

This Time, I Will Get My Divorce, Mr

Chapter 531

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Chapter 531 Black Forest Cake

Sonia then flipped open a document and started burying herself in work. Later that afternoon, she told Charles that she was going to meet up with Toby to return him the jewelry, so she got into her car and left Paradigm Co. for the Fuller Group.

It was already 1.00 PM by the time she arrived, and she stepped right through the entrance before she saw Tom walking in her direction. "Hello, Miss Reed."

"Hi, Tom," Sonia replied with a smile.

"President Fuller sent me to take you to the office." Tom stood aside, extending his arm to show her the way.

"How did he know I'm here?" Sonia appeared to be surprised. Although she did mention she was going to drop by in the afternoon earlier that morning, she didn't tell Toby the exact time. Therefore, she had no idea how Toby came to know that she had arrived and ordered Tom to collect her.

Tom adjusted his glasses and explained, "Oh, President Fuller mentioned that you'd be coming in the afternoon, so I was told to wait for you here."

"I see." Sonia nodded in confusion. "Then, you must have been waiting for a long time." Flattered by Toby's decision to have Tom wait for her so early, she reckoned his sincerity deserved her appreciation.

"Well, not really. I just came down here about ten minutes ago. Anyway, Miss Reed, let's get going, shall we?" Tom asked, to which Sonia responded with an affirmative hum. "Yes, please."

Both of them then made their way to the elevator that was meant for Toby to use. As they passed by the lobby, their presence drew the attention of the crowd around them. Some who knew Sonia didn't seem to be surprised about her arrival, considering the partnership between the Fuller Group and Paradigm Co. Thus, they believed Sonia was probably there to discuss some business with Toby. However, those who didn't know her were seen with their mouths wide agape as they began to gossip in murmurs.

After all, since Tom was Toby's personal assistant, they didn't think he would send him to receive a random visitor unless it was someone important to him. Otherwise, he would have sent his secretary or some other assistant to receive the visitor. At that moment, they all couldn't help but wonder who Sonia was and

why Toby had to get Tom to personally receive her. Who is she? Why does Mr. Brown have to personally receive her?

In the meantime, Sonia could sense the strange eyes on her from everybody else, but nonetheless, she appeared to be indifferent toward their dramatic reactions, as she didn't even bother to look at them. To her, she couldn't care less about their judgment and opinions, since they were not going to do her any harm anyway.

I can't control what people think about me, so they can look at me however they want.

One minute later, both of them arrived at Toby's office, whereupon Tom opened the door and invited her in with his arm stretching out. "Please come in, Miss Reed."

"Thank you." Sonia expressed her gratitude politely and stepped into the office, only to see no signs of Toby. She then stopped in her tracks and looked back at Tom. "Where is President Fuller?"

"President Fuller is currently in the middle of a meeting right now, but he'll be here in a few moments. So, please take a seat while waiting for him. Can I get you a little something to drink?" Tom showed Sonia the way to the couch.

Sonia sat down on the couch. "I'm fine with anything, so why don't you make the call? I'm not fussy anyway."

"I'll make some tea, perhaps. Please bear with me for a moment, Miss Reed," Tom said.

"Sure." Sonia nodded.

As soon as Tom excused himself, Sonia put her purse down on the table in front of her and reached for her cell phone in it. Then, she saw a notification popping up on her phone screen, catching her attention. "The Stryder Family is under investigation?" Sonia immediately sat up straight and opened up the notification to view it, only to realize it was a news report about the Stryder Family's detention.

When Sonia learned that the authority had launched an investigation on the properties the Stryder Family owned, she curled her lips and sneered. Deep down, she didn't feel surprised about the news at all, knowing that the Stryder Family would soon have what was coming to them.

Ever since Melody was arrested, it was only a matter of time that the police would publish the news across Seafield, especially after her confession about being Tina's accomplice and the murderer responsible for the death of Peter's first love. After all, Melody was from the Stryder Family, which was highly respected and revered by society.

Therefore, when the prestigious family's black sheep was found to be a murderer who took an innocent life and obstructed justice by assisting a criminal's escape, the Stryders inevitably became the center of the spotlight throughout the entire nation. For that, the law enforcement unit was pressured to run a thorough investigation on the Stryder Family.

After all, Melody's wrongful actions reflected her upbringing in the Stryder Family, putting her other family members in a bad light. Therefore, the authority had no choice but to involve Melody's family in the investigation in order to appease the public's wrath.

Thanks to Melody's previous interference with Seafield's political affairs, the Stryder Family still struggled with the repercussions that followed her selfish act. However, things only took a turn for the worse when Melody's unlawful actions doomed the Stryder Family's future and sealed its fate. Thus, Sonia believed that Melody's parents must have regretted having a daughter like her.

"Am I seeing a smile on your face? What are you reading?" Toby opened the door and walked into his office with Tom, who was holding a tray in his hands, just when Sonia was skimming through the comment section of the news.

Sonia put away her phone and looked up. "I was just reading a news report about the Stryder Family. They're currently under a criminal investigation."

Toby jutted his chin. "Oh, so that was what put a smile on your face, but I guess that's something that calls for a celebration."

"You knew?" Sonia looked at the man.

"Yeah. For a while now, I guess." Toby walked closer to the lady and sat down opposite her.

"Miss Reed, here is your black tea and Black Forest cake. I hope it's to your liking." Tom moved to the coffee table to serve Sonia what was on the tray.

"Thank you." Sonia nodded.

"You're welcome. Actually, it was President Fuller who told me to prepare it. So, if you want to thank someone, thank him." Tom placed a cup of coffee in front of Toby.

"Did you prepare all this for me?" Sonia gazed at Toby with a surprised look on his face.

With an affirmative hum, Toby replied, "I know you have a sweet tooth, so I sent someone to buy some."

In the meantime, Tom let out a sigh on the inside because he previously didn't know that the cake was meant for Sonia. A month ago, Toby suddenly ordered someone to prepare a luxury cake in the refrigerator without any specific request

about its type. While Tom initially thought that Toby had cravings for cakes, he quickly dismissed that thought because he had never seen Toby eating one.

Therefore, he quietly observed his superior with confusion, unable to understand why he would have someone prepare a cake and throw it away before he left work, only to repeat the same process the next day.

As time went on, Tom wondered whether Toby was out of his mind until one day, about a month ago, when he overheard his boss talking. It was then that he realized Sonia had a sweet tooth and that the cake was meant for her.

Miss Reed may or may not come often, but President Fuller still prepares the cake every day, rain or shine, so that he won't miss his chance to let her taste it when she really visits. Thus, I must say that I'm impressed by his tenacity.

On the other hand, Sonia, who had no idea about the cake's origin, only fixed her eyes on the cake with complicated emotions on the inside.

At the same time, Toby noticed her silent stare and guessed she didn't like it, so he asked with a tense look on his face, "Don't you like the cake?"

"No." Sonia shook her head. "I'm just a little flattered. Thanks."

"No big deal. It's just a piece of cake anyway. In fact, whoever receives you elsewhere would probably do the same thing as I do, so there is no need to be so tense," Toby replied despite his fear that Sonia wouldn't want to eat the cake just because he was the one who prepared it.

"No, I'm not tense. Like you said, it's just a piece of cake, so I'm totally cool." Sonia smiled.

Initially nervous, Toby soon heaved a sigh of relief and curled his lips upward. "Good to know that. Why don't you take a bite and tell me how it tastes?"

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Chapter 532 A Close Call

"Sure." Sonia nodded as she grabbed a fork and sliced the Black Forest cake before putting it into her mouth. With the soft texture and sweetness, the cake tasted so delicious that Sonia lost herself in it while her eyes curled upward like a smile.

"It looks like you love it a lot," Toby commented with a smile upon noticing Sonia's reaction.

"Well, the taste is indeed not bad." Sonia gave her compliment.

Toby held his cup of coffee in the air and said, "Glad to hear that. I have a few more right here, so you could take them away if you want."

"Thanks then," Sonia replied and took a sip of her black tea. Deep down, she couldn't deny how much she loved the cake, so she reckoned she might as well take a few more slices of it since she had already eaten one. After finishing the cake on her plate, she put it down and grabbed the bag beside her before handing it over to Toby. "This is the jewelry you gave me. Thank you so much."

"No worries." Toby received the bag and gave it to Tom. "Please take care of it."

"Sure, President Fuller." Tom nodded and took the bag to the lounge, where there was a safe.

Watching as Tom walked away, Sonia asked, "Are you sure you don't want to examine it? Aren't you afraid that I'd substitute it with a counterfeit?"

"No need for that. I don't think you'd do that either." Toby added while drinking his coffee, "Furthermore, I wouldn't complain either, even if you did that."

Meeting the man's sentimental eyes, Sonia felt her heart pounding even faster as she couldn't help but keep her head down.

On the other hand, Toby let out a sigh, feeling dismayed at Sonia's slight resistance, although she had stopped rejecting his advances to woo her. After all, he couldn't stop wondering when she would ever realize she was already in love with him if she continued to fight her emotions and resist his advances. Ugh, man! I wish I could just tell her everything and ignore the fact that it may backfire.

While Toby was caught up in his thoughts, Sonia's phone suddenly rang. She then reached for her phone in her purse and realized it was a call from her secretary, Daphne. Thus, she chuckled at Toby in embarrassment. "Excuse me, President Fuller. I'd like to answer this phone call."

