

Unwanted Girl Spoiled by Billionaire – c 121-130

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Chapter 121

Damon's reaction |

à left everyone speechless. He actually worried about Noelle, for a second, they wondered if the world was ending

Everyone in the Anderson family knew Damon had always been loyal to Leia.

Before Norlle even stepped foot in their house, he had already maile it clear he wanted nothing to do with her. When she finally returned, he ignored her, mocked her, and acted like she didn't belong.

Even on the night she was being celebrated, he got into a fight with the family because of Leix

So if anyone had asked, they would all say the same thing: Damon would never accept Noelle. No matter what, he would always side with Leia.

Yet here he **was**, looking completely y panicked over Noelle.

Eh, still shocked from being showed, finally snapped. His expression darkened **as** he stepped forward. "Damon, what the hell is wrong with you! Why did you push me?"

Damon shot him a **glare**. "Are you seriously **asking**? **What's** wrong with you? Why did you smack Noelle so hard?"

Damon knew Eli was a total idios when it came to controlling his strength. He had probably smarked Noelle **right on** her injury

Has her wounds reopened? He wanted to ask, but Noelle clearly didn't want to talk about it, and he couldn't just bring it up in front of everyone

Now he was just **standing** there, tense and pissed **off**, with no clue **what** to do

Lli blinked, confused. "Huh? I was **just** excited for her, **so** I patted her. What's the problem?"

“You don’t have to hit people just because you’re happy! And that wasn’t a pat, it was a damn slap” Damon snapped.

Lli stared at him like he’d lost his mind. “Why are you making such a big deal **out** of this? Since when do you even care about Noelle? Haven’t you always been on Leia’s **side**?”

“What’s with the sudden act? And Noelle didn’t even say anything, so why are you losing

“Dammar” Damon clenched **his fists**, barely holding himself **back** from decking him.

Eli wasn’t **any** calmer. He **had just** wanted to **congratulate** Noelle, **and** now **Damon** was acting like he committed a crime

Just as Damon and Eli were about to go at it again, Noelle grabbed Damon’s hand. She looked up at him with **a** smile. “Relax, Dumon. I’m fine. But I have to admit, its kind of nice seeing **you** worry about me”

Damion didn’t look convinced. His gaze stayed locked **on** her, full of **concern** Noelle, are you sure?”

She was putting on a b

on a brave face, but he wasn’t buying it. Her complexion was why too pale, and she was clearly not as okay as she claimed to be

was starting to catch off too.

Noelle had **always** been full of energy, but **now** she looked weak, almost sickly. He had been too distracted arguing with Damon to notice **at** first. but now that lie was paying attention, it was obviou

His brows knitted together. “Noelle, why do you look so palet Are you feeling **okay!**”

Hearing that, Kimberly rushed **over**.

One look at Noelle, and her stomach dropped. Her daughter’s forehead was damp with sweat, her lips almost colorless Alarmed, Kimberly took Noelle’s arm “Sweetheart, **are** you not feeling well? Should I call the doctor?”

She reached out, touching Noelle’s forehead, only to find her skin ice cold.

By then, Vincent and Charlie **had also** gathered **around**, their **faces** full of concern.

Noelle, still trying to play it coul, gave them all a weak sinale: Tin fine! I was just out in the heat **too** long, then blasted the AC when I got inside Probably just a little cold.“.

“You sure?” one of them **asked**.

ng her ryrs.

Noelie was a great liar, and most of them seemed to believe her. But Kimberly wasn't so easily fooled. She turned to Damon, narrowing. "Damon, is that really what happened!".

Damon clenched his jaw.

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Not even close. Noelle was seriously injured **and** needed surgery. But instead of going to the hospital, she had barely gotten her wounds cleaned. The fact that she was even upright right now was a miracle.

"Damon—" Kimberly's voice cut through his thoughts. When he **didn't** answer, she asked again, firmer this time.

Damon, Mom is talking to you?" Noelle nudged **him**, throwing him a quick wink, clearly telling him to just go along with it.

Damon opened his mouth, but for some reason, the words wouldn't come out. His throat felt dry, like something was stuck there. After a brief pause, he gave a small nod. "**Yeah..** just like Noelle said?

That was all Kimberly needed to hear, so she let out a relieved breath

Then, she **gave** Noelle's cheek a gentle squeeze. "You, young lady, need to **take** better care of yourself. You're not a kid, but you're Alright, I'll have someone bring you some cold medicine Later. **Make** sure you take it properly"

act like one.

"I will Noelle beamed, her usual bright smile in place.

Eli, who had been watching, finally relaxed "Seriously, Noelle? You're **strong** enough to beat people up, but a little cold gets you? What a joke **Hang** on, I'll grab you some medicine"

"Thanks. Eli!" she grinned.

When Eli returned, Noelle swallowed the medicine without hesitation. Then, turning to Kimberly, she said, "Mom, I'm feeling a little tired. I **think** I'll head to my room and rest for a bit"

"Alright" Kimberly nodded. "Get some rest. I'll have someone **wake** you up

for dinner.

"**Okay,**" Noelle mumbled as she stood up. However, before she could take a step. Damon was suddenly beside her.

She blinked at him. “Damon“”

Without a word, he reached out and steadied her with a firm grip. His **voice was** calm as he **said**. “I’ll help you up.”

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Noelle grinned at Damon “Wow, you’re being really nice to me. Thanks, Damon!”

“Enough with that.” Damon didn’t even glance at her as he helped her upstairs.

Downstairs, the Anderson family watched them go, their reactions ranging from shock to suspicion.

Eli raised an eyebrow “Okay, is Damon possessed or something! Since when does he care this much about Noelle”

Charlie folded he arms “Seriously Unless Noelle has something on him?”

Kimberly rolled her eyes. “You two need to stop. Damon is her older brother r. Of course,

(comme, he should care about her What’s so strange about that?

“Mom if it were any of us, sure. But Damon‘ There’s no way this isn’t weird” one of them shot back

Kimberly crossed her arms. Then tell me, what exactly is so weird about it?”

“I knew I wouldn’t be this confused

Vincent finally spoke up, his voice calm but firm. “Enough. Why are we acting like this **is** a bad thing! If Damon finally knows how to look after his sister, maybe we should just let him”

El exhaled sharply. Fine, whatever. Then, with **a** smirk, he added, “Damon stepping up isn’t a problem for **us**, but I bet someone else is losing

Kimberly sighed. “Ell **do** you **always** have to be so sarcastic!”

“Oh, I live for it be said, grinning

their

Meanwhile, Leia had been quietly watching

ing from the second floor.

