Chapter 1181 Suspicions

When Patricia saw that her son had laid his eyes on Bastien's soon-to-be wife, she followed his gaze. "Rumors have it that Ms. Lovas has always been sickly, so she hardly makes appearances at events. However, now that I've seen her in person, she doesn't seem as weak as the rumors claim."

She took a sip of her wine and continued, "I was not expecting my first meeting with Ms. Lovas to be on such a formal occasion. The Lovas family sure hid their daughter well over the years." Frowning, Daniel looked at Bastien and the woman beside him from a distance before shaking his head.

"I saw Lunetta once when she was still a child. Indeed, she was sickly, always looking fragile and vulnerable. The confidence and composure she displays now are non-existent back then." He got a little confused as he continued, "Her appearance barely changed, but it's puzzling how there's a drastic change in her bearing. It feels like she's turned into a different person!"

Patricia gave it a thought and commented, "Perhaps that's the magic of puberty!" The conversation between the couple caused Jerome, who had been quiet the whole time, to have a lightbulb moment.

There's no way a young girl who's been kept at home all this while can have such a bearing. Given today's technology, it's not difficult to alter her appearance to look like Natalie. Yara was the perfect example of someone who resembled Natalie without needing to undergo cosmetic surgery. However, even Yara, Natalie's twin sister, failed to imitate Natalie's bearing, let alone a woman who wasn't related to Natalie by blood!

"Jerome, come with me to greet others." Daniel patted Jerome on the shoulder, gesturing for him follow him.

However, the latter stood unmoving in the same spot with his dark brows knitted tightly together.

"Jerome, did you not hear me?"

"Father, I suddenly remember I have something else to do." Jerome placed his half-empty wine glass on the table next to him before turning around to walk away.

Daniel's expression stiffened. "He—"

That time around, it was his wife's turn to console him. "Don't be too hard on him. Natalie's death dealt him a great blow. Let's give him some space to grieve. I believe Natalie will watch him from the heavens and keep him safe."

As Jerome left in a hurry, he accidentally bumped into Helma, making her spill some of her wine.

Instinctively, he apologized to her. "I'm sorry."

Helma tidied her dress and said flatly, "It's fine."

After he walked away, she took a new glass of wine.

It was not that she did not care about the wine splashing on the hem of her dress, but the soon-to-be-held wedding occupied her mind entirely. Upon seeing that the man beside her was still calmly sipping his wine, she could not help asking anxiously in a soft voice, "You said you could help me, but how exactly are you going to achieve that?"

Helma was running out of patience.

Once Bastien and Lunetta went through all the procedures of the wedding in the presence of the king, she would no longer have a chance to be with Bastien. Hence, the man next to her was her only shot at turning the tables around.

Geert, who had awakened his alternate personality as King, swirled the glass of wine in his hand, but his eyes were fixated on the empty throne in the middle of the stage.

"What's the hurry? Everyone has yet to gather here, so how can we start this grand show so soon? It's only meaningful to take our time and start it once everyone's here." A bloodthirsty glint shone in King's eyes. It was as if the red drink in his glass was not wine but human blood.

Helma could barely sit around idly any longer, but she knew she could not make any progress by herself so long as the man beside her had yet to give her the green light.

Hence, she could only stare intently at the woman standing next to Bastien on the stage.

However, when she observed the woman for a sufficiently long time, she suddenly realized that the latter seemed to be staring unblinkingly at Samuel.

Chapter 1182 Hatred For Snatching His Wife

In the middle of the hall, Bastien glanced at Natalie from the corner of his eye, only to catch her gazing at a certain someone under the stage with eyes filled with adoration.

After following her gaze, he realized the person she was staring at was none other than Samuel. "Be mindful of where you're at now." The muscles on Bastien's face were taut as he warned her in a low voice, "Control your gaze."

When Natalie tilted her head slowly, the beads on her tiara collided with one another, emitting a crisp and pleasant jingle.

She chuckled and said sarcastically, "I can't help it. My eyes can only see the people I want to see. If you think I'm not obedient enough, you shouldn't have brought him over here in the first place. It's your business that you want to destroy me and satisfy the desire of crushing your love rival, but it's my freedom to look at whoever I want!"

