

Happiness 581-590

The Promise of Happiness

Chapter 581 The Entire World

Natalie was still blushing, even when they were well on their way home. At that moment, she seemed as red as a cooked prawn.

Perhaps it was because they were in the VIP area, but no one else was in that corridor for a long time. Samuel ended up kissing Natalie for so long that she almost fainted from prolonged deprivation of oxygen.

Samuel knew his girlfriend was a little angry, so he smiled without saying anything.

Soon, the car stopped steadily at the entrance of the Bowers residence.

Natalie had just stepped into the living room when her four little troublemakers ran over and surrounded her.

“Mommy, you scared me so, so much!”

“Mommy, you are not allowed to be that impulsive again.”

“Mommy, how are you feeling?”

“Mommy, I miss you so much.”

All four chubby faces were staring at her with concern and worry, and Natalie didn't know who to respond to first. She didn't want to play favorites, so she crouched down and kissed all four kids on their foreheads.

“Thank you for your concerns, Sweethearts. Don't worry. I have fully recovered,” promised Natalie with a smile. “Your Uncle Steven told me that you guys have been good these past couple of days, so I will tell you a story tonight and coo everyone to bed, okay?”

“Yay!”

Xavian, Clayton, and Franklin were boys, after all, so they didn't cry despite missing Natalie dearly.

Sophia, however, went through the kidnapping and witnessed how Natalie got hurt. Seeing the latter all well now made the former cry endlessly. The tears simply won't stop rolling down her cheeks.

Sob! Sophia cried in her baby voice. “This is all my fault. I was naughty, and that is why Mommy was in such a dangerous position. From now on, I will listen to Mommy and Daddy and be good. I will also do what my big brothers said.”

Sophia was actually a good kid who behaved well.

That was why Melissa went after Sophia, who was the most innocent and sweet one among them.

Natalie held Sophia in her arms and cooed, "That was a very dark place, and even the boys would be scared. You were brave because you didn't lose control and waited for us to come to rescue you. You did good, Sophia."

"I did?" asked Sophia in a coarse voice.

"Of course, you did," replied Natalie before she looked at the three other boys. "You can ask your big brothers if you don't believe me."

The three boys thought that Sophia was brave and did well too, so they each gave her a thumbs up.

"You did great, Sophia."

"You performed really well, Sophia."

"You made us proud of our baby sister, Sophia."

The little girl stopped crying and smiled shyly upon receiving those praises.

Her smile had always been especially sweet and cute.

Natalie's lips instinctively curved into a smile as she hugged the soft and fragrant Sophia. It didn't matter how difficult the task was or how much turmoil she would have to endure. She still felt as though she would have the entire world so long as her four tiny angels were with her.

At night.

After Natalie cooed all four of her angels to bed, she returned to her room.

Samuel was still working in the study, so she was the only one in the bedroom. She was about to go to sleep when she received a call from Gerald.

She walked to the balcony and leaned against the railing before placing her phone by her ear.

"Mr. Jones."

"Natalie, I have Melissa's autopsy report with me now," shared Gerald in a concerned tone. "The fatal wound was the bullet through her head. It destroyed her brain. No surprise there, but the labs had run all tests and compared the content of her blood against all known drugs. There were zero traces of anything."

Natalie became deep in thoughts after hearing what Gerald said.

"Natalie, could you have made a mistake? Perhaps Melissa never took any drugs," said Gerald in an uncertain voice.

"Hmm... there is something off with your description, Gerald," replied Natalie as she narrowed her eyes a little. "What if someone created a drug and never shared the content publicly? The coroner wouldn't know what to test against, right?"

Gerald didn't talk for a long time after hearing that response.

"Natalie, if an unknown drug is out there, then the consequences would be dire, regardless of what the drugs' uses are."

"That is why Melissa's death isn't the end," said Natalie. She stared at the stars shining in the sky, and her red lips parted. "My gut tells me that this is somehow related to my granddad's murder case. Melissa's death isn't the end. If anything, it is just the beginning."

Both Natalie and Gerald had complex feelings about that case.

Twenty-three years ago, Arnold died in the Nichols residence, and the police investigation concluded his death was an accident.

That "accident" had too many coincidences leading to it, though. It was just like how Melissa suddenly went crazy and got shot. Everything was simply too... clean.

"I can't keep Melissa's body here forever, but I've asked Effie to keep two samples of her blood safe."

"I see. Okay, thanks."

Natalie hung up the phone after that.

She didn't know if the call had affected her or if the winter wind was too strong, but she was shivering before she even knew it.

She crawled into her blanket and wrapped herself up, but she was still so cold that she shivered.

While combating the chill coursing through her veins, Natalie fell asleep. Too many things ran through her mind, and all the images and people started intertwining. It was as though she was standing on quicksand and was being dragged...

She didn't feel warm or safe until a masculine body leaned close to her.

Like an octopus, Natalie hugged and stuck herself to that warmth.

