

A Cue For Love Chapter 1101

Chapter 1101 The Negotiations Have Fallen Through

Bastien didn't answer her question right away, but Natalie wasn't in a rush. She took a sip of coffee and refused to touch the strawberries and cream cake that the man had brought.

"Blaze has been looking for the mysterious jade key that concerns Loang's ancient artifacts. These thousand-year-old national treasures are the foundation of the country. In essence, whoever gets their hands on the jade key holds Loang's lifeline..."

Natalie was shocked to hear that, for she was the one who had the jade key. A mixture of emotions surged within her, but her face remained devoid of expression. "What does that have to do with me?"

"Do you know the location of the jade key?" Bastien cut straight to the chase. "The key concerns Loang's national treasures. Certainly, it'd be more appropriate for a member of the royal family to hold on to it."

After a brief pause, he added, "I'll help you rescue your child from Blaze, but in exchange, I hope you'll tell me everything you know." "How are you so sure that I have the information you're seeking?"

"I looked into the child who was abducted. She's a descendant of the Jankovich family, who's in control of the jade key." A crease appeared between Bastien's brows as he continued, "Although I have no idea how you found her and even managed to adopt her, I'm sure she knows where the jade key is. If you really don't know, then hand her over to me. I can assure you that I won't hurt her."

Looking at the man in front of her, Natalie couldn't help but notice how he'd become a stranger to her.

The gentle Mr. Nine was nothing more than a façade, and the real him was a monster filled with horrible desires.

Indeed, it was just as she had expected.

Bastien helping her rescue Yumi came with a price, and the price was exactly what Blaze wanted from her—the jade key that was worth a king’s ransom.

“I don’t need your help,” Natalie said, her voice laced with determination as she stared into the man’s eyes. “I don’t know anything about the Jankovich family. All I know is that she’s my daughter and someone I want to protect. I won’t hand her over to you, let alone allow her to be caught up in the royal family’s dispute.”

“Natalie, do you really think you’d be able to rescue her all by yourself?”

In the face of rejection, Bastien became paranoid, and his voice grew louder.

“Your man is nowhere to be found when you need him the most! Do you think you’re that smart and capable of putting up a fight all by yourself? How could you disregard the help that I’m offering with such sincerity?”

Admittedly, Bastien was an ambitious man at heart, but he also knew that his heart lay with Natalie.

However, she scoffed at his sincerity and rejected his assistance in a way that left no room for discussion.

“Prince Jonathan, I believe I’ve made things extremely clear with you during the palace banquet at Luna Palace,” Natalie answered candidly. “You’re a prince, and I’m a commoner. It’s best if we put some distance between us. As for the key and the Jankovich family, I suggest you look into them carefully. The grudge between Blaze and I have nothing to do with the key. It’s solely because I attacked their underground base while I was in Chanaea.”

With that, Natalie left some cash on the table and strode out of the café with her backpack.

She was only doing this for Yumi’s sake.

No matter how important the jade key was, it was merely an inanimate object. On the other hand, Yumi was a young child who shouldn’t have to shoulder such heavy responsibilities.

As such, Natalie was determined to stop anyone who was interested in investigating the little girl.

After Natalie left, a loud crash reverberated through the café. Raw anger shot through Bastien, causing him to swipe the coffee cups off of the table.

The dark brown beverage spilled all over the ground, making a huge mess.

I'm always thinking for her, yet she completely disregarded my sincerity! What an evil wretch!

Just then, Joseph came over to him, handing him a handkerchief to clean his hand.

"Mr. Nine, a woman like her is undeserving of all this," Joseph couldn't help but comment.

"Shut up." Bastien cleaned the coffee stains off of his finger as a sharp glint fled across his eyes. "I've said that she's the only woman I'll acknowledge and accept as my wife. Do not let me hear you speak ill of her ever again."

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Chapter 1102 Keep It A Secret

Natalie hadn't left the café for long when she received news of Billy's and fake Natalie's return. Soon, she, too, arrived home.

Emma's jaw dropped at the sight of the two identical Natalies. "W-What's going on?" she stammered. "Why... are there two Ms. Nichols?"

"Can you tell which one of us is the real Natalie?" asked Natalie with a soft smile. Emma's eyes darted between the two of them and grew even more bewildered. She couldn't tell apart the two Natalies at all!