She had seen everything, how Damon, her most loyal supporter, **had actually** fought with Eli over Noelle. Over a **slap**

Aslap. There was no reason for him to react like that. Damon was supposed to be the one person she could always rely on. And now, even he was turning his back on her

As soon as they disappeared into Noelle's room, Leia stormed back to her own. She **barely made** it to the **bed** before collapsing onto it, burying her face in her pillow as sobs wracked her body.

She hated Noelle. She hated everything about the Anderson family. Why is everyone against me? Why does nothing ever go my way? Why!! I hate this. I hate all of it

Her thoughts spiraled, landing on the message from before, the one promising to get rid of Noelle. But Noelle was still here. Still breathing.

She should be dead by now.

Damon stood at Noelle's door, hesitating. He looked her over, his voice low. "Are you sure you're okay?"

Noelle flashed him a bright smile. "Totally fine! Damon, I'm **super** tough. Don't worry about me"

He still wasn't convinced. "If you need anything, just tell me. I'll get

get it for you

you

She paused, thanking. Then, lowering her voice, she whispered, "In a dual case.. can you grab me some gauze and **anti**-inflammatory meds?"

Damon's expression darkened instantly. "So, you are hurt" His jaw tightened, and he silently cursed himself for being a complete idiot.

Noelle, feeling drained, waved him off. "It's fine! just go buy it for me already. I need to sleep. Bye!"

Before he could argue, she pushed him out and shut the door.

He let out a frustrated sigh but turned to leave, heading out to buy the supplies.

Inside, Noelle dragged herself to the bed and collapsed. The moment she hit the mattress, her whole body trembled, **like** she was barely holding something in

After **a moment**, she forced herself up and pulled up

up her shirt. The gap around her

lower wound was soaked with **blood**.

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Thankfully, her black top hid the fresh stains..

She carefully peeled the gauze away, sucking in a sharp breath. The bullet wound, which had just started to scab over, had been ripped open again thanks to Eli's slap. Blood oozed **out**, and beneath it, she could see a glimpse of bone.

A fresh wave of pain hit her, sharp and searing. It hurt. Badly.

Her vision blurred as tears welled up, but she clenched her **jaw** and focused on keeping her breathing steady. She needed to stop the bleeding.

It took every ounce of willpower she had. By the time it finally stopped, she was completely exhausted.

Noelle laid back, exhausted, her forehead **damp** with sweat. Even breathing felt like a chore.

Then, her phone rang. The familiar ringtone pulled her out of her haze.

She reached for it, and when she saw the name on the screen—Nick—her lips quivered.

Before she **could** stop herself, the tears she had been holding back finally spilled over. She answered, her voice small and broken “**Nick** it hurts so much”

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Hearing Noelle's weak, pitiful voice, Nicolas felt like

felt like his chest

chest was being crushed.

He took a slow breath, forcing himself to stay calm. His **voice** was soft, steadily, anything to keep her from breaking down. “Baby, don't cry. Tell me what happened. Where does it hurt?”

Hearing Nick's voice only made Noelle feel worse,

Her body was completely drained, aching all over. She could barely move. Lying there, she pouted and murmured. “I ran into some hitmen... my shoulder got hurt and now it really, really hurts. Nick, it hurts so bad.”

“Himen?” Nicolas' entire body went rigid. His tone darkened. “Elly babe, where are you? Are you safe?”

At home, Noelle sniffed. “I'm safe. It just hurts a lot.”

Her voice was so soft, so fragile, like a small wounded animal. It made his stomach **twist**

Nicolas didn't hesitate. “Baby, I'm coming over right now”

Yes, please. Noelle whispered, her **voice** shaking. “Nick, hurry....”

“Twill Stay put” **He** ended the call.

Not wasting another second, he strode out of his office. Right then, Bryan walked **in and** almost bumped into **him**. He blinked in surprise. “Mr. Sawyer, where are you-

“Cria

a car ready for the Anderson family’s house. And bring some proper gifts, Nicolas ordered, not even looking back.

Bryan hesitated, looking anxious. “Sir, you **can’t** leave now! The chairman of the Atoraka-Nowedon Economic Association is about to arrive. **You** don’t have time to go anywhere.

Nicolas **didn’t** slow **down**. “Then push the meeting back.”

Bryan’s face turned pale. Lowering his voice, he tried again. “But, sir, the chairman **has a** terrible temper. If we reschedule last minute, this deal—”

At that. **Nicolas** suddenly stopped. Bryan barely managed to avoid crashing into him.

Slowly, Nicolas turned, his lips curling into a cold **smirk**. “Bryan, have you forgotten? We’re the ones calling the shots here. No matter how bad his temper is, he’ll have to **suck** it up when he sees me.”

Bryan could tell right away, **Nicolas** was actually angry this time. And that surprised him.

He had worked for the man **for** years, and if there was one thing he knew, it was that Nicolas never let his emotions show.

No matter the **situation**, he was **always** calm, unreadable. But now, it was obvious something had happened with **Noelle**.

Without hesitation. Bryan lowered his head. “Tim sorry, Mr. Sawyer. I shouldn’t have said that.”

Nicolas shot him **a cold glance** before **turning** away. “**Just** get it done. Now.”

“Understood.” Bryan didn’t waste another second

inner time rolled around, but Noelle still hadn’t come downstairs.

Kimberly glanced toward the staircase. “Is it just me, or has Noelle been asleep way too long! She usually naps for an hour or two, but she’s been out all afternoon.”

Eli immediately stood up. “Till go wake her

He had barely **taken** two steps before Damon blocked his way. Eli frowned. “What the hell, Damon!”

Damon crossed **his** arms, **his** expression cold. “She’s **sick**. Just let her **rest**

Eli scoffed. “**And** she doesn’t need to eat just **because she’s sick**? If anything, she needs food even more right now”

He tried to step around him, but Damon moved **again**, blocking him.

Eli’s patience snapped. “Are you looking for a fight!”

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Damon’s clenched “Eh top making a fum.”

fus!!” 1 stared at him like he had lost his mind. “I’m literally just trying to get her to eat What is wrong with you?”

His eyes narrowed. “And since when are you this close to Noelle!

Damon didn’t answer. He just stood his ground, unmoving. Damon, move”

Damon didn’t flinch. “Or what

El huffed. Get out of my wi

“Not happening”

By now, the rest of the Anderson family was watching. It was clear Damon was being unusually dit.

Vincent frowned, looking at him, Damon, what’s with you today?”

“Exactly,” Kimberly said, frowning, “Damon, Eli just wants to call Noelle for dinner. Why are you stopping him?”

