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Chapter 329

Elise had no idea what had happened between the mother and son, but one thing was clear: she probably wouldn't have to worry about her relationship with Madeline in the future. This brought her more joy than escaping from imprisonment.

Both Elise and Alexander stayed at the Griffith Residence for an hour. When they left, Madeline didn't press her with questions, allowing Elise's bright mood to continue.

On the way back to Sinclair Residence, Elise could no longer hold herself back. She was all smiles as she looked at Alexander. "Did you hypnotize your mother?" she teased.

A smile tugged at the corners of Alexander's lips, and he deliberately played along with her. "Guess."

"You definitely did." Elise had been bothered about the situation with Madeline for a long time. Now, she felt unbelievably relaxed. Still, she couldn't help her curiosity. Dialing down her expression, she attempted to pry the truth from Alexander. "Come on, tell me: what kind of sorcery can make someone have a personality change? I need to learn it."

Alexander grinned mysteriously. "It's a secret."

He was the only one who needed to know about that time when he fought tooth and nail against the world and practically estranged himself from his family. Telling Elise would simply put more stress on her.

Elise rolled her eyes at him balefully before she mulishly turned her head to the side. "Still keeping secrets from me. If you're not going to say it, then don't. I'll keep my secrets from you in the future too."

Screech

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Alexander slammed on the brakes, pulling over by the side of the road.

The sudden stop made Elise lurch forward before her seatbelt catapulted her back firmly into her seat. When she turned around, she saw Alexander looking at her with a sad and hurt look on his face instead of the smug look he had been sporting just before.

"What is it?" Elise was baffled.

"You said that you're going to keep your secrets from me?" Alexander's expression was dark, an ugly sight.

For a moment, Elise was at a loss for words. It was only then that she realized she had stepped on a sore spot for Alexander. Just hiding her identity had caused many arguments between them. He had always disliked secrets, and now that Elise openly said she was going to hide things from him, he would of course disagree.

Since Alexander managed to resolve the issue with Madeline, Elise decided to cheer him up. She looked at him with puppy-dog eyes and a cheeky smile on her face. "All right, I'm sorry-I shouldn't have made such a joke. I promise that I definitely won't hide anything major from you."

Alexander's gaze softened a little. "Not even the small things," he pointed out.

Whoops, he got me there. Elise initially wanted to sneak in a loophole, but she hadn't expected Alexander to be so sharp-eyed. He didn't even give her any wriggle room. With no other choice, she smiled harder. "Heehee, got it. I'll do as you say."

Only then was Alexander satisfied. He started up the engine again and sped off toward the Sinclair Residence.

Robin and Laura were already waiting for them. The moment the security guard announced Alexander's arrival, the old couple promptly helped each other to hurry to the door to wait. Before the car even came to a complete stop, they'd eagerly tottered over to the passenger seat with their walking canes.

"Elise, my darling granddaughter..."

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Elise was pulled into a hug by Laura the moment she alighted from the car. When Laura noticed that Elise's right hand was hurt, her heart ached so much that tears came to her eyes. "Are you seriously injured? Oh, darling, you should have stayed at the hospital if you're hurt. Why did you have to rush back?" Laura might seem like she was chastising Elise, but every word of hers was filled with love.

Robin gripped his cane hard with both hands wordlessly, his brow furrowing deeply. Worry was plain as day on his face.

"Grandma, don't worry. I was actually responsible for that injury myself. It's not all that bad; it doesn't hurt-see? I'm perfectly fine, right?" Worried that her grandparents didn't believe her, Elise hastily waved her hand a few times.

Laura quickly stopped her and patted her with exaggerated movements, "All right, you heartless little girl. You're going to break your poor grandma's heart!" she

chastised

"That's enough. Poor Elise has suffered enough. Let's continue this inside," said Robin.

It was only then that the four of them noisily headed inside the house.

They had only just sat down when Alexander's phone rang. He took a look at the caller's name; it was Cameron. "I'm going to have to take this call."

Robin lowered his gaze as he dipped his head slightly. "Go ahead."

Having gotten Robin's permission, Alexander went to the balcony with his phone in hand.

Laura ignored this as she simply fired off all her questions at Elise. "Ellie, Matthew didn't mistreat you, did he? That madman is practically inhumane!"

"No. Don't worry about that, Grandma..."

Robin listened to their conversation while occasionally glancing at the balcony, where Alexander was, to look at him thoughtfully.

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Not long after that, Alexander hung up and came back to them to indicate that he had to leave. "There are some urgent things that I need to finish up at work. I apologize beforehand for leaving Elise in your care."

Robin's expression darkened. "There's nothing to apologize for. Elise is my own granddaughter; why should I find her presence a problem? Go. Don't ever come back without any good reason."

Upon hearing Robin's tone, both Laura and Elise instinctively turned their heads to look at him.

