

Chapter 777 The Time Has Come For It To End

After Elliana finished speaking, Cole reached out and tapped her nose with tender affection. "Every bit of this—I orchestrated it all for you."

"For me?" Elliana's brow creased as confusion flickered across her features.

Cole gave a slow nod. "Maxine's death is still fresh, and the Griffiths family remains consumed by grief. But soon enough, their focus will shift to you—to your bloodline. You're a Campbell, after all."

Understanding bloomed within her like dawn breaking through storm clouds. "You feared they would force me to abandon the Campbell family entirely, swear absolute loyalty to the Griffithses, and worse—command me to march against the Campbells themselves?"

"Precisely that," Cole confirmed, his voice steady. "I've always known how you'd never bend beneath their demands. You possess the strength to weather their storm alone. But I refused to let their poisonous politics consume you, and I certainly wouldn't allow it to cast shadows over our daughter's future."

Warmth flooded through Elliana's chest, spreading like sunlight through winter branches. She hadn't imagined he'd planned so meticulously or peered so far into the uncertain terrain of her future. Earlier, when she'd stood in that council hall surrounded by ancient grievances between the Griffiths and Campbell families, she had wrestled with the weight of the feud. Yet, no clear path had revealed itself to her searching mind.

"My mother grew up beneath Maxine's watchful eye, shaped by her hand," Elliana began, her voice thoughtful. "And yet, my mother tumbled headlong into love with my father and bore him two children. Now, here I stand, thrust into leadership of the Griffiths family through sheer accident of fate."

A wry laugh escaped her lips. "I can't decide whether to admire destiny's

twisted sense of irony or rage against its cruelty. But perhaps this was always meant to be—perhaps I'm the one who must finally extinguish the hatred burning between the two families. This feud has scorched its way through a thousand years, poisoning every generation that inherited its burden. The time has come for it to end."

"You're absolutely right," Cole said, folding his fingers around hers and squeezing gently. "Whatever path you choose, I'll walk it beside you without hesitation."

She was born Campbell. He carried Griffiths' blood. They had tumbled into love despite everything, exchanged vows, and created twins who embodied both legacies. Their daughter would someday inherit the entire Griffiths empire. The hatred had to die with them. To perpetuate the war now would mean waging battle against themselves, against their own flesh and blood.

Lost in the depths of their conversation, they traveled the corridor's length without noticing the distance melting away.

The hallway terminated at a spacious lounge where the Griffiths men had gathered, their wives and children clustered around them in anxious anticipation.

When they'd first witnessed Cole storming into that sacred council hall, shock had rippled through their ranks like electricity. Everyone had braced themselves for his immediate expulsion, for the brutal punishment that tradition demanded. Instead, to their absolute astonishment, he now emerged from those hallowed doors with Elliana's hand clasped firmly in his. The elders hadn't punished him. It was unheard of.

For countless generations, Griffiths men had been barred from entering the council hall—forbidden by iron-clad rule. Cole had become the first to shatter that ancient prohibition. And he'd walked out completely unharmed.

The crowd stood even more thunderstruck now than when they'd watched him burst through those doors.

This rang especially true for the Griffiths men themselves. They'd been raised beneath crushing suppression, conditioned to swallow every injustice in suffocating silence. To them, Cole represented something entirely alien. No, not merely alien—a warrior deity made flesh. Today

marked the first time they'd witnessed the truth with their own eyes: men could actually rise and defend themselves. Perhaps the Griffiths women weren't the terrifying legends they'd been taught to fear after all.

Cole, oblivious to the internal revolutions sparking through their minds, frowned at their submissive postures. The sight dragged his thoughts back to the concern Elliana had voiced earlier. If Griffiths men were valued so little, treated as lesser beings, what future awaited his grandson? No. These absurd, archaic family rules needed to be torn down and rebuilt from nothing.

Just then, a middle-aged couple emerged from the crowd, bowing with careful respect toward Elliana.

Elliana tilted her head. "And you are?"

"My name is Clifford Griffiths," the man said. "I'm Katrina's father."

The woman beside him added softly, "Belinda Griffiths—her mother."

Understanding dawned in Elliana's eyes. Clifford—Maxine's nephew. When Maxine had named Katrina as heiress, Katrina's parents had been stripped of their right to raise her. They'd been reduced to strangers in their own daughter's life, allowed only fleeting glimpses from afar.

And later, on Maxine's orders, Katrina had led the attempt on Elliana's life. The mission had failed. Katrina had been captured. Since that day, no one had dared ask what became of Katrina.

Clifford and Belinda had lived each day in quiet torment, desperate for news, terrified of the truth. Now, standing before Elliana, they finally found the courage to ask—though their voices trembled with fear.

But Elliana already knew what their hearts were begging to hear. She spoke gently. "During the assassination attempt, Katrina was injured."

The color drained from their faces. Clifford's breath hitched. Belinda's fingers clutched at her skirt.

Elliana softened her expression into something reassuring, almost gentle. "There's no need for alarm. Her injuries were relatively minor, and she recovered fully long ago. But the trauma proved overwhelming—when she finally opened her eyes, she had lost her memory."

Relief crashed over Clifford and Belinda like a breaking wave. Learning their daughter still lived, still breathed, surpassed anything they'd allowed themselves to hope for. "Thank you." They spoke as one, their voices raw with emotion. "Thank you for showing her mercy, for letting her live!"