Samuel, on the other hand, tilted his head down to look at the woman in his arms. He sighed internally. Everything was fine earlier, so why is she so cold now? Seriously, why won't she take care of herself without me monitoring her? I honestly don't know what to do. She can be as smart and as devious as a fox at times, but somehow, she doesn't remember to care for herself.

Samuel truly didn't know what to do. He sighed aloud, then tightened his hug on her to warm her up with his body temperature.

The next day was the day they buried Melissa.

Natalie woke up early in the morning, had some breakfast, then entered Yandel's car.

Yandel shot a look at Natalie before saying, "Boss, I've already placed the cleaner's name tag and uniform in the box right in front of you. You can put them on whenever you want. Also, I've dealt with the paperwork, so no one will suspect anything."

"Got it, thanks."

Natalie opened the box. She kept her eyes on the mirror and removed that hyper-realistic mask filled with freckles. After that, she changed into another hyper-realistic mask. It was the one she used when she went stone-gambling with Yandel.

She tied her hair up and made sure every strand was hidden within the hat that the cleaners used.

They soon reached a spot about two hundred meters away from the funeral home.

Yandel stopped the car and let Natalie out. She used her fake name tag to enter the funeral home and changed into her uniform there. In addition, she put on a face mask.

“Are you new? Why haven’t I seen you around before?” demanded a cleaner who was in her forties. She was rude and kept scrutinizing Natalie from head to toe.

“Yes, I am new. Today’s my first day,” replied Natalie humbly.

“I am Harper Chisolm. Everybody calls me Harper.”

“Understood.”

Natalie nodded absent-mindedly. She picked up the mop and turned around to leave, but Harper stopped her.

“What are you doing?” asked Natalie calmly as she turned to Harper.

“My, aren’t you a clueless newbie? Don’t you realize that I am teaching you the rules?” growled Harper while crossing her arms. She glared and said, “The head of the department talked to me in person and told me to be nice to you, but don’t let that get in your head. Do not assume that you can ignore me just because you have someone helping you. I may not be as powerful, but I can still make life a living hell for you.”

Natalie didn’t expect to deal with any politics, since the job did not pay that well.

Still, she didn’t want any unnecessary issues, so she asked, “Oh, then may I know what the rules are, Harper?”

“Newbies are to clean the rooms where the corpse and coffins are placed,” replied Harper. She had her head up high, and it was obvious she was discriminating against Natalie.

Chapter 583 Annoying Poltergeist

Being a cleaner at a funeral home meant that the work was simpler, and the pay was slightly better. The only downside was that the working environment was eerie.

Harper could tell that Natalie wasn’t going to butter anyone up, so the former wanted to teach the latter a lesson.

Hah, I hope she gets scared out of her mind. Only then will she learn to obey and let me boss her around.

Harper was waiting for Natalie to admit defeat, but the latter simply nodded without hesitating. “Okay, no problem.” After saying that, Natalie picked up the mop and headed over to the morgue.

Harper was speechless.

She wanted to make things difficult for Natalie and force the latter to pay a bribe or something. Unfortunately, no one cared about any of that.

Ah, this is so frustrating! It's fine. I'll pay attention and look for another opportunity to bully that young lady.

Natalie carried the bucket and the mop all the way to the morgue.

No one ever went there unless it was to pick up or drop off a body.

It could be the cooler installed or it could be the fear the corpse inspired, but the place had always been strangely eerie and cold.

Even a buffy guy would need a strong heart to be there, so by right, a young helpless lady should be terrified.

Natalie was not a regular young lady, though. She had seen plenty of corpses, and most were bloody. There were simply too many bodies in the coroner's office, and those victims did not die of natural causes. That meant Natalie had witnessed all sorts of terrifying corpses.

The morgue at the funeral home was, therefore, a piece of cake for her.

It was eight in the morning when she reached the place, and Melissa's funeral would take place at nine o'clock.

Natalie would have to spend thirty minutes cleaning the place up, but after that, she could sneak over to check out the ceremony.

About ten minutes later, Natalie heard footsteps behind her and concluded that someone had been following her around.

She took advantage of the blind spot when she turned the corner, and that was when she discovered the truth. The person following her around was none other than Harper, who had tried to bully Natalie earlier.

Ah, so the old wives' tale is right. Even the devil isn't as annoying as the poltergeists.

Natalie sighed internally and in frustration. She didn't want to make things difficult for the cleaning lady, but the latter was impossible.

If Harper continued following Natalie around, it would make things more difficult for the latter and could expose her.

A mischievous glint flashed past Natalie's eyes.

Well, if this poltergeist insists on messing with me, I'll have no choice but to teach her a lesson.

Harper had been following Natalie around to check if the latter was slacking off. If that was the case, the former would report the matter to their boss.

She thought she was well hidden and kept a close enough eye, but Natalie disappeared in a blink of an eye.