As such, Natalie decided not to tease the middle-aged lady any longer and shot a glance at the woman who was disguised as her. Having caught her hint, the woman took off the hyper-realistic mask, revealing her original appearance.

Disbelief was written all over Emma's face when she saw that. "Oh my... T-This is scarier than magic!"

"Wonders will never cease in this boundless world of ours, Mrs. Bunton. Naturally, anything could happen, but some might be secrets that shouldn't be revealed," stated Natalie, her voice firm and resolute.

"I understand, Ms. Nichols. I won't say anything I'm not supposed to." Emma nodded fervently.

"Okay." After Natalie relayed her instructions, the woman and Emma left the study. Natalie sat leisurely in the chair with her legs crossed. She shot Billy a look and queried, "How was your trip? Smooth sailing, I suppose?"

"A lot smoother than I expected. We mobilized a number of men to protect the substitute in secret, but they weren't deployed at all." At the mention of that, Billy furrowed his brows. "Logically speaking, although Blaze has kidnapped Yumi to threaten us, they could very well ambush us and steal the jade key. That would be an excellent move, but they didn't do so."

She nodded and fell into deep thought upon hearing that. I wasn't expecting the substitute to come out of the situation completely unscathed.

"Mrs. Bowers, could it be that they might have something planned out?" Billy articulated his theories.

"Perhaps." Natalie's composure was a stark contrast to his nervousness. "No matter what tricks they have up their sleeves, we'll only find out once we cross that bridge. Let's not overthink and make a decision when we come to it."

Her expression showed little emotion, and oddly enough, that gave Billy peace of mind. It was similar to the vibe that Samuel gave off, and to remain as cool as a cucumber in the face of a crisis was a truly admirable trait.

At that, Billy couldn't help but exclaim, "Mr. Bowers was right about you, Mrs. Bowers."

"Oh." Natalie was slightly surprised to hear that. When she thought of Samuel, all of the longing she felt for the man came back. "He's in the mountain with Jorden and Master. I wonder if they've cured the poison by now... But the lack of news means he's fine. I believe he'll be able to cure himself of the poison and return to my side."

Billy felt his heart soften at her words. "That's right. Mr. Bowers will surely return safely. After all, he can barely bring himself to be apart from you."

"Mm. Thank you for your hard work for the past few days, Billy. Go home and get some rest. I'll need your help with rescuing Yumi later on," she said with a faint smile.

"All right, I understand." After he left, Natalie sat alone in the study. Although she was tired, her mind felt oddly refreshed and sober.

She was waiting for Zophie to take the initiative to contact her. The latter thought of Natalie as her prey, but to Natalie, it was still unclear who would be the prey and predator.

The minutes continued to tick by. While Natalie was resting with her eyes shut, her phone, which was on the table, began to vibrate.

For some reason, she had a feeling about who the caller might be and instantly opened her eyes. After picking up the call, she brought the phone to her ear and answered, "Hello?"

"Natalie! Did you get the jade key?" Zophie's voice came from the other end of the line, her tone laced with a hint of menace.

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Chapter 1103 The Jankovich Family

"I got it," answered Natalie. "I guess you weren't bluffing after all!" commented Zophie, who could not help but get emotional. She thought she could not get Natalie to do what she wanted because Yumi was not the woman's biological daughter. Unexpectedly, everything worked out just fine. Not only will the jade key be mine, but I'll also exact my revenge on Gale for sure!

"If you want your daughter, meet me tonight," uttered Zophie slowly. "Bring the jade key to the location I sent you. If I see anyone with you, I'll immediately detonate the bombs tied around your daughter. I have no reason to hurt her if you do as I say. Give me the jade key, and I promise the child will be unharmed."

"Fine. You have my word," promised Natalie without a second thought as soon as Zophie was done speaking. "See you tonight." With that said, Zophie ended the phone call.

Natalie narrowed her almond-shaped eyes as she put the jade key replicated by Varre into her pocket. After that, she called Billy over to tell him her plan.

“Isn’t that a bit too risky, Mrs. Bowers?” Billy’s eyes widened in shock after he listened to Natalie. “Billy, do you remember what Mr. Bowers told you before he left?” questioned Natalie casually.

