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## **Chapter 131 - 140**

The day was just starting and yet Belavia was in full swing after the news that Greyson Enterprises fell into bankruptcy spread like wildfire. The unfortunate news was the front page headline of every notable newspaper, and the issue was number one trending online.

The blame for the company's downfall was all directed to Vince Greyson, the acting CEO of Greyson Enterprises. Due to his negligence and mismanagement the once great company collapsed just months after he took over.

The breaking news was aired on radios and television. If Ybrahim Greyson had not confirmed the shocking news in a prescon, no one would actually believe it. Everyone believed that it had been a hoax and the evidence was fake but after hearing the truth from Ybrahim Greyson, the truth finally sunk, the huge empire crumbled to the ground.

The news just erupted like a bomb that shocked everyone. Even Ybrahim couldn't believe what happened. He trusted Vince but all his son did in return was to ruin the company he worked hard for three long decades.

Greyson Enterprises once stood proud and taller than most of its competitors. It's been thriving all this year but sad to say, it

was no longer the same in a blink of an eye.

Vince Greyson, after facing charges, fled the country in order to escape his crimes and to evade his debts which reached billions in total. Ybrahim Greyson couldn't do anything but apologize for his son's crimes and shoulder all responsibility. But no matter how hard he apologized, their lives will never be the same. It was not the end... but the beginning of their doom.

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When I turned the television on, I wasn't even surprised to hear the morning news. To others, it could be shocking but to someone like me who knows the news before it was even aired, it felt the same. I flipped the channels and yet there was nothing which I found interesting so I turned the television off.

There's no use to hearing the same news over and over again when I know the whole truth.

I swiftly moved to the minibar and? grabbed a can of cold beer from inside the refrigerator before I sunk to the comfortable single sofa inside my hotel room. My fingers clutched the can tightly as I poured the liquid into my mouth.

Somehow, the sense of triumph I knew I would feel after exposing Vince's darkest secret didn't arrive. There was this deep, hollow emptiness inside me saying it wasn't enough. Vince deserved more than that. What I did wasn't enough to make him pay for his crimes.

Now that he escaped it felt as if my efforts had been wasted. There's a part of me which felt a little bit disappointed with the turn of events. It never occurred to me that Vince was a huge coward. He couldn't face what he did. Above all, he escaped all his responsibilities and left it all for his aging father to handle. It must have been a huge failure for Ybrahim Greyson to be abandoned by his legitimate son.

But no matter where Vince goes, I shall hunt him even if I have to go into the deepest, darkest part of hell just to catch him. He could run away, but he would never escape the truth that he was ruined for life, his life will never be the same again. He will always be on the run. He would always guard his back in fear someone would jump out of nowhere and kill him.

I lifted the can into my mouth and drank half of it. My thoughts were occupied with where he is now. I'm sure that Vince didn't escape to another country. I lived with him for years and I know how his brain works. He sure was coward but he's not that stupid.

He would not do something ridiculous like running away without enough cash to keep him alive. Vince was smart enough to consider that.

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That makes me think that soon, Vince would run out of money and he would come back for Ybbrahim to ask him for more.

I emptied the can into my mouth and crushed? it into my hands before throwing it on the nearby trash can. The sooner Vince was caught, the better. As long as he's on the loose, I will never be at peace. He would undoubtedly try to kill me at every opportunity. It's okay if he would only take me as his target. But I'm afraid that he would harm Phoenix and Faith Vienne.

I lost a child before and I don't want to lose anyone again. I won't allow it to happen. I would fight to death just to keep my family safe.

The loud? sound of my phone ringing snapped me out of my glum reverie. Sighing, I hurriedly vacated the sofa and picked the phone seated on the top of the night table. When I looked at the screen, it was Phoenix who was calling me.

For a while, my worries faded. My face lit up as I answered the phone.

"I miss you, Ace... Hopefully you're doing fine..." Her worried voice greeted my ears. Just the sound of her soft voice has a calming effect on me. A gentle smile emerged from my lips.

"I miss you too, love." I respond as I try to ignore the longing I felt for her. "Don't worry, I will be home soon... I'm flying back to Britannia after I finish packing."

We talked on the phone for thirty long minutes. The three days I haven't been with her feel like years to me. We talked about Faith Vienne. We even talked about Vien, our angel. We both wished that she was still alive even though it's impossible so when I return back from Belavia we could be one big family again.

When I hung up, I couldn't stop grinning. The call helped me feel a lot more better.

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Now that I temporarily settled the matter regarding? Vince, I could finally return to my family.

## **Chapter 132**

The moment I closed the door and the walked to through the long and narrow hallways to return the room key card to the front desk my heart ominously began to beat an erratic rhythm.

Ofentimes when this uncomfortable feeling arises, I will simply kick it away and it will be gone. However, the dark feeling didn't fade after I pushed it away. Instead, it intensified which tells me to be wary of dangers waiting for me.

As I strode outside the hotel with my backpack slung behind my back, I instantly sensed I'm being watched. The longer I stood there, the more I feel uncomfortable.

No one would dare to attack me in broad daylight so I would be safe for a moment.

No one would attempt to harm me in this place full of people.

My hawk-sharp eyes darted to the crowd.

My alerted gaze surveyed?left to right. So far, I found no suspicious person but I didn't let my guard down. Not yet, I still sensed the impending danger waiting to befall on me.

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I waited for a cab to pass. I would be going to the airport so I needed one. I didn't wait long before I spotted the cab approaching my way, I hailed it right away until it stopped in front of me. I pulled the door open and placed my backpack on the backseat before I climbed inside and closed the door.

The unpleasant scent of air freshener invaded my nostrils, it was making me dizzy. Somehow, the air that wafted inside the car made my stomach turn upside down. Nausea descended on me, my finger clutched the seat in front of me to keep myself from falling on the floor.

"To the airport, please." I ordered and I realized that my voice sounded weak.

