

Love's Cruel Stroke Chapter 21

Bitter resentment filled Tiana when she saw the hard look of disappointment in Elizabeth's eyes. She was Elizabeth's biological daughter and a true member of the Sinclair Family, and yet Elizabeth had always favored and defended an outsider like Rachel. Why should I be the one escorted out of here when this is my family home?!

Gritting her teeth, Tiana protested, "If you're going to take Rachel's side, Grandma, then don't ever call me your granddaughter again!"

Elizabeth was apathetic. "Now that you're married into the Ashe Family, you will be known as Madam Ashe. You don't have to drop by the Sinclair Residence so frequently." Then, she called out to the household staff, "Can someone please drop Madam Ashe and Young Master Theodore home?"

Tiana thought her lungs might explode from the sheer rage coursing through her body. She had said those things in hopes of emotionally blackmailing her grandmother, but Elizabeth treated her with the same indifference. In the end, she had as good as humiliated herself in front of Rachel.

Just then, she saw John's car pull up outside the yard. As though beholding her saving grace, Tiana hauled Theodore along with her as she barreled out of the house, crying, "Dad, Grandma's kicking me out of the house, and she even asked that I stop coming over so frequently from now on..."

As she said this, tears spilled down her cheeks uncontrollably.

John frowned at her waterworks and pointed out, "You're twenty-eight. Pull yourself together and start acting your age. Besides, your grandmother is right; you're part of the Ashe Family now, and with all that's going on there, you should stay with them instead of dropping by unnecessarily."

Tiana nearly choked. She could hardly believe that her own father would say such things to her, but before she could whine any further, John brushed past her into the living room

When he saw Rachel sitting on the couch, he hastened over and asked, "Rae, would you like to come by the company and take a look at the prototype we made based on the microchip you developed?"

The prototype was far superior to any marketable product that the company had before this, John was not the only one who was stunned by it; everyone else at the company was equally in awe.

The product had yet to go into mass production, but everyone could already tell how it was going to blow up the market once it was launched.

Rachel looked up at him and smiled. "It's alright, Uncle John. Caleb has already sent me a video of it."

John tried to keep his cool as he went on to say, "Speaking of this, Rae, Caleb and I were wondering if you'd be interested in taking up a position in Sinclair Group."

"Thank you for the kind offer, Uncle John, but I don't think that will be necessary. I plan on setting up my own workshop, you see," she answered with a polite smile. "When the workshop is established, I hope that you'd look out for me in the industry as well."

John was evidently disappointed. He didn't think there was any other software engineer in Seaview City as talented and adept as Rachel. Having her in Sinclair Group would definitely be a boon to the company's future progression, not to mention it could help the company reach new heights in the next half of the year.

That said, he couldn't force her into taking up the job offer. If she had set her mind on starting her own business, then he, as her uncle, would naturally support her all the way.

At the sight of how famously her own father was getting along with Rachel, Tiana was sure she would collapse out of fury. She vowed to oust Rachel from the Sinclair Family no matter what it took, but before she could get any bright ideas, she was duly escorted out of the house and back to the Ashe Residence by Elizabeth's staff.

When she had gone, the house resumed its previous serenity.

Elizabeth rubbed her temple tiredly as she said, "Please excuse your cousin Tiana, Rae. She's been spoiled from a young age, and she's incorrigibly unreasonable."

Rachel pursed her lips into a thin line and said nothing.

She didn't care if Tiana lashed out at her and called her names, but to constantly refer to Casper and Olivia as 'mongrels' was crossing the line. After all, the kids were growing up and picking up on new terms, not to mention they were already making sense of the world around them. Being called 'mongrels' would only hurt their budding self-esteem, and the last thing Rachel wanted was for them to be wounded,

With a sigh, Elizabeth summoned one of her maids and asked that she bring over a box. The box was an ornate one, and when Elizabeth opened it, the emerald jewelry set nestled within dazzled under the lights. They were breathtaking

"Rae, this jewelry set was originally meant for your mother, but it's a shame that she passed on before her time. Now, there are yours," the old woman said kindly as she caressed Rachel's hair. "Wear these for the banquet tomorrow, and I've already had a dress laid out for you. It was made according to your measurements."

