

Happiness 348-357

The Promise of Happiness

Chapter 348

At the same time, Yara's eyes anxiously darted around.

"Who are you? Who the hell are you?" Yara growled, her voice trembling.

If Yara had not conducted a DNA test between them and confirmed that they were not blood related, she would have thought that the woman before her was the same woman that died in the fire five years ago.

"Didn't I already introduce myself to you?" Natalie calmly stated, "I'm Natalie."

She smirked at Yara and walked away.

All humans should not commit evil deeds. Even if they were cruel and vicious, they would feel guilty and afraid whenever they recall their villainous doings.

Regardless, this was only the start to Natalie's revenge plot.

Yara glanced at Natalie with wide eyes.

She bit her lip so hard that it was about to bleed.

Natalie! This woman has the same name on purpose. She must know something about what happened five years ago.

If everyone were to find out what happened that year, her sacrifice to save Samuel and her position as Franklin and Sophia's "mother" would be useless.

make sure the plan for tonight succeeds, and I'll ruin her reputation in front of everyone.

As Natalie calmly sipped on her wine, she could still feel everyone's eyes on her.

"Who does this woman think she is?" There was a discussion surrounding Natalie.

"I thought Kenneth approved Yara as his future granddaughter-in-law. So who the hell is this woman?"

One person assumed, "I mean, she does have a good figure. But no matter how hard I look at her, she's only average-looking

"Does Mr. Bowers have a unique taste? Maybe he doesn't like people who are too perfect and prefers people with some flaws."

At that moment, another person interrupted the discussion.

"Enough. If all of you have the guts to gossip about her, you should say it to Natalie's face," Lia commented

As soon as she spoke out, those people involved in the conversation fell silent.

Natalie turned to look at the lady that stood up for her.

The woman looked gentle, and she had a slender frame. She did not have perfect facial features, but she looked decent. Although she had makeup on, Natalie could tell that she had severe anemia to the point that there might not be enough blood flow to her heart.

"Thank you," Natalie said.

Lia shook her head. "It's the least I could do. They were going overboard. It's shallow to judge someone by their looks."

"Sensible people like you are rare." Grinning, Natalie raised her glass to clink with Lia's.

"Indeed."

Smiling, Lia finished the glass of cocktail in her hand.

When she reached out to take another glass from a waiter, Natalie stopped her.

"You are not in the best health, so you shouldn't drink so much." Picking up a glass beside her, Natalie mixed some cold and hot water. "Here. Warm water would be best for you."

Startled, Lia probed, "Are you a doctor?"

"Well, I know a thing or two," Natalie replied.

With a perplexed look, Lia gratefully took the warm water from Natalie and thanked her.

She took a sip. It did not taste like anything but was at the perfect temperature-neither too hot nor cold.

If I didn't have to do this, I could be good friends with her.

"Anyway, my name is Lia."

"I'm Natalie," Natalie introduced herself.

"That's a nice name." Looking down, Lia fiddled with the glass uneasily. "As your name suggests, you must have a warm heart, huh?"

"Are you nervous?" Natalie raised her brows.

"No."

However, when Lia lifted her chin to look at Natalie, she felt various emotions surging within her.

"Sorry, Natalie."

"Why are you apologizing to me?" Natalie raised her brows and asked in confusion.

"I have to do something that will let you down." Biting her lip, Lia mumbled, "But I have no other choice."

In bewilderment, Natalie interrogated her, "What?"

She could not comprehend why a woman she met for the first time would apologize to her.

However, amid her confusion, Lia's face turned pale, and she uncontrollably spat out mouthfuls of blood.

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The blood was crimson red.

Instantly, it caught everyone's attention.

Clutching her abdomen, Lia fell to the ground with a contorted expression. She was still coughing out blood.

What's going on? Why would she puke out this much blood all of a sudden?

Concerned, Natalie wanted to help Lia up and take her pulse to figure out what had happened.

However, before she could touch Lia, the latter avoided her.

She stammered, "D-Don't touch me."

"You will die at this rate," Natalie stated.

Unable to take it any longer, she couldn't be bothered about Lia's rejection and took her hand by force. Natalie took Lia's pulse, and she was horrified by the results. She stared at the woman in disbelief.

Just when she wanted to ask Lia what she ate, a towering figure dashed toward her to pull her away.

"What did you do to her?" Lionel roared, "Why is this happening to my sister?"

Lia took in a sharp breath and pointed weakly at Natalie. With much difficulty, she huffed, "Lionel, she did this to me,"

"Me?"

Subconsciously, Natalie stepped back in horror.

I did nothing to her, so why would she accuse me?

