

# Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 326

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As the ill intent wafted in her mind, she could no longer suppress the demon within her. As if she was possessed, she lost control of her own emotions. With that, she grabbed a fruit knife in the living room and hid it in her sleeve. Deranged, she unlocked the door to the room confining Elise.

As Elise, on the other hand, was about to bang on the door, the door was pushed open. When she looked Heather in the eye, she immediately knew the woman in front of her wasn't the Heather she knew. Although she couldn't quite put Heather's shift in behavior into words, her presence undoubtedly put her on edge.

With a still face, Heather stared at Elise for a couple of seconds. She scanned at the latter's injured hand before stating aloofly, "You're hurt."

„Baffled, Elise was only reminded of her injury then, to which she awkwardly replied, "Right. I didn't even realize it until you mentioned it." Perhaps it was the stupefaction upon seeing Heather's sudden change that made her forget the sting on her hand.

With a knowing look, Heather took a step into the room and shifted her body sideways to allow Elise a path out of the room. "I'll treat it outside. Matt will kill me if anything happens to you." As she spoke, she carried a tremendous determination within her, which she revealed not on her face, but under her glistening eyes.

As subtle as it was, Elise was able to sense it, and she grew even more cautious. At the same time, she was tempted by her goal, as she had her keen eyes fixated on the main door which was right opposite her bedroom's door. She would be able to escape once she stormed out the bedroom. Nonetheless, Heather wouldn't be so kind to let her off. There was no telling if she could still breathe after exiting through the door. However, when she thought of her grandparents and Alexander, she gritted her teeth and decided to give it a try.

Under Heather's scorching gaze, Elise grabbed her injured hand and walked out the room. When she was passing by Heather, her steps subconsciously decelerated.

Heather watched as Elise walked past her. It wasn't until Elise's back was fully facing her that she revealed a vicious expression. In a flash, the knife that was in her sleeve was already raised above her head. All she had to do in that instant was stab her. In that case, the blame could be easily deflected by saying the then-dead woman, who was trying to escape, were accidentally murdered in a circumstance where Heather was forced to use a knife after a massive effort of trying to stop her from running. As such, there would no longer be an Elise Sinclair in the world. Simultaneously, Matthew wouldn't blame her for Elise's death. Bearing that in mind, Heather grasped

her knife even tighter and held it even higher before going for the forceful stab.

It was a perfect execution, except for the fact that she had forgotten the giant mirror in the living room that was reflecting every detail of her actions. Elise saw the glinting knife in the mirror, and without any contemplation, she dodged the stab with her agility harnessed from years of experience as a veteran racer.

Accordingly, Heather missed her attack. And when she realized it, Elise was already at the living room's couch. "Why are you trying to kill me?" Elise glowered, unable to take in what just happened.

Heather gnarled her teeth and pointed the knife at Elise. Her facial expression resembled that of the most gruesome demons. "Because you don't deserve Matthew, and you ruined him! Thus, you should pay for it with your life!" Having said that, she recklessly charged toward Elise.

Due to the injury on her hand, Elise couldn't attempt to disarm her. She could only run around the couch as she evaded each attack from Heather. Very soon, they ended up in each other's previous positions, facing each other.

Heather squinted her eyes as she panted, anxiously holding the knife toward Elise. "Stop running. You can't run away from this, Elise. This is your life, destined to be ended for the sake of Matthew and I. Just face the reality!"

"You face the reality!" Elise coldly gazed at her, unable to figure out how idiotic could a woman be to be willing to commit crime for a man's attention. "Matthew never loved you! Whether I exist or not, he won't truly care about you! How much longer are you planning to deceive yourself?"

"Shut up! You're lying! Matt and I are in love. His actions toward you are only out of envy for Alexander. I'm the only person who really understands him! We've been together for so long, and I'm the only one that deserves him. Once you're out of the picture, the three of us can finally live happily ever after!" Heather was so drunk in her fantasy that she'd lost all rationality.