Upon hearing my words, the driver wordlessly started the engine and the car moved forward.

I sunk into the back seat and closed my eyes tight. Perhaps, the nauseating feeling would flee after a minute of rest. I've been up all night and it's no wonder I'm feeling unwell. I was sleep-deprived and that explains the sudden dizzying feeling.

After ten minutes passed, my eyes fluttered open only to realize that my dizziness didn't diminish. I felt a lot worse than I did before. This time, my vision was beginning to lose its focus and my surroundings were turning a bit hazy.

What is happening to me? I asked myself weakly and fought hard to maintain my focus but my struggles were to no avail.

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My energy dropped until I could no longer move my limbs and my legs. I tried to struggle but my whole body was paralyzed. I tried to scream for help but there was no sound emanating from my lips.

And the sudden realization hit me. It took me a moment before the truth sunk inside my head, the room was filled with a smoke from a chemical. The nauseating smell inside the cab was a drug that could momentarily paralyzed someone... and make that person slowly lose consciousness.

I didn't realize it immediately until it's too late. I was already snared into a trap I couldn't escape.

Despite my weakening body, I managed to lift my face to the driver's seat. I saw the man's reflection in the mirror. He possessed a pair of ocean blue eyes like mine. Even while wearing a mask, I still recognize him.

Before I could say his name out of my lips, my head fell back to the cushioned seat and I lost my consciousness.

I didn't know how long I'd been unconscious when I roused from my sleep slumber. I tried to lift my eyes open but it was so heavy that my eyelids could barely move.

The car skidded into a stop and the engine stopped. I heard the sound of the door opening closing as the man on the driver's seat climbed out of the car. Seconds later, the door on my left opened and I was dragged and dragged to the floor and left there.

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The car door slammed shut. The footsteps walked past me until I couldn't hear it anymore. While my captor was away, I tried to move a body part only to realize that even my fingers refused to move.

I wonder how long this numbness would last. I don't even know where the hell I am or if I will still be alive before the sunset.

The footsteps were back. It is now approaching my way. Then I felt my body move as someone dragged me to the floor by pulling my feet.

Excruciating pain hit my body as my back rubbed against the pebbled ground before it reached the cemented pavement. A door was opened and I was dragged inside. The smooth and cold surface of the ceramic floor told me I was inside the house.

Again I was dragged across the tiled floor until another door opened and I was pulled inside before the grip on my feet loosened.

I forced my eyes open but I couldn't. I tried to move my body again but failed once more. I blindly listened to my surroundings. I know that he was still there despite not making a sound.

My head began to spin. A sudden sleepiness struck me again. The nauseating scent of a chemical invaded my nostrils. I would die of suffocation if I stopped breathing. I could only hold my breath for two minutes. I gasped and inhaled a mass of smoke.

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The door creaked open and someone entered the room then slammed the door none too gently. Angry shouts filled the room as the two argued. I couldn't identify the second man who just entered the room since I'm beginning to feel groggy. I couldn't even understand what was going on with my eyes firmly closed.

But before I drifted back into a deep slumber, I heard the sound of a fragile object falling to the floor with a piercing crash. Then there was a long, forceful struggle between the two before a body fell to the floor with a heavy thud.

### **Chapter 133**

When my eyes fluttered open, the first thing that came across my view was the hazy white ceiling. After blinking several times, the blur didn't fade so I was forced to close my eyes again and wait a few seconds until my vision cleared.

Hell, where am I? What happened? I don't remember a single thing. I just woke up sprawled on the floor wondering how I came to this place.

After a few minutes my eyes opened. This time my sight was as clear as the morning blue sky. The familiar sky blue walls, the king size bed, the minibar at the corner, and the portrait of a woman hanging on the wall greeted my eyes as it scanned the room.

I don't need to see anything to know that I was in the Greyson Mansion—inside my room.

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What?am I doing here? I swore not to return in this hellhole unless it's a matter of life and death situation.

I tried to get up but my weak limbs were unprepared and I fell back to the floor. My whole body numb and my head pounded painfully. I wonder how long I'd been sprawled on the cold, hard floor.

The eerie silence inside the room was deafening. And a dark aura appeared all over the place. The faint light emanating from the venetian blinds confirmed it was nearly six in the afternoon and the sun was beginning to set.

After summoning all the strength I could muster, I forced myself to get up, this time I succeeded. My hands suddenly came in contact with a warm?liquid.?My head snapped to investigate only to discover the pool of fresh blood that gathered within my reach.

The morbid sight sent chills down my spine. When I looked into my hands, I realized it was soaked with blood. But it was not the blood that scared me the most—it was the ten inch knife I'm holding.

My fear grew into the size of a monster. Frozen to my place, I simply stared at it with eyes wide and unblinking while expecting it to magically disappear. Unfortunately it did not vanish. Instead, the more I look at it, the more it becomes real.

Thump! Thump!

Thump! Thump!

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My heartbeat was so loud that it filled the whole room.

Is this real or is it a nightmare? How did this happen?

I pushed my body up until I regained my balance and stood on my feet. I nearly lost my balance when I stumbled on the unconscious body on the floor.

The knife in my hands slipped out of my hold. It collided with the tiled floor with a piercing clatter.

Clad in an exquisite white dress and lying in the pool of blood was Angela. Blood leaking on the grievous wound on her chest.

The chilling scent of death and murder reeked through the heavy atmosphere. We are the only people inside the room. It's most likely I murdered her.

But... But... I can't remember anything!

I can't possibly attack a defenseless woman and then stab her multiple times until she collapses on the floor.

My stomach turned upside down and bile rose on my throat. Unable to take more of the morbid scene, I looked away. My feet refused to move as if a spell was cast to immobilize them. The sound sirens sounded in the distance. Yet, I still didn't move in my place.

The surreal events seem to happen fast forward.

