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“Mom!” Although Tyler was just as stunned by what happened, he quickly reacted when he saw Jean falling toward him. Then, he supported her before patting her face and pinching her. It seemed that she had fallen into a deep coma and didn’t regain consciousness even after he had shouted at her.

With an indifferent look, Rose said coolly, “Mary, send her to her room.”

Mary nodded and walked toward him. “Young Master Tyler, please hand Madam White to me.”

“Oh, okay.” Tyler nodded and allowed Mary to support his mother. Then, she supported Jean as she helped Jean up the

stairs and into her room.

After that, Rose focused her gaze on Toby. “Toby, you fully know that all the men in the Fuller Family are loyal and devoted. They have never done anything like playing with other people’s feelings, except for your father and you.”

At that, her hand that gripped the whip trembled for a moment as if she was suppressing her emotions. After a moment, she took a deep breath and closed her eyes before she was calm once again. “I will not talk about your father as that was a special case. Your parents did not love each other and they married to fulfill their family responsibilities. However, you are different; since you promised to marry Sonia, you should be good to her and live a happy life with her. However, what happened instead?”

Snap!

She delivered another whip, which caused him to grunt in pain. A trace of heartache subsequently flashed in her eyes, but it was quickly suppressed. “After you married Sonia, you threw her aside, didn’t care about her well-being and even gave her the cold treatment. In fact, you even allowed Jean and Tyler to bully her. Is this what a husband should do?”

Upon hearing these words, Tyler’s face reddened with shame and he couldn’t help but lower his head. He knew that he was at fault.

Nevertheless, Rose didn’t even look at him as she was still staring at Toby. “I wanted to teach you a lesson at that time, but Sonia stopped me. I thought since this is a matter between you two, then you should resolve it yourselves. Since she is dedicated and has a warm, pure personality, I figured she could impress you, but I never expected your heart to be more apathetic than I thought.”

"It's not like that, Grandma-" Before Toby could even finish his words, another whip interrupted his response.

"Shut up, you are not in a position to speak!"

It was already the third whip and for each whip, she didn't show any mercy. He could still endure the severe pain on his back and kneel for the first two lashes, but he could no longer stand straight this time. He fell to the ground from the impact and trembled due to the pain.

As Rose couldn't bear such a sight, she looked away with a frosty face. "I can forget what you have done, but what really makes it difficult for me to stomach is your affair with Tina during the marriage. If you hadn't quickly divorced Sonia, would've beaten you to death instead. I asked you after the divorce whether you would regret your decision, to which you replied that you won't. Look at what happened-you made Sonia pregnant!"

She was furious when she said this and lashed him with the whip twice. His body curled in intense pain as the cold sweat dropped from his forehead and dripped onto his eyelashes, rendering him unable to open his eyes.

Tyler was next to him in tears while grabbing their grandmother's hand and begging, "Grandma, don't hit him anymore. He can't take it anymore!"

However, she didn't listen and shook off his hand. "Toby, before the divorce, you and Tina were entangled with each other to the point where you disregarded Sonia's feelings. Yet, after the divorce, you had sexual relations with Sonia again; what exactly do you take her for? You are simply playing with her feelings! The Fuller Family didn't teach you this, did we?"

Rose's eyes were scarlet and watery as she brandished the whip again. As Tyler looked at Toby shivering in pain, he anxiously took out his phone. "Sonia, you must answer my call. Please, only you can save Toby now."

He quickly dialed Sonia's phone number.

Meanwhile, over at the hospital, Sonia had just finished reading the report that Daphne sent and was about to rest when the phone on her bedside rang. When Sonia saw that it was Tyler calling, she couldn't help but frown. It was so late; what was he doing by calling her? Without thinking much, she was ready to hang up, but she had accidentally slid the answer button the wrong way. As a result, his urgent voice soon spilled into her ear. "Oh, thank God! Sonia, you finally answered. Sonia, you have to save my brother!"

Upon hearing Tyler's cries, Sonia raised her eyebrows. "What's wrong?"

"G-Grandma is whipping my brother and his entire back is now injured. He's on the verge of collapse, so please make Grandma stop, Sonia. She likes you a lot, so she'll definitely listen to your words. Sonia, please," Tyler sobbed as he pleaded.

Even though he was tall and sinewy, he was only a teenager after all and grew up as a pampered child, so he had never witnessed such a bloody, violent scene before. He would naturally be scared to death upon such a sight. In addition, he was worried about Toby and didn't know how to save him from his grandmother's beating. Therefore, he naturally cried from anxiety.

"What? Grandma has used a whip on Toby?" She suddenly straightened her posture, her expression serious.

Sonia remembered that flogging was the consequence of breaking any family rule of the Fuller Family. Whenever a member of the family made a big mistake, they would ask to be lashed by the whip that was left behind by their ancestor. However, during the six years that she was with the Fuller Family, she heard that the old master had only used the cane to beat his son, who was Toby's father, more than 10 years ago. As for the reason, she didn't know, which was why she never expected Toby to also be punished according to the family rules.

"Yes, Sonia," he urged. "Please quickly come and save my brother."

She pursed her lips. "Can you first tell me what mistake Toby has made and why Grandma has brought out the whip?"

"It's all because of you." He stomped his foot.

Sonia froze. "Because of me?"

"Grandma knew about your pregnancy and the child was conceived after you and my brother divorced 3 months ago. She's angry as she thought my brother played with your feelings, so she is punishing him," he explained.

Her eyes narrowed because she had thought that Toby was being punished for something else; she never expected it to be because of her. Since the matter was related to her, she really

couldn't just stand by and watch. With a sigh, she pinched her brow and tried to shake off her exhaustion before she responded, "Got it. Give the phone to Grandma."

"Okay." Now that Tyler knew that Toby was now being saved, he cried with joy as he hurriedly handed the phone to Rose. "Grandma, Sonia is looking for you."

