behind her. Because she knows the Crimson name will protect her.”

He stood up slightly, leaning toward Gideon.

“Grandfather, think about it. The Crimson family and the Drake family have had tensions for years. But we’ve always maintained a surface peace. Why? Because we respect the power of whoever is backing the Drakes from the shadows.”

His voice hardened.

“And now Amelia has kicked that hornet’s nest. The seized shipment is a message. It’s a warning aimed directly at us.”

The room went quiet again.

Gideon turned to the head butler standing near the wall and made a small gesture. The butler moved forward immediately, pouring a fresh cup of tea and setting it in front of Victor.

“Drink,” Gideon said.

Victor sat back down, breathing hard.

Theodore let the silence settle for exactly two seconds.

Then he tilted his head slightly and said, almost pleasantly, “If you’ve already figured out that the Drake family’s backer is behind this, why stop there? Why not think a little deeper and find the actual root of the problem?”

Victor’s eyes narrowed.

“What are you implying?”

“I’m not implying anything,” Theodore said. “I’m stating it plainly.”

He shifted slightly in his wheelchair, his posture unhurried.

“Regardless of who is fanning the flames from the outside, the reason this shipment was seized comes down to one thing. Negligence. Specifically, yours and your father’s.”

Victor’s face went red.

Theodore continued without pause.

“For the past several months, you and Magnus have poured every ounce of your energy into the inheritance competition. The overseas operations in the southern region have been left unattended. You gave your enemies a gap wide enough to drive a cart through:”

He looked at Victor directly.

“Since my leg injury kept me confined three months ago, you’ve been returning to the capital far too frequently. You’ve barely spent any time overseeing the foreign business accounts. Someone noticed that.

And they used it.”

“That’s-” Victor slammed his palm on the armrest. “You’re deflecting. You’re twisting this to avoid responsibility.”

“I’m discussing facts,” Theodore said simply. “A serious mistake was made. Before anyone looks outward for someone to blame, the first step should be to look inward. That’s not deflection. That’s basic accountability.”

Victor shot to his feet.

“The real problem is Amelia!” he snapped. “She doesn’t know when to stop. She doesn’t understand the weight of what she’s stirring up.”

He stabbed a finger toward Theodore.

“Break the engagement. Now. Issue a public statement. Distance the Crimson name from the Stone family entirely. That’s the only way to fix this.”

The words landed in the room like stones dropped into still water.

Theodore looked at him.

Then he laughed.

It was a single, quiet sound. Not warm. Not amused. It was the kind of laugh that made the air in the room feel slightly colder.

“Victor,” he said, “you really are incapable of seeing beyond the length of your own arm.”

Victor’s face twisted. “You-”

“You want to talk about who’s causing losses for this family?” Theodore’s voice didn’t rise. It didn’t need to. “Let’s talk about that. If the Crimson family’s future were placed in your hands, how long do you think it would take before the power behind the Drake family had you on your knees?”

He let that image sit.

“You’d be bowing your head and baring your throat like a submissive Omega within a year. Maybe less.”

Victor’s hands clenched into fists at his sides. “And you think you can do better? You think you can actually beat whoever is backing the Drakes?”

“If I didn’t believe that,” Theodore said, “then why would I have allowed Amelia to move the way she has?”

The silence that followed was sharp.

Victor stared at him.

Then, slowly, the realization crossed his face.

“You-” His voice dropped. “You planned this. From the beginning. You deliberately let her do it.”

His expression shifted from rage into something uglier.

“You used someone else’s blade. You used our family’s assets as a chess piece, and you used Amelia as the hand holding the knife.”

Theodore's expression didn't change.

"What I did," he said calmly, "was allow an opportunity to develop naturally. The gap in your management is what gave the enemy room to act. That isn't my doing."

He paused.

"And while we're being honest with each other—you haven't forgotten, have you? What you did to my father.

Kidnapping him. Using him as leverage against me."

The color drained slightly from Victor's face.

"I haven't settled that account yet," Theodore said. "So as far as I'm concerned, we're both competing on

our own merits. That's how it should be."

Victor turned away from Theodore.

He turned to Gideon instead, his voice cracking slightly at the edges.

"Grandfather. Do you hear this? He's using the family's assets as sacrificial pieces. He's gambling with everything we've built."

Gideon had been silent throughout the exchange.

Now he looked at Theodore.

His expression was unreadable, but his eyes were sharp and searching.

"Theodore," he said. "I want a direct answer. Do you genuinely believe you can handle the Drake family and whoever stands behind them?"

Theodore met his grandfather's gaze without flinching.

"Before," he said, "I wouldn't have made that claim. The risk would have been too high."

He paused for one breath.

"But with Amelia, I have no doubt."

The words were quiet. Absolute.

Gideon studied him for a long moment.

Then he exhaled slowly through his nose and leaned back in his chair.

“Victor.”

Victor turned immediately, hope flickering in his eyes.

“Go home,” Gideon said. “Tonight. Start working on the remediation for the seized shipment. I want a full report within forty-eight hours.”

Victor’s mouth fell open. “But—Grandfather, you can’t just—”

“That’s enough.” Gideon’s voice dropped back to that low, immovable register. “We’re done here.”

Victor stood there for one more second.

Then he turned and walked out.

As he passed Theodore’s wheelchair, he slowed his steps just slightly.

“You and Amelia,” he said under his breath, his voice barely above a whisper, vicious and low. “You’ll crash and burn together. Both of you.”

Theodore didn’t look at him.

Victor walked out of the great hall.

The fury didn’t cool on the walk home. It built.

By the time Victor crossed through the main gate of the Crimson estate, his hands were still clenched at his sides, his jaw locked tight.

He moved through the front courtyard at a sharp pace, the gravel crunching under his boots.

Then he stopped.

There was a figure standing in the shadows near the far wall.

Still, Completely still.

Mason. Victor recognized the silhouette immediately. He stood there for a moment, something complicated moving through him—not quite guilt, not quite hesitation. Just a flicker of something he didn’t have a name for.

But the anger was still there. Burning.

And as it burned, it shifted into something else. Something colder and more deliberate.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

He dialed Vivian's number.

She picked up on the second ring.

"Victor-"

"You saw it, didn't you?" he said, loudly enough that his voice carried into the still night air. "Grandfather sided with Theodore again. As always."

He started walking again, slowly now, his tone shifting into something that sounded like wounded indignation.

"Theodore really does know exactly how to work the Alpha King. He's spent years perfecting it. Every move calculated. Every word chosen."

He let out a short, bitter sound.

"He's fought so hard for that inheritance position. Done whatever it takes. Swallowed every humiliation."

He paused. "Even the fact that his mother was driven to her death—indirectly, by Grandfather's own hand—and Theodore just... choked it all down. Acted like it never happened."

A long, heavy sigh.

"I just feel sorry for his mother," Victor said. "She deserved better than that."

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 409[
1,207 words]

(Victor's POV)

The phone was still pressed to his ear.

Victor kept his voice steady, kept the wounded tone in place.

But his eyes drifted sideways.

There—in the shadow near the garden wall—a shape shifted.

Then disappeared.

Mason was gone.

Victor's expression didn't change for another three full seconds. Then, slowly, the corner of his mouth curved upward.

He lowered his voice into the receiver. "I'll tell you more when I'm back inside."

He hung up.

Vivian was waiting the moment he stepped through the door.

"What did you say to her?" she demanded, falling into step beside him. "And what happened with the seized shipment? Grandfather didn't say a single word about holding Theodore responsible-"

"Sit down," Victor said.

She did, but barely. Her hands twisted together in her lap, her expression tight with frustration.

"Gideon let Theodore walk away clean," she said. "He let Amelia's entire mess go without comment. Do you understand what that means for us? The family meeting is coming. If the shipment loss gets pinned on our side-"

"It will," Victor said flatly.

Vivian went pale. "Then we're losing ground. Every day, we're losing more-"

"I know." Victor lowered himself onto the sofa. His voice was calm now. Almost detached. "Think about it.

That three-month deadline Grandfather set—who do you think it was actually for?"

Vivian blinked. "For the inheritance competition. For all of us-"

"No." Victor shook his head slowly. "It was for Theodore and Amelia,"

Vivian's mouth closed.

"If Amelia manages to heal Theodore's leg within those three months, Victor said, "Theodore's position as heir becomes untouchable. Completely locked in. Grandfather will have his proof. His justification. His clean conclusion."

The color drained further from Vivian's face.

“Then the family meeting-”

“Will be a formality.” Victor’s jaw tightened. “Our window is closing. Every day that passes, it gets smaller.”

Vivian shot to her feet. “Then we have to do something. We can’t just sit here and watch him-”

“I already did something,” Victor said.

His tone was quiet. Satisfied.

Vivian stopped. She stared at him.

—

(Victor’s POV)

Victor leaned back against the sofa cushions, his posture relaxed now, the tension from the great hall finally bleeding out of his shoulders.

“Mason,” he said, “lives inside the Crimson Moon Pack House.”

Vivian’s brow furrowed. “What does that have to do with-”

“Everything I said on that phone call just now,” Victor said, “I said it for him.”

A beat of silence.

Then Vivian’s eyes went wide.

“You knew he was listening.”

“I suspected.” Victor’s mouth curved again. “And I confirmed it when I saw him leave.”

Vivian pressed a hand over her mouth, then let out a short, disbelieving laugh.

“The story about Theodore’s mother,” she said slowly. “You planted it.”

“Every word.” Victor tilted his head. “Theodore’s mother was driven to her death. Indirectly, by Grandfather’s choices. Mason knows that history. Everyone who was in this house during that time knows it.”

He spread his hands.

“All I did was remind him. Out loud. With feeling.”

Vivian sank back into her chair, her expression shifting from anxiety into something brighter.

“You didn’t have to lift a finger,” she said. “You just talked.”

“The best moves never require your hands,” Victor said.

Vivian exhaled. “And if Mason actually acts on it? If he goes after Grandfather-”

“Then one of two things happens.” Victor’s voice was even. Clinical. “Either Grandfather survives, and Theodore is implicated in the chaos surrounding the attack. Or Grandfather doesn’t survive.”

He paused.

“Either way, Theodore is finished.”

Vivian was quiet for a moment.

“He’s been so confident,” she muttered. “Sitting there in that chair, talking about taking down the Drake family and whoever backs them. Like it’s already done.”

“Let him talk,” Victor said. “All that confidence, all those grand plans—none of it means anything if the foundation collapses underneath him.”

He picked up his glass from the side table and took a slow sip.

“Theodore thinks he’s the one playing chess,” he said. “He hasn’t noticed that someone else already moved a piece.”

The video call connected on the third ring.

Theodore’s face appeared on the screen, and Amelia immediately noticed that he looked—comfortable. Relaxed in a way he rarely was after family meetings.

“You seem like you’re in a good mood,” she said.

“Relatively,” he said.

“So?” She pulled her knees up onto the bed, settling in. “What did Gideon say about the Africa situation?”

“Not much,” Theodore said. “He didn’t need to. Victor said enough for everyone.”

“Victor.”

“He was furious.” There was a faint, dry amusement in Theodore’s voice. “He tried to make it your fault,

naturally. Argued that you’ve been too reckless, that you’ve stirred up enemies, that the seized shipment is blowback from your actions against the Drake family.”

