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Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 541

Chapter 541 The Real Reason

"What do you mean?" Toby narrowed his eyes. What did my father go through back in the day? What did she mean by that?

It was as if life drained out of Jean as soon as she brought up Homer. There was sadness in her eyes as she held onto the armrest of the sofa and sat down. She looked hollow, no longer as frigid as she always had been, and if it weren't for the trace of guilt that highlighted her expression, one might think she was at peace with the world.

"When your father and I got married over ten years ago, we didn't receive your run-of-the-mill blessings, and what we got instead were merciless teasing and snide remarks, but I won't go into that. All you need to know is that I was not welcome in the circle, and your father became the butt of the joke because he married me, a woman who was neither of good breeding or culture. I was basically good at nothing."

As Jean said this, she worried at the band on her ring finger like it would give her comfort. The ring was made of white gold, but it was dull and unpolished. It looked ancient, and at first glance, one could tell that she had not taken it off for years, not even to get it cleaned at the jeweler's.

The band also looked a little tight on her ring finger, which swelled up around the band like it was constricted instead of decorated.

Even so, she didn't appear to have taken the band off over the years, and it was obvious that the band meant a lot to her.

Presently, she gazed down at the wedding band on her ring finger—the very one Homer had given to her when they exchanged their vows—and mused sorrowfully, "Your father was once the greatest man in the circle, the very same circle that shunned him and cast him out

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when he married me. They thought your father was a fool for bringing me into the upper-class society, claiming that my lowly status would hurt the image of the elite. So they mocked him for it, and they set me up to fail on many occasions in order to humiliate your father.”

Having said all this, Jean clenched her plump fist, and her smooth expression began to twist into a grimace. Her eyes grew red as she went on to say, “But those weren’t the worst of it. The nightmare came when those vicious women in the circle took advantage of my being a philistine and decided to gang up on me. They sweet-talked me into giving them several important contracts that Fuller Group was working on so that they could let their husbands take a look and collaborate with the company afterward. They told me it was a way to let Fuller Group expand its horizons.”

“And you did what they asked you to?” Toby asked, raising his brows.

She nodded numbly. “Of course I did. I knew nothing back then, but I only wanted to help your father and become one of those corporate wives who helped their husbands with their business. Little did I know that I would end up jeopardizing instead of helping your father and Fuller Group; your father lost important contracts, and the company went through unimaginable turmoil that year.”

“I’ve heard about this,” Tom interjected as he adjusted his spectacles. “Fuller Group took a heavy blow that year, and if Old Mrs. Fuller hadn’t stepped in and lent her aid, then that could have been the end of the business. I heard that Old Mrs. Fuller even fired Mr. Fuller from his position as the president.”

Toby parted his lips and added, “Father lost those important contracts and caused the company to go into turmoil. Grandma had to fire him, or she’d have a hard time dealing with the shareholders.”

Riddled with self-blame, Jean said mournfully, “That’s right, so for a long time, your father spiraled into depression. He started to get into drinking, and eventually, even your grandmother couldn’t stand it any longer and suggested that your father go on a business trip abroad. She said something about negotiating for a deal with some international tycoon, which, if the deal was concluded, would make the shareholders change their minds about your father. That way, she could reinstate him as the president of the company again. But...”

She buried her face in her hands, finally losing her composure as she broke down sobbing.

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At the sight of this, Toby clenched his fists and said hoarsely, "But no one expected Father to die at the hotel he was staying at while abroad."

Unable to form coherent words, Jean could only sob and nod to confirm what Toby had said.

Signaling Tom to wheel him closer to the coffee table, Toby then took out a few tissues and handed them to Jean, saying, "I understand now why you think Sonia isn't meant to be part of our family. The Reed Family has fallen from grace and, by extension, out of rank with the other elite families. You think that Sonia would only drag me and Fuller Group down, that she wouldn't be able to offer any real help; you're afraid that I would end up like Father and become the laughingstock of the industry."

"Yes," Jean mumbled in a wobbling voice as she looked up to meet his gaze. "That's exactly what I meant to tell you. I practically walked your father into his death, Toby, and I don't want you to go down the same path he did."

That was the real reason why she had not treated Tina with the same hostility as she had Sonia. Unlike the Reed Family, the Gray Family was still within the elite circle, and with Titus backing Tina up, she would make a much better contender than Sonia.

More importantly, Tina had been the only daughter in the Gray Family, which meant she stood to inherit every penny of the family fortune once Titus passed on. When that happened, Toby would have access to the same fortune, and Fuller Group could once again expand its growth. Jean had seen this as the only way to ease her own guilt and for her to shake off her past.

However, Jean hadn't expected Tina to turn out to be more trouble than she was worth.

"Mom, thank you for worrying about me and being so considerate of me," Toby said now, his expression gentle as he shoved tissues into her hand.

Regardless of all that had happened, Jean's enmity toward Sonia and her objections against Toby and Sonia's relationship had all been for his best interests.