“Huh? Where is she? That b*tch sure can move. Where has she gone off to? I knew it. She may be a newbie, but she doesn’t behave like one. I bet she’s sneaking out and being lazy right now,” cussed the uncouth Harper.

And then it happened.

Click! The lights from the entire floor suddenly went out.

Harper’s heart jumped with fear, but she forced herself to act calm. “Oy, who’s there? Who’s messing with the lights? It’s you, isn’t it? You b*tch! How dare you pull a prank on me?”

It would take the eye some time to adjust to the sudden darkness, so Harper couldn’t see anything.

She wasn’t superstitious, but the situation at the time was too eerie and inspired a little fear.

Hence, she kept cussing nonstop. Maybe that was her way of dealing with her fear of the unknown.

“Who’s there? Show yourself. Oh, don’t let me catch you. If I do, I will punish you so severely. I am Harper Chisholm, and I have never been afraid of anyone. Do you realize how many years I spent working here? I’ve seen all sorts of characters...”

Suddenly...

A faint blue light zipped past right in front of Harper. Someone with a pale face and messy hair sprang up out of nowhere.

The person had ridiculously small irises and half of her face was swaying in the air.

“Ah!”

That face was right in front of Harper, and it got her to scream aloud before fleeing fearfully in the other direction.

As she ran, she fell onto the floor. She couldn’t be bothered to check her dislocated bones and ran ahead as soon as she got back up on her feet.

Natalie saw how Harper was practically crying while running away. The former readjusted her own eyes and put her hyper-realistic mask on properly once more. She smiled and shook her head. My, that woman’s behavior sure has changed after being scared.

Chapter 584 Haunted

Harper ran so much that she was sweating when she reached her leader’s side. She swung his hand and cried. “There’s a ghost down there. I saw a woman’s ghost in the corridor one floor below us. She only had half a face intact, and her irises were gone. I swear, the bottom half of her face was swaying, and she looked just like the demon in the movies.”

The leader couldn't help being stunned after hearing that. "What the hell are you talking about? There's no such thing as a ghost. Did you forget to wash your face in the morning? Maybe all the germs have blinded you."

"I'm not messing with you. I honestly saw it with my own eyes," insisted Harper. Even thinking about that creepy face scared her senseless and turned her pale. Her voice was filled with fear when she added, "If you don't believe me, you can ask the newbie. She must've seen it, too."

Just then...

Natalie showed up with a bucket and a mop. She shot a look at the terrified Harper and asked, "Harper, what's wrong? Why are you sweating so much? Did something happen?"

"Did you see a ghost when you were one floor below? It only has half a face with the lower half dangling along," said Harper. She was staring at Natalie and was practically begging the latter to reaffirm those words.

"I didn't see anything."

"How is that even possible?" said Harper. She couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"I was cleaning the entire time, and I honestly didn't see anything," replied Natalie. She shrugged, then raised her brows before asking, "Were you on that floor earlier? Because I never left the place, yet somehow, I never saw you there. Are you sure that's where you were?"

Natalie kept staring at Harper in confusion.

Even their leader was staring curiously.

Natalie's question knocked Harper off her senses. Could it be... Was I not there at all? Did I go through a portal or something and accidentally went to hell?

"Oh my gosh, unclean forces lurk in these halls!" shouted Harper endlessly.

"Shut the hell up," growled the leader, who was affected by Harper's constant shouts. He angrily ordered, "You are a cleaner, so if there is anything 'unclean' around here, it's your job to clean it!"

Harper might be terrified, but the leader's words prompted her to shut right up.

"An important ceremony will take place at nine o'clock. The youngest daughter of the Nichols family will be buried today, so the two of you are to help the guests. Put the flowers in the right place and put away any other gifts anyone might have brought. Stay alert. Do not cause any trouble!"

"Understood."

Natalie and Harper held their cleaning equipment and went to the top floor.

The hall at the end of the Southern corridor was where Melissa's funeral would be held. Fresh flowers pretty much filled the entire place.

Melissa's corpse had already been placed in the crystal coffin, and they had covered up the gunshot wound on her head. The skilled make-up artists used a lot of make-up, so there was no sign of that wound being there at all. It looked as though she was sleeping peacefully.

Natalie stared at the woman inside the coffin and thought about how evil that woman looked when she was hurling threats. The former couldn't help feeling relieved to see that woman gone.

Harper saw Natalie in a daze, so she urged, "Oy, what are you standing around for?"

Natalie shifted her gaze from the crystal coffin and started working on the flowers.

Soon after.

The Nichols family's friends and associates showed up.

Yara was there before Yvonne and Thomas even arrived.

Natalie and Harper were crouching to pick up some wrapping, so they happened to be in Yara's way.

"Go away," growled Yara in distaste.

Natalie stood up and scanned Yara from head to toe.

The latter had put on a black dress and didn't do anything to her hair. All she had were two hairpins with white flowers on them.

