

The Marvelous Elijah's Return By Rever Chapter 26

Chapter 26

Facing Jail time Six

o'clock met James in a nearby shopping mall a few blocks from the Paz motel, and as he was staring at the cabbages and vegetables that lined the shelves around him, he couldn't help listening to the two ladies gossiping beside him.

"Did you see this morning's news?" A brunette woman asked excitedly. "Of course, I saw it. I thought news about their divorce was going to be the craziest thing we would get, but it just keeps getting worse! He and her cousin... like that's just so messed up!" A blonde lady exclaimed, throwing her free hand in the air.

Wondering what the heck they were talking about, he shook his head and put the cabbage into his basket before moving to the next shelf and grabbing a bunch of tomatoes. As he was placing them into his basket, he noticed how some shoppers were whispering, instead of talking normally and it just made him even more puzzled. But he carried on with his task in silence, trying his best to ignore them since he wanted to buy all the stuff quickly to make breakfast before Elijah or anyone else woke up. Finally, when he had all the items on the list in his basket, James carried it to the cash register, paying with his credit card.

Then he collected his plastic bags and headed out of the store and started walking up the sidewalk, humming to himself softly.

After a ten minutes walk, he suddenly stopped in his steps, his eyes widening as he saw the bunch of news crew vans, parked in front of the motel with a bunch of reporters standing outside like vultures ready to pick off the bodies of their prey.

His heartbeat accelerated as he wondered if they were here concerning the situation where Elijah punched a reporter yesterday, and the more he thought about it, it made sense, and he let out a sigh of annoyance. Clutching onto his bags' handle, James drew a deep breath and started walking toward the motel entrance, praying that none of them stop him.

But when he got to the door, he felt a hand tap him on his shoulder, and he squeezed his eyes shut, dreading who it would be. Yet, he didn't turn around and pushed the key into the lock.

"Excuse me, do you live here?" A journalist asked, looking at James struggling to unlock the door. "It seems like you do... Do you mind if we ask you a few questions?" "Yes, I

do mind!" James replied angrily, shaking his head as he finally managed to open the door.

Then he shoved it open, rushed into the lobby, then fought his way into shutting it in the face of the reporters, who were shouting questions at him while banging on the door. "What is wrong with these people?!" James growled, shaking his fist in frustration. "Is it true that this is where Elijah live, in the motel of Peach and her mother?" A reporter shouted from outside the shut door. A look of worry and anger flashed across James' eyes as he took a step back, mumbling beneath his breath, "This has gotten out of hand. Master Elijah is in some serious trouble."

As the fear that he tried to suppress became hard to ignore, James rushed into the kitchen with the plastic bags and set them on the counter before pulling out his phone. For a while, he stood, staring at its screen, as he wondered if he should call. Then he sighed and dialed the number. After a few rings, he heard Mr. Maxwell's voice on the other end of the call, "Why are you disturbing me this early, James?"

"So...rry... I am sorry, Boss. It's just that the young master might be in a serious situation and 1..." James stated, trailing off as he could feel his voice shaking.

"James, is my son facing jail time?" "Well... I... I don't think so, boss... not that I know of." "Is he in need of a heart, kidney, or organ transplant?" "Huh?! Hmm... No, sir."

A sigh of annoyance echoed through the receiver and then Mr. Maxwell said calmly, "Then why are you calling me?" Swallowing hard, James closed his eyes and said nervously, "The thing is, sir, there are reporters everywhere, and they-

"James, you call me this early in the morning because of reporters?!" Mr. Maxwell demanded harshly, his tone filled with irritation as he said, "I told you to call me in case of a real emergency." "But sir, his reputation..." "What kind of teacher gives his students the answer to the questions on the day of the test?" Annoyed and worried, James lost his grip on his tongue and said, "But sir, you are his father, not his instructor." "Don't be silly, James. How does a child learn to crawl, walk, talk, and understand life..? From the adults in their lives regularly. And as his father, this is a part of my life lessons for him. Let him figure it out for himself!" Mr. Maxwell said calmly.