He could not deny her good intentions, but that didn't mean he could accept her stance, either. As such, he gazed upon her steadily and said with utmost seriousness, "But I will still choose to be together with Sonia."

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“What?” Jean’s eyes widened as she demanded, “How could you say that even after all that I’ve told you?” She had given him insight on all her reasons, and she even brought up the devastating past she had kept hidden for so long in hopes that she might change his mind about Sonia. Alas, she failed in persuading him to give up on the idea of remarrying Sonia and only seemed to have spurred him on. Did I tell him all that for nothing?

“Yes,” Toby answered firmly now. “Sonia and I will never go through what you and Father did because Sonia is different from you.”

“How is she any different from me?” Jean sputtered cynically. Admittedly, Sonia was born into a much better family than hers, but the Reed Family was no longer part of the elite circle, even though Paradigm Co. still stood as proof of their glory days.

That being said, even Jean could tell that Paradigm Co. was not profiting, and she didn’t need a business degree to know that at the end of the day, Sonia was as good as broke.

That just means that Sonia is no more different from I was in the past!

“She’s entirely different.” Toby shoved his hand into his pocket and felt for the Ocean’s Heart, then elaborated, “Sonia might not have anything now, but she is ambitious and talented in running a business. With her in charge, Paradigm Co. will eventually find success, so it’ll only be a matter of time before the Reed Family rejoins the elite. Also—”

He paused, and a small smile played on his lips as he thought of something. “If others dare to even say a single snide remark to her face or mock her, she would fight back instead of taking the abuse in silence. She has always known how to stand up for herself, and on that point alone, she’s much stronger than you were, Mom. If you had defended yourself back in the day, then maybe you and Father wouldn’t have ended up in such a sorry state. Moreover, I’d like to think I’ve done a superb job in expanding Fuller Group, and it’s a much more powerful company than when Father ran it. As things stand, our family doesn’t need an arranged marriage to strengthen our alliances or our standing in the industry. My prowess is the reason why Fuller Group has its success and glory now.”

“Doesn’t need...” she mumbled in confusion. Why wouldn’t we need an arranged marriage? Throughout these years, all she knew was that blue-blood families relied on arranged marriages to strengthen their ties and social standing.

He kept his gaze on her and explained, “Yes, our family doesn’t need an arranged marriage to maintain a certain social standing. Something like that is only done by those who aren’t

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strong enough in the first place. Mom, our family isn't how it used to be. I want you to think about it, and I hope you'll really change your mind about Sonia. I don't want to have to choose between you and her, but if I'm forced to, then you should know that I definitely won't give her up."

Upon hearing this, Jean stiffened. She felt as if someone had thrown a bucket of ice water over her. If he won't give Sonia up, then that means I'll be the one he leaves behind in the end!

At that moment, she froze in her seat, and all the color drained out of her face.

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 542

Chapter 542 Repaying His Deeds

Jean had never imagined Toby would favor Sonia over her. She couldn't believe that if it came down to it, she would lose to Sonia.

The revelation struck her like a bolt of lightning. In a daze, she plopped down on the couch with a hollow look in her glistening eyes.

Toby's gaze darkened at the sight of this. He waved his hand mutely to have Tom wheel him upstairs, and the latter hurried to do as told.

It didn't take long for the both of them to arrive in the upstairs hallway. Tom opened Toby's bedroom door and wheeled him in, saying, "Aren't you worried that you might have hurt Madam White's feelings with what you told her?"

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Toby parted his lips and pointed out impassively, "Some things just can't be avoided. It's for the best if I let her know how much Sonia means to me; otherwise, she would never dial back on her unjust hostility and continue to mess with Sonia."

"That's true," Tom agreed, nodding.

Presently, Toby took out the Ocean's Heart from his pocket. "I'm going to need some cleansing solution." The necklace had been worn by Jean, and he hated to give it back to Sonia without first cleaning it thoroughly.

"Right away," Tom said solemnly, instantly catching on to what Toby intended to do. As such, he headed out the door to get the cleansing solution ready.

Owing to Jean's vast jewelry collection, the staff at the Fuller Residence practically stock-piled bottles of jewelry-specific cleansing solutions. Tom needed to only ask one of the servants to get a large cup of it, which he immediately brought up to Toby's room.

Toby had him place the cleansing solution on the desk, and when that was done, he dunked the Ocean's Heart into the liquid. It took only seconds for the solution to turn murky, and Toby used a long glass rod to gently stir the Ocean's Heart while it soaked in the solution, giving it a thorough cleansing.

Tom, on the other hand, stood to one side with a towel in hand as he watched the cleaning process.

It was only after the solution had turned clear once more that he walked up to Toby with the towel. "Here you go, President Fuller."

Toby took the towel and placed it on the desk; then, using a pair of tongs, he retrieved the Ocean's Heart from the cup of solution and laid it on the towel.