"What are you saying..." Laura asked.

Elise also couldn't figure out what was going on. Her grandfather had always been a good-natured man, and he was usually friendly to others. But why was he being so antagonistic today?

As a man as well, only Alexander knew what Robin was thinking. He wasn't angry with this either as he gently smiled to show that he was fine with Robin's words. "No problem." He then turned to Elise. "I'll come back later for you," he said

"Okay." Elise nodded demurely, showing some sort of consolation for him.

Alexander pressed his lips into a thin smile before he relaxed and left.

The moment he left, Laura turned on Robin. "What is wrong with you? He saved your precious granddaughter, so why were you in such a rush to chase him away?"

"What do you know?" Robin distastefully frowned, wanting to say more but also trying to stop himself. "You forgot how... never mind. In any case, he and Elise are not meant to be. It is better to cut your losses instead of dragging things out." Having said that, he exhaled deeply. However, his gaze remained on Elise, studying her perhaps on purpose, perhaps not.

Elise was sharp enough to realize that her grandparents were hiding something from her. "Grandpa, did something happen while I was away?"

Alexander had always been respectful toward his elders. He probably wouldn't have started an argument with her grandparents. Elise truly didn't understand he was such a perfect man,

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and every parent out there fell over themselves to have him as their son-in-law. Why did her grandparents suddenly seem to dislike him so much?

Could the law of equivalent exchange also apply to familial relationships instead of being limited to material things? If one's relationship with one side of their family improved, would the relationship with the other side worsen? Was Elise fated to never be able to have both families bless their relationship?

Laura already understood Robin's hints, so she hastily covered for him. "It's nothing. What could have happened while you were away? We were just worried about you."

But Elise wasn't so easily deterred. Laura's hesitance was a clear sign that she was not telling the full truth, and besides, neither grandparent was good at lying to her. Sighing, she placed a hand on the back of Robin's hand. "Grandpa, you know that you can't hide things from me. Just what happened actually? Tell me, please," she said patiently.

Deep down, Robin knew that it was only a matter of time before Elise found out the truth. With no other choice, he laid out everything about the photos and videos that Matthew had sent. "I'm doing this for your own good. Regardless of Matthew's wicked ways, he and Alexander are still brothers at the end of the day. Now that something like this has happened, you two must break off your relationship no matter how reluctant you are. Girls can only live their lives with pride if they know how to love and respect themselves. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

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Elise understood what her grandfather meant. If she truly slept with Matthew, then she couldn't pretend as if nothing had happened, nor could she continue to enjoy Alexander's love while ignoring everything, regardless whether Matthew and Alexander were brothers or not. It didn't matter whether she didn't want to or if she wasn't the one at fault. Sometimes, though, fate was just that fickle and unreasonable. There was no room for argument.

It might be painful at first, but Elise knew deep down that people could eventually leave. If that was what fate intended, then all she could do was adjust her mindset and force herself to accept it.

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But before that, there were some things that she needed to understand fully first.

"Did you save those photos?" Elise asked Robin.

"Well..." An uncomfortable look came over Robin's face, but he quickly caught on as to what Elise meant. He tested the waters. "Did you actually...?"

But Elise's words proceeded to extinguish his hope that had just flickered back to life.

"I'm not sure either." Elise shook her head. "It's just like you said; I wasn't awake when those photos and videos were taken. I was indeed unconscious for a while, unaware of anything. I can't confirm whether Matthew had actually done any of that to me."

"I understand what you mean." Robin nodded solemnly to indicate his understanding, but he was still troubled. "It's my fault. I was so furious by that b*stard that I completely didn't think of that. I didn't save any kind of evidence..."

If that was the case, it seemed that the only proof of whether or not Elise and Matthew had intercourse was purely through Matthew's say-so.

In truth, Elise wasn't actually all that hurt by this. She was the victim at the end of the day. Even if she had lost her purity, the one who should be shamed and humiliated was Matthew. She would not feel like she was lesser because of this. Elise was in a rush to find out the truth simply because she wanted to tie up loose ends with Alexander; she didn't want them to part in such a confusing manner just because of Matthew's slanderous claims.

Seeing how her grandfather blamed himself, Elise couldn't bear to keep asking any further. Instead, she comforted, "It's okay, Grandpa. I'm your granddaughter; something as small as this won't get me down. Don't worry. I'll deal with this

properly."

Robin looked at her with a heavy gaze, his weathered eyes still filled with heartbreak. "I'm so sorry for you..."

Later that afternoon, Elise took a nice nap at home after a hot shower.

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Unknown to her, however, Matthew had already begun a new round of counterattacks as she lay sleeping peacefully in her familiar bed.