Among her words, Elise caught something rather critical. "You're... pregnant?" She looked at Heather's flat stomach and inquired, to which Heather gave no response, but her silence obviously admitted the existence of a tiny life within her. Instantly, Elise's eyes lit up. She switched up her strategy and aggressively taunted, "Once you kill me, your child will have a murderer for a mother. How happy could that be?"

Hearing the terms "child" and "murderer" in the same sentence, Heather was triggered. Forcibly, she woke up from her fantasy, only to find the knife in her hands, before turning to Elise in fear and agitation. She realized she had been too hasty. In

mere minutes, she simply wanted Elise to disappear so that all her issues could be resolved. Overly immersed, she had completely forgotten about the law and the consequences of killing. She had to admit that Elise had moved her. Even if it was for the sake of her children, she shouldn't be attempting such a crazy stunt.

Seeing as she slowly laid down her weapon, Elise sincerely stated, "You can still come back from this. As long as you're willing to change, it's never too late to turn back. In the same way, if you let me go, I promise not to investigate Matthew once I return safely. I can even help you get out of this place, to somewhere nobody could recognize you. Think about it. Isn't that what you want?"

"What I want..." Heather muttered as she lost herself in thought.

Watching as she'd lowered her guard, Elise immediately turned to the main door of the house and started counting down in her heart. Five, four, three, two... one! Swiftly, she dashed to the door and ferociously pushed down the door handle. To her surprise, the door remained unopened. What. Am I supposed to pull this instead? Pushing and pulling, she found all her attempts were in vain, as if the door was fused with the walls.

Sensing the loud disturbances, Heather regained her senses. "Trying to escape?! Not a chance! Matt says he'll die if you're gone. No! Don't run!" Her mind went overdrive just by imagining Matthew being in danger. At once, she rushed toward Elise and grabbed her, attempting to drag her back into the bedroom.

As Elise had just arduously broken out of the cursed bedroom, going back into it would mean more torment. Thus, she endured the pain on her hand as she withstood the dragging force from Heather.

Consequently, the knife that Heather had yet to unhand was probing Elise's stomach. The more force Elise exerted, the deeper the tip of the knife pressed against her flesh, as if it was about to pierce through her clothes and her tender skin.

Under the tense situation, Elise improvised. Instead of resisting, she pushed along Heather's force. Heather, unable to react in time, fell down. The two of them tripped together, and Elise was on top of Heather, pressing the latter's hand against her body. With that, Heather loosened her grip as the sharp knife fell onto the ground with a clank.

Regaining her senses, Elise swiftly picked up the knife and pinned Heather down with one hand, holding the knife at her throat with the other. "Don't move!"

## Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 327

Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 327

With the icy blade of the dagger touching her neck, Heather instinctively flinched back. When she lowered her gaze to see the offending dagger, her breathing hitched.

She was someone who highly valued her life. To top it off, she also had people that she loved

"You won't dare." Heather narrowed her eyes, attempting to see how far Elise's limits stretched.

Elise curved her lips up, but her smile didn't reach her eyes. "You can try me."

Heather could see from Elise's eyes that she had thrown all caution to the wind. In the end, Heather didn't push her luck.

Elise knew a little about fighting in the first place. Now that she had a dagger, she had the upper hand completely. Once she had ascertained that Heather wouldn't continue fighting, she finally moved on to the next step. "Get up," she threatened. Still holding Heather, she turned to glance at the door. "And open the door," she urged.

Heather obediently did as she was told, moving over to grab the handle. However, the door wouldn't open. "It's locked."

"You better not be playing any tricks." Elise actually didn't believe her.

"If you don't believe me, try it yourself." Heather raised her arms in surrender. "You're Matt's only chance of turning the tables. You think he'll let you escape so easily?"

Elise had enough of pointless blabbering. Matthew could come by any time now. She didn't have much time to waste. Every second was precious.

"Turn around." After getting Heather to stand with her back to her, Elise pointed the dagger at Heather's back while she tried to open the door with her free hand. In the end, there was no miracle. No matter how much strength she poured in, the handle remained resolutely in place.

Heather smiled, pleased. "Matt's going to come back soon. And before that happens, you better go back to the room, or I can't guarantee what kind of treatment you're going to receive otherwise," she reminded.