Rose shot Tyler a meaningful look. *This kid is quite smart; he knows the best person to look for to save Toby.*

Hence, she cast the whip aside and took the phone. After replacing her indifference with kindness and benevolence, she greeted, "Sonia, it's me."

"Grandma, Tyler said that you are whipping Toby?" Sonia asked.

"Yes, this boy deserves to be whipped." Rose nodded. "He betrayed you before the divorce and caused you grief. After

that, he cheated after the divorce and impregnated you. I really don't know what sins the ancestors of the Fuller Family have committed for us to end up with such a sinful descendant like him."

Before the divorce, Toby had insisted he only loved Tina and didn't believe that he and Sonia were suited for each other, yet this mess occurred instead.

So, *what is he taking Sonia as?* Rose thought as she glanced coldly at the unconscious Toby on the floor. Then, she sighed in exhaustion. "Sonia, is the child okay?"

Thinking that the Fuller Family would soon be welcoming the fourth generation, her mood had slightly improved. However, in the next second, Sonia's answer instantly sent her good mood crashing to rock bottom.

Sonia touched her belly and replied, "Didn't Toby tell you? The child was aborted."

The phone in Rose's hand fell to the ground with a plop as she collapsed from the shock of the news. Before losing consciousness, there was only one thought in her mind: *my great-grandson is gone!*

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"Grandma!" Tyler yelled when he saw Rose beginning to topple over. Then, he rushed to grab hold of her before she collapsed to the ground.

At this moment, Mary happened to be making her way downstairs. Upon seeing Tyler holding onto Rose, Mary demanded in shock, "Young Master Tyler, what's going on? Is Old Mrs. Fuller okay?"

"I don't know what happened, but she fainted" he explained with an ashen face.

Mary hurried over and helped to lay Rose on the floor before performing CPR on the older woman. As she did so, she urged, "Call an ambulance, Young Master Tyler."

"Oh, right!" He snapped out of his frantic daze and glanced around before he spotted the phone that had slipped from Rose's grip and landed on the floor earlier. Then, he bent to pick

it up.

Coincidentally, the call with Sonia was still ongoing and her alarmed voice filled the other line as she shouted, "Grandma? Grandma!" She had heard the phone clattering onto the ground as well as Tyler's anxious cries on the other end and instantly knew that something had happened to Rose. She only grew more panicked when Rose didn't make a single sound over the phone.

Sonia had no idea what was going on. Since she was not with Rose, it meant that she could only clutch her phone with trembling hands and anxiously call out for the latter while hoping desperately for some response. Alas, all that greeted her on the other line was not Rose's voice, but Tyler's trepidation as he said, "Sonia, Grandma has just fainted."

"What do you mean she fainted?" Sonia bolted upright in bed. She was just about to press for details when the call ended with a decisive beep.

Thinking that Tyler might have accidentally hung up, she called the number once more only to find that the other line was busy.

Sonia let out a groan of frustration and set her phone aside. Worry and panic weighed on her as she wondered whether Rose had collapsed after learning that she had terminated her pregnancy. *If that really is the case, then it would be my fault if anything bad happens to Grandma!*

Meanwhile, over at the Fuller Residence, the ambulance Tyler called for arrived as quickly as it could. The paramedics eased Rose onto the stretcher before they brought her and Tyler to the hospital.

That night, it seemed as if the Fuller Family was thrown into predestined chaos; three out of the four family members had collapsed, leaving a helpless Tyler trying to shoulder the burden alone. If Mary hadn't been next to him throughout the process, he had a feeling that he would black out too.

After all, he was only a boy in his late teens whom Rose, Jean, and Toby had sheltered. For the most part, he was coddled and free to do whatever he pleased. Never once had he thought all three of his pillars would crumble before him.

Presently, Titus was unsettled as he returned to the Gray Residence. At the sight of him, Julia's eyes lit up and she hastened to greet him at the threshold. "Honey, you're home."

"Welcome home, Dad," Rina said cheerily while walking up to him.

Titus nodded sullenly and as Julia helped him over to the armchair, he said, "It's good to be home."

"I'll get you a drink, Dad." With that, Rina poured tea into a cup and handed it to him.

He took the cup, his expression softening as he pointed out, "How very thoughtful of you, Rina"

The girl smiled unassumingly and lowered her gaze, hiding the dark gleam in her eyes.

There was something incredibly gratifying about being praised. Rina had spent the last twenty-six years of her life being subjected to abuse and she never understood parental love until she arrived at the Gray Residence, whereupon she discovered how potent and enthralling it was to become the object of parental affection. *Why can't such wonderful parents be my biological family?*

"How did it go, honey? Has Toby agreed to reinstate our partnership and the engagement?" Julia asked nervously, clutching her hands together like she was in prayer. "If the engagement were to resume, would he choose Tina or Rina?"

Upon hearing this, Rina became tense and watched Titus with wary eyes.

Titus, on the other hand, tightly clenched the cup in his hand as his features twisted into a grimace. If the cup wasn't made out of glass, he would've squeezed it into pieces. "No, he has not!" he finally bit out through gritted teeth, rage and spite coloring his voice.

Julia froze. "He hasn't? As in, he doesn't want to reinstate both the partnership and the engagement?"

He practically threw the cup onto the table as he answered gloomily, "Yes, that's what I meant. He hasn't agreed to do anything at all!"

"How is that possible, though?" A stunned Julia covered her mouth with a shaky hand.

While standing at one side, Rina was elated to hear this. She was more than relieved to know that the engagement would remain canceled. She had neither wanted to marry into the Fuller Family nor have Toby reinstate his engagement with Tina; she didn't want Tina to marry well, for fear that it would only make it harder to throw that infernal girl out of the Gray Family.

And as for me... The silhouette of a cavalier and lean figure flashed in Rina's mind and she couldn't help the blood that rushed to her face as her heart began to race.