Amelia raised an eyebrow. “And?”

“And it didn’t work.” Theodore’s expression was composed, almost serene. “I told him plainly—before he points fingers at anyone else, he should examine his own negligence. He and Magnus abandoned the southern operations for months. They handed the enemy an opening.”

“How did he take that?”

“Poorly.”

Amelia pressed her lips together to keep from smiling.

“I also told him,” Theodore continued, his tone perfectly even, “that if the Crimson family’s future were placed in his hands, he’d be bowing his head to the Drake family’s backers within a year. Maybe less.”

Amelia lost the battle with her smile. A laugh escaped before she could stop it.

“Theodore,” she said, “that’s genuinely vicious.”

“It’s accurate,” he said simply.

“It’s both,” she said. “That’s what makes it so good.”

(Amelia’s POV)

Theodore’s expression shifted slightly. “What about your side? The Drake family.”

“Griffin was detained tonight,” Amelia said. “The interrogation is ongoing. They’re still tracking Lance.”

“Lance.” Theodore said the name with a particular flatness.

“I know,” Amelia said. “The audacity of it. He actually thought a charm attempt would work on me.”

“The man has never encountered a real obstacle in his life,” Theodore said. “He assumed the same tactics

that worked on frightened girls would work on you.”

“He didn’t account for the fact that I have you,” Amelia said.

Theodore looked at her through the screen.

“No,” he said. “He didn’t.”

The air between them shifted—not dramatically, just a degree or two warmer.

“You know,” Amelia said, tilting her head, “if you put half as much effort into actually distracting me as Lance put into his little scheme, I might be genuinely in trouble.”

Theodore was quiet for exactly one second.

Then he reached up, deliberately, and loosened the collar of his robe.

The fabric fell open just enough.

“In that case,” he said, his voice dropping slightly, “I’ll make more of an effort. For the sake of raising your standards.”

Amelia stared at the screen.

“I have material for tonight’s dreams now,” she announced.

Amelia’s eyes opened.

Ceiling. White. Motionless.

She lay there for a full ten seconds.

“Unbelievable,” she said to no one.

She came downstairs for breakfast with the energy of someone who had been personally wronged by the universe.

Jaxon looked up from his coffee. Seraphina set down her fork.

“What happened?” Seraphina asked immediately.

“Nothing,” Amelia said, dropping into her chair.

“You look-”

“I had a dream that didn’t finish,” Amelia said. “It’s fine. I’m fine. I’m just mourning it slightly.”

Jaxon and Seraphina exchanged a glance.

“If it’s a relationship issue-” Jaxon began carefully.

“It’s not.” Amelia picked up her fork. “Everything is fine with Theodore. I’m just-” She paused. “Lance still hasn’t been caught, right? It would almost be convenient. I could use something to take my frustration out on.”

Seraphina let out a slow breath and visibly relaxed.

“I was worried for nothing,” she murmured.

“Mom.” Amelia turned toward her. “I need your help with something actually important. Saturday evening,

Theodore and I have plans.” She leaned forward slightly. “Help me figure out what to wear.”

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 410[1,178 words]

(Amelia’s POV)

The moment the words “help me pick something to wear” left my mouth, Seraphina’s entire face changed.

Her eyes lit up like I’d handed her a gift.

“Leave it to me,” she said immediately, setting down her fork with the decisive energy of someone who had been waiting years for exactly this assignment.

Jaxon looked at her, then at me, then quietly returned to his coffee with the expression of a man who understood he was no longer relevant to this conversation.

After breakfast, I headed to the office.

Anya was already at the door, practically vibrating.

“Great news,” she said, following me inside. “Wayne’s image reversal is complete. Yesterday’s operations worked. The heat is enormous—he’s trending on every major platform this morning.”

“And Gale Entertainment?”

“They made an official announcement.” Anya pulled up her tablet. “They’re replacing the female lead with one of their own artists and holding a launch ceremony today. They’re pushing forward with *The Rising Storm*.”

So they were accelerating.

I’d expected that.

“What about Jasper?” Anya asked, her voice shifting into something more hopeful. “Since Wayne’s situation turned around—does that mean Jasper’s the same?”

“Yes,” I said simply.

Anya’s eyes went wide.

“Every piece of dirt on Jasper was fabricated,” I said. “A classic case of the guilty crying foul and turning the blame on the innocent.”

She stared at me for a moment, then let out a sound somewhere between a gasp and a laugh.

“Then *Treatment Diary* isn’t what people are saying it is,” she breathed. “It’s not a—”

“A problem artist dumping ground?” I raised an eyebrow. “No.”

“You knew all along.” She looked at me with something close to reverence. “You knew from the beginning

“This is the first project I’m putting my name on,” I said, keeping my voice even. “I have a reputation to protect. I’m not going to let anyone ruin it.”

Anya nodded, snapped out of her daze, and left with the focused energy of someone who had somewhere important to be.

I picked up my phone and dialed Director Liam.

He answered on the second ring.

“Casting,” I said. “Where are we?”

“Ahead of schedule, actually.” His voice was warm, unhurried. “Zoey’s spot is locked in, and the rest of the major roles are nearly confirmed. I’m estimating we finish the full cast by mid-month. Every role will be the right fit—I won’t compromise on that.”

“Good,” I said. “Mid-month is fine.”

I ended the call and set the phone down.

The numbers started arranging themselves in my head without me asking them to.

*Treatment Diary’s casting was running almost a month behind *The Rising Storm*. Director Liam was meticulous—a six-month shoot was the floor, not the ceiling. Gale Entertainment, on the other hand, would cut every corner available to them. Compress post-production. Rush the edit. Get it out three, maybe six months ahead of us.

With identical subject matter, the first one to air had the advantage.

Griffin’s original plan had been genuinely well-constructed. I could acknowledge that without it bothering me.

The flaw hadn’t been in the design. It had been in Arthur York’s execution—specifically, his decision to hand casting authority to Hugh, who had reached for the easiest targets without bothering to check whether the dirt on them was real.

Griffin had assumed that Wayne and Jasper were genuinely compromised. He hadn’t known they were victims.

His mistake.

I had already decided: *The Rising Storm* would fail. Not just stumble—fail completely. And when it did, Arthur York would be standing at a crossroads with no good options. Watch the company rot from the inside, or sell Jade’s shares at a loss and walk away.

I intended to make sure the second option felt like mercy by comparison.

(Author’s POV)

A knock broke the silence.

Anya opened the door. “Caleb Stone is here to see you.”

A beat.

“Send him in.”

The man who walked through the door looked like he hadn’t slept in days.

Caleb Stone—who had once carried himself with the loose, careless confidence of someone who’d never had to try very hard—looked hollowed out. His jaw was rough with stubble.

His hair was unwashed and uneven. The face that usually wore a smirk like a permanent accessory now just looked tired.

Adrian's betrayal had done that. The man who had hired someone to hurt Livia had been his own father.

Caleb stopped in front of the desk. He opened his mouth, and for a half second something old flickered in his expression—the reflex of a name he'd been about to say.

He stopped himself.

"Alpha," he said instead.

Amelia's posture didn't change visibly, but something in her settled.

Good, she thought. *As long as the Stone family stopped trying to claim kinship or reach for things that weren't theirs, she could deal with them like anyone else.*

"Sit," she said.

He did.

"I'm leaving the country," Caleb said. "Taking my mother with me." He looked at his hands for a moment, then back up. "A label overseas reached out. They're willing to cover the penalty clause and sign me directly. The new album revenue still goes to Gale Entertainment—that's already locked in—but I've made up my mind."

Amelia studied him for a moment.

"Congratulations," she said. "Your style was always better suited to international markets. The rock direction you've been pushing for the past two years—that's where the audience actually exists for it."

Caleb went still.

He had come in braced for indifference at best. Dismissal at worst.

He hadn't expected that.

Something complicated moved through him—something raw and genuine that he didn't quite have a name for. He almost said it out loud. Almost.

He swallowed it back. *She doesn't need to hear that. It would only be awkward.*

“There’s something else,” he said. “The Wayne and Zoey situation—the rumors about them. I know some of the background.” He paused. “If it ever becomes a problem for you, I can come back. Testify, make a statement, whatever you need.”

He heard himself say it and almost winced.

She has Jaxon. She has Theodore. She has the entire Crimson family behind her. What exactly are you offering, Caleb?

He didn’t take it back.

“When do you leave?” Amelia asked.

Something quick and involuntary moved through Caleb’s eyes.

“Day after tomorrow,” he said. “There’s a flight.”

He wanted to ask. The question was right there, sitting in his chest like a stone.

Will you come see us off?

He couldn’t make himself say it. The risk of her saying no—or worse, saying nothing—was too much.

“What about Ethan?” Amelia asked.

“We haven’t talked much lately.” Caleb leaned back slightly. “He’ll probably come find you himself. That’s my guess.”

A short silence.

Then Caleb exhaled, and when he spoke again, his voice was different. Quieter. Like something he’d been carrying for a long time had finally gotten too heavy to hold.

“One more thing.” He paused. “Amelia.”

Not *Alpha*.

Her name.

“I never said it properly.” He looked at her. “Thank you. For saving my mother.”

The words landed in the room.

Then, slowly, Caleb lowered his head.

Not a full bow. Just a tilt of his chin—the barest angle, enough to expose the side of his neck.

It was a gesture that required more than words. A surrender of posture. An acknowledgment that went deeper than language.

Amelia looked at him for a moment.

“I did it to clear my own name,” she said, her voice calm and even. “And to put Adrian behind bars. Saving your mother was incidental.”

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 411[932 words]

(Author’s POV)

After leaving Starlight Entertainment, Caleb headed straight to Gale Entertainment.

He had a contract to terminate. He’d arranged it through Zachary, the contact he’d originally brought in when he’d made the jump. Zachary had been the one to smooth the transition, to handle the paperwork and the introductions.

Caleb figured he at least owed him a conversation before walking out.

He hadn’t even made it through the front door before he spotted Zachary walking out of the HR department.

Zachary looked like a man who had just been handed a bill he couldn’t pay.

He didn’t bother with pleasantries.

“Don’t bother looking for me after this,” he said flatly. “I’ve been let go.”

Caleb stopped. “What?”

Zachary’s jaw tightened.

“You heard me.” He glanced back at the HR office, then away. “I recommended bringing you on board because I believed in the commercial value. Believed in the talent.” He let out a short, humorless breath.

“But you lost the head-to-head with Amelia, and then the Hugh scandal sent the stock into freefall. Arthur

went back on everything. The double salary – gone. Every promise he made – gone.”

He shook his head.

“Every employee who jumped ship from Starlight Entertainment has been cut. Most of us were still in

probationary periods. No severance. Nothing.”

Caleb said nothing.

Zachary swore under his breath, low and bitter and unrestrained.

“If I’d never left Starlight Entertainment,” he said. “If I’d stayed and worked under Amelia – I’d be in a completely different position right now.”

The words landed heavily.

Because they were exactly what Caleb had been thinking.

From inside the HR office came the muffled sounds of other former Starlight employees – raised voices, protests, someone demanding to speak to a manager. They were accusing Gale Entertainment of discarding them the moment they stopped being useful.

Zachary scoffed.

