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Chapter 531 Black Forest Cake

Sonia then flipped open a document and started burying herself in work. Later that afternoon, she told Charles that she was going to meet up with Toby to return him the jewelry, so she got into her car and left Paradigm Co. for the Fuller Group.

It was already 1.00 PM by the time she arrived, and she stepped right through the entrance before she saw Tom walking in her direction. "Hello, Miss Reed."

"Hi, Tom," Sonia replied with a smile.

"President Fuller sent me to take you to the office." Tom stood aside, extending his arm to show her the way.

"How did he know I'm here?" Sonia appeared to be surprised. Although she did mention she was going to drop by in the afternoon earlier that morning, she didn't tell Toby the exact time. Therefore, she had no idea how Toby came to know that she had arrived and ordered Tom to collect her.

Tom adjusted his glasses and explained, "Oh, President Fuller mentioned that you'd be coming in the afternoon, so I was told to wait for you here."

"I see." Sonia nodded in confusion. "Then, you must have been waiting for a long time." Flattered by Toby's decision to have Tom wait for her so early, she reckoned his sincerity deserved her appreciation.

"Well, not really. I just came down here about ten minutes ago. Anyway, Miss Reed, let's get going, shall we?" Tom asked, to which Sonia responded with an affirmative hum. "Yes, please."

Both of them then made their way to the elevator that was meant for Toby to use. As they passed by the lobby, their presence drew the attention of the crowd around them. Some who knew Sonia didn't seem to be surprised about her arrival, considering the partnership between the Fuller Group and Paradigm Co. Thus, they believed Sonia was probably there to discuss some business with Toby. However, those who didn't know her were seen with their mouths wide agape as they began to gossip in murmurs.

After all, since Tom was Toby's personal assistant, they didn't think he would send him to receive a random visitor unless it was someone important to him. Otherwise, he would have sent his secretary or some other assistant to receive the visitor. At that moment, they all couldn't help but wonder who Sonia was and why Toby had to get Tom to personally receive her. Who is she? Why does Mr. Brown have to personally receive her?

In the meantime, Sonia could sense the strange eyes on her from everybody else, but nonetheless, she appeared to be indifferent toward their dramatic reactions, as she didn't even bother to look at them. To her, she couldn't care less about their judgment and opinions, since they were not going to do her any harm anyway.

I can't control what people think about me, so they can look at me however they want.

One minute later, both of them arrived at Toby's office, whereupon Tom opened the door and invited her in with his arm stretching out. "Please come in, Miss Reed."

"Thank you." Sonia expressed her gratitude politely and stepped into the office, only to see no signs of Toby. She then stopped in her tracks and looked back at Tom. "Where is President Fuller?"

"President Fuller is currently in the middle of a meeting right now, but he'll be here in a few moments. So, please take a seat while waiting for him. Can I get you a little something to drink?" Tom showed Sonia the way to the couch.

Sonia sat down on the couch. "I'm fine with anything, so why don't you make the call? I'm not fussy anyway."

"I'll make some tea, perhaps. Please bear with me for a moment, Miss Reed," Tom said.

"Sure." Sonia nodded.

As soon as Tom excused himself, Sonia put her purse down on the table in front of her and reached for her cell phone in it. Then, she saw a notification popping up on her phone screen, catching her attention. "The Stryder Family is under investigation?" Sonia immediately sat up straight and opened up the notification to view it, only to realize it was a news report about the Stryder Family's detention.

When Sonia learned that the authority had launched an investigation on the properties the Stryder Family owned, she curled her lips and sneered. Deep down, she didn't feel surprised about the news at all, knowing that the Stryder Family would soon have what was coming to them.

Ever since Melody was arrested, it was only a matter of time that the police would publish the news across Seafield, especially after her confession about being Tina's accomplice and the murderer responsible for the death of Peter's first love. After all, Melody was from the Stryder Family, which was highly respected and revered by society.

Therefore, when the prestigious family's black sheep was found to be a murderer who took an innocent life and obstructed justice by assisting a criminal's escape, the Stryders inevitably became the center of the spotlight throughout the entire nation. For that, the law enforcement unit was pressured to run a thorough investigation on the Stryder Family.

After all, Melody's wrongful actions reflected her upbringing in the Stryder Family, putting her other family members in a bad light. Therefore, the authority had no choice but to involve Melody's family in the investigation in order to appease the public's wrath.

Thanks to Melody's previous interference with Seafield's political affairs, the Stryder Family still struggled with the repercussions that followed her selfish act. However, things only took a turn for the worse when Melody's unlawful actions doomed the Stryder Family's future and sealed its fate. Thus, Sonia believed that Melody's parents must have regretted having a daughter like her.