Since she was afraid that Titus and Julia would catch her looking flustered, she quickly looked down and hid her face from their view.

However, it was clear that neither Titus nor Julia were paying attention to her, so they were unaware of how flushed she looked right now.

Julia dug her nails into her palms, growing antsy as she demanded, "Why in the world would he turn us down? We have evidence of his affair and he should know better than to refuse

us"

"Why should he know better?" Titus let out a hollow, self deprecating laugh. "His name alone is enough to keep anyone from aggravating him, even if we were to publicize all proof of his affair. The most damage he'd get out of it would be a couple of scathing remarks made behind his back, and as for the netizens..."

He broke off in a contemptuous scoff, then continued, "Toby would probably have liaised with all the media powerhouses and social media platforms before we could even air his dirty laundry on the internet. And our plan to use the netizens to tarnish his reputation would be stymied. From how I look at it, there's no way he would be threatened by the mere likes of us."

"But." Julia was rendered speechless by her husband's sour analysis. She stammered to filter her thoughts into words, but in the end, she could only manage hoarsely, "So, we were excited over nothing?"

"Pretty much," Titus agreed with a sigh.

They had believed that they could finally one-up Toby with evidence of his scandal and needle him into giving them what they wanted, but as it turned out, their plan was only good on paper.

As she sobbed into her hands, Julia wailed, "At this rate, what's going to happen to our enterprise?"

Titus thoughtfully narrowed his eyes. "If push comes to shove, then we'd have to settle for a merger. We could let go of some of our shares, but at the great risk of losing control over the enterprise, and that would be the end of the Gray Family's reign over the company."

If that happened, then Triforce Enterprise would no longer be the Gray Family's business; they would be reduced to the same standing as any other shareholder.

Triforce Enterprise was Titus' brainchild and after having poured his blood, sweat and tears into building it up from scratch, he could not sit by and watch it slip through his fingers like fine sand. However, he could not obtain a loan anywhere even from financial institutes. As things stood, he had to resort to desperate measures, even if it meant settling for a merger, which was something he would never have considered otherwise.

Julia stared at her husband, her heart twisting when she noticed how withered he looked. "Honey-"

"Right, it's getting late and we should all get some rest. When Tina comes home from the hospital tomorrow, keep an eye on her so that she doesn't cause us any

more trouble." He rose from his seat and rubbed his temple tiredly. "I finally realized that she is no match for Sonia, not even in the slightest."

With an obedient nod, she replied, "Alright."

The darkness of the night slowly passed and when the morning arrived, Charles showed up at the hospital to escort Sonia.

She eyed him in askance. "Did you come alone?"

"Who else were you expecting?" He cast her a sideways glance.

Sonia stood next to her bed and placed a hand on her lower abdomen, which was still sore from the procedure. "I just thought Carl might come along with you."

"I called him to ask if he wanted to, but for some reason, couldn't get through his phone. I don't know what he's up to either, so I figured I'd just come here without him," Charles explained with a casual shrug. Then, a sudden thought crossed his mind before he asked, "By the way, did something happen between you and Carl yesterday?"

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The moment she thought about her exchange with Carl the day before, Sonia lowered her gaze before she dismissed, "No, nothing happened at all."

Clearly seeing through her lie, Charles raised a brow and drawled, "Really? Because from how I look at it, something definitely happened. I ran into Carl after I managed to borrow the wheelchair and boy, was I shocked by how gloomy he looked. I asked if he was okay, but he ignored me; when I returned to the ward, you looked sullen as well. I figured something must have happened between you two, but I only kept quiet about it because you looked so upset at that time."

She chewed on her lip in reticence.

He pulled up a chair next to her bed. "Come on, let it all out and maybe I'll guide you like a moral compass."

"It's nothing, really," she muttered before she sat down on the chair propped up to one side of the room. "I just noticed that Carl has a psychological issue and I..."

Sonia trailed off, not wanting to talk about how Carl had been involved in the poisoning, at least not to Charles. She didn't want him to worry and she certainly would hate it if the two men started holding grudges against each other.

While Charles hadn't known Carl for as long as she had, the two men were still friends and she didn't want to jeopardize their friendship by telling the truth.

Moreover, she had already decided to forgive Carl and look past this incident. Withholding the truth seemed the best way to move forward.

Charles, on the other hand, exclaimed in surprise, "Y-You noticed Carl's psychological issue?"

Sonia briefly appraised him with narrowed eyes as she accused, "What, did you already know about it?"

He swallowed convulsively at the realization that he had let this secret out of the bag.

"Out with it, Charles! Have you known about his psychological issue all this while?" she asked incredulously as she stared at him with wide eyes.

He struggled to find the words before he finally sighed and confessed, "Okay, fine. I've known about this for quite some time now."

"You-" In a fit of frustration and disbelief, she kicked him. "If you knew about it, then why didn't you say anything?" If he had done so, she would have tried to persuade Carl to seek professional help; he would be better at coping with his psychological issue instead of going to lengths to poison her.

"Carl was the one who asked me to keep my mouth shut about it," Charles admitted as he resentfully rubbed the area where Sonia's kick had landed moments ago.

She glowered at him mutinously. "I can't believe you would call yourself my childhood friend when you are hiding things from me! When did you find out about Carl's psychological issue? Tell me the truth!"

"Well.." He averted his gaze and looked to a remote corner of the room, appearing as if he was trying to come up with yet another lie.

Sonia frowned in annoyance and made to kick him again, but he foresaw this and quickly brought his legs up, effectively dodging her approaching foot. With a rueful chuckle, he responded, "Okay, okay, I'll tell you everything! There's no need to get riled up."

"Well, then, stop dawdling!" she urged.