“Pointless,” he said. “Gale Entertainment is going under anyway. It’s only a matter of time.”

(Author’s POV)

Once he’d vented, Zachary seemed to notice Caleb was still standing there.

“What brought you in?” he asked.

“Contract termination,” Caleb said. “I’ve got an overseas label willing to sign me and cover the buyout.”

Zachary stared at him for a second.

Then he let out a dry laugh- not mocking, just exhausted.

“Arthur’s desperate to cut costs right now. He’ll probably be thrilled to let you go.” He looked Caleb over.

“An overseas label. So you’ve got somewhere to land.”

“Looks that way.”

Zachary shook his head slowly.

“You’ve got real talent, Caleb. Real luck too.” He said it without warmth, just as a statement of fact. “And you still managed to push away the one person who could have pulled you up.”

Caleb didn’t flinch. He’d already said that to himself a hundred times.

“As for me,” Zachary continued, “if I’d stayed at Starlight, my career would look nothing like this.”

He looked at Caleb one last time.

“Good luck,” he said. Then he turned and walked away.

The other dismissed employees filed out behind him, faces tight with anger and regret.

Someone in the crowd was talking about Starlight Entertainment’s rising stock price. How different things

might have been. How they’d made the wrong call at exactly the wrong moment.

Then someone recognized Caleb.

A beat of silence.

Then the whispers started.

Of everyone here, Caleb had fallen the furthest.

Born into a pack with money and a name. A famous face. A career that should have been untouchable.

And now cast out. His father behind bars. Having turned his back on the only lifeline he’d ever had.

Those words tore into him like claws.

He’d kept his composure in front of Amelia. He’d walked out of that office with his head straight and his voice level.

But standing here now, surrounded by people who had nothing left to lose, he couldn’t hold the pain at bay.

The regret hit him in waves.

If he'd gone with the family when they brought her home.

If he hadn't, in his blind and desperate cruelty, tampered with her brakes and tried to have her killed.

If he'd just been different.

But there were no second chances.

What was done was done.

(Author's POV)

He didn't let himself drown in it for long.

He pulled himself together and walked toward Arthur's office.

He raised his hand to knock.

Then stopped.

The door was slightly ajar, and voices drifted through the gap – low, deliberate, carrying the particular weight of a conversation no one expected to be overheard.

Arthur's tone was grave.

"Director Bruno, Yves – *The Rising Storm* is everything now. I'm counting on you both. Don't let this fall apart."

Caleb lowered his hand.

He stayed very still.

Inside, Arthur sat behind his desk, facing Director Bruno and Yves. Director Bruno's expression was strained, his brow creased in a way that suggested he'd been wearing that look for days.

"Arthur, I'll do what I can," he said. "But the public sentiment right now is working against us at every turn. The Hugh scandal is still fresh. Every move we make gets scrutinized. The timing is—"

"Bruno." Arthur cut him off, not harshly, but firmly. He shifted his approach, his voice smoothing into something more deliberate. "Think of it this way. This is your chance to prove you're better than Director Liam."

Director Bruno went quiet.

The room held that silence for a moment.

His gaze drifted to Yves, as though looking for something to hold onto – some reassurance, some sign that the ground beneath them was still solid.

Yves met his eyes.

He was leaning back slightly in his chair, completely relaxed, with the particular ease of a man who had

never seriously considered the possibility of losing.

A calm, unhurried smile settled on his face.

“I’ve been in this industry long enough to know that the only thing separating winners from losers is

whether you quit,” he said.

His voice was smooth. Certain.

“I don’t quit.”

He looked at Director Bruno steadily.

“Stop worrying. With me on this, *The Rising Storm* won’t lose to *Treatment Diary**

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 412[
1,444 words]

(Author’s POV)

Arthur’s face finally broke into something resembling relief.

He leaned back in his chair and looked at Yves with open admiration.

“That’s exactly the kind of thinking this company needs right now,” he said. “That kind of resolve.”

He turned to Director Bruno.

“What about you? Can you commit to this?” Director Bruno was quiet for a moment. His brow was still creased, but something had shifted behind his eyes.

He glanced at Yves again.

If Yves was willing to stake his reputation on this, then retreating now would make him look like a coward.

“If Yves is in,” he said slowly, “then I’m in. I’ve spent twenty years building my career. I’m not about to let anyone say I can’t hold my own against Director Liam.”

Arthur exhaled – long and slow, like a man who had been holding his breath for days.

“Good,” he said. “If **The Rising Storm** beats **Treatment Diary**, Bruno, you’ll be the top director in this industry. No one will be able to dispute it.”

Outside the door, Caleb stood very still.

A quiet, humorless smile crossed his face.

These people.

They were sitting in there, dividing up a future that didn’t belong to them yet. Talking about winning like the outcome was already decided.

He’d sat in rooms like that before.

He knew exactly how those conversations ended when Amelia was on the other side.

He raised his hand and knocked.

The door swung open.

Arthur’s expression curdled the moment he saw who it was.

“What do you want?” he said flatly.

Caleb stepped inside without waiting for an invitation.

“I’m here to terminate my contract,” he said. “I have an overseas label ready to sign me. They’ve agreed to cover the buyout ten million, paid in full.”

Arthur stared at him.

Then a cold, contemptuous smile spread across his face.

“A washed-up has-been,” he said. “And you’ve already found somewhere to land. Impressive.”

Caleb had spent the last hour swallowing things he wanted to say.

He was done.

“Gale Entertainment is going under anyway,” he said evenly. “It’s only a matter of time before my sister finishes what she started. You’re not in a better position than I am – you’re just further behind on figuring that out.”

Arthur’s expression went rigid.

“I could hold that contract,” he said, his voice dropping. “Keep you locked in here for as long as I want.”

“You could,” Caleb said. “And then you’d get nothing. No buyout. No royalties from my back catalog. No future album revenue.” He held Arthur’s gaze. “We can drag this out if you want. I have time.”

A beat of silence.

Yves, who had been watching from his chair with the relaxed interest of someone watching a mildly entertaining argument, spoke up.

“Arthur, why bother? Someone who can’t even stay loyal to the people who gave him a platform – that’s not someone you want in your building.” He waved a hand dismissively. “Let him go. He’s dead weight.”

Arthur’s jaw worked.

He looked at Caleb. Then at the number on the table.

Ten million was ten million. And Caleb wasn’t wrong about the royalties.

“Fine,” he said, the word coming out like something he was spitting out. “Get the paperwork done. I want you out of this building today.”

It took less than an hour to process.

Caleb signed where he was told to sign. He didn’t linger over it.

When it was done, he stood up and looked around the room one last time at Arthur, at Director Bruno, at Yves still lounging in his chair like he owned the place.

“Don’t overestimate yourselves,” he said. “Getting a head start doesn’t mean you win.”

Director Bruno looked away.

Arthur said nothing.

Yves smiled that same smooth, unshakeable smile.

“I’ve been in this industry for over a decade,” he said. “I’ve never lost. My name alone draws more audience than Wayne ever could.” He tilted his head slightly. “Whatever you think you know about your sister, it doesn’t apply here.”

Caleb looked at him for a moment.

“Wait and see,” he said.

Then he turned and walked out.

The lobby was cool and quiet after the office. His footsteps echoed on the polished floor as he pushed through the front doors and stepped out into the open air.

He stood there for a second.

He’d had that same certainty once. That unshakeable belief that talent and momentum were enough. That he was too established, too visible, too far ahead to be caught.

Amelia had dismantled that belief piece by piece, without ever raising her voice.

Yves would learn the same lesson.

They all did, eventually.

Behind him, the office door had barely closed before Yves’s expression shifted.

The easy confidence was still there, but underneath it, something sharper moved.

He looked at Arthur.

“Don’t let him get in your head,” he said. “Caleb Stone is irrelevant. He made his choices.”

Arthur nodded, but his eyes were still tight.

“I know. I just need this project to-”

“Arthur.” Yves cut him off, calm and deliberate. “There’s something we need to discuss.”

Arthur looked at him.

Yves leaned forward slightly, elbows on his knees.

“The company is in a difficult position right now. The public sentiment is bad. The lead actress change has already generated negative press. And I’m the one taking on the most exposure here – the most risk.” He paused. “That kind of risk deserves compensation.”

Arthur’s eyes narrowed. “What are you asking for?”

“Five percent of Gale Entertainment’s shares,” Yves said. “At the current market price.”

The room went very quiet.

Arthur stared at him.

The current market price meant rock bottom. After the Hugh scandal, after the stock collapse, five percent was a fraction of what it would have been six months ago. But it was still five percent of the company.

“You’re asking me to sell you shares while the price is at its lowest,” Arthur said.

“I’m asking you to compensate me for staying when everyone else is running,” Yves replied. “If the show succeeds – and it will – those shares will be worth ten times what they are today. You know that.”

Arthur was silent for a long moment.

He thought about the stock price. About the investors pulling back. About the board meetings that had started to feel like interrogations.

He thought about what would happen if Yves walked out too.

“If the show wins,” Arthur said finally, his voice low and strained, “the shares are yours.”

Yves smiled.

“It’ll win,” he said simply.

Caleb’s rented apartment was on the fourth floor of a building that smelled faintly of damp carpet and other people’s cooking.

He pushed open the door and found Livia sitting on the sofa.

She wasn’t doing anything. No phone in her hand. No book. No television.

She was just sitting there, staring at the middle distance.

She used to wait for people to come home with a smile already on her face – the kind of smile that said *I saved you a seat, I kept your dinner warm, I’ve been thinking about you.*

That smile was gone.

She looked up when he came in.

“Do you think Amelia will come to see us off?” she asked. “The day after tomorrow, at the airport.”

Caleb bent down to change his shoes.

“I didn’t ask her,” he said quietly.

Livia nodded slowly.

“We don’t have the right to ask,” she said. Her voice wasn’t bitter. It was just tired. “I know that. If I were her, I couldn’t ask either.”

She pushed herself to her feet.

She moved toward the hallway, slow and deliberate, like someone carrying something heavy in both hands.

“I thought I had everything,” she said. “A home. A family. People who would always be there.”

She stopped at the doorway.

“I was wrong about all of it. My mate betrayed me. My family-” She didn’t finish the sentence. She didn’t need to. “The rift between Amelia and me has grown too deep. I know that.”

Caleb straightened up.

“Mom,” he said. “When we get there, I’ll look after you. You won’t have to-”

“No.” Her voice was quiet but firm. She turned to look at him. “I’m going to open my own shop. Support myself. With my own hands.”

She met his eyes steadily.

“I’ve spent my whole life depending on other people, Caleb. It didn’t work. None of it worked.” Something settled in her expression – not peace exactly, but resolution.

“Whatever time I have left, I want to live it for myself. Stand on my own two feet. Build something that’s actually mine.”

Caleb had no answer for that.

He watched her disappear down the hallway.

The apartment was very quiet after she was gone.

Caleb’s situation didn’t occupy Amelia’s thoughts for long.

She had work to return to, and she returned to it.

At midday, she set aside her files and made her way to Crimson Moon Pack headquarters for Theodore’s treatment session. It had become a regular part of her schedule – predictable, almost routine.

She pushed through the main entrance into the lobby.

She had barely crossed the threshold when a voice tore through the building like a crack of thunder.