"Sure." Toby nodded.

Sonia slid across her phone screen to answer the call, whereupon she put it to her ear. "Hello."

"President Reed, I found something about the car license plate number that you told me to investigate earlier," Daphne answered.

Sonia sat upright and asked, "What did you find? Who is the owner of the car? Is there anything fishy about it?"

The owner of the car? Toby pricked up his ears and put down his cup of coffee while staring at her. What's going on? Is she in some kind of trouble?

"The owner is just a normal civilian who has been using the car for years, so everything seems fine here," Daphne replied while skimming through her results.

"Alright, I heard you." Sonia nodded when she heard her secretary's reply. She then put her phone away and heaved a sigh of relief with her mind put to ease. It looks like the driver who happened to be going the same way as we did this morning is just a normal civilian. Well, I guess I can rest assured now knowing that he wasn't actually tailing us.

Noticing Sonia's relief, Toby squinted and asked in a concerned manner, "What happened?"

"Oh, it's no big deal, but it's already dealt with anyway." Sonia smiled faintly.

"Oh, good to know that. If anything serious happens, you can always come to me, and I'll take care of it for you." Toby jutted his chin.

"Sure." Sonia nodded, but Toby could tell how perfunctory her answer sounded.

"Alright, President Fuller. It's getting late, so I should get going now. After all, I'm needed at the construction site by 3 PM later." Sonia lifted her arm and looked at the watch on her wrist as she stood up. In fact, she hadn't been to her plant at all, even though it had already been built for months.

Meanwhile, the construction team gave Daphne a call earlier and told her that they had finished building the plant. Thus, they requested someone to examine and inspect the place upon completion so that any amendments could be brought up and carried out. For that, Sonia decided to pay a visit to the plant.

"Sure, I'll see you out, perhaps." Toby rose from his seat. Although he wanted Sonia to stay for a while more, he didn't really have a reason to convince her. Nonetheless, he was glad that she didn't resist his advances, so he could find an excuse to see her any time he wanted, unlike his previous experience.

On the other hand, Sonia didn't reject Toby's offer to see her out as she smiled and nodded in agreement.

Then, Toby looked at his assistant, who had just come back from the lounge after putting away the jewelry, and gave him an instruction. "Please pack the cake in the refrigerator."

"Sure," Tom replied with an affirmative hum and went on to do as he was instructed. Soon, he returned with a delicate box, which Toby took and handed over to Sonia.

"Thank you." Sonia took the box.

"Don't mention it. Your love for the cake is the best way of showing your gratitude to me." Toby looked at her, speaking with a hoarse voice.

The next moment, Sonia's ears blushed as she kept her head down without saying a single word.

In the meantime, Toby sensed her embarrassment and chuckled before he changed the subject. "Let's go." Then, Sonia followed him out of the office and headed toward the elevator. When they got there, Toby pushed the button to open the elevator door. "Where did you park your car, by the way?"

"The junction near your company's entrance," Sonia answered with the cake in her hand. In fact, she parked her car there because she spotted a vacant lot there when she arrived.

While Toby nodded his head to show his acknowledgment, the elevator arrived. Then, he chivalrously invited her to step into the elevator before he did, as Tom followed right behind to make sure the elevator door was closed.

As the elevator descended, the confined space was shrouded by silence, with neither of them speaking a word to the other. It wasn't until they stepped out of the elevator that Sonia broke the silence and said, "I'll see you soon, so you should probably get back inside, President Fuller."

"No worries. I'll leave once you get into your car," Toby said with one hand in his pocket.

Noticing Toby's insistence, Sonia silently gave in and reached for the car keys to unlock her car door. "Alright, I'll make a move now. See you!" She waved her hand at the man.

"See you." Toby responded with an affirmative hum.

When Sonia opened the car door and was about to enter the vehicle, a speeding car could be heard charging from behind. As Toby looked up, he saw a black car of a Japanese brand traveling in their direction at an unusually high speed. Sensing the driver's intent to run over them, Toby appeared to be shocked as he quickly seized Sonia's arm and pulled her backward.

"Watch out!" Toby shouted with an intense voice.

"What's wrong?" Sonia was jerked by the man to the side before she could understand what had happened. However, she also didn't manage to hold her cake tightly as it fell onto the floor. At the same time, Sonia collapsed into Toby's arms while both of them turned around in a circle with the man's arm around her waist. Then, both of them fell down onto the ground and rolled out of the way just before the car could run over them.

In the meantime, Tina was frustrated with Toby's swift reaction because he not only managed to dodge her car but also save Sonia's life at the same time. As she watched her chance slip through her fingers, her face twisted in malicious horror. "Goddamn it!" Tina thumped the steering wheel and set her eyes on the man and the lady outside her car window, gritting her teeth. In fact, she had been tailing Sonia all the way there while waiting for an opportunity to hit her and run.

However, when Toby showed up as well, she was gleeful that luck was on her side. While Tina believed she could only find peace in Sonia's death, her love for Toby had grown into a grudgeful hatred. Thus, she could never bring herself to forgive him.

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Chapter 533 They Deserve Death](#)

In order to prove her love for Toby, Tina went through the trouble of dating Quentin and orchestrated an accident that killed him to get his heart for the man she loved. However, she was now dismayed in hindsight, thinking Toby didn't love her at all because all the love he showed her was none other than an illusion from the hypnotism. Although she had no choice but to reluctantly accept her fate, she reckoned Toby should have never snapped out of his hypnotic state.

After all, Toby broke up with her the moment he woke up, rendering her a laughingstock. Thus, she blamed him for putting her through so much suffering.

If you won't appreciate my love for you, you'll die together with Sonia. No one can have Toby if I can't have him.

Initially thinking she could run them over with one attempt, she was surprised that they managed to dodge her car at that critical moment. Nonetheless, she quickly came to a decision to turn around for another try. At the thought of that, she smiled creepily at the both of them in her car and stepped on the gas pedal, steering the car toward them.

Meanwhile, the car only managed to run over Sonia's cake on the floor, flattening the box as its content was crushed into smithereens. Setting her eyes upon the cake on the ground, she snapped out of her petrified trance and caught on to what had just happened.

That driver really wanted to kill me and Toby! Sonia shivered at the thought of the driver's killer intent. If it hadn't been for Toby, I would have been run over like a pancake. Wait a second, Toby!

"Toby!" Sonia quickly turned her attention when she thought about him. While he looked like he was seemingly injured, she knitted her eyebrows with a pale face.

Seeing his miserable state, Sonia immediately panicked. "How do you feel, Toby?"

"I sprained my ankle. Help me up." Toby gasped for breath, enduring the pain while weakly asking for help.

"You sprained your ankle?" He is injured indeed. Sonia confirmed her suspicion and got out of the man's arms to check on his leg.

"Don't move!" Knowing what Sonia was going to do, Toby stopped her with a stern look on his face. "Help me up first. That car may come back."

"What?! That car may come back?" Sonia's face changed, her eyes dilating in horror.

Toby tried to prop his body with his arm as he fixed his glacial eyes on the direction in which the car drifted away. "Yeah, whoever was driving was obviously trying to kill us. Now that the driver failed to do so, I'm sure he or she will likely come back for us."

"No way. We need to get out of here then." Sonia quickly helped Toby up without any hesitation.

Just when Sonia helped Toby get back on his feet, they suddenly heard the sound of an oncoming car from behind them. She then looked back and saw the same car that almost hit them a few moments ago. Toby was right. That car was coming back. It looks like whoever is driving won't stop until we're both dead. "Let's go!" Sonia gritted her teeth, summoning all the strength from her body to carry Toby away while both of them made for the parterre and dove into the bushes.

The moment both of them fell into the bushes, they landed on the flowers in the parterre, which caused their clothes to be entangled with countless flower pedals.

This would be such a romantic scene if it weren't for some crazy driver who tried to kill us for no good reason.

While Toby and Sonia were forced to take cover in the parterre, their current situation would be a romantic encounter if they weren't trying to escape from someone who was trying to kill them in a car.

On the other hand, Tina's face twisted in frustration when she saw Sonia and Toby diving into the parterre. Goddamn it! They got away with it again! Why is it so hard for me to just run over them?! Blinded by her anger and irritation, she was so engrossed with both of them in the parterre that she forgot her car was also charging at the parterre. Shortly after that, her car crashed into the concrete before a loud bang was heard. While Tina's car came to an abrupt stop, the jarring car alarm filled the silent atmosphere. At the same time, Tina bumped into the steering wheel, feeling unbearable pain in her chest as she felt dizzy in her head. Then, she felt something warm and wet dripping down her forehead, only to realize it was—blood.

Damn it! I'm bleeding. Tina gritted her teeth, her hands shaking as she cursed Toby and Sonia on the inside. I'm here to kill Sonia, but now she is fine, and I'm hurt! What the heck is going on?! Goddamn it! "What's that sound?" Tina quickly saw Tom and a few other bodyguards coming her way when she was silently

cursing Sonia and Toby. At the sight of those men, she had her facial expression darkened.

I need to get out of here! Now! Otherwise, it'll be too late for me to escape!

Knowing that she was a fugitive who had just attempted murder, Tina was fully aware of how she would end up if she was ever caught. After all, it wasn't easy for her to escape from the police the last time, so she didn't want to be captured again.

Tina clenched her jaw and shifted the gear to reverse from the concrete, whereupon she stepped on the gas pedal and sped away. Before she left, she looked back and set her glacial eyes on the parterre, swearing to herself that she would be sure to kill them next time.