Go back? Wouldn't that be waiting around like a sitting duck? Elise wouldn't admit defeat so easily. Thus, she put away her dagger and began to search for another escape route.

Heather, on the other hand, was no match for Elise. They both knew this fact deep down, so she didn't escalate the situation any further.

Like she was watching a show, Heather coldly looked on as Elise searched from the kitchen all the way to the study with nothing to show for it. She once again mocked, "Stop wasting your time. This place is completely sealed off. There's no other exit apart from that door." In addition to that, that door was specially made. No blade was going to scratch that door, and

axes wouldn't be able to break it down. Other than getting its key to unlock it, there was no other way to get that door to open.

Elise returned to the living room once more and looked at Heather dejectedly, who was enjoying the show. These two are mad for constructing such a huge hidden space out of nowhere. Am I really never going to escape?

Just as Elise was about to fall into despair, Alexander's familiar low voice sounded from outside. "Elise, are you in there?"

Elise's eyes instantly lit up, and she whipped around. "I'm here! Alexander! I'm inside!" He found me. He really found me. She knew she could trust this man.

"Okay, got it. Don't get overexcited." Alexander unhurriedly calmed Elise before he continued in an unrushed manner, "I'm going inside now. Stand a little further away."

"Sure." Elise took a few steps back, leaving a few feet of distance between the door and herself.

The next moment, something could be heard smashing away at the door. One strike, two strikes... Elise could even feel the floorboards shaking, but there was absolutely no sign of the door opening.

Not long after that, the smashing sounds stopped. Elise heard Alexander again. "Elise, hide. Find a room or stay far away from the door. Can you do that?" He deliberately made his voice louder.

Elise glanced around before nodding at the door. "Yeah. Is the kitchen far enough?"

"Yes. Go and hide. I'll go inside two minutes later for you." Having said that, Alexander disappeared. Elise quickly headed to the kitchen and locked the door to wait for her rescue soon.

Heather sat unperturbed on the couch as though she had just heard the biggest joke

in her life, waiting for Alexander to once again hit another dead end. She had said before that the door would not be opening unless unlocked with its key.

The next moment, though, there was a loud crash as the wall across her suddenly crumbled. Immediately after, an SUV rushed at her. Heather quickly raised her arms in front to shield herself. With the piercing sound of brakes screeching, the SUV stopped just a hair's breadth away from her. She barely escaped with her life.

Alexander opened the door of the vehicle and got out. Once he had determined the location of the kitchen, he quickly ran over and opened the door. The moment he saw Elise, all his defenses came crashing down, and he drew Elise into his arms without a care in the world. He held her tightly, wishing that he could have her permanently in his life.

"I'm here," Alexander said, his voice choking up.

"I know." Elise had never felt so safe before. "Thank you, Alexander."

Alexander shook his head, his large hand moving up and down as he patted her fluffy hair. "Sorry I came too late."

The sticky feeling he got when he touched her hand instantly made Alexander frown. That striking red on her hand when he looked down was like a knife, stabbing right into his heart.

"What happened? Did you get hurt?" Alexander's heart hurt, but he didn't dare to touch Elise, fearing that he would hurt her

Elise had already weathered through the worst of the pain. By now, the pain had numbed, so she didn't really feel anything much. She smiled as she shook her head. "It's nothing, just a small scratch. It's no big deal."

But Alexander wasn't going to easily give up on this matter. This place was completely sealed off, and other than Elise and that other woman, there was no one else here. He knew very well just who the culprit was, and a chill instantly rose in his eyes. He lifted a hand and gently placed it on Elise's shoulder. "Wait for me for a bit," he soothed. Subsequently, his lips curved up. Although he was clearly smiling, the rest of his expression was filled with cruelty. Retrieving Elise's dagger, he took a deep breath before he headed to the living room for Heather, who still hadn't calmed down from the initial shock.

As Elise watched his departing figure, she instantly understood what he was going to do. She hastily ran after him and pulled on his sleeve to stop him. "This has nothing to do with her. I actually hurt my own hand."

