Chapter 2283 Becoming Stronger

How am I going to find someone as good as her? How am I going to face Mr. Lincoln? What am I going to tell Lincoln and Anthony? What about the kids at the children's home?

What about me? Tears escaped from the corner of her eyes, and Francesca's eyes fluttered shut. Sloan's naive yet handsome face emerged in her mind.

Back when they first met, she still did not have her memories yet. The first time she summoned a beast with the summoning spell, Sloan was starry-eyed.

From then on, he became her fan. To help her out, he even went against Danrique's orders and let her go sneakily. Every time he received the task to protect her, he carried it out to the best of his ability.

Every time she fought with Danrique, he would defend her. To her, Sloan was not just a bodyguard; he was her buddy in the Lindberg family.

This time, he impulsively broke into the prison with Layla to rescue her. He was someone who had gone through rigorous training, so how could he not know that he was running straight to his death?

He definitely knew it. But he still came because she was the one he admired and wanted to protect most.

Zolt and Morty, too. They were Sloan's good friends, and they were often tasked to protect Francesca, so they were close to her as well.

That was why they had blindly followed Sloan there. In the end...

The thought of those cruel scenes was like a knife through Francesca's heart. Her twenty-one years of living had been eventful, but she never bore any grudges toward anyone.

Not even Chrono. What she felt the most were often resignation and exasperation.

However, this time, Francesca abhorred the masterminds—the president and his wife.

Regardless of everything, they had set her up and killed Layla, Sloan, Morty, and Zolt. Francesca was never going to let them off.

With that thought in mind, a new motivation to live burned bright in Francesca.

She had to recompose herself and make herself stronger. It was only then she would be able to protect herself and the people around her.

She could not be the lamb waiting to be slaughtered anymore.

Now, Francesca regretted not listening to Layla. She should have created more powerful weapons and poison and brought them along with her. She could have made herself more powerful in both attack and defense.

Nevertheless, she had to wait until Xendale was peaceful again before she could work on that.

After all, no matter how mighty she was, she could never win against those in power.

I wonder how Danrique is doing now. Is he back? Will he be able to turn the tables and defeat the evil couple?

Francesca stared at the dark cave for a while before forcing herself to sit upright. Then, she gobbled down the wild berries and chestnuts beside her.

She had to recuperate and recover as quickly as she could so that she could leave the place.

She had to look for Danrique.

Danrique woke with a start. His forehead was beaded with sweat, and terror filled his amber eyes.

He had a nightmare again, and in his nightmare, Francesca was caught in an explosion in the underground dungeon. She was torn to pieces, and her blood coated his entire body.

He screamed her name as his heart shattered into a million pieces.

The pain he felt in his chest seemed so real.

"Mr. Lindberg, you're awake," Sean said from behind the screen. "Do you want some water?"

"Any news of her?" asked Danrique instead, covering his eyes with his hand.

"Not yet," Sean tentatively replied. "But Ms. Felch's childhood friend, Anthony, has gone to Xendale to look for her. Mr. Lincoln is with him. The two of them are working in secret, and they thought that no one has found them out, but the president's men have been watching them the moment they arrived."

"Mr. Lincoln has been saved?"

"Mhm. He's been released a few days ago," Sean answered. "Riz Corporation's men were nice enough to send him straight to S Nation. He probably saw the news and failed to contact Ms. Felch and Ms. Layla. He was worried about them, so he came to Xendale as soon as possible."

"Send someone to protect them from the shadows," Danrique instructed. "Don't alert anyone."

Chapter 2284 Counterattack

"Do we not persuade them to return?" Sean whispered. "They shouldn't be intervening at a time like this." "Do you think we will succeed?" Danrique let out a bitter chuckle. "They're as stubborn as Francesca.

"You're right." Sean sighed. "Just secretly protect them," Danrique repeated. "Task Gordon on this, and have him bring a few quick-witted ones, but not too many."

"Task Gordon on this? Is he not going to look for Ms. Felch anymore?" Sean blurted out. Then, he realized what Danrique was trying to do. "Oh, I see. You think that they have a way to contact Ms. Felch, so by having Gordon protect them, Gordon will be able to find Ms. Felch?"

Danrique inclined his head. He was running out of strength to speak. "Understood. I'll call Gordon right away," Sean said as he turned around. "Wait," Danrique called out.