I won't fail again next time! When I return, it'll be time for both of you to meet your demise!

At that moment, Sonia sat up straight while feeling dizzy but soon met Tina's eyes through the car window. Shocked by what she saw, Sonia couldn't believe her eyes. Tina! It's Tina who tried to run over us!

"President Fuller! Miss Reed!" Tom came running to Sonia and Toby, checking on them in a concerned manner. "Are you guys alright?" In fact, he didn't tag along with Toby to see Sonia off. Instead, he was waiting in the lobby because Toby would like to see Sonia off alone. Thus, he sensibly left them to it, thinking it wasn't necessary for him to be the third wheel. Nonetheless, when it took Toby longer than it should to return, Tom started to get curious until he heard a loud bang from the outside.

Wondering what happened, he stepped outside with a few security guards to investigate the commotion. As he discovered what happened, he saw Sonia and Toby lying in the parterre with a car rammed into the concrete.

Seeing that, he instantly understood that Toby and Sonia were nearly hit by that car, but when he sent his men to confront the driver, the car started moving and drifted away before they could do what they intended to. Therefore, Tom had no choice but to mark down the car's license plate number and went on to check on Toby and Sonia.

"We're fine." Sonia shook her head and pointed at the direction in which Tina drove away, desperately saying, "Hurry up! That driver is Tina, so don't let her get away!"

"What?!" Tom paused shortly before his face turned cold. "I can't believe that was Tina!"

"Get her!" Toby endured his dizziness and gave his order.

Tom nodded and said, "Alright, I'll get someone to go after the car." He then instructed two of the bodyguards, who got into a car and pursued Tina. In the

meantime, Sonia emerged from behind the bushes while helping Toby walk out of it. However, since Toby sprained his ankle, he wasn't able to walk properly, which made it hard for the lady to help him get out of the parterre. In the end, Tom had to give her a hand in helping Toby out of the parterre.

"President Fuller, are you hurt anywhere else besides your ankle?" Tom quickly checked on Toby with Sonia while anxiously asking him in a concerned manner,

"Besides my ankle, I'm fine." Toby waved his hand in response. In fact, he sprained his ankle when he cushioned Sonia from the fall a few moments ago, but other than his ankle, he was perfectly fine.

"I don't care if you only just sprained your ankle. You need to see a doctor," Sonia seized Toby's arm and said.

Tom agreed with Sonia and reached for his phone to send for the doctor.

"Let's get back to the office," Toby squinted and replied before shifting his gaze to Sonia. "Come along with us."

"Sure." Sonia nodded, thinking she shouldn't just walk away like nothing ever happened after the unexpected incident took place. Deep down, she told herself that she must at least make sure he wasn't hurt anywhere else.

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Chapter 534 The Grudges Between Them

Not long after the three of them had returned to Toby's office, the doctor Tom summoned earlier arrived. Immediately, Sonia cleared away the things on the coffee table to make room for the doctor's medical kit.

However, the doctor had only just put down his kit when Toby pointed at Sonia and instructed, "Attend to her first."

"President Fuller!"

"No!"

Tom and Sonia protested simultaneously, making their objections clear. As far as Tom was concerned, Sonia was relatively unscathed, whereas Toby's foot was swollen.

As such, it made sense for the doctor to tend to Toby's injuries first instead of checking up on Sonia.

Sonia, on the other hand, thought the same thing. The abrasions on her arm were not any worse than Toby's swollen ankle, but more importantly, he had been the one who stepped in and saved her in time. On that point alone, he rightfully deserved all the medical attention.

At the sight of Sonia's stony expression and stubborn refusal, Toby parted his lips to say something but thought better of it when he felt her overwhelming authority loom over him.

It was only after she had seen him give up on his attempt to argue that she looked away and addressed the doctor in a white coat with a polite smile. "Please attend to him first, doctor."

"Very well," the doctor agreed with a perfunctory nod. "President Fuller, could you please lift your leg for me?"

Toby frowned, seemingly reluctant to follow orders.

Sonia pursed her lips at this and urged like a flustered hen, saying, "Didn't you hear the doctor? Lift your leg up so he can examine it! How else do you expect him to go about this?" Without warning, she bent over to wrap an arm around his injured leg to lift it.

Toby hadn't expected her to do this, and he stiffened at the sudden gesture. However, this only made it harder for Sonia to lift his leg, and she reached out to tap him on the shoulder, hissing, "Hey, loosen up!"

Upon hearing this, Toby snapped out of his daze. He couldn't suppress a smile as he relaxed his body.

When she felt that his leg was not quite as heavy and stiff as before, she successfully lifted it up and propped it on the sofa. "You can examine him now, doctor."

"Alright," the doctor replied as he walked over to the sofa and crouched down, thereafter checking the swollen area.

Meanwhile, Tom stood to the side with his hand clasped over his mouth to keep from laughing. He was highly entertained by how Toby dared not utter a word of complaint even though he was anal about someone touching his foot, all because Sonia was staring at him like she would not hesitate to put him in place. Maybe fear really is the heart of love after all, Tom thought in amusement.

Toby seemed to realize what Tom was laughing at, and he narrowed his eyes at the latter as though saying icily, I can't believe you have the nerve to laugh at me when you don't even have a lover.

As if reading Toby's mind, Tom felt the grin slide off his face. His lips gave a final twitch before he put on a straight face again, though his pride was definitely hurt. He's right. I probably shouldn't make fun of him when I've been a bachelor all my thirty years of life. I really ought to work on my game.

Presently, oblivious to the wordless exchange between Toby and Tom, Sonia knelt down before Toby's injured foot and asked the doctor worriedly, "How's his foot looking, doctor?"

The doctor pressed down on Toby's ankle, which made Toby frown. Seeing this, the doctor understood the extent of Toby's pain and turned to grab a bottle of cooling spray from his medical kit. Shaking the aluminum bottle twice, he aimed the nozzle at Toby's swollen ankle and sprayed it. "It's nothing serious. He put a strain on his ligament, which is just another way of saying he sprained his ankle. He'll be fine in a couple of days."

When Sonia heard this, she let out a sigh of relief and said, "Oh, thank goodness." Then, she looked at Toby and flashed him a bright smile. "Did you hear that? The doctor said you'll be fine in a couple of days!"

Toby nodded, eyeing her with endearment as he answered, "I heard him."

She stood up. "Thank you for what you did earlier." They had been downstairs, and she was just about to get into the car when she heard the sound of an approaching vehicle, but she did not turn to see where that vehicle was going.

Sonia had thought that it would only pass her by, but to her surprise, the car had intended to run her down and kill her.

If Toby hadn't reacted in time and dragged her back to the pavement, Tina would have knocked her off her feet and sent her flying down the street.

"You don't have to thank me. Anyone would have done the same thing in my position, let alone someone who loves you as much as I do. I couldn't just do nothing and watch you get hurt before my very eyes," Toby pointed out gravely, keeping his gaze on Sonia.

If she had gotten hurt while he was there, he might never be able to forgive himself. He would spend the rest of his days in self-loathe, haunted by the fact that he had failed to save her. With that in mind, he thanked the heavens that he had been there to drag her back onto the safety of the pavement. If she had been alone, then she would be...

His fists clenched, and he stopped himself from thinking about what might have happened. He couldn't bring himself to accept how dire the situation could have been had he not been there to save her. Just focus on the present, he told himself firmly. This is the best I could ask for.

Having heard the man's subtle confession, Sonia felt her heart begin to race, and she parted her lips to say, "Even then, you shouldn't have risked your life like that to save me. You could have—"

"I was more terrified about you getting hurt than anything else," Toby said, cutting her off. At any given moment, he would have prioritized her life over his own safety.

Sonia's eyes widened, and she turned around to dab at the tears that had somehow escaped. She wasn't sure why she was crying, but she tried to keep her voice steady as she choked out, "Toby, don't you know how stupid it is for you to risk your life to save mine? Have you ever stopped to wonder if it's worth it?"

"I can't speak for others, but I know it's worth it to me," he answered solemnly.

She bit down on her lip and muttered in resignation, "You're a lovesick fool! That's what you are."

He chuckled. "Well, I can't help it now. I've already put the rest of my life in your hands. It's too late for me to play it safe."

Sonia looked up slightly and drew in a breath, pushing down the exasperation that was welling up in her as she turned to meet his gaze. "Please don't act so impulsively if something like this ever happens again. Do you really think I'd sleep at night if you gave up your life to save mine? For your sake, and mine, could you please just put yourself first, Toby? I don't want to see you get hurt because of me ever again!"

She paused at this, then added, "Someone should go after Tina before she gets away. If she does, who knows when she'll pop out of nowhere and run some crazy scheme to hurt me? When that comes to pass, you're going to risk your own safety again just to help me, so I'm asking you to butt out of this, Toby. This is a grudge between Tina and myself, and I don't want to drag you into it."

Next to them, Tom nodded earnestly to show that he agreed with her. He was Toby's assistant and friend, and he didn't want to see Toby get hurt. He'd be better off not taking part in all this drama between Miss Reed and Tina.

However, he also understood that Toby could not keep himself from intervening. Because if he doesn't, then who's going to take his place to step in and protect Miss Reed?

Sure enough, Toby gave a firm shake of his head. "I'm afraid I can't do that. I'll put my foot in even where it's not wanted. Haven't you realized that this grudge ties not just you and Tina together, but all three of us?"

