Chapter 2233 Little Bodyguard

"Then, what should I do now?" asked Monica in a meek voice. "Should I just persuade Ms. Felch to take me with her?"

"Are you out of your mind?" William was bereft of speech. He couldn't even be bothered to continue the meaningless conversation with Monica. "Let me think of something. You may leave." "Your Highness..."

Monica still had something else to say, yet a peek at William's irritated countenance was sufficient to compel her into lowering her gaze and backing away.

She felt aggrieved, for she was a senior Interpol detective, after all. All she knew was carrying out investigations and apprehending criminals. She never had a knack for putting on a pretense.

Even so, she had given her all in completing every task that had been assigned to her.

Meanwhile, Francesca was having nightmares the entire night. In her dreams, she could see that Danrique was in danger as he was pinned underneath a vehicle with his legs bathing in a pool of his own blood, seemingly on the verge of death.

Anxious and concerned, she wanted to rush over and rescue him, but it was as though her feet were stuck in the ground, and they wouldn't budge no matter how hard she struggled.

Right at that juncture, the vehicle exploded all of a sudden with a loud boom. With her eyes widened in disbelief, Francesca gaped at the scene as Danrique was engulfed in the roaring flames.

"No!" Francesca let out a frantic scream before sitting up in bed, sweating ever so profusely.

Only after seeing the familiar room that she was in did she realize that she had been dreaming. Be that as it may, the sensation was so palpable that she had thought that it was real.

She touched the pillow at the side, reminiscing the time they spent together before Danrique left as a throbbing pain assailed her.

Subsequently, she checked her phone and was greeted by nothing but a text from Gordon that read: We haven't found him yet, Ms. Felch. Cradling her forehead, Francesca was utterly disappointed.

Nevertheless, there was nothing she could do at the moment. With her mind abuzz with messy thoughts, she slept through several hours more until she was ultimately awakened by the chimes of her phone.

"Francesca, I've made the appointment. We'll meet at North Hotel at one o'clock in the afternoon." It turned out to be a call from the first lady. "Noted. I'll be there on the dot."

A glimmer of hope rose within Francesca as she glanced at the time. There were still another few hours to go. She couldn't wait for the time to arrive sooner so that she could finally gain more information regarding Danrique's whereabouts.

Knowing that Francesca was going to meet the first lady, Layla reminded, "You have been researching poison and drugs, haven't you? How about hidden weapons and booby traps? Bring some with you for self-defense."

"Those things are too conspicuous." Francesca refused to heed Layla's advice as she added, "I can't simply put on a casual attire with a backpack to see the first lady, now, can I?"

[&]quot;Then, you—"

"Rest assured, Ms. Layla. I'm well-prepared."

As they spoke, Francesca asked Sloan to bring her to Danrique's laboratory. While she was there, she summoned Sam.

Sam still recognized Francesca. It bolted toward her the second it heard her whistling. Coiling itself around her wrist, it resembled a mesmerizing, shiny jade bracelet.

"Look, Ms. Layla! This is my very own little bodyguard!" Holding Sam high up, Francesca went on, "It's the one that had bitten Chrono the last time!"

"This little one must be extremely poisonous." Seeing Sam up close like that, Layla felt a shiver run down her spine.

Then came Sloan's words of caution, "Sam has been soaking in poison substance for a couple of months already, so it's pretty deadly now, I must say. Ms. Felch, please be careful."

"Don't you worry about a thing." Francesca then checked the time and announced, "I must go now."

Sloan hurriedly trailed behind her. "I'd like to escort you there, Ms. Felch, if I may."

However, Francesca turned him down. "You guys stay here and be on guard. Don't let anyone come and cause trouble. I won't be long."

"But your safety is also our priority." Sloan became a nervous wreck on that note. "What if something bad happened to you? How am I going to explain it to Mr. Lindberg?"

"If something were to really crop up, you people wouldn't be able to fend it off anyway." Wearing a confident demeanor, Francesca stated, "Besides, I can deal with it myself." "But—"

Just when Sloan was about to speak further, Francesca hopped into the car and floored the accelerator, vanishing quickly beyond the horizon. "Ms. Felch, Ms. Felch..."

Sloan continued to call out to her as he tried to chase after her. Sadly, his voice was drowned by the howling wind.

Chapter 2234 Meeting Hazel Again

Despite being extremely worried about Francesca as well, Layla comforted Sloan upon noticing how distraught he was. She said, "There's no need to worry. The average person won't be able to harm her." "But—"

"I noticed there was an animal-training facility behind here. Why don't you bring me there to take a look?" Layla suddenly changed the subject.

"Okay." Francesca drove to North Hotel, the place where she agreed to meet the first lady at.