He shrugged before he solemnly explained, "I've known about it for a year now. Carl and I got in touch with one another two years ago, courtesy of your

grandfather. When your dad passed, your stepmother and sister sold off all his shares in Paradigm Co., but your grandfather had been secretly buying up these shares alongside Carl. I don't know how long they both have been working together, but I'm guessing it's been more than three years, given how I've only joined them two years ago."

"So, both of you and Grandpa have been buying up shares in Paradigm Co.?" She gaped in disbelief.

Three months ago, which was right after her divorce from Toby, Carl had brought her to see her grandfather, Leonard. Leonard was an archeologist who spent the better part of his years studying and wandering through historical sites, so he hardly ever kept in touch with Sonia. In fact, she never saw him in the six years that she was married to Toby; it was always radio silence on Leonard's end, so she was shocked that Carl had even managed to locate him at all.

What was even more surprising was the sum of shares in Paradigm Co. that Leonard had presented Sonia with. She was well aware that her stepmother and sister had sold off these shares, and casting her own astonishment aside, Sonia's curiosity was provoked after seeing the large number of shares he had in hand. She wanted to know how he managed to acquire these shares, the amount of which far surpassed what her father had held during his lifetime.

Naturally, the presumption that Leonard was the one who purchased these shares had stood valid for a while, but she quickly dismissed it. He was merely an archeologist and it wasn't a well-paid career, at least not well enough to provide him with the means of purchasing shares worth twenty percent of the entire Paradigm Co.

Following this, Sonia had suppressed her curiosity and decided that she would save her questions for the next meeting with her grandfather. However, when the meeting came around and she had asked for answers, Leonard kept mum about the truth. Nevertheless, she would rather have a clear explanation on this, just in case he had made some kind of deal with someone else.

Little did she know that Leonard, Carl and Charles were collaborating with each other all these years to acquire the fifty-one percent share in Paradigm Co. that she now held.

As it turned out, she had unknowingly received an overwhelming amount of generosity and kindness from those around her. She should have returned their favors by maintaining her pride and dignity, but she had instead spent the last six years compromising with the Fuller Family. Not to mention, she was pathetically obsessing over the idea of turning Toby into the man he had once been. She chased after him like a desperate puppy in the hopes that they could have the happily-ever-after that she dreamed of. In retrospect, she had been a fool and even disappointed her grandfather, Charles and Carl. The guilt and shame stirred in her like a sour, bitter cocktail.

Almost at once, she felt as if she did not deserve the shares she now held in Paradigm Co. It hurt to think that she owned them and they weighed on her conscience.

Besides, how could she have been so thick-skinned as to own them at all? She had never once done anything to deserve them.

Upon seeing how upset Sonia was, Charles leapt up from the hospital bed and asked worriedly, "Baby, what's wrong?"

Sonia gazed up at him with watery eyes and drew in a deep breath to suppress her tears. "Nothing, I just feel really guilty about something I thought about."

"And what might that be?" he asked in curiosity.

She shook her head. "It's nothing."

Even as she said this, she made a solemn vow to return his and Carl's favor to her. She suddenly realized that she owed so much to a long list of people in this lifetime.

Charles could tell that there was something on Sonia's mind. He gazed at her intently and when she still didn't say anything, he frustratedly threw his hands in the air in a show of resignation. Then, he picked up from where the initial conversation had left off. "So, where was I?"

"You were telling me about how Carl and my grandfather worked together for at least three years or more," she pointed out.

"Right. So, I took a guess at the timeline when your grandfather found me two years ago and had me join his efforts in recouping those shares. It was after I agreed to help him that I met Carl, and ever since then, we've been buying up those shares listed on the market," he explained.

Sonia pursed her lips and demanded angrily, "I met Carl two years ago, so why didn't you say anything then? Why didn't you tell me that the both of you were working together with Grandpa in buying up the shares?" She wondered whether she would have snapped out of her lovesick daze with Toby if they came clean with her from the beginning.

"I wanted to, but your grandfather told me to keep it from you, and so did Carl. My hands were tied" Charles answered with a pout. Then, he added, "I spent a lot of time with Carl in the past two years and I noticed that there was something off about him from the start, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. It wasn't until a year ago that I realized he had a psychological issue. When he found out, he warned me not to breathe a word of it, especially to you. So, I've kept it a secret from you until now."

That's how it is then! Sonia dug her nails into her palms. "Do you know what caused his psychological issue?"

"No, but I know it's pretty serious, so I guess he's had it for a while."

For a while... She narrowed her eyes in thought. If that's the case, then something must have happened to Carl in the last ten years that created this psychological issue of his. He couldn't have been born with it because he was gentle and always ready to laugh ten years ago.

"By the way, baby, what are you going to do now that you know about Carl's condition?" Charles piped up, sounding somber.

Sonia pinched the space between her brows. "What else is there for me to do other than to convince him to seek treatment? It's the only way he could take a turn for the better."

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"That's going to be tough" Charles said as he shrugged halfheartedly. When he caught the look on Sonia's face, he chuckled bitterly and explained, "Believe me, I tried to get him to seek treatment as well, but he refused. It will be a challenge to persuade him otherwise."

Sonia lowered her gaze. "Regardless, we can't just let Carl's condition deteriorate any further, or he'd end up hurting himself and others. I'll try to talk to him about seeking professional help one of these days."

"Well, if you say so, then I'll leave it up to you. We should go now, though" Charles pointed out as he made to take her bag for her.

She hummed absentmindedly in response. "Let's go." (This Novel Daily Latest Chapters provide it)

With the discharge sheet in hand, both of them walked out of the in-patient ward and headed for the elevators.

They had only just come to a stop in front of an elevator when the doors opened before Charles could press the button. The next second, Tyler barreled out of the elevator without watching where he was going, nearly knocking Sonia down in his hurry.

"Watch out, baby!" Charles exclaimed. Possessed of lightning reflexes, he grabbed hold of Sonia and pulled her aside, saving her from what would have been a rough collision.