Earlier when Alexander and Elise arrived at the Sinclair Residence, various magazine publishers and newspaper outlets received pictures of Matthew and Elise lying topless on a bed together, seemingly all at the same time. These photos were like a bomb, sending shockwaves everywhere. The entire entertainment industry went into overdrive to churn out articles, every outlet wanting to be the first to hog the top trending search by utilizing the controversy—'Alexander Griffith's Fiancée Cheating on Him With His Own Brother'—as the focal point. Some unscrupulous people simply skipped the magazine path, simply publishing the photos via blog posts or even videos to draw traffic. In just an instant, the internet was abuzz with discussion.

Presumably, Alexander had left Elise earlier to deal with this issue.

Inside the meeting room, the hastily-assembled emergency PR team sat around the table. They argued until they were red in the face, all of them putting their heads together over this PR nightmare for one reason, and one reason only—to prevent Elise's name from being tarnished.

"...Shifting the public's attention is the most important thing right now. Listen to me and find a B-lister to take the fall. We'll certainly be able to shift a lot of the heat away like this."

"That's just treating the symptoms, not the cause. Why don't we get in touch with those platforms and request them to take those topics down? It's going to take more effort, but we'll be able to root out the problem. We won't have to worry about those comments spreading like wildfire. They'll start spreading again at just the slightest mention otherwise."

"I say that we just get the legal department to write up a letter to go after those major content creators who are purposely directing the narrative! We'll make an example of them!"

"No, you listen to me..."

These public relation contingencies all had some flaw to them, but none of them

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were up to Alexander's standards. He sat there quietly in his seat, letting those at the meeting table to squabble like no tomorrow. Yet, he seemed to be in a completely different world, for the aura around him was so chilly that it terrified the others.

There was no doubt that Matthew decided to go for this dirty blow because he wanted to force Elise into a corner, to force her to be tied to him. But he was mistaken: Elise could be reasonable, but she would not be coerced. Such a drastic move would only make Elise even more sure to keep him away at arm's length.

However, this wasn't the problem that Alexander was considering. There was only one thing that he was concerned about no one would be able to get past him in the future to hurt Elise. Collecting his thoughts, he lifted his hand and rapped the table.

"Knock, knock—"

Instantly, the PR team fell completely silent. All of them turned their gazes in unison to their employer.

"Looks like you still don't know what the name 'Elise Sinclair' means. I'll say this once, and once only—as long as I, Alexander Griffith, still remain in this seat, then Elise's reputation is also the Griffith Group's reputation." At that, Alexander lifted his left hand to look at his watch. "It's 1.28 p.m. now. You've already wasted 18 minutes and 23 seconds. By 2 p.m, I hope that I will no longer see the name 'Elise Sinclair' on any social media platform. Use all means possible. If that is not the case by then, all of you will be handing in your resignation letters."

The office descended into a suffocating silence. Other than Alexander, everyone else had the exact same expression, as if the same expression had been copied and pasted onto their faces, all deep frowns and solemnness.

Alexander had given them only half an hour, but it wasn't all that difficult to figure out which was Alexander's most preferred way to deal with this PR case, considering their knowledge. Most importantly, asking Alexander any questions now when he was in this state was a surefire way for them to get a one-way ticket to death.

These people had only two choices: they could just stand there and do nothing, waiting for the seconds to tick down while the public grew even louder. They would take the blame

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before they packed their bags to leave. Or, they could stick it out and voice their questions to Alexander, only to be killed on the spot with that murderous gaze of his.

Both paths led to death, and no one dared to be the first one to make a move.

After a while, Cameron could no longer take it, and decided to give everyone a

frustrated reminder. "Are you all zombies or something? Mr. Griffith has spoken-do everything that you can to solve this, no matter the price. Get a move on already!"

At the last word, the group of people who had still been sweating buckets just moments ago promptly sprang from their seats and rushed out of the meeting room.

Once everyone was gone, the meeting room fell into silence again. Alexander tilted his head up as he leaned back in his seat. His eyes were gently closed, but a frown could be seen on his forehead, looking out of place on that chiseled face of his.

Cameron couldn't help but console his employer when he saw Alexander's tired form. "I'm sure Miss Sinclair won't take all this to heart."

Alexander merely sat there motionlessly without answering him. No one knew whether he'd heard him.

Cameron felt awkward at the lack of response. After a few seconds of silence, he brought up the task that Alexander had assigned to him earlier. "The general vicinity of the area where Miss Sinclair was found has been checked thoroughly-they still haven't caught the culprit."

"They still haven't caught the culprit."

Upon hearing those words, Alexander felt like he had been given a harsh slap.

How many times had Matthew slipped away right under his nose?

The crux of the problem wasn't whether Elise minded what the media said about her; instead, it was whether he could put Matthew in his place. If he had protected Elise properly, none of this would have happened.

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It was time to put an end to everything.

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