Rachel gazed at the emerald pieces in her hand. The stones were beautifully carved

and glimmered under the lights. It didn't take a keen eye to tell that this was an old family heirloom.

These emeralds were worth more than she could imagine; they were a symbol of old money and probably so precious that they could not be procured through modern wealth. It was surreal that Elizabeth would hand these over to her without condition. Moved by the old woman's generosity, Rachel said, "Thank you, Grandma." She carefully closed the box and set it aside. After a pause, she asked, "Will the Yates attend the banquet tomorrow evening, Grandma?"

"Those riff-raff don't belong past our threshold, Rae. They'll only ruin the evening with their tasteless style and scintillating behavior," Elizabeth said scornfully. There was no hiding

the rage in her eyes as she added, "They did everything in their power to get rid of you back in the day. You ought to live your life vibrantly and fearlessly. That'll show them!"

Rachel gripped Elizabeth's hand tightly, and a sense of peace overcame her.

The lights shone ever brighter now that it was nightfall.

A long line of cars was pulling up outside the Sinclair Residence, and the clock hadn't even struck 8.00PM yet.

The Sinclairs were one of the most prominent families in Seaview City, and all the socialites and ladies of nobility were invited to this lavish affair.

However, given how tight-lipped the Sinclairs had been about the banquet, none of the guests knew the reason behind such an elaborate soiree.

Presently, the guests gathered in groups of three or four in the yard, exchanging warm pleasantries as they sipped on their wines and champagne. Meanwhile, the star of the party was upstairs in the dressing room, getting ready.

The dress she wore was cinched at the waist and flared out into voluminous skirts.

The sage-colored skirts were dotted all over with floral motifs, and little rhinestones lined the hem like stardust. When she came into the light, she dazzled, and so did her dress

She wore a pair of delicate emerald earrings, and on her neck rested an emerald necklace that accentuated her collarbones. She looked stunning in her dress and jewelry, All in all, she was a walking work of art,

Tiana walked into the room then, just in time to see Rachel in all her glorious beauty,

Jealousy rose within her, and she was seized with the urge to lunge toward Rachel to

tear her dress into shreds. However, she dared not act on her thoughts. If Elizabeth were to catch her, then she would be thrown out of the house altogether, and that would be humiliating.

A lightbulb went off in her head as Tiana shuntered up to Rachel with a glass of champagne in hand. Smiling, she drawled, "You really are Seaview City's Aphrodite, Rae. Look at how gorgeous you are in that kress. Oh, no-"

The glass in her hand tipped forward before she could finish her sentence, and the champagne sloshed and splattered all over Rachel's teal dress.

"Oh, no, Rae! I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to" Tiana apologized without much sincerity as a vicious look shone in her eyes. Now that the dress is ruined, she'll have nothing to wear to the banquet! Don't even think about trying to stun everyone with your beauty the moment you return to Seaview City, Rachel!

She wanted everyone in society to look upon Rachel in disgust and scorn, like how they had four years ago!

Much to her surprise, however, Rachel let out a tinkling laugh as she said breezily, "Don't worry about it, Tiana. Back when I was Seaview City's Aphrodite, I've had plenty of people splash wine on me on purpose during banquets and parties just to embarrass me, which is why today,

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Rachel broke off and lifted a fraction of her skirts, then gave them a light flick. The champagne droplets rolled down the fabric and fell to the floor, leaving no trace behind in the teal dress. "See, I know how ugly jealousy can get, not to mention messy. It's only practical that the dress is made of satin; not a speck of water or wine will seep through it," she elaborated sardonically. "That said, I'm sure you didn't mean to spill champagne on me out of jealousy; you were probably just clumsy."

Tiana blanched and cursed the dress for being made of waterproof fabric.

"Tiana, go back to the Ashe Residence if all you're here to do is to make a scene!" Caleb, who had been in the dressing room, warned harshly. He had seen for himself how Tiana had deliberately splashed champagne onto Rachel's dress, and anyone with eyes could tell that it was not an accident. He couldn't fathom why his sister would resort to such underhanded and foolish schemes.