Her make-up was light, but every stroke and dab was carefully drawn, so she looked as stunning and as natural as a blooming flower.

Natalie was slightly taken aback when she saw that face. She didn't think she would bump into Yara just like that.

"What the hell are you looking at? Move aside!" growled Yara as she shot a cruel look at Natalie.

Natalie wasn't the only one staring at Yara, though. Harper was staring as well.

"T-The top half of your face looks just like the ghost I saw!" said Harper. She recalled the terrifying experience she had just gone through and shouted aloud. "Ah, a ghost! You're a ghost. You malicious being. Why are you haunting me?"

Chapter 585 The Filth Befits The Fraud

Natalie stared at Harper in astonishment but managed to recover very quickly, for half the face that she used to spook the latter was precisely her own.

"What ghost, Harper? There's no ghost here," said Natalie as she held Harper's hands.

"It's her! That's the ghost that's been haunting me!" Harper shook off Natalie's hands violently and hollered at Yara, "Don't think that you'd be able to deceive me by creating half of that missing face you didn't have! Just leave me alone!"

"Where did this crazy woman come from?" Yara furrowed her brows.

“Show your true self, evil spirit!” Harper surveyed her surroundings until her eyes fell upon a bucket on the floor. Then, she grabbed ahold of it and hurled its contents at Yara. “With so many people around, I have no reason to be afraid of you! Try to pick on me now, b*tch! I’d show you what’s what!”

Dank and grimy, the water that was used to mop the floor left Yara soaked through and completely ruined the getup she had meticulously put together.

“Security! Security!” Yara was hopping mad. “Where the hell are you? Hurry up and get this lunatic out of here!”

Harper’s visceral reaction took Natalie by some surprise, with the former in a seeming lack of care for whether Yara was human or not when she flung that big load of wastewater onto her.

Nevertheless, the filth befits the fraud. So I guess there’s nothing unbecoming at all about that.

It did not take long before security mobilized and took the raving and ranting Harper away.

Natalie was considering pulling out for the time being when she was stopped by Yara.

“Hold on.”

Momentarily taken aback, Natalie turned and regarded Yara. “Is there something I can help you with, miss?”

“Are you in league with her?” Yara was obviously still stewing, and it showed in the way she was glaring at Natalie.

“No.” Natalie returned her counterpart’s gaze without flinching. “You could see for yourself how I’ve held her and tried to restrain her, and I was just as surprised that she reacted as strongly to your presence as she did! But half an hour before, she did tell me that she saw a half-faced ghost that may have shared some resemblance to you. Perhaps, it might have been a ghost that looks like your twin?”

The mention of the word ‘twin’ put a taut furrow between Yara’s brows. It bothered her so much that ridding herself of the cruddy water became the least of her concerns.

“You... What nonsense are you spouting?”

“This is a funeral home after all. Things are a little creepier here, as you can expect.” Natalie’s lips curled up. “So, it isn’t that surprising even if you were to run into one or two of them ghosts, even during the day.”

“The dead can’t be anything more than dead. Where in the world would ghosts even come from?”

Once done with her castigating, Yara also had just about enough of the filthiness clinging to herself. She was not about to attend the funeral soaked to the skin lest she got turned into the butt of jokes for the day.

Shoving Natalie aside, she stormed off for the VIP lounge in a huff.

Unbothered, Natalie’s smirk only grew more gleeful by the moment.

One can choose not to believe in ghosts, but one should never show a lack of respect. It's unfortunate that this twin sister of mine doesn't understand such a simple notion.

Moments later, Yara was inside the restroom cleaning herself up. She had already tasked her new assistant with the delivery of a long black dress over to the funeral parlor.

Standing before the vanity, she scrutinized that exquisite, yet pallid face of hers.

"How could there be... a ghost that looks exactly like me?" Yara ran her fingers over her own face and began to laugh. "That woman should have been burned into disfigurement. The only reason she could have turned out that way must be due to the reconstructive surgery she underwent afterward! Since she isn't dead, there's no ghost to be had! Besides, so what if ghosts exist? Even if they do, it should be Melissa who ought to come calling!"

Chuckling, Yara shook her head in good humor.

"Hmph! Ghosts are just the fiction of the living person's imagination!"

After Yara changed into the gown sent by her assistant, she put on a fresh face of makeup before making her reappearance in the public eye.

By then, Thomas and Yvonne had both arrived. With that, the funeral service commenced properly.

When Melissa's body was pushed inside the hall, Yvonne suddenly broke down and wailed, "Oh, my poor Melissa—"

Her cries carried the unequivocal anguish of a parent losing her child.

At this moment, in her guise as one of the staff, Natalie stood in the corner of the hall and bore testament to Yvonne's grief, as well as Thomas' pretensions at it.

Chapter 586 Someone Of Great Importance

Thomas ought to feel the impetus to weep, except that his emotional state did not facilitate this. As much as he tried to scrunch up his face, he was unable to squeeze out even one sliver of tear.