Alexander's anger had reached its boiling point. He simply thought that Elise was making up excuses because she was softhearted. He didn't listen to her.

Elise could seemingly see the embers of fury in Alexander's eyes burn larger and faster; he was close to losing control. Realizing this, she was both delighted yet panicked. In her franticness, she grabbed the hand that Alexander held the dagger with, forgetting her own pain as she held on with both her hands. "It's true—I wanted to hurt myself to make them take me to the hospital so that I would get a chance to escape. Alexander, are you going to kill because of me? If you end up in prison and this happens to me again, who's going to look for me?!" She was practically begging

now.

Having felt her warmth, Alexander instantly snapped out of his rage. Carefully, he held her face, her expression currently filled with both love and worry. "Don't be scared. With me here, there won't be a next time."

With that, Alexander tossed a frigid look at Heather's way before he turned to open the door of the SUV. Quietly, he carried Elise and helped her into the passenger seat before he moved over and got into the driver's seat. Start the engine, get ready, back up. Done. His face was icy as he stepped on the gas, as though this was the only way that would make him feel like he wasn't useless for not even being able to protect his beloved

## Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 328

Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 328

The sound of the engine got more and more distant. Heather stood on the spot for a full thirty seconds before she gradually came back to her senses. As she looked at the rubble and destruction on the ground, the first thing she thought of was that Matthew was certainly going to blame her for not being able to guard Elise well.

If Matthew thinks that I'm useless. I might not be able to stay by his side anymore. "No, I definitely can't leave Matt..." Heather mumbled as she began to pace around the space. Soon, her attention was drawn to the small fruit knife by the kitchen's entrance.

After just a second of hesitation, she walked over and picked up the knife. Then, she ruthlessly stabbed it straight into her left arm.

When Matthew drove back, he could see that the walls on the first floor had already partially caved in. Furious, he smacked his steering wheel. Did you escape again, Elise? Although it wasn't very likely, he still had a little hope as he revved the car. Once the car came to a stop, he immediately ran inside the house without even taking the time to pull out his keys.

The moment Matthew stepped into the living room, he promptly noticed that the door to Elise's room was wide open. His last hope was completely extinguished then. When he snapped out of it, he finally noticed Heather lying injured on the couch. Hunching over, he gently shook her. "Heather?"

Heather wasn't actually unconscious; it was just an act for Matthew. Seeing him panicking, she slowly opened her eyes. "Elise worked together with Alexander. She escaped after she stabbed me. I'm sorry..." she weakly explained.

Now that his chance to turn the tables was gone, Matthew was incensed. However, he couldn't let his anger show with the pale-faced Heather there. All he could do now was set this matter aside and help her up. "You aren't to blame. You were alone-how could you have possibly taken on both of them at once? Let's get you to the hospital first."

Meanwhile, at the emergency room, the nurse applied some ointment for Elise. After telling her about some things she had to look out for, the nurse left the room. Not long after the nurse left, Alexander came in.

It had been a long time since they saw each other. After experiencing the whirlwind

that was earlier and calming down, Elise and Alexander somehow ended up a little more polite and reserved with each other.

Elise pressed her lips together. In order to make Alexander relax, she said jokingly, "The nurse was really patient."

Alexander stood in front of her expressionlessly. He didn't speak, simply opting to look at her without moving. His dark eyes glimmered under the lights, an indiscernible glint shining in them.

It got awkward.

Elise wasn't a master at easing the atmosphere. So, she pretended to shrug casually and averted her gaze.

"You're always like this." Alexander's voice suddenly rang out, low and deep. Chastisement and exasperation could be heard in his words.

Elise looked up at him, her pretty little face scrunching up a little. She couldn't figure out how she had gotten on his nerves again.

Alexander could see through her confusion. Angry, he lifted a hand to pinch his forehead, but in the end, he deflated helplessly. He just wanted Elise to know that her safety was always the priority. Clearly, though, she didn't pay attention to that. Otherwise, she would have just patiently waited for him to save her instead of hurting her hand like that. Nonetheless, he knew that she didn't like him nagging her, so he had no choice but to swallow those words. When he neared her, he reached out and pulled her in for a hug.