Charlie didn’t **say** anything, but his eyes stayed on Damon, like he was trying to figure something out

Leus on the other hand, looked furious. Her eyes were red, her face full of resentment

She couldn’t understand. Damon used to hate Noelle. Now, all of a sudden, he was acting like he cared

It didn’t make sense. He had **always** been on her side, always the one who cared. Something must have happened between him and Noelle while they were out. Something that made him change.

No matter how she looked at it, there was only one explanation, Noelle had somehow bewitched him.

Damon, meanwhile, kept his mouth shut. Noelle didn’t want anyone knowing what had happened earlier, so he had to keep it a secret.

But his silence only made things more suspicious. The tension in the room was thick when a servant suddenly noded Sawyer is here.”

Vincent raised a brow. “Nicolas Sawyer? What is he doing here at this hour?”

Eli scoffed, already annoyed. “Tell him to get lost! We don’t need him here.”

Vincent shot him a warning look “Eli, watch your mouth. He’s Noelle’s fiancé You can’t treat your future brother-in-law like that

The moment he heard “fiance.” Eli lost it.

“Fiance” Dad, are you serious?” He stepped forward, **his** voice rising. “**Nicolas** is nothing **but** a spoiled, useless playboy! And you want Noelle to marry him!

“He’s **just** another rich kid who spent his days partying and doing nothing. How is that guy supposed to be worthy of her

Vincent’s expression hardened

He couldn’t deny that Eli had a point. This whole engagement had never felt right

Noelle was smart, responsible, and independent. Meanwhile, Nicolas, **despite** being the so-called heir of the Sawyer Family, held no real power. He wasted **his** time fooling around and playing rich boy.

To be honest, Vincent wasn’t sure if Nicolas was good enough for Noelle either.

Even though Vincent wasn’t **happy** about it, he **wasn’t** as hot-headed as Eli.

“Idiot,” he muttered, his tone low but firm. “He’s a jerk. You don’t just kick out a guest. And in case **you** forgot, the Anderson family and the Sawyer family go way **back**

“Even if you can’t **stand** him, at least show some basic **respect**. I won’t **have** people thinking our family has no class”

Eli let out a short laugh. Of course. His father cared more about **appearances** than anything else. He wondered if there was anyone in the world

who could make him set that aside.

Vincent told the **servants** to let Nicolas in, and soon, footsteps echoed from the entryway

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about their families being close, they had barely interacted with Nicolas. Everything they knew about him came from

their minds, he was nothing but a spoiled, sleary playboy, slicked-back hair, flushed cheeks, and the lingering smell of alcohol.

“Sawyer, please come in the servant announced

Everyone named toward the door, expecting a mess. Instead, a sharply dressed man in a tailored suit and polished leather shoes stepped inside.

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cent of cheap perfume

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(broad shoulders, slum waist.

Inking me anda

exence that commanded attention. He was nothing like the

rogance they had expected. Instead, he carried himself like

Nicolas they

but the only one who could match Nicolas’s presence was Adriel.

gered, but the man standing in front of them felt different. More composed. More in control

but even they could tell something had shifted. The careless charm had been replaced by

colas remained unfired, a smooth smile on his face as he nodded toward the Anderson family. “Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, I

Stimand, then quickly replied the greeting. It’s been a while

I have to say, you’ve changed quite a bit.”

wavier. His voice was steady, unhurried. It was reckless, before, I won’t deny in

educated. “Oh, don’t be so hard

colas panned at Bryan, who immediately stepped forward with two neatly wrapped gift boxes

-handed“:

histone light but polite. “Just a small gesture, please accept it”

cmneyed the box and in cut a hearty laugh. No need for that Your visit is enough. Don’t treat me like a stranger.

inodded. It’s only right”

oded a jewelry box to Kimberly and a larger gift box to Vincent, his posture respectful as the weight of the moment settled over the room.

miled. “I heard Mr. Anderson enjoys collecting paintings I recently came across a Van Gogh painting and thought you might like it.”

ickly opened the box. Inside was an authentic Van Gogh’s masterpiece.

completely unned. Then he looked back at Nicolas, his expression a mix of disbelief and excitement. “Are you serious? This is Gogh’ And you re just, eving it to me!”

Tan Gogh i painting

they were priceless. Even the smallest piece kuld be worth hundreds of millions, And Nicolas had

sberly Lified.:

bid of her own box. A deep red gemone, nearly the size of – pignon) reg, rested inside. Her beach hatched Jupron Blood ruby!”

rutry, it was the rarest and

wid easily go for hundreds of millona, and

then it was early impossible to find. Unless **one** had serious

bey wouldn’t even get the chance to had on something like this

hall gesture” but the entire Anderson tarily was speechless.

uch a deep bench. Trying

way too much. We can’t accept these He quickly tried to put the paunang **back**

Noelle’s parents, and I have the utmost **respect** for **you** both. **No** gift a

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Seeing how firm he **was**, Vincent hesitated for a moment before finally nodding. He carefully put the painting away, and when he looked up at

dentas again, his expression was noticeably warmer

“Well then Vincent said with a genuine smile, since its just about dinner time, why don’t you stay and join us for a meal?”

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Nicolas smiled. I appreciate the offer, sir, but before dinner, Fd like to check on Noelle. How is the ton”

Kimberly besitated. “She’s still asleep. She wasn’t feeling well today, said she caught a cold. If you go in now, you might get sick to

Nicolas didn’t even flinch. “She is my **fiancee**. If she’s not feeling well, the last thing fil do is stay away”

“**Ban**.....” Kimberly still looked uncertain.

Vincent eut her off gently. “They re engaged. It’s perfectly normal for him to check **on** her. No need to overthink it” He turned to Nicolas with a smile. “Go ahead. Noelle’s room is the third one upstairs”

“Thank you” **Nicolas** nodded and made his way up.

Nicolas had completely stolen the show today in the Anderson family’s house.

he gifts he had.

It just his presence, though that alone was enough to turn heads. What really silenced any objections from them were the brought. No matter how much they might’ve disapproved of him before, those concerns suddenly seemed a lot less important

Eli watched Nicolas disappear upstairs and scoffed. “Wow. He really just bribed Mom and Dad. That guy’s **got nerve**.”

The Anderson family had strict rules. Normally, not **even a** fiance would be allowed to visit Noelle in her room **while** she was resting. That was just how things were done.

But Nicolas had walked in, given Vincent a priceless painting, handed Kimberly a rare **gemstone, and suddenly**, all those rules didn’t seem to matter anymore.