"Yes?" Sean halted in his tracks and waited for Danrique's instructions. "Have Lupine and the others work on the second task," Danrique stared at the clock on the wall and continued, "at three in the afternoon tomorrow."

"Um... We're putting forward the plan by this much?" Sean was baffled. "Riz Corporation has yet to respond..."

"Do as I say!" Danrique could not wait any longer. He had to find Francesca immediately. Before that happened, he had to have a trump card to ensure her safety too.

"Yes, sir." Sean felt that putting forward the plan was risky, but he could understand how Danrique felt, so he dared not go against his words.

Gordon instantly conveyed Danrique's order to the others and called Gordon and Lupine.

Once the two received their orders, they immediately worked on it.

Then, the latest news came from Lupine. Per the instructions he received, Jesse uploaded a piece of evidence of the presidential palace's crimes every day. It resulted in an uproar, and public opinion was unfavorable to the president. Many citizens were calling for the president to step down, and some even took their protests to the streets.

By then, the president and his wife panicked.

Harrier and Kevin were not of any help at all.

In fact, Harrier was panicking. He knew that the sudden turn of tables had to mean that Danrique was back.

The news that targeted the first lady and Avery could have been due to William bribing the Gold family. However, the evidence of the presidential palace's crimes was not something William would be able to get.

Only Danrique was capable of doing that, and that evidence was his trump card.

The president thought that he could take advantage of the situation when Danrique was targeted by M Nation to annihilate the latter and take over Lindberg Corporation, but as it turned out, Danrique came prepared.

Danrique was never one to care about power and status, but he would never let anyone who crossed him off the hook.

Harrier was smart. He knew that the president would not be able to do anything to him as long as Danrique could come back alive.

Therefore, he had to stop helping the president, or else he was doomed to a terrible death.

But what can I do?

Harrier was gripped with anxiousness.

Right then, William sent his men to bring a tortoise to him.

The moment Harrier saw it, he immediately understood that it was best for him to act like a tortoise hiding in its shell at a time like this.

Hence, he immediately went into hiding.

Kevin grew a brain this time, for he did the same thing as Harrier. Therefore, both of them went into hiding.

The two of them abandoned Lindberg Corporation and discreetly fled the country. Even if the president and his wife were furious, there was nothing they could do about them.

The tide had changed. The presidential palace was losing the people's trust, and the army and the Ministry of Law were starting to waver. Even the ones who were sent to keep an eye on the Lindberg family were beginning to work half-heartedly. As a matter of fact, they were even letting many things slip by them knowingly.

Everyone was waiting for Danrique to return.

The perilous state of everything forced the president to hold a press conference, hoping to clarify certain things to salvage his reputation.

At three in the afternoon the next day, right as the president was about to head up the stage for his speech, he received a piece of shocking news.

His wife and his daughter had been kidnapped!

All colors drained from the president's face when he heard the news, but he soon calmed down and announced the kidnapping of his family at the press conference. Then, he started to try to gain sympathy from the people.

However, in the middle of his pitiful act, he received a message. Mr. President, aren't you afraid of us killing your wife and daughter if you continue to play the pity card?

Chapter 2285 A Selfish Man

It was a call from an unknown number. The initially calm president was overwhelmed by mixed reactions. The culprit must be a powerful figure. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to kidnap my wife and daughter under the watchful eyes of the guards.

The president believed the culprit was aware of his every move. By right, no one else, besides the crewmembers and the journalists in the hall, would know what he said since the press conference was not live-streamed.

Even the recorded video would only be released half an hour later once the president's secretary had reviewed the content. Who is the culprit? What does he want from me?

The journalists began bombarding him with questions. "Mr. President, did someone really kidnap the first lady and Ms. Avery?"

"Mr. President, who do you think kidnapped them?"

"Mr. President, what's your opinion on the latest news about you? Do you think someone did that to sabotage you?"

"Mr. President..."

The president stared at the phone with anxiousness written all over his face.

The press conference was a good opportunity to dispel the rumors, but he had to be mindful of his next course of action since someone had threatened him by kidnapping the first lady and his daughter. I might put my wife and daughter in danger if I say something that will agitate the kidnapper. However, I might lose the

chance to clear things up if I don't say anything. Everyone will think that I'm guilty.