"You—" Bastien was once again provoked by Natalie's words. "Do not forget your current identity!" "What will you do to me if I choose to forget about it?" Natalie pursed her red lips. The arrogance in her bones made it impossible for her to give in to him.

It was her incompetence and carelessness that caused her to be threatened and schemed against till then. However, Natalie could never behave like an obedient bird in a cage and learn to please him according to his preferences.

She would rather die than flatter Bastien. After uttering that sentence, Natalie tilted her head away from him and fixed her gaze on Samuel again.

Envy bubbled up inside Bastien when he saw that she had ignored him again. That bitter emotion was so overwhelming that he could not be bothered to observe the proprieties, crossing over the silk ribbon and standing next to Natalie. He then held her hand tightly, using that action to make her know who would be her spouse in the future.

Natalie refused to give in, but she could only let Bastien hold her hand as everyone in the hall was watching them.

The relatives of the royal family and esteemed guests under the stage took in the "public display of affection" from the couple and were utterly impressed.

"I didn't anticipate that an otherworldly flawless man like Prince Jonathan could be so clingy when he's in love!"

"Exactly! People say that even the most heroic man is bound to fall for a woman's beauty. I'd say the youngest daughter of the Lovas family is blessed to marry Bastien!"

"They are a match made in heaven! I don't think this is an arranged marriage, as they are obviously deeply in love with each other!"

"I agree! I agree!"

The crowd could not stop sending their blessings to the couple.

Meanwhile, a storm was brewing silently inside Samuel's dark eyes.

His flawless face did not show much of his emotions, but his fists were clenched so hard that his knuckles cracked. The sounds were so loud that even Yandel, sitting next to him, heard them.

Yandel tilted his head to glance at Samuel and was frightened by the dark look in his eyes.

"Samuel, w-what's with that look?" He choked on his wine, and his speech was slightly incoherent due to his violent coughing. "You... You look like you have a deep-seated hatred for him... because he snatched your wife. Do you have to look so scary?"

Hearing that, Samuel gave him a meaningful look.

Yandel was rendered speechless.

His gaze is too scary! Why does it feel like he's wordlessly telling me that I got it right?

"Billy, how are the preparations?" Samuel stopped looking at Yandel and turned to gaze at Billy instead.

"Mr. Bowers, everything is ready," answered Billy in a solemn manner.

"Okay."

Just as Yandel wanted to ask what Samuel and Billy were whispering about, Jerome suddenly weaved through the crowd and came to Samuel's side. Anxiousness was written all over his face, and he was still panting as he grabbed Samuel's arm. The man had a question and a big one at that.

He refused to believe that Samuel failed to notice the suspicions when even he did.

"Samuel, tell me. What is going on?" Jerome asked the second he regained steady breathing.

Chapter 1183 Yandel Finds Out Too

Instead of answering Jerome's question immediately, Samuel merely eyed him and responded with another question, "What do you mean by what's going on?"

Jerome glanced at the woman standing next to Bastien before directing his gaze to Samuel again. "You should know what I'm talking about! Tell me what you're planning to do today. I'd be sure to help you as long as I'm around. She just doesn't love me, but when it comes to my feelings, I've never felt any less for her than you do!"

It was only after those words had fallen from his lips that Samuel could confirm Jerome had also found out the truth.

"Okay." Meanwhile, Yandel was utterly bewildered by the baffling conversation between the two men. "Jerome, Samuel, what are you guys talking about? Why is it that I can understand every word you're saying, but when I put everything together, I don't seem to get it at all?"

Yet, neither Samuel nor Jerome paid him any heed. The two of them turned around and headed toward somewhere less crowded.

Yandel remained frozen in place for nearly a minute.

The wedding on that day was suspicious, to begin with.

Bastien, Jerome, and Samuel—all three of them had loved Natalie deeply.

In spite of their different statuses and personalities, they harbored a deep affection for her. She was the only woman who could make them do irrational things that deviated from their usual behaviors.

There's no one else who can do that but Boss.

Yandel was no fool.