"Am I seeing a smile on your face? What are you reading?" Toby opened the door and walked into his office with Tom, who was holding a tray in his hands, just when Sonia was skimming through the comment section of the news.

Sonia put away her phone and looked up. "I was just reading a news report about the Stryder Family. They're currently under a criminal investigation."

Toby jutted his chin. "Oh, so that was what put a smile on your face, but I guess that's something that calls for a celebration."

"You knew?" Sonia looked at the man.

"Yeah. For a while now, I guess." Toby walked closer to the lady and sat down opposite her.

"Miss Reed, here is your black tea and Black Forest cake. I hope it's to your liking." Tom moved to the coffee table to serve Sonia what was on the tray.

"Thank you." Sonia nodded.

"You're welcome. Actually, it was President Fuller who told me to prepare it. So, if you want to thank someone, thank him." Tom placed a cup of coffee in front of Toby.

"Did you prepare all this for me?" Sonia gazed at Toby with a surprised look on his face.

With an affirmative hum, Toby replied, "I know you have a sweet tooth, so I sent someone to buy some."

In the meantime, Tom let out a sigh on the inside because he previously didn't know that the cake was meant for Sonia. A month ago, Toby suddenly ordered someone to prepare a luxury cake in the refrigerator without any specific request about its type. While Tom initially thought that Toby had cravings for cakes, he quickly dismissed that thought because he had never seen Toby eating one.

Therefore, he quietly observed his superior with confusion, unable to understand why he would have someone prepare a cake and throw it away before he left work, only to repeat the same process the next day.

As time went on, Tom wondered whether Toby was out of his mind until one day, about a month ago, when he overheard his boss talking. It was then that he realized Sonia had a sweet tooth and that the cake was meant for her.

Miss Reed may or may not come often, but President Fuller still prepares the cake every day, rain or shine, so that he won't miss his chance to let her taste it when she really visits. Thus, I must say that I'm impressed by his tenacity.

On the other hand, Sonia, who had no idea about the cake's origin, only fixed her eyes on the cake with complicated emotions on the inside.

At the same time, Toby noticed her silent stare and guessed she didn't like it, so he asked with a tense look on his face, "Don't you like the cake?"

"No." Sonia shook her head. "I'm just a little flattered. Thanks."

"No big deal. It's just a piece of cake anyway. In fact, whoever receives you elsewhere would probably do the same thing as I do, so there is no need to be so tense," Toby replied despite his fear that Sonia wouldn't want to eat the cake just because he was the one who prepared it.

"No, I'm not tense. Like you said, it's just a piece of cake, so I'm totally cool." Sonia smiled.

Initially nervous, Toby soon heaved a sigh of relief and curled his lips upward. "Good to know that. Why don't you take a bite and tell me how it tastes?"

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Chapter 532 A Close Call

"Sure." Sonia nodded as she grabbed a fork and sliced the Black Forest cake before putting it into her mouth. With the soft texture and sweetness, the cake tasted so delicious that Sonia lost herself in it while her eyes curled upward like a smile.

"It looks like you love it a lot," Toby commented with a smile upon noticing Sonia's reaction.

"Well, the taste is indeed not bad." Sonia gave her compliment.

Toby held his cup of coffee in the air and said, "Glad to hear that. I have a few more right here, so you could take them away if you want."

"Thanks then," Sonia replied and took a sip of her black tea. Deep down, she couldn't deny how much she loved the cake, so she reckoned she might as well take a few more slices of it since she had already eaten one. After finishing the cake on her plate, she put it down and grabbed the bag beside her before handing it over to Toby. "This is the jewelry you gave me. Thank you so much."

"No worries." Toby received the bag and gave it to Tom. "Please take care of it."

"Sure, President Fuller." Tom nodded and took the bag to the lounge, where there was a safe.

Watching as Tom walked away, Sonia asked, "Are you sure you don't want to examine it? Aren't you afraid that I'd substitute it with a counterfeit?"

"No need for that. I don't think you'd do that either." Toby added while drinking his coffee, "Furthermore, I wouldn't complain either, even if you did that."

Meeting the man's sentimental eyes, Sonia felt her heart pounding even faster as she couldn't help but keep her head down.

On the other hand, Toby let out a sigh, feeling dismayed at Sonia's slight resistance, although she had stopped rejecting his advances to woo her. After all, he couldn't stop wondering when she would ever realize she was already in love with him if she continued to fight her emotions and resist his advances. Ugh, man! I wish I could just tell her everything and ignore the fact that it may backfire.

While Toby was caught up in his thoughts, Sonia's phone suddenly rang. She then reached for her phone in her purse and realized it was a call from her secretary, Daphne. Thus, she chuckled at Toby in embarrassment. "Excuse me, President Fuller. I'd like to answer this phone call."