Now that the Ocean's Heart was clean, it sparkled like it was new. In particular, the diamond that formed the centerpiece dazzled under the lights, emitting breathtaking rainbow hues.

Toby took the towel and gently wiped the remaining solution off the Ocean's Heart, then patted it completely dry. As he did so, he said to Tom, "Go into my wardrobe and bring me a jewelry box."

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Following this, Tom went into the wardrobe and soon returned with an intricate jewelry box.

Having painstakingly dabbed every last droplet of the solution off the Ocean's Heart, Toby carefully placed it into the box. "You're dismissed."

"Yes, sir," Tom replied, then nodded once respectfully before walking out the door.

Now that Toby was alone in the room, he picked up his phone and gave Sonia a call. It took only seconds for her to answer, and she asked on the other line, "Is there a reason why you're calling me at this late hour?"

"Did I catch you at a bad time?" He pressed the phone to his ear and asked lightly, not answering her question.

Sonia was working away on her laptop, but when she heard what he said, she stretched her neck to loosen the stiffness that was setting in and gave a short laugh. "No, you didn't. I'm not asleep yet, so I don't think it's a bad time."

"Good," Toby said slowly, toying with the jewelry box in his hand. Then, he asked, "You know you didn't have to give the Ocean's Heart back to me."

She froze at this, then frowned and pointed out, "Are you bringing this up because you just got to know about it?"

He hummed in response. "Yeah."

"No way," she mumbled, her brows drawing closer together. "I passed the Ocean's Heart to Jean after you were hospitalized so that she could return it to you on my behalf. How did you—" At the mention of this, she broke off and was suddenly reminded of how greedy Jean could be. Looking sullen, she asked, "Did Jean take the Ocean's Heart for herself instead of handing it over to you?"

"Yes," he confirmed with a nod, making no effort to deny Jean's wrong. "I came back to the Fuller Residence this evening and saw her wearing the Ocean's Heart, which was how I found out that you returned it."

"My goodness, so she did take it for herself! The nerve—" Sonia pursed her lips, catching herself before she called Jean names in front of Toby; he was her son, after all, and such

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disparaging remarks on Sonia's part would seem rude. With that in mind, she swallowed her words.

However, even as she stayed silent, Toby could still wager a guess at what Sonia had been about to say. He wasn't angry, given how Jean truly had been in the wrong when she took the Ocean's Heart for her own intentions.

"If it makes you feel better, I've already taken the Ocean's Heart back from her," he informed softly, caressing the top of the jewelry box.

Sonia let out a breath of relief. "Oh, that's good to know."

"But what I really want to know is why you gave it back to me in the first place," he said, narrowing his eyes as a grim look passed over his face. He was starting to wonder if she was cutting him off after she returned everything he had ever given to her.

Hearing how unhappy he sounded, Sonia let go of the mouse and explained forthrightly, "I thought about it for a really long time, and I only gave the Ocean's Heart back to you because I owe you too much. After you jumped off the cliff to save me, I realized just how much you have risked and given up for me, so much so that I can't ever dream of repaying you. I can't carry around the accumulated weight of your favors because it will only suffocate me, so returning the Ocean's Heart just so happened to be my first step in repaying you. There'll be more to come until I'm finally liberated."

Oh, so that's why. Having heard her reasons, he felt the frown on his face begin to ease. If anything, he empathized with her. There was nothing special tying them together, no sentiments that would justify all that he had done for her. Instead, he was burdening her, and eventually, she would crack her mind just so she could find a way to repay his efforts.

He should have known that she would be this way. She had never been the type to take things for granted, and she would find ways to return the favor or the guilt would crush her.

"I understand. In that case, I'll keep the Ocean's Heart," he said with an air of finality as he placed the box on the desk. If she so desperately wants to repay my deeds, then so be it. I'll keep the Ocean's Heart if it makes her feel better.

He figured he could wait until they were back together again before he stopped her from avidly trying to repay him for what he had done in the past, because by then, his love would no longer burden her.

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On the other line, Sonia was oblivious to his thoughts and merely broke into a relieved smile at his words. "I'm glad you could see my point."

Some of the weight lifted off her shoulders now that he had agreed to take back the Ocean's Heart. That's one favor down. I'm slow, but at least I'm making progress in returning his favors one by one. Over time, the guilt I feel would lessen for sure, and then I'll be free.

As for the rest of his deeds, she had every intention of repaying them in time.

Just then, she thought of something and straightened up. "By the way, I, uh, talked to Charles about the whole nickname thing."

"So soon?" Toby raised a brow as a trace of astonishment glimmered in his eyes. He had assumed that she would take things slow and work up to the conversation with Charles; in fact, he had been prepared to listen to Charles addressing her as 'baby' for a while before she put a stop to it.

Little did he know that she would act on his suggestion so quickly and ask Charles to drop the nickname. At the thought of this, Toby smiled, and his spirits were obviously restored. If she acted so quickly, then it means she does care about me and my feelings.