Billy remembered, but he did not answer the woman. “Before Samuel left, he said I’d be in charge when he was away, which means I get to decide what you do. When I give you an order, you do your best to execute it without flaws,” reminded Natalie, who was beautiful like a flower yet firm like a tree.

Although Billy worried for Natalie’s well-being, he knew there was nothing he could say to change her mind when he saw the determination in her eyes. “Yes, Mrs. Bowers.”

“Good.”

Meanwhile, in a warehouse on the docks, Yumi shook her head relentlessly as she watched Zophie strap powerful explosives to her legs. “No! No!”

“Isn’t everyone in the Jankovich family supposed to be strong?” mocked Zophie with hatred and condescendence in her eyes. “How are you so weak? Your biological mother never begged for mercy even though she was whipped more than a hundred times. On the other hand, you’re already scared out of your mind when I did nothing but tie explosives to you.”

The Jankovich family?

Yumi’s eyes widened as she gazed at Zophie in disbelief. She had never mentioned her last name since her mother had warned her not to do so.

Yumi was told that her last name would only invite disasters, so she was not to reveal her true identity after escaping to Chanaea.

Because of that, even Natalie, who adopted Yumi and treated the girl like her own, was unaware of who Yumi really was.

Yumi could not help but wonder how the woman before her knew not only that she was a Jankovich but also that her mother had been whipped.

“Why would my mother be whipped?” Yumi suddenly flew into a rage like a wild beast when her mother was brought up, acting completely different from her indifferent and stubborn self in the past two days. If it were not for Yumi’s young age, Zophie would have been stunned by the girl’s reaction.

Looking at the agitated Yumi, Zophie furrowed her eyebrows. So what if she’s furious? She’s still just a five-year-old child. This girl... is also related to Gale’s death!

“You really want to know how your mother was injured, huh? Lucky for you, nobody knows more about it than I do.” Zophie snickered. “That’s because I was the one on the other end of the whip. I saw with my own eyes how bloodied and wounded your mother was.”

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Chapter 1104 What Her Mother Had Been Through

Although Yumi knew that her mother had already passed away, her eyes could not help welling up when she heard what her mother had been through before dying. “Mom...”

When Zophie saw tears rolling down Yumi’s cheeks, her lips curled up into another smirk. She could not be more pleased with herself for having broken the angry child and regaining control of the situation. “Why did you do that to my mother?” questioned Yumi at the top of her lungs.

“She didn’t have to die, you know? However, she refused to play nice!” Zophie grabbed Yumi by the chin while recalling the night she had tortured the girl’s mother. “If she had just handed your family’s treasure over, King probably would’ve let her live. She just wouldn’t tell us what we wanted to know because she was convinced that her death could keep us from finding you and the jade key!

Do you think she’d regret being tortured for so long if she knew you’d eventually fall into my hands and that Natalie would obediently hand the jade key to me like a dog?”

Yumi’s eyes were already filled with tears at that point. Her hatred for Zophie was clearly visible in them. Unwilling to let Zophie pinch her chin, Yumi tried to bite the woman’s hand, but she evaded her.

"I won't fall for the same trick twice, you little brat!" Zophie lifted her hand again to give the girl a hard slap. "You'd better remember your place; you're nothing but a bargaining chip and bait for me to lure out Natalie. So don't even think about avenging your two mothers! I'd save my breath if I were you. Be a good girl, and I might just let you die beside Natalie."

Yumi's cheek was in pain. She regretted asking Natalie to come. If Mommy comes here, she'll lose not only the jade key but also her life! I've already lost my biological mother; I can't afford to lose Mommy too!

Since Yumi got her hands and legs tied up and her communication device taken away, she had no way of informing Natalie.

At that moment, she hated the fact that she was only a weak five-year-old child. If I were bigger and stronger, I'd be able to protect myself and others!

Meanwhile, Natalie was already driving an ordinary car to Moon Harbor, which was located on the north side of Yaleview.

As the largest port in the world, Moon Harbor had five times more imports and exports than the one in Chanaea.

Zophie only asked Natalie to meet her in the forest of containers, as it would be less likely for them to be followed or monitored.

On the way, Natalie received a call from Zophie.

"Hello?"

"Are you on your way?"

"I am," replied Natalie calmly.