Ever since the day Elise was kidnapped, Alexander had been on tenterhooks. It was only now that he finally relaxed. From then on, he made a promise to himself that he would never let anyone take Elise away from his sight again.

After an unknown amount of time, Elise couldn't quite breathe from being hugged for so long. Just as she was about to remind Alexander to ease up, he released her.

"Let's go back first. This place is too close to where Matthew is. It's not safe." Alexander took off his jacket and draped it around Elise's shoulders. They then quickly drove away from the hospital.

Over an hour later, the SUV drove past the Griffith Residence's gates.

This wasn't Elise's first time here, but an awkward look still came over her face when she saw Alexander offer her a hand after the vehicle had stopped. Just because she

had just escaped from a dire situation didn't mean that some things could be easily overlooked. Madeline was the one uncrossable gulf between them. Having only just escaped from Matthew's clutches, Elise truly didn't want to go in and be treated like some pariah while bearing verbal attacks that never should have been directed at her.

Knowing what she was worried about, Alexander stretched his hand out further, his gaze sharp and determined. "Trust me, many things have changed since then. You won't be disappointed."

Elise looked at him. Under the sunlight, his face looked even more bewitching and lively. He looked like he had walked straight out of a painting.

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Just as Alexander said, that distant, excluded feeling that had kept creeping in her heart before didn't arise. Everything in front of her was real. He was right. There was no other person in the world who could have followed the trail and located her with just a wedding dress. With how well Alexander understood her, did she have anything else to worry about?

At that thought, the darkness in Elise's expression dissipated, leaving behind a faint smile. She placed her dainty hand in Alexander's. They then walked hand-in-hand into the Griffith Residence together, the place that she had repeatedly left in fear and panic.

The rest of the Griffiths were currently busy at this hour. Madeline was the only one at home, nursing her injuries, and coincidentally, they ran into each other.

The moment their eyes met, Elise looked at Madeline. She attempted to trust Alexander and awkwardly twitched her lips up in an effort of goodwill.

Seeing her safe return, Madeline studied Elise; her clothes were disheveled and messy, unlike the image of the perfect daughter-in-law that she had in mind. Her first

instinct was to reject Elise, but then, she caught sight of the apathetic look in Alexander's gaze through the corners of her eyes. In the end, she sighed. With no other choice, she reined in her thoughts and nodded, accepting Elise's offered smile. "You're back at last. You've been through a hard time. Go upstairs and get some rest." She then called a servant over. "Mrs. Hilda, tidy up the guest room. Bring Miss Sinclair some clean clothes."

"Yes," Hilda acknowledged in a respectful tone.

Having said all she wanted, Madeline turned and headed for the couch in the living room, coffee cup in hand. She didn't even wait for Elise to thank her.

Everything took time. The fact that Madeline didn't reject Elise and allowed her to

stay was already the greatest concession she could make. As for when she would be able to sincerely accept Elise, there was still a long road ahead.

Madeline had just turned around when she heard Alexander speak to Hilda. "No need for that. Elise, you can stay in my room. Bring the things there."

Madeline paused before lowering her head to stir her coffee indifferently. After years of interacting with other upper-crust ladies, she had already trained herself to discern the truth behind a person's words and actions. She knew very well that Alexander had said that on purpose for her—he wanted her to know that Elise was not a guest in this house.

Elise initially thought that Madeline would make a stand and make some unreasonable demand, but to her surprise, Madeline didn't show any reaction after hearing Alexander. It startled Elise. By the time she snapped out of her shock, Alexander was already leading her upstairs by the hand.

Elise nervously followed behind him. It wasn't until they had gone to the second floor and disappeared into the elevator that she was certain—Madeline had truly changed.

## Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 329

Bring Your A Game, Mr 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*

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..."

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.

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, 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?"

## Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 330

### Bring Your A Game, Mr Chapter 330

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.

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.

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

14.45 MUG.

Chapter 330

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 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.

It was time to put an end to everything.