"What?" Sonia gaped at him, a little startled by this revelation.

The air around Toby grew colder as he thought about what had happened just now. "When we were downstairs, Tina didn't just try to kill you; she was trying to kill me, too."

"That's impossible!" Sonia gasped, her wide eyes filled with disbelief.

He smirked and elaborated, "No, it's entirely possible. If she wasn't trying to kill me, then she wouldn't have driven her car in our direction again, even after I pulled you to safety. We were on the ground together, Sonia. There was no way she could have killed you and spared me in the process."

This made Sonia fall into a stunned silence. She thought about his analysis and found herself agreeing with him. Indeed, if it hadn't been Tina's intention to kill Toby, then she would have sped off after failing to run Sonia down the first time, but instead, she made a fast turn and hurtled toward her and Toby.

So she really did want to kill me and Toby by running us over with her car.

"But why would she do something like that? Doesn't she love you?" Sonia demanded, her nails digging into her palms as her gaze searched Toby's face.

Disgust flashed in Toby's eyes as he spat, "Her love is worthless. Besides, she never truly loved me."

"Never?" Sonia repeated in surprise.

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That's not possible, Sonia thought, still alarmed by Toby's proclamation. If it's true that Tina never truly loved him, then why was she so possessive of him?

As though reading her mind, Toby elaborated grimly, "She never truly loved me for me! After I blacked out from that particular car accident, I had Tom look into Tina, and we discovered a crucial piece of information."

"What was it?" Sonia asked anxiously.

Tom interjected, "We found out that, at that point, she had known for quite a while that she wasn't Titus' biological daughter."

"Yes. Tina discovered at the age of eighteen that she was not Titus' biological daughter, which means there was a chance that he wouldn't pass Triforce Enterprise to her. Even if he would, she knew her lack of skills in running a business would only jeopardize the company. There was a real likelihood that Triforce Enterprise could go bankrupt or be taken over by the shareholders, so in order for her to keep up her lavish lifestyle, she began to set eyes on all the successful men in the industry."

Sonia's jaw dropped when she heard Toby's explanation. "No way."

"It's all true, Miss Reed. I looked into the men Tina had set her eyes on and found that they were bachelors from and heirs to some of the most elite families in the industry," Tom began elaborating. "Our President Fuller happened to be the cream of the crop, but with the Gray Family's standing back in the day, they were far from being in his league. Tina couldn't find a way to even get close to President Fuller, until she discovered that he was pen pals with you, Miss Reed."

"Pen pals..." Sonia's face fell as she remembered something. So that's what happened! Tina and I went to the same university, and she was even my roommate!

The scene of Tina catching her writing letters flashed in Sonia's mind. They had been in their first year of university then, and she recalled Tina making fun of her for using such archaic methods to communicate with someone. Following this, Tina even rallied the other students from the course to join in the teasing.

But one day, Tina suddenly showed interest in Sonia's pen pal and started asking questions about him. She had always been reproachful of Sonia's letter-writing, but out of nowhere, she claimed to have plans on finding herself a pen pal as well.

Perhaps that had been the precise moment when Tina, by some way or another, discovered Toby and Sonia were pen pals. Then she had the idea to impersonate me so that she could finally get close to Toby!

At the thought of this, Sonia closed her eyes and bit out angrily, "It was my fault for not seeing through her schemes at the beginning."

If she had known that John and Toby were the same person—that her pen pal and the man she had fallen so deeply in love with shared one identity—before Tina had, things would have turned out differently for her and Toby.

For one, Tina would never even be part of their narrative.

Presently, at the sight of Sonia's trembling hands, Toby reached out and pulled her into his arms. She stumbled into his embrace, and as he held her, he caressed her hair gently while murmuring, "None of this is your fault; it's mine. I should have told you my identity all those years ago."

In actuality, he had considered telling her about his real identity back then, but at last, he decided against it after seeing how difficult the search for a compatible heart donor had been.

That moment of hesitation had ended up being the perfect window for Tina to come between him and Sonia.

The fault was not Sonia's alone, but that didn't matter. Having missed out on six years with her, Toby was determined to have every moment he could with her now.

Sonia, on the other hand, was surprised by his sudden gentle embrace, but for some reason, she couldn't bring herself to push him away. There was something comforting about being in his arms like this, and she found herself calming down.

Going along with the flow, she quietly leaned her forehead against his shoulder and asked slowly, "So you're saying that Tina only ever loved you for your money and status, but not for who you are? She went to such extreme lengths just so she could have you fund her lavish lifestyle?"

"That's right," Toby muttered hoarsely, dipping his head so he could breathe in the pleasant scent of her hair.

She lowered her gaze. "Actually, I thought her feelings for you were true to some extent. I could tell."

Sonia had seen the jealousy in Tina's eyes whenever they were in the same room; raw emotions like that couldn't have been an act. Such jealousy and hostility toward me would have been uncalled for had Tina never truly loved Toby.

Toby's brows furrowed. "I don't care whether her feelings for me were real or not because I don't want her in the slightest. The idea of being loved by her disgusts me!"

Hearing this inexplicably lifted Sonia's spirits, and the beginnings of a smile began to curl on her lips as she said, "You know, maybe Tina tried to kill you because all that love she had for you has turned into pure hatred."

"It doesn't matter. She could try, but it's not as if she'd succeed in murdering me anytime soon," Toby pointed out darkly. An insidious look flashed in his eyes, but it disappeared just as quickly. He gently released Sonia from the cage of his arms and stared into her eyes. "Just remember that going forward, the grudges you thought were between you and Tina concern me as well, so don't tell me not to intervene. Tina would still come after me even if I were to back out of this mess. You understand that, don't you?"

Sonia parted her lips to say something in protest, but having been rendered speechless, she finally nodded. "I understand."

Meanwhile, the doctor who had been tending to Toby's sprained ankle—and who had become an involuntary third wheel to Toby and Sonia in the process—stood up and said, "Okay, President Fuller, you're all set and ready to go. I've bandaged your ankle, so try to keep the area dry for at least twenty-four hours, though you can clean it with a damp towel. In the meantime, take care not to bump into anything."

Toby hummed in response. "Alright. Now, can you please attend to her?"

"Very well," the doctor agreed readily, then glanced over at Sonia. "Take a seat here, young lady."

Sonia made a noise of acknowledgment and walked over to the other side of the couch, then rolled up her sleeve to reveal the abrasions on her arm so the doctor could tend to them.

Just then, Tom's phone rang. "President Fuller, it's a call from the bodyguards I sent to go after Tina earlier."

Toby looked somber as he barked, "Well, answer it!"

Sonia turned to stare at Tom anxiously as well.

Under their intense scrutiny, Tom picked up the call and put it on speaker. "It's me. Have you brought the target into custody?"

"Sorry, Mr. Brown, but we lost her," one of the bodyguards on the other line reported trepidatiously.

Exasperation and disbelief colored Tom's features as he snapped, "What? You lost her? You guys are two walking blocks of muscle with a flashy car, but neither of you managed to catch a girl in a beat-up ride?"

Putting it that way, it was hard for anyone to believe that Tina had outrun two security guards.

Toby, too, looked incensed, and the air around him crackled with angry energy. Sonia's fists were clenched so tight that her nails were digging hard into her palms, and the incredulous expression on her face belied her thoughts. How did it end up this way?

She had initially thought that the bodyguards would take down Tina for sure, but in a shocking twist of events, the wretched woman actually managed to escape.

It was just as Sonia had said earlier: if they failed to bring Tina into custody and let her escape, then it would only be harder to catch her the next time. For as long as Tina stayed hidden in the shadows, she was a giant, ticking time bomb. There was no telling when she would pop up again and hurt them.

As things were, the worst-case scenario that Sonia had thought of had finally happened.

On the other end of the phone, the two bodyguards looked down in shame after getting told off by Tom.

"We're sorry, Mr. Brown. We didn't mean to let her escape; we thought the chase was going well, but just as we were about to corner her, two other cars skidded out of nowhere and cut us off."

"Cut you off?" Sonia was astonished as she bit down on her lip. "Could they be Tina's accomplices?"

“Obviously,” Toby agreed with a solemn nod.

“She actually has accomplices?” Sonia slammed her fist against the cushion and demanded, “Who would put their lives on the line to help her? Cynthia? Or maybe Julia and Titus?”

These were the only people Sonia could think of who might lend Tina a hand in all this. There was no way Melody could have helped Tina escape, not while she was already struggling in prison already. No, she couldn’t have arranged for anyone to help Tina get away from a manhunt.

That being said, Sonia thought there might be others who were aiding Tina in secret, but the possibility of that was low.

After all, the current Tina had already fallen from grace; she was no longer the same girl who had been coddled and supported by courtesies of her relationship with Toby. Her fans had deserted her, and her connections were too thinned out to offer her any real advantage.

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Chapter 536 The Way He Said It

“We’ll just have to look into this and weed out her accomplices, whoever they are,” Toby said darkly, narrowing his eyes ominously.

Sonia nodded in agreement with him. There was little point in guessing who might have helped Tina escape when a thorough investigation could give them all the answers.

“Get the bodyguards to come back for now,” Toby instructed, pinching the space between his brows wearily as he glanced at Tom. Now that Tina had managed to get away, sending bodyguards after her would be redundant.