"Sure." Toby nodded.

Sonia slid across her phone screen to answer the call, whereupon she put it to her ear. "Hello."

"President Reed, I found something about the car license plate number that you told me to investigate earlier," Daphne answered.

Sonia sat upright and asked, "What did you find? Who is the owner of the car? Is there anything fishy about it?"

The owner of the car? Toby pricked up his ears and put down his cup of coffee while staring at her. What's going on? Is she in some kind of trouble?

"The owner is just a normal civilian who has been using the car for years, so everything seems fine here," Daphne replied while skimming through her results.

"Alright, I heard you." Sonia nodded when she heard her secretary's reply. She then put her phone away and heaved a sigh of relief with her mind put to ease. It looks like the driver who happened to be going the same way as we did this morning is just a normal civilian. Well, I guess I can rest assured now knowing that he wasn't actually tailing us.

Noticing Sonia's relief, Toby squinted and asked in a concerned manner, "What happened?"

"Oh, it's no big deal, but it's already dealt with anyway." Sonia smiled faintly.

"Oh, good to know that. If anything serious happens, you can always come to me, and I'll take care of it for you." Toby jutted his chin.

"Sure." Sonia nodded, but Toby could tell how perfunctory her answer sounded.

"Alright, President Fuller. It's getting late, so I should get going now. After all, I'm needed at the construction site by 3 PM later." Sonia lifted her arm and looked at the watch on her wrist as she stood up. In fact, she hadn't been to her plant at all, even though it had already been built for months.

Meanwhile, the construction team gave Daphne a call earlier and told her that they had finished building the plant. Thus, they requested someone to examine and inspect the place upon completion so that any amendments could be brought up and carried out. For that, Sonia decided to pay a visit to the plant.

"Sure, I'll see you out, perhaps." Toby rose from his seat. Although he wanted Sonia to stay for a while more, he didn't really have a reason to convince her. Nonetheless, he was glad that she didn't resist his advances, so he could find an excuse to see her any time he wanted, unlike his previous experience.

On the other hand, Sonia didn't reject Toby's offer to see her out as she smiled and nodded in agreement.

Then, Toby looked at his assistant, who had just come back from the lounge after putting away the jewelry, and gave him an instruction. "Please pack the cake in the refrigerator."

"Sure," Tom replied with an affirmative hum and went on to do as he was instructed. Soon, he returned with a delicate box, which Toby took and handed over to Sonia.

"Thank you." Sonia took the box.

"Don't mention it. Your love for the cake is the best way of showing your gratitude to me." Toby looked at her, speaking with a hoarse voice.

The next moment, Sonia's ears blushed as she kept her head down without saying a single word.

In the meantime, Toby sensed her embarrassment and chuckled before he changed the subject. "Let's go." Then, Sonia followed him out of the office and headed toward the elevator. When they got there, Toby pushed the button to open the elevator door. "Where did you park your car, by the way?"

"The junction near your company's entrance," Sonia answered with the cake in her hand. In fact, she parked her car there because she spotted a vacant lot there when she arrived.

While Toby nodded his head to show his acknowledgment, the elevator arrived. Then, he chivalrously invited her to step into the elevator before he did, as Tom followed right behind to make sure the elevator door was closed.

As the elevator descended, the confined space was shrouded by silence, with neither of them speaking a word to the other. It wasn't until they stepped out of the elevator that Sonia broke the silence and said, "I'll see you soon, so you should probably get back inside, President Fuller."

"No worries. I'll leave once you get into your car," Toby said with one hand in his pocket.

Noticing Toby's insistence, Sonia silently gave in and reached for the car keys to unlock her car door. "Alright, I'll make a move now. See you!" She waved her hand at the man.

"See you." Toby responded with an affirmative hum.

When Sonia opened the car door and was about to enter the vehicle, a speeding car could be heard charging from behind. As Toby looked up, he saw a black car of a Japanese brand traveling in their direction at an unusually high speed. Sensing the driver's intent to run over them, Toby appeared to be shocked as he quickly seized Sonia's arm and pulled her backward.

"Watch out!" Toby shouted with an intense voice.

"What's wrong?" Sonia was jerked by the man to the side before she could understand what had happened. However, she also didn't manage to hold her cake tightly as it fell onto the floor. At the same time, Sonia collapsed into Toby's arms while both of them turned around in a circle with the man's arm around her waist. Then, both of them fell down onto the ground and rolled out of the way just before the car could run over them.