Suddenly, realization struck Natalie. She finally understood why Lia apologized to her earlier. Lia must have already known she would puke out blood and planned to pin the blame on me. It seemed like Lia approached me on purpose.

Regardless, Natalie was caught off guard.

"If anything happens to my sister, I will drag you to hell!" Lionel threatened Natalie before scooping Lia up into his arms. Shakily, he assured, "Lia, I'm going to send you to the hospital now. Don't be afraid. I'm here, and I won't let anything happen to you."

Lia nodded and snuggled in Lionel's embrace.

Meanwhile, Kenneth, Samuel, Silas, and the rest finally rushed over after noticing the commotion. After all, it was a banquet held by the Bowers family, and they were responsible for everyone's wellbeing.

Kenneth's face darkened when he saw the pool of blood on the floor. "What happened?"

Keeping it short, Lionel summarized, "Mr. Bowers, I have to send my sister to the hospital and have no time to call the police. Please do me a favor and detain this woman. Lia already told me that she's the one who did it, and I'm sure the police can find some evidence when they come over."

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By that time, Lia was already unconscious and had blood smeared all over her body. It was a terrifying sight to behold.

With Lia in his arms, Lionel left in a hurry.

Kenneth leaned on his walking stick for support and glared at Natalie.

"How dare you attack Lia from the Johnson family at the Bowers family's banquet? Do you even care for our family? I can't believe you made her puke that much blood!"

"It wasn't me." Natalie paused momentarily before adding, "I will follow them to the hospital."

However, Yara blocked her path.

"What's wrong? You almost killed Lia, but you refuse to admit it? What's more, you have the audacity to go to the hospital with them? Do you want to see her die before you?" Yara did not seem to be in shock. In contrast, it was as though she knew about it beforehand, and there was a smug look on her face.

Natalie could roughly make out the situation.

Nonetheless, it was not the time to push the blame now that Lia's life was in danger.

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In fact, Natalie reckoned that Lia had no idea that she might lose her life because of this ploy.

After all, when Lia was puking out blood, she did not seem like she was putting up an act.

Besides, she said sorry from the bottom of her heart. Even if she did not apologize, Natalie could never bring herself to sit back and do nothing since she was a doctor.

"Why do you care?" Natalie ignored Yara.

With a small gesture from Kenneth, the security guards surrounded Natalie to detain her.

"I've already called the police. For the time being, you're not allowed to go anywhere else." "Even if you do not have a motive, there is evidence against you. You need to stop with your excuses!" Kenneth sternly scolded, "Natalie, the Bowers family organized this banquet. There's a limit to how insolent you can be, so show some restraint. Now that a possible murder has occurred, I can't let you just leave like that."

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The corners of Natalie's lips curled upward into a cold grin.

This is a baseless allegation!

Kenneth did not care if Natalie did drug Lia or not. The main issue was pushing the blame on her. With a blemish on her record, she would be unworthy of Samuel.

"Grandpa, she did not do it." Samuel spoke solemnly.

The more Samuel tried to protect Natalie, the more frustrated Kenneth felt. He lashed out, "Samuel, why are you defending her at this point? Look at the situation!"

"If you think I'm defending her, so be it." Samuel shrugged and replied, "If she says she did not do it, I believe her."

"You b*stard! You need to learn right from wrong!" In the heat of the moment, Kenneth flung his walking stick in Samuel's direction.

Although Samuel could have easily dodged it, he stood rooted to the ground and was hit squarely in the chest.

Everyone was speechless as they watched the scene unfold.

Out of concern, Natalie hugged Samuel's arm and frowned. "Why didn't you avoid it?"

"If I move away, he would only get angrier and hit you." With a soft smile on his face, Samuel slowly said, "I have to respect him because he is my grandfather. However, I will also keep my promise to protect you."

His words touched Natalie's heart.

At that moment, her throat felt dry, and she could not find the right words to say.

On the other hand, Kenneth was furious that Samuel still stood on Natalie's side even after the incident. He glanced around before he growled, "Samuel, you have to keep in mind that you are not only part of the Bowers Corporation but also the head of the Bowers family. Many people are watching your every move today. If you continue to cover up for this suspect, you are letting down your ancestors, including your parents in heaven."

During the confrontation, some police interrupted the banquet.

They did not hesitate to surround Natalie and wanted to put the cuffs on her.

Unable to watch them take Natalie away, the twins stood in front of her like guards. It looked like

At the same time, Samuel did not move. He frowned with a cold expression on his face.

Steven, Silas, and the others were also in a dilemma as they watched on.

All of this did not go unnoticed by Natalie.

Despite feeling upset because of the wrongful accusation, the people she trusted still had faith in her.