Adjusting his glasses, Tom answered, “Yes, President Fuller.” With that, he returned to the phone conversation and ordered the bodyguards to come back.

Meanwhile, the doctor was done tending to the abrasions on Sonia’s arm. He slipped off his disposable gloves with a flourish and announced, “You’re all done, miss. I’ve disinfected and put ointment on the wounds. Now, you may be tempted to scratch the wounds while they’re healing, but let the itching subside on its own, or the wounds might leave the scar.”

“Got it, doctor. Thank you,” Sonia said with a polite smile.

"You're welcome." The doctor grabbed the medical kit from the coffee table and slipped the strap over his shoulder. "I'll be taking my leave now, President Fuller."

Upon hearing this, Toby jerked his chin at Tom and said, "Tom, see the doctor out and drop by the security office along the way. We need to find out the precise time when Tina showed up around the area."

"Yes, sir!" Tom nodded respectfully, then politely indicated for the doctor to leave through the door. The doctor took the lead, and Tom fell in step behind him.

When the door clicked shut, Sonia and Toby were the only ones left in the large office.

Presently, her gaze flickered over to his bandaged ankle as she asked, "Do you need to use the restroom or go back to your work desk?"

Toby shook his head. "No. Why do you ask?"

Sonia replied, "What I meant was, if you need to go to the restroom or back to your desk to sort through documents, then all you have to do is tell me. Think of me as a human crutch, if you will, since you can't exactly walk on your own at the moment."

"Oh," he said, then nodded slowly as he considered this option. "Got it. I'll let you know if I need your help."

"Right, so you will," she said with a smile. "And if you don't because you want to save me the trouble or whatever, just know that it'll add to my guilty conscience. Regardless of how things culminated, the fact remains that you busted your ankle because you wanted to save me."

In all fairness, Tina had wanted to run the both of them down, but if Toby had dodged away without pulling Sonia along with him, he would have been completely unhurt. At the end of the day, Sonia was the reason he would be limping for the next few days.

At the sight of her guilty expression, Toby sighed. "Come on, don't be too hard on yourself. I brought this onto myself when I rushed to keep you from getting run down."

"You could say that, but—" She was cut off abruptly by the sound of her phone ringing. Frowning, she fished the phone out of her purse and saw Charles' name flashing on the screen. She turned to Toby and muttered, "Sorry, I have to get this."

Toby hummed in response. "Go ahead."

She slid her thumb across the screen to pick up the call and pressed the phone to her ear. "Hey, Charles."

"Hey, baby. I thought you'd have dropped the jewelry off at Toby's by now," Charles said on the other line.

Sonia gave Toby a brief look and replied, "I have."

"Then why aren't you back yet? It's been ages, and we said we'd go over to sign off on the factory later, remember?" Charles pointed out.

She checked the time. "Sorry, but I'll be running late. Something came up."

"Something came up? What is it, baby?" Charles grew concerned. "Do you need my help?"

"No," she said, smiling as she shook her head. "It's fine. Everything has been handled for now."

Relieved, Charles prompted, "Oh, well, in that case, hurry back. Any later and the construction team will be getting off their shift."

Sonia nodded and gave a small hum. "Okay, I'll get back as soon as possible."

"Alright. See you later, then." Having said this, Charles ended the call.

Sonia set the phone aside, and Toby handed her a glass of water as he asked, "So, what did Charles want?"

"Thanks," she mumbled as she took the glass. Then, in response to Toby's question, she explained, "You know how you gave me a piece of land a couple of months ago because of Tina? I built a factory on it, and now the construction is nearly done. They want me to go over and run a final check before signing off on it."

"Congratulations," Toby said cheerily. "Now that you have a factory, you won't have to outsource manufacturers for your inventory."

He raised his own glass of water and made a toast to her new achievement.

Seeing this, Sonia broke into a smile and clinked her glass against his. "You're right. I won't have to stoop down to beg for others' favors or put my pride on the line now that I have the factory set up."

She still remembered how she had gone to Autumn Crest Hill for a meeting with Director Sandberg and his team. She had only just taken over Paradigm Co. then, and she was supposed to negotiate for manufacturing contracts with Director Sandberg, but all she got out of the deal was a round of harassment from the old director and his team of leering men. If Toby had not shown up to intervene back then, Director Sandberg and his employees might have had their way with her.

She shuddered at this, disgusted by how vile the experience had been and how she would hate to relive it.

“With the factory close to completion, have you looked into equipment suppliers?” Toby asked after sipping his water, drawing Sonia out of her thoughts.

She frowned. “I haven’t actually decided on that, but I’m considering international suppliers, since their engineering technology is much more advanced than what I could find in the local market. That being said, I’m going to need a buying channel if I set my mind on overseas equipment, and I am without one at the moment.”

“I could make arrangements for you,” Toby offered, eyeing her steadily.

She shook her head vehemently when she heard this and flapped her hand to turn him down. “Oh, no, don’t trouble yourself. I intend to take a look at the equipment myself when I go overseas.”

He cocked a brow at this. “I didn’t know you were planning a trip abroad.”

Clasping her glass of water, Sonia hummed thoughtfully and said, “A friend from my alma mater is throwing an engagement party next month on the tenth. She called me up two days ago and invited me to the party, and apparently, her fiancé comes from a family that owns a mining company. They’re supposedly collaborating with a lot of engineering companies, so when I go over next month for her party, I’ll try my luck and see if I can set up a buying channel.”

Next month on the tenth... Engagement party... The fiancé comes from a family that owns a mining company...

These strung together in Toby’s mind, and he wondered idly if they were part of a coincidence as he glanced in the direction of his work desk, the drawer of which contained the invitation to an engagement party.

Much like Sonia’s friend, the soon-to-be groom who had sent Toby the invitation was having the engagement party on the tenth of next month, and his family happened to also be in the mining business.

Connecting the dots, Toby deduced that he and Sonia would be attending the same engagement party in the following month.

Amused by the thought of this, he began to smile, and soon a low chuckle escaped him.

Next to him, Sonia shot him a baffled look and asked, “What’s so funny?”

“Nothing,” he sputtered softly, lowering his gaze to hide the lingering amusement in his eyes. He had no plans of telling her that they would be attending the same engagement party, because he would very much like to see

how she would react when she saw him on the day of. Would she be surprised or overjoyed? Or both?

He could almost see her staring at him, wide-eyed with astonishment. The picture alone was enough to entertain him, and he resisted the urge to laugh once more.

Sonia, on the other hand, was a little flustered by Toby's sudden mysterious front, but she didn't want to press further if he had no intention of telling her in the first place. Everyone had their own secrets, after all.

She put her phone into her bag, and she had only just tugged on the zipper when she heard Toby ask, "By the way, is Charles still calling you baby?"

At that moment, Sonia wasn't sure if she was imagining it, but she thought Toby had added emphasis to the word 'baby'. He had also said it in a hoarse voice, which only added a suggestive edge to the word that gave her stomach butterflies and made blood rush to her face.

Worst of all, he made a point to look deep into her eyes when he said the word 'baby', and she was having a hard time deciding if he had done so on purpose.

For a moment, she thought her face was heating up too much and too quickly for her own good. She instinctively reached up and patted her cheeks with both hands. Sure enough, her skin felt hot to the touch. It didn't help that her heart was suddenly thumping wildly in her chest, threatening to fly out of her chest even though she was trying to stay calm.

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Chapter 537 A Little Too Unreasonable

Sonia had one hand pressing her chest and the other fanning herself to cool down the flush on her face.

Toby stared at her in mild bewilderment and asked, "Are you okay?"

"I-I'm perfectly fine!" Sonia stammered, swallowing convulsively as she looked down to avoid his gaze. My goodness, what's wrong with me? Why is my heart beating so fast? Why is my face burning up? Calm down! He wasn't actually calling me 'baby'; he was only platonically referring to Charles' nickname for me, so why am I acting so weird about it?

Charles had more often than not called her 'baby', but never once had she ever felt the way she did now. Logically speaking, the way Toby had called her by the same nickname shouldn't affect her this much.

Presently, Toby could tell that Sonia was being evasive. With narrowed eyes, he gazed at her intently, as though he wanted to see through her.

After a pause, he appeared to understand what was going on. Dark amusement glittered in his eyes as he leaned forward, closing the distance between them. The corner of his lips curled with a devious smirk as he said slowly, "You still haven't answered me, Sonia. Does Charles still call you 'baby'? Hmm?"

This time, he added even more emphasis and bass to the word, and the suggestive edge that came with his gravelly tone only made Sonia draw in a sharp breath.

"S-Stay away from me!" She abruptly stood up and marched forward, effectively putting some distance between them. She had her back turned to him, and she refused to spin around no matter what.

Catching sight of the red tips of her ears, Toby more or less knew what her face must look like at the moment. It's probably the same shade of red as her ears.

By the looks of it, he was sure that his words earlier had brought about her sudden rush of embarrassment. Realizing this, he rested his cheek against the palm of his hand, and a teasing grin played on his lips as he drawled, "Make him stop calling you that from now on."

"Why?" Sonia rubbed her face as though to relax her expression, inhaling deeply to calm her nerves before she spun to look at Toby.

He met her gaze and said plainly, "Because I don't like it."

She pursed her lips. "That's your problem. Why should Charles give up calling me that just because you want him to?"