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Hurried footsteps sounded on the hallway followed by the urgent knock on the door. They were ordering me to open the door but I didn't even move an inch.

I don't know what to do at the moment. The shock numbed my whole body and it made my brain stop functioning.

The door was kicked until it opened. The next thing? I know, half a dozen uniformed men entered the room and I was forced on my knees and secured my wrists with handcuffs.

I don't understand what they're trying to say. My mind went numb as well.

I didn't struggle. I allowed them to drag me outside the room then across the foyer where I saw Samantha—my stepmother— furiously waiting.

Slap!

The immediate attack on my face made my cheeks numb in pain. Her laser-sharp eyes slice through me. I didn't even blink as I fought her gaze.

"I cursed you to rot in hell for killing your step-brother's wife! I swear, I will not allow you to escape, I will make sure justice is served." Her screams could be heard all the way to the third floor of the mansion.

"I. Did. Not. Kill. Angela." Finally, I recovered my voice and I stressed each word so she would understand.

"And you think I would believe you?" The room reverberated with her hysterical laughter. "You think I'm stupid?" She added, her squinted eyes

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surveyed my blood-stained shirt. Her fingers curled into a tight ball. Her jaw furiously clenched.

"I'm not gonna force you to change your beliefs. I don't care about your opinion." I retorted ferociously then turned to the police officers, "Should we leave?"

The men led me to the door.

I ignored Samantha's angry outburst behind me and allowed myself to be dragged.

"Insolent! I will make sure you will spend the rest of your life behind bars!" She yelled furiously. I pretended not to hear her, which angered her more.

I climbed into the car and settled into the backseat. A police officer sat beside me before the car moved forward.

Now that my shock subsided I tried to recall what exactly happened until my head hurt. But no matter how hard I force myself to remember what exactly happened, I still couldn't remember a single thing.

The police car skidded to a stop in front of the police station. I climbed out of the car and I was ushered inside the building.

I must force myself to recall the events or else I would be charged with murder.... Murder which I didn't even commit.

But if I'm not the one who murdered Angela, then who else did?

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## Chapter 134

Ace's scheduled flight to Britannia was yesterday. Twenty-four hours passed since then but I haven't received a call from him informing me his flight had been cancelled.

My worries keep growing. Negative ideas kept popping inside my thoughts. The fact that he was not answering his phone scared me more.

What if Vince kidnapped him? What if something happened to Ace without me knowing?

I took a deep, steadying breath and kicked the negative thoughts away. Fretting would never take me anywhere.

.... The number you have dialed is either unattended or out of coverage. Please try your call later.....

It was the fourteenth time I try to call him. But like the previous attempts, no one answered.

From the amount of my failed tries and having to listen to the same voice over and over again, I memorized the lines.

Sighing, I returned the phone on top of the night table. Then I shifted my gaze to my daughter.

Faith Vienne was lying inside her crib, flailing her arms in the air. I picked her up and carried her towards the terrace for a breath of fresh air.

The soft whistle of cold wind helped ease a bit of my stress. Slowly, I calm down.

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It's a beautiful day, I thought. My eyes sweeping to the scenic clear blue sky looking like a scene straight out of a painting as it spread through the horizon.

As I enjoyed the view and the soft caress of the cold wind, I prayed to the heavens that Ace is safe wherever he is now.

Even if it takes long for Ace to return, perhaps it would take days or even a week, I will wait for him.

And if by chance he does not return then it's time to take action....

I rocked Faith Vienne into my arms and sang her a song until she sleepily yawned and closed her adorable eyes.

When my daughter was fast asleep, I entered my room then laid a soft kiss on her rosy cheeks before lowering her into the queen size bed.

While I was arranging the pillows around my little girl, there was a soft rustle of movement behind me. When I looked in the direction of the doors, there Elisa stood.

"Have you called Ace?" She asked as she swiftly moved closer and sat on the edge of the bed.

I shook my head and weakly mumbled 'no.'

Seeing the sad look upon my face, she smiled and cheered me up. "Don't worry, he will be here soon, his trip was simply delayed."

"I hope so." I replied. Hoping my best friend was right.

While Elisa was there, I took a quick bath and changed into a fit pink t-shirt and jeans. After I emerged from the bathroom, I grabbed the car keys on the top of the night table and headed to the door.

"Take care Beatrix," Elisa said as I headed to the door.

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"Thanks a lot Lis. Promise, I will be quick,?I just need to buy diapers and a feeding bottle ...."

"No problem," She replied.

I opened the door and closed it behind me. The house was extremely quiet. It became like that when Ace left. Perhaps it was just my imagination.

The foyer was empty. Madam Stella was nowhere to be seen. I want to ask her if she wants me to buy something for her.

I shrugged my shoulders and walked outside the house.

The refreshing cold wind brushes past me. It was a cloudy day, a beautiful opportunity?for a picnic. Unfortunately, Ace wasn't here yet so I need to move my plans until he arrives.

I climbed inside the car, put my seatbelt on, and turned the engine. The car slowly made its way towards the gates.

It was boring to drive alone under the exquisite blue sky. I'm used to having Ace follow me like a shadow wherever I go. Now that he's away, I feel the nagging emptiness.

To cheer myself up, I turned the radio on. A heartbreak song blasted on the speaker and my mood plummeted to the ground.

I turned the radio off. It wasn't helping me anyway.

Sighing, I focused my attention on the road.

The car?behind me caught my attention. I noticed it in the rear view mirror?after I left the estate. It did not overtake my car even if it had the chance. I could not help but wonder if it was tailing me or I'm just paranoid here.

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After a thirty minute drive, my car halted into the parking area in front of the supermarket. The car that had been following my car drove past me. I sighed, relieved that it was not what I thought.

The guard opened the door as I got inside. I mumbled a quick thank you before I picked a cart and pushed it towards the baby section.