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Samuel had done too much for her, and she could not watch him continue throwing away his reputation before Kenneth and the rest of the Bowers family because of her.

Standing on tiptoe, Natalie whispered into Samuel's ear, "Thank you for trusting me, but you have to let me go with them. I know that you will find a way to get me out of there. However, you have to do it within three hours because if it takes any more time than that, Lia might lose her life, and no one will be able to verify the truth then."

Afterward, Natalie gave Samuel's cheek a soft kiss.

Gasp!

Everyone took in a sharp breath as they did not expect her to flirt with Samuel at this point.

Ignoring the crowd's reactions, Natalie did not forget to bend down to instruct the twins after talking to Samuel.

"Listen to Daddy and Uncle Steven and trust them that I'll be fine."

With tears in their eyes, Franklin and Sophia nodded. Franklin murmured, "Okay, we'll be good."

"Good." Natalie stated and gently caressed their heads.

Then, she straightened and held her hands out in front of the police.

Click! They handcuffed her.

As the police escorted her out, Natalie stood tall and looked calm.

Even though it was chaos, she still seemed unaffected.

In fact, the aura that she had at the banquet that night was one that left a deep impression on every guest.

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A hint of malice flashed across Yara's eyes as her gaze riveted on the retreating figure.

She's staring death in the face, but she's not flinching. What would it take to break her facade?

Yara refused to believe that the incident today did not faze Natalie.

She had taken a gamble by approaching Lia. With Lia's dirty secret in hand, Yara was confident that she could blackmail Lia into cooperating with her.

However, she did not expect Lia to harm herself to such an extent to deliver the job to perfection.

Nevertheless, the drug that Yara had fed Lia would do more than just make her vomit blood as Yara had initially promised. Instead, the effects of the drug would leave Lia comatose, if not dead.

Die, Natalie!

– The whole ordeal at the banquet left Kenneth weary as if he had aged years in a night.

“Yara, bring me back to the lounge. I need to rest for a bit,” Kenneth rasped.

“Yes, Grandpa,” Yara responded with deference as she escorted the old man upstairs.

Once they had arrived on the first floor, Kenneth inquired, “About the Lia... You had a hand in it, didn’t you?” His hoarse voice was barely above a whisper.

Kenneth had years of experience under his belt and had seen things beyond one’s imagination. It was not difficult for him to identify the culprit after some logical deduction.

“Grandpa, ...” Yara struggled to deny, but words escaped her.

Anxiety seized Yara. She did not expect Kenneth to see through her ruse so quickly, nor did she want to leave the impression of a cunning woman.

It was impossible to survive in the elite circles without a couple of tricks up her sleeve, but ironically, manipulative women were detested by men. There was a fine line between wit and deceit, and it was a hefty price to pay if she failed to tread it.

“Don’t worry, I’m not going hold you to it.”

“In that case, what are you trying to imply?” Yara asked hesitantly.

“After bringing me back to the lounge, I want you to visit the hospital,” Kenneth instructed. “Let it be an attempted murder; there’s no need to sacrifice Lia’s life. I believe that with your medical expertise, you’ll be able to save her. I understand that you’re forced to commit sinful acts at times, but I sincerely hope that you can do some good to uphold the Bowers family reputation, if not your own.”

Conflicting emotions warred within Yara.

Despite Kenneth’s gentle tone, Yara knew that it was an order to save Lia.

Though she had been cramming her medical books for the past few months, she had barely scratched the surface of the profession.

How am I supposed to save Lia? I can’t leave her to die, but if I fail to save her after attempting to, my incompetence will be exposed.

She was trapped between a rock and a hard place.

“Yara, do you understand?” Kenneth prompted.

“Yes,” Yara answered with an obedient nod. “I’ll do as you say, Grandpa.”

After leaving Kenneth in the lounge, Yara paced up and down the living room.

I can’t go to the hospital! Even if Grandpa lets it go, Lionel and Samuel will never forgive me if they find out the truth! Lia must die without a trace!

At the verge of breaking down, Yara’s gaze fell upon a vase that stood in the corner of the room.

She walked toward it and swung at it forcefully. The porcelain enamel vase toppled to the ground, shattering to pieces.

Yara crouched down and picked up a shard. She fiddled with the porcelain piece as she fell into deep thought.

Taking a couple of deep breaths, Yara closed her fingers tightly around the shard.

The sharp edges of the porcelain pierced her skin. Instantly, blood gushed out of her palm and trickled down her wrist, its crimson hue contrasting vividly with her pale skin.

“Help! I hurt my hand!” Tears brimmed in Yara’s eyes as she screamed in agony. Any thought of suicide vanished instantaneously.