Damon, who had been watching quietly, finally spoke. “He knew exactly what he was doing. Dad loves paintings. Mom loves gemstones. He planned

Charlic, who had been silent until now, **added**. “Those gifts **are** worth over 150 million dollars combined.”

“150 million dollars?!” Eli spun around, his eyes practically popping out of his **head**. “**Are** you serious?”

He had known the gifts were expensive, but hearing the actual number hit different

“That’s insane,” he muttered, still trying to
to process it.

Curly smirked. “The Sawyer family sure knows how to flex. Nicolas doesn’t even have real power, yet he’s still throwing around gifts like that”

Eli rolled his eyes. “Yeah, because he was born into it. He doesn’t **have** to do a damn thing, his brothers run the business, **and** he just **sits back and** spends their money. I heard he owns 40% of the **family’s** shares.

Damon **chuckled**. “Sounds like someone is jealous. Why don’t you go be a Sawyer if you want it so bad?”

Eli scoffed. “**Pass**. I’d rather make **my** own way than be some rich kid living off his family”

Despite his words, he couldn’t **shake** off the envy. Damn, Nicolas **is loaded**

Leia listened to her brothers argue while their parents fawned over the gifts, unable to put **them** down. Her eyes drifted toward the stairs, and for a moment, a dark shadow crossed her face.

sting in her chest.

She loved Harley, or at least she told herself she did. But watching Nicolas tonight, so different from before, left an unexpected sti

If she hadn’t turned him down all those times, everything he had now—the wealth, the **prestige**, the admiration—would have been hers.

From the moment Nicolas arrived **to** the moment he went upstairs, he hadn’t spared her a single glance.

She was supposed to be his fiancée. And yet, to him, she might as well not exist,

Leia felt a wave of bitterness wash over her. It was **as if**

It was **as if** Noelle had stolen something from her again.

How much more does she have to **take** from me before she’s satisfied? Do I have to destroy her to get my life back? Her fingers curled into fists

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After dealing with the Anderson family, Nicolas braided upstairs without wasting a second.

He stopped in front of the third door on the left and knocked lightly. “Elly babe, it’s me, Nick”

Silence. Frowning, he tried again. Still no response

Is she asleep? Something felt off. He pushed the door open, and the second he stepped inside, a faint metallic scent hit him. Blood.

His chest tightened as he hurried over to the bed. Noelle was curled up under the blanket, hugging a pillow. Her breathing was uneven, soft but shaky. Her face, though no longer pale, was flushed in a way that didn’t look right.

She was burning up.

“Elly babe.” Nicolas crouched down pressing the **back** of his

is hand to her forehead. The beat that met his skin made his stomach **drop**

“Shit. She’s burning up Her fever had to be at least 104 degrees Faltenbrit

Without hesitation, he scooped her up, holding her against his **chest**. His hand gently cupped her **cheek as** he tried to wake her. “Elly babe, come on. Wake up”

A few seconds passed before her eyelashes fluttered, Slowly, she opened her eyes, her gaze hazy **and** unfocused

Then despite everything, she gave him a **weak**, sleepy smile and reached out “**Nick** you’re here. Hug me”

Nicolas swallowed hard. She looked nothing like the bright, energetic girl he knew. She was fragile, weak, like she might slip away if he let go.

A sharp pain twisted in his chest. He held her closer, his voice barely steady. “Baby, why did you let it get this bad?”

He had known she was hurt from their call earlier, but he **hadn’t** realized just how bad it was. She was barely hanging on

Noelle was completely tired. Her body felt like dead weight, the fever refusing to break. The wound was inflamed, burning up along with her

She slumped against Nicolas’s chest, too weak to even lift her head

Barely above a whisper, she mumbled, “Ran into some hitmen... Damon was there too. They were after him. Took a bullet for him ended up like this”

Nicolas's expression darkened instantly, "Damon' The **same** bastard who had once threatened to **kill** Elly babe!!

"You took a bullet for him! Are you serious?" His **voice was** tight his chest burning with frustration. What the hell are you thinking?

Noelle didn't even open her eyes. "Had to build a good relationship with him. He was ready to cut ties, but after this... now he cares"

There was almost a hint of pride in her voice. **Nicolas** let out a sharp breath, his **jaw** clenching. You nearly **died** for **that**?

t

He wanted to grab her and shake some sense into her. Is your connection to the Anderson family really worth risking life?

You've taken a bullet, and **for** what? Have you even thought about the people who actually care about you? The ones who will be terrified anything happens to **you**?"

Nicolas wanted to be **mad**—he **was** mad—but looking at her now, so **weak** and **helpless**, he just couldn't bring himself to say anything harsh.

Taking a slow breath, he kept his voice steady. "Elly babe, let me see your injury"

"Yeali" Noelle Lurely nodded.

She tried **to** lift her left shoulder but struggled, her movements sluggish. **Nicolas** immediately stepped in, gently pushing her clothes aside.

The moment he saw her wound, his breath caught

A deep, bloody hole marred her once flawless skin. The bleeding **had** stopped, and a **scab** had formed, but the raw pink flesh underneath was still

vible

Seeing it up close, Nicolas' whole body tensed. His hands shook, his chest felt tight, and for **a second**, he **forgot** how to breathe..

His eyes darkened, jaw clenching **as** he grunted out, "Noelle, are you insane! You're seriously hurt, and you're just lying here like it's nothing? You need to go to the hospital. Now"

se into her again. If she had a death wish, she should've just said so, he would buy her the nicest grave **money**.

He wanted to yell, to shake some sense into her

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But no matter how pissed he was, his **body** moved on instinct. He was ready to pick really to **pick** her up up and get her to the hospital right that second. Before he **could**, Noelle grabbed his hand, squeezing in tightly.

1. y. She pressed her head against his chest, shaking her **head**. “Nick, I can’t go to the hospital

“Can’t?” His voice was sharp. “Noelle, you have a bullet wound. What do you mean you can’t?”

She was **as** stubborn as ever. “No”

“Elly babe—His pati

patience **was hanging** by a thread. But instead of backing down. Noelle smiled.

She **forced** her eyes open, exhaustion clear on her face, but still, she smiled at him. “Nick, don’t worry. I’m tougher than I look. I’ll be fine in less than a week. It won’t even **leave** a scar

Nicolas just stared **at** her. “A week? Are you serious?”

She nodded confidently, then tilted her head, her voice softening “Don’t be **mad**. You look kinda hot when you’re angry, but I like it better when you smile. Your smile is my favorite.”

His heart did a damn flip. Even now, looking like she would pass out any second, she still had the nerve to mess with him.

