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## Chapter 13

Outside the Callahans' villa.

Dozens of jeeps screeched to a halt as the soldiers that had ridden them here charged onto the Callahans' home.

Panic erupted amongst the Callahans. Lex, who had gone to bed, got up again and approached the soldiers in his pajamas. "What's happened, sir?" he asked the leader frantically, his face pale.

"Take them."

With their order issued, two soldiers grabbed Lex by his forearms and dragged him away.

The others, still groggy from sleep, were also forcibly pulled into the jeeps.

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Meanwhile, a loud bang erupted from Thea's home. Benjamin and Gladys were awoken suddenly as soldiers filed in and dragged them away.

Cansington Hotel basement.

Thea sat tied up on the ground. Soon enough, her family was also brought in. Her grandfather, Lex Callahan; her father, Benjamin Callahan; her uncle, Howard Callahan; her second uncle, John Callahan, and everyone else. No one had been left out.

All of them had been tied up, too.

They looked at each other in panic and confusion, not knowing what they had done to offend the Xaviers, or why they were now in a basement.

Trent sat on the only chair in the room, taking a drag of his cigarette.

"Do you know why I brought you here, Thea Callahan?" he asked, his expression cold as the soldiers behind him looked on.

She did not. She knew she was nowhere near the workers when the painting fell, so why did the surveillance footage show otherwise?

"General Xavier, we haven't done anything against your family. In fact, our Tommy is good friends with Joel Xavier! Why are you doing this? Please, let us go," Lex shuffled in his restraints as he pleaded with Trent. "If we did do something to offend you, I promise I'll personally make it up to you..."

Trent held up a hand, cutting Lex off. "Thea Callahan destroyed a painting that was worth one-point-eight billion dollars at the auction banquet. I'll release you now so you can liquidate your assets, Lex Callahan. Get me the money in exchange for the rest of your family. They die otherwise."

"What?!"

"One-point-eight billion?!"

"What the hell happened, Thea?!"

"How did you destroy a painting worth that much?!"

The Callahans, shocked, furious, and still tied up, started hurling insults at Thea.

They accused her of being a curse upon their family, and how she had always been nothing but trouble for them.

Thea, struck speechless by their insults, was unable to get a word out.

"Release Lex Callahan," Trent ordered.

Trent had investigated the Callahans' fortune before he took action. Adding all their assets up, the Callahans were worth 1.3 billion in total. This one painting was enough to bankrupt them entirely.

Lex walked up to Thea as soon as he was released, then slapped her with all his strength. "Useless thing! You've ruined our family! We're doomed!"

Tears flowed down her swollen red face. "It wasn't me, grandfather!" she cried out. "It really wasn't me!"

"How dare you argue! Would General Xavier falsely accuse you of this?!" Lex shouted, slapping her a few more times in rage.

He knelt before Trent after he was done. "Please have mercy on my family, General Xavier," he pleaded desperately.

"Mercy?" Trent said coldly. "Did you give mine any mercy when Alex Yates started bankrupting us because of a phone call from Thea Callahan?"

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Realization dawned on Thea. "You... You set me up?!"

"Yes," Trent said. "It doesn't matter if you know. You can't do anything about it. I'm getting that one-point-eight billion from you, one way or another. I'm the deputy commander on the western border. Wiping you out will be easy."

Lex slumped to the ground, his energy leaving him completely. He seemed to have aged ten years in a single instance. "We're doomed!" he wailed in despair. "The Callahans are doomed!"

"Toss the old man out of here."

"Yes, sir."

Two fully armed soldiers dragged Lex, still sobbing, out of the room.

The other Callahans watched on, frozen in horror.

General Xavier was completely serious. The Callahans were doomed, and it was all because of Thea.

"Thea Callahan, you wicked little b\*tch! You did this to us!"

"Why didn't we abort you when we could?!"

"This is your own fault! Why are you dragging the rest of us into this?!"

"General, I have nothing to do with Thea! Please let me go!"

"Sob sob... I don't wanna die! General Xavier, please let me go. Thea was the one that crossed you. Just get your revenge on her! Kill her! Kill her and let the rest of us go!"

The Callahans kept pleading. There was nothing else they could do against the mighty Trent Callahan.

Hearing her own family's spiteful words, Thea's will to live shattered. She passed out from overwhelming emotion.

Trent waved an arm, and one of his soldiers dumped a bucket of water on Thea.

She sputtered awake.

Trent stood up and approached her, a dagger in his hand. He lifted her chin, sliding the blade lightly across her fair cheek.

"Thea," he started in a cold tone. "Ten years ago, you broke into the Cadens' estate while it was burning down and were injured. But I see you've regained your beauty. Now, tell me. The person you saved from the fire... where is he?"

"I... I don't know." Thea trembled, her face pale.

Trent slashed the dagger across Thea's cheek, and bright blood flowed an instant later, dyeing half her face red.

"Ahh!" Thea cried out in pain, struggling to break free. Her limbs were tied up, however, and her efforts were in vain.

The other Callahans shook in fright, the more cowardly ones passing out at the sight of blood.

"Speak. Who did you save? Did he come find you? What is your relationship with Alex Yates? Why does he respect you that much?"

"I don't know! I don't know! I don't know anything, I swear!" Thea sobbed.

Another slash.

Another wound appeared on Thea's face, but all she felt was a hot sting, then warm fluid once again running down her cheek and neck.

"Who did you save?!" Trent roared. "Did he come for you?!"

Thea was dumbfounded, even through her fright. She truly did not know who she saved ten years ago. She started crying, her tears stinging on her wounds.

"I don't know! I swear! I didn't even know that was the Cadens' estate I ran into! I only found out about that later! I don't know who I saved! His face was burnt beyond recognition when I pulled him out of the fire! He jumped into the river and got washed away... I don't know who he is! He's never come for me, General Xavier! I'm telling you the truth! Please have mercy..."



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