Tiana, on the other hand, couldn't fathom why her brother was so avidly defensive of someone outside the family. She wanted to lash out at him and throw a fit, but because there were others here in the house, she had no choice other than to suppress her rage.

Presently, Rachel gazed into the mirror as she dabbed on her lipstick, and when she was done, she looked even more stunning than she had moments ago. She walked over to Caleb and smiled as she said, "Shall we go down to the party, Caleb?"

Caleb nodded, and the both of them walked out of the dressing room side-by-side.

Meanwhile, all the guests had already arrived dressed to the nines. The banquet hall in Sinclair Residence was decked out in lavish decorations, and everyone was chattering among themselves, their combined voices filling the space with an air of festivity,

Everyone was taking guesses at the reason behind the Sinclairs' banquet this evening when the crowd near the doorway suddenly grew restless. Those further in the hall turned to see what was going on, only to be surprised by the newly arrived guests,

"Goodness, I didn't think anyone from the Ford Family would come this evening!"

"What are the Sinclairs up to? Why is Jordan here?"

"Jordan hardly ever makes an appearance at social events like this, If he's here, then something important must be taking place tonight!"

As the crowd descended into a frenzy, Jordan walked slowly into the hall. He was dressed in a black tailored suit this evening, which only accentuated his stoic and reserved front. The air around him seemed to drop to sub-zero temperatures as he

made his way through the crowd.

"Come on, Jordan, stop being a buzzkill!" Howard couldn't help grumbling under his breath as he walked next to the frigid man. "You're like a walking iceberg. No ladies are going to chat me up if you keep looking so constipated!"

Jordan shot him a sideways glance. "Weren't you the one who asked that I circle the room with you?"

Quentin grimaced and said with no small amount of contempt, "Howard here has his eyes set on Layla Lacey and made us come along for moral support. I can't believe you were unfortunate enough, not to mention free enough, to be dragged into this. Jordan."

Jordan lowered his gaze and made no reply. He hadn't shown up voluntarily at the banquet because Howard made him, but because he had seen a certain woman walk into Sinclair Residence the day before. She must be from the Sinclair Family. Thus, when the Sinclairs sent him an invitation, he had pushed back his work schedule to attend the banquet.

But it had been a while since he walked in, and the woman was still nowhere to be seen.

Jordan had become the center of attention as soon as he appeared. Every socialite from respectable upper-class families was eyeing him with interest. There were plenty of young ladies here at the banquet who wanted to walk up to him and introduce themselves, but he seemed so cold and intimidating that they started to gain second thoughts. Eventually, they missed out on their window of opportunity.

For at that moment, the lights on the second floor landing were turned on, and a couple began to make their way down the stairs.

The first person everyone took notice of was Caleb, the first young master of the Sinclair Family:

At the sight of him, slow realization dawned upon the guests. Is this banquet thrown in honor of Young Master Caleb's engagement?

The Sinclair Family were in the top ten prominent families of Seaview City, and Caleb naturally became a strong contender among the women of nobility who were seeking a capable and powerful son-in-law. Everyone at the banquet was instantly eager to see which socialite had been lucky enough to become Caleb's fiancée.

At that moment, everyone's gaze fell upon the woman next to Caleb, and this was followed by a collective sharp intake of breath. She's gorgeous! Where did she come from? How could she be this gorgeous and exist in the same universe as us?

Even the socialites in the audience were taken aback by the beauty and grace of the woman who was supposedly Caleb's fiancée.

"My goodness, where did Young Master Caleb find such a beautiful fiancée? Look at her! She's a vision!"

"Her skin is like flawless porcelain, and check out her figure! At this rate, even I can't help falling in love with her, and I'm a woman!"

"Don't you girls think she looks a lot like that young lady from the Yates Family? They're both the breathtaking, ethereal type."

"Are you talking about Rachel? Well, she might have been Seaview City's Aphrodite back in the day, but Young Master Caleb's fiancée is definitely more beautiful than

she was!"

Indeed, the present Rachel looked far more stunning than she had four or five years ago. Back in the day, she had been eighteen, and she had eyes that were filled with naivety and endless hope for her own future.