At Dream Corporation, Yandel and Ross brooded over the news of Natalie’s arrest.

“F*ck, is Samuel even reliable? How could he let Boss get dragged away?” Yandel kicked a chair furiously to vent his anger.

Ross was worried as well, but unlike Yandel, he kept his composure.

“Instead of blaming others, we should focus on finding a way to bail Ms. Nichols out,” Ross reasoned. “I’ll notify the legal director to pay a visit to the police station.”

“The legal director alone won’t do. Dispatch the whole legal department!” Yandel said frostily. “We hired them to deal with issues like this, and it’s time they stepped up to the plate. By bail or parole, I want Boss out of that place! It doesn’t matter how much much it costs. I won’t let her Hence, despite the absurdity of Yandel’s suggestion, Ross decided to roll with it.

stay in there for another second if I can help it.” “I’ll contact the legal department right now.”

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Yandel left the company and sped toward the police station downtown in his Maybach.

Dream Corporation’s legal team followed closely behind in a huge bus. The entourage consisted of tens of lawyers.

The legal director had a vague idea that they were on a mission to rescue someone out of prison, but the rest of the legal team were completely clueless as to why they were tagging along. Even so, they could tell from the number of lawyers present that the issue was of a large magnitude.

However, when they pulled up by the roadside, the legal team was astounded to see the number of busses and luxury cars parked in front of the police station.

This is insane!What is up with today?What could possibly demand the presence of so many lawyers and attorneys?

The police station was jam-packed with people. Yandel, Ross, and the legal director managed to shove their way in while the rest of the legal team were on standby on the bus.

Familiar faces greeted them once they entered.

Samuel, Steven, Hans, Yana, and Shawn had gathered at the police station.

Yandel and Ross exchanged looks as they both realized that they were late to the party; Natalie already had a whole rescue team made up of people who were far more prominent and influential than the Dream Corporation.

In other circumstances, Yandel would have been jealous that he was not Natalie's only knight in shining armor, but he had more important things to deal with at the moment.

Knowing that Natalie had so many people rallying for her release, Yandel heaved a sigh of relief.

It was a rarity for so many wealthy families to convene at the police station, let alone with so many attorneys in tow. Moreover, the attorneys were the *crème de la crème* of Dellmoor.

Although Natalie had been brought down to the station to be interviewed about the alleged poisoning, she was not a suspect of the crime. Hence, the police department never expected that so many bigshots would show up to bail her out.

Knowing that they could not afford to cross these people, the police took extra caution when they interrogated Natalie.

Hans' lawyers were the first to arrive. They cut to the chase and started to handle the paperwork for Natalie's bail.

As the officer on duty recorded the necessary details, he asked, "Who is the surety?"

"Me."

"Me."

"Me."

All the occupants of the room volunteered in unison, rendering the officer speechless.

Who in the world is this woman? What power does she hold over these people that they would rush to bail her out without batting an eyelid?

The police officer was in awe. After all, being a surety was grueling and unrewarding. While Natalie was out on bail, any problems she stirred up would have to be borne by the surety.

"So, who will it be?" The officer asked once again.

"Me." Samuel took the initiative and signed his name on the paper. "She's with me."

"Oh, all right."

The process of bailing Natalie out was not a speedy one. It took up to forty minutes to finish up the paperwork.

To prevent Natalie from fleeing, the police attached an ankle monitor to Natalie before allowing her to leave.

The group swarmed toward Natalie the moment she stepped out.

“Natalie, are you all right?”

“Boss, you scared us!”

“The Watsons family will follow up on this case. Don’t worry. We won’t let you receive an unjust conviction.”

A lump rose to Natalie’s throat as she scanned the group of people that cared for her.

When she first returned, it felt like it was only her and Yandel against the world.

She dared not even imagine that she would form such deep bonds within a few months.

She longed to express her gratitude, but a more urgent matter popped up in her mind-Lia was still in the hospital. “There is something that I must attend to immediately. After everything is over, I’ll catch you up on the details,” Natalia excused herself apologetically.

Everyone nodded in understanding.

Samuel brought Natalie to the hospital.

His expression darkened when his gaze fell upon the bulky device on Natalie’s left ankle.

Although the ankle monitor did not physically impede Natalie, it portrayed her as a suspect.

Furthermore, it stripped her of any privacy as her location was constantly exposed, courtesy of the global positioning system embedded in the device.

Natalie was keenly aware of the air of displeasure that surrounded Samuel. She knew that the man cherished her deeply and loathed seeing her accused wrongfully.

It was only natural that she would feel upset about being unreasonably pinned as a suspect.

However, with Samuel on her side, the negative feelings dissipated.