"Mr. President..." the journalists continued shooting questions while the photographers kept snapping his photos.

After pulling himself together, he lifted his head, looked at the crowd with steady eyes, and answered furiously, "Yes. Someone kidnapped my wife and my daughter. I believe the mastermind is the person who has recently circulated the rumors to tarnish my reputation."

He took out his phone and showed the journalists the text message. "I received this text message as I was walking into the hall. The person was trying to stop me from telling the truth..."

"Could you please tell us more, Mr. President?"

The journalists got even more excited as they believed this breaking news would be able to capture viewers' attention.

"Who's the mastermind? How did he kidnap the first lady and Ms. Avery when there were bodyguards around?" One of the journalists raised his doubt.

"The mastermind is someone authoritative and influential, isn't he?"

"Yes." The president was fuming. "Someone who could spread rumors to sabotage me and kidnap my family is definitely not an ordinary folk. I just want to be a president who serves the citizens. What have I done wrong? What did I do to deserve this?"

"I know I'm risking my wife's and daughter's lives by exposing this, but as a president, I'm more concerned about the fate of Erihal than my reputation. Even if I have to put my family in danger, I still need to tell the truth," he added.

His voice was filled with righteous indignation.

The melancholy tone in his voice had won him some sympathy.

It was as if a righteous man was bullied to a point where he had no choice but to cry for help.

The journalists, who felt sorry for the president and sympathized with him, began to ask more questions. Some of them even deduced that Danrique orchestrated this to usurp the presidency.

Many journalists, too, agreed with the conspiracy theory.

In the blink of an eye, the tables had turned.

The president was pleased with the turn of events as he knew things were turning around for him.

Meanwhile, in a deserted warehouse, the first lady's jaw dropped when she heard what the president said from the computer's monitor.

She was aware of how power-hungry her husband was, but never in a million years had she ever imagined that he would leave her and their daughter in the lurch.

Chapter 2286 Disappointed

The first lady could not help but wonder how unimportant they were in the president's eyes. He can replace me with another woman, but how about Avery? She's his biological daughter! How can he be so heartless?

"I don't believe this. I don't!" The initially arrogant Avery was overwhelmed with fear. "Daddy cares about me. He'll come and rescue me. He will for sure!"

"Mr. President didn't plan to save you at all." Lupine, who had put on a mask, sneered icily, "Your life is worth nothing to him." She then gestured for two subordinates to drag Avery to a large meat grinder.

At the same time, another subordinate turned on the machine. "Ah... ah...!" Avery screeched in fear. "No!" The agitated first lady stopped them from leaving. "Take me! You can do anything to me, but don't hurt my daughter!"

"Anything?" Lupine tapped her face with a dagger. "You'd better think carefully." "I'm willing to do anything as long as you let go of my daughter!" the first lady bellowed as she panicked.

"Very well." Lupine gestured. Morgan turned off the meat grinder. At that time, Avery, who was hung upside down, had already fainted. if Morgan were to turn on the machine again, she would have fallen into the grinding chamber.

The first lady was aware of their intention. She knew her daughter would suffer a miserable death if she refused to cooperate. "What do you want from me?"

Her entire body was shivering, but she forced herself to remain calm. Go ahead and kill me, but spare my daughter!

"Look into the lens and confess the crimes you and the president had committed!" Lupine ordered.

A subordinate lifted a camera and aimed at the first lady.

"I know nothing. The president doesn't allow me to ask him anything," the first lady replied in a steady tone, "I can't tell you anything, even if you kill my daughter and me."

After a short pause, she continued, "But I can confess the crimes I committed to clear Francesca's name!"

"He doesn't care about you and your daughter, yet you're still trying to protect him?" Lupine pointed at the computer. "Did you not hear what he said? He knew well enough we would kill you after he said that, yet he still did it without remorse. He's clearly a very selfish man!"

"You're right." The first lady responded with a sarcastic laugh. "All his life, he only cared about himself. To him, people around him, including my daughter and I, are merely pawns he could use to his advantage."

"If that's the case, why are you still defending him?" Lupine could not understand why.

"I'm not defending him. I really have no idea what he did," the first lady said seriously, "He's a paranoid person who doesn't even trust his wife."

"You might not know all the serious crimes he had committed, but I bet you know some of the awful things he had done," Lupine said with a smirk. "I'll ask the questions, and you answer."