"Because it's a term of endearment that connotes an intimacy the both of you do not share. You aren't lovers, and more importantly, I'll get jealous. I've tolerated his inappropriate behavior for long enough, and I have no plans to continue tolerating it. Sonia, I hope to be the only one who gets to call you by that nickname." There was no hesitation or mockery in his eyes as he said this, and his voice was as grave as it was steady.

Something glistened in Sonia's eyes as she demanded, "Don't you think you're a little too unreasonable right now?"

"Not at all. I'm just doing what I think is right," Toby countered gently, his features softening with an unspoken sentiment.

Sonia parted her lips, but just as she was about to say something, the door to the office swung open before Tom marched in with a laptop.

As soon as he came in, he registered the strange dynamics in the room and halted in his long strides. He saw that Sonia had stood up even though Toby was still

seated on the couch, and immediately sensed that something was off. "Oh, did I—" He broke off and shot Toby a nervous look, his heart beating frantically in his chest. "Did I come in at the wrong time?"

From the looks of it, something had happened between Sonia and Toby, and his sudden entrance interrupted them. With that in mind, Tom wished that lightning could strike him on the spot. He slowly assessed Toby's icy expression and instantly knew that he had come in at a bad time. His lips twitched anxiously as he tried to telepathically convey his apologies.

Sorry, President Fuller! It was my fault! I should have known better! This won't happen again!

"It doesn't matter. Are you here because you've finished going through the security footage?" Toby asked in a bone-chilling voice, rubbing his temple tiredly.

Upon hearing the words 'security footage', Sonia hurriedly resumed her seat.

Tom nodded grimly. "Yes, I've gone through all of them. Tina was seen pulling up outside our building at 2.00PM, and from there onward, she stayed put in the car. Here's the footage I've edited." Having reported that, he placed the laptop in front of Sonia and Toby, after which he clicked into the footage in question.

The first thing Sonia saw was her own red Mercedes-Benz appearing in the footage, followed by the scene where she got down from the car and walked into the building.

Right after she walked into the building, a black sedan pulled up on the street across from her car.

Tom pointed at the black sedan and said, "Right there! That's Tina's car!"

Astonished, Sonia gasped with her fists clenched, "This was the car she was driving?"

"Why? Does the car seem familiar to you?" Toby asked, looking at her intently.

She shook her head, then nodded. "I don't actually find the car familiar, but the license plate rings a bell."

"The license plate?" Toby narrowed his eyes and looked back at the footage, focusing on the license plate on Tina's car.

The footage was clear and in technicolor, and Toby had no trouble reading the license plate at all. It featured a number thirteen, which seemed appropriate, given how Tina was the very definition of bad luck itself.

"This morning, Charles and I were driving over to Paradigm Co. when we noticed a car tailgating us. It was the same car, and I know this because the license plate was particular enough to catch my eye. But just as Charles and I were about to

call the police, the car drove away. We figured it was only a coincidence that it was on the same route as us, but to be on the safe side, I had Daphne look into the owner of the license plate after I arrived at Paradigm Co.”

“So, who was the owner?” Toby urged, his face stormy.

Sonia chewed on her lower lip. “Well, the data showed that the owner of the license plate was just a normal civilian, so I let my guard down. But I didn’t think that Tina would turn out to be the owner!”

When Tina had tried to run her and Toby down earlier, Sonia had been so caught up with avoiding the collision that she didn’t even pay attention to the license plate. That would explain why, in the heat of things, she hadn’t noticed that Tina’s car was the same one that had tailgated her that morning.

“No, that can’t be. If Tina was the owner all along, then your secretary couldn’t possibly have said that the license plate belonged to a civilian,” Tom countered doubtfully. “Could it be that your secretary is an accomplice of hers, Miss Reed?”

“That’s impossible,” Sonia said defensively. “Daphne could never work for someone like Tina.”

Toby interjected coolly, “The problem likely lies in the license plate itself. Tom, look into the license plate and see if it belongs to Tina or the civilian Sonia mentioned.”

Tom nodded gravely. “Right away, sir!”

While Tom took out his phone to make a call, Sonia and Toby watched the rest of the footage. There was nothing particularly exciting after Tina was spotted pulling up by the curb because she never got down from the car, and the street saw its usual stream of pedestrians and passing vehicles.

It wasn’t until two hours later, when Toby and Sonia showed up on the other side of the street, that Tina’s car started to move.

After that, the scene of the almost-accident played before their very eyes. Tina had attempted to crash her car into them, and they tried to dodge her.

Having finished the footage, Toby laced his fingers together and placed his hands on top of his knees, then lowered his gaze in thought.

Sonia, on the other hand, merely drew in a breath without saying anything.

Just like that, a tense silence descended upon the office.

A few minutes later, Tom hung up the phone and returned to stand before the two others, after which he reported dutifully, “President Fuller, we’ve looked into it, and the data shows that the license plate belongs to a normal civilian, just as Miss Reed’s secretary had found.”

"Which means Tina was using a forged license plate," Toby said with a wintry smile.

Tom nodded. "Apparently so. She must have had it made at the last minute; otherwise, she would be pulled over for driving a vehicle without a license plate, and that would hinder her plans of following Miss Reed."

"That's enough for now." Toby nodded solemnly. "Now, look into the Gray Family and the Stone Family. I want to know if they were helping Tina in the shadows."

Up until now, the news of Tina being alive had yet to be made public, though the police would have already informed the Gray Family about it. They had to, seeing as the Gray Family had previously been grieving after Tina reportedly took her own life by jumping off a building.

It would make sense then if the Gray Family, having stopped mourning over Tina's non-existent death, was secretly helping her plot revenge.

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Chapter 538 Toby's Bodyguards

"Right away," Tom replied solemnly, then left to carry out Toby's orders.

Presently, Sonia lifted her arm to glance at her watch and saw that it was drawing close to 4.30PM. Letting her arm fall back to her side, she was about to bid goodbye to Toby when he beat her to the chase. "Well, if you're going to sign off on the factory, then you should probably get going now. Go straight home as soon as you're done, or it won't be safe after nightfall."

"Okay," she agreed, rising to her feet. "I'll be leaving now."

Just then, he picked up his phone and stopped her. "Hold on. I'll get someone to escort you back."

"Oh, that won't be necessary. I can drive," Sonia said, turning him down with a cursory wave of her hand.

He looked at her gravely and pointed out, "I think it's entirely necessary. I don't like the idea of leaving you on your own; who knows if Tina will ambush you along the way?"

Upon hearing this, Sonia fell silent, and she pictured herself driving along the way and running into Tina. She'd probably step on the gas and crash into my car, then hope that the impact would be enough to kill me.

Sonia shuddered at the eerie thought of this and decided to take up Toby's offer. Bowing her head in polite gratitude, she said, "Thank you."

He nodded once, then sent out instructions through his phone. After that, he set his phone aside and announced, "Done. You can head down to the lobby now; the team I've arranged to escort you will be waiting for you there."

She gave a small nod. "Okay. I'll get going now, then."

Toby gave a casual flap of his hand to dismiss her. "Go on."

With one last glance at his bandaged ankle and a gentle reminder that he should keep the area dry, Sonia slung her purse over her shoulder and walked out of his office.

As she stepped out of the elevator and into the lobby, she indeed came upon the men whom Toby had arranged to escort her. These men were uniformed bodyguards who towered over her and boasted strong, bulky physiques, attributes that instantly made her feel a sense of security.

That being said, what surprised Sonia the most was not the bodyguards' physiques, but the way they intended to escort her. She would be driving back with one of their cars tailing her and the other in front of her.

She had believed that Toby would want the bodyguards to be in her car while escorting her back, but as it turned out, he had thought differently.

Now that she looked at it, an arrangement like this was for the best in terms of security. With two cars escorting her, Tina would not be able to reenact her murderous scheme from earlier that afternoon, at least not without crashing first into either one of the bodyguards' cars.

Warmth coursed through Sonia as she smiled to herself, a little surprised by Toby's foresight in planning all this.

She suddenly realized how much attention to detail Toby paid to whatever he did or intended to do.

At the entrance of the newly built factory, Charles flicked his cigarette butt away when he saw Sonia's familiar red car draw near and accused, "Took you a while to finally get here, baby,"

Sonia got down from the car and flashed him a quick, apologetic smile. "Sorry to keep you waiting, Charles."

"Nah, don't worry about it. I've only been here for half an hour," he said with a grin. Then, he noticed the two cars that had escorted Sonia back and asked curiously, "Hey, what's going on here, baby? Who are these people?"

She was being frank as she pointed at the other two cars and explained, "Those are Toby's cars, and the ones driving them are Toby's bodyguards."

"And why did his bodyguards follow you here?" Charles pressed, frowning.

"It's a long story, but basically, Toby dispatched them for my own safety, and they'll leave once they've escorted me back to Bayside Residence later," she elaborated, running her fingers through her hair to keep it in place.

Charles gave another pointed look at the cars, and he was about to say something when Sonia glanced at the time and said, "Okay, that's enough for now, Charles. It's getting late, and we have a factory to see."

"Oh, right," he said, snapping out of his thoughts when he heard this. He stored away his questions and fell in step behind her as she walked through the factory entrance.

It was 6.00PM when they signed off on the factory. The sky was gradually darkening, and Sonia was ready to leave after she had finalized the amendments and handed them to the construction team.

Charles, on the other hand, was sitting in Sonia's car as he eyed the bodyguard's car up front, then poked his head out of the window to peer at the other car following them. Suspicion filled him as he prompted unhappily, "I think it's about time you explain to me why Toby sent two bodyguards to escort you, baby."