It was just that his mind had been set on the fact that Natalie had died, and he was drowned in so much grief that he could not think any further.

But if Boss isn't dead, how do we explain that body that looked just like hers? Who was cremated that day, then? And if Boss is still alive, where is she now? Why would she let the people closest to her think she's dead and grieve for her?

Then, Yandel fell into great shock as suspicion arose within him.

He raised his head abruptly and looked toward the center of the stage.

Realization suddenly dawned on him as he stared at the meek-looking woman next to Bastien.

It's her? It's actually her?

Yandel stood still like an idiot, his eyes slowly reddening.

Thank goodness that Boss isn't dead!

No longer in the mood to enjoy his glass of champagne, he strode toward the spot where he had last seen Samuel and Jerome. I can't be an ordinary spectator like the other guests here.

Joyful music resonated across the lively large hall, making the atmosphere especially festive and delightful.

Bastien and Lunetta's wedding ceremony was slated to begin in ten minutes.

As the attendants escorted Mikhail into the hall, the music came to a stop, and the entire place was filled with a dignified silence.

The king displayed his innate regal bearing with every move he made.

Every prince, lady, distinguished guest, and attendant stopped what they were doing as soon as they saw him and proceeded to bow to him per custom.

Then, Mikhail sat on his throne and looked at the audience.

Having lived a life full of rich experiences, the middle-aged man concealed the emotions in his eyes so well that no one could tell what he was thinking.

That was Natalie's second time meeting Mikhail.

During their first encounter, she rejected Bastien's marriage proposal before him.

On that day, she was meeting the king face-to-face once again, but as Bastien's soon-to-be wife.

Oh, the irony.

Natalie gripped the silk ribbon in her hands subconsciously.

It was not because she was nervous. In fact, she had always treated Mikhail as a regular middle-aged man rather than the king of Loang.

He's just like a middle-aged executive who manages a company, except that he runs a country as the king. That's all there is to it.

At that moment, she was only mulling over how she would call off the absurd wedding.

Chapter 1184 Threats

After bowing to Mikhail, Natalie stared straight at him, contemplating every possible move she could make. If I rip out my mask and tell him that Bastien did all this just so he could marry me, what would my odds of winning be? Obviously, I won't have to marry Bastien if I cause such a huge stir in front of all these people, but whatever happens afterward may be entirely beyond my control.

What Bastien did is a huge disgrace to the royal family for sure. I can't predict how Mikhail would deal with him or if Mikhail would show him mercy because of their father-and-son relationship, but one thing's for sure—the royal family of Loang will regard me as a plague.

The fact that she had managed to leave unscathed after turning down Bastien's proposal back then was already a miracle. However, she could not be confident about getting the same outcome on that day.

If Mikhail were to set his mind on removing the so-called plague that was her, Samuel and her five children could end up being dragged into the whole ordeal too.

Mikhail may not do anything to Samuel and the kids, but their safety still can't be guaranteed. What if something happens to them after I leave this hall?

As the woman increasingly tightened her grip on the silk ribbon, her nails dug into her palms, forming crescent-shaped marks on her skin.

"Bastien, now that you're settling down to start your own family with the youngest daughter of the Lovas family, you've officially become mature and independent. Continue to spare no effort when it comes to our nation's affairs. Don't let me down," Mikhail advised while seated on the throne.

"Don't worry, Father. I'll remember every piece of your advice," Bastien responded courteously.

Then, Mikhail's eyes fell on Natalie.

"So, you're Lunetta Lovas?"

Natalie was hesitant about responding to him.

Seeing that, Bastien hurriedly covered for her. "Father, I believe you're aware of Lune's condition. She spent the past years recuperating in a remote village and rarely interacted with people, so now that she's meeting so many people for the first time, not to mention on such a grand occasion, it can't be helped that she's a little nervous..."

He then shot Natalie a tender look that was also laced with a hint of warning.

Until then, he still forced her to cooperate by using the people she loved.

It certainly was not anything new, but it worked exceptionally well against Natalie.