With a sigh, he reached out and flicked her forehead. “You’re barely holding on, and you **think** I can still smile! Huh?”

“There’s really nothing to worry about.” Noelle murmured, wrapping her arms around his waist and pressing closer.

She **barely** had the energy to keep her **eyes** open, so she just rested her head against his chest, letting out **a** soft sigh. This injury is nothing”

“Nothing!” **Nicolas** almost lost it right then and there.

His grip on her tightened as he fought the urge to scold her. She had a bullet wound, and she **was** acting like she just scraped her knee.

Noelle just let out a tired hum, her **voice soft** and **almost** playful. “Seriously, I’ve had worse?”

Then, like she **was** talking about a bad memory from gym class, she added, “One time, every bone in my body was shattered. All my joints were broken. No medicine, no help. just me, left to figure it out on my own. I survived that.”

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Noelle genuinely wanted to comfort Nicolas, to ease his worries about her. But the moment her words left her lips, it felt like the hard taken a handful of needles and stabbed them straight into his heart.

Shattered bones Every joint broken! What kind of life had Noelle endured? Who could be so heartless, so cruel Nicolas seethed, his body trembling with rage. His veins throbbed on his forehead as he fought to rein in his fury.

Clenching his jaw, he **hissed** through gritted teeth. “Who? Who did this to you?”.

“Hmm. I can’t say Noelle shook her head.

The lab—its secrets—were off-limits, even to Nick. She quickly steered the conversation back, her voice soft but firm. “Nick, I’m telling you this because I want you to know I’m strong. I don’t need to go to the hospital. I **hate** hospitals”

If the hospital discovered her abnormal physiology, or if Nick caught even a hint of it, she’d have no choice but to kill him too. But she loved Nick too much. She couldn’t bear to hurt him. So, no hospitals. Ever.

“Elly babe Nicolas had seen enough of the world to think he was immune to **its** cruelties. He thought his heart had turned to stone long ago. But now, he felt it breaking for this girl, his eyes welling up with tears he hadn’t shed in years.

Noelle noticed the change in his voice **and** looked up **at** him. “Nick, are you crying?”

His brown, usually unreadable eyes were now red-rimmed, glistening with unshed tears. He didn’t deny it, his voice rough as he said, “Yeah, you made me cry. Happy now!?”

“Hey, don’t be mad” Noelle cooed, wrapping her arms around his neck. She forced a smile, trying to lighten the mood. “I might be exaggerating a bit, you know I just wanted you to fuss over me a little. It’s not that bad. Really!”

She paused, then added, “It’s just been a **while** since I’ve been hurt this badly. I’ll get used to it again.”

The worst injuries she’d ever suffered had been in the lab. Back then, the men in white coats had pushed her body to its limits, experimenting on her day after day. They wouldn’t stop until she was **barely** clinging to life.

Needles piercing her flesh. **Bones** shattered. Burns Drowning. She'd **endured** it all. Back then, she'd wished for death, but somehow, she'd survived. And in the process, she'd gained an incredible ability to heal.

Since leaving the lab, Noelle's physical abilities had **far** surpassed those of ordinary people. No one **had** been able to hurt her—until now. It had been eight years since she'd felt pain like this. That's why it hit her so hard. But compared to what she'd been through before, a bullet wound was nothing

"You'll get used to **it again!**" Nicolas repeated, **his** anger flaring once there. "You want to

"No, no! I'm just saying: Noelle backtracked quickly.

through this again""

"Don't say stuff like that. I want to live a long life, you know," he grumbled, though his tone softened.

"Nick" she whined, her voice dripping with sweetness.

Nicolas sighed, defeated. I can't **stay**

in't stay mad at you. **Just** stop

I stop talking, **okay?** **You** look like you're about to pass out from the pain."

"I'm hur! I was in pain, but now that you're here, it's **all** gone. You're my painkiller, Nick"

Even in her weakened state, Noelle knew how to charm him. **Nicolas** couldn't help but smile, though his heart ached for her.

He knew she was putting on a brave face, but her body told a different story. She was weak, too weak to recover properly at the Anderson house. especially since she didn't want her family to know about her injury.

An idea struck him. He looked down at her, his voice gentle. "Elly babe, how about you come **stay** with me for a few days?"

"stay with you?"

"Yeah. Even **if you** won't go to the hospital, you still need **a** good place to recover. **You** can't heal properly here, and you'll just end up being a burden **to** your family. So, why not come to my place! Once you're better, you can come back."

Noelle's eyes flickered with interest. After a moment, she replied.

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"**Okay,**" Noelle replied softly, her voice sweet and i

Lobedient

She had been worrying about how to recover without her family noticing. Even if there was no blond, the sanell of medicine might give her away Nick's offer to say at his place solved her problems perfectly.

Seeing her agree so readily. Nicolas let out a quiet sigh of relief. Good. She hadn't turned me down. The thought eased some of the tension in his chest

"Then let's **go** now, Nicolas said.

"So soon!" Noelle blinked, surprised.

"Yeah

Every time Nicolas thought about the horrifying wounds on Noelle's back, his heart ached. He didn't want her staying in this place a second longer -no proper medical care, no decem environment. He couldn't stand it.

to make him

"Hmm..." Noelle hesitated, biting her lip. She glanced **at** Nicolas and said, "But Eli's home. I don't know if he'll let me go. I don't want to m

Eli had never liked Nicolas. If the two of them started arguing, it would be a mess. After their last cold war, Noelle didn't want to go through that again.

"Don't worry." Nicolas reassured her, leaning down to nuzzle her forehead gently. His voice was soft and tender. "I won't upset Eli. Besides, this is where Damon's conscience comes into play."

"Huh?" Noelle furrowed her brow, curiosity flickering.

What does Damon have **to do** with this she wondered. But the thought quickly slipped away-she was too **exhausted** to press further. If Nicolas said it was fine, she trusted him

With a soft sigh, she opened her arms and grinned up at him, her expression a mix of exhaustion and playfulness. "Nick, carry me. I want you in carry **me** downstairs"

"Won't that hurt your wound?" **Nicolas** hesitated. He thought carrying her on his back might be safer, avoiding her injuries.

But Noelle insisted, I want you to hold met Just be careful with **the** wound, okay!"

When his little **princess** gave an order, Nicolas obeyed. He chuckled softly, scooping her up effortlessly. "Alright, let's go."

"Okay."