"I mean, it wasn't that soon," she countered feebly now, her eyes watery as she looked down at her lap. "I just happened to be with Charles earlier this evening, and I decided to bring it up to him on a whim."

"And did he agree to drop the nickname?" Toby prompted gently.

She nodded. "Yeah, he did, but..."

"But what?"

"Nothing." She shook her head, withholding the consequence of her talk with Charles. Glancing at the time displayed on the bottom right corner of her computer screen, she said, "Right, President Fuller. It's getting late and I'm going to call it a day."

"Okay." While his curiosity was urging him to probe for details, he quelled it when he heard that she was going to bed; he didn't want to wear her out with his questions.

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“Get some rest then. Goodnight,” he said now, the words coming out in a pleasant drawl that put emphasis on the bass of his voice.

Sonia felt her skin prickled at his voice, as if someone was tickling her with a feather. She shuddered and bent to rub her ear against her shoulder as she mumbled softly, “Goodnight.”

When the call was ended, Toby put his phone down and took up the box, then maneuvered his wheelchair toward his walk-in wardrobe.

Boss Your Wife’s Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 543

Chapter 543 The One Who Bought the Rings

Upon entering his wardrobe, Toby headed straight for the display case where he kept his watches, ties, and other designer accessories. Then, he placed the jewelry box into one of the empty compartments.

Having done so, he withdrew his hand and made to leave but stopped when he thought of something. The next second, he opened one of the drawers and took out a black velvet box.

The box was small and fit in his palm. He opened it with one hand to reveal the two rings nestled within. One of the rings was slightly larger than the other; they were matching wedding bands—specifically made for him and Sonia all those years ago.

He stared at the rings, his gaze darkening as he picked up one of them and began to turn it, inspecting the Fuller Family crest engraved beneath the band. The barest hint of a smile curled on his lips.

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Sonia had always believed that she paid for their wedding bands, but in actuality, Toby had been the one who bought them while she was kept in the dark, hence the Fuller Family crest on the inside of the bands.

Six years ago, following his agreement to their marriage, Sonia dropped by the Fuller Residence to go over wedding details and the matter of wedding bands. However, Toby had been hypnotized back then, and all he could think about was Tina. He had felt unadulterated spite for Sonia, believing that she was holding him hostage through marriage. Consequently, he couldn't care less about what she wanted for wedding decorations, and he had no interest in the wedding band designs; he had told her to make arrangements on her own and left home after that.

He hadn't wanted to even be in the same room as her. However, he hadn't expected to run into her at the mall that same day.

She had been standing at the counter of a jewelry store, single-handedly picking out their wedding bands, which turned out to be the same ones he was currently holding.

Back then, she had probably been so overwhelmed by the joy of her upcoming wedding that she never bothered looking into the price of the rings before asking the retail assistant to bag them up.

The rings had been valued at two million, but given how the Reed Family were on the brink of bankruptcy, there was no way Sonia could have forked out the money. Buying the rings would have inevitably crippled her and the rest of the family.

Realizing this, Toby intervened and showed up in the lounge behind the jewelry store. He paid more than a million in secret, then ordered that the Fuller Family crest be engraved on the inside of the wedding bands.

At that point in time, he had been bewildered by his own behavior. He had considered the possibility that he might be insane because there seemed to be no other explanation as to why he would pay for a woman he hated so much.

It was only after he had snapped out of the hypnotism and fallen in love with Sonia again that he understood one thing: she had haunted the back of his mind even while he was hypnotized, but he never realized it.

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In the end, Sonia only had to fork out a third of the initial price to buy the rings, and she never found out that he had paid for them too.

Recalling all this, Toby picked up the wedding band that was meant for him and slowly slipped it onto his left ring finger. As soon as he did, his gaze fell upon the ring that would have belonged to Sonia had they actually stayed married and whispered, "Just wait a little while longer. Before you know it, you'll be reunited with your rightful owner."

After that, he closed the lid of the box and placed it back onto the display case, then wheeled himself out of the wardrobe.

...

The next day, Sonia arrived at Paradigm Co. and came upon Daphne, who was standing at her usual spot at Sonia's office doorway as she greeted, "Good morning, President Reed."

"Is everyone ready for the meeting?" Sonia asked as she opened the door.

Daphne nodded. "Most of them."

"And what about Charles?" Sonia asked, opening the floodgates.

Hesitantly, Daphne replied, "President Lane is here as well, but..."

"But what?"

Daphne adjusted her glasses, behind which her eyes lit up with worry. "But something seems off about him. He looks kind of upset."

Upon hearing this, Sonia stopped in her tracks.

Daphne noticed the shift in her demeanor and parted her lips to ask, "President Reed, do you know the reason why President Lane is upset?"

Sonia lowered her gaze pensively. "I guess you could say that." She didn't think Charles would still hold it against her after she broke the conversation last night, but she supposed it was only fair that he did. After all, sentiments would be worth nothing if they dissipated so quickly, let alone those to do with love.