It was only when Tyler heard Charles' voice that he stopped in his tracks. He turned, and his eyes lit up when he saw Sonia. "Sonia!" he called out. She raised a brow. "What are you doing here?"

"Grandma and Toby are being kept under observation here, so I came to take care of them," Tyler answered plaintively.

Sonia was suddenly reminded that Rose had collapsed the night before, but when she was about to ask after the old woman's condition, Charles interjected coolly, "Oh, Toby's been hospitalized? What delightful news! Come on, kid, tell me what happened to him. Is it some terminal illness? How long will he have to live? Give me all the details so I can get a wreath for him-you know, for his voyage into the afterlife."

"You-how dare you speak of my brother like he's dying!" Tyler fumed at Charles' sinister taunting, and all he could see at that moment was red as he hurled his fist toward the older man.

Charles, on the other hand, did not expect such rage from the kid in front of him. *He's actually going to punch me*, he thought with wide eyes. He bridled and dodged as fast as he could.

However, Tyler was a basketball player with all the attributes to go with it. With his height and long legs, he towered over Charles by at least half a foot.

As such, even if Charles dodged with astounding agility, he still could not escape Tyler's vice-like claw.

Meanwhile, upon seeing that Tyler's punch was about to land on Charles' face, Sonia frowned and cried out peevishly, "Stop it!"

Her voice rang loud and clear, and Tyler's fist came to an abrupt halt in mid-air. Sonia marched up to them and tore them apart. "That's enough, both of you. *We're in a hospital!* Show some decency, why don't you?" She glared at Tyler, then at Charles before saying, "Apologize right now, Charles."

"Why?" Charles demanded with wide eyes. (This Novel Daily Latest Chapters provide it)

She pursed her lips. "Why? Maybe it's because whatever you said earlier was totally uncalled for! I know you hate Toby with a passion, but there's no need for you to say such terrible things about him. Now, apologize!" she bit out with emphasis this time.

Charles quirked his lips and muttered begrudgingly, "I'm sorry."

Tyler glowered at him mutinously. "I don't give a damn about your apology!"

"Then what the hell do you want?" Charles barked, his brows knitting together.

"I want to punch your lights out, that's what!" Tyler spat, clenching his fists angrily.

"Come on, big guy!" Charles rolled up his sleeves. "I admit I was caught off guard when you wanted to throw down some punches earlier, which was why I dodged, but that won't happen again! Let's take this outside, kid, and we'll see if you're just all talk!"

"Fine! We'll take it outside then!" A cold smirk played on Tyler's lips as he added mockingly, "I'll show you who's all talk at the end-" He broke off deliberately and eyed Charles' legs with contempt, then scoffed. "Though I think between the both of us, you'd run off crying first!"

"You punk"

"That's enough!" When Sonia saw that the boys were building up to another fight, she interrupted again, this time with the same frustration as a tired parent. She stood between them like a wall and snapped, "Charles, you're nearly thirty years old. What are you doing picking fights with a minor? Don't you feel ashamed of yourself? And you!" She shot a dark look at Tyler. "Keep your temper in check, young man."

She was using all her might to keep a fight from breaking out between these two. Aside from the plain fact that fighting in a hospital was downright unacceptable, she was also aware that Charles would lose out painfully in a fight with Tyler.

While Charles was oblivious to this, Sonia knew that Tyler was well-versed in kickboxing. Moreover, he was taller than Charles. In the aggregate, Charles was no match for the kid.

That being said, Charles was clueless about how much of a disadvantage he would be at if a brawl broke out, but he was a little embarrassed to have been called a petty adult by Sonia for picking fights with a minor. A red flush crept over his cheekbones as he clenched his fists and let out a dry, awkward cough. "Fine, then. If you're going to put it that way, baby, then I guess I'll be the bigger person and let this punk off the hook this time."

"Let me off the hook?" Tyler scoffed in derision. "Move, Sonia! I'm going to teach this guy a lesson and knock some sense into him!"

"Stop it!" Sonia could feel the onset of a migraine attack. She rubbed the divot between her brows and asked, "Tyler, how's

Grandma doing right now?"

Upon hearing this, Tyler finally calmed down, and his rage was replaced with the despair that one might associate with an abandoned puppy. "Grandma's fine; she came to an hour ago. Toby, on the other hand, isn't doing too well. He's still in the ICU."

"The ICU?!" Sonia's jaw fell open.

Charles, too, was equally shocked. "Hold up-does he actually have a terminal illness or something?" After all, things had to be dire in order for a person to end up in the intensive care unit.

Having regained composure, Sonia eyed Tyler steadily as she pressed, "How badly did Grandma punish him?"

She had thought that Toby, being Rose's grandson, would be subjected to mercy even if the old woman were to break out the cane. However, it was now that she realized how wrong she had been to assume this. As it turned out, Rose had given Toby such a harsh beating that he ended up in the ICU. In fact, one might even think that somebody had had a score to settle with him if they didn't know any better.

"What? Toby ended up in the ICU because Old Mrs. Fuller doled out corporal punishment on him?" Charles demanded incredulously, his voice rising by an octave.

Tyler ignored him and kept his attention on Sonia, nodding as he replied with red-rimmed eyes, "He was in really bad shape after Grandma was done caning him. I counted ten strokes, and the back of his shirt was barely holding together after each one. Things got pretty graphic when his skin tore and blood seeped through; when he was loaded into the back of the ambulance last night, his back was a whole bloody mess. He was practically mutilated."

At the mention of this, the gory image of Toby's maimed back from last night flashed in Tyler's mind. He shuddered, and all the color drained from his face.

While he was explaining, Sonia could visualize the scene, and she pursed her lips reticently.

Unexpectedly, Charles inhaled sharply and exclaimed, "I can't believe the old lady could be so ruthless. Why did she cane Toby *anyway*?"