I grabbed a three piece set of assorted color baby bottles displayed on the rack and loaded it on the cart. When I finished, I moved forward.

The cart pulled into a halt when I reached the area where diapers are displayed. Carefully, I selected the most trusted and tested brand and grabbed three large packs and placed it inside the cart. Three large packs of diapers is equivalent to three weeks to one month's supply. I always buy diapers in bulk since I hate going to crowded supermarkets every week.

I headed straight into the counter where a long queue was waiting. When it's my turn, I paid the cashier in cash.

Five minutes later, I emerged out of the door carrying the items I purchased. Hurriedly, I made my way to where my car was parked. When I reached the spot, I pulled the compartment open and loaded the items inside before closing it again.

An ominous feeling descended on me after I climbed inside the car and closed the door. Before I could turn the engine, things escalated quickly.

A muscular arm hooked around my neck, suspending my breathing. A piercing scream tore from my lips.

## **Chapter 135**

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The arms holding my neck tightened. I struggled hard, punched his face multiple times but he didn't even budge. No matter how hard I fought, I'm still no match to his strength.

He pressed a handkerchief into my nose. I know what it could do to me so I fought even harder—with all the strength I have. This is a matter of life and death situation. I won't allow him to do what he wants.

My long fingernails clawed his cheeks. He cried in pain and cursed in rage. The handkerchief fell out of his reach. His hold around my neck momentarily loosened.

I took the chance and hit him forcefully using my elbow. He fell back on the backseat of the car.

I turned to the door and reached for the handle. But before the tip of my fingers touched the handle he snatched my hair with brute force that I stumbled on the seat.

A piercing scream erupted from my lips. My fist smashed his face nonstop. I won't give up without one hell of a fight. I can't die this fast. I still have to live for the sake of my daughter... for Ace.

He slapped me so hard that my cheeks went numb. The blow was powerful enough to cause me to hit my head on the steering wheel. The metallic taste of blood lingered on my bleeding lips.

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"Bi\*ch!" He spat and fished something on the pocket of his trousers. It was a sprayer but it was rather small for a bottle of perfume. It was twice as big as my thumb.

"V-vince?" I gasped. My mouth dropped to the floor as my eyebrows shot to the ceiling.

It must be Vince! Even if he's wearing a mask and a bonnet I still recognize his voice.

"You got it right, my darling Phoenix." He said, despite the mask covering his mouth, I could sense the sinister smile playing on his lips.

"W-what d-did you do to Ace?" I asked in a shaky voice, my horrified gaze bored to his.

"You don't have to know, Phoenix...." He snapped and without another word sprayed the contents of the bottle into the air.

The nauseating scent filled my nose. My eyelids feel heavy. I blinked my eyes rapidly, forcing myself not to fall asleep.

I forced my trembling legs to rise, then snatched the cat figurine below the rearview mirror and used brute force to smash it hard on his head. He stumbled on the backseat. Groaning as he rolled from the painful blow.

Blood oozes from the wound. Panting, I used the last of my strength and pulled the car door open. I jumped outside.

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I haven't taken another step forward when my vision begins to blur, my head starts to spin, and I lose my balance.

My head bumped into the hard, rough pavement

'Help!' I screamed but the words became a barely audible whisper.

The last thing I knew before darkness swallowed me up was the sound of hurried footsteps approaching me. After that, I drifted into nothingness.

Am I dead? I asked myself as I lay sprawled on the ground.

Pitch black darkness surrounded me. I couldn't see anything except black. I couldn't feel anything too. It must be what feels like to be dead.

Am I really dead? I asked myself for the second time. But I couldn't find an answer.

Before I could even think of anything, images began to flash inside my thoughts.

I saw my parents....

I saw Ace....

I saw my angelic daughter, Vien...

I saw everything that happened in my past....

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Tears fell down my cheeks as I watched the flow of memories. I realize how strong I am. Everything that happened to me has a reason. Whatever happened in the past I have no regrets since it is what made me who I am now.

I closed my eyes again. This time, I drifted to another peaceful slumber.

I don't know how long I've been asleep. When I opened my eyes, the grandiose ceiling and the golden chandelier hanging on top came to my view.

When I looked to my right, the breathtaking sunset visible through the floor to ceiling glass window welcomed my eyes.

Beautiful.... Just beautiful....

Slowly, I tried to get up on the bed but the sudden jolt of pain when I tried to get up shot through my bandaged head. I fell back on the feathery soft bed, wincing.

When the pain subsided I tried to get up again, this time more carefully. Relief shot through me when I successfully sat on the bed.

My squinted eyes surveyed my surroundings. The place looks familiar.... I was sure I'd been here before. The cream colored walls, the king size bed, the golden chandelier, the Victorian sofa set, and the floor to ceiling window look so familiar.

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Where was it? Claymore Mansion? Yes, I Think it is... the place owned by Lady Ravenwood.

So why am I here? The last thing I remember before losing consciousness was hitting my head on the pavement... then I heard footsteps running... and after that I couldn't recall anything....

It doesn't make sense... I don't understand why I'm here.

My thoughts were cut short when the door opened. A woman with golden brown hair tamed behind her nape entered. When she came closer, I realized she possessed enchanting sapphire eyes.

She placed the tray on top of the night table. There was a scalding cup on top. I couldn't identify if it's tea or coffee but I hope it's coffee.

"I'm glad you're awake." She whispered softly.

This must be Lady Ravenwood, I thought to myself as my gaze landed on her stunning face. She's more beautiful up close.

She handed the cup to me.

"Thank you." I mumbled.

When I lifted the cup to my lips the enchanting scent of hot chocolate permeated my nostrils. I took a sip and nearly closed my eyes. It tastes better than coffee or tea.

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"Allow me to introduce myself, Phoenix. I'm Claire Ravenwood. I'm Ace's mother."

The cup nearly slipped from my hold.

## **Chapter 136**

"I am Ace's mother." Lady Ravenwood repeated after seeing the shocked look on my face.