“Theodore, you despicable, shameless man – get out here right now!”

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 413[1,363 words]

(Amelia’s POV)

I hadn’t even cleared the automatic glass doors when the voice hit me.

Loud. Furious. Achingly familiar.

“Theodore, you despicable, shameless man – get out here right now!”

I didn’t need to see his face.

I’d spent enough years listening to that voice to recognize it anywhere.

Damien.

I let out a slow breath and pushed through the doors.

He was standing in the middle of the lobby, held back by two security guards who had their hands braced against his chest. His face was red, his jaw tight, every muscle in his body coiled with indignation.

“What is it this time?” I called out.

He spun around the moment he heard my voice.

For one unguarded second, something crossed his face – something warm and desperate and painfully earnest. His expression shifted from fury to relief to something that looked almost like joy.

Then it died.

His eyes dropped to the Crimson Moon Pack headquarters surrounding him, and the realization landed visibly on his face.

She’s here for *him.*

The warmth drained out of his expression. What replaced it was something brittle and sharp.

“So you really do come here every day,” he said, his voice dropping into something that wanted to sound casual but didn’t quite make it. “To treat his legs. Is that what we’re calling it?”

The receptionist at the front desk glanced up from her screen.

“Mr. Blackwood,” she said, her tone perfectly level, “Miss Stone visits daily for Mr. Crimson’s medical treatment. That is correct.”

Damien’s jaw worked. His eyes swept the lobby – the employees who had stopped pretending to work, the security guards still positioned on either side of him.

“Treatment,” he repeated, drawing the word out like it tasted wrong. “Right. And does that treatment

require her to take her clothes off?”

The lobby went very still.

I felt the weight of a dozen stares shift toward me.

The receptionist set down her pen.

“Mr. Blackwood.” Her voice was calm, but there was an edge underneath it now. “Any medical examination requires a degree of undress. That is medicine, not scandal.” She looked at him steadily. “Miss Stone is Mr. Crimson’s fiancée. Her presence here is entirely appropriate.” She paused. “What isn’t appropriate is a stranger walking into this building and implying otherwise. The only thing your comment reveals is the kind of mind doing the imagining.”

I stared at her.

I had exchanged perhaps thirty words with this woman in all my visits here.

She had just said every single thing I couldn’t be bothered to say myself.

Damien’s face went through several colors in quick succession.

“I didn’t – that’s not what I meant,” he said, backpedaling fast. “I just – I’m not okay with this. That’s all. I’m not okay with any of this.”

“I don’t care,” I said flatly.

He looked at me.

“Amelia-”

“We have nothing to do with each other,” I said. “We haven’t for a long time. I don’t need your gifts. I don’t want your gifts. If you walked up to me and handed me something personally, I would hand it straight back.”

I looked at him without blinking.

“You sent a birthday present to my fiancé’s building. For me.” I let that sit for a moment. “Damien. Think about what you actually did. You gave a gift meant for me to the man I’m engaged to. What exactly did you think was going to happen?”

His mouth opened. Then closed.

“Stop coming here,” I said. “Every time I see you, I like you less. I didn’t think that was possible, but you keep proving me wrong.”

(Author’s POV)

The elevator doors slid open.

Marcus stepped out first, then turned and pushed Theodore’s wheelchair into the lobby.

The effect was immediate.

Three of the newer female employees forgot entirely what they were doing and simply stared. Theodore Crimson at a distance was striking. Up close, in person, he was something else entirely – all sharp angles and composed authority, jet-black hair, golden eyes that took in the room in a single sweep.

Then their gazes dropped to the wheelchair, and something complicated moved through the lobby.

Theodore didn't notice, or if he did, he gave no indication.

His eyes found Amelia first. Then they moved to Damien.

"You came down?" Amelia asked, stepping toward him.

"I got a call," Theodore said. His voice was unhurried. Perfectly even. "Someone was making noise in the lobby." He glanced at Damien with the particular brand of indifference that managed to be more cutting than contempt. "I thought you might have just arrived. Didn't want you walking into a mess." He paused. "I've already called the police."

"You-" Damien's voice cracked. "You called the *police*?"

Something snapped in him.

"You think this is a joke?" he said, his voice rising. He pointed at Theodore, hand shaking. "You sit in that chair and play the victim and she just – she just *runs* to you every single day, and you act like you've done nothing wrong-"

"Mr. Blackwood." Marcus took one step forward.

But Amelia was already moving.

Damien saw her coming toward him and his whole body shifted. The anger bled out of his posture. His eyes softened.

He thought she was coming to him.

He actually thought she was coming *to* him.

His lips parted. He started to say her name.

The slap landed before he finished the syllable.

The sound cracked through the lobby like a branch breaking.

Sharp. Clean. Absolute.

No one moved.

No one spoke.

Damien stood with one hand pressed to his cheek, staring at Amelia with an expression that had no name - shock and pain and something that looked, beneath all of it, like a man watching the last door close.

Amelia looked at him.

When she spoke, her voice was quiet. Not soft. Quiet – the way a blade is quiet before it cuts.

“You’re acting like a child,” she said. “You always have.”

Damien’s hand dropped slowly from his face.

“What you call devotion,” she continued, “is just noise to me. It’s always been noise.” She held his gaze

without flinching. “Do you want to know why we didn’t work? Not the version you tell yourself – the real reason?”

He said nothing.

“You decided the effort wasn’t equal,” she said. “You felt like you were giving more than you were getting. And maybe you were. You cooked. You bought things. You showed up.” She paused. “But Damien – I never asked for any of that. I asked for one thing. I wanted someone who would let me be a healer. Someone who wouldn’t make me choose between medicine and them.”

She took a slow breath.

“You couldn’t do that. Every time I stayed late to study, every time I prioritized a patient, every time I chose my work – you made me feel like I was failing you.” Her voice didn’t waver. “That’s not love. That’s a leash.”

Damien’s throat moved.

“Amelia, I-”

“I like Theodore,” she said, loudly enough that every person in the lobby could hear it clearly. “I like him because he doesn’t do that. He understands what I’m working toward. He stands next to it instead of fighting it.” She let the words land. “And yes – he has a face that meets my standards. That matters too. I’m allowed to say that.”

A few of the employees exchanged glances.

“You want to talk about who ended things?” Amelia’s voice sharpened. “You ended it. You made an ultimatum to test me. You wanted to see if I would choose you.” She looked at him steadily. “That kind of test is childish. It’s manipulative. And the fact that you’re still here, years later, still running the same play- it tells me you haven’t grown at all.”

She was done.

She turned away from him.

Behind her, Damien stood completely still. His hand moved back to his cheek, almost unconsciously, pressing against the place where her palm had connected.

He had imagined a hundred versions of how this would go.

Not one of them had looked like this.

He had believed – genuinely believed that what he felt was something she would eventually recognize. That persistence would become proof. That one day she would look at him and see everything he’d been carrying and understand.

But she had looked at him.

And all she’d seen was weight.

The sound of wheels on polished floor broke the silence.

Theodore pushed forward.

He didn’t rush. He moved at the same measured pace he always did – deliberate, unhurried, as though the room had already arranged itself around him.

He stopped beside Amelia.

His hand reached out and closed around hers.

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 414[
1,200 words]

(Author’s POV)

Theodore’s voice was low.

But it carried the weight of an Alpha's authority, pressing down on the entire lobby like a physical force.

Every employee went still. Even the air seemed to hold its breath.

His golden eyes fixed on Damien. Direct. Unwavering.

"I'll say this once," Theodore said. "Amelia is my fiancée. She will be my only mate in this lifetime."

He paused, letting that settle.

"If you cause her any further disturbance – any at all – I won't bother with warnings. I'll make sure you disappear from this territory entirely." His voice didn't rise. It didn't need to. "And I mean that."

Damien's jaw tightened.

But he didn't speak.

Theodore turned to the security guards flanking Damien. "Hold him until the police arrive."

The guards tightened their grip without a word.

Damien didn't struggle.

There was nothing left in him to fight with.

Amelia's words kept looping through his head – her voice, flat and final, stripping away every story he'd told

himself over the years.

That kind of test is childish. It's manipulative.

He stared at the polished floor.

Around him, the employees who had gathered were already murmuring amongst themselves, voices low but not low enough.

"He really thought showing up here would change something?"

"That's not devotion, that's harassment."

“He thinks he’s being romantic. Everyone else just sees a man who can’t take no for an answer.”

Damien’s hands curled at his sides.

Theodore had already turned away from him.

His entire attention shifted to Amelia, and his expression changed the authority drained out of it,

replaced by something quieter and warmer.

“Let’s go,” he said softly.

Amelia nodded.

She walked beside him toward the elevator without a single glance back.

Damien watched them go.

The two of them, side by side her steps easy and unhurried, his wheelchair moving with that same measured steadiness he always carried.

Something in Damien’s chest caved in.

He understood, in that moment, with a clarity that felt like cold water, that this was the last time.

There was no version of this where he tried again.

The police arrived within minutes. Given Theodore’s identity, they handled the matter with brisk efficiency-

Damien was taken to the station, formally warned, and made to sign a no-harassment order. The documentation was filed and archived. Shortly after, the Blackwood family’s lawyer appeared to collect him.

Damien walked out of the building without looking back.

The office door clicked shut behind them.

The moment it did, Theodore reached out and pulled Amelia toward him.

One hand settled at the small of her back, firm and certain. The other lifted to her face, his thumb brushing lightly along her cheekbone.

Amelia caught the faint scent of pine and musk that always clung to him. Her heartbeat picked up before she could stop it.

Theodore lowered his head until his nose was nearly touching hers.

“He won’t bother you again,” he said quietly.

Amelia laughed softly. “If he’s foolish enough to try, just deal with it however you want. Though the Blackwood family might complain.”

Theodore’s eyes darkened.

“If the Blackwood family can’t control their own people,” he said, “then I’ll control them for them.”

His gaze dropped to her face, and something warm and open moved through his expression.

“When you said you liked me,” he said, “in front of all those people – do you have any idea how happy that made me?”

Amelia tilted her head back and looked at him directly.

“The first reason,” she said, without any embarrassment, “was your face. You meet my standards.”

Theodore’s mouth curved.

“The second reason,” she continued, “was watching you refuse to break after everything that happened to you. That kind of person someone who stays standing after a blow like that I respect that.”

She let her voice drop slightly, almost casual.

“But now? Now I genuinely like you.”

Theodore’s breathing shifted.

He lowered his head and caught her lower lip in a light bite – brief, deliberate, warm.

“Hearing you say it,” he murmured against her mouth, “especially in front of that many people – I still couldn’t help it.” He pulled back just enough to look at her. “Say it again.”

Amelia laughed.

“Later,” she said. “When you’ve earned it.”

“Then I’ll keep earning it.”

She smiled despite herself.

“The moment I was really sure,” she said, “was during one of your treatment sessions. You were in real pain – I could see it. But you didn’t make a sound.” She held his gaze. “I thought, this man – I’ve decided on him.”

Something shifted in Theodore’s expression.

He kissed her then – properly, without holding back.

Amelia’s breath scattered.

When he finally pulled back, his forehead came to rest against hers, both of them breathing unevenly.