Natalie took this all in from where she stood, and her almond-shaped eyes radiated with scorn.

Not only had this father chosen to pass on conducting an autopsy to understand the cause of the unforeseen death of his own daughter, but he even found it such a struggle to shed a tear or two at her funeral.

Thomas subsequently made his way to the center of the hall with a heavy heart to read out a eulogy.

Fabricated completely from a template, the entire text was bereft of even one iota of genuine emotion from start to end, with the only notable change to the messaging being Melissa's name.

Thomas was on the verge of choking up several times as he went along, but his tears did not flow, just as it was for him right from the start.

With a somber expression appropriate for the sorrowful atmosphere of the occasion, Yara wiped at the barely damp corner of her eyes with her own veil.

Everything that had transpired here brought Natalie back to her memories from five years ago when she was sent to Mount Surya to recover from the extensive burns she suffered, in the care of Malcolm and Donna.

Over the phone, she had asked Gerald about how Thomas and Yara dealt with her 'body' that was left behind in the fire's wreckage, and whether they had any suspicions of her having survived the flames.

Gerald's answer set her mind at complete ease.

The Nichols family had happily signed off on her death certificate and did not even bother to claim the ashes.

In the end, the police found a home for her 'remains' at a public cemetery where a marked grave was erected for her on humanitarian grounds.

Hence, she already had a taste of the Nichols family's indifference and selfishness long before Melissa did. The only thing that set their fates apart was that she had better luck than her sister did.

She, at the very least, came out of it alive, and with the chance to seek vengeance on behalf of Arnold and herself.

Upon the completion of the eulogy, the attendees of the service, each with a stalk of white chrysanthemum in hand, encircled the casket three times in silence before they laid the flowers upon Melissa's body.

With the completion of this service, Melissa was to be completely cremated.

Sprawled to the side of Melissa's crystal casket, Yvonne's cries increased in mournfulness until her voice croaked. "It's all my fault, Melissa! I must have committed too many sins, so much so that you were made to suffer them in my place! You're so young. It should have been me to have died, not you!"

Yvonne's wails reverberated around the entire interior of the hall.

Although Natalie found Yvonne quite pitiful, this poor soul was doubtlessly detestable in her own way.

Just like Yvonne admitted so herself, on top of wriggling her way into the family as a mistress, she had also failed to take Melissa in hand ever since. All these were criminal in themselves.

Two black-suited men went up to pull Yvonne away from the casket. When she saw her daughter being pushed further and further from her, she passed out on the spot, instantly plunging the entire scene into chaos afterward.

"My wife has been overtaken by grief and needs to be sent to the hospital. Will someone come to give me a hand?" said Thomas.

Two of the staff voluntarily put themselves forward to lend support. They brought Yvonne to the VIP lounge and went about preparing a honey drink, gathering ointment, and the likes.

Thomas was about to go over to check on Yvonne when his phone started ringing, but he hung up outright as he was not in the mood to answer.

The caller, however, seemed quite intent on reaching him, making one insistent call after another, as though determined to get him to pick up.

Noting how distracted Thomas looked when he saw the name on his display, Yara took it upon herself to say, "Could it be an important work call, Dad? Why don't you go ahead and attend to it, rest assured that I got things here under control."

"All right."

Thomas then hastily left the funeral service's venue.

Observing how Thomas was willing to disregard the unconscious Yvonne, Natalie felt it in her gut that whoever he was eager to meet must be someone of great importance.

Hence, she lowered the brim of her cleaner's cap and took off after him with the broom in hand.

When she tailed him to the funeral home's side door, Natalie was almost certain that whoever Thomas came out to see must be of great significance.

Her expectations were confounded when she got a closer look at that individual. What the... It's her!

Chapter 587 Rendezvous With His Floozy

Natalie recognized the woman for whom Thomas abandoned his wife midway through a funeral as the same one who was beside him when he squandered a hundred million on stone gambling at the black market.

As if it was not bad enough that Thomas was unable to shed a tear at the funeral, it turned out that he was worse than that; Coming out for a rendezvous with his floozy before his own daughter's body had been cremated!

Natalie gnashed her teeth as she felt aggrieved on behalf of her late mother.

"What are you doing here, Yeva?" Thomas snarled with his eyes gawking. "Today's Melissa's funeral, so stop messing around! What if someone were to spot you here like this?"

"So what if anyone were to see me? Wouldn't that be even better?" Yeva wrapped her hands around Thomas' arm without the slightest bit of inhibition. "Since you've already grown weary of that old hag, and her daughter is already dead as well, you should take the opportunity to kick her out from the Nichols family!"

"What? Are you crazy?"

"Am I wrong to say that?" Yeva retorted. "I'm carrying your child, and the doctor says that there is an eighty to ninety percent of it being a boy! If he should become your heir in the future, without his own mother having any legal status, how do you expect he and I to face the world?"