The first lady's car was already parked outside, and the hotel manager and her bodyguards were standing at the entrance. They walked up and greeted Francesca respectfully as soon as they saw her.

Francesca got out of the car and strode into the hotel in a hurry. "Has Mrs. President arrived?" "She arrived a while ago."

The bodyguards brought her in, whereas the hotel manager stood at the entrance, waiting for the Atkinson family members to arrive.

When Francesca entered the hotel, she noticed there was no one in the hotel. It was apparent that the first lady had booked the entire place.

The first lady was sipping on her tea when Francesca entered the private room, and when she saw the latter, she beckoned her over. "Oh, you're here. Come and have a taste of this tea."

Francesca was not in the mood to enjoy tea, but she still sat down and waited patiently.

The first lady patted Francesca's hand and reminded her, "Francesca, I'll ask the questions when they arrive later. Don't worry. They will not dare to hide anything from me"

As soon as the first lady finished speaking, the hotel manager brought in the representatives from the Atkinson family.

Francesca was dumbfounded when she turned around and saw who it was. Hazel, who was severely injured, was wheeled into the room by Gerard. The first lady was shell-shocked. "Hazel? When did you return?"

That was also the question Francesca wanted to ask. "I reached home around three in the morning."

Hazel's voice was hoarse and deep as she spoke, and there were bandages wrapped around her head, a cast on her leg, and abrasions on her arms. To make matters worse, she was shot in the chest. It seemed laborious for her to even sit up straight.

"How did you end up like this? What happened? Where's Danrique?" Francesca asked anxiously. Hazel was still too weak to explain the situation at length, so she remained silent. The first lady queried as well, "Yeah. What happened?"

"Mr. Lindberg and I were attacked. He covered me so I could retreat first. While escaping, I got hurt and lost consciousness. When I woke up, I was already in the hospital and had lost contact with Mr. Lindberg and his subordinates. I have already sent people to look for him, but there hasn't been any news. I have no choice but to return to Erihal when I was attacked again yesterday..." Hazel explained with difficulty.

Upon hearing that, Francesca grew even more uneasy. Hazel was still severely injured even though Danrique and his men were covering her. It was evident that the firepower from the attack was highly intensive.

"How is this possible? Who attacked you guys?" the first lady asked anxiously.

Hazel furrowed her brows. "It should be Pastor and Frank. Previously, Pastor's business was affected when Mr. Lindberg expanded his business into the Epean market, so Pastor has been holding a grudge against him. Moreover, the people backing Pastor wanted to rope in Mr. Lindberg, but he did not agree. Therefore, those people let Pastor do whatever he liked. Also, their power had grown exponentially with Frank's and the Nacht family's assistance, coupled with the fact that we were in a disadvantageous position as Mr. Lindberg did not bring enough men along this time..."

Gerard sighed before replying, "Danrique was careless this time. He usually brings a lot of men with him whenever he goes out to work. Why did he only take a dozen people this time?"

Hazel glared at Francesca hatefully upon hearing his remarks. "Apparently, he has to leave some men behind to protect certain people at home. Mr. Lindberg was in a rush this time and did not make proper preparations, allowing them to take advantage of the situation."

"Enough with the nonsense. Where were you when you guys were attacked? Tell me the precise location and situation clearly." Francesca was unfazed by what Hazel said.

"I already explained to Gordon. I care more about Mr. Lindberg's safety than you do!" Hazel replied coldly.

Chapter 2235 Provocation

Her words were obviously provocative. Francesca furrowed her brows and was about to say something when the first lady spoke up to smooth things over. "Okay, that's enough. Our main priority is to find Danrique."

Hazel responded, "I hope we could find him as soon as possible, too. My subordinates and I have already informed Gordon about the situation. He has gotten all the information he needs and is investigating the situation now."

The first lady sighed sorrowfully. "That's good to know. I hope Danrique will be able to return safely."

At that moment, Gerard said sarcastically, "We all hope for that. With the absence of Danrique, some urgent projects cannot be initiated, while some important projects have to be postponed as they require approvals. As a result, the company has suffered significant losses. If this continues, the problem will only worsen."

"The president has already sent people over. At the same time, we contacted the government there. We will bring Danrique back safely." The first lady changed the subject.

"It's great that we have the president's help. Danrique would surely return soon," Gerard quickly replied.

The first lady nodded. "Yes. Let's eat first. We can talk while we eat."

Hazel said feebly, "Mrs. President, I'm not feeling well, so I can't stay outside for long. I won't be able to eat dinner with you."

Gerard chimed in hastily, "That's right. Hazel is badly injured and was carried back home on a hospital bed in the morning. We wouldn't even be here if you didn't summon us."