"Now I want you to turn on the speakerphone, Natalie," ordered Zophie. "You just have to follow my instructions after reaching the Lunar Road intersection, and you'll find me soon."

In order to find Yumi, Natalie had no choice but to comply. "Okay."

As promised, Zophie began to guide Yumi after the latter reached the road mentioned.

Natalie was sure Zophie did not show her the shortest route because the one Zophie had asked her to take was less crowded. On top of that, she could tell she had been going around in circles.

“Why are we circling on the same road?”

“Are you questioning my guidance? If so, you can find your own way to your daughter!” said Zophie threateningly.

“No,” answered Natalie, doing her best to suppress her anger.

“Good. Then keep going!” Zophie demanded.

She had her eyes fixed on a laptop showing the surveillance footage that monitored the roads Natalie took.

Besides Natalie’s black car, no other vehicles were recorded taking the same path twice, which clearly showed the length Natalie was willing to go to get Yumi back.

After getting the confirmation she needed, Zophie let out her first sigh of relief.

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Chapter 1105 What Are You Looking For

The game of cat and mouse went on for almost an hour before Zophie finally revealed her location to Natalie. “Looks like you really did come alone after all.”

Zophie did not say that because she was impressed with Natalie’s bravery. On the contrary, she thought the woman was a fool for showing up alone. Everyone knows how valuable the jade key is. She must be an idiot to take such a big risk for a girl who’s not related to her by blood. Still, I suppose I should thank her for her stupidity. If she weren’t so cooperative, I probably wouldn’t be able to get the jade key for King or avenge Gale.

“I’m waiting for you, Natalie.” Zophie crossed her legs languidly and broke into a smirk before hanging up.

“Sure.” Forty minutes later, Natalie reached the area of the dock where containers of different colors and sizes were stacked up as tall as high-rise buildings.

Surrounding the giant metal boxes were countless port cranes, and even though they were not active, the steel wire ropes hanging in mid-air were enough to make anyone feel pressured.

Having reached a dark blue container with Zophie’s instructions, Natalie lifted her hand to bang on the metal door.

Bang! Bang! Bang! She knocked on the door so hard that the echo of the noise caused her to feel a tightness in her chest.

Not long after the forceful knocking, the container door opened, and a woman in a black leather jacket and pants walked out. That was the first time Natalie had met Zophie in person.

The latter with exquisite facial features had a high ponytail that perfectly complemented her skintight leather outfit. Even though Zophie looked stunning, she had her finger ready to pull the trigger of a Browning trained on Natalie’s forehead.

“We finally meet, Natalie.” Zophie smiled, but her eyes were filled with hostility. “Do you have any idea how long I’ve waited for this day?”

“I have what you want, so return the child to me.”

“Do you seriously think you’re in a position to negotiate with me?” questioned Zophie rhetorically before gesturing with her Browning. “You and the kid both belong to me now. Neither one of you is getting away.”

Zophie pulled the trigger twice, shooting Natalie’s knee and right arm.

Bang!

Bang!

Immediately, Natalie collapsed to the ground in pain as fresh blood flowed out of her wounds and pooled under her. “You...”

Casually blowing on the hot muzzle, Zophie slowly approached Natalie.

"I told you that both you and the child are mine. Nobody's leaving," said Zophie as a glint of malice flashed across her eyes. "You didn't think I was joking, did you? I don't want just the jade key and the kid; I want to make you suffer too!"

Although Zophie was gorgeous, she looked as mad as a hatter when her hatred for Natalie turned her eyes crimson-red.

After kicking Natalie to the floor, Zophie began to search the injured woman for the jade key because she was sure it was somewhere on Natalie.

She was determined to ensure that Natalie died a horrible death as soon as she got her hands on the key.

However, Zophie could not find it no matter where she looked.

"That's impossible!" exclaimed the woman with furrowed eyebrows, refusing to believe that Natalie would come to rescue the last member of the Jankovich family without bringing the jade key she was promised. I'm not giving up! I probably didn't look hard enough. Either that or this b*tch really knows how to hide her stuff!

Still, Zophie got nothing even after searching every inch of Natalie's body.

She was so focused on finding the key that she failed to notice someone approaching her from behind to place the cold tip of their gun against the back of her head.

"What are you looking for, Zophie?" inquired a familiar voice, causing Zophie to doubt her hearing.