Silence took over and after a few seconds James spoke again, his voice low, "I understand, sir." "Good. Don't call me again unless my son has exhausted all his options. Otherwise, I won't forgive you or handle it lightly!" Mr. Maxwell uttered firmly, ending the call without another word.

Staring numbly at his phone for several seconds, James sighed, and then he put it back into his pocket, frowning at the groceries.

At that moment, he heard the sound of footsteps approaching him from the back, and he immediately turned to see Miss Grace heading his way. He smiled faintly as she greeted him with a warm smile and said, "Morning, James!"

"A pleasant morning to you, Grace," He replied gently.

Darting her eyes away from him, she stared at the bags and asked, "What's in these?" "Oh, I picked out fresh ingredients for breakfast," James answered as she walked towards the

counter.

Then Miss Grace took a peek into the bags, staring in disbelief at how fresh the vegetables and fruit were, dumbfounded that Elijah knew how to pick out food so well.

"Thank you so much." Miss Grace said gratefully, her face breaking into a radiant smile as she stared intently at him. "You should go rest. I will handle things from here."

Watching her in disbelief as she took out the bag of tomatoes, Elijah rushed over and gently grabbed it from her grip, saying, "You just got back from the hospital! I could never let you take such a big load by yourself. So you should be the one to rest."

Grinning brightly, Miss Grace stared at him with a loving look before saying, "I'll manage, don't worry. Besides, you, Elijah, and the others have done so much for us, that I can't keep letting you guys continue like this."

"You are not cooking, Grace," James stated sternly, shaking his head in disapproval. "You are too weak right now."

"He's right, mama." Peach uttered as she stepped into the kitchen, pouting at her mother's frown.

"But..." Miss Grace tried to argue and then sighed when both her daughter and James glared at her. "Okay, fine."

Smiling at her mother, Peach went over to Miss Grace and hugged her tightly, inhaling as a sense of relief flooded over her body as she felt safe and secure being in the arms of her mom.

"Does anyone know who has the front door key?" Matt asked as he suddenly walked into a kitchen with a confused look on his face.

"Right... I came in here to ask the same question." Miss Grace said, pulling away from Peach.

A look of worry crossed James' face when he said, "I do, but it's safer that way because-

"Guys, there are a bunch of people standing outside... I peeked out my window and saw these journalists and cameramen out there." Ryan said, rushing inside the kitchen.

A look of concern was written all over everyone's faces at what Ryan said, especially Peach, who looked over at her mother's worried eyes. "Why is it so noisy outside the motel?!" Rookie asked as he entered the kitchen, looking sleepy and annoyed. Frowning, James sighed and mumbled, "Reporters."

"Reporters? Where?" Elijah asked, scratching the back of his hair as he yawned.

The moment he fixed his eyes on everyone in the kitchen, Peach lowered her gaze to the tiles as his words from yesterday played in her head, and she felt her heart thumping rapidly. Effortlessly, Elijah noticed her reaction, and his brows furrowed together, wondering if his behavior yesterday toward her was a mistake.

But soon, he realized that maybe he shouldn't be thinking too much about it since their conversation didn't seem to be that bad in his head.

"Elijah, we have a problem... Reporters are swamping outside of the motel with their vehicles, and I think it will be a long while before they leave... It looks like someone tipped them off that

you stay here." James explained with a hint of fear in his voice.

Silence engulfed the room, and everybody waited anxiously for Elijah to say something until Rookie broke the silence and asked, "What now?"

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Chapter 27

What's the catch

Outside the motel was crowded with even more reporters and news crews as the seconds turned into minutes, and no one seemed willing to give up and leave.

In the dining hall, Elijah, Matt, Peach, Ryan, Miss Grace, James, and Rookie sat around the table, in silence, eating their breakfast, and occasionally stealing glances at each other.

When Peach looked at her mother, she could tell that she was getting increasingly concerned, and she looked over at Elijah, looking away from his eyes when he caught her stare.

“Do you still have Melina’s number?” Peach said after a few moments had passed, her voice low.