“It must have hurt when your grandfather beat you, didn’t it?” Natalie said as she gently caressed his palm. “I’ll tend to the wounds on your back once I save Lia.” Her voice was soft and mellow, filled with anguish on his behalf.

Samuel was overwhelmed with emotion as he gazed at her dainty face.

This woman! How can I not love her?

Lowering his head, Samuel captured Natalie’s lips with his own. It wasn’t a light peck on the lips but rather a long, lingering kiss, as if he yearned to convey his indescribable feelings to the core of her soul.

Chapter 353

At the hospital, Lionel slumped against the wall outside the emergency room. His legs had given away, and his eyes had glazed over in shock.

Blood covered both his hands, the residual warmth seeping into his cold bones. He trembled uncontrollably as his entire being succumbed to fear.

The terror he felt at that moment was like nothing he had experienced before. It was like a black hole that loomed over him, ready to engulf him at any given time.

The fear was beyond just worry for his sister's life. A more sinister concern lurked beneath what was meant to be brotherly care. Lionel had tried to dismiss the thought whenever it surfaced in the past, but now, it haunted him every second. Is Lia really just a sister to me?

The red light above the doors to the operating theatre turned off.

Lionel scrambled to his feet and waited anxiously for the doctor.

The doctor exited the operating theatre with a frown on his face. He passed Lionel a piece of paper with the words "Notice of Critical Illness" written in bold at the top of the page.

"You're the patient's family, aren't you? Please sign on this paper. The patient is not in good condition. The poison has entered her veins, so even if we proceed with a stomach pump, the odds are not looking good for her. It'd be best if you could prepare yourself to say goodbye.

Treasure your last moments together," the doctor announced grimly.

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Lionel felt like someone had dropped a bomb on him. There was a ringing in his ears as the world around him swirled, and it took a long while before he snapped back to his senses.

Signing the notice of critical illness was part of the procedure.

Lionel stared blankly at the paper but did not move to accept it. "Sir, please sign on the paper," the doctor urged.

"Impossible!" Lionel exploded all of a sudden. "You're spouting nonsense! Lia is perfectly fine; it's impossible that you can't save her! You must be incompetent. I don't believe a single word you say! I'm going to transfer Lia to another hospital, and I'll find a doctor that actually knows what he's doing!" he bellowed.

The doctor was no stranger to death.

Transferring Lia to a different facility would do more harm than good, and the process would take up precious time that could have been spent with family.

"My deepest condolences," the doctor said solemnly.

"I'll beat you up if you utter another word! Do you hear me?" Lionel was on the brink of insanity. He clutched the doctor's lapels and raised a fist to punch him.

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"Hitting me will achieve nothing," the doctor stated seriously. "If you still have your head on, you would know that the wise thing to do is to keep the patient company in her last moments instead of wasting your time here."

Instantly, Lionel fell silent. His fingers loosened up as he slowly let go of the crumpled fabric.

In a trance, Lionel shuffled toward the intensive care unit.

There, Lia lay on the hospital bed in a coma. Her eyes were shut tight as if she were sound asleep.

“Lia...”

The serene expression on her face reminded Lionel of when Lia was young.

She had always been a quiet sleeper-a cherub that was a blessing to the family.

There were certain things that Lionel did not want to admit, but the seeds of affection had been sowed in his heart. His feelings for Lia sprouted and budded, its roots reaching into the depths of his soul as his love blossomed into a flower that had to be hidden from society's eye.

If Lia was awake and aware of my feelings, would she find me repulsive?

Lionel had been adopted by Lia's father toward the end of his life, so he was not biologically related to the Johnsons.

The Johnson family had given him all that he owned currently, so he could not repay their generosity with such heinous behavior.

“I'm sorry, Lia. I failed to protect you...”

Lionel was a valuable asset to the corporation and a force to reckon with in the business world. However, all of that toughness was gone as he stood by the hospital bed like a helpless child. Tears spilled out of his red-rimmed eyes.

He was not weak, but the agony of losing a loved one was unbearable for even the strongest of men.

At that moment, the door to the room slammed open as Natalie and Samuel rushed in.

Lionel whipped back to look at the source of the sound. He immediately honed in on the woman standing next to Samuel.

He instantly recognized her as the woman who had poisoned Lia. If not for her, Lia would never die!

Hatred surged through him that instance

“How dare you show up here!” Lionel's eyes were filled with murderous intent as he advanced toward Natalie. “Look, she's dying now. Are you satisfied? Since you're here, I'll make you pay for what you did to her. A life for a life!”

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Natalie stepped back involuntarily.

Unfortunately, Lionel did not give her the chance to escape. His arm shot out quickly, his fingers around Natalie's delicate neck. His face turned red with fury as he tightened his grip to suffocate her.

