

## Chapter 764 Deal

Elliana clutched her baby girl closer, her arms forming a shield around the tiny body. Nothing disgusted her more than watching Maxine's hungry eyes devour her daughter. This was the precious life she had nearly died bringing into the world—and no one possessed the authority to steal her away.

Right now, Maxine teetered on death's edge, yet her gaze remained locked on the baby girl. A savage impulse flickered through Elliana's mind: she could send Maxine straight to her grave right then and there.

A string of broken sighs escaped Maxine's lips as she shook her head. "I've failed every ancestor who built the Griffiths legacy. I've abandoned the wisdom passed down by those who came before me. The family crumbles now, destroyed by my own failures—I deserve to die a thousand times over."

She raised her tear-stained face toward Elliana. "Please, I'm begging you—take the Sovereign's Orb and stand as the temporary leader of the Griffiths family. When your daughter grows strong enough, you can transfer the power to her. Could you grant me this? If you accept, I'll reveal every secret you've spent years hunting about your mother."

Despite Maxine's desperation, Elliana's face remained frozen in an icy, impenetrable mask. The others remained equally unmoved. Those tears sprang from Maxine's bitterness to be reduced to this point—they earned no sympathy.

Only Aubrie wept. She and Maxine had been raised together, once bound tightly. Their entire generation had absorbed the Griffiths family's tradition, each one carrying the crushing weight of duty to preserve the family's glory.

Even after Maxine had imprisoned her in a dungeon for years, abandoning her to endless torment, Aubrie still couldn't stomach watching their bloodline vanish forever. Miguel had already demolished their core base—ripping the very heart out of their family—and nothing remained. The Griffiths family had breathed its last.



Maxine had burned her final reserves of strength to flee the underground ruins and track down Elliana. This was her last desperate wager, gambling that Elliana's hunger to discover her mother's origins would prove powerful enough to make her accept the Sovereign's Orb and prevent the Griffiths' name from dissolving into forgotten history.

Through a veil of tears, Aubrie watched Elliana, silently praying she would agree, though she understood she had forfeited any right to ask.

Elliana didn't reach for the Sovereign's Orb. Her refusal emerged calm and measured. "I carry no Griffiths blood. I possess neither the right nor the reason to lead your family. If I claimed this Sovereign's Orb, my authority would be hollow, and no one would acknowledge me. You'll need to search elsewhere."

Maxine's strength drained visibly from her body. She swayed, her voice fading to barely a whisper. "Elliana, even if Griffiths blood doesn't run through your veins, it flows through your husband's—and through your daughter's. Please, shoulder this burden just temporarily. Do it for their sake."

"My husband wants nothing to do with the Griffiths family, and my daughter never will," Elliana answered, each word coated in frost.

Cole silently took Elliana's hand, a quiet gesture of support for whatever she decided. Though Griffiths blood coursed through his body, he had never embraced membership in the family and felt no loyalty to their crumbling empire.

"What about the secret of your mother's origins—does that hold no power over you?" Maxine studied Elliana, her voice dissolving into a desperate whisper. "If you turn me away, that truth dies with me. No living soul will ever discover where she came from."

Elliana's lips compressed into a thin, bloodless line. Words abandoned her. She had refused the Sovereign's Orb specifically to sever every thread connecting her to the Griffiths family. Whether the Griffiths family flourished or withered into dust mattered nothing to her. Her only desire had been to find her mother, reunite her scattered family, and finally claim the peaceful life she deserved. But Maxine had weaponized that yearning, wielding it as leverage to force the burden of Griffiths leadership onto her shoulders.



After a long, suffocating silence, Elliana released a bitter laugh. "You're making a reckless gamble, Maxine. What prevents me from seizing the Sovereign's Orb, extracting the secret from you, and abandoning your family the instant you stop breathing?"

"You won't," Maxine declared with unshakeable conviction. "You're cut from the same cloth as your mother. You both honor your promises. You guard the vows you make—you wouldn't deceive a woman on her deathbed."

Elliana's jaw clenched, her refusal still clinging stubbornly to her tongue.

Suddenly, a violent cough tore through Maxine's chest. Blood sprayed from her mouth in a crimson arc, and she crumpled into the snow.

Elliana lunged to her side. Time was bleeding away—Maxine's life slipped further from reach with every heartbeat that passed.

"Elliana... my time is running out... Please, won't you say yes?" Maxine's voice emerged as little more than a rasp, each word clinging desperately to her final breath. "When I stole your mother away, she had lived only three days. She grew up never knowing where she belonged. I alone carry this truth. The moment I close my eyes, the mystery vanishes with me into the void."

Elliana's options had evaporated. "Fine," she heard herself say, the word escaping before thought could catch it. "I agree."

With that, she took the Sovereign's Orb from Maxine's hand.

Relief washed across Maxine's face, softening the hard edges pain had carved there. Her breathing thinned to wisps, her eyelids sagged under an impossible weight, and her heartbeat stumbled through its final, faltering rhythm. Only her lips retained the strength to shape sound. "Elliana, come closer... I'll tell you everything."

Elliana leaned down and lowered her ear to Maxine's mouth.

"Your mother... She is... She is..." Maxine balanced on the knife's edge between life and death. Her voice had frayed to a thread of sound, barely more substantial than breath itself, fracturing and fading between words. The night wind howled around them, swallowing everything in its path. No one else could hear. Only Elliana, with her ear sealed against Maxine's




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 +120 Points at most

lips, could capture these vanishing fragments.

Even then, Elliana had to marshal every shred of focus she possessed to decipher what Maxine was struggling to say.



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