In the meantime, Tina was frustrated with Toby's swift reaction because he not only managed to dodge her car but also save Sonia's life at the same time. As she watched her chance slip through her fingers, her face twisted in malicious horror. "Goddamn it!" Tina thumped the steering wheel and set her eyes on the man and the lady outside her car window, gritting her teeth. In fact, she had been tailing Sonia all the way there while waiting for an opportunity to hit her and run.

However, when Toby showed up as well, she was gleeful that luck was on her side. While Tina believed she could only find peace in Sonia's death, her love for Toby had grown into a grudgeful hatred. Thus, she could never bring herself to forgive him.

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Chapter 533 They Deserve Death

In order to prove her love for Toby, Tina went through the trouble of dating Quentin and orchestrated an accident that killed him to get his heart for the man she loved. However, she was now dismayed in hindsight, thinking Toby didn't love her at all because all the love he showed her was none other than an illusion from the hypnotism. Although she had no choice but to reluctantly accept her fate, she reckoned Toby should have never snapped out of his hypnotic state.

After all, Toby broke up with her the moment he woke up, rendering her a laughingstock. Thus, she blamed him for putting her through so much suffering.

If you won't appreciate my love for you, you'll die together with Sonia. No one can have Toby if I can't have him.

Initially thinking she could run them over with one attempt, she was surprised that they managed to dodge her car at that critical moment. Nonetheless, she quickly came to a decision to turn around for another try. At the thought of that, she smiled creepily at the both of them in her car and stepped on the gas pedal, steering the car toward them.

Meanwhile, the car only managed to run over Sonia's cake on the floor, flattening the box as its content was crushed into smithereens. Setting her eyes upon the cake on the ground, she snapped out of her petrified trance and caught on to what had just happened.

That driver really wanted to kill me and Toby! Sonia shivered at the thought of the driver's killer intent. If it hadn't been for Toby, I would have been run over like a pancake. Wait a second, Toby!

"Toby!" Sonia quickly turned her attention when she thought about him. While he looked like he was seemingly injured, she knitted her eyebrows with a pale face.

Seeing his miserable state, Sonia immediately panicked. "How do you feel, Toby?"

"I sprained my ankle. Help me up." Toby gasped for breath, enduring the pain while weakly asking for help.

"You sprained your ankle?" He is injured indeed. Sonia confirmed her suspicion and got out of the man's arms to check on his leg.

"Don't move!" Knowing what Sonia was going to do, Toby stopped her with a stern look on his face. "Help me up first. That car may come back."

"What?! That car may come back?" Sonia's face changed, her eyes dilating in horror.

Toby tried to prop his body with his arm as he fixed his glacial eyes on the direction in which the car drifted away. "Yeah, whoever was driving was obviously trying to kill us. Now that the driver failed to do so, I'm sure he or she will likely come back for us."

"No way. We need to get out of here then." Sonia quickly helped Toby up without any hesitation.

Just when Sonia helped Toby get back on his feet, they suddenly heard the sound of an oncoming car from behind them. She then looked back and saw the same car that almost hit them a few moments ago. Toby was right. That car was coming back. It looks like whoever is driving won't stop until we're both dead. "Let's go!" Sonia gritted her teeth, summoning all the strength from her body to carry Toby away while both of them made for the parterre and dove into the bushes.

The moment both of them fell into the bushes, they landed on the flowers in the parterre, which caused their clothes to be entangled with countless flower pedals.

This would be such a romantic scene if it weren't for some crazy driver who tried to kill us for no good reason.

While Toby and Sonia were forced to take cover in the parterre, their current situation would be a romantic encounter if they weren't trying to escape from someone who was trying to kill them in a car.

On the other hand, Tina's face twisted in frustration when she saw Sonia and Toby diving into the parterre. Goddamn it! They got away with it again! Why is it so hard for me to just

run over them?! Blinded by her anger and irritation, she was so engrossed with both of them in the parterre that she forgot her car was also charging at the parterre. Shortly after that, her car crashed into the concrete before a loud bang was heard. While Tina's car came to an abrupt stop, the jarring car alarm filled the silent atmosphere. At the same time, Tina bumped into the steering wheel, feeling unbearable pain in her chest as she felt dizzy in her head. Then, she felt something warm and wet dripping down her forehead, only to realize it was—blood.

Damn it! I'm bleeding. Tina gritted her teeth, her hands shaking as she cursed Toby and Sonia on the inside. I'm here to kill Sonia, but now she is fine, and I'm hurt! What the heck is going on?! Goddamn it! "What's that sound?" Tina quickly saw Tom and a few other bodyguards coming her way when she was silently cursing Sonia and Toby. At the sight of those men, she had her facial expression darkened.

I need to get out of here! Now! Otherwise, it'll be too late for me to escape!

Knowing that she was a fugitive who had just attempted murder, Tina was fully aware of how she would end up if she was ever caught. After all, it wasn't easy for her to escape from the police the last time, so she didn't want to be captured again.