Nicolas carried Noelle carefully, making sure to avoid the bullet wound on her left shoulder. He headed downstairs with her in his arms.

was pacing nervously, **his** eyes darting toward the staircase. “What’s taking Nicolas so long in Noelle’s room! What’s he up to! I’m

Downstairs, Eli was par going up there”

Before he could move, he saw Nicolas coming down the stairs with Noelle in his arms. The sight **made** Eli’s blood boil.

He stormed over, blocking their path. “Nicolas, what the hell are you doing! Where are you **t aking** Noelle

Nicolas, ever calm, smiled warmly at Eli. “Noelle’s **running** a fever. I’m taking her to see a doctor. Mind stepping aside, Eli?”

The way **Nicolas said** “Eli” made him llinch, a shiver of discomfort running down his spine.

Disgusted but undeterred, El stood **his** ground. “Are you out of your mind? We have doctors **here**. Why do you need to take her out?”

He leaned in to check on Noelle. She hadn’t looked great when she came **home earlier**, but after taking some medicine, she should’ve been better. What he saw shocked him.

Noclle’s face was flushed, her forehead damp with sweat. She looked unterly exluausted, curled up in Nicolas’s arms.

“Noeller What the hell happened? **You said** it was **just a** cold?” Eli’s voice rose in panic.

Noelle winced, burying her lace deeper into Nicolas’s chest. “Ugh. It’s noisy....

Eli’s jaw dropped. I’m worried about you, and you think I’m being noisy he thought.

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sammered, but concern sull clouded his eyes as he glared at Nicolas. “Put her down! She’s burning op. She don’t need you hauling ber ‘around. I’ll call the family doctor“

Nicolas didn’t budge. He kept his polite smile intact. “Eli, Noelle’s condition seems serious. Your **family** doctor might not be enough. I’ve already.

irrangd for the best doctor in Reniam City to see her.”

“Oh so you think money can buy everything! Put her down!” Eli snapped.

Nicolas remained silent, still holding Noelle. His gaze flicked toward Damon, who seemed to pick up on the unspoken message

Damon sighed and stepped forward, pulling Eli back. “Eh, stop making a scene. Nicolas isn’t going to hurt Noelle. Don’t waste time”

Eli stared at Damon in disbelief. “Damon, are **you out** of your mind? You’re seriously letting Nicolas take Noelle away**

Damon, usually quick to anger, held **back** his temper for the sake of not making a scene in front of the outsider. Besides, Nicolas’s arrival seemed too timely, and he likely knew about Noelle’s injuries. He was probably just trying to get her treatment as quickly **as** possible.

“Look” Damon said with a **serious** tone, “Nicolas **says** he’s already called in the best doctor. What’s the harm in letting him **take** care of her?”

“We have our own doctors, **don’t** we?” Eli **was** still agitated.

Damon shot him a sarcastic look. “Your doctors are different from his, aren’t they?”

They are not Eli **was stubborn**

Damon gave him a cold laugh. “Are they really?”

He then turned to their parents, **asking** “**Mom**, Dad, what do you think?”

Vincent and Kimberly, who had accepted Nicolas’s **expensive** gifts earlier, felt obliged to side with him. Plus, they genuinely believed Nicolas a

Vincent nodded. “I think it’s fine for Nicolas to take her

Eli was stunned. “What?”

Kimberly chimed in, agreeing, “Since it’s the best doctor, it’ll be better for Noelle.”

Eli’s face went blank. “You too!”

He quickly turned to Charlie, **asking**, “Charlie, what do you think?”

Charlie, who had been quietly watching the exchange, glanced at his two brothers and replied with a neutral tone, “I abstain”

Eli **was** speechless. “You’re abstaining?”

Frustrated, he turned to Leia.

Leia, trapped in his gaze, tensed, unsure how to respond. But before she could speak, Eli waved his hand dismissively. “Forget it. Your opinion doesn’t matter anyway”

La could only stare, stunned by his attitude. What a jerk,' she thought, disbelief thick in her chest

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Eli found himself outnumbered. He glanced around the room, his lips curling into a bitter smile. "Well, three votes for, ofte against, and one aberration. Bless my opinion doesn't matter, huh?

Nicolas, victorious, smiled gracefully. "So. Thi, can I take Noelle now!!

Elishor a cold look at Nicolas

Nicolas ignored the childish antics and turned in Vincent and Kimberly with a polite smile "Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, Ell take Noelle now?

Vuvent nodded. Go ahead. Don't delay her treatment."

Kimberly stepped closer to her daughter, gently to hing Noelle's forehead. The heat radiating from her skin maile Kimberly's worry deepen. She looked up at Nicolas and added. "Nicolas, make sure she doesn't catch a chill on the way. And keep a damp cloth on her forehead to cool her dosen."

"Thank you. Take good ca

You have my wond"

care of her

Aber saying their goodbyes, Nicolas carried Noelle out of the Anderson house and quickly drove to his private residence

His residence was a small duplex, normally only occupied by Nicolas, and a housekeeper came by to clean every so housekeeper had already left

y so often. But since it was late, the

Nicolas instructed his secretary, Bryan, to prepare all the necessary medical supplies. He was about to call a doctor when Noelle, still feverish **and** half-conscious, stopped him.

"Nick, no doctors"

"Don't worry. My people **are** discreet. They won't say a word. Nicolas tried to reassure her.

But Noelle stubbornly **shook** her **head**. "No need. I'm a pretty good doctor myself. I know **what's** going on with me. Nicolas, just get me a few meds."

She lived off a few medications. Nicolas frowned, still **uneasy**, "Elly babe, are you sure just these meds will be enough!"

“Yep.”

Noelle **was** lying limp on the bed, eyelids barely lifting **as** she looked at him. The medicine is just to help a little. My body heals fast. I just need *Test*”

Hearing this, Nicolas finally relented. “Alright. I’ll get the meds. You try to rest

With, that, he turned to leave. But before he could even **take a** step, Noelle grabbed the **hem** of his shirt.

“What is it?” he asked, turning around.

Norlie’s round eyes were half-lidded. She looked at him, her voice soft, “Nicolas will you stay with me tonight? I **just want** you by my **side**.”

Her weak, dependent expression melted his heart. His **eyes** softened as he bent down, gently ruffling her hair. “Of course, sweetheart. I’ll stay with you. Let me just get your meds first, **okay**?

“Okay”

Only then did she release him, her eyes fluttering as she added, “Come **back quick**,”

“Promise.” Nicolas said, **giving** her a smile.

He couldn’t help but think how clingy she was when she wasn’t feeling well—she was already a naturally affectionate person, but when she was hurt,

she seemed even needier.