He hadn't wanted to ask back at the factory, not while Sonia had been busy checking through the construction work. However, now that they were already making their way home, he figured she had no reason to avoid his questions anymore.

Next to him in the driver's seat, Sonia was unfazed by Charles' curiosity. Knowing him, she knew that he would not relent until she gave him all the answers he wanted.

With her hands on the steering wheel, she began unaffectedly, "Well, if you must know, something happened this afternoon..." She told him about the incident where Tina tried to kill her in a car crash.

Having heard the end of the story, Charles looked aghast as he exclaimed, "What the hell? I didn't know something as dramatic as that went down!"

"Yeah, and out of concern for my safety, Toby dispatched two bodyguards to escort me. He's just worried that Tina might ambush me again," Sonia said, glancing at the car behind her through her side mirrors.

Charles couldn't bring himself to be unhappy with Toby after this. After all, Toby was taking all the necessary measures to keep Sonia safe. If I start protesting over something like this, then I'd look downright petty.

"By the way, baby, didn't you say that Toby sent someone after Tina? If he's having these bodyguards escort you home, does that mean Tina got away?" Charles asked, his brows knitted tightly together.

Sonia hummed in response. "They were close to cutting off her escape route, but she had back-up and got away. Now, Toby's looking into her potential connections to see who's been helping her in the shadows, and once he finds out, he'll let me know."

"Damn!" Charles slapped his thigh in a fit of anger. "I don't get it. How could anyone still back Tina up after all the mess she brought onto herself? What kind of connections does she have?"

Sonia lowered her gaze in thought, looking somber as she said, "Who knows? But no matter who her connections are, I won't let her get away that easily!"

He nodded at this. "Obviously."

Without adding anything more to the conversation, Sonia pursed her lips and grew reticent. At the sight of her grim expression, Charles left her alone and began to scroll through his phone in silence.

They pulled up at Bayside Residence half an hour later, and the bodyguards who had done their job bade Sonia goodbye before leaving in their respective cars.

Watching their cars drive into the distance, Charles rubbed his chin pensively and pointed out, "To be honest, baby, I think you should hire a couple of bodyguards to follow you around at all times like those two did, seeing as Tina is still lurking in the shadows and probably getting ready to ambush you."

Sonia did not object to his suggestion and merely laughed good-naturedly. "I'll consider doing just that."

Then, she opened her side of the door and got down from the car while Charles followed suit.

She rounded the front of the car and walked up to the passenger's side where Charles was standing, then said, "Why don't you take the car tonight and pick me up here tomorrow morning? There's a meeting at Paradigm Co. tomorrow that you could sit in for."

"Okay," he answered readily with a grin, then walked over to the driver's side of the car jauntily.

Having done so, he held the door open and waved goodbye at Sonia. "Guess I'll be leaving then, baby."

She hummed in response, but just as Charles was about to duck into the car, she suddenly thought of something and spun around to call out to him, "Hey, wait a minute, Charles!"

"What's wrong?" Charles was already halfway behind the steering wheel when he heard her and ducked out from the car.

Toby's words echoed in Sonia's mind, and she parted her red lips as she stammered, "Uh... Charles, do you think you could maybe stop calling me 'baby' from now on?" She found herself agreeing with Toby that the term of endearment was far too intimate to be appropriate for a friendship like hers and Charles'.

The grin on Charles' face slipped when he heard this, and he demanded in bewilderment, "Did you just ask me to stop calling you 'baby'?"

"Yes," she replied with a firm nod.

"But why?" He slammed the car door shut and closed the distance between them with a couple of long strides, seeking an explanation from her.

She looked up at him and said, "Because I don't think it's appropriate."

Confusion dawned upon him. "How is it not appropriate?"

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"It just isn't, okay?" Sonia let out a weary sigh and went on to say, "Look, a term of endearment like this should only be used if you and I are lovers, but we aren't. We're just friends, and calling me 'baby' is a little over-the-top."

Charles laughed, but it was cold and devoid of his usual humor. "Oh, suddenly it's 'over-the-top'? I've been calling you that for over a decade, and you've never said there was anything wrong with it until now. Did somebody talk to you about this and make you stop me from calling you that?"

Sonia's eyes widened by a fraction, but that was enough to make Charles understand the truth behind this unexpected shift. He clenched his fists and said through gritted teeth, "So somebody does want me to stop calling you that. Let me guess—is it Toby?"

There was no answer from Sonia, but something flashed in her eyes that looked a lot like admission.

"I'm right, aren't I?" Charles sneered in disgust. "Look at you being an obedient little girl and asking me to stop calling you a decade-long nickname just because he told you to."

Guilt rose within her when she heard this, and she chewed on her lip as she tried to explain, "I'm sorry, Charles. I'll admit that Toby was the one who asked me to do this. He said to tell you that he wants you to stop calling me 'baby' because it's inappropriate, but when I seriously considered it, I found myself agreeing with him. A nickname like that really is inappropriate between the both of us."

Sonia hadn't given much thought to this matter until Toby brought it up. After he had, it was as if something clicked in her. The nickname Charles had given her was far too intimate and flirtatious to be considered platonic.

However, Charles was less than understanding as a contemptuous smirk tugged on his lips. "No, this has nothing to do with whether the nickname was inappropriate or not. You're just worried that if you let this continue, you're going to make a certain someone very unhappy, and you don't want that."

Sonia stiffened. "W-What?"

"Nothing!" Charles took a step back and returned to the driver's side of the car. He opened the door, then ducked to retrieve the key from the ignition. "I'm going to ask you one last time: do you really want me to stop calling you by that nickname?"

She parted her lips, hesitation overwhelming her. But at that moment, Toby's face flashed in her mind and batted away the doubt that threatened to cloud her judgment, and she finally nodded with a firm hum.

Upon hearing her answer, Charles felt his heart drop to his stomach, and the hope he had been clinging to disappeared.

There was bitterness in his eyes as he drawled, "Got it. I can see that you've made up your mind on this, and if that's what you want, then I'm fine with it. From now on, I won't call you 'baby' anymore, but you know what? As soon as I stop calling you that, our relationship will no longer be the same."

She frowned. "What do you mean? All we're dropping is the nickname, but that doesn't have to change anything between us."

"If it's a real friendship we're talking about here, then of course, nothing will change. But we're different." He tightened his grip on the car keys and took in a breath. "You were the only person I've ever called 'baby', because doing that makes me feel like I have a special place in your heart, like I'm irreplaceable. Now that you've taken away my privilege to do that, it only goes to show that I'm no different than any other friend you have; I'm not as important or irreplaceable as I thought. So I guess this is it."

With that, he put the keys on the car's hood and turned his head for the pavement.

“Charles!!” Sonia cried out at the sight of this, suddenly growing frantic.

However, it was as if Charles hadn’t heard her at all. He didn’t look like he was going to turn around or stop in his tracks as he marched toward the pavement, then raised an arm to hail an approaching taxi. The next second, he got into the idling car and left.

Seemingly frozen in place, Sonia watched the taxi speed away with indecipherable emotions rushing through her.

She had picked up on several things from Charles’ soliloquy earlier, and one of them that she was suddenly made aware of was his feelings for her.

She felt her nails dig into her palms, and she shook her head to clear her thoughts as disbelief colored her expression.

Needless to say, she couldn’t believe that Charles had never treated their friendship as a platonic one all along and that he actually had developed romantic feelings for her over the years.

If he hadn’t said all that, then Sonia would have been completely kept in the dark.

So that was why he wanted to call me ‘baby’ and why he reacted the way he did when I asked him to stop.

Indeed, had he seen her as just a friend and nothing more, then he wouldn’t have reacted quite so dramatically when she asked him to stop calling her ‘baby’. He might be wounded, but not to the extent of wanting to keep a distance from her.

“Oh, Charles...” Sonia muttered under her breath ruefully, staring in the direction where Charles had gone.

Although she grew sad at the sour turn their relationship had taken and how they would no longer be as close as they had been, she didn’t regret what she had done.

Maybe she would regret it if she had never discovered Charles’ hidden romantic feelings for her, but right now, she was sure she had done the right thing. If she had allowed the nickname to go on between them, then Charles’ feelings for her would only grow deeper and take root, so much so that he wouldn’t be able to let them go.

But she could never love him back, and whatever sentiments he had for her could never be reciprocated. She would only hurt him in the end.

Having him give up his affectionate nickname for her had as good as clarified her feelings toward him. Her stance in the matter was clear: she saw him as just a friend and nothing more. Perhaps all this had happened soon enough to keep him from falling even more for her, and he could save himself from inevitable heartbreak.

At the thought of this, Sonia sighed ruefully and walked up to the car. She picked up the keys Charles had left on the hood and turned to head into the apartment building.

Meanwhile, Toby went back to the Fuller Residence after Sonia had left his office, and he had only just gotten down from the car when his phone rang.

He raised his hand, signaling Tom to stop pushing the wheelchair, and answered the call.

"President Fuller, we have escorted Miss Reed safely back to Bayside Residence," the man on the other line reported.

Toby hummed. "Well done. Any sightings of strange cars along the way?"

"No, sir."

A frown etched upon Toby's face as he replied stoically, "I see. From now on, I want the both of you to watch over Sonia and keep her safe, but stay hidden throughout."

"Yes, sir," the man on the other line said solemnly, nodding.