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"What happened to him, President Reed?" Daphne pressed out of concern, clenching her fists as she eyed Sonia pleadingly and waited for an answer.

Sonia knew about Daphne's feelings for Charles, and she did not keep the girl in suspense as she explained, "Charles and I got into a disagreement."

"Oh, I see," Daphne replied numbly, with an unreadable look in her eyes. That makes sense. Given President Lane's sharp sense of humor and rapier wit, it's rare to see him upset, and there are less than a handful of people who could bring his spirits down, other than President Reed, of course. She's the only one who could affect him in any way at all.

She should have known that Sonia had something to do with Charles' sour mood this morning.

Presently, Sonia clapped a hand on Daphne's shoulder and said comfortingly, "Come on, there's no use dwelling on this. Let's go for the meeting, and as for Charles, I'll talk to him. If I can't get through to him, then I'll have to let you take a shot at cheering him up."

Taken aback, Daphne stammered, "M-Me?"

"Yes," Sonia confirmed with a gentle nod.

"No, I can't do it." Daphne began to shake her head vehemently, flapping her hands to dismiss Sonia's suggestion.

Sonia burst into laughter. "Give yourself more credit. I'm sure you'll make for the perfect shoulder to cry on if you believe in yourself. Maybe the romance you've always dreamed of will happen if you just take a leap of faith."

When she heard the last part of Sonia's encouragement, Daphne blanched and stared at her with wide eyes. "President Reed, do you—" Do you know about my feelings for Charles?

As if reading her mind, Sonia grinned and said good-naturedly, "Give it your best shot!"

So she does know. Daphne gaped at Sonia, and it took a while for her to recover from her shock as she asked slowly, "Aren't you angry, President Reed?"

"Why would I be?" Sonia countered, somewhat confused.

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Wringing the hem of her shirt nervously, Daphne swallowed and elaborated, "Well, because I... have feelings for President Lane."

A light chuckle escaped Sonia. "Why would I be angry about that? If you like Charles, or anyone else, that's your business. I don't get a say in who you choose to have feelings for, and in this context, Charles and I are just friends, so no, I'm not angry."

Daphne relaxed after hearing this, and the anxiousness that had overcome her started to wane. She was grateful that Sonia was open-minded, because she had had experiences with women who hated seeing their male best friend—whom they had no intention of dating—getting attention from other women.

As of now, Sonia said seriously, "Bottom line is, you won't get what you want without trying. Just know that if you and Charles ever start dating, you have my full support. You're pretty compatible with him, in case you don't know that."

She truly wished Daphne and Charles could end up together. Sonia couldn't reciprocate Charles' feelings for her, and if the sentiments had been allowed to continue, then they would both end up getting hurt in the long run.

All the reasons added up was why she was elated to know that someone was romantically interested in Charles. If the right person came along and managed to catch Charles' attention, then he would no longer have anything more than platonic feelings for me.

If that came to pass, Sonia would be free from such unwanted pursuits, and Charles would find his own happiness as well. From how she looked at it, this was a win-win situation.

She was aware of how selfish she was being, and admittedly, she was taking advantage of Daphne. However, seeing as Daphne already had feelings for Charles, all Sonia would be doing was helping the girl achieve her dreams.

That being said, she would make sure to compensate Daphne for this.

Compatible with him. These words reverberated in Daphne's mind, and she blushed crimson as she said weakly, "You've got to be kidding, President Reed."

"I'm certainly not! I'm telling the truth. Look, you can always sleep on this and make a decision in your own time, but right now, we have a meeting to get to," Sonia prompted with a smile as she took up the documents on her desk and sauntered out the door.

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Daphne snapped out of her daze and hurried to catch up.

Having arrived at the conference room, Sonia saw that the attendance was nearly full, but she could not escape Asher's snide attack as she walked over to her seat. "My, my, our dear Vice President Reed has finally made her grand entrance. Being so fashionably late even after the rest of us showed up on time. You certainly know how to keep us old men on our toes, don't you? What, do you think you're too good for us?"

Sonia put down her documents and took her seat at the table, after which she shot Asher a withering look as she retorted, "Well, what can I say? I am the largest shareholder of Paradigm Co., and I think that gives me the privilege to be fashionably late, don't you think? It's not my fault that none of you have enough shares to lord over my head in the first place."

Boss Your Wife's Asking for A Divorce Again Chapter 544

Chapter 544 Breaking the Ice

"You—"

Asher and his supporters grew so incensed at her words that their faces turned the color of beetroot, but they couldn't retort against her. She was right; she might be the vice president now, but the fact remained that she was the largest shareholder of the company, and that meant she enjoyed privileges they did not. As unhappy as they were, they had neither the means nor standing to retaliate against her.

At the sight of the scowls on their faces, Sonia smirked and refrained from snorting in contempt. I can't believe they're still trying to pick a bone with me at this point. How petty. Stoically, she withdrew her gaze and glanced in the direction of Charles' seat.