Raising his gaze, Elijah fixed his eyes on her, but she refused to meet his stare. Taking a deep breath, Elijah took a long look at her and asked, “Why do you need it?” “To end this nightmare,” Peach muttered, her eyes glued to the table.

Everyone’s gaze was now focused on her as her mother asked, her voice filled with uncertainty, “What are you talking about now?”

Slowly, Peach lifted her head and gave her mother a small smile which faded away once she said softly, “All this is happening because Melina assumes that Elijah... that Elijah and I are together, and I want to talk with her... to clarify-1

“That’s not going to work,” Elijah said bluntly, cutting her off as everyone stared at him.

Frowning slightly, Peach swayed her eyes on the plate, in front of him and asked, “How do you know when we have not given it a try?”

“Just trust me. Talking to her will only feed her ego and make her think that you are some sort of toy for her to play with.” Elijah replied, raising his brows as he eyed her seriously “Okay, I know the possibility of Melina treating me rudely and insulting me is very high, but I can’t just ignore this mess and wish it away “No one is wishing this away, Peach. But I need time to think about what to do with this situation,” Elijah said firmly, giving her a look that clearly said ‘don’t get involved.’

But Peach was persistent, and stubbornly shook her head and continued arguing, “It is not your place to decide this. I want to talk to her...” Hands clenching, Elijah clutched his jaw and then he said, “It’s not my place?”

The others looked at the two nervously, judging from Peach and Elijah’s expressions, it was clear that there was an unresolved issue between them.

“Yes. I don’t want you getting yourself tangled in my family matters and involving yourself in this mess... You have done enough and don’t need to put yourself into the middle of my problems,” Peach replied quietly, her fingers nervously twisting together as she stared at her hands.

As silence fell over them, Elijah glanced at the rest of the group, seeing their worried gazes and he frowned and said, "Okay, but you can get her number from somewhere else, not me."

Glancing at the others, Peach nodded silently as she slowly stood up and looked down at her

half-fill plate, and mumbled, "Fine, whatever..." Then she left the dining area, leaving behind everyone, staring helplessly at each other, and then at Elijah.

For a while, the room was filled with heavy silence until the sound of Elijah's ringtone interrupted their uneasy tension, snapping everyone out of their awkward state. Pulling out his phone, Elijah sighed as he stared at the unknown number and then canceled the call. But then, two seconds later, the phone began ringing again. With a frown, Elijah accepted the call and placed the phone against his ear, mumbling, "Who is this?"

"I can not believe you didn't save my number," A deep male voice that he recognized, echoed from the phone, causing Elijah's brows to furrow, surprised that he called. "Bryan Checks,"

"Ahh, you have a good memory. But why are you making me do all the chasing, Elijah?"

Narrowing his eyes slightly at the teasing tone, Elijah replied coldly, "Why did you call?" "I heard you have a little problem with the media these few days." Bryan commented, smirking as he added, "I think I could help you out, you know." After hesitating for a second, Elijah decided to humor Bryan a little. "Alright then. What's the favor?"

"Oh, so you're playing along?" Snorting, Elijah answered, "Of course, why wouldn't I when this is to my liking?"

Resting back in his seat, a smirk tugging at his lips as Bryan let out a chuckle and then said, "Well, if that's the go-ahead, then one call from me can get your driveway clear of those reporters." "Okay, what's the catch to this deal?" Elijah demanded, a serious look on his face as he leaned forward a bit.

Everything has a price, and Elijah wasn't stupid enough to think that Bryan would just offer him his assistance freely and without conditions.

Sensing Elijah's uneasiness in his tone, Bryan let out another laugh as he stated, "Join me for a drink tonight. That's all."

Those words made Elijah raise his brows in confusion since he hadn't expected Bryan to suggest such a thing. He thought that Bryan would demand something in return, not simply invite him to hang out with him. "Hmm, a drink?" Elijah asked, trying to figure out whether or not he should accept Bryan's offer.