She could endure the most torturous interrogations, but there was no way she could watch her loved ones get hurt because of her. Even if the people he used against her hold no actual value to her, the thought of innocent lives being involved due to her was simply unbearable.

These are people's lives we're talking about. You can't regain a life once it's lost!

The woman gritted her teeth as her nails grazed the skin of her palms, causing droplets of blood to trickle out and stain the silk ribbon. Even so, neither Mikhail nor Bastien noticed that.

Unable to find anything special about "Lunetta," Mikhail cast a dubious look at Bastien, wondering why his most brilliant son ended up falling for such an inarticulate and unusual young lady.

Still, those were some extremely small traces of doubt.

As a father, he would not interfere with his son's marriage too much as long as the latter did not make decisions that he deemed too absurd.

Meanwhile, Frieda was all smiles on her son's big day. "Bastien, Lune, I wish you both well as a mother. May you enjoy a blissful and everlasting marriage, be blessed with children, and support each other at all times."

In truth, she would have had something to say about Lunetta's background if she had not witnessed Bastien lose himself over Natalie in the past.

However, given that she was ready to thank every deity in the universe as long as he did not marry Natalie, she bestowed the greatest kindness on "Lunetta," who had never smiled even once so far.

Natalie had the sudden urge to laugh as she observed Frieda from behind the hyper-realistic mask.

It's amusing to see how someone's attitude toward me could do a one-eighty just because of this mask I'm wearing.

Chapter 1185 Enraged

Frieda then ordered the servant to bring another pair of jadeite bracelets to gift to her. The bracelets were truly the best among the best. The crystalline, spotless quality of the crystal was not something a normal collector would be able to get with mere money. Not only were the bracelets a symbol of wealth, but they were also a symbol of nobility.

Natalie did not need to take the bracelets herself, for there were maids at the side to keep them for her. However, Natalie was not delighted by the gift. She was only speechless.

If... If Lady Frieda sees me after I take off the hyper-realistic mask, I'm sure she'll get a heart attack from the fury she'll feel. Meanwhile, on the other side, it was time for the wedding to begin.

Natalie did not see anything different about Samuel from his usual way. Perhaps it was like what Bastien had said: Samuel might have recognized her once, but he could not recognize her every time. Samuel had thought of that body as her, and he had already accepted her death.

Natalie did not resent Samuel for not recognizing her. She just felt upset. She was married to Samuel. If not for this scheme, she and Samuel would have had their own wedding.

Maybe it would not be as grand as this one, and maybe it would not have as many distinguished guests as this wedding had, but it was Samuel she was marrying. He was the center of her dream wedding.

Natalie's lashes trembled. She closed her eyes, and a drop of tear rolled down from the corner of her eye. Right as the wedding that everyone had their eyes on was about to start, a deafening gunshot rang out in the hall.

Bang!

Immediately, thick gray smoke appeared in the hall, blurring everyone's vision.

"What's going on?"

"Why is there gunfire?"

"It's an assassination!"

"I can't see anything! I'm doomed! I can't see anything at all!"

The smoke in the hall continued to thicken, and some people started to scream in fear.

No one knew whether they were the target of the assassination or if they would be caught in the crossfire. Even the high and mighty members of the royal family and guests began scurrying everywhere to escape.

In the meantime, Bastien, upon seeing how the wedding he had meticulously planned dissolve into chaos, was heartbroken. It felt as if a clawed hand was gripping his heart tightly, crushing it.

He never thought that his wedding with Natalie would be sabotaged right as he was about to marry her.

Before he could think of who was behind the sabotage, Bastien began looking for Natalie.

His hands swung fervently before him, trying to find Natalie with the silk ribbon that had tied them both together. However, he soon found that the other end of the

silk ribbon was on the ground, and the one who was supposed to be there was... gone.

Bastien's heart sank.

Right as he was about to instinctively call out Natalie's name, he abruptly realized his mistake.

The woman he was supposed to marry that day was Lunetta Lovas, not Natalie Nichols. No matter what happened, he must not call out Natalie's real name.

Bastien was filled with regret. He regretted not restricting Natalie more than he had, but there was nothing he could do at that moment; he could only think of a way to keep his father safe.