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He had his head down, so she couldn't quite see the look on his face, but she felt how distant he was all the same. She sighed quietly as she settled into her chair and announced, "Alright, let's start the meeting."

"Yes, ma'am," the whole table chorused as everyone opened up the folder in front of them.

The meeting went on for two hours before it came to a conclusion. Asher and his supporters were the first to leave the room, but Sonia stayed unmoving in her seat. She didn't keep her things or seem like she was about to rise to her feet and walk out of the room any time soon.

Instead, she leaned into her seat and rested her head against the back of her chair, staring at Charles.

Presently, Charles was keeping his things, and when he was done, he stood up to leave.

Seeing this, Sonia quickly called out, "Charles, wait."

He stopped in his tracks and turned to look at her, his expression devoid of the warmth and humor she was used to seeing. He looked almost impassive as he asked flatly, "What is it?"

Sure enough, he was sticking to his promise and had dropped the term of endearment. In the past, he would have added 'baby' to that statement.

Sonia was composed as she rose from her seat and eyed him steadily. "How about you and I have a talk?"

"About what?" he asked, his gaze on her indifferent and distant.

She didn't answer him immediately. She was watching the others who had yet to file out of the conference room; they were all ears, trying to pick up on gossip.

As though sensing her gaze, they looked down at their shoes guiltily and hurried out the doors. Soon, the large conference room was empty, save for Sonia and Charles.

She kept her eyes on him and said matter-of-factly, "About how you're still holding a grudge against me after our conversation last night."

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Charles parted his lips, but he offered no retort because he really was still holding a grudge against her for their dispute last night.

The resentment he felt was not only due to the fact that he knew she would never choose him as a romantic partner, but also the way she had gone about things.

Even if they would never work out as a couple, they still had over twenty years of friendship between them, but all it had taken was Toby's unhappy remark for Sonia to come up to Charles and ask him to drop the nickname he had been calling her all this while.

How am I supposed to just let that go, Sonia?

Upon seeing the sullen look on Charles' face, Sonia sighed wearily and said, "I'm sorry, Charles. I know I should have been more considerate of your feelings instead of springing the conversation up on you like that, but I don't think I was wrong to do that. You like me, don't you, Charles?"

His eyes widened in disbelief as he gaped at her. "How... How did you know?" He had been in love with her for more than a decade, and she was the one thing on his mind ever since he learned the ways of the world. He had wanted to confess his feelings for her on countless occasions, but his lack of courage kept him from doing so.

Alas, she found out anyway, much to his surprise.

She lowered her gaze and explained, "I didn't know it at first, but after what you said last night, I figured it out. Why else would you have reacted the way you did? This brings me back to why I said I did the right thing, because I don't like you the same way, and I can't ever reciprocate your feelings for me. What I've done, at best, was to make you give up hope that we might ever stand a chance; think of it as a wake-up call, Charles, because if your feelings for me deepen over the years, then you'd only end up getting hurt, and I'd be riddled with guilt."

"No, I won't—"

"Yes, you will!" Sonia cut him off, pleading for him to see her point. "I don't know when you started having feelings for me, but I reckon it's been a long time. That just goes to show that you're sentimental enough to hold on to the idea of us, and if that were to go on, then you'd fall too deep to save yourself from inevitable heartbreak. I don't want to see you end up that

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way, Charles. You're my best friend, and the last thing I want to do is to hurt you, so please just let go of your feelings for me, even if it means changing the way you address me."

She was setting boundaries when she asked him to stop calling her 'baby', and her stance was clear: the both of them would never work out as a couple. She hoped she had put that point out emphatically enough to make him understand how important it was for him to let go of a relationship that never could be.

Naturally, Charles heard the underlying meaning of her words. As his eyes grew red with anger, he clenched his fists and accused her angrily, "So you're warning me to drop all those affectionate nicknames for you and to stop being all chummy with you, and you want me to completely stop deluding myself that we might stand a chance. Is that it?"

She shook her head. "No, I'm not warning you. I wouldn't do that to you. I'm merely trying to make you see my point here. I don't love you more than just a friend, so romance is definitely off the table for us, which is why I need to make things clear. I need you to understand that we aren't going to work out, so you won't keep pining over me."

Sonia knew she was being harsh, but it was the only way he would snap out of his fantasy and let things go. She didn't have a choice but to be blunt with her words.

Charles, on the other hand, finally understood how death by a thousand cuts felt like. Her words stabbed through his heart mercilessly; they took all the air from his lungs and left him bleeding. He bit out woundedly, "So you're cutting me off?"

"That's not what I meant. I just like us better when we're friends without all these other underlying sentiments," Sonia replied.

He looked down and chuckled bitterly. "I get it now. You just want us to be friends and nothing more, so you're asking me to let go of my feelings for you."

"Yes," she confirmed solemnly, nodding once.