As time passed and the years flew by her, the curious look in her eyes was replaced by tenacity and serenity. She had also filled up her frame, and her silhouette had grown more womanly over the years. She moved with such feminine grace and elegance that her every gesture was captivating-seductive, even.

"Holy crap! Isn't she the mermaid from yesterday?" Howard asked incredulously, his eyes wide with disbelief as he stared at Rachel from across the hall.

Quentin was bemused as he drawled, "The mermaid is now Young Master Caleb's fiancée. She's way out of your league now." ||

Next to them, Jordan had a grim expression on his face as he registered this twist of events. So I really did misunderstand her. She was never trying to get close to me at all. She's about to marry into the Sinclair Family! Well, what do you know? He clenched his wine glass tightly as an inexplicable rage and frustration seized him.

On the other side of the hall, Rachel was standing next to Caleb with a courteous smile on her face when she suddenly felt a sharp gaze on her.

Frowning, she looked around and finally met Jordan's smoldering obsidian orbs, which had a somewhat mutinous gleam in them. Why is he looking at me like that! She pursed her lips and broke eye contact,

Shortly after, Caleb went up on the raised platform and bowed at the guests politely, then said, "Thank you for taking the time to attend our family's soiree tonight, but the star of the evening is not from the Sinclair Family, but my cousin, Miss Rachel Yates."

When the words left his mouth, a deathly hush fell upon the hall.

Then, mere seconds later, everyone burst into an uproar.

"*Rachel Yates?!" "I wasn't imagining it, was I? Young Master Caleb really did address that woman as Rachel, didn't I? But didn't she die four years ago?"

"See, I told you that she looks similar to Rachel, and none of you believed me! I was right! She really is Rachel, and she doesn't look like she's changed a bit since four years ago!"

"But isn't she supposed to be dead? Why is she standing there looking very much alive?"

"Remember how the news of her burning down the Yates Residence and committing suicide by drowning thereafter rocked the city for months on end? You can still look it up online!"

"I recall how reporters caught her having a one-night stand with some random guy during her coming-of-age party. She disappeared for eight months after that, and then word got out that she gave birth to stillborn twins. She burned down the Yates Residence out of spite for her family, but now that she's here... Had she faked her death all this while?"

"Does she really think that everyone here would forget about all the dirty things she did just because she faked her death and stayed in hiding for four years? As if!"

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A few years back, the news had caused an uproar, seeing how the Yates Family was well known in Seaview City. When Rachel had her coming-of-age ceremony, the celebration was so grand that everyone felt envious of her.

However, when she was caught sleeping with some man the next day, her reputation was subsequently ruined, and she became the laughingstock of the town.

She then vanished for almost a year. Just as people were starting to forget about the issue, the fire at the Yates Residence happened, and with that, Rachel's crimes were brought to light.

She hooked up with some man and fell pregnant with his child. Although she decided to give birth to the child, she suffered from complications during childbirth and the baby did not survive. In the end, she lost her sanity and burned the house down before choosing to end her life.

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Every singler bit of the story was enough to break the internet, not to mention all of them happening to one person.

For nearly two months, Rachel's name was all over the news. Hence, at that point, everyone in Seaview City knew her name, including Jordan. The incident created such a stir that even a man like him, who didn't pay much attention to gossip, heard about it.

He couldn't believe the lady in front of him was the same one from four years ago.

"So, we really did meet each other." In shock, Howard's jaw dropped open as he glanced at her. "She's Seaview City's Aphrodite, the woman my mother wanted me to marry."

When Quentin heard this, he shook his head. "If those events had not occurred, she could be your wife by now. Do you think your mother would let you marry her after everything she's done?"

Howard glared at him and retorted, "I didn't say that I'm going to marry her."

"I know. You came here for Layla," Quentin reminded.

"With Seaview City's Aphrodite here, Layla is nothing." Howard shifted his sight on Rachel lustfully and murmured, "Watch me make her mine."

"She's not the kind of person whom you could provoke," Jordan warned in a frigid tone,

Immediately, Howard approached him and questioned, "What's the deal? Do you have feelings for her?"