The guests tried to run out of the hall in the smoke, but they soon realized that the place was locked down.

Meanwhile, Natalie took the opportunity to leave Bastien's side and went to look for Samuel.

She wanted to find Samuel.

She had to have Samuel!

Alas, everyone around her looked similar due to the smoky air. It was difficult to even walk straight, let alone see the features of another person.

Nevertheless, Natalie stubbornly continued to look for Samuel in the crowd.

"I can't find you. Why can't I find you?" Natalie muttered under her breath. "Where... Where are you?"

Chapter 1186 Will Always Recognize You

Natalie's distress brought tears to her eyes. She was already looking for Samuel to the best of her ability, but she simply could not find him. Transparent tears escaped her eyes.

For the past month and a little more, she had been kept by Bastien like a bird in a gilded cage, taken care of by the best people and fed with the best food. Yet, life was like hell.

Natalie dearly missed Samuel. She missed the way he used to gaze at her, and she missed his hugs. She missed everything about him.

If not for the long separation, Natalie would have never known that she was that emotional and that fearful of separating from Samuel. "Where are you? W-Why can't I find you?"

A guest was running around like a headless chicken in the chaos. Natalie was preoccupied with looking for Samuel, so she never saw the guest about to collide with her.

Right at that moment, a powerful hand grabbed her wrist. "Who are you—"

The days of imprisonment had made Natalie a bundle of nerves. The moment the hand touched her, she tensed up. Before she could push the person away, she fell against a man's broad chest.

"Nat." The voice burrowed itself into her heart. Natalie's lashes trembled, and she froze in her spot. She did not know what to do next.

Samuel was unfazed by Natalie's frozen state, however. He slowly pulled her closer and closer to him as he tightened his grip around her. It was as if he was trying to meld her into his body and never let go.

"Nat." Samuel's deep-set eyes turned moist as tears rushed out of them. This was his precious, and he had finally found her.

I-I've really found her! Natalie hiccupped. The tears she had been holding back for a long time surged out of her eyes like water from a broken dam. She choked out, "H-How did you recognize me? I... I still have the hyper-realistic mask on my face..."

This had been Bastien's meticulous plan. He was not going to let anyone have the chance to recognize her. Not only did he make the real Lunetta become her scapegoat, but he even hired someone to make a hyper-realistic mask that was far more realistic than the one she used to have.

Even Natalie sometimes would be in a daze as she stared in the mirror. Although her eyes still seemed like hers, the other features made her look like a completely different person. So how did Samuel recognize me in the smoke?

"I told you that I'll recognize you regardless of everything." "You..."

"I used to be able to recognize you, and I still can." Samuel closed his eyes and sensed Natalie's heartbeat. With a chuckle, he said, "So what if Yara looks the same as you? I've never gotten the two of you wrong before, so how can this be a challenge to me?"

"Samuel—" Natalie was bawling her eyes out, but she still praised, "You're so smart!"

"Mhm," Samuel answered without a hint of humbleness, but he made no move to let Natalie go. "Samuel, when did you find out that I was still alive?"

"When I was identifying the body," Samuel replied. "The woman had the same face as you, and because she had been in the morgue for a long time, it was hard to see the difference. I nearly believed that you were dead. It was when I changed her clothes that I realized the body could not be yours."

"Why?" Natalie blurted out. "The scars weren't right."

"Huh?" Samuel pulled Natalie away from him. As he cupped her face, he sincerely said to her, "Even though the person had been meticulous to the point they replicated various kinds of old scars and new wounds, there's no one else in this world who's more familiar than me with those scars on your body."

Chapter 1187 Look Properly

Natalie gave Samuel a look of disbelief. "You actually recognized me from the old scars?"

"There are three deep scars and eleven light ones on your body. As for their locations and shapes, even you might not be fully aware of them." Samuel flatly explained, "I had all those scars seared into my mind. Therefore, when they tried to replicate those scars on the corpse to trick everyone into thinking that you were dead, it backfired by indicating to me that you were still alive."

So that's how he did it. It wasn't as complicated as I thought. When Samuel clearly described the number of scars she had, Natalie's heart couldn't help but skip a beat.