Tyler's lips parted like he was about to answer, but he caught himself. Charles was his enemy, after all, and he scoffed as he snapped, "That's none of your business! You have no right to know!"

"You-" Charles choked on whatever insult he had been ready to fire, then quieted down and murmured, "Fine, don't tell me. I don't give a damn either way. Come on, baby, it's getting late. We shouldn't waste time talking to this kid when we have to

get going."

"Sorry, Charles, but do you think you could go without me? I'm going to pay Grandma a visit," Sonia said, rubbing her temple

tiredly.

Charles frowned. "Visit her? Why would you do that after the Fuller Family,"

"You know she's been kind to me, Charles; I can't just sit by and do nothing now that I know she's hospitalized" Sonia argued seriously, meeting his gaze.

More to the point, she might have caused Rose to collapse last night when she broke the news of her terminated pregnancy, which gave her all the more reason to visit the matriarch of the Fuller Family

Charles opened and closed his mouth, too stumped to protest. After a few seconds, he sighed in resignation and acceded. "Very well. Go and see the old lady. I'll be waiting for you at the hospital gardens."

Sonia flashed him a smile. "Thanks, Charles."

"It's nothing. Go on, then," he prompted, tousling her hair affectionately

She froze at this gesture, and when he withdrew his hand, she brought hers up to the spot where his fingers had tousled her hair.

Before this, she might have overlooked his gesture and deemed it as a platonic one, seeing as he rarely ever tousled her hair, even while they were kids. But now that she knew of his feelings for her, the intimacy of this gesture suddenly weighed differently than it otherwise would have.

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Upon noticing the dazed look on Sonia's face, Charles leaned forward and asked, "What's wrong, baby?"

Sonia snapped out of her thoughts and was initially surprised to see how close Charles' face was to her own. Quickly taking a step back, she averted his gaze and mumbled, "Nothing."

Charles narrowed his eyes at her demeanor. *What's going on? Is she hiding from me?*

"Sonia, can we go and see Grandma now?" To one side, Tyler was annoyed to see Sonia getting too close to any man other than Toby. As far as he was concerned, she belonged to Toby alone, and as Toby's younger brother, he was obligated to ward off any other man who tried to get chummy with Sonia.

Sonia nodded. "Okay, let's go." With that, she turned to address Charles. "So I guess I'll get going then, Charles."

"Go on," he replied with a nod.

Sonia gave Tyler a look, and they sauntered in the opposite direction of the elevator lobby.

This floor was dedicated to VIP wards, so it was no surprise that Rose would be staying here. "Here we are," Tyler announced half a minute later, coming to a stop in front of one of the doors.

Sonia looked up at the plaque that bore Rose's full name and gently knocked on the door. It opened within seconds to reveal Mary, whose eyes glimmered in relief as she exclaimed, "Oh, it's you, Young Mistress!"

Sonia smiled at her. "Hello, Mary." (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

"How good of you to drop by, Young Mistress," Mary said cheerily. "Old Mrs. Fuller was just talking about you. She's been calling you, but for some reason, she couldn't get through your phone."

"My phone ran out of battery." Sonia explained ruefully. She had forgotten to charge it after her call with Tyler last night, and when she woke up this morning, she saw that her phone had died but chose to do nothing about it.

She had thought that she could charge her phone once she was back home, but little had she known that Rose would bombard her with calls.

"It's alright. Come on in, Young Mistress." Mary ushered enthusiastically as she opened the door fully to allow Sonia's passage.

"Okay." With a nod, Sonia stepped through the open door with Tyler and Mary in her wake.

At first glance, Rose was lying in the hospital bed, looking like a frail old person who had just drifted off to sleep. Lowering her voice to just barely above a whisper, Sonia called out in greeting, "Grandma."

She thought the old woman had fallen asleep, but she was caught off guard when Rose's eyes fluttered open instantly. A wide smile plastered on Rose's wizened face when she saw her visitor. "Sonia" she greeted affectionately.

"Hello, Grandma." Sonia walked up to the bed and sat down next to it.

Rose took her hand in hers affably and asked, "What are you doing here, Sonia?"

"I just got discharged today, and I ran into Tyler while waiting for the elevator. When I found out you were here, I tagged along with him so I could visit you. How

are you doing, Grandma?" Sonia's eyes searched the old woman's face with concern.

Rose beamed. "I'm perfectly fine. The doctor said that panic got the better of me, and with my old age, my blood pressure spiked without warning and caused me to collapse. I'm all better now, and I'll be going home this afternoon."

"That's good to know." Sonia nodded, feeling reassured. (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

However, the lighthearted moment was quickly disrupted by Tyler's belligerence as he interjected tearfully, "That's not true! The doctor said that Grandma only got lucky this time, but if the same thing were to happen again,"

"Tyler!" Rose cut him off with a warning look on her face, no longer patient and affable as she signaled him to keep quiet.

Nevertheless, Sonia caught on to the insinuation that Rose's collapse was a sign of something graver, and she pursed her lips before urging, "Tyler, go on."

Tyler nodded and picked up where he left off. "If Grandma were to collapse because of her blood pressure once more, then she would be at high risk of getting a stroke, and she'd be paralyzed forever."

"What?" Sonia's eyes widened in alarm, and she tightened her grip on Rose's withered hands. "Grandma..."

Rose heaved a sigh but resumed her gentle facade as she placated, "Don't you worry about that right now, Sonia. With old age comes sickness; it's inevitable. Besides, if I'm not too strung up about it, you shouldn't as well."

"But-"

Sonia was about to protest, but Rose interrupted. "By the way, Sonia, I'd like you to be honest with me-did Toby ask you to end the pregnancy?" She had only collapsed the night before thinking that her grandson was the reason why Sonia terminated the pregnancy.

"No, he didn't" Sonia answered with a firm shake of her head.