“Don't you dare go near Lia!” ,

At the sight of this, Samuel moved to stop Lionel. However, before he could do anything, he noticed Natalie shaking her head almost imperceptibly. With her eyebrows drawn tightly together, she wordlessly implored him not to intervene.

Lionel directed all the pent-up emotion toward Natalie.

He did not hold back on his strength and attempted to crush her windpipe. Natalie gasped for air as her throat constricted from the pressure.

Meanwhile, Samuel watched his beloved woman get hurt in his presence, his eyes glinting dangerously.

Realizing that Samuel had no intention of giving up, Natalie mouthed, "Don't."

Samuel clenched his fists, the veins on his arm popping up from the force. At that moment, he radiated pure menace.

He knew that Natalie had a plan, but watching her put her life on the line made him wish he didn't.

Does she even understand that I could care less about Lia Johnson? Natalie is my Achilles' heel.

It took every ounce of self-control for Samuel to stay out of the situation.

Glowing at Natalie, Lionel growled, "Lia never hurt you. Why did you have to do this to her? She's only twenty; she still has a bright future ahead of her. Why did you have to poison her so ruthlessly?"

"It wasn't me," Natalie replied calmly. Her face was ghastly white, but her clear eyes shone with resolution.

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te that, Lionel gripped her neck tighter as he roared, "Don't you even try to defend yourself! Lia herself said that you were the culprit before she passed out. And yet, you still show no remorse!"

Pain shot down Natalie's throat. Death seemed only inches away from her.

"I-I'm not here to debate about who was t-the culprit. I'm h-here to save her. I-if you want her to 1-live, let me go," Natalie choked out.

Lionel narrowed his eyes and scoffed, "Why would Lia's murderer want to save her? Do you think I'm an idiot?"

Suffocation made it hard for Natalie to speak, but her gaze remained steady and unwavering.

"Your sister still h-has a chance, but if you k-kill me, she will die."

"You—"

"T-Think about why I got released from the police station so quickly. If I didn't allow you to . choke me, d-do you think that you can even touch me? Even S-Samuel is helping me, so what are you worried about?" Natalie interrupted.

At that, Lionel faltered and glanced at Samuel, who was standing behind him.

The man was extraordinarily gorgeous, but his eyes upturned eyes gave him a wicked look that resembled the devil himself. A shiver ran down Lionel's spine.

Samuel's patience was wearing thin.

"Let's put aside the fact that she did not murder your sister. Instead, let's go to extremes and assume that Natalie killed your sister. So what?" Samuel said, his tone glacial.

Lionel's insides quivered at the sight of Samuel's furious gaze.

He knew that Samuel was not bluffing.

After some contemplation, Lionel gradually loosened his grip on Natalie's neck and moved his hand away.

Spotches of red and purple marred Natalie's pale neck. It was a horrifying sight.

Natalie coughed a few times but paid no heed to the bruises on her skin.

"Don't worry, I'll do my best to save Ms. Johnson, even if it's just for the sake of proving my innocence," Natalie vowed.

Natalie brushed past Lionel and approached the hospital bed. She pulled out Lia's arm from under the covers and lightly placed two fingers on Lia's frail wrist.

Lia's pulse was slow and erratic—a sign that the poison was well in her systemic circulation.

Had Natalie arrived any later, the poison would have reached Lia's heart. If that happened, even the best doctor in the world would not be able to save her.

Thank goodness, she was just in time.

Natalie hiked up her evening gown and reached for the leather pouch strapped to her calf. She then pulled out her needle kit and unfurled it to reveal a row of crystal needles.

After that, Natalie deftly pulled out a silver needle and jabbed one of Lia's acupoints with perfect accuracy.

Chapter 355

Natalie's back stiffened.

With great proficiency and gracefulness, Natalie inserted the needles into Lia's acupoints.

Ten minutes later, she managed to insert forty-nine crystal needles in total.

As time went on, the acupoints began to react strangely. Veins were bulging and turning brown black at the same time.

Lionel was astounded by the sight, as this was the first time he saw such a technique within traditional medicine.

After that, the phenomenon continued to emanate throughout Lia's body to the extent her neck and face were covered by black bulging veins.

Furrowing her brows, Lia grimaced in pain.

Under normal circumstances, she would have already been woken up by the pain.

However, her eyes remained tightly shut. Despite that, her eyelashes were fluttering while her entire body was twitching. She looked as if she was unable to wake from a nightmare.

Suddenly, Lia threw up a mouthful of black blood with a loud barf.

Panicking, Lionel asked Natalie, "Why is she puking blood again?"