That's how he's always been. Even though Samuel never professed his love for her openly, he would express it in many other implicit and explicit ways.

While she was still worried that he would be taken in by the trick, she didn't expect such an elaborate trap would fail to ensnare him. Soon, Natalie's sobs were gradually replaced by a smile.

To meet someone worth loving in the ocean of people was an extremely difficult endeavor, and yet, she managed to meet him. Furthermore, his love for her was so unconditional that all the suffering she experienced was nothing compared to it.

Wrapping her arms around Samuel's waist, Natalie felt her tears streaming down with increasing intensity. "This is wonderful... It's really, really wonderful!"

Samuel wiped her tears away with his hand. "You silly girl." All of a sudden, a flurry of gunshots rang out in the great hall.

The commotion interrupted the couple's romantic moment. With plenty left to do, their uncontrollable longing for each other had to take a backseat for the time being. Tugging Samuel's sleeve, Natalie couldn't help but ask, "Are they..."

"No," Samuel denied. "The forces I prepared are for—"

Before Samuel could finish his sentence, chaos erupted again in the hall. The usually distinguished guests and members of the royal family were running aimlessly around like a horde of desperate refugees.

The situation made it easy for one to knock into another.

Hence, Samuel hugged Natalie tightly with both his arms shielding the back of her head to prevent her from being injured by the surging crowd.

Meanwhile, Mikhail was surrounded by Bastien and the others in the center of the main hall.

King, together with Allen and the members of Blaze disguised as palace staff, gradually approached the group.

At that moment, one of the princes, who wanted to distinguish himself in front of Mikhail, came forward to block Geert's way. "Geert Leitz, are you staging a coup?"

No sooner had he spoken than Allen pulled the trigger, shooting the prince right between his eyes.

Thud!

The bullet pierced through his brain. Thereafter, his body collapsed onto the ground in a pool of blood and brain matter.

He was none other than Shirley's eldest son. The sight of his brain being blown out in front of her eyes triggered an agonized scream from her. Just when she lost all sanity and attempted to lunge at Geert, her life was swiftly ended by Allen with a subsequent gunshot.

Within the space of a couple of minutes, one of the royal consorts and a prince had their lives taken from them.

The shocking scene caused anyone who harbored the same desire to distinguish themselves to reconsider their decision.

When Mikhail saw that it was Geert confronting him, he furrowed his brows as he bellowed, "Geert, I have always treated you well, so why are you doing this? Do you know that you and the Leitz family will be destroyed for your transgression?"

When King heard the way Mikhail addressed him, he couldn't help but sneer, "Mikhail, take a closer look. I'm not that coward whom you call Geert!"

Chapter 1188 How Dare You Say Her Name

Unable to believe his ears, Mikhail's eyes widened in shock. Ever since he ascended the throne, Mikhail had summoned Geert many times but never saw this side of him before.

"Why are you doing this?" The shaken Mikhail added, "I've never mistreated you before." King couldn't help but burst into laughter.

"Yes, it's true that you have never mistreated that coward, Geert." Even though he possessed Geert's features, King's eyes brimmed with hostility when his character was in possession of the body. As if he was recollecting the past, he began to speak in a bitter tone. "I wonder if Your Majesty still remembers the sins you committed before ascending the throne?"

Ever since ancient times, blood would inevitably be spilled every time there was a change in power or dynasties. Mikhail's path to the throne was naturally no exception.

Nevertheless, everything was done behind the scenes to maintain his virtuous appearance. Even though Mikhail admitted to having his hands covered in blood after sacrificing many lives for his goals, he couldn't recall any conflict he shared with the man standing before him.

"Since when do you have a reason to seek revenge upon me?" Mikhail's gravitas didn't diminish despite the circumstances. "The Leitz family has always basked in glory with the support of the Scholl family during both the previous king's reign and mine. There's no need for you to use such a ludicrous excuse to mask your own ambition!"

Staring at the man before him, King laughed insidiously when he recalled the woman he had lost.