Nicolas returned with the medication she requested—oral and **topical**. After administering everything, Noelle flopped back onto the bed, exhausted, though her **small** hand still clung tightly to his. It was as if holding onto him was the only way she could feel safe.

Nicolas sat on the edge of the bed, quietly watching her **sleep**,

That night, Noelle didn’t sleep peacefully. Her injuries were severe. Even surgery would take **hours to treat** such wounds, but she refused **to** go to

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the hospital or accept medical help, choosing to rough it out on her own.

As she put it, she’d always handled injuries this way before, even worse ones, and still pulled through

But even someone **as** strong as her couldn't avoid suffering during the recovery. After all, she was still only human.

Her fever raged all night, and she felt like a little furnace. Despite her small frame, when she curled up, she seemed even smaller.

Nicolas watched her closely. Suddenly, he remembered reading somewhere that people with extreme insecurities often curled up into a ball while they slept

He didn't know what Noelle **had** been through, but he could imagine. She had probably been through so much pain and hardship alone, **always** forcing herself to carry the burden **without** anyone to rely on

"Elly babe, it's okay. I'm here. You don't have to be scared. Nicolas **bent** down and whispered softly in her ear, trying to comfort her.

She remained unconscious, but from the **way** she clenched her teeth and made **faint** "hissing" sounds, he could tell how much p

pain she **was** in

Just watching her made his heart ache. She had insisted she wasn't in pain, probably trying to appear strong for his sake. But now, it was clear. Such a little liar. Nicolas thought, a mix of tenderness and frustration swirling inside him.

Nicolas lay next to her, humming a soft tune. Whether the song had any effect, or if Noelle simply found comfort from his presence, by the time the early morning hours came, her face **had** relaxed, and the pain seemed to ease.

All night long. Nicolas had been wiping her forehead and cooling her down. By the time the sky began to lighten, Noelle's fever finally broke

She was still asleep. Nicolas gently lifted the hem of her shirt to check her wounds.

Miraculously, the injuries **from** yesterday, once raw **and** bloody, had scabbed over. The inflammation had subsided, and her skin, except around the wound, had returned to its original smoothness.

Noelle lay quietly, breathing evenly, not the frantic breaths from last night but calm and steady.

She was healing fast.

Nicolas **was** astonished.

Earlier. Noelle had claimed **that** she'd recover completely in a week, without leaving **a scar**. At the time, he thought she was either exaggerating or just trying to avoid worrying him.

But looking at her now, **recovering** at this speed maybe, just maybe, she would be fully healed before the week was up

It was incredible. Such healing power was beyond what any normal human could possess.

Nicolas had known for a while that Noelle wasn't an ordinary person. Her reflexes, speed, strength, and learning ability were all top-tier. She was, in many ways, the pinnacle of human potential.

But even then he hadn't considered the full picture. Someone like her—so powerful—couldn't have been born **naturally**.

Nicolas knew that secret organizations existed, conducting experiments to create **enhanced** humans. Noelle seemed like the type they'd be striving for—perfect, beyond **the** average human

But if that were true, he **couldn't** understand why she had been released. If she had been a subject of such an organization, she would have been a precious asset. Why let her go? What purpose would it serve?

According to **Nicolas's** investigation, Noelle had shown up at an orphanage when she was just ten years old. This meant **that** for the last eight years, she had been living freely.

If she really was the product of some secret program, why would they let her go? What could their reasoning possibly be? Nicolas wondered, his

mind

marbled with questions

AD

Noelle woke up around noon the next day. Her eyes fluttered open with a sudden movement, as if she'd been recharged, and she was a far cry from the weak and feverish state she'd been **in** the **day** before.

"Nick—" She sat up in bed and looked around the room, searching for Nicolas, but he wasn't there. The room was empty—just her.

"Nick" She hopped out of bed, barefoot, and rushed toward the door, ready to find him.

As soon as she stepped into the hallway, a wave of delicious smell hit her. It was intoxicating.

Her nose twitched, and her stomach growled loudly, demanding to be fed. She followed the scent, racing downstairs, where she spotted Nicolas—tall handsome, and holding a bowl of porridge—heading toward the stairs.

When he saw her, a smile spread across **his** handsome face. "Elly babe, what are you doing running around like **this**?"

"I couldn't find you, so I **came** looking!" Noelle chirped, bouncing over to him. Her eyes locked onto the bowl in his hands. "Nick, what's that! It smells amazing!"

the be

“Fish porridge” Nicolas replied, amused as she practically drooled over the bowl. “I figured you’d be hungry when you woke up. Since you’re **injured**. I made something light. Think you can handle it?”

Lean cat in” Noelle’s eyes lit up. “I’m starving! I could probably gnaw on a table leg right now!”

Nicolas **chuckled**, teasing her. “Guess I’ll **have** to make sure you’re well-fed, or else all the furniture in the house will disappear.”

Noelle **giggled**, reaching out to grab the porridge from his hands. “Let’s eat!”

She started toward the dining table, but after a few steps, Nicolas called her back. “Hold up”

“Huh?” Noelle turned, blinking at him. “What’s wrong?”

Nicolas’s brows furrowed **as** he walked over, his gaze dropping to her bare feet. “**Why** aren’t you wearing shoes?”

Noelle looked down and then realized, eyes wide. “Oh! I forgot!”

Nick sighed, his expression softening, though **a** flicker of frustration lingered. This little scannerbrain he thought, shaking his head with a mixture of exasperation and affection

Without saying another word, he swept her up into **his** arms, his voice gentle but firm. “Even though it’s summer, the floor can be cold. No more running around barefoot, got it?”

“Go it” Noelle grinned, her smile lighting up her **face**.

The sight of her sweet, innocent face made Nick’s heart soften. His chest tightened with affection, **and** it **felt like** his heart, over and over.

He swallowed hard, trying to **steady** his breath,

like a soft leather was brushing against

But Noelle was too focused on the food to notice. She wiggled in his arms, urging

ing **him**, “Nick, **what’s**

is the **hold-up**? Let’s go call”

Snapping out of his daze, Nicolas carried her to the dining room.

Noelle, needing to replenish her energy after her injury, devoured the entire portion of porridge. When she finished, she leaned **back** in her chair, parting her slightly rounded belly, “Nick, your cooking is amazing. This porridge **is** almost as good as mine!”

“Really” Nick raised **an** eyebrow, amused. “You’re complimenting me and sneaking in **a self-praise** at the same time?”

Noelle grinned. “I’m **just** telling the truth Next time.

1. r. I’ll make you something, too. I’m an expert chef, alter all?”