“The first time you treated me,” he said, his voice low and rough, “you touched the scars on my legs. You didn’t flinch. You didn’t look at me with pity.” He exhaled slowly. “That was the moment I wanted to keep you.”

Amelia put her hand flat against his chest and pushed gently.

“Alright,” she said. “We’ve kissed enough. Time to eat. Then treatment.”

Theodore looked at her.

“That’s it?”

“That’s it.”

He sighed, but the corner of his mouth stayed lifted.

After lunch, Amelia began the rehabilitation session.

Theodore sat still as she worked, his breathing controlled, his posture straight.

He thought about their conversation from the night before.

“Did you dream about me?” he asked.

Amelia didn’t look up from what she was doing.

“Yes,” she said plainly.

“What kind of dream?”

A pause.

“The kind I can’t describe in polite company,” she said, her tone entirely matter-of-fact. “But it ended right

at the important part. Again.” She exhaled through her nose. “That’s the second time.”

The faint note of genuine regret in her voice was unmistakable.

Theodore’s expression flickered – something between amusement and something considerably warmer.

“You said again,” he said, catching the key word.

Amelia finally glanced up at him. “Did you dream about me?”

“Of course,” he said, without hesitation. “Though I prefer kissing you in real life.”

Amelia stared at him for a moment.

“You say things even more directly than I do,” she said flatly. “That shouldn’t be possible.”

“It’s a talent.”

She shook her head and returned to the treatment.

The final technique required the most pressure.

Amelia’s hands moved with precision, applying force along the nerve pathways in his legs – deeper than

usual, more demanding.

She felt the moment the intensity peaked.

She looked up.

Theodore’s brow was furrowed, just slightly. The line of his jaw was tight. A thin sheen of sweat had gathered at his temple, and a bead was threatening to slide down toward his cheek.

He wasn’t making a sound.

“Does it hurt?” she asked quietly.

“No,” he said.

Amelia made a short sound of disbelief.

“I used the strengthened technique today,” she said. “The pain level is several times higher than your normal sessions.” She looked pointedly at the sweat on his temple. “That’s about to drip, and you’re still sitting here pretending everything is fine.”

Theodore let out a low laugh.

“If you’re this worried about me,” he said, “how could I possibly admit it hurts?”

Amelia gave him a sideways look.

But she couldn’t quite hold the flat expression.

The smile broke through before she could stop it.

“Of course I’m worried,” she said, her voice softening without her meaning it to. “I’m not just your healer.”

She met his eyes.

“I’m your fiancée. It’s only natural that I care about my future mate.”

She straightened and set her hands in her lap.

“When I finish the massage,” she said, returning to her professional tone, “I want you to try standing. Take a few steps if you can. Let’s see how today’s recovery looks.”

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 415[1,275 words]

(Author’s POV)

The half-hour treatment session came to an end.

Green and White slipped silently back into Amelia’s bag, coiling themselves into comfortable positions.

Amelia zipped the bag closed and turned to face Theodore.

She stepped forward and extended her hand.

“Try standing,” she said quietly. “I’ll be right here.”

Theodore looked at her hand for a moment.

Then he reached out and took it.

His grip was firm. But his fingertips trembled – just slightly, just enough for her to feel it.

She didn't say anything about it.

Theodore drew in a slow, steady breath. His arms pressed down against the wheelchair armrests, muscles

tightening as he pushed his weight upward.

For a moment, nothing happened.

Then his body rose.

His legs were stiff. She could see the effort in every line of him – the set of his jaw, the rigid line of his

shoulders, the careful way he shifted his weight.

But he was standing.

He stood there, breathing evenly, both feet flat on the floor.

Then he took the first step.

Slow. Deliberate. His foot came down with a quiet certainty that made her chest tighten.

Then the second step.

Same pace. Same steadiness.

Amelia watched him, and something burned behind her eyes that she hadn't expected.

She blinked it back fast.

He's actually doing it.

She'd known the treatment was working. She'd tracked every session, every small sign of improvement. But knowing it and watching him walk – those were two completely different things.

Theodore stopped.

He turned to look at her

His golden eyes were quiet and warm, and he looked at her the way he always did—like she was the only thing in the room worth looking at

He reached out and curled his hand around the back of her neck, drawing her forward until their foreheads touched.

“Thank you,” he said, his voice low. “For everything.”

Amelia swallowed.

The tightness in her chest was almost unbearable.

She let out a small breath and forced her voice into something lighter.

“Verbal thanks aren’t enough,” she said. “Once you’ve fully recovered and we’ve completed the Marking you’d better perform.”

A beat of silence.

Then Theodore’s chest shook with a low, quiet laugh.

“I won’t disappoint you,” he said. His voice carried the weight of a genuine promise. “Not in any regard.”

Amelia felt heat climb to her face.

“Alright,” she said, pulling back slightly. “Stop talking and take a few more steps. Let’s see how far you can go today.”

Theodore looked at her for one more second.

Then, instead of stepping forward, he reached out and pulled her into his arms.

His embrace was firm and unhurried, one hand pressed flat against her back, holding her close.

Amelia went still.

His voice came low against her ear.

“In every regard,” he repeated softly. “I promise.”

She stood there for a moment, caught off guard.

Then, slowly, she lifted her arms and wrapped them around him.

“I’ll be watching,” she said, her voice muffled slightly against his shoulder.

She felt the smile in his exhale.

(Author’s POV)

On the other side of the city, Penelope Blackwood pushed open the door of the police station.

The officer at the front desk looked up.

He blinked.

She was, objectively speaking, striking – tall, sharp-featured, composed in the way that only came from

years of being the most formidable person in any given room.

He opened his mouth to ask how he could help.

She had already walked past him.

Damien was sitting in the waiting area, elbows on his knees, staring at the floor.

He looked up when he heard her footsteps.

He had just enough time to register her expression before her foot connected with his side and sent him sprawling off the chair.

“Penelope-”

She grabbed the nearest plastic stool and swung it down onto him.

“Do you have any idea,” she said through her teeth, “what you’ve done to this family’s reputation today?”

Damien threw his arms up to shield himself.

“Stop-”

The stool came down again.

“I told you to leave her alone.” Her voice was sharp and cold and furious. “I told you. How many times did I tell you?”

The officer at the desk had risen to his feet.

He took two steps forward, then stopped.

Penelope pointed the stool at him without turning her head.

“I’m disciplining my brother,” she said flatly. “This is a family matter.”

The officer opened his mouth.

Then closed it.

He sat back down.

The other officers in the room exchanged glances, collectively deciding this was not a situation they were equipped to intervene in.

After a long moment, one of them cleared his throat carefully.

“Ma’am, perhaps it might be better to continue this at home-”

“Fine.” Penelope set the stool down. “I’m taking him.”

“There’s still the release paperwork-”

She was already at the desk, pen in hand.

The officer blinked at the signature she slapped down in front of him.

By the time he looked up again, she had already grabbed Damien by the collar and was steering him toward the door.

Her bodyguards fell into step behind them.

(Author’s POV)

The car door slammed.

Damien landed heavily in the backseat.

Penelope got in after him, and before he could straighten up, her hand shot out and grabbed his collar.

The first slap cracked across his face.

Then the second.

Third.

Fourth.

Each one landed clean and hard, snapping his head to the side.

Damien sat there, ears ringing, jaw aching, staring at the seat in front of him.

“Are you awake now?” Penelope’s voice was low and clipped. “Or do you need more?”

Damien touched the corner of his mouth.

His fingers came away with a faint trace of blood.

He looked at her.

“You don’t get it,” he said. His voice came out rougher than he intended. “You’ve never actually loved someone. You don’t know what it feels like to-”

The fifth slap was harder than the others.

His head rang.

When the stars cleared, he saw that Penelope’s hand was shaking.

Not from the effort.

From something else entirely.

“You think I don’t know?” Her voice had dropped to something quieter and far more dangerous. “I’m worse off than you are, Damien. I can’t even say it out loud.” Her jaw was tight. “I buried it. I kept it there. I never once acted on it, because I’m not stupid enough to chase someone who doesn’t feel the same way.”

Damien forgot about the pain.

He stared at his sister.

In all his years of knowing her her sharp tongue, her iron composure, her absolute refusal to show weakness – he had never once heard her say anything like that.

“Who?” he asked.

Penelope’s expression shut down instantly.

“Old history,” she said. “It doesn’t matter.”

“Who is it?”

“Drop it.”

“Penelope-”

“I said drop it.” Her voice came out flat and final, but something had flickered behind her eyes – just for a second, something old and carefully contained. “It’s none of your business.”

Damien watched her face.

She turned away from him and looked out the window, her posture perfectly straight, her expression

smoothed back into its usual cool authority.

He kept watching her.

She had always been like this- untouchable, composed, never letting anything crack the surface.

He had always assumed she simply didn’t feel things the way other people did.

He was apparently wrong.

She liked someone.

The thought was so strange he almost couldn’t hold it.

She liked someone and never said a word. Never did a single thing about it.

He looked at his sister’s profile – the set of her jaw, the slight tension around her eyes that she probably didn’t know was there and for the first time in a long time, he felt something other than his own misery.

Something almost like guilt.

He turned back to the window.

The city moved past outside, buildings and streetlights blurring together.

He thought about Amelia.

Her voice, flat and certain: “That kind of test is childish.

Theodore’s hand at her back, easy and natural, like she’d always belonged there.

The way she hadn't looked back.

Not once.

He exhaled slowly.

The silence in the car stretched out between them.

After a long moment, Damien drew in a breath.

"You don't have to worry," he said, his voice quieter now. Resigned in a way that felt, strangely, like relief. "I won't go near Amelia again."

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 416[1,272 words]

(Author's POV)

Penelope stared at her brother.

Her eyes were sharp, searching, unconvinced.

"You actually thought it through?" she asked. "Just like that?"

Damien was quiet for a moment.

He stared at his hands, jaw tight.

"Yeah," he finally said. The word came out bitter. "I did."

He exhaled slowly.

"If I actually care about her, I shouldn't be making her life harder." His voice was low. "I don't want to end up being someone she despises. That's worse than being nothing to her."

He touched the side of his face where she'd slapped him.

The skin was still hot and swollen.

"That slap she gave me." He let out a short, humorless sound. "It hurt. And not just my face."

He looked down.

“We lived in the same pack. I was the closest person to her. And I threw that away. I didn’t treasure it.” His voice dropped further. “I tried to drag her back into something dark. I was the one being despicable.”

He said it plainly, without excuses.

Penelope said nothing.

She let the silence sit for a moment.

Then, very quietly, she exhaled.

The tension in her shoulders eased – just slightly, just enough to notice.

“Looks like those slaps weren’t wasted,” she said.

Damien snapped back to the present.

“Penelope.”

His voice came out sharp and furious.

She didn’t even blink.

Damien pressed his palm against his swollen cheek, glaring at her with barely contained outrage.

“I can’t do anything about it right now,” he said through his teeth. “But when I have the ability – I will pay you back for every single one.”

Penelope raised an eyebrow.

“I’ll be waiting,” she said calmly.

Damien made a sound of pure disgust and turned away from her, fixing his gaze on the window.

The city moved past outside in blurred streaks of light.

He made a silent promise to himself.

He would become someone with real power. Real standing.