Tina clenched her jaw and shifted the gear to reverse from the concrete, whereupon she stepped on the gas pedal and sped away. Before she left, she looked back and set her glacial eyes on the parterre, swearing to herself that she would be sure to kill them next time.

I won't fail again next time! When I return, it'll be time for both of you to meet your demise!

At that moment, Sonia sat up straight while feeling dizzy but soon met Tina's eyes through the car window. Shocked by what she saw, Sonia couldn't believe her eyes. Tina! It's Tina who tried to run over us!

"President Fuller! Miss Reed!" Tom came running to Sonia and Toby, checking on them in a concerned manner. "Are you guys alright?" In fact, he didn't tag along with Toby to see Sonia off. Instead, he was waiting in the lobby because Toby would like to see Sonia off alone. Thus, he sensibly left them to it, thinking it wasn't necessary for him to be the third wheel. Nonetheless, when it took Toby longer than it should to return, Tom started to get curious until he heard a loud bang from the outside.

Wondering what happened, he stepped outside with a few security guards to investigate the commotion. As he discovered what happened, he saw Sonia and Toby lying in the parterre with a car rammed into the concrete.

Seeing that, he instantly understood that Toby and Sonia were nearly hit by that car, but when he sent his men to confront the driver, the car started moving and drifted away before they could do what they intended to. Therefore, Tom had no choice but to mark down the car's license plate number and went on to check on Toby and Sonia.

"We're fine." Sonia shook her head and pointed at the direction in which Tina drove away, desperately saying, "Hurry up! That driver is Tina, so don't let her get away!"

"What?!" Tom paused shortly before his face turned cold. "I can't believe that was Tina!"

"Get her!" Toby endured his dizziness and gave his order.

Tom nodded and said, "Alright, I'll get someone to go after the car." He then instructed two of the bodyguards, who got into a car and pursued Tina. In the meantime, Sonia emerged from behind the bushes while helping Toby walk out of it. However, since Toby sprained his ankle, he wasn't able to walk properly, which made it hard for the lady to help him get out of the parterre. In the end, Tom had to give her a hand in helping Toby out of the parterre.

"President Fuller, are you hurt anywhere else besides your ankle?" Tom quickly checked on Toby with Sonia while anxiously asking him in a concerned manner,

"Besides my ankle, I'm fine." Toby waved his hand in response. In fact, he sprained his ankle when he cushioned Sonia from the fall a few moments ago, but other than his ankle, he was perfectly fine.

"I don't care if you only just sprained your ankle. You need to see a doctor," Sonia seized Toby's arm and said.

Tom agreed with Sonia and reached for his phone to send for the doctor.

"Let's get back to the office," Toby squinted and replied before shifting his gaze to Sonia. "Come along with us."

"Sure." Sonia nodded, thinking she shouldn't just walk away like nothing ever happened after the unexpected incident took place. Deep down, she told herself that she must at least make sure he wasn't hurt anywhere else.

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Chapter 534 The Grudges Between Them

Not long after the three of them had returned to Toby's office, the doctor Tom summoned earlier arrived. Immediately, Sonia cleared away the things on the coffee table to make room for the doctor's medical kit.

However, the doctor had only just put down his kit when Toby pointed at Sonia and instructed, "Attend to her first."

"President Fuller!"

"No!"

Tom and Sonia protested simultaneously, making their objections clear. As far as Tom was concerned, Sonia was relatively unscathed, whereas Toby's foot was swollen.

As such, it made sense for the doctor to tend to Toby's injuries first instead of checking up on Sonia.

Sonia, on the other hand, thought the same thing. The abrasions on her arm were not any worse than Toby's swollen ankle, but more importantly, he had been the one who stepped in and saved her in time. On that point alone, he rightfully deserved all the medical attention.

At the sight of Sonia's stony expression and stubborn refusal, Toby parted his lips to say something but thought better of it when he felt her overwhelming authority loom over him.

It was only after she had seen him give up on his attempt to argue that she looked away and addressed the doctor in a white coat with a polite smile. "Please attend to him first, doctor."

"Very well," the doctor agreed with a perfunctory nod. "President Fuller, could you please lift your leg for me?"

Toby frowned, seemingly reluctant to follow orders.

Sonia pursed her lips at this and urged like a flustered hen, saying, "Didn't you hear the doctor? Lift your leg up so he can examine it! How else do you expect him to go about this?" Without warning, she bent over to wrap an arm around his injured leg to lift it.

Toby hadn't expected her to do this, and he stiffened at the sudden gesture. However, this only made it harder for Sonia to lift his leg, and she reached out to tap him on the shoulder, hissing, "Hey, loosen up!"