"Really?" Rose gazed at her intently.

"Really," Sonia reassured. "President Fuller didn't force me to do it; I chose to end the pregnancy." She lowered her gaze then, looking guilty. "I got into an accident, and I couldn't keep the baby."

"An accident?" Rose repeated in astonishment.

Sonia's eyes shone with tears. "I slipped and fell, and the miscarriage followed."

"I see," Rose said mournfully, patting her chest as though to soothe the heartache. A bitter smile tugged on her lips. "I suppose there's nothing we could do. Maybe it was fate that we never got to meet the baby."

Sonia could tell the old woman had really hoped to see the baby greet the world, and a twinge of guilt seized her as she whispered, "I'm sorry, Grandma." (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

Rose patted her arm. "You don't have to apologize. You have never once hurt our family in any way, which is more than I can say for the rest of the Fuller Family. Toby put you through so much."

Initially, Rose had planned on doing everything she could-even if it meant casting her own dignity aside-just to push Sonia and Toby back together, given how Sonia was already pregnant with his child anyway. However, now that Sonia had lost the baby, that plan had as good as gone to the dogs.

This is all Toby's fault. If only he'd told me sooner about the pregnancy, I'd have done everything in my power to fix his relationship with Sonia! Alas, her goodwill could not beat out the cards dealt by fate; perhaps Toby and Sonia really weren't meant to be together after all. At the thought of this, Rose shook her head in bitter resignation.

In the following hour, Sonia kept Rose company until she decided to get going, seeing how Charles was still waiting for her out in the gardens. She hated to let him wait for much longer in this cold weather.

"Sonia, are you are you going to see Toby?" Rose asked in a slightly hesitant tone, regarding the younger woman with an unreadable look in her eyes.

Biting down on her lip, Sonia finally shook her head curtly and said, "I don't think so. The string that tied me to President Fuller snapped the moment I lost the baby. I'm grateful that you took it upon yourself to punish him for me, Grandma, but as of now, President Fuller and I will no longer have anything to do with each other."

By the time she paid back all that she owed Toby, she would cut him off entirely.

Seeing the somber gleam in Sonia's eyes, Rose sighed wistfully and said at last, "Very well, then. Tyler, could you escort Sonia out, please?"

"Okay." Tyler was sulking as he agreed to see Sonia out. He couldn't understand how she could be so heartless as to not visit Toby, who was a patient. *Surely it wouldn't be an issue to visit a patient!*

Presently, Sonia bade Rose goodbye, then fell in step behind Tyler as they walked out of the room and toward the elevators.

Just as they were drawing close to the elevators, Tyler abruptly stopped in his tracks and turned to give Sonia a wounded look. "Toby's in the ICU ward up ahead, Sonia. Are you really not going to see him?" (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

"No." Sonia replied with an air of finality.

Upon hearing this, Tyler clenched his fists and pleaded, "Sonia, he's in really bad shape. Can't you please just go over and visit him for a bit? Please?" Then he bowed deeply before her, with his waist bent at a sharp angle.

Sonia was startled by his desperation. Frowning, she argued, "Don't you think you're forcing me more than you're asking me for a favor?"

"I'm not. I didn't think much of it, but I know that there's a higher chance of you caving if I did this," Tyler admitted gravely as he straightened up and looked her in the eye.

Without waiting for her to respond, he reached out and grabbed her by the wrist, then hauled her along as he ran down the hallway ahead of them.

It wasn't until after they had stopped in front of Toby's room at the ICU ward that Sonia realized where she was. The ICU ward was different from the typical hospital ward. The walls were all made of glass, and Sonia didn't have to go in to see what was happening inside.

She could clearly see Toby, who was deathly pale as he lay on the hospital cot, his bare torso heavily bandaged. More astonishing was his back, which looked as if the doctors and nurses had taken care to drape a fitted white sheet over it.

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Upon closer look, the fitted white sheet was really made out of layers of bandage that covered nearly the entire surface area of Toby's wounded back. It wasn't hard to see how badly hurt he was.

"Come on, Sonia, let's go in!" Tyler urged, placing a hand on the doorknob.

Sonia shook her head vehemently in refusal. "No, let's not. I've already seen him, haven't I? It's time for me to go!"

"But," Tyler began to argue.

However, he was cut off brusquely when Sonia pressed her lips into a grim line and snapped impatiently, "Tyler, I never wanted to come here in the first place, but you didn't leave me a choice when you dragged me down the hallway. Now that I've seen Toby, what more are you asking of me?"

Tyler flushed. "I'm not asking for more. I just want you to stay with Toby for a bit."

"And why should I? What am I to him?" she retorted witheringly, meeting Tyler's flustered gaze.

He opened his mouth, wanting to say something along the lines of 'you're his wife, of course!' before remembering that she and Toby were already divorced.

As such, he closed his mouth again, feeling stupid as the words died on his tongue.

At the sight of this, Sonia shook her head slightly and turned to head for the elevators. This time, Tyler did not stop her.

Perhaps it was because he knew he had no right or power to hold her back. (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

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Sonia stopped in front of an elevator and pressed the button. The elevator arrived not long after, and when the doors opened, a figure clad in a white coat walked out—it was none other than

Tim.

He was a little startled to see Sonia on the other side of the doors, and he adjusted his glasses as he asked, "I thought you were discharged. What are you still doing here?"

"I got held back." Sonia explained nebulously with a mild smile.

Tim peered behind her shoulder and instantly understood what was going on. He narrowed his eyes slightly and inquired, "Your ward isn't in this direction, so why would you be leaving through the elevators here unless you've dropped by to visit Toby?"

While he clearly guessed it right, Sonia did not become flustered but shrugged instead, showing a trace of frustration as she replied, "You caught me. I ran into Tyler on my way out of the hospital, and when I found out Grandma was hospitalized, I decided to visit her. After that, Tyler dragged me all the way here to see Toby."