Even if he and Amelia would never be anything – even if that door was permanently closed – he refused to let the last image she had of him be a weak, irrelevant man who didn’t know his own place.

That much, at least, he could control.

(Author's POV)

Penelope had no intention of letting her brother fixate on Amelia indefinitely.

She needed a distraction. Someone who might actually hold his attention.

She thought of Natasha – Theodore's cousin, direct and sharp-tongued, with enough fire in her to handle Damien without getting burned.

It wasn't a bad idea.

She quietly tracked down Natasha's contact and sent her a message.

She kept it brief: an apology on Damien's behalf, and a personal guarantee that if he pulled anything like this again, she would break his legs herself.

A voice message came back almost immediately.

Natasha's voice was light and easy, but there was an edge underneath it.

"If there's a next time, don't bother. Theodore will break his legs before you get the chance."

Damien heard it from across the seat.

His expression twisted instantly.

Penelope glanced at him, then casually asked into the phone, "What do you think of my brother, generally speaking?"

The reply came without hesitation.

Natasha's voice didn't even pause.

"A clueless, clingy idiot who can't read the room to save his life."

Damien moved before she could stop him.

He snatched the phone straight out of her hand.

"You-" He stabbed at the voice message function. "Who are you calling an idiot? I hope you never find a mate. I hope you're alone for the rest of your life. Mind your own business!"

He shoved the phone back at Penelope and sat back, chest heaving.

Penelope looked at her phone.

She looked at her brother.

She let out a slow breath and quietly abandoned every thought she'd had about matchmaking.

Damien was still fuming, muttering under his breath, reaching for his own phone.

She watched him pull it out and start typing.

“Stop the car,” she said flatly.

The driver glanced in the mirror.

“Ma’am?”

“Stop the car.”

The car pulled smoothly to the curb.

Penelope reached over, grabbed Damien by the back of his collar, and shoved the door open.

“Out.”

“What-”

She planted her foot against his side and pushed.

Damien stumbled out onto the pavement, barely catching himself.

He spun around, outraged.

She pulled the door shut.

“When you’re done arguing,” she said through the window, “walk yourself home.”

The car pulled away.

—

(Author’s POV)

The cold hit him immediately.

Damien stood on the pavement, the winter air cutting straight through his jacket, and stared at the retreating tail lights of his sister's car.

He pulled out his phone.

His fingers were already moving.

Natasha had apparently had the same idea, because a message was already waiting for him.

Hope the cold freezes some sense into you.

He typed back without thinking.

You're the one who needs sense frozen into you.

At least I'm not standing outside in the cold like an idiot.

How do you know I'm outside?

Your sister just told me she kicked you out of the car. Enjoy your walk.

Damien's eye twitched.

He typed faster.

They went back and forth – sharp, petty, relentless – neither of them willing to let the other have the last word.

Then Damien stopped.

He stared at the screen for a second.

Then he typed: *You know, the reason you keep coming after me is obvious. You're trying to get my

attention. You like me.*

He sent it.

There was a pause.

Longer than usual.

Then her reply came.

*Listen carefully. I will leave you alone the moment you promise – genuinely promise – to stop harassing

Theodore's future mate and stop interfering in their relationship. Until then, I have no choice but to keep an eye on you. Talking to you is exhausting. Every single time.*

Damien stared at the message.

He read it twice.

Then he shoved his phone into his pocket and started walking.

The wind was sharp against his face, and the pavement stretched out long and empty ahead of him.

He didn't type anything back.

(Author's POV)

Amelia's afternoon nap ended quietly.

She gathered her things, said a few words to Theodore, and left his office.

Theodore watched her go.

He waited until her footsteps had faded completely down the corridor.

Then he picked up his phone and dialed Marcus.

Marcus answered on the second ring.

"Go out this afternoon," Theodore said. "Find a good walking cane."

A beat of silence.

Then Marcus's voice came back – barely contained, practically vibrating.

"Sir. Your legs–"

"I can stand. I can walk." Theodore kept his voice even. "I still need time to fully recover. But I'm mobile."

"That's sir, that's–"

“Marcus.”

“Yes.”

“When you go shopping for the cane,” Theodore said, “make it obvious. Don’t be quiet about it. I want

Garrett and Victor to hear about it.”

He paused.

“Let them feel the pressure.”

Marcus went silent for exactly one second.

“Understood,” he said, and now his voice had shifted into something steady and purposeful. “I’ll make sure of it.”

Theodore ended the call.

(Author’s POV)

Marcus moved fast.

He was out of the building within the hour, and he made no effort whatsoever to be subtle about it.

The news traveled quickly.

By mid-afternoon, it had reached Victor

Victor stared at the person relaying the message.

“Say that again.”

“Marcus was seen shopping for a walking cane. Best shops in Northgate City. He was asking for the highest quality available.”

Victor’s expression went very still.

Then it cracked.

“Are you serious?” His voice rose. “He’s actually buying a cane?”

He shoved back from his desk and started pacing.

–

He and his father Magnus were already drowning – a shipment seized, resources locked, pressure coming from every direction.

And Theodore, through all of it, had come out untouched.

And now his legs were recovering.

Victor's hands balled into fists at his sides.

He'd done the work. He'd taken the risks. He'd cleared obstacle after obstacle, and Theodore was going to

walk away with everything.

He grabbed his phone and dialed.

Garrett picked up.

Victor didn't bother with a greeting.

"You've heard?" he said immediately, voice tight and clipped. "Theodore's legs. Marcus is out right now buying the best cane in all of Northgate City."

He lowered his voice, the words coming out fast and hard.

"We're running out of time. If Mason doesn't move soon, the heir's position will be completely out of reach."

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 417[1,270 words]

(Author's POV)

Garrett stepped back into his office and loosened his collar.

The press conference had been small, routine, nothing worth remembering.

His phone rang before he'd even reached his desk.

Victor.

He picked up without rushing.

“It’s done,” Garrett said, before Victor could speak.

A beat of silence on the other end.

“What do you mean, done?” Victor’s voice was tight, impatient.

Garrett pulled out his chair and sat down slowly.

“I had someone put together a vehicle maintenance record,” he said. “From the year Theodore’s mother died.”

He picked up the steel pen from his desk and turned it between his fingers.

“The record shows that Alpha King Gideon quietly ordered his people to tamper with the brake system on her private car.”

The silence that followed was longer this time.

“You’re certain Mason will believe it?” Victor finally asked.

Garrett set the pen back down on the desk with a soft click.

He leaned back in his chair and crossed his hands over his chest.

A slow, easy smile crossed his face.

“Mason is not a careful man,” he said. “And he is extraordinarily easy to provoke.”

He paused, letting the words settle.

“If he were careful, he wouldn’t have killed that man the way he did – all those years ago, for Theodore’s mother. Brutal. Absolute. No hesitation.” Garrett’s voice remained smooth and unhurried. “He would rather strike the wrong target than allow a single person who might have harmed her to walk free.”

Victor made a sound on the other end. Low and satisfied.

“So the plan,” Garrett continued, “stays the same as before. The evidence needs to find its way to Mason

naturally. He can’t feel it being handed to him.” He tilted his head slightly. “That part is yours to handle. How you get him to stumble across it – that’s your problem.”

“And the document itself?”

“I’ll have someone deliver it to you tonight. Quietly.”

“Good.”

Garrett ended the call.

He stared at the ceiling for a moment, expression unreadable.

He had no illusions about Victor.

The moment Theodore was gone, Victor would turn on him without a second thought. That kind of man always did.

But Garrett was not worried.

He had never once in his life relied on another person’s loyalty to protect himself.

(Author’s POV)

Victor set his phone down and exhaled.

The tight, restless energy in his chest eased – just slightly.

He leaned back and let himself think.

Alpha King Gideon’s study held years of important files and documents. Private records. Personal

correspondence. The kind of material that no one was supposed to touch.

All Garrett’s fabricated record needed to do was find its way into that collection.

And then Mason would do the rest.

Victor’s jaw tightened.

Garrett was clever, he had to admit that much.

Too clever.

The kind of man who smiled at you while calculating exactly how to discard you when the time came.

Victor had already decided.

Once Theodore was dealt with, Garrett would be next.

No complicated plans. No drawn-out strategy.

Just swift, direct, final.

The night had settled over Northgate City by the time Marcus pulled the car up to the Pack House entrance.

He cut the engine and moved to open the door.

Theodore stopped him with a single word.

“Don’t.”

Marcus froze.

Theodore reached down to the seat beside him and picked up the cane.

It was a good one solid, well-weighted, the handle smooth and firm under his grip.

He positioned it carefully.

Then, slowly, he swung his legs toward the door.

Marcus stood just outside, not reaching in, not helping, every muscle in his body visibly tense with the effort of restraining himself.

Theodore’s feet met the ground.

He pressed his weight down through the cane, through his arms, through his legs.

The pain was there. A deep, grinding ache that ran from his hips down to his calves.

But his legs held.’

He stood.

It took him a moment – longer than it should have, longer than he would have liked.

But he stood on his own, upright, both feet on the ground.

Marcus made a sound.

It was barely audible. Almost nothing.

But his hands were shaking.

Theodore glanced at him.

“Stop that,” he said.

“Yes, sir.” Marcus’s voice came out rough. He cleared his throat. “Of course. Apologies.”

Theodore took his first step forward.

Then another.

The cane struck the stone path in a steady rhythm.

It cost him. Each step was deliberate, measured, harder than it looked.

But he was walking.

Marcus fell into step beside him, close enough to catch him if needed, far enough to give him the dignity of the distance.

(Author’s POV)

They had barely made it a dozen steps when a figure appeared ahead on the path.

Mason.

He had his jacket on, a worn canvas bag over one shoulder.

Heading out for the night.

He stopped when he saw Theodore.

His eyes dropped immediately to the cane, then moved up to Theodore’s face.

Theodore met his gaze steadily.

“How has the work been?” Theodore asked. “Settling in all right?”

Mason reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

He typed quickly and held the screen up.

Fine.

Theodore nodded once.

Mason typed again.

Has Theron been found?

Theodore shook his head. Short. Direct.

Something shifted in Mason's expression.

A flicker of something – disappointment, maybe. Or something darker underneath it.

He nodded once, tucked his phone away, and walked past them without another word.

Theodore watched him go.

When the sound of Mason's footsteps had faded, Marcus spoke quietly.

"He's been steady," Marcus said. "Works without complaint. Keeps to himself." He paused. "The only right that stood out was the evening Victor caused trouble here. Mason stayed late. Alone. Long after everyone else had gone."

Theodore said nothing for a moment.

He kept walking, the cane striking the path in its slow, even rhythm.

"Victor and Garrett's operation took a hit when that African shipment was seized," Theodore said finally. "They've lost momentum. They need a new angle."

He paused.

"Mason's loyalty to my mother is absolute. They know that." His voice was quiet and precise. "They will try to use it. They'll find some way to make him believe she was betrayed that someone close to her was responsible for her death."

Marcus went very still.

"And then they'll point him at you," Marcus said.

Theodore didn't answer.

He didn't need to.

That was his to carry.

The woman who had once saved his life who had pulled him back from a place he had no right to return from her son was not going to have blood on his hands because of her.

Mason was already a man who had killed.

He knew exactly what that weight felt like.