"I'd be responsible for both you and the baby," Thomas comforted. "But we can't deal with this like this, Yeva! Especially not today! If anyone sees us, we'd be finished!"

Yeva remained pertinacious.

“But...”

“If you keep up with this nonsense, you can forget about your allowance for this month!”

It was only the mention of her allowance being cut that convinced her to sulkily relent. “Fine... I’ll go back first.”

“That’s my girl!”

Behind the stone pillar, Natalie took in every word of the exchange between Thomas and Yeva.

Once Thomas had settled his affairs here, he hurried back into the funeral home.

Yeva bit her lip while she stood outside the doors. “Sooner or later, I’d make myself the proper mistress of the Nichols family...”

After Yeva went far, a glint flashed across Natalie’s eyes. She then retrieved her phone from her pocket and rung up Yandel.

“How’s everything going over on your end, Boss?”

“Pretty good, I’d say. But we have ourselves a surprise finding.” Natalie paused briefly before she continued, “Remember the floozy we saw Thomas stone gambling with at the black market? She’s pregnant with Thomas’ kid. Judging from his character, Thomas is bound to try to keep word about it watertight, so you should probably have your people watch this lead more closely.”

“Understood. I’ll get right on it.”

Having already attended Melissa’s funeral, Natalie was in no mood to return to the funeral home.

When she remembered the two vials of blood samples from Melissa that the Forensic Department had set aside for her, she hired a ride outside the gates to bring her to the Major Crimes Unit.

Beep, beep—

Natalie used her thumbprint to unlock the door to the coroner’s office.

Effie was initially shocked to see a female cleaner in grey overalls enter, but recomposed herself when she remembered that the other woman would have used her prints to gain access.

“Boss!” Like a rabid fangirl, Effie approached Natalie and threw her arms around the latter. “Oh, I’ve missed you so much!”

Not knowing how to react to the magnitude of this bear hug, Natalie opted to pat her counterpart on the back.

“Umm, okay.”

Natalie then looked around. “Where’s Brandon?”

“Relax. He just got assigned to a case and went out. I reckoned he shouldn’t be back for quite a while.”

“That’s good to know.”

Whilst Effie was in the know about Natalie's donning of hyper-realistic masks, Brandon remained in the dark about it.

Hence, be it any manner of disguise or the removal of Melissa's blood samples, things could get a little sticky if he was present.

"I need to take one vial of the blood samples that Mr. Jones left with you here."

"Sure. I'll bring it to you, Boss."

It did not take Effie very long to return with a vial of the blood sample which she passed along to Natalie.

When Natalie saw the apprehension on the former's face, she could not help but ask, "What's on your mind, Effie? Free feel to speak."

"I've overheard the conversation between Grandpa and yourself..." Effie mumbled. "Having done hundreds of comparisons against the sample, I wasn't able to find any matches from any existing databases. If it exists on record, there isn't even the most rudimentary method to test for it. Should anyone decide to use it profligately, the consequences would be unthinkable!"

Chapter 588 Busted By Samuel

"This is extremely dangerous, Effie, so pretend you've never heard anything that we said and don't get yourself involved," Natalie cautioned. "I'm your superior, so this is a direct order that you are to comply with without question."

"Understood." Effie remained worried for Natalie. "But what about you, Boss?"

Seeing Effie getting her own brow in a knot out of concern for her, Natalie's lips lifted into a grin. "I'll try to be careful."

Natalie departed from the Major Crimes Unit with a lot on her mind, for it was not as though she had not thought about the things Effie mentioned before.

Back in the warehouse, Natalie had seen Melissa gunned down by Joshua with her own eyes. Hence, her intention for wanting Gerald to covertly conduct an autopsy on Melissa was to ascertain the truth.

With the outcome of the autopsy inconclusive, the only thing that was certain was that the person behind all of this was even more well-hidden and dangerous than she had anticipated.

Now, the plot had thickened to the point that she was not even sure why she herself became a target for the mastermind.

But seeing how her counterpart enjoyed playing hide and seek and being as well concealed as he was, she did not mind putting in the work to ferret him out.

Natalie headed home after she had the blood sample sent to the research center over at Dream. She did not have much of an appetite by that time as she was still bogged down by ruminations about the whole affair.

Taking a shower did not help clear her mind either, thus Natalie went out to the balcony to catch some air in the hope that it might help her calm down.

The night breeze brought down Natalie's body temperature and at the same time, helped settle her emotions somewhat.

So lost in thought, she did not even notice Samuel pushing his way through the door.

"What are you doing, sitting here in the cold all by yourself?" The man's voice coming from behind her contained at least three parts of annoyance.

Natalie turned to the sight of Samuel's deep-set phoenix eyes.

"Oh, didn't you say that you won't be back before ten? It's only nine right now..." Natalie had a look of sheepishness about her as she spoke in a small voice.