The first lady let out a cold snort and said, "Danrique is indeed a very tactful opponent. When he made it out alive, I knew we were doomed."

She knew these people were Danrique's subordinates.

The first lady might not know everything about the president, but Lupine and the others could still come up with questions to solicit some insider information from her.

The president must have been pleased with how things had turned out. He felt the kidnap had given him a chance to play the pity card in front of the citizens. Gaining the people's sympathy meant he was one step closer to making a comeback.

Yet, he did not know his wife was utterly disappointed with his action.

The first lady no longer cared about safeguarding their marriage. At that point, she just wanted to protect her daughter at all costs.

After all, forcing them to spill out the truth was Danrique's ultimate motive.

"Now, look into the lens and confess the things you've done to make Ms. Felch a scapegoat," Lupine ordered, "start by telling us about more Avery, the illegitimate child of the family."

Chapter 2287 The Reason Behind Everything

The president was still pretending to be pitiful when another breaking news was reported. The first lady admitted that she attempted to frame Francesca, which was consistent with the speculation in the previous news—Chrono was Avery's lover, and Candice was her illegitimate child.

Because of Candice's death, Avery, who was already unhappy with her life and suffering from severe depression, became even more mentally unstable.

The first lady blamed Francesca for everything. As soon as Danrique was in trouble, she began to exact her revenge on Francesca by ensuring that the woman met with the Atkinsons. That way, she could poison Gerard and blame Francesca for it.

In the video, the first lady even arranged to buy off the Atkinsons' family doctor and the forensic examiner. The evidence presented was solid and conclusive.

Immediately, public opinion set off another uproar. What sympathy the president had won had just then instantly evaporated as everyone shifted their attention to the first lady and wondered if there would be any more shocking news.

Meanwhile, William, who was watching the news in a wheelchair, finally relaxed his furrowed eyebrows. "Mr. Lindberg is back. It must be Mr. Lindberg," Hazel said excitedly.

"Yes." William watched as the dark clouds in the sky slowly dissipated. "Finally, the storm is over..."

In a hidden villa somewhere, Danrique was watching the news on a computer screen with a deadpan expression, yet his eyes were filled with a thousand emotions.

Not long after Sean checked his watch for a countdown, Danrique's phone, which had just been turned on, rang. He looked at the phone screen and smirked. "It's the president."

"Don't answer it," ordered Danrique calmly.

"Understood." Sean knew Danrique was testing the president's patience since the president was only open to discussion after Danrique had gotten the upper hand.

Since Danrique was no pushover, he wanted the president to plead with him in person.

The other reason for that was to prevent the president from pretending to seek peace and taking the opportunity to end Danrique once and for all.

After all, Danrique was severely injured, and the Lindberg family suffered a great loss. Should the president decide to exercise his military power and mobilize the army, Danrique would be in grave danger.

Even if Danrique had hundreds of elite bodyguards, he would not be able to withstand such a powerful force.

That was why he had to humbly seek Riz Corporation's help.

Only with the company's protection could Danrique stand a chance against the president.

The phone screen kept flashing until the call ended, and since the device did not ring again after that, Danrique assumed the president was panicking about failing to reach him.

Glancing coldly at the phone, Danrique ordered, "Have Lupine carry on with the interrogation and do her best to get more secrets."

"Understood." Sean quickly relayed the order. He then commented with a chuckle, "These women are pretty capable. Although they're new, they have no problem accomplishing their missions."

"That's true. They're much more capable than you guys," responded Danrique, glaring at Sean.

"Yes." Sean quickly lowered his head.

After what happened to Layla, Sloan, and the others, Danrique was more than displeased with Sean and Gordon. The only reason the two were exempted from punishment was that he needed them at the critical moment.

"Anything from Gordon?" Danrique asked.

"The news just came in, and I was about to report it," replied Sean. "Gordon followed Mr. Lincoln and Anthony up the mountain and saw a male eagle circling the peak. He assumed that was how the two knew Ms. Felch was on the mountain. If he follows the trail, I believe he'll find her soon."

"I hope so..." Danrique had mixed feelings about the news. He owed Francesca too much. Not only did he not know how to face her, but he also did not know if she would forgive him.

He was the reason behind everything, including Layla's death. Francesca must be heartbroken...