Upon hearing this, Toby snapped out of his daze. He couldn't suppress a smile as he relaxed his body.

When she felt that his leg was not quite as heavy and stiff as before, she successfully lifted it up and propped it on the sofa. "You can examine him now, doctor."

"Alright," the doctor replied as he walked over to the sofa and crouched down, thereafter checking the swollen area.

Meanwhile, Tom stood to the side with his hand clasped over his mouth to keep from laughing. He was highly entertained by how Toby dared not utter a word of complaint even though he was anal about someone touching his foot, all because Sonia was staring at him like she would not hesitate to put him in place. Maybe fear really is the heart of love after all, Tom thought in amusement.

Toby seemed to realize what Tom was laughing at, and he narrowed his eyes at the latter as though saying icily, I can't believe you have the nerve to laugh at me when you don't even have a lover.

As if reading Toby's mind, Tom felt the grin slide off his face. His lips gave a final twitch before he put on a straight face again, though his pride was definitely hurt. He's right. I probably shouldn't make fun of him when I've been a bachelor all my thirty years of life. I really ought to work on my game.

Presently, oblivious to the wordless exchange between Toby and Tom, Sonia kneeled down before Toby's injured foot and asked the doctor worriedly, "How's his foot looking, doctor?"

The doctor pressed down on Toby's ankle, which made Toby frown. Seeing this, the doctor understood the extent of Toby's pain and turned to grab a bottle of cooling spray from his medical kit. Shaking the aluminum bottle twice, he aimed the nozzle at Toby's swollen ankle and sprayed it. "It's nothing serious. He put a strain on his ligament, which is just another way of saying he sprained his ankle. He'll be fine in a couple of days."

When Sonia heard this, she let out a sigh of relief and said, "Oh, thank goodness." Then, she looked at Toby and flashed him a bright smile. "Did you hear that? The doctor said you'll be fine in a couple of days!"

Toby nodded, eyeing her with endearment as he answered, "I heard him."

She stood up. "Thank you for what you did earlier." They had been downstairs, and she was just about to get into the car when she heard the sound of an approaching vehicle, but she did not turn to see where that vehicle was going.

Sonia had thought that it would only pass her by, but to her surprise, the car had intended to run her down and kill her.

If Toby hadn't reacted in time and dragged her back to the pavement, Tina would have knocked her off her feet and sent her flying down the street.

"You don't have to thank me. Anyone would have done the same thing in my position, let alone someone who loves you as much as I do. I couldn't just do nothing and watch you get hurt before my very eyes," Toby pointed out gravely, keeping his gaze on Sonia.

If she had gotten hurt while he was there, he might never be able to forgive himself. He would spend the rest of his days in self-loathe, haunted by the fact that he had failed to save her. With that in mind, he thanked the heavens that he had been there to drag her back onto the safety of the pavement. If she had been alone, then she would be...

His fists clenched, and he stopped himself from thinking about what might have happened. He couldn't bring himself to accept how dire the situation could have been had he not been there to save her. Just focus on the present, he told himself firmly. This is the best I could ask for.

Having heard the man's subtle confession, Sonia felt her heart begin to race, and she parted her lips to say, "Even then, you shouldn't have risked your life like that to save me. You could have—"

"I was more terrified about you getting hurt than anything else," Toby said, cutting her off. At any given moment, he would have prioritized her life over his own safety.

Sonia's eyes widened, and she turned around to dab at the tears that had somehow escaped. She wasn't sure why she was crying, but she tried to keep her voice steady as she choked out, "Toby, don't you know how stupid it is for you to risk your life to save mine? Have you ever stopped to wonder if it's worth it?"

"I can't speak for others, but I know it's worth it to me," he answered solemnly.

She bit down on her lip and muttered in resignation, "You're a lovesick fool! That's what you are."

He chuckled. "Well, I can't help it now. I've already put the rest of my life in your hands. It's too late for me to play it safe."

Sonia looked up slightly and drew in a breath, pushing down the exasperation that was welling up in her as she turned to meet his gaze. "Please don't act so impulsively if something like this ever happens again. Do you really think I'd sleep at night if you gave up your life to save mine? For your sake, and mine, could you please just put yourself first, Toby? I don't want to see you get hurt because of me ever again!"

She paused at this, then added, "Someone should go after Tina before she gets away. If she does, who knows when she'll pop out of nowhere and run some crazy scheme to hurt me? When that comes to pass, you're going to risk your own safety again just to help me, so I'm asking you to butt out of this, Toby. This is a grudge between Tina and myself, and I don't want to drag you into it."

Next to them, Tom nodded earnestly to show that he agreed with her. He was Toby's assistant and friend, and he didn't want to see Toby get hurt. He'd be better off not taking part in all this drama between Miss Reed and Tina.