"Come to think of it, Francesca is a doctor. Why don't you let her have a look at Hazel's injuries?" the first lady suggested enthusiastically.

"There's no need for that. I can't trouble the almighty Dr. Felch with my minor injuries!" Hazel gazed at Francesca coldly.

While Francesca was fuming, the first lady stepped in to defuse the situation yet again. "Francesca has exceptional medical skills. Previously, when Avery had a relapse, the other doctors could not do anything to save her. Francesca was the one who saved Avery."

"Is Avery okay?" Hazel asked concerned.

"Her situation has already stabilized."

In the midst of their conversation, the first lady's phone suddenly rang. She took a look at the caller ID and said hastily, "The president is calling. I need to take this. You guys can sit here and wait for me to return."

"All right. Go ahead." Gerard and Hazel nodded in response.

After the first lady left to take the call, Gerard, Hazel, Francesca, and a few maids were the only ones left in the private room.

Gerard said with a cynical tone, "Don't think of yourself as the lady of the Lindberg family simply because you're dating Danrique. You need to understand that you guys are still not married, so you're not part of the family yet."

"Daddy—" Hazel furrowed her brows and tried to stop him.

"Hazel, you're too much of a pushover," said Gerard to Hazel before glowering at Francesca with hatred. "I don't understand what Danrique sees in you. You don't have any good qualities, yet you act high and mighty. Let me tell you. You have to give up the seal sooner or later. With Danrique absent, the other directors would still need to ensure that the company continues running. It's not something an outsider like you can have a say in."

Francesca bellowed in annoyance, "Are you done? How dare you make yourself sound so righteous when you guys are attempting to usurp Danrique's authority while he's away? How hypocritical!"

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"You—"
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Francesca interrupted him angrily, "What? Don't think I'm a pushover! With me here, no one will be able to take anything from the Lindberg family."

Livid, Gerard gritted his teeth. "How dare you! Who do you think you are? Do you really think you're a big shot? Aren't you just one of Danrique's women? You're going to get kicked out soon..."

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"Daddy..."
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"The audacity!"

Enraged, Francesca picked up an ashtray and threw it in his direction.

Gerard hastily ducked to avoid it, and it landed on Hazel instead. The woman yelped in pain as the color drained from her face.

Chapter 2236 Venomous Sam

When Gerard saw her daughter getting hit, he raised his fist to punch Francesca in his rage. At that moment, the green snake that was hiding in Francesca's sleeve shot out and wrapped itself around Gerard's neck, opening its mouth to attack.

Just as it was about to sink its teeth into Gerard's skin, Francesca yelled, "Sam, come back!" Sam's tongue had already come in contact with Gerard's skin, but it held back just in time and jumped back to Francesca's wrist before coiling and turning into a jade bangle-like shape.

"You..." As Gerard touched his neck and looked at Francesca's wrist, his face turned pale. "You evil woman! I'm going to kill you!"

Next, he lunged at Francesca. "Stop it right there!" The first lady appeared at that juncture and stopped Gerard. The latter lowered his fist, while Francesca, who was ready to retaliate, retracted her raised leg as well.

If the first lady hadn't appeared, Gerard would have been sent flying by Francesca's kick before he could even land a punch.

"Gerard, what are you doing?" the first lady scolded. "I just went out for a call, and I come back to see you attempting to hit Francesca! You're a man and an elder to her. How could you be so unreasonable?"

"Mrs. President, this is a misunderstanding!" Gerard pointed at Francesca in agitation and continued, "This brat attacked me with an ashtray earlier and missed, but Hazel got hit instead!"

The first lady turned to look at Hazel and found out that the girl's wound was indeed bleeding, and an ashtray lay beside her feet. At that sight, the first lady questioned, "Francesca, what's going on?"

"Gerard offended me with his words first," said Francesca coldly. "I did hurl an ashtray at him, but he dodged. That's why I accidentally hurt Hazel."

Feeling somewhat guilty about Hazel's bleeding wound, Francesca approached the other woman to check her injury. However, Hazel rejected her outright. "I don't need you to check on me!"

Francesca rolled her eyes and produced a small bottle from her pocket. She tossed it to Hazel, saying, "I made this medicinal powder. It's very effective in treating external wounds. Use it if you want. Otherwise, just throw it away."

Hazel was about to discard it when Gerard stopped her. In a low voice, he told her, "Just keep it first. Although she's problematic, she is actually very skilled in medicine."

"Daddy, are you okay? Were you bitten by that snake?" Hazel asked in concern while examining Gerard's neck.