"It's poison. Hence, it's a good sign that she's vomiting it out." Glancing at Lionel, Natalie added, "She has been throwing up since the banquet and still has a lot more poisoned blood to get out of her system. Anyway, you should now wipe your arm clean, as we need to transfuse your blood to her."

When Lionel froze at her words, Natalie frowned at him.

WO

"What's the matter? Are you unwilling to donate blood to her despite being her elder brother?"

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"No, I'm going to get ready now."

After leaving the ward, Lionel contacted the hospital's blood bank to source blood on Lia's behalf.

SOU

It wasn't because he was reluctant. In fact, he was willing to sacrifice his life to save Lia. Unfortunately, they were not biological siblings and naturally didn't have the same blood type. As a result, he couldn't donate his blood to her.

Back in the ward, Natalie wiped the black blood thrown up by Lia with a towel.

Observing Lia's body, Natalie inserted crystal needles wherever there were bulging black veins. Her objective was to force all the poison out.

After all, traditional medicine had in-depth research on poisons.

In contrast to modern medicine's approach of diagnosing disease from the microbiological level, traditional medicine makes its diagnosis from a macro perspective, drawing upon its history of a few thousand years.

Therefore, Lia's poison could only be treated by traditional medicine, as modern medicine would have concluded that the poison was already in her blood, and there was no way she could be cured.

At that moment, Natalie's body was splattered with black blood. Despite the sweat dripping down her forehead, she maintained her focus on the acupuncture treatment.

Watching Natalie, Samuel felt concerned but was also filled with admiration.

*This woman may be feisty and decisive on the outside, but has a heart brimming with compassion on the inside.

The more he looked at her, the deeper he was in love with her.

Meanwhile, at the Bowers residence, the Bowers family banquet had turned into chaos.

Yara's hand had been cut by a broken vase. After it was treated by their family doctor, it was wrapped in a thick bandage.

Despite it being already midnight, Kenneth was still awake.

He gave Yara the side-eye. "Yara, given how timely your injury was, did you plan for it to happen?"

Despite feeling her heart sink, she maintained a calm exterior. "Grandpa, I didn't. I really broke the vase by accident and cut my hand. Anyway, I'll be heading to the hospital and see if there's anything I can do to help Ms. Johnson."

"That's a good idea." Kenneth nodded. "Lia's mom is a relative of the Bowers family and an amazing woman. Hence, I'm quite fond of Lia. Although her mom passed away young, I still hope that nothing untoward would happen to her."

"I understand," Yara acknowledged despite thinking otherwise.

Even if I'm in possession of Lia's secret, it could still be leaked as long as she's alive. Therefore, I can only feel safe once she's dead.

At that moment, the phone at the Bower's residence rang.

It was answered by the elderly butler.

"What is it?" Kenneth asked.

"Steven just called to inform that Ms. Johnson's condition is stable. She has been rescued from the brink of death."

Chapter 356

Feeling relieved, Kenneth eased the frown on his face.

"It's good to hear that she's all right." Kenneth glanced at Yara. "Yara, since your hand is hurt, there's no need for you to go to the hospital. You should rest at home instead. Considering that you've been training in medicine since you were young, your hands are crucial to your future. Therefore, you have to take good care of yourself and protect your hands better."

Despite her gloomy expression, Yara nodded with a faint smile. "I'm glad to hear that Ms. Johnson has been saved."

"I'll be retiring to my room."

“Yes, Grandpa.”

With the butler’s help, Kenneth returned to his bedroom after having his worry eased.

The fact that Lia was saved after having a close shave with death caused him to feel less guilty. Furthermore, he was hoping that Natalie would be imprisoned for a few years over what happened.

However, Yara didn’t share Kenneth’s sentiments as a vicious glint flashed in her eye.

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The poison she gave Lia was so lethal that it was supposed to be untreatable.

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So how was she cured? What if she exposes my filthy deeds when she awakes? No, I must do something to protect myself.

Meanwhile, inside the hospital, Lia had finished puking the poisoned blood and received a blood transfusion of two hundred milliliters. Although she hadn’t regained consciousness, her condition had gradually stabilized.

When Lionel saw Natalie again, he couldn’t help but ask, “Ms. Nichols, why did Lia accuse you of poisoning her?”

“I have only met Ms. Johnson once,” Natalie replied with a narrowed gaze. “Before she vomited blood, she kept apologizing to me. Hence, I suspect she knows that I too am being used by someone insidious. Unfortunately, Ms. Johnson didn’t expect the person who instructed her to accuse me of poisoning her really wanted her dead.”

Lionel was stunned.

If not for what happened, he would’ve thought that Natalie was spouting nonsense.