"I wonder if you remember the name Jennie Shamrock?" King spoke in an intimidating tone. "How could you have treated her that way? After she saved your life time and again, have you fulfilled your promise to her? Other than hurting her and forcing her to her death, what else have you done?"

The moment King mentioned the name, an excruciating pain gripped Mikhail's heart.

The name was declared taboo in Luna Palace, for he never wanted to hear of it again.

He had never loved another woman more in his entire life, but she was out of his reach upon his ascendance to the throne. If her life hadn't been taken by the power struggles he was involved in, she would have been free to continue healing the sick.

"Jen..." Mikhail kept repeating the name. Every time he called it out, he could feel his heart being ripped apart.

"Mikhail, how dare you utter her name!" King roared. "In spite of how she treated you, what did you do to her? If I was the one who took your place as king of Loang, she might have chosen me instead of you. Moreover, I would have taken better care of her for the rest of her life!"

King was well aware that he was a split personality of the coward Geert.

He had no name for himself, and even Jennie saw him as Geert.

It wasn't until he saw with his own eyes how Mikhail betrayed and abandoned Jennie despite her choosing him that he named himself "King."

Initially, he assumed that his role as a split personality was to protect the cowardly Geert. However, he realized how wrong he was when Geert's personality held him back from his desire to protect Jennie. From then on, he began to form his own agenda.

He wanted to become stronger so that he could become the king of Loang.

Only then was he capable of exacting revenge on those who harmed Jennie, and Mikhail was one of them.

Without Mikhail, he would have become the king of Loang. Jennie would then have chosen him instead of the former.

"Even though the most wonderful person in the world was yours, you ended up hurting her because of your desire for the throne." King's laughter grew increasingly maniacal. "And now, I want you to abdicate and declare to the world that you have handed the throne over to me. Only then will I consider sparing the lives of your wives and children."

Chapter 1189 Living Up To The Deal

"Obviously, if you refuse, I have other means of stripping you of your position. It's just that it will cost a lot more lives and result in more bloodshed." King had founded Blaze and gathered immense wealth and weapons in preparation for that specific moment.

Furthermore, he had finally managed to produce the drug that enabled his personality to dominate Geert's body forever by sealing off the latter.

Blaze had, all this while, established many research centers in Chanaea and Loang for the sole purpose of forcing researchers to come up with that particular drug. As a result, there were many who assumed Blaze was researching poisons or drugs that could affect one's mental condition for the purpose of profit.

However, the truth couldn't be any further, for his real objective was to create a drug that would allow his personality to take over the body permanently.

Now that the time was right, he would receive a jab once a month to keep Geert's personality at bay. Consequently, he could finally use the body to complete his grand plan—seek revenge for the woman he loved and become the king of the nation!

Upon hearing King's words, Mikhail furrowed his brows in silence. Bastien, who could sense that Mikhail was considering King's proposal, lowered his voice and said, "Father, despite our dire circumstances, you cannot hand the country over to a nutjob who suffers from a split personality. This would be extremely irresponsible to the country and its people!"

Bastien's words and the conviction in his eyes caused Mikhail to weigh the consequences of his choices.

Having caught Bastien whispering in Mikhail's ear, King easily guessed what was said. Hence, he couldn't help but burst into mocking laughter. "Mikhail, no wonder Bastien is your favorite among all the children. He, very much like you, is just as greedy for power and riches. Instead of worrying about his missing bride, he is more concerned with the security of his own position!"

King had barely finished when Bastien's expression drastically changed. Although he was filled with the urge to find Natalie, the nation's desperate circumstances took precedence.

Refusing to admit the truth, he retorted defiantly, "Blaze is nothing but an organization. Do you really think the guards in Luna Palace are pushovers? I dare you to take my life now, or you won't get another chance after this!"

Dressed in his wedding suit, Bastien got to his feet and approached King step by step.

He had run multiple scenarios in his mind.

If he were to confront King now, there was still a chance for him to turn the tide. However, if he were to surrender and allow King to take the throne, he, as Mikhail's son, would suffer a fate no different from his half-brother, who was just shot to death.

King raised his gun and aimed the barrel at Bastien.

Despite the frown on his face, Bastien had no other choice but to continue forward without showing any fear.