He dug his nails into his palms. "Okay, fine. I'll just keep these feelings aside, and I won't ask for anything more. As for the whole being-friends thing, I'm sorry, but I don't think I can be just your friend until I've completely let you go."

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With that, he turned to leave with a self-deprecating, hollow smile on his face. How pathetic. I've loved a girl for over ten years, and I got rejected before I could even confess my feelings for her. The love story he had hoped for was written off before he even got to the prologue.

Meanwhile, Sonia was rooted in the same spot as she stared after Charles' retreating figure. She parted her lips to call out for him but caught herself and watched him leave. What's the point of calling out for him? He might just take it the wrong way and start having false hopes again.

She refused to let that happen. She could never reciprocate his feelings for her, and this hurt that she was causing him now would only be temporary. He would get over it eventually and come to see that she was doing this with his best interests at heart.

If she had been afraid of hurting him and decided to string him along, then the damage that might come from this would be insurmountable.

That being said, she had to agree with him on the last part of his statement. They would never truly be friends until he had let go of her entirely. If they were to carry on as though nothing had happened, then they would simply be turning a blind eye to the cracks in their friendship; they would no longer be as close, and worst of all, they might even become awkward around each other.

She would be better off waiting until he had let go of her entirely, and once he did, they could start afresh.

At the thought of this, Sonia closed her eyes and let out a long sigh.

Just then, Daphne hurried into the conference room, sounding unmistakably anxious as she asked, "President Reed, what happened to President Lane? I ran into him just now, and his eyes were red, like he's been crying, and he—"

"Go look for him," Sonia cut her off gently, forcing out a smile.

Daphne froze. "Look for him?"

"Yes. We had a long talk just now, and he's probably really upset now. I'm worried about him. Do you think you could keep an eye on him and make sure he doesn't do anything rash? It would also help if you could try to cheer him up a bit," Sonia elaborated, pinching the space between her brows tiredly.

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“But—”

“No more buts. Just go, or you won’t catch up to him. I wouldn’t want him to drive and get into trouble just because he was upset,” Sonia urged, interrupting the girl once more and dismissing her secretary with a wave of her hand.

Boss Your Wife’s Asking for A Divorce Again

Chapter 545

Chapter 545 Faultless

At the thought that Charles might get into trouble, Daphne felt her stomach twist, and without another word, she rushed out of the conference room to chase after him.

When she had left, Sonia resumed her seat and patted her cheeks tiredly, then took out her phone to text Toby. ‘Do you think I’m the one at fault here?’

Meanwhile, Toby had been busy going through documents when he heard his phone buzz with a new message. He put down his pen and grabbed his phone to take a look.

A gentle smile broke out over his impassive face when he saw that it was a message from Sonia. He clicked into it, only to be a little confused when he saw that there was no context to her message. At last, he decided to call her instead of making guesses.

Sonia, on the other hand, was waiting for Toby’s reply, and she jumped when her phone rang instead. She scrambled to hold onto her phone, almost dropping it in the process. Having recomposed herself, she answered the incoming call and pressed the phone to her ear, greeting, “Hello?”

Toby sounded concerned as he asked, “Hey, did something happen?”

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She bit her lip and said slowly, "Not exactly. It's just Charles." She told Toby about the conversation she had had with Charles earlier, then asked with a hollow look in her eyes, "So, do you think I'm the one at fault here?"

Amusement flashed across Toby's features when he heard the whole story, and his warm smile was like springtime after all the ice melted. "You did the right thing. If you can't reciprocate his feelings, then putting a stop to this now would be better than letting him fall deeper. He'd only end up getting hurt in the end."

"That's what I thought," Sonia said, relieved to hear that he agreed with her. It was as if his words had led her out of her daze.

"I'm really happy," Toby said.

She tipped her head to one side and asked, "What are you happy about?"

"I'm really happy that you came to me to clear your doubts," he pointed out, chuckling lightly.

A flustered look flashed in her eyes as she retorted, "Hey, I only came to you because I don't know who else to talk to. You're just a substitute at best."

"Still, I'm really happy about it," he countered easily. Besides, I can tell whether or not you see me as a substitute.

"Okay, let's just talk about something else. How's your ankle?" Sonia asked out of concern, straightening up in her seat.

Toby glanced down at his injured ankle and answered, "It's not as painful as it was yesterday, but I still can't walk."

"Don't worry. You'll be back up on your feet in a couple more days," she placated, sighing quietly in relief after hearing that his pain had subsided.

He let out a good-humored laugh. "Yeah. I'm going to the hospital to get the dressings changed."

"What time? I'll go over, too," she offered hurriedly.

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“Seriously?”

Sonia nodded and hummed in response. “You only got hurt because of me, so it would be almost immoral of me to leave you alone while the doctor tends to your injuries. I’ll go with you.”

Toby was so moved by this that his eyes glistened with overwhelming sentiments. “Okay. I’ll pick you up in the afternoon.”