"I'm not sure." Gerard put his hand over his neck and said to the first lady, "Mrs. President, Hazel isn't feeling well. I'll bring her home first."

"All right. I asked you to come today because I wanted to ask about Danrique, but I didn't expect a conflict like this to take place. It's all because of my negligence. Mr. President already scolded me earlier," the first lady mentioned with her brows scrunched.

"It's not your fault, Mrs. President—"

"Anyway, you should go," interrupted the first lady. "Take good care of Hazel."

"All right." Without saying anything more, Gerard wheeled Hazel toward the exit.

Before leaving, Hazel bowed at the first lady, but she did not even spare a glance at Francesca. Upon turning around, she asked Gerard again, "Daddy, were you bitten by that snake?"

"I don't think so. My neck doesn't hurt, but it feels a bit numb and chilly," Gerard answered softly.

"You should go and see a doctor. The snakes reared by Mr. Lindberg are highly venomous," Hazel said with worry.

"That snake was raised by Mr. Lindberg?" Gerard's face fell. Just as he was about to turn around to lash out at Francesca, Hazel pulled him back. "That's enough. We shouldn't make a scene in front of Mrs. President. Let's go home first."

Although Francesca couldn't hear the father-daughter duo's conversation clearly, she could guess what was going on. She couldn't help but roll her eyes out of annoyance.

I may despise the two of them, but I wouldn't go so far as to murder them! Considering how venomous Sam is, Gerard would be dead with just one bite.

Chapter 2237 Invader

After Gerard and Hazel left, Francesca did not stay long. She exchanged a few pleasantries with the first lady and took her to leave.

When she walked out of the hotel, she saw Sloan and the others waiting by the road. "Why are you here?" she asked in confusion. "We're worried about your safety, so we came to fetch you," said Sloan respectfully.

"Let's get in the car first." Francesca opened the car door and got in, and Sloan followed suit. "Ms. Felch, are you okay—Ah!"

Before he could even finish his words, the car sped forward, startling him. Everything happened so fast that the car escorting them could barely keep up.

"Who will guard the house if you're out?" Francesca demanded unhappily. "Didn't I tell you to stay there? What if those scums send someone to steal the seal?"

Sloan hurriedly explained, "That won't happen. I only brought two men with me. The others stayed behind." "That's good to hear."

The next second, Sloan's phone rang. He picked up the call, and soon, his eyes widened in panic. "What? Did they succeed? D*mn it. I'll be back soon."

"What is it?" Francesca questioned immediately. "You were right," Sloan groaned in exasperation. "Someone attempted to steal from the house, but Ms. Layla noticed him." "Did they catch him?"

"He ran away. There aren't enough people at home; the thief is probably an expert." Sloan peeked at Francesca guiltily.

"Yes, I got it," Sloan replied, not daring to make any more excuses.

By the time they rushed home, the bodyguards were waiting at the door. Upon seeing Francesca and Sloan, they gave a detailed report on the incident. In the end, one of them said, "Good thing Ms. Layla was quick to notice. Otherwise…"

Layla walked out the next moment. "I can't take all the credit. There's a security system in the study room that triggers an alarm when someone enters. I only noticed after seeing the alarm." "Let me take a look."

Francesca entered the house hastily and went to the study room. The infrared light inside the room was still flashing, so no one dared to approach it since they would be electrocuted.

Francesca reached out to push the door open, but Sloan stopped her. "Ms. Felch, the alarm has been triggered because of the thief. You'll be electrocuted if you go in now." "Then when can I enter?"

Sloan looked troubled. "We've never encountered this situation before, so I really don't know. If Mr. Lindberg is here, we could use his fingerprint to turn off the alarm."

Without giving it a thought, Francesca placed her finger on the sensor to try and see if it would work. Ding! Surprisingly, the alarm turned off. Everyone, including Francesca herself, was shocked.

She had no idea when her biometrics was registered in the alarm system of the study room. "Francesca, take a look inside first," Layla suggested.

Francesca went in immediately and checked the safe. Fortunately, it was untouched. The study room looked just the same as it was when Danrique left.

Only the window was opened. Although the window was not burglar-proof, the alarm system would be triggered once an outsider sneaked in. Electricity would then flow through the entire study room and electrocute the invader.

After closing the window and double-checking everything, Francesca shut the door and instructed, "In the coming days, I want you all to guard the house properly. Do not go anywhere else. No matter what happens, do not hand over the seal. Is this understood?"

"Yes, Ms. Felch!" the men answered in unison. "You may leave now."

Then, Francesca sent them away and pulled Layla into her room. "Ms. Layla, did you see the person's face? Who is it?" "He was in black, and he wore a cap and a mask. I couldn't see his face."