Samuel's brows wound up in a furrow. "It should have been ten, but I drove a little faster than usual because I wanted to get home earlier. Was I to return as scheduled, would you have stayed out here, exposing yourself to the elements like this until then?"

When he was done talking, he grabbed Natalie by the hand and dragged her off the balcony and back inside the bedroom.

Once inside, Samuel went on to tug at the sash around her waist, looking to relieve her of her robe.

"You..." Natalie bit her lip and whined, "Could you not?"

"What are you thinking, Natalie?"

That put the frowning Natalie into a defiant mood. "Why... What are you stripping my robe for!"

Samuel pursed his lips and without answering, wrapped his arm around her hip and lifted her.

"Samuel..."

The man said nothing. Instead, he forcefully carried her into the bathroom, placed her in the tub, and ran the hot water.

"I've already taken a shower. There's no reason for me to take another... Let me go!"

"No." With his arms propped on either side of Natalie's body, Samuel's had his eyes fixated upon her as he questioned away. "Do you really think you're not going to get sick standing outside on a cold day like this? Do you expect to not experience pain, or feel terrible? You know that I'd be worried if you were to get sick, so are you so determined to see me look tormented before you learn to rein yourself in?"

Samuel's gaze was frigid and his tone harsh.

Lifting her gaze to meet his, Natalie saw the concern in Samuel's eyes and that moved her profoundly inside.

This man... really, really loves me!

"I... I'm so sorry." Realizing her own impropriety, Natalie softened her tone. "I was just too deep in thought that I forgot... It won't happen again next time..."

"Will there be a next time?" Samuel raised a skeptical brow.

“Never.” Natalie nodded and made a promise.

Samuel was much appeased after seeing Natalie acknowledging the error of her ways.

“Stay in the tub.” Samuel grabbed a towel in stride with which to cover Natalie’s chest. With tension in his inflection, Samuel said, “I’m going to make you some ginger tea to drink after this.”

Chapter 589 Hoarse

After Samuel stepped out of the bathroom, he leaned with his back to the glass door and took several deep breaths to stabilize the impulses stirring inside him.

From the moment he removed Natalie’s robes, he was already in heat.

Had he stayed inside there one minute more, all his sense of self-control would have crumbled on itself as there was nothing he wanted more than to take her right there and then.

Fearful of harming Natalie’s body, Samuel went on downstairs to make the ginger tea he promised her.

Gavin approached when he saw Samuel coming down. “Is there anything you need of me, Mr. Samuel?”

“Nat may have caught a chill, so I would like for her to have some ginger tea. But it’s fine, Gavin. I can prepare it myself.”

With that, Samuel turned into the kitchen.

While Gavin watched Samuel depart, he smiled broadly at the thought of the latter’s thoughtfulness toward Natalie. Mr. Samuel really has changed considerably.

Inside the kitchen, Samuel began to peel the ginger. Once they had been completely skinned, he had them placed inside the boiling water to brew into tea.

Worried that Natalie might find the ginger packing too much heat, he made sure to put more sugar into the mix.

By the time Samuel brought the readied ginger tea into the bathroom, the interior was already shrouded in a fog of humidity. There, inside the tub, sat the fair and tender woman with her arms wrapped around her knees, looking fresh and lovely like a hibiscus in bloom in the midst of the water that surrounded her.

Natalie lifted her chin when he entered and regarded him with moistened eyes.

D*mn it!

Samuel’s body started to heat up once more.

“The ginger tea is ready. Make sure you finish every last drop of it,” he said as he passed the mug along.

“Okay.”

Natalie obediently lifted her delicate hand to receive it from him and sipped away at the tea with her dainty lips. The beverage was less spicy than she had imagined and leaned toward sweetness.

“It’s delicious!” she said with a toothy grin.

“Yeah,” replied Samuel in a dense inflection while he continued to keep his tensed up back toward her. “Don’t stay in there for too long. Get out once the water starts to cool. I’ll be in the bedroom.”

The man seemed to be in some hurry, and he closed the door rather loudly.

With her head bowed and her hands taking in the warmth of the mug between them, Natalie’s eyes were filled with delight.

What’s with the cool guy act? He obviously wants to do it, yet he’s acting like he doesn’t.

When Natalie walked out of the bathroom, Samuel could no longer contain himself. Following that, the kisses rained all over.

That night lasted till late.

Unable to hold up physically, Natalie wound up sleeping well into the next day.

The first thing that greeted her when she roused was a call from Yana.

“Yana...”

“What happened to your voice, Natalie?” asked Yana in concern. “Are you down with the flu?”

Natalie had taken a warm bath and helped herself to ginger tea. Her hoarseness did not stem from an ailment, but from the overexertion of her vocal cords from the night before.

“Probably not. I guess I must be tired out recently.” There was no way she could have related such an embarrassing cause to Yana. Thus, she could only fob her off.