“That’s fine. I can—”

“So it’s settled then. I’ll call you when I reach your building. Right, I have to go; I have a couple of things to attend to. See you later.” With that, he ended the call and set his phone aside before looking at Tom, who had just come into the office with documents in hand.

Tom placed the documents on the desk in front of Toby and reported grimly, “President Fuller, we’ve looked into it and found that neither the Gray nor the Stone Family helped Tina get away, which means someone else helped her escape.”

“Someone else?” Toby took up the documents, the frown on his face so deep that it seemed imprinted. “Did you find out who it was?”

Tom shook his head. “No, but one thing we’re sure of is that her accomplices aren’t from Seafield. I looked into it, and there’s been no activity in Seafield that might be connected to Tina and her escape.”

“Does that mean there are forces from other cities and countries that are helping her?” Toby guessed with a grimace.

Adjusting his glasses, Tom answered gravely, “Yes, but if that were to be the case, then we’d have a hard time finding the persons who helped her.”

After all, theirs was only one of the many cities in the country, and with all the other countries in the world, there was no telling which forces had allied themselves with Tina. If the territory had been within Seafield perimeters, investigations would be a lot easier going forward.

Presently, Toby narrowed his eyes and ordered, “Send someone over to Miles’ location.”

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“President Fuller, do you think Miles helped Tina escape?”

“He was the one who helped Tina keep me under mind control, so I wouldn’t put it past him to help her now.”

Tom nodded. “That makes sense. Very well, then. I’ll send a team over after this.”

With a somber hum, Toby said, “By the way, have you looked into Quentin’s death?”

Tom sighed tiredly as he replied, “We haven’t made much progress, seeing how it’s been years since the accident. Moreover, there were no cameras at the location of the car crash, so it’s nearly impossible to track down the reckless driver who killed him.”

Toby’s lips were pressed into a grim line. “I see. Continue the investigation.”

Toby had to do all that he could to find out the truth behind Quentin’s death. He hoped that the man really did die from an accident, but if he hadn’t, then Toby naturally took it upon himself to uncover the details of his death. He wanted to avenge Quentin, or he would have died and given up his heart to Toby in vain.

“Yes, President Fuller.” Tom acknowledged his superior’s demand but suddenly thought of something and added, “Also, we ran into problems trying to pinpoint Declan’s exact whereabouts.”

“What do you mean?” Toby demanded, frowning.

Looking uneasy, Tom elaborated, “Initially, we kept a close eye on Carl and his activity and successfully confirmed that Declan smuggled abroad, so we sent men over to the location before Carl could beat us to catching Declan. However, Carl seemed to have caught on to our plans and intervened to cover up Declan’s tracks, so now we lost him.”

“He doesn’t want us to find Declan?” Toby asked, growing sullen.

Carl had a score to settle with Declan, so it was unlikely that he would help the latter cover his tracks. I bet this means the only reasonable explanation for his intervention is that he’s trying to stop me!

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Tom nodded. "Most likely so. Carl may have his own plans for Declan, and he doesn't want us to intervene."

A cold smirk played on Toby's lips as he drawled, "Well, what a coincidence. I have my own plans for Declan as well. Go and hire one of the top hackers in the world; I refuse to believe that Carl is the best hacker there is."

"Yes, sir," Tom said with a firm nod, then turned to leave the office.

Toby placed his right hand on his desk and tapped his fingers lightly against the surface, his eyes gleaming ominously.

...

That afternoon, Sonia wrapped up her work and summoned her assistant. "Here, hand out these documents accordingly."

The assistant nodded. "Yes, President Reed." She marched forward and carried the documents in her arms, then made to leave.

Just then, Sonia stopped her. "Wait a minute."

Halting in her tracks, the assistant asked politely, "Is there anything else I can help you with, President Reed?"

Sonia flicked her wrist to loosen the strain she had put on it from hours of work. "Is Daphne not back yet?"

With a shake of her head, the assistant replied, "No."

Sonia's brows furrowed. It's been hours. She should be back by now. I can't even get through her phone... Snapping out of her thoughts, she flashed the assistant a quick smile and dismissed her, saying, "Alright, then. You may go back to your desk."

The assistant excused herself out of courtesy and began to make her way out the door.

At that moment, Sonia's phone screen lit up with a new message. She glanced down to see that it was a text from Toby, which read, 'I'm outside your company.'

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Outside? She blinked at this. He actually came? She rose from her seat and hurried to the balcony, then looked down at the scene below the building.

True enough, as she looked down from the height of her balcony, she could pick out Toby's gleaming, luxurious Maybach from among the cars idling by the curb. He was currently parked across the street from the company building entrance.

For some reason, at the sight of his car, Sonia suddenly felt as if she was a wife whose husband was waiting to pick her up after work.

Blushing furiously at this, she hurriedly shook off such nonsensical thoughts and texted Toby, 'I'm coming down now!'