I blinked several times, slowly digesting her words.

"But... But... you're too young to be his mother."

"I will take that as a compliment, Phoenix." She smiled humbly, her eyes twinkling.

"Yes, that's a compliment. You appeared around your 30's to me."

"Thank you dear, by the way I'm 39." She mumbled and elegantly sat on the chair beside the bed.

"Ace never told me about you.... I mean he did not particularly say you're his mother." By the mention of it, I witnessed the twinkle in her sapphire eyes dissolved. It was replaced with a shadow of loneliness and pain.

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I bit my lower lip. I shouldn't say the words aloud. She was hurt. If only I could take my words back.

"I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have said it." I said apologetically.

Claire shook her head and forced a smile on her lips, the smile barely reached her eyes. "You don't have to say sorry. I know my son hates me."

"Because Ace had been all alone all these years. When you left him, he felt that the world forsaken him. And the only person who should have stayed by his side left and didn't return."

"I'm fourteen when I gave birth to Ace. I have no option but to leave."

My jaw dropped to the floor. "Fourteen?" I repeated as my eyebrows shot to the ceiling. It's a very young age to raise a child. Girls at that age should be at school.

"Shocking right?" Claire rose from her seat. There was a distant look in her eyes as she recalled a particular memory. "I was kidnapped and raped by Ace's father. The only reason why our family didn't press charges was because he was more powerful back then. We would be shunned by society if the truth comes out. I couldn't let that happen. My father was in the hospital at that time. Tarnishing our family name will result in losing a lot of business investments. If that happens, we won't be able to pay hospital bills. My whole family would suffer."

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"I was so young then," She continued. There was resigned acceptance in her voice as she recalled the darkest part of her life. "I couldn't make decisions on my own so I agreed to stay at the Greyson mansion until I gave birth to Ace. Samantha Greyson, Ybrahim Greyson's wife, made my life a living hell. We both know it was not my fault. I was there against my will but everyday she made me feel as if everything happened to me.

Claire stopped reminiscing and looked at me. "I'm sorry. You shouldn't be hearing this."

"It is okay. I don't judge you for it. I'm very willing to listen."

Claire took a deep, steadying breath as she continued, "I thought I would be happy as long as I have my son with me. But then one day I just snapped. Ace was around ten years old that time. Samantha tried to kill me and that was the last straw. I left the Greyson Mansion for good. When I tried to take Ace they wouldn't allow me. I have tried to take him for years but they don't want to give him back. I was blackmailed and threatened. They would destroy my whole family if I insisted on taking my child back."

Too lost to even say a word, I bowed my head. As a mother, I know exactly how she feels. Losing a child was so painful that no words would be enough to describe it. It feels like a part of yourself is taken away from you.

"Ace loves you...." I softly said when I recovered and looked deep into a pair of sapphire eyes that reminded me of Ace. "He might not realize it now but he

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does. He was just blinded from pain. He had a traumatic childhood that scarred him for life."

"I hope he will one day learn how to forgive me.... He's the only one I've got now aside from my granddaughters."

She accidentally said granddaughters. I should have corrected her?but I kept my mouth shut. It was an honest mistake after all.

"Give him enough time and he will learn to forgive and accept you."

Claire nodded, "I will patiently wait until he does."

I gave her a tender smile which she reciprocated with a smile full of warmth. When my gaze shifted to my fingers, I was surprised that I was still holding the cup of cocoa. I forgot about it.

I lifted the cup into my mouth and took a sip. The rich flavor of cocoa lingered on my tongue.

"Phoenix, about what happened to you this morning, I want to discuss it with you."

I blinked my eyes rapidly. The issue totally slipped my mind.

"I-I?have no recollection of what happened. " I said truthfully, my horrified eyes landed on hers.

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"Vince tried to kidnap you... you're lucky that we arrived in time. The bad news is, he escaped and he brought your car with him."

Now that Claire mentioned that Vince tried to kidnap me, the memory slowly dawned on me. I could now remember the details. I was able to smash the ceramic cat figurine on his head. When he was thrashing in pain, I took the opportunity to escape by jumping out of the car.

"Is it just a coincidence that you're there?"

"No, " she responded, shaking her head. "When Ace left to deal with Vince, I had a strong feeling your life would be endangered so I took the initiative to watch over you while he's away. I wasn't mistaken, Vince tried to abduct you. My bodyguards helped you when Vince tried to drag you inside the car."

I shudder at the thought of Vince forcing me inside the car. I wonder what could have happened to me if Claire wasn't there for me.

"Thank you....Thank you for saving me. I owe you my life."

"You owe me nothing, Phoenix." She said taking my hand. Tears sprang at the corner of her eyes. "I should be the one thanking you for taking good care of my son."

## **Chapter 137**

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"I love your son and I will do everything for him."

Claire nodded her head in understanding. She then gave me an admiring smile.

"I'm glad that Ace chose you as his other half."

The moment I heard her words, I couldn't help but smile. Ace is the love of my life. I too was glad I chose him.

I honestly couldn't think of any other man except him.

We've been together for more than five years now and to be honest, it was the happiest and the most challenging time of my life.

True my life with him had been full of ups and downs but in the end I was able to make it through the fire and the biggest achievement was that I am able to keep our family together.

Claire let go of my fingers and wiped the tears at the corner of her eyes.

"Sorry, I'm so emotional right now. I'm just so happy to be finally talking to you." She blushed as she gave me a smile filled with tenderness. "Anyway, finish your hot chocolate. I want you to meet someone."

I didn't ask who. I just nodded my head and brought the cup to my lips. When it was finished, I handed Claire the empty cup.

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"Wait for a while, I will be back." She said and hurriedly made her way towards the door with the tray that contained the empty cup in her hand.

Claire opened the door and stepped outside. When I couldn't see her anymore, I leaned on the headboard.