"Oh" Tim said plainly. "And now you're leaving?"

She nodded. "That's right. I should go now that I've already seen him."

Tim broke into a light chuckle. "What do you think of his injuries?"

"What do I think?" She looked at him suspiciously. "Why would you ask this?"
(This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

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"Nothing, I'm only curious. After all, I heard that his injuries had something to do with you," he explained nonchalantly, adjusting his glasses once more.

She lowered her gaze and said stoically, "The rumors aren't technically wrong, but in all honesty, he brought the injuries upon himself, so I don't know what to think of them."

"Oh, is that so?" An odd glimmer flashed in Tim's eyes as he became interested. "I take it that you know why he was caned in the first place?"

"Sort of, but seeing as it weighs on my personal affairs with the Fuller Family, I'd rather not talk about it with you." Sonia nodded in apology, then added, "Right, I should get going now, Dr. Lancaster. See you."

With that, she brushed past him and into the waiting elevator.

Tim, on the other hand, glanced over his shoulder at the slowly closing elevator doors. The fluorescent lights above reflected off his glasses, and he waited until the doors fully closed before he turned away. Pushing his glasses up his nose bridge, he let out an amused laugh and said to no one, "How interesting!"

Meanwhile, Charles sat on a nearby bench in the gardens outside the inpatient ward, and he was speaking on his phone when Sonia found him.

She walked up to him, and when he spotted her, he beckoned her over. He spoke into the line for a few seconds more, then hung up. "Are you done?" he asked Sonia, keeping his phone in his pocket.

Sonia nodded. "Yeah, I am." (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

"Took you a while," he accused jokingly, then tapped his watch in mock exasperation to show that he had been waiting for much longer than expected.

She flashed him an embarrassed smile. "I guess I lost track of time while I was talking to Grandma. Sorry for waiting, Charles. I'll buy you dinner later if you'd like."

"Nah, there's no need for that. Besides, it's not like you could stomach rich food right now, and I'd hate to be the only one eating any thing with flavor. Come on, I'll drop you home," he offered graciously, rising to his feet.

They sauntered over to the hospital parking lot, and a couple of steps in, Charles suddenly remembered something. He turned to look at Sonia and said eagerly, "By the way, baby, guess who I saw earlier."

"Who?" Sonia asked, shaking her head to show that she was not up for guessing games now; she probably would have made all the wrong guesses anyway.

Charles did not try to bait her either. Instead, he narrowed his eyes as he chuckled insidiously. "I saw Tina!"

"What?" Sonia stopped walking. "Tina's here at the hospital, too?"

"No, she's not here as a visitor," he began to explain. "Apparently, she's been staying in the hospital ever since she left the courthouse the other day. I asked the nurses and did some sleuthing; as it turns out, the police took Tina into custody while she was still in recovery, so she came back to follow up on her treatment after she was released. She didn't get discharged until today."

A frosty look passed over Sonia's face as she mused, "I see."

"Now that I think about it, there's something strange about you,

Toby, and Tina," Charles pointed out, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

She gave him an assessing look. "What do you mean?"

"I meant how unlucky the three of you are, of course," he answered jauntily. "Haven't you realized? The three of you have made countless trips to the hospital in these three short months. It was always you, or Toby, or Tina. It's almost like an eenie-meenie-minie-mo thing."

"Well..." Sonia's lips twitched in bemusement, though she couldn't rebuke what he said because it was the truth. "That's enough now. Let's not talk about it anymore and get going," she said decisively, opening the door on the passenger side of the car.

Charles saluted her like he was in the army and quipped, "Yes, ma'am!"

They drove back to Bayside Residence. Charles did not hover, and he left to attend to some company matters after helping Sonia pick up around the apartment.

Sonia, on the other hand, called for take-out, and she was digging into her meal when she gave Carl a call.

However, it was just as Charles had told her that morning: none of her calls could get through, and Carl had as good as gone off the grid.

She wondered idly if he was unavailable because of work, or if he was hiding from her after his confession yesterday. Either way, she was determined to find him and talk him into seeking treatment for his complex.

With that in mind, she gave up on calling him and clicked into Messenger, then sent him a text which read, 'Carl, give me a call when you see this. There's something important I need to talk to you about. Please!

She set her phone aside when the text had gone through, and while waiting for his call, she let her mind wander.

Alas, the wait lasted all night, and when she saw that he had yet to call her the following morning, she couldn't help but sigh in disappointment. (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)

I don't even know if he saw my text. She rubbed her eyes, but that did little to wake her up as she groggily made another call to Carl. However, all she got in return was a beep that indicated he had switched his phone off.

Her brows furrowed. "What in the world is going on? What is he up to?" It was hard not to suspect that something had happened to Carl now that he had disappeared for a whole day and night

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With her lips pressed into a grim line, she gave Charles a call instead. He picked up almost instantly, and he greeted around a yawn, "Good morning, baby."

"Morning, Charles." Sonia lifted the covers off her and got out of bed, then walked over to the French windows to draw open the curtains.

As the blinding morning light filtered through the glass and warmed her face, she winced and shut her eyes. After adjusting to the sudden brightness, her eyes fluttered open slowly.

"Why did you call me so early in the morning? Did you miss me, baby?" Charles asked teasingly, chuckling.

She rolled her eyes. "Now isn't the time to be cheeky. Be serious for a change. I need to ask you something."

"Okay, what is it?" He cleared his throat and became solemn.

When she heard his lighthearted tone turn somber, her expression grew serious as well. "It's about Carl. None of my calls have been getting through since last night; his phone has been switched off, and I'm worried that he might be in trouble."

She was terrified that after the confession yesterday, Carl had been unable to take the hit and had done something drastic.

After all, there was no telling what he might be capable of doing on impulse, given his complex. (This Novel daily new chapters provide it)