Given that King had no qualms about killing Mikhail, taking Bastien's life was nothing but an afterthought to him.

All of a sudden, a figure dashed out in front of Bastien to shield him with her outstretched arms.

"Don't kill him!" It was none other than Helma, who had always been hopelessly in love with him. She pleaded with King, "I know you aren't Geert, but your body belongs to him, making you my biological father still. Furthermore... you promised me that as long as I cooperated with you, you would not harm Bastien. You even vowed to make him mine! Go ahead and kill anyone you fancy, but please spare him!"

The rapidly developing situation had diverged from Helma's expectations. This was far from what she imagined when she first planned to foil the wedding.

Regardless of how events unfolded, she remained steadfast in her desire not to see Bastien harmed.

"Did you hear that? My 'daughter' has asked me not to lay a finger on you." Despite being amazed by Helma's desire to protect Bastien, King kept his word to not hurt the latter.

Chapter 1190 Begging Him

"Bastien, you should count your blessings that my 'daughter' loves you and is willing to plead for mercy on your behalf." Spreading his hands, King continued with a smile, "Once I become the king of Loang, you will be my 'son-in-law' and continue to enjoy the privilege and luxury you have grown accustomed to. In fact, I can give you more than that. If you can marry Lunetta, I'm sure you can marry Helma too."

Helma had a special place in King's heart. Even though he didn't acknowledge her as his real daughter, he couldn't deny the strong biological bond that they shared. Therefore, he was willing to spare Bastien on Helma's account since Mikhail was his true target.

After King had spoken, Helma walked up to Bastien's side. Tugging on his suit, she persuaded him in a tone brimming with sincerity. "Bastien, did you hear that? As long as you marry me, he's willing to let both of us off the hook. We can then be together and enjoy unparalleled riches! Therefore, you have to agree to his proposal. Do it quickly!"

Under the circumstances, no one could deny how tempting King's offer was.

Even Frieda's stance began to sway as she wanted her son to agree to Helma's request.

However, without a moment's hesitation, Bastien pried Helma's hand away from his sleeve. "I don't care about his proposal. It's no loss for me. I would rather die than marry you."

No sooner had his words rolled off his tongue than Helma burst into tears.

"Why?"

"There's no why," Bastien flatly replied.

"There has to be a reason!" Feeling utterly humiliated by Bastien, the emotional Helma raised her voice. "Why can you accept Natalie and Lunetta but not me? I was clearly the fiancée you were supposed to marry and the one who can be the biggest help to you. And yet, you reject me without even giving it a second thought! Do you know that I've had feelings for you since I was young? In order to be together with you, I strived hard to make myself better, hoping to show you the best version of myself! Unfortunately, you only had eyes for them and never for me!"

Even though Helma's crush on Bastien carried a hint of her inferiority complex, the depth of her feelings for him exceeded everyone's expectations.

Expecting her words to move Bastien—even a little—Helma was shocked that he didn't even bat an eyelid as he then replied, "There's no real reason. However, if you insist on one, I can only say that I have no feelings for you, and she is the only person who has my heart."

Bastien's brief reply dealt Helma a devastating blow.

She had bared her soul to him, expecting him to be, at the very least, touched by her sincerity, even if he didn't reciprocate her feelings at the same level. Little did she expect him to outright reject her, leaving her no space to even indulge in her fantasies.

Despite all my machinations and the dire circumstances he is facing, he still refuses to choose me?

The next moment, she collapsed on the ground in a puddle of tears.

When King saw how Bastien repudiated Helma, he couldn't help furrowing his brows as he aimed his gun at the younger man again. "I had wanted to let you go

on Helma's account. However, do you really think that there's no limit to my tolerance when you continue to hurt her?"

Bastien turned to look at King, his gaze calm as ever.

"I'm willing to compromise on anything except accepting someone I don't love. Death would be less painful for me."

Love was something that Bastien would never back down on.

If not for this principle, he wouldn't have taken such a huge risk for Natalie's sake. After all, there were plenty of other girls who could help him solidify his position in the royal family. In fact, Natalie was one of the poorest choices for that purpose.