I wonder if Ace is alright wherever he is now. I missed him so badly that my heart ached while thinking about him.

Claire said she wanted me to meet someone, who would that be?

The room was silent. The only sound I could hear was the ticktock of the clock. Minutes passed by but Claire hadn't returned so I decided to leave the bed.

Aside from the slight pounding in my head, and the pain in my lips I'm perfectly fine.

There was a soft knock on the door. When it opened, a uniformed servant entered. She was young, or perhaps it was her youthful smile that gave me the impression she's younger than her real age. "Miss Ravenwood is inside another room. Please follow me."

Despite my confusion, I raised no question and followed the servant who led me to the spacious corridors. When I thought we would be walking forever, she pulled into a stop at a particular door.

"Before you enter Ma'am Phoenix, please calm yourself."

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I didn't understand what she meant but I followed her anyway. I took a deep calming breath and when I felt lighter, I pulled the door open.... Claire was standing near the window. When she saw me enter, she turned towards me.

Slowly, I made my way towards the bed only to freeze in shock when my gaze shifted to the bed where a little girl was seated.

In a blink of an eye, the self-control I thought I possessed crumbled to the flawless white floor.

No one could have prepared me for the scene in front of me. Seated right in front of the bed was Vien.... My daughter.

A sob erupted from my lips as pain gripped my heart.

I must have missed her so much that I'm imagining things.

Vien, my first born, was dead. She died in an accident and that is all because of me. And the child in front of me was a different girl. I am only seeing an illusion.

I blinked rapidly and waited for my illusion to stop, to my surprise it didn't change one bit. The child lying on the bed was Vien's perfect replica.

I wiped the tears abundantly flowing down my flushed cheeks. But the more I wiped the tears with the back of my palms the more my tears flowed abundantly.

Before I even knew it, I was violently sobbing and kneeling on the floor.

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Dear lord, I missed my child so much. I should have been the one who died that night and not her.

If I could turn back time, I would rewrite the past. I would let my life be taken instead of Vien. I could die in peace knowing that I was able to save her.

The little girl around four years carefully moved down the bed and she slowly made her way towards my direction and stopped right in front of me.

My tears made my gaze blurred and unclear. I wiped my tears using my fingers and when my vision cleared, I looked at her.

Her dainty fingers cupped my cheeks.

The more I looked at her the more my sobs intensified. A pair of phoenix blue eyes intently stare at me. Her seraphic face was framed with curly brown hair.

Without a doubt, this little girl...is my little angel, Vien.

The girl opened her lips but no words came out. She opened it the second time, this time she was able to say something. The first word that came from her mouth was the words. "M-mama."

I pulled her into my arms. Hold her tight as if I will never let go.

It took me four agonizing years to hold her again. If this was just a dream, I don't want to wake up.

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She reciprocated my hug with equal warmth. "Mama... mama... i-its y-youu." She sobbed, her shoulders shaking. She wrapped her arms around me even tighter.

We pour our heart out as we hold each other. When I raise my head, I realize we are not the only ones crying. Claire was crying too.

I didn't know that this day would come that I would be holding my first born into my arms. All these years, I blamed myself for her death. Seeing her now was a miracle and I would be forever thankful for the lord.

"I will never leave you again Vien... I promise you, Mama will stay by your side no matter what.

I lowered my head into her temples and laid a soft kiss on her cheek.

## **Chapter 138**

If this is a dream, I don't want to wake up anymore. I waited too long for this reunion to happen. And now I couldn't believe all I ever prayed for and all I ever wanted was actually taking place.

I sat on the edge of the bed, my beautiful child leaning on my chest, my arms protectively wrapped around her so that no one could take her away from me again.

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Claire watched us with a glint of tears in her eyes and a smile stretched on her lips.

Tears clouded my vision. I swallowed hard to suppress them. I cried a drum a while ago. If I continue to tear up, I will probably lose tons of fluid in my body.

My arms tightened around Vien. It felt so good to hold her in my arms. It felt so great to feel her heart beating—a proof that she was alive.

I don't want to ever let go of her. I fear she would dissolve into nothingness if I set her free.

There's nothing which could kill me now except realizing that she's an illusion my brain made up to feed my fantasies.

I have dreamed of this moment over and over again. Now that it finally came true, I couldn't speak. The moment was too wonderful to be described in words. So I just kept Vien in my arms so she would know how much I missed her without saying a word.

I didn't know how long I'd been in that position when the bed jolted and Claire sat beside me. She cleared her throat before she spoke, "Lucas Nicholas, my nephew was the first one to discover your daughter was alive."

Shock hit me hard, my questioning gaze landed on hers, "So Ace knows that our daughter is alive?"

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When she shook her head, I sighed. Relieved to know Ace didn't keep the truth from me.

If Ace knows the truth he would not keep it to himself. He understands how I feel as a mother. I would be the first person he would come looking for after he knew our daughter was alive.

Claire let go a deep breath before she told me everything from start to finish. She told me the exact details of how Lucas found out my child was alive and how he was able to save her.

As I listened, helpless tears fell from my cheeks. I thought I couldn't cry anymore but I was mistaken. My eyes turned into a reservoir by the amount of tears it kept shedding.

The pain gripping my heart continued even after Claire finished her story. It broke my heart thinking about the wasted years. It took me four agonizing years to have my child back. Those four years would be forever stolen. I would only be completely happy if the man who played with our lives paid for his sins.

Sniffing, I wiped the wetness on my cheeks using the back of my palms.

My baby girl has been through a lot. She suffered a lot too. And that is because of Vince. The thought of my daughter into Vince's evil hands stabbed my heart with a knife.

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My fist curled into a tight ball. I never hated anyone the way I hated Ace's stepbrother. He not only ruined our lives but also faked my daughter's death. That was the worst thing he had done. I could never forgive him in a million years.