Without another word, Toby hung up the phone.

Upon seeing Toby put his phone down, Tom proceeded to wheel him through the doors of the Fuller Residence.

As soon as Toby entered the living room, he was greeted by the sight of Jean sitting with her back turned to him on the sofa.

She appeared to be holding a mirror in one hand while the other was placed on her collarbone, her fingertips brushing against something. She was also muttering something along the lines of, "Absolutely gorgeous."

Toby quirked a brow and asked aloud, "Mom, what are you doing?"

Startled by his voice, Jean faltered, and the mirror she had been holding nearly clattered to the ground. It dropped onto her lap instead with enough force to bruise her skin, and she hissed at the impact.

However, she paid no mind to this as she threw the mirror aside and rubbed the sore spot where the mirror had landed. With one hand pressed to her collarbone, she hurriedly spun around and flashed Toby a nervous smile as she said, "Toby, I didn't know you were coming home today. I thought you'd be staying at your own place."

Seeing the panic that lay behind her forced smile, Toby narrowed his eyes and explained flatly, "I'm just here to take a couple of things. What's wrong with your neck, Mom? Why are you covering it?"

His piercing gaze made her all the more uneasy as cold sweat threatened to roll down her temples. She gazed at him with wide, watery eyes as she said, "I-I'm having allergies, so my neck—"

Before she could finish speaking, her phone rang and cut through the brewing tension in the room. Upon hearing the ringtone, Jean reached for her phone instinctively, but she realized what she had done the moment she lifted her hand away from her collarbone. A cry nearly escaped her as she thought, Oh, no! He caught me!

Standing behind Toby, Tom felt his jaw drop in surprise when he saw the necklace Jean was wearing and demanded incredulously, "Is that the Ocean's Heart?"

Having seen it too, Toby frowned and asked darkly, "Mom, isn't the Ocean's Heart supposed to be in Sonia's possession? Why do you have it on you right now?"

Jean swallowed when she heard his confrontational tone, and her gaze darted from one corner of the room to the other as she tried to come up with an excuse. "T-This is a knock-off! A premium knock-off! It's not the real thing!"

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Chapter 540 Jean's Confession

"A premium knock-off?" Toby repeated grimly, the air around him growing cold.

Tom's lips twitched, and he was rendered speechless as he thought, A premium knock-off of the Ocean's Heart? What a ridiculous lie!

Not knowing that Toby and Tom had already caught her in her lie, Jean thought she had them fooled. Nodding frantically, she said, "Yes, a premium knock-off. I specifically went to the mall to get it, and it cost me thousands!"

"Mom, do you seriously think the Ocean's Heart would have a knock-off in the market?" Toby demanded as he stared at her impassively.

Upon hearing this, Jean felt the sirens going off in her head, and a wave of uneasiness crashed over her as she stammered, "W-What do you mean?"

"What I meant was that the Ocean's Heart was auctioned off as soon as it was made, and no photos of it had ever been made public. The rest of the world only knew the Ocean's Heart as an extremely valuable piece of jewelry, but they never saw what it looked like. As for that shop that you supposedly went to, why don't you tell me where they came across the real Ocean's Heart and thereafter

produce a counterfeit like that?" he asked icily and pressed his lips into a thin line.

She blanched and began to stammer, "I-I..." She was at a loss for words, having reached the peak of embarrassment now that her bluff had been called.

Rubbing the space between his brows, he asked, "So, are you ready to tell me how the Ocean's Heart came to be in your possession?"

She held onto the Ocean's Heart that was nestled upon her collarbone and forced herself to meet Toby's piercing gaze. Understanding that she could not lie any further, she finally spoke the truth. "Sonia gave it to me."

"That's impossible!" Toby countered sternly with a frown.

Hurrying to her own defense, Jean insisted, "She really did give it to me! You were hospitalized when she came over to look for you. I was the one who greeted her at the door, and she handed the necklace to me so I could pass it to you, but I—"

"But you decided to keep it for yourself instead when you realized that it was the Ocean's Heart, is that it?" Toby asked, narrowing his eyes dangerously.

Jean looked down in shame as though to confess in silence.

Taking a deep breath to keep his rage at bay, Toby reached a hand toward her and barked coldly, "Give me the necklace."

"No," she cried in protest when she heard this and tightened her grip on the Ocean's Heart. She shook her head vehemently, her unwillingness showing on her face. "You were the one who bought the Ocean's Heart in the first place, Toby, and when you first gave it to that bit—"

His expression grew sullen. "Hmm?"

Knowing how he felt toward Sonia at the moment, Jean realized that she had said something wrong. She opened and closed her mouth, then tried to cover up her mistake as she argued, "What I meant to say was, Sonia was the one at fault when she snatched the Ocean's Heart away in the beginning, and now that she has returned it out of her own good conscience, you could give it to me instead of letting it lie around the house."

"No!" Toby snapped through gritted teeth, then reached out to her once more. "Give me the necklace."

Jean tried to persuade him once more. "Toby—"

However, he did not budge as he hissed, "Give it to me!"

She heard the impatience and dangerous undertone in his voice and thought better than to push his limits. She quickly unclasped the necklace and handed it over to him reluctantly, all the while clenching her jaw.

Having taken one end of the necklace, Toby made to pull it in, only to find that it would not budge in mid-air. Frowning, he looked up to see that Jean had not entirely released the other end of the necklace even as she handed it over, and her face was the perfect picture of reluctance.

He sighed wearily. "Tom."

"Yes, sir," Tom replied swiftly.

"Have a set of jewelry made for Madam White tomorrow."

"Very well, sir," Tom answered respectfully with a nod.

Then, Toby turned to look at Jean like he was dealing with a child. "Did you hear that, Mom? Tom is going out tomorrow to have an expensive set of jewelry made for you, so could you please let go of the Ocean's Heart and let me have it now?"

He couldn't pull the Ocean's Heart out of her hands by force. Otherwise, he might risk breaking it.

Meanwhile, Jean stared longingly at the Ocean's Heart, not at all interested in or overjoyed at the prospect of owning new jewelry. She knew that no jewelry could come close to being as valuable as the Ocean's Heart, and naturally, she would not settle for less.

"Let's talk about this, shall we, Toby?" Jean forced out a smile on her plump face as she desperately argued, "Sonia has already returned the Ocean's Heart, which could only mean that she no longer wants it. You—"

"No," he snapped in brusque rejection. "Even if she returned it because she didn't want it anymore, I would still keep it for her. As far as I'm concerned, she's the only one who gets to have the Ocean's Heart."

"But—"

Toby had completely lost his patience now, and through gritted teeth, he hissed, "No buts. Let go of the necklace."

At last, Jean let go of her end of the necklace and let him take it. As unwilling as she was, she dared not go against him. He might be raised by her, but his demeanor took after his grandmother's, and hell hath no fury like a scorned Toby.

Presently, after taking back the Ocean's Heart, Toby felt the anger in him subside as his expression softened. He carefully slipped the necklace into the pocket of his pants, then shot Jean a somber look. "Mom, I'm sure Grandma has told you

about how Sonia and I would eventually remarry and how you should stop having such unwarranted hostility against her, right?"

Jean nodded slowly at first, then asked unhappily, "Are you really planning on going through another marriage with her, Toby?"

"Yes," he answered firmly.

Incensed, Jean protested, "What's so wonderful about her anyway? Why can't you just let her go?"

"Maybe you should tell me why you have such little regard for her. What did she ever do to make you hate her so much?" he countered coolly instead of answering her questions.

Scoffing, Jean began to say, "She's a terrible person through and through! She—" Just as she was about to come up with examples of Sonia's supposed terrible personality, Jean found herself at a total loss of words. Surprised and somewhat bewildered by this realization, she wondered why she couldn't pinpoint any of Sonia's flaws.

As though reading her mind, Toby rubbed his temples wearily. "Do you know why you can't think of a single bad thing about Sonia, Mom? Because you know as well as I do that she has done nothing wrong. Six years ago, she showed you respect regardless of how you treated her, and she never retaliated. She took care of Tyler even when he bullied her, but she only brushed it off and did what was asked of her. It's precisely because she has done everything right that you can't nitpick on her, so I don't understand why you hate her so much."

Why? Jean lowered her gaze and muttered, "Because she comes from a terrible family, and she'll only pull your leg if she sticks by you. How do you expect me to tolerate having a daughter-in-law like her?"

"A terrible family?" He scoffed incredulously. "That's the most ridiculous reason I've ever heard!"

Behind him, Tom nodded in agreement with Toby; he couldn't quite understand Jean's argument, either.

Granted, having daughters-in-law who came from questionable or below-average family backgrounds was taboo among older women in the upper-crust society, but these women differed from Jean. They were born and raised as blue-bloods with impressive wealth at their disposal, so Tom could see why they might think lowly of daughters-in-law who had poor roots.

However, Jean's background was worse off than Sonia's. At the very least, the latter's family had been affluent, even if for a short while. The former, on the other hand, was born into an average working-class family, so for her to look down on Sonia's upbringing was confounding.

“Why is that ridiculous?” Jean put her hands on her hips, indignant. “I just don’t want you to marry someone who can never match up to the Fuller Family’s standards, someone who could never offer you the help or support you need. Bringing a woman like her into the family will only make you the laughing stock of the circle. Can’t you imagine the shame of it all? I’m saying this because I see you as my own son, Toby, and I don’t want you to go through what your father did back in the day.”