He didn't mind carrying more of it.

Jasper's brow furrowed.

Mason looked at him directly and signed back.

Why didn't you tell me about the engagement banquet? You went. You didn't say a word.

Jasper's hands stilled on the table.

Then he signed, slowly.

Because I was afraid you'd do something you couldn't take back. I don't want to lose you.

Mason stared at him.

The words sat in the air between them, simple and unguarded.

He looked away after a moment.

He picked up his fork and knife and cut into the food on his plate.

He signed, one-handed, without looking up.

Eat.

Jasper watched him for another moment.

Then he signed again, quietly.

I arranged for you to be there to find the truth. That's all. Please be careful.

Mason nodded once.

He didn't sign anything back.

He ate in silence, methodically, clearing his plate.

Then he pushed back from the table, stood, and went to his room.

(Author's POV)

Jasper cleaned up alone.

He rinsed each plate carefully, dried the forks and knives, stacked everything back in its place.

Then he picked up the script sitting on the counter and walked to his own room.

The space was barely navigable.

Clothes draped over every surface. Shoes scattered across the floor. Vitamin bottles clustered on the

windowsill and the edge of the desk – the kind of accumulation that happened when someone lived too

busy and too uncertain to stay organized.

He stepped over a pile of laundry and sat down on the edge of the bed.

He opened the script.

And then his phone rang.

He looked at the screen.

The name displayed was – Theodore.

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 418[
1,371 words]

(Author's POV)

Jasper stared at the screen for a moment.

Then he pressed accept.

“Theodore.”

“Hey.” Theodore's voice came through warm and unhurried. “Is there anything you're running short on lately?”

Jasper looked around his room.

Supplement bottles lined the windowsill. Packages he hadn't opened yet were stacked in the corner. A new jacket still had its tags on, draped over the back of his chair.

He let out a short, rueful laugh.

“Nothing. I haven’t even gotten through half of what you already sent.”

He shifted on the edge of the bed, pulling his knee up.

Then the thought surfaced – the one he’d been pushing down all evening.

He hesitated.

“Theodore,” he said quietly. “That fake brother of yours. Were you... as good to him as you are to me?”

(Author’s POV)

A brief pause.

Then Theodore answered, simply and without hesitation.

“What I’ve given you is nothing compared to what I gave him. Not even close. A drop in the ocean.”

Jasper went very still.

“I held back with you,” Theodore continued. “Because you kept pulling away. I didn’t want to make you feel pressured.”

Jasper’s grip tightened on the phone.

He stared at the wall across from him.

“But he betrayed you,” Jasper said. “He sold you out. And you ended up-”

He stopped himself.

He didn’t say “unable to walk”. The words felt too blunt, too ugly to say out loud,

“Doesn’t it scare you?” he asked instead. “Doing all of this again? For me? We’re blood, but we don’t know each other. Whatever happened to you back then that wasn’t my fault, and I didn’t cause it. But I’m still a stranger to you.” He exhaled. “Aren’t you afraid I’ll do the same thing?”

Theodore was quiet for a moment.

When he spoke again, his voice was easy. Almost light.

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because I believed he was my brother,” Theodore said. “So I treated him like one. That’s what you do for family. I don’t regret it.”

He said it simply, the way someone states a fact they’ve long since made peace with.

I don’t regret it.

Jasper closed his eyes.

The words hit him somewhere he wasn’t prepared for.

Theodore was a good brother.

–

He had always been a good brother – to someone who didn’t deserve it, and now to someone who was about to repay that same kindness with the same betrayal.

Because if Mason went after Alpha King Gideon, it wouldn’t matter whether he succeeded or failed.

Theodore would be pulled into it either way.

And Jasper had known.

He had known, and he had said nothing, and he had let Mason stay, and he had arranged for Mason to be in that house.

Theodore had given him nothing but care and patience and quiet, steady kindness.

And he was going to let Mason burn it all down.

His chest felt tight and airless.

“Jasper?”

“Nothing,” he said quickly. “There’s nothing else. I just – I was just asking.”

“Get some sleep.”

“Yeah. Good night.”

He ended the call.

Then he sat there without moving, the phone dark in his hand, his back slowly sinking against the headboard.

He thought about Amelia.

She had helped Mason too. Quietly, without asking for anything back.

And Theodore.

And now he and Mason were going to betray the very people who had shown them nothing but kindness.

He pressed the back of his hand over his mouth.

It didn't matter what reasons they had.

It didn't matter how justified it felt.

What he was doing was no different from what that fake brother had done.

Not one bit different.

(Author's POV)

On the other end, Theodore set his phone down on the nightstand.

A message notification lit up the screen.

Natasha.

I'm so sorry I didn't keep a better eye on Damien. I had no idea he'd actually go to the company and cause a scene. That's on me.

Theodore typed back.

It's fine. Thank you for your help.

Three dots appeared almost immediately.

I've been yelling at him all day. I told him if he goes anywhere near Amelia again, I'm posting everything – every embarrassing thing I know about him and he'll never be able to show his face in any pack again.

Theodore almost smiled.

—

Don't waste your time on someone like that.

Honestly? Natasha shot back. *I've got nothing better to do lately. Consider it my entertainment.*

He set the phone aside.

Then he picked up his tablet and opened the video call.

It connected after two rings.

Amelia appeared on the screen, freshly showered, her long black hair still damp and loose over her shoulders.

Green was coiled around her left wrist, looking supremely unbothered.

Black was draped across the back of her neck, and White had settled into a neat loop on her knee.

"Green," Theodore said.

Green turned its head away with absolute deliberate indifference.

Theodore looked at it for a moment.

"Still holding a grudge."

"Green holds grudges longer than most people I know," Amelia said.

Black, apparently having no grudges whatsoever, began nudging toward the camera end of the screen with unmistakable curiosity.

Theodore watched it bump its nose against the lens.

"Black seems to like you," Amelia offered.

"Black has good taste."

She laughed softly, reaching up to redirect Black away from the screen.

White stirred on her knee, stretched, and resettled.

Theodore watched the three of them – the pushing and nudging and lazy coiling, the small chaos of creatures completely at ease with each other.

"With them around," he said, "you probably never had a quiet night."

“Never,” she agreed, without any complaint in her voice.

He thought about the Pack House when he was young.

His mother gone. Jasper gone. The corridors always too still.

“When my mother died,” Amelia said, as if she’d been following the same thread, “and you were alone – did you ever feel like the house was too empty?”

Theodore leaned back against the headboard.

“I had a goal,” he said. “Finding Jasper. Bringing him home. I stayed busy enough that I didn’t have time to feel it.”

Amelia was quiet for a moment.

Then she looked directly at the camera, her blue eyes steady and serious.

“Then I’ll make you a promise,” she said. “These three are coming with me when I marry you. Consider them part of my dowry.” A small smile. “I’ll make sure your life never has a dull moment.”

Theodore said nothing for a moment.

He thought about today.

His feet on the stone path. The cane striking the ground. The weight of his own body, held up by his own legs.

He thought about standing.

–

He thought about standing in front of her not in a wheelchair, not braced against something – just standing, the way he was always supposed to.

He wanted to be that man for her.

He wanted to stand before her the way an Alpha was meant to stand before his mate, and give her the kind of marking ceremony she deserved.

He had wanted many things in his life.

He had never wanted anything this much.

It had been less than three months since Amelia Stone had walked into his life.

Three months, and everything had changed shape.

“Alright,” Amelia said, cutting through his thoughts. “Your legs just held you up for the first time today. You need to rest.” She tilted her head. “We have a proper date tomorrow. I’ll work you hard enough then.”

Theodore raised an eyebrow.

“A date with you couldn’t tire me out. Not in a full day.”

Amelia felt warmth bloom quietly in her chest.

She shook her head.

“You’ve gotten very smooth,” she said. “You’ve got quite the silver tongue now.” She reached up to move Black off the camera again. “Alright. Good night, Theodore.”

“Good night, Amelia.”

The screen went dark.

The next morning.

Saturday.

Amelia woke early, the light still pale through the curtains.

She reached for her phone out of habit.

One new message.

From Caleb.

She opened it.

(I’m leaving. My flight takes off at ten this morning.)

Mason’s motorbike was old.

The engine rattled and coughed as he pulled away from the Pack House gates, the headlight cutting a weak beam through the dark street ahead.

He rode alone.

The city thinned out as he went, the lights growing sparse, the roads quieter.

By the time he reached the building where he and Jasper rented their rooms, the street was nearly empty.

He pushed the door open to find the table already set.

Jasper had cooked.

Mason washed his hands at the sink and sat down.

Jasper sat across from him, watching him with that careful expression he always wore when he was trying to figure out how to say something.

He signed.

Did you get close to Alpha King Gideon at all? Any access?

Mason shook his head.

He kept his face neutral.

He didn't mention Victor's voice drifting through the wall that evening. Didn't mention what he'd heard.

Alpha's Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 419[1,190 words]

(Amelia's POV)

I stared at Caleb's message for a long moment.

[I'm leaving. My flight takes off at ten this morning.]

I knew exactly what he meant.

He wanted to know if I would come to the airport. If I would see him and Livia off.

I set the phone face-down on the nightstand.

I wasn't going to reply.

I had made my peace with what happened between us. I wasn't carrying the hatred anymore. But letting go of hatred wasn't the same thing as forgiveness, and forgiveness wasn't the same thing as pretending nothing had happened.

Some doors, once closed, don't need to be opened again.

There was nothing left between us worth holding onto.

I got up, washed my face, and went downstairs.

The kitchen smelled like warm bread and herbal tea.

Seraphina was already at the table, a cup held between both hands. She looked up when she heard me on the stairs.

“Come eat,” she said. “I kept it warm.”

I sat down across from her and reached for the bread.

“Jaxon got called in at three in the morning,” she said, her voice careful. “Emergency at Stone Botanicals.

Some kind of equipment failure.”

I stopped chewing.

My mind went there immediately.

Zane Jenkins.

It was the kind of move he would make – quiet, technical, deniable. Not a direct attack. Just enough pressure applied in just the right place to cause disruption.

I filed it away and kept my expression neutral.

Seraphina turned her cup slowly in her hands.

“Caleb is taking Livia out of Northgate City today,” she said, almost gently, “I thought you should know.”

“I already know,” I said.

She let out a soft breath.

“I just hope they stay safe, wherever they go.” She shook her head. “I’m not asking you to see them off. I wouldn’t ask that of you.”

I looked at her.

She meant it. There was no pressure in her voice, no expectation.

In her eyes, the fact that I wasn't carrying hatred anymore was already more than enough.

I reached across the table and squeezed her hand once.

She smiled, and the tension in her shoulders eased.

"Now," she said, her tone shifting, "I picked out something for your date tonight. I left it on your bed. Go

look at it after breakfast and tell me what you think."

After I finished eating, I went back upstairs.

The outfit was laid out neatly across the bed.

A dusty blue cashmere coat. Underneath it, a black lace top, delicate and fitted. The accessories were already arranged beside it – small, precise, exactly right.

I stood in the doorway and looked at it for a moment.

It was warm without being heavy. Elegant without being stiff. The kind of thing that looked effortless and wasn't.

"Mom," I called out toward the hallway.