I hope someday justice will be served. Even if it takes long but as long as justice is served I will wait patiently until Vince is convicted for his crimes.

"Lucas decided to keep Vien from you. He too kept the truth from Ace. He just wants to keep the child safe." Claire continued with a distant look in her eyes. "Please forgive Lucas for keeping Vien for a while. He knows that you and Ace are in danger. He doesn't want Vien to be dragged into another situation that would threaten her life."

I fully understand Lucas for what he did and I appreciate him for it. However, what I did not appreciate was not telling me right away. He wouldn't understand my sentiments unless he experienced what it feels to have a child.

I took a deep calming breath before I responded. "I'm not that angry anymore... Since it already happened and my daughter is saved I forgive him."

For the first time since I arrived in the Claymore Mansion, a contented smile stretched on my lips. "I will forever be grateful for what Lucas did. I couldn't thank him enough for placing his life in danger just to save my daughter."

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"Vien is Lucas Nicholas's niece." Claire began, reciprocating my smile with equal warmth. "It's his obligation to save a member of his family." She added, this time her eyes staring at Vien filled with fondness.

"I also want to thank you for taking good care of my daughter, Lady Ravenwood. You didn't only save my life today but you also saved my daughter."

Claire stepped closer and landed her dainty fingers on top of my shoulders. "As Ace's mother, it's my duty to protect you while he's away. I would do everything within my power to keep the two of you safe."

My gaze shifted from Claire to Vien. I discovered my daughter was fast asleep.

Claire saw her too. She slowly rose from the bed to give me space. I gingerly place my child on the bed. She stirred after her back landed on the soft cushion. "Mama... mama." She mumbled.

I sat on the edge of the bed and took her hand. "Mama's here my child." Vien stopped her panic cries as her fingers tightened around me. Tension left her face and she calmed down.

"When she first came here in the Claymore Mansion, Vien couldn't say a word. Her trauma must have made her mute. I was afraid that she would never be able to speak again. However, all my fear melted after you came. Hearing the child speak your name for the first time gave me so much hope."

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## Chapter 139

Hearing Claire's words made my chest want to burst with emotions.

Vien had been waiting for me!

Once Ace returns we would be one big happy family again!

The thought brought a tear in my eyes and a smile on my lips.

I lifted my fingers and caressed Vien's rosy cheeks. She would be a wonderful sister to Faith.

My eyes turned to Claire who stood a few steps away from the bed. She was looking intently at Vien with longing in her eyes.

She was so absorbed in her own thoughts that she didn't notice I was watching her closely.

Claire must have been thinking about her son. She hadn't held him for so long. Ace was around ten years old when she left him because of his abusive father. Until now, Claire couldn't even touch her own son. The situation is difficult for her.

I could feel she's a good person. If only one day Ace would learn to accept his mother. I know once he hears what Claire had been through, he would learn to forgive her. After all, the two looked so much alike. Ace will one day understand that he couldn't continue hating the woman who had given birth to him.

A deep sigh escaped my lips. My gaze drifted back to my daughter.

There's so many questions swirling inside my thoughts now. But among those questions I only got one which I needed the answer the most.

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If Lucas Nicholas wants to keep Vien until this issue is resolved, why did Claire decide to tell me about Vien now?

As if reading my thoughts, Claire slowly made her way to me. "Lady Ravenwood?" My wide, questioning eyes landed on hers.

Claire forced a smile on her lips but the glint barely reached her eyes. "Perhaps you're wondering why I insist on telling you the truth even if Lucas is against it?"

I looked deep into her beautiful sapphire eyes and nodded my head. I want to hear the response coming from her.

She took a deep breath before she continued, "I told you the truth because I don't want you to suffer anymore. It's been four years and without you telling me, I know it was the worst years of your life. My child was taken away from me too. That's my worst nightmare as a mother. For years, I suffered because of it. So if there's someone who could understand all your pain, it was me. Phoenix."

By just looking at her, I could almost sense the agony and loneliness she kept hidden all these years.

It makes me want to wipe the sadness within her with reassuring words despite knowing it would not be enough to ease them. Only Ace has the power to take all her pains away.

I saw a tear drop from her eye but she quickly turned away and walked towards the window.

She lifted her fingers and wiped the tears off her cheeks.

She didn't turn towards me, instead she kept looking towards the view on the window.

The light and dark merely finished their tug of war. In the end, it was darkness that won and it spread a pitch black ink through the horizon.

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For the first time in four years, I felt a heavy burden was lifted off my chest. I felt lighter and that is because I have my precious princess with me today.

My only regret is, I couldn't make Claire feel better. And no amount of words nor reassurance will. Unfortunately, I couldn't give what she wanted but I hope one day she will have what her heart desires.

\*\*\*

"From now on, I will hire two bodyguards to watch over you wherever you go."

We were having dinner when Claire brought her plans up. From looking at my plate my gaze shifted across the table to where she sat.

I don't have any objections since it's a brilliant idea. I want to keep my children safe too and I couldn't do it on my own so I agreed.

She was elated to hear I don't have objections.

"Also, I'm sorry that I couldn't allow you to go home tonight." She said sincerely, her gaze meeting mine. "Especially since you are bringing Vien with you, I couldn't just allow you to leave. We don't know what will happen once you leave Claymore Mansion. At this point it would be dangerous to go out even if you bring half a dozen bodyguards with you. Vince might be lurking in the darkness and waiting for the perfect timing to catch you."

I nodded my head in understanding. The only thing that saddens me is not being with Faith tonight. I'm worried that she would notice my absence. I don't want to bother Elisa. I don't want her to be deprived of a goodnight sleep because of the favor I want to ask her.

"However, you could return tomorrow morning and I would come with you. I haven't seen my other granddaughter and I want to grab the chance to spend some time with her.... Well if you would allow me?"

How could I say no to Claire?

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I gave her a smile before I replied, "I would be grateful if you would come with me. Please spend your time with Faith and Vien, they needed you too."