"No," Jordan flatly denied.

After scoffing, Howard swirled the red wine in his glass. Meanwhile, the banquet turned chaotic as people freely gossiped about Rachel's past.

When Caleb heard them, a scowl developed on his face and he was ready to speak out when Rachel beat him to it.

"It seems that you all know me, so I believe I don't need to introduce myself." Her eyes were stern as she swept her gaze over the room and spoke coldly.

She lifted the hem of her dress a little and proceeded down the stairs. In reality, she was small, yet she was the one who stood out the most in the crowd. With a smirk on her face, she announced, "There were numerous rumors about me years ago, but the fact that I'm still alive and well proves that they were only rumors."

Everyone thought that she had died, yet there she was, standing right before them.

Indeed, rumors could not be trusted. However, there was no way the public would be convinced so easily. As stated by the Yates Family, Rachel was dead, and it was not something that could be explained with a few words.

At that moment, some women who were envious of her beauty came forward and chastised her.

"Miss Yates, you're one of the Yates. Why are you throwing a banquet at the Sinclair Residence instead of the Yates Residence?"

"Miss Yates, the picture of your one-night stand is all over the internet. What can you say about that?"

"Miss Yates, you've done so many horrible things before. Yet, you still have the guts to appear in front of everyone here?"

The questions were harsh, but Rachel had anticipated all of this to happen the minute she agreed to come here.

"I would like to declare that from now on, I have nothing to do with the Yates Family," she announced, her face expressionless and her voice piercingly frigid.

'As for the pictures..' Her glance traveled across the ladies. "I'm sure the majority of you here have a boyfriend or a fiancé. I'm sure if I spend some money and hire a paparazzi, all of you will show up in the news."

The minute these words left her mouth, the ladies' faces turned uneasy, It was unsurprising for ladies their age to date and sleep with men. Hence, if someone

actually followed them, they would also be seen cuddling with someone in bed.

Everyone immediately fell silent. Howard took a sip from the glass of wine in his hand and remarked, "How eloquent. Indeed, she's not one to be messed with."

Meanwhile, Jordan clenched his jaw tightly when he heard Rachel.

She was basically confirming that the pictures from five years ago were real and that she did sleep with that man.

When Jordan realized this, he felt a wave of rage come over him out of nowhere. However, when he thought it over again, it was indeed reasonable. She had to sleep with a man to be able to give birth to a daughter.

He shook his head, unable to believe that he actually lost his cool because of a woman. The gossip in the banquet hall eventually died down. Noticing this, Rachel breathed a sigh of relief.

Although she didn't care about their opinion, she still felt uneasy. She was ready to raise a glass of red wine to toast somebody when a lady in a yellow dress approached her. "Miss Yates, did you really give birth to a set of stillborn twins four years ago?"

Instantly, Rachel's face darkened. The death of her two babies had left a huge wound in her heart. She looked up and recognized that the woman speaking was Tiana's best friend, Kelly Collins. Tiana had obviously instructed Kelly to ask her this question.

At that point, Rachel regretted not smacking Tiana harder the other day as it seemed that she needed to teach Tiana another lesson.

Kelly snickered as she watched Rachel's gloomy face. "So, it's the truth, after all. What a shame that they died. I actually looked forward to seeing whether the two kids inherited the looks of Seaview City's Aphrodite."

Her words rubbed salt on Rachel's wounds. Therefore, Rachel looked Kelly in the eyes, her eyes full of anger. Before she could say anything, a mocking voice behind them sounded

"Excuse me, but how many months are you in now?" Howard asked as he walked over with a smirk on his face, his gaze fixed on Kelly's stomach.

Kelly was stunned, "What do you mean she asked."

*Your stomach looks so big that you must be pregnant. Let me guess... Four months
Howard didn't even bother to hide the mocking smile on his face.

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Immediately, Kelly's face flushed red.

Kelly was wealthy and quite beautiful but a little overweight, so the fat around her tummy was especially obvious. Even though she wore the baggiest dress, it still couldn't cover her flaws.

Thus, she was envious of Rachel's beauty and wonderful body, but before she could even embarrass Rachel, she was humiliated.