“**Alright**, Ill believe it when I taste it,” he **teased**, tapping her nose affectionately

Noelle led, beaming

i now she was starting to

Once she was full, she started feeling a bit **sticky**. She hadn’t taken a bath since the day before **because** of her **injuries**, and now feel uncomfortable.

She grabbed Nicolas’s arm. “Nick, I need a shower”

He looked at her with **a** raised eyebrow. “You’ve got those serious injuries, and you want to **take** a bath! You’re **asking** for the wound to get infected again, aren’t you? Remember what happened last night?”

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He was clearly remembering how she’d been burning with fever all night **because** of the infection.

But Noelle wasiyi **having** it. She clung to him, whining, “Nooo, Nick, I feel gross. I **need** a bath!”

“**You** can **fought** it out for a few **days**, just wipe yourself down with some water, he suggested firmly.

No! I want a real shower!” Noelle pouted, her eyes sparkling with mischief. “You could help me. Nick. You’re so careful—you’d make sure my wound stays dry, right?”

Nicolas’s eyes narrowed. “You little troublemaker. **Were** you planning this all along?”

uh?” Noelle blinked innocently at Nicolas’s suspicimis gaze, then shook her head earnestly. “Not I really wanted a bath, but then I thought of this ides, so I figured I’d ask you to help me. It’s like going with the flow, you know?”

“You’re such a smooth talker,” Nicolas **said**, poking her forehead lightly Inut carefully.

“Nick, help me, help me, Nick, Nick, Nick, please, please, please!” Noelle clunted like a broken record.

She **was like** a piece of sticky candy- —once she latched onto you, there was no shaking her off.

Nicolas had no choice but to **give** in. If he refused, she'd probably pester him about it all day. The thought alone **was** exhausting. Finally, he sighed in defeat "Alright, let's **go**."

Noelle cheered, "Yay! Bath time! Bath time?"

In the bathroom. Noelle stripped down and draped herself over the edge of the bathtub like a contented kitten, letting Nicolas wash her with slow,

gentle strokes.

His careful tender touch **had** her humming in pleasure. Her soft, sweet murmurs were pure temptation, pushing Nicolas's self-control to the brink

Nicolas felt like **he must have** owed her **in a** past life, **and** now she was here to torment him.

He was a normal, healthy man, and having the person he loved naked in front of him, making such inviting sounds, was an immense challenge.

But no matter how strong his urges, he wasn't about to **take advantage** of her while she was injured.

After silently reciting every moral principle he could think of to **no** avail, Nicolas decided to distract himself by **starting** a about those assassins from yesterday-any idea who sent them? Any enemies you can think of?"

"Hmun"" Noelle tilted her head, pausing her humming. "Not really

a conversation. "Elly babe.

The fact that the attackers were also from the lab had surprised her. Even more surprising was that someone had hired them to kill her.

"Any suspects?" **Nicolas** pressed.

"I've had **a lot of** enemies in the **past**, but I'm not sure who is could be."

Nicolas's expression darkened, "Could it be because your photo was released by the company, drawing

attention?

"Probably not," Noelle shook her head. "For dangerous jobs like being a spy, **assassin**, or mercenary, I never revealed **my identity**. And in other industries where I did show my face. I don't think I made any enemies."

"So it's unlikely to be an old enemy seeking revenge, Nicolas mused, his eyes narrowing, "Could it be **Lela**?"

Noelle had been in the spotlight **lately**, and **jealousy** might drive Leia to do something extreme.

But Noelle shook her head again. “Doubt it. Leia doesn’t have the connections for that”

The **assassins** were from the **lab**, **and** someone like Leia, who lived a normal **life**, wouldn’t have access to such people.

Sull, Nicolas wasn’t convinced. “We should **investigate** Leia anyway, see if she’s been in contact with anyone **suspicious**”

“Okay. Noelle nodded.

After what felt like **an** eternity, Nicolas finally finished bathing Noelle. He wrapped her in a large towel and carried her **back** to the bedroom.

The scene felt familiar, The last time Noelle had **been in a similar situation was** when she’d stayed over at Dumon’s place and ended up with **Nicolas**. That night, they’d crossed a line

As the saying goes, “A well-fed mind wanders to mischief Noelle couldn’t help but recall **that** night, and her thoughts quickly took a naughty turn.

When Nicolas bent down to place her on the bed, Noelle suddenly grabbed his arm.

“What now!” Nicolas looked down at her, noticing the mischievous glint in her eyes

Noelle grinned eagerly. “Nick, I want to do o what we did last time.”

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A heavy sigh escaped Nicolas. The moment **he saw** that sparkle in her eyes, he knew she was up to no good. He set her down and flicked her forehead lightly. “What are you thinking? You’re still injured. Don’t push your luck.”

“What’s the big deal Noelle pouted, refusing to let go. “My wound’s already healing. Once it scabs over, it’ll be gone in a few days, no scar left!” “Let’s wait until you’re fully healed, okay? Nicolas replied, trying to stick to his principles.

“Ughhh” Noelle let out a small groan, clearly disappointed. She leaned in, whispering in a teasing tone, “Nick, are you... not up for it

She’d read in a magazine that men his age were supposed to be at their peak. Yet, he kept turning her down.

According to the magazine, if a man kept refusing woman, it was either because he didn’t like her or because he had... performance issues.

Nicolas raised an eyebrow. His eye t

twitched **as** he looked at her, forcing a smile. “You little troublemaker, what kind of nonsense have you been

Sup

“It’s not nonsense! Noelle crossed her arms, defending her source. “It’s full of life truths every woman should know!”

Nicolas sighed. She’d clearly been misled. “No more of those trashy magazines, got it!”

“Why?” Noelle frowned, clearly not happy with his decision.

Because I said so, Nick snapped back, his patience wearing thin

“Humph” Noelle huffed, then added slyly, “Nick, if you’re really having trouble, you should see a doctor. Don’t be embarrassed! The magazine said men often ignore their problems because of pride, and then it gets worse!”

Her constant jabs about his “performance” were pushing Nicolas to his limit. He’d been restraining himself all this time out of concern for her injury, and now she had the audacity to question his capabilities!

His eyes darkened as he leaned over her, his voice low and dangerous. “You really want to push me, huh?”

“Nick” Noelle blinked up at him, sensing the shift in his demeanor. His body temperature seemed to rise, his breathing growing heavier.

Nicolas closed the distance between them, his dark eyes locking onto hers.

A sly smile spread **across** his handsome face as he murmured. “Elly babe, looks like the last lesson wasn’t enough,” he muttered, his tone low and dangerous “Fine, let’s see if we can **make this** a real lesson.”