They had assumed Katrina was dead after her mission failed. Elliana's revelation felt like witnessing resurrection itself.

"But she hasn't lost every memory," Elliana continued, her tone turning gentle as morning mist. "Her memory remains frozen at a specific moment—right after she learned she'd been named heiress. Now, her mind exists in perpetual innocence, as carefree and unburdened as a young child discovering the world for the first time."

Chapter 778 Katrina's Parents

The revelation that Katrina had retreated to a carefree child dropped like a bomb. In that instant, Clifford and Belinda broke down, tears spilling freely.

To Clifford and Belinda, Katrina had always been a bright child—sharp, curious, and full of promise. Yet, they knew her limits. Among the girls raised from birth to inherit the Griffiths family legacy, she was leagues behind. The idea of her being chosen as the successor was something they had never dared to dream.

Then one day, fate had seemingly smiled on them. When Maxine's messenger had delivered the shocking news of Katrina being chosen as the next family leader, they had forgotten to breathe. It had felt unreal, as if they were trapped in a pleasant dream they feared would fade if they opened their eyes. It had taken a long while for the reality to sink in.

Soon after, their home had become a parade of visitors. Everyone had come to offer congratulations and sing praises of their remarkable daughter. Swept away by the flood of admiration, they had slowly lost their grounding. Their hearts had brimmed with joy as they imagined the day Katrina would stand as the Griffiths family's future head.

But that dream had soon turned sour.

Every Griffiths successor underwent brutal training—lessons and trials that tested both mind and body. Katrina, lacking the sharp instinct of her peers, had stumbled again and again. Maxine's punishments had come swiftly and harshly, each one cutting deeper into her spirit.

Day by day, the once lively, carefree Katrina had transformed into someone cold and distant. Sometimes, her anger would flare without warning, fierce and frightening.

Clifford and Belinda knew Katrina was in agony. Whenever the pressure became unbearable, Katrina would lock herself away, tearing at her pain until her body bore the marks of it.

The sight of her broken form was a pain sharper than any Clifford and Belinda had ever known. Many times, they had wanted to beg Maxine to let Katrina go—to take back her decision and allow their daughter to live a simple, peaceful life. But fear had held them hostage. The thought of offending Maxine and dooming their family froze them in silence.

Katrina wouldn't allow them to do so either—the shame of losing her position as heiress, of becoming the subject of scorn, terrified her more than the suffering itself. She had trapped herself in a prison of pride and pain, refusing every escape. And so, her torment had become Clifford's and Belinda's.

When Katrina had failed in her mission to kill Elliana, Clifford and Belinda had thought she was gone forever. Their grief had been unbearable—yet beneath it, a small voice whispered that perhaps it was for the best. At least, her suffering was finally over.

Now, Elliana revealed that Katrina was still alive and had even returned to the innocent, carefree girl she once was. Tears returned, unstoppable. Amnesia didn't matter. If Katrina no longer remembered the pain, she was finally free. To them, it felt like she had been reborn—a second chance to love her right, to protect her from every hurt. They silently made a vow. This time, they would never let her face that darkness again.

Clifford cleared his throat, voice trembling. "If I may ask... How do you plan to punish Katrina?"

Before Elliana could speak, Belinda's voice broke through her sobs. "What she did is unforgivable. You have every right to take her life, and we wouldn't object. But please," she whispered, tears streaking her face, "please, spare her. She's my child."

Her words ended in a shuddering cry. After all, what mother wouldn't want her daughter to live? Maxine had reached nearly eighty before she died, and even then, Anita had wept like a child. Katrina was still so young—her life had barely begun.

Elliana said softly but firmly, "You don't need to worry. I won't punish her. She only followed Maxine's orders. The blame isn't hers. As the new leader of the Griffiths family, I have no wish to carry old grudges."

"Thank you," Clifford and Belinda breathed, their relief so deep that it nearly stole their voices.

After a long pause, Clifford asked quietly, "Could we take her home with us?"

"Of course," Elliana replied without hesitation. "But traveling to Ublento might be difficult for you. I'll have Davin handle it."

The Griffiths men were bound to the clan for life, never allowed to leave its grounds. Until Elliana changed the old rules, Clifford couldn't go himself.

Elliana called for Davin and explained everything. He accepted the task with a nod and then turned to Clifford and Belinda, "Please be patient for a few days. I'll finish arranging Maxine's funeral first before bringing Katrina home."

Clifford and Belinda nodded, grateful beyond words. After thanking Elliana once more, they left, their hearts lighter than they had been in years.

With no urgent matters left to attend to, Elliana and Cole flew back to Ublento.

They had been gone for days and missed their son dearly. Their first stop was the Evans home.

News of their return spread quickly, and soon, the entire Evans family gathered in the living room, excitement buzzing in the air. Everyone was eager to meet Beatrice at last.

The Evanses had always been a family of sons, so daughters were rare—and cherished beyond measure.

Beatrice, the first girl born into the great-grandchild generation, had already become everyone's darling.

Jeff, especially, had been counting down the days. From the moment he woke that morning, he could barely contain his joy. Today, he would finally meet his little cousin, the family's brightest star.