With clenched teeth, Kelly retorted, "How can I be pregnant when I'm not even married? Young Master Howard, please be cautious with your remarks. I don't want anybody to misunderstand."

"So you're afraid of being misunderstood? Why did you ask Miss Yates something like that on purpose, then?" Howard burst out laughing. "How could Miss Yates have had children before when even someone looking like you has never been pregnant?"

Having been insulted again, all Kelly wanted to do was disappear. She stomped her feet and strode away into the crowd.

Rachel had not expected that someone would defend her, let alone Howard, whom she had beaten up the day before.

"Thank you. Let's have a drink." She smiled at Howard.

The latter instantly clinked glasses with her and asked, "Miss Yates, do you remember that we met five years ago?"

Rachel nodded calmly.

Five years ago, Howard was a well-known playboy in Seaview City. Naturally, she had crossed paths with him, and she even remembered her father and stepmother had wanted her to marry him.

Just then, Jordan and Quentin walked over to them. The moment Jordan arrived, it felt as if the temperature had dropped a few degrees, so it was difficult for Rachel not to notice him

"I'm sorry, but I need to go over there," she said.

"Let me come with you." Howard followed her,

Seeing that, Jordan suddenly felt frustrated,

"Howard, are you that excited to be her child's stepfather?" he asked coldly

The minute he said those words, he knew he had messed up. Have I lost my mind? Why did I say something like that? However, he could do nothing about it, as the words had – long left his mouth. In the end, he could only put on a cold facade.

Howard scratched his chin puzzledly and muttered, "I don't think Miss Yates has a child..."

Rachel's figure looked perfect, so Howard could not believe she had given birth. Even if she did, it was reported on the news that the babies had died. Howard had been with several girls in the past, but he had never been with a woman with children. After all, women like that were quite bothersome.

Meanwhile, Rachel froze on the spot. She did not let her kids attend the banquet, since she knew they'd be called a lot of derogatory names.

She would never let such things happen, so there was no way she would expose her children to the public before things were settled.

However, Jordan already knew about Olivia, and he didn't have a reason to help keep her secret.

Rachel gazed at his icy expression and said lightly, "Mr. Ford, do you mind if we step outside for a while?"

Jordan nodded coldly and walked to the balcony. Immediately, Rachel followed after him.

"Wait, what the hell?" Howard was dumbfounded. "Why does Jordan get to spend time with her when I was the one who helped her earlier?"

Quentin sympathetically patted him on the shoulder. "You're not as attractive or wealthy as Jordan. Any woman would prefer him over you."

As he was talking, Layla walked by, and Howard instantly noticed her. Approaching her, he praised, "You look stunning today."

Quentin was left speechless when he saw that. I shouldn't have sympathized with Howard

On the other hand, Rachel followed Jordan to the balcony. As the two attractive people were walking side by side, it attracted many people's attention,

"Oh my gosh, did she just snatch Jordan away right after coming back?"

"Why would Jordan talk to Rachel alone? I thought he wasn't interested in women."

"We're doomed. Now that Rachel's back, there's no chance for us anymore."

The ladies all sighed, as they knew they didn't stand a chance against Rachel.

They still remembered how things were five years ago-Rachel was the center of attention wherever she went. Even if she was barefaced and wearing the most simple attire, she still looked stunning:

They were so jealous of her, yet there was nothing they could do about it. The only thing they could do was complain about it on the internet.

The chilly night wind swept over the balcony, fluttering Rachel's dark hair. "Mr. Ford, let's make a deal," she whispered, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

A smirk appeared on Jordan's face as he asked, "What deal?"

"I noticed that there is nothing about your son on the internet, so it must mean that you don't want him to be exposed. I am willing to keep this secret for you. At the same time, I hope you can understand me as a fellow parent and keep my secret as well."

Jordan felt a sting in his heart as he recalled the nasty insults flung at Rachel by the people earlier. If the little girl knew that people were being disrespectful to her mother, she would most likely cry.

Jordan didn't know why, but he suddenly felt compelled to see the girl. However, he swiftly dismissed the weird idea.