"Yes?" Her voice floated up from the bottom of the stairs.

"It's perfect," I said. "I love it."

A pleased sound came up from below.

I changed, checked myself once in the mirror, and headed out.

(Author's POV)

At that same moment, Caleb was in the back of a taxi.

His phone was in his hand. The screen hadn't changed.

No reply from Amelia.

He refreshed it anyway, just in case.

Still nothing.

“Put it away,” Livia said from the seat beside him. Her voice was flat. Not cruel – just tired.

Caleb looked at her.

“She’s not coming,” Livia said.

He knew she was right.

Livia turned to look out the window. The city moved past in long, grey streaks.

“I used to think she was heartless,” she said quietly. “Now I think we just got exactly what we deserved.”

Caleb didn’t answer.

Because she was right about that too.

When they had everything, they never once stopped to think about the damage they were doing. They never asked who was getting hurt. They just took, and dismissed, and moved on.

And now they had nothing.

And they were still hoping for something – some gesture, some sign that they were forgiven – and that hope was the most pathetic thing of all.

He put the phone in his pocket.

Outside the window, the high-rises of Northgate City slid past and fell away behind them.

He didn’t say goodbye out loud.

He just said it in his head.

To the city.

To Amelia.

And then he looked forward and didn’t look back.

(Author’s POV)

Amelia didn’t go to the office.

She went to Berry’s place instead.

Berry answered the door in an oversized sweater, her baby face creased with something that wasn't quite worry but wasn't far from it.

"She's been in her room," Berry said, before Amelia could ask. "Both days, Barely comes out. I bring food and she eats it, but she doesn't talk much."

Amelia nodded.

"I'm taking her somewhere."

Berry blinked. "For fresh air?"

"No." Amelia's voice was even. "To show her something. She needs to understand that dying doesn't solve anything. Staying alive and making the people who hurt her pay – that's the only thing worth doing."

Berry looked at her for a moment, then stepped aside.

Amelia walked down the short hallway and knocked on the door at the end.

A pause.

Then footsteps.

The door opened.

Zoey stood in the frame wearing a thin white dress. Her arms were bare. The bruises on them were old-

yellow at the edges, deep purple at the center, the kind that had been there long enough to settle in.

She looked at Amelia without surprise.

"You're here," she said.

"Come with me," Amelia said simply.

Zoey didn't hesitate.

"Okay."

She turned back into the room to grab a jacket off the chair, and Amelia waited.

Since being pulled out of that place, Zoey had felt two things at once, every hour of every day.

Fear – the constant, low hum of it, the certainty that Zane Jenkins would find her eventually, that nowhere was truly safe.

And underneath that, something she hadn't felt in years.

Rest.

Real rest. The kind that came from sleeping in a room where no one was going to come through the door.

She had slept more deeply in the past two nights than she had in the past three years combined.

She was still alive.

She could feel it, the simple fact of it, in a way she hadn't been able to feel anything for a long time.

So when Amelia said *come with me*, she didn't ask where.

She just followed.

Amelia's vehicle pulled up to a building on the eastern edge of the city.

There was nothing remarkable about it from the outside. A plain facade. A side entrance. The kind of place that didn't invite attention.

But it was hers.

One of several locations in Northgate City that almost no one knew about.

Silas was already inside, standing near the far wall with her arms crossed and her expression perfectly composed.

"How is he?" Amelia asked.

"Loud," Silas said. "He's been at it since last night. Threatening, mostly. Says when Griffin finds this place, he's going to-" She paused. "His words were graphic."

Amelia made a short sound.

"He's bluffing."

"Almost certainly," Silas agreed.

Amelia glanced at Zoey, who was standing just behind her right shoulder, watching everything with wide, quiet eyes.

“Come on,” Amelia said. “I want you to see this.”

She led them down the hallway toward the room at the back.

The sound started before they reached it.

Muffled, but getting louder with each step.

Silas moved ahead and put her hand on the door.

She pushed it open.

The voice hit them like a wave.

“Amelia!” The shout tore through the room, raw and furious. “You worthless piece of trash, get out here! When Griffin finds this place, you’ll be on your knees begging to die!”

Alpha’s Abandoned Daughter is the Secret Heiress! - Chapter 420[1,327 words]

(Author’s POV)

The words coming out of Lance’s mouth were filth.

Pure, unfiltered filth – the kind designed to wound, to humiliate, to make someone feel small enough to disappear.

For Amelia, it was noise.

She stood in the doorway with her hands loose at her sides, her expression completely still. Not suppressed. Not controlled. Simply unbothered, the way a person is unbothered by weather they’ve already dressed for.

But behind her, Zoey had gone white.

Not pale. White. The color drained from her face so fast it was like watching something collapse from the inside.

“Amelia!” Lance’s voice cracked against the walls of the room. He stared at the open doorway, his eyes burning – rage on the surface, terror underneath, barely held down. ”

Nothing.

Zoey didn't blink.

Amelia exhaled softly through her nose.

"You told me you'd do whatever I said," she said, her tone shifting – just slightly firmer, just enough. "Were you lying?"

That landed.

Zoey's eyes flickered. Something behind them shifted.

She swallowed once, hard.

Then, slowly, she lifted one foot. Then the other. Step by step, like someone walking through deep water, she crossed the threshold and moved to Amelia's side.

Lance hadn't stopped talking.

His voice had climbed higher, faster, more frantic – a stream of threats and insults that looped back on itself, getting louder as the silence from Amelia continued.

She didn't look at him.

She turned to Silas.

"Get me something," she said. "Something that won't make a mess of her hands."

Silas nodded once and left the room without a word.

She came back thirty seconds later with a baseball bat.

Smooth handle, solid weight. Clean.

Amelia took it.

She turned toward Lance.

He saw the bat and took one automatic step backward, his back hitting the wall. His mouth was still moving – still threatening, still promising what Griffin would do, what he would do, how sorry she was going to be –

Amelia didn't wait for him to finish.

Her wrist turned.

The bat swung horizontal, fast and precise, and connected directly with his mouth.

The sound it made was not pleasant.

Lance hit the floor. He curled in on himself, both hands flying to his face, and when he pulled them away they were red. Two broken teeth sat in the blood on the floor beside him.

He made a sound that was not words.

Amelia looked at the bat for a moment.

Then she turned and held it out to Zoey.

“When someone only understands one language,” she said calmly, “you speak it.” She nodded toward Lance. “Try it. It’ll help more than you think.”

Zoey stared at the bat.

She shook her head quickly, pulling her hands back. “I can’t. He’s – I can’t fight him. He’ll –”

“He won’t,” Amelia said.

Her voice was flat. Not reassuring in a soft way- certain, in the way of someone stating a fact about the weather.

She looked at Zoey steadily.

“His name is Lance Drake. Griffin’s cousin.” She kept her voice even. “He’s spent years setting traps for girls. Young ones, mostly. He’d earn their trust, then use them, then make sure they couldn’t talk about it afterward.” She paused. “Several of them didn’t survive. He has never once expressed anything resembling remorse. He still thinks he’s untouchable.”

Lance, bleeding on the floor, lifted his head.

“You worthless –” he started.

“He needs to feel what they felt,” Amelia said, over him, as if he hadn’t spoken at all. “That’s the only thing that will ever mean anything to him. Pain is the only language he has ever respected.”

Lance spat blood.

“Go ahead,” he snarled, his voice wet and broken. “Unless you’re planning to kill me today, the second I get out of here, I will make sure you both –

He kept going.

Zoey was no longer looking at the bat.

She was looking at Lance.

”

Something had changed in her face.

The frozen quality was gone.

What replaced it was harder.

Zoey reached out and took the bat from Amelia’s hand.

She walked toward Lance.

Lance saw her coming and immediately shifted – his eyes narrowing, his voice switching targets without missing a beat.

“I don’t know who you are,” he said, his tone vicious, “but it doesn’t matter. The second I’m out of here, I’ll find out. And then I’ll find everyone you care about. Every single one of them. And I’ll –”

He didn’t finish the sentence.

The word *everyone* had done it.

Zoey’s grip tightened on the bat.

She thought of Wayne. The only person she had left. The only person in the world who had ever looked at her like she was worth something.

Anyone who threatened Wayne deserved whatever came next.

She swung.

The first hit landed on Lance’s shoulder too high, not enough force behind it. Her arms were shaking.

But she didn’t stop.

She swung again.

“You worthless piece of filth,” she said, her voice breaking on the words. “You absolute

She swung again.

Amelia had already moved.

A silver needle, thin as a thread, slid into the nerve cluster at the side of Lance's neck. The silver's natural toxicity spread fast – not fatal, not even close, but enough. His muscles went slack. His legs gave out. He folded to the floor like something with the bones removed, arms still raised over his head, unable to do anything but absorb what was coming.

Zoey didn't notice.

She was somewhere else entirely.

She hit him again, and again, and the words kept coming – ragged and furious and years overdue – screaming at him about the girls he'd used, the people he'd broken, the lives he'd treated like disposable things.

"Do you know what pain feels like?" she shouted, her voice cracking. "Do any of you monsters actually know what it feels like?"

Silas took a half-step forward.

Amelia put a hand out, not touching her, just – there.

Silas stopped.

Amelia shook her head slightly.

"She needs this," she said, barely above a whisper. "Let her finish."

So they waited.

Ten minutes.

At the end of it, Zoey's arms gave out.

She dropped the bat. It hit the floor with a hollow clang.

She sat down beside it, hard, like her legs had simply stopped working. Her chest was heaving. Her face was wet.

Lance was still on the floor. He wasn't threatening anyone. He was making small, involuntary sounds, curled around himself, shaking.

Zoey pressed the back of her hand to her mouth.

Then she laughed.

It was a broken sound, half-sob, half-real.

“That felt good,” she said, her voice unsteady. “That actually felt –” She stopped. Pressed her lips together.

Shook her head.

When she looked up, her eyes were red and wet and clearer than they’d been in days.

“I’m not dying,” she said. “I’m not going to do it.” Her voice was quiet but it didn’t waver. “I want to stay alive. I want to watch every single one of them get what they deserve. I want to be there when it happens.”

She looked at Amelia.

“I want to see it.”

Amelia held her gaze for a moment.

Then she nodded once.

She turned to Silas.

“Take her out. Get her something warm to drink.”

Silas crossed the room and touched Zoey’s arm gently, guiding her up from the floor and toward the door.

Amelia waited until their footsteps faded down the hallway.

Then she turned back to Lance.

He was still on the floor. The silver’s effect was wearing off at the edges – she could see the small, furious movements starting to return to his fingers – but he wasn’t going anywhere.

She walked over to him.

She put one foot on the side of his head, not hard, just enough to hold it in place.

Then she crouched down slowly, her forearm resting on her knee, and looked at him from above.

Her expression was calm. Almost amused.

“You want out?” she said. “Then it depends on whether Griffin is good enough to find you.”

She tilted her head slightly.

“He showed up at the Stone River Pack House demanding I return you. I handed over your message transcripts and the security footage of you being brought here, and called the authorities. He and his enforcer spent a very interesting few hours at the station.” She smiled, just a little. “They’re probably out by now. But as long as you stay missing, he’s still the most obvious suspect in your disappearance

Her smile widened, just slightly.

“Understand that, you useless little pup?”