However, he also understood that Toby could not keep himself from intervening. Because if he doesn't, then who's going to take his place to step in and protect Miss Reed?

Sure enough, Toby gave a firm shake of his head. "I'm afraid I can't do that. I'll put my foot in even where it's not wanted. Haven't you realized that this grudge ties not just you and Tina together, but all three of us?"

"What?" Sonia gaped at him, a little startled by this revelation.

The air around Toby grew colder as he thought about what had happened just now. "When we were downstairs, Tina didn't just try to kill you; she was trying to kill me, too."

"That's impossible!" Sonia gasped, her wide eyes filled with disbelief.

He smirked and elaborated, "No, it's entirely possible. If she wasn't trying to kill me, then she wouldn't have driven her car in our direction again, even after I pulled you to safety. We were on the ground together, Sonia. There was no way she could have killed you and spared me in the process."

This made Sonia fall into a stunned silence. She thought about his analysis and found herself agreeing with him. Indeed, if it hadn't been Tina's intention to kill Toby, then she would have sped off after failing to run Sonia down the first time, but instead, she made a fast turn and hurtled toward her and Toby.

So she really did want to kill me and Toby by running us over with her car.

"But why would she do something like that? Doesn't she love you?" Sonia demanded, her nails digging into her palms as her gaze searched Toby's face.

Disgust flashed in Toby's eyes as he spat, "Her love is worthless. Besides, she never truly loved me."

"Never?" Sonia repeated in surprise.

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Chapter 535 We Lost Her

That's not possible, Sonia thought, still alarmed by Toby's proclamation. If it's true that Tina never truly loved him, then why was she so possessive of him?

As though reading her mind, Toby elaborated grimly, "She never truly loved me for me! After I blacked out from that particular car accident, I had Tom look into Tina, and we discovered a crucial piece of information."

"What was it?" Sonia asked anxiously.

Tom interjected, "We found out that, at that point, she had known for quite a while that she wasn't Titus' biological daughter."

"Yes. Tina discovered at the age of eighteen that she was not Titus' biological daughter, which means there was a chance that he wouldn't pass Triforce Enterprise to her. Even if he would, she knew her lack of skills in running a business would only jeopardize the company. There was a real likelihood that Triforce Enterprise could go bankrupt or be taken over by the shareholders, so in order for her to keep up her lavish lifestyle, she began to set eyes on all the successful men in the industry."

Sonia's jaw dropped when she heard Toby's explanation. "No way."

"It's all true, Miss Reed. I looked into the men Tina had set her eyes on and found that they were bachelors from and heirs to some of the most elite families in the industry," Tom began elaborating. "Our President Fuller happened to be the cream of the crop, but with the Gray Family's standing back in the day, they were far from being in his league. Tina couldn't find a way to even get close to President Fuller, until she discovered that he was pen pals with you, Miss Reed."

"Pen pals..." Sonia's face fell as she remembered something. So that's what happened! Tina and I went to the same university, and she was even my roommate!

The scene of Tina catching her writing letters flashed in Sonia's mind. They had been in their first year of university then, and she recalled Tina making fun of her for using such archaic methods to communicate with someone. Following this, Tina even rallied the other students from the course to join in the teasing.

But one day, Tina suddenly showed interest in Sonia's pen pal and started asking questions about him. She had always been reproachful of Sonia's letter-writing, but out of nowhere, she claimed to have plans on finding herself a pen pal as well.

Perhaps that had been the precise moment when Tina, by some way or another, discovered Toby and Sonia were pen pals. Then she had the idea to impersonate me so that she could finally get close to Toby!

At the thought of this, Sonia closed her eyes and bit out angrily, "It was my fault for not seeing through her schemes at the beginning."

If she had known that John and Toby were the same person—that her pen pal and the man she had fallen so deeply in love with shared one identity—before Tina had, things would have turned out differently for her and Toby.

For one, Tina would never even be part of their narrative.

Presently, at the sight of Sonia's trembling hands, Toby reached out and pulled her into his arms. She stumbled into his embrace, and as he held her, he caressed her hair gently while murmuring, "None of this is your fault; it's mine. I should have told you my identity all those years ago."

In actuality, he had considered telling her about his real identity back then, but at last, he decided against it after seeing how difficult the search for a compatible heart donor had been.

That moment of hesitation had ended up being the perfect window for Tina to come between him and Sonia.

The fault was not Sonia's alone, but that didn't matter. Having missed out on six years with her, Toby was determined to have every moment he could with her now.

Sonia, on the other hand, was surprised by his sudden gentle embrace, but for some reason, she couldn't bring herself to push him away. There was something comforting about being in his arms like this, and she found herself calming down.