Claire's eyes popped up in happiness. Her lips curled into a smile that lit up the whole room.

"Thank you." She mumbled.

"You're very much welcome, Lady Ravenwood."

When dinner was finished, I immediately excused myself and retreated to Vien's room. She was still asleep when I entered the room.

I gingerly moved to the night table where a wireless telephone sat and dialed the number to Madam Stella's estate.

I was relieved when it was Madam Stella who answered.

"Dear lord! You called at last. We've been so worried about you, Beatrix." Madam Stella began. I winced and distanced the telephone from my ears to protect my ears from her high-pitched tone.

"I apologize for what happened today. I was nearly kidnapped today."

"Kidnapped!!" Madam Stella was horrified.

Sighing, I told her what exactly happened today.

## **Chapter 140**

"Vince, Ace's step-brother, tried to kidnap me. I was so lucky that I managed to jump out of the car before he could do anything to me." I told Madam Stella.

Shivers run down my spine as the memory plays on my thoughts. I still couldn't believe I managed to escape Vince's clutches unscathed.

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I wonder what could have happened to me if Lady Ravenwood didn't arrive on time and Vince took me away inside the car.

I wonder if Vince planned to kill me or merely wanted me to be the hostage so he could get what he wanted.

"I was so glad that someone helped you!" Madam Stella exclaimed, tearing through my trail of thoughts.

I was glad too.... I couldn't express how grateful I am that I survived this day. I thought I was going to die.

"I don't know how I'm going to tell your father if you're harmed!" She let go a deep, exasperated sigh. "You made us all worried when you didn't return after going to the grocery store!" Madam Stella continued in her high-pitched tone. I have to move the wireless telephone away from my ears to protect my eardrum.

Now that Madam Stella mentioned father, I was reminded that I needed to talk to him. There were so many things I needed to discuss with him and that includes Vince and how he tried to kill me and Ace.

Once I told father about it, he would be angry that I didn't tell him right away. He would surely fly to Britannia in a fortnight and hire a dozen bodyguards to watch over me. That's exactly what my father is going to do.

I sighed and decided I would call him early in the morning. I have the whole night to summon all the courage I could muster to do it.

"Lady Ravenwood is right, Beatrix. Just stay for the night there. It would be too dangerous if you insist on coming home at this hour. We never know what Ace's brother has in mind. I want you to be safe."

I could imagine Madam Stella pacing back and forth inside her office with a worried look on her face. I was so sorry that I caused her so much trouble

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today. I sighed and waited for her to finish her sermon before I grabbed the chance to speak.

"I feel bad for not being with Faith tonight but Lady Ravenwood and you are right. I couldn't come home at this hour. That's why I decided to just return home first thing in the morning. For now, I will spend the night here in the Claymore Mansion."

"Good girl. You take care. I will pass the phone to Elisa. She was eager to talk to you."

There was a moment of silence on the opposite line. Then I heard hurried footsteps in the background and seconds later I heard Elisa's worried voice asking if I was alright.

I told her I was fine and fortunately I have no life-threatening injury. I also told her

what the exact details I told Madam Stella.

Elisa was silent as she listened to my story. If I could see her expression now I know that there's a deep frown on her forehead.

I told her everything that I could recall except the part that Lady Ravenwood was actually Ace's mother. I would tell her some other time. I couldn't explain everything while on the phone.

As expected, my best friend was worried.

"Vince seriously needed to be locked up inside a mental institution. His actions were exactly the perfect definition of a man suffering from a mental illness. I just hope the police would immediately capture him. He would not stop unless he kills you or Ace." Elisa said between gritted teeth.

"The police are already working on it. There's a tracking device attached to the car so it would not be long before they find him."

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When the call was over and Elisa assured me that my little angel was already peacefully asleep in her bed I turned the phone off.

I let go a deep sigh of relief and returned the telephone on top of the night table.

Smiling, I headed to the bed where Vien was asleep and snuggled close to her.

As I lay beside my daughter, my thoughts drifted back to Ace. The smile on my lips faded. The worry I felt earlier returned. This time it was greater than the last time.

I just hope wherever he is now, he's safe.

I pray that Vince didn't do something terrible to his step brother. Because if he did hurt Ace, I will hunt him even to the deepest, darkest part of hell to get my revenge.

Vince?would be wrong to think that I will never do anything to stop him. He was wrong.

He faked Vien's death. He tried to kill me and Ace. It was enough for the last straw. I couldn't bear to watch him destroy my family without doing anything.

I couldn't bear to watch my loved ones suffer. I must do something to protect them.

I stared at the little angel beside me and my eyes began to water.?I couldn't believe that my daughter was alive. This moment is one of the best things that happened to me.

My eyelids grow heavy. Before I even knew it, I fell asleep with Vien in my arms.

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It was six in the morning when I woke up. The first thing to greet my view was Vien's angelic face. I blinked my eyes several times just to make sure I'm not dreaming.

Her eyes fluttered open. "Mama..." She said softly. Her cherry lips stretched into a smile.

This is real! This is not just a dream.

"Good morning Vien."?I pulled her into my arms and hugged her tight. She hugged me back with equal warmth.

I kissed her on the temples before letting her go. "Today we will be seeing your baby sister Faith! She looks so much like you Vien and I'm sure you will love her..."

"B-baby... sister?"

"Yes! Faith is your younger sister! We will go to Madam Stella's Estate so you will be able to see her."

Vien's face lit up. Her eyes widened and her eyebrows shot to the ceiling. This is the first time I saw her face this bright. She looked so happy and excited at the same time.

I got up from the bed and lifted her up until her toes touched the floor.

"Shall we prepare now? Mama is excited to see your baby sister."

Vien eagerly nodded her head. Her lips curled into a gentle smile. She excitedly pulled me to the bathroom and I followed behind her, chuckling.

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