“You should take care to rest up.” Yana then remembered why she called in the first place. “Anyway, it’s my dad’s birthday in five days. As his goddaughter, you must attend the banquet that night!”

“Of course, I will,” said Natalie with a smile. “Especially since it’ll be my first birthday celebration with the Weisses since he has become my godfather.”

“Great! I’ll be seeing you then!”

After Yana hung up, Natalie got up and traveled to Dream Corporation. She wanted to see whether there was anything suitable as a gift for her godfather, Jason, inside the safe.

Within these safe were the treasures Natalie had accumulated over the years.

Ross’ and Lia’s jaws dropped when they saw the jade-ware, jewels, and emeralds inside.

What sort of safe is this? It’s practically a mini-museum for precious artifacts.

Yandel, however, did not appear to be as impressed.

Seeing how Ross and Lia were mesmerized by the glitter inside, Natalie said, “I haven’t really given you any gifts before, have I? You two can have a look inside, and take any single piece that caught your fancy...”

Chapter 590 Could Not Resist The Lure

“Can I really?” Lia rubbed her hands in anticipation.

“Of course, you can,” said Natalie with a laugh. “Well, don’t just stand there. Let’s go through them together. I could use your suggestions with something that might be suitable for an elder.”

“Thank you, Ms. Nichols.”

“Thank you, Ms. Nichols.”

Lia and Ross exchanged looks. Then, they began to comb through the five large safety deposit boxes.

Just watching by the sidelines ultimately became too much for Yandel to take. “Boss, is it possible for me to...”

“Yeah, of course!” Natalie’s lips lifted. “Rest assured that I won’t be leaving anyone out.”

When he met Natalie’s eyes, Yandel felt that this was another day that he would remember fondly in his time with her.

The thing that motivated him to work for Natalie was never the money. Apart from her multitude of uncanny identities, what stood out to him most was her overwhelming open-mindedness and big heart.

“Thanks, Boss!”

After going through the safety deposit boxes for hours, the lot of them finally settled on their heart’s desire and every one of them was greatly satisfied.

“Hang back, Ross. I have something that I wish to discuss with you alone.” Natalie’s eyes seemed quite solemn when she uttered those words.

Yandel and Lia cleared out of the office and made space for Ross and Natalie.

“There’s some unknown psychedelic toxin inside the blood sample sent to the research center yesterday. The side effects of which include the inducing of hyperactivity, and a change in temperament... My guess is that with heavier doses and long-term exposure, it may make one highly aggressive, or even immune to physical pain. Perhaps, it might even make one akin to zombies in the movies.” Natalie stood at the full-length windows and looked down upon the ceaseless flow of traffic in the city below.

Ross’ pupils shrunk when he heard that.

Not that he would doubt anything that Natalie said, but this all sounded very outlandish to him.

He kept his cool and asked, “What would you like for me to do, Ms. Nichols?”

“Extract this toxin from the sample and perform some tests to ascertain its makeup.” Natalie looked right at Ross. “It is only by understanding our opponent that we can gain the upper hand. We must come up with a cure for it and in the shortest time possible in order to save those innocent people.”

It was hard for Natalie to adjudge whether Melissa deserved to die the way she did.

However, whatever it was inside the latter’s body could only be developed within legal gray areas.

Pertaining to this, she had a feeling that it must somehow be linked to Arnold's untimely demise. No matter what, she had to get to the bottom of it.

Realizing the gravity and urgency of this task, Ross nodded in acknowledgment. "Understood."

Elsewhere, inside the Centurion Corporation.

Samuel sat with his head bowed and eyes narrowed while he went through the file he had on hand.

"We weren't able to find anything unusual off Yara. There's no evidence connecting her to the traffic accident you were previously involved in and Ms. Sophia's kidnapping."

"Looks like it wasn't her..." Samuel's brow creased into a taut furrow, feeling that the whole case had only grown extremely vexing.

"Keep digging." Samuel then pivoted. "And what about the manpower deployment that I asked to make arrangements for?"

Billy stood next to him and continued his report, "Already done, Sir. I've assigned two of the finest to shadow Mrs. Bowers."

"Good." Samuel acknowledged that with a slight nod. Then, he found himself a little confused by how his counterpart addressed Natalie. "What did you just call Nat?"

Although Samuel and Natalie's relationship had not been formalized in any legal procedure or public ceremony, Billy had already, in his heart, recognized her as the mistress of the Bowers residence.

"I-It's just a slip of my tongue, Sir..." Billy hastened to explain. "If you think that it's inappropriate, I would not address her as Mrs. Bowers next time. I shall continue to hail her as Ms. Nichols or Ms. Natalie then."

"Why are you being such a dumbass?" a frowning Samuel bellowed, "Did I ask you not to?"

"No, Sir!"

As much as Billy tried to keep a straight face, he was sniggering inside.

Regardless, he was well aware that Natalie already had Samuel wrapped around her fingers, and could not resist the lure of this manner of addressing her.