Going along with the flow, she quietly leaned her forehead against his shoulder and asked slowly, "So you're saying that Tina only ever loved you for your money and status, but not for who you are? She went to such extreme lengths just so she could have you fund her lavish lifestyle?"

"That's right," Toby muttered hoarsely, dipping his head so he could breathe in the pleasant scent of her hair.

She lowered her gaze. "Actually, I thought her feelings for you were true to some extent. I could tell."

Sonia had seen the jealousy in Tina's eyes whenever they were in the same room; raw emotions like that couldn't have been an act. Such jealousy and hostility toward me would have been uncalled for had Tina never truly loved Toby.

Toby's brows furrowed. "I don't care whether her feelings for me were real or not because I don't want her in the slightest. The idea of being loved by her disgusts me!"

Hearing this inexplicably lifted Sonia's spirits, and the beginnings of a smile began to curl on her lips as she said, "You know, maybe Tina tried to kill you because all that love she had for you has turned into pure hatred."

"It doesn't matter. She could try, but it's not as if she'd succeed in murdering me anytime soon," Toby pointed out darkly. An insidious look flashed in his eyes, but it disappeared just as quickly. He gently released Sonia from the cage of his arms and stared into her eyes. "Just remember that going forward, the grudges you thought were between you and Tina concern me as well, so don't tell me not to intervene. Tina would still come after me even if I were to back out of this mess. You understand that, don't you?"

Sonia parted her lips to say something in protest, but having been rendered speechless, she finally nodded. "I understand."

Meanwhile, the doctor who had been tending to Toby's sprained ankle—and who had become an involuntary third wheel to Toby and Sonia in the process—stood up and said, "Okay, President Fuller, you're all set and ready to go. I've bandaged your ankle, so try to

keep the area dry for at least twenty-four hours, though you can clean it with a damp towel. In the meantime, take care not to bump into anything."

Toby hummed in response. "Alright. Now, can you please attend to her?"

"Very well," the doctor agreed readily, then glanced over at Sonia. "Take a seat here, young lady."

Sonia made a noise of acknowledgment and walked over to the other side of the couch, then rolled up her sleeve to reveal the abrasions on her arm so the doctor could tend to them.

Just then, Tom's phone rang. "President Fuller, it's a call from the bodyguards I sent to go after Tina earlier."

Toby looked somber as he barked, "Well, answer it!"

Sonia turned to stare at Tom anxiously as well.

Under their intense scrutiny, Tom picked up the call and put it on speaker. "It's me. Have you brought the target into custody?"

"Sorry, Mr. Brown, but we lost her," one of the bodyguards on the other line reported trepidatiously.

Exasperation and disbelief colored Tom's features as he snapped, "What? You lost her? You guys are two walking blocks of muscle with a flashy car, but neither of you managed to catch a girl in a beat-up ride?"

Putting it that way, it was hard for anyone to believe that Tina had outrun two security guards.

Toby, too, looked incensed, and the air around him crackled with angry energy. Sonia's fists were clenched so tight that her nails were digging hard into her palms, and the incredulous expression on her face belied her thoughts. How did it end up this way?

She had initially thought that the bodyguards would take down Tina for sure, but in a shocking twist of events, the wretched woman actually managed to escape.

It was just as Sonia had said earlier: if they failed to bring Tina into custody and let her escape, then it would only be harder to catch her the next time. For as long as Tina stayed hidden in the shadows, she was a giant, ticking time bomb. There was no telling when she would pop up again and hurt them.

As things were, the worst-case scenario that Sonia had thought of had finally happened.

On the other end of the phone, the two bodyguards looked down in shame after getting told off by Tom.

"We're sorry, Mr. Brown. We didn't mean to let her escape; we thought the chase was going well, but just as we were about to corner her, two other cars skidded out of nowhere and cut us off."

"Cut you off?" Sonia was astonished as she bit down on her lip. "Could they be Tina's accomplices?"

"Obviously," Toby agreed with a solemn nod.

"She actually has accomplices?" Sonia slammed her fist against the cushion and demanded, "Who would put their lives on the line to help her? Cynthia? Or maybe Julia and Titus?"

These were the only people Sonia could think of who might lend Tina a hand in all this. There was no way Melody could have helped Tina escape, not while she was already struggling in prison already. No, she couldn't have arranged for anyone to help Tina get away from a manhunt.

That being said, Sonia thought there might be others who were aiding Tina in secret, but the possibility of that was low.

After all, the current Tina had already fallen from grace; she was no longer the same girl who had been coddled and supported by courtesies of her relationship with Toby. Her fans had deserted her, and her connections were too thinned out to offer her any real advantage.