However, after watching Natalie demonstrate her compassion and adept medical skills, he believed every word she said.

“When she awakes, I’ll definitely ask her who was the one who manipulated her into doing this.”

Lionel clenched his fists in anger. He resolved to exact revenge on whoever treated Lia as a pawn.

“Since she wasn’t honest with you before taking the poison, her resolve not to tell you would only be stronger now.” Natalie continued, “I just want you to tell her not to blindly believe in the words of the perpetrator. After all, she is willing to harm her own sister, let alone an outsider.”

Lionel was taken aback.

Just when he was about to say something, he realized nothing would come out. In the end, he simply thanked Natalie.

Without saying anything further, Natalie turned and left the hospital.

Pursing his lips tightly, Samuel got up together with her and followed suit.

* Once Natalie settled into the front passenger seat of the car, she heaved a sigh of relief.

After putting on her safety belt, she spaced out for a while and didn't even notice if the car was moving

Only when she turned toward Samuel did she realize that he was staring at her neck with his eyebrows knitted. His eyes were so dark that they looked like a bottomless abyss.

She was cognizant of what he was looking at and what was going through his mind.

As a result, she felt it better to not bring the matter up. Or else, it would simply upset Samuel further.

"Why?"

"What do you mean why?" Feeling self-conscious, Natalie licked her dry lips and played dumb.

Nonetheless, Samuel wasn't going to have any of it as he reached out to gently stroke her neck.

"Why didn't you let me stop Lionel from strangling you?" Samuel's voice was icy cold. "If you were worried that he would disrupt the diagnosis, I could've knocked him out with a punch."

Chapter 357

Thinking about Samuel's idea, Natalie realized that it was indeed brilliant.

Unfortunately, it didn't cross her mind when they were in the ward.

She had planned to let Lionel vent his anger before seeking his understanding and trust to treat Lia with acupuncture. Subsequently, Lia lost massive amounts of blood from puking and needed a blood transfusion from her brother.

Lost in thought, Natalie didn't answer Samuel's question, causing his frown to intensify.

"Why aren't you saying anything?"

"Since the matter has been resolved perfectly, there's no need to be pedantic about the process." When Natalie felt his fingertips on her neck, she tucked her head by reflex. "No matter what, the fact that Lia was cured is a silver lining indeed. After all, I do not wish for her to die because of me."

"Nat, have you ever thought about yourself?" Samuel continued questioning.

"I have." Natalie nodded. "The Johnson siblings have a good reputation. Hence, I'm confident doing this."

"If you have thought about yourself, have you then thought about me?"

"You."

Stumped, Natalie didn't know what to say.

“It seems you have not considered my feelings at all.” Samuel suddenly moved within breathing distance of Natalie’s ear while his body leaned against her. “Nat, I’m not as easy-going as I look. To me, I don’t care if Lia or Lionel dies. You are all that matters to me.”

Caught by surprise, Natalie looked up and locked eyes with Samuel.

His hostility makes him feel so distant.

All his gestures, from his gaze to his breath, seemed to be exuding an air of possessiveness.

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She had never seen that side of him before.

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“Didn’t everything turn out to be all right?” Natalie cupped his face with both her hands and softly added, “Besides, you’re there with me. If I was in real danger, you would definitely protect me!”

She had taken the initiative to lower herself.

Nonetheless, the displeasure on Samuel’s face couldn’t be more obvious.

Erm, when he gets angry, he becomes more difficult to pacify than the children. However, I was pushing the thresholds of danger just now. Come to think of it, it really was a torture for him to watch back then. Fine! Looks like I have no choice but to placate him.

Lifting her face, she gently gave his lips a kiss.

His lips are especially cold and stiff today.

Nevertheless, Natalie was unfazed. Forcing her way through his teeth, she began exploring around cheekily so as to assuage his anger.

Not wanting to waver on his principles, Samuel resisted Natalie’s attempt to muddle the situation by not reciprocating.

More than ten seconds later, Natalie began to feel disheartened.

Da*n it. Has my initiative failed to charm him now?

Natalie didn’t dare to delve further into the issue. Given that she had started turning on the charm, there was no going back other than intensifying her efforts.

Samuel had planned to resist all the way. However, given how she was seducing him, he had reached the limits of his endurance. Consequently, it was no longer a matter of principle.

He's not reacting to me at all. Isn't this going to be embarrassing?

Just when she was about to give up, Samuel moaned all of a sudden and kissed her back intensely.

While she was stunned by the sudden change, Samuel had put his hand behind her head and seized the initiative.

"My dear Nat, since you dare play with fire, you will be responsible for putting it out." Filled with lust, Samuel's voice had become raspy. "Holding you accountable will have to wait."