"I can help you, but what do I gain?" he asked gently.

Rachel was taken aback for a moment, since she had not expected him to agree so quickly. "What do you want?"

"You can't reject me if I need your help," he said solemnly.

Rachel was astonished for a while before nodding. She didn't think she could help him with anything, but she had no right to turn him down. With that, she lifted her

glass and said, "Thank you, Mr. Ford."

Her lipstick had stained the glass, and as Jordan stared at it, he felt his mouth drying up.

"Did you actually give birth to a set of stillborn twins four years ago?" he asked slowly, looking away. He wasn't purposely hurting her, and he simply wanted to know the truth.

In the news, the twins were said to have died, but if that was the case, where did her daughter come from?

Instantly, Rachel clenched her fists tightly because she hated it the most when people mentioned her two children.

Every time they were mentioned, the sight of their bruised bodies emerged before her eyes.

She took a long breath and calmed herself. "The news is fake. Mr. Ford, don't trust anything you hear. Excuse me. I still need to greet the guests."

Right after, she lifted her dress and walked away quickly.

Jordan's brows tightened as he was left there alone.

So the two children didn't die, or maybe only one of them did. In any case, she still has a daughter who is alive and well.

As soon as Rachel walked away, someone poked his head out of the corridor's corner. It was Casper, who had been hiding behind the curtain.

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Casper slowly walked out from behind the curtains, and he kept his eyes on Jordan's figure as he silently followed the latter.

Olivia treated this man very differently. The only plausible reason he could think of to explain her behavior was that this man was probably their father. Thus, he needed to obtain his DNA sample for a paternity test.

His hair, saliva, blood, and nails all carried his DNA, and Casper was determined to lay his hands on one of them. Pursing his thin lips, he continued following Jordan from a distance.

Meanwhile, Jordan had a wineglass in his hand. He took a small sip before walking into the hall where the banquet was held. However, before he could take more than a few steps, he felt someone tailing him.

Huh! I can't believe someone would be following me on such an occasion.

He casually put his wineglass on a table before continuing to walk. After a few steps, he abruptly turned around, and his action scared Casper so much that the latter's heart skipped a beat.

With that, he quickly turned around and acted as if he was merely passing by. When Jordan saw his figure, the derisive smile on his lips grew even colder.

Damian Ford, huh? How dare he sneak out to come to this event? Are those guards at the Ford Family so incapable that they can't even keep watch on a child?

Then, he barked coldly, "Stand right there."

Those words sounded so frosty that Casper, who had never been intimidated by anyone, instantly felt his palms sweating when he heard them.

Nonetheless, he acted as if he hadn't heard it and continued walking forward.

"Damian Ford, take one more step, and I'm getting someone to send you out of the country tonight."

Jordan's voice sounded threatening. This time, he successfully made Casper stop in his steps,

A moment later, Casper turned around with a look of confusion on his young and boyish face. "Sir, are you sure you haven't gotten the wrong person?"

When Jordan caught sight of the unfamiliar face before him, he suddenly felt rather embarrassed.

Condro' I've gotten the wrong boy' But then, thy does this child look so much like Damian

Jordan pursed his lips slightly before asking, "Why were you following me earlier?"

"I wasn't following you.* Casper blinked, "My toy car went missing. Have you seen it?"

Jordan shook his head and turned to leave, and only then did Casper heave a deep sigh of relief

When he was sure that Jordan was truly out of sight, he hastily walked toward the table and took the wineglass the latter had drunk from earlier.

Then he took out a piece of sampling paper from his pocket and pressed it on the spot where Jordan's lips had been.

The moment he was about to put the piece of paper into his pocket, he heard Rachel's voice behind him

*Casper, what are you doing here?"

That was enough to make Casper freeze on the spot. He knew very clearly how much his mother hated his father, so he knew he couldn't mention him at all.

If his mother were to know that he was investigating his father's matter in secret, she would surely be upset.

Thus, he took a deep breath and let his hand that was holding the piece of sampling paper tightly hang by his side. Then, he looked up and smiled at the woman. *Mommy, I'm here to get some cake for Olivia. She likes black forest cake the most."

Rachel rubbed his head affectionately before saying, "Let's go. We'll look for Olivia together."

She had already shown her face at the banquet, so there was no need for her to stay mingling with those scheming folks anymore. She would rather spend more time with her children

Hence, the two of them went upstairs and headed to the lounge together.

Elizabeth was advanced in age, so she didn't like to join parties. That was why she was absent throughout the entire night, for she had been staying in the lounge with Olivia

Rachel's two aunts, Monica and Linda, had enough of watching Rachel being all proud and impressive, so they stayed in the lounge to keep Elizabeth company.

Olivi was sitting on the balcony, reading a book. Her skin was smooth and fair, and

she had thick eyelashes that looked like tiny fans on her eyelids, casting a faint shadow on her porcelain skin.

Even though she was simply sitting there, she looked like a dazzlingly beautiful child actor. When she grew up, she'd surely be an incredibly gorgeous woman.

Monica grew extremely envious as she stared at the little girl. She sighed and commented, "Olivia really is pretty. She's definitely even more outstanding than Rae. It's a shame that she's mute and her background is unknown, not to be,"

Before she could even finish her sentence with something even nastier, Monica felt a chilling glare being directed at her.

Elizabeth then said coldly, "Olivia isn't mute. She just doesn't want to speak."

Monica pursed her lips, clearly disagreeing with Elizabeth. Is there even a difference between the two? I don't care. She's a mute to me.

Linda tried to ease the tension between the two. "There's also an autistic child like Olivia in my family. I heard from the doctor that it's difficult to cure autism. However, as long as the

child's parents stay with them, it would take less time for the child's condition to improve. Nonetheless, who on earth is Olivia's father? Why wouldn't Rae say anything about it?"

She was obviously trying to weasel out some information about Olivia's father.

Elizabeth grew upset when she heard that, but before she could even drive them out of the room, Olivia threw the book in her hands to the ground and ran out of the room.

"Follow her! Hurry! If something bad happens to Olivia, I want the two of you out of this family!"

Both Monica and Linda knew Elizabeth cared a lot about this child who belonged to Rachel, so they rushed out of the room to get some men to go after Olivia.

Meanwhile, Olivia was running down the stairs. There were a lot of people in the hall, which made her feel slightly afraid, so she turned around and ran into the backyard of the Sinclair Residence.

"Look! Little Mute Girl is here!"

Theodore was playing with a bunch of other children in the backyard when he saw Olivia running out of the house. He hurried toward her to block her way.

She's messed with me twice, and she even messed with my mom! I'll make sure she learns her lesson this time!

Theodore was the leader of the children, so when he rushed toward Olivia, the rest of the children followed as well.

"Wow! She's pretty! I've never seen such a pretty girl before!"

"Yeah! She's even prettier than my sister!"

When Theodore heard the way his friends were complimenting Olivia's looks, he grew furious. Hence, he grabbed a handful of mud from the flowerbed and threw it straight at Olivia's face.

Olivia glared at Theodore with her beautiful eyes. Then, without warning, she opened her mouth and bit Theodore's arm.

"Argh! She's biting me again! Get her off me!"

At Theodore's command, the five boys, who were all around the age of seven, rushed forward to pull Olivia away from Theodore.

Olivia struggled intensely. Her sudden burst of strength was so great that the two boys could barely keep her under control.

At the same time, Theodore was so furious that he clenched his teeth and pushed Olivia forcefully. As a result, Olivia fell right into the flowerbed. The sharp branches of the plants scratched her fair and tender skin, causing a number of bloody scratches to appear on her arms.

"You little mute! Don't you dare mess with my mom again!"

Theodore grabbed another pile of mud to throw at Olivia. The other children thought it looked fun, so they joined in as well.

In just a moment, dirty mud covered the little girl's pretty face, hair, and white dress,

They were in the backyard of the Sinclair Residence, which was a place that people would rarely enter. However, someone took an unusual path.

Climbing over the fence, Damian sneaked into the Sinclair Residence.

He had had someone investigate it, so he was very sure that that woman would join the banquet at the Sinclair Residence. That was why he had rushed to the venue without regard for anything else.