“Yeah, just a drink... How does eight o’clock sound?” Bryan asked, chuckling faintly. Uncertain, Elijah hesitated before saying, “Sure, I’ll see you.” “Goodbye, Elijah.” “Hmm,”

Hanging up the call, Elijah stared at the phone in his hand for a while, wondering what exactly Bryan wanted out of that invitation. But even though he didn’t know what Bryan wanted from him, he had no choice but to comply and agree to the request because... even though he would never admit it with his mouth, Peach’s little outburst did a number on him, and he couldn’t deny that he cared about her well

being.

“Matt, follow me,” Elijah said as he stood up from the chair, ignoring the other’s gazes while he walked off.

Not wasting a second, Matt jumped from his chair and rushed out of the dining room following Elijah into the hallway. When they got to his bedroom, Elijah looked back at Matt with worry written all over his face, and then he told Matt, “I need your protection for tonight.”

Those words sent Matt straight up in a panic before he quickly stood straight, brought his hands to his side, raised his chin, and uttered seriously, “May I ask why, boss?”

“Bryan invited me for a drink by Eight,” Elijah said, looking at Matt with a dull expression as Matt nodded, understanding his intentions “Where?”

“Where?!”

“Yes, where is the meet-up happening?”

Immediately, Elijah’s face went blank when he realized that Bryan didn’t mention where exactly he was planning on meeting him, and he replied, “I don’t know.”

The sound of her room door opening drew Peach from her thoughts as she looked up to find her standing in the doorway watching her. After shutting the door behind her, Miss Grace walked over to where Peach was sitting, on a stool, in front of the dresser mirror.

“Why are you hiding in here?” Miss Grace questioned calmly, glancing at her daughter with concern etched in her features.

Looking down, Peach hesitated, feeling nervous for reasons that she couldn’t quite pinpoint. She didn’t like lying to her mother, especially not when she was upset about something, so she mumbled, “Does my eyes look deceptive or manipulative?” A look of confusion and slight surprise washed across Miss Grace’s features and she stared at her daughter for a while before mumbling with a hesitant tone, “Huh? What are you saying, Peach?”

"I too am confused. I don't know what he means by that. But it still feels weird and uncomfortable to talk about it. I want to know what exactly he wants from me." Peach whispered, avoiding eye contact with Miss Grace. "One minute he's nice, and the next, he's angry and I don't understand why and how he changed so often." "Give Elijah time, Peach. We don't know his story or what he went through... You shouldn't rush into things either, you'll get hurt if you do," Miss Grace responded, putting her arm around her shoulder.

"I just..."

"Just be yourself Peach, and trust me, I'm sure things will work out. As long as you stay calm and stay patient, everything will be alright. Just give him time, and remember, he is not a bad person, he just needs more time and space,"

Looking at her daughter's moist eyes, Miss Grace gave her a gentle smile and softly kissed her forehead as she hugged her tightly.

Peach smiled as she rested her cheek on her mom's chest, closing her eyes as she took in a shaky breath. And in a small voice, she whispered, "Thanks Mom, I love you."

The lobby had an awkward tension as Rookie, Elijah, and Ryan sat on the couch facing each other, the only sounds audible among them were their breath.

"What do you think the boss wants to talk to Matt about?" Rookie broke the silence after several minutes.

"He called, Bryan Check's name... He's a dude we met when we went to the bank." Ryan responded, a faint frown appearing on his face.

"Their conversation sounded like they were making some kind of deal..." "Yeah, and the boss didn't look happy about it."

The conversation made James frown slightly, having a sense of unease creep upon him as he tried to push it away, and then blurted out, "What do we know about this man?"

The sudden sound of cars' engines echoing from outside the motel interrupted the conversation, making everyone turn towards the doorway.

"What's going on out there?" Ryan questioned as he stood up, looking curiously at the others.

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Chapter 28

They are beautiful

“Get off the premises! Now! Get in your car and drive off!” A guy in a police uniform with a megaphone shouted at the reporters.

Some of the news crew were still confused while others were already driving off because they were afraid to get arrested for trespassing or get removed by intense force. “While is the chief constable here... Isn’t Elijah just a nobody?” A journalist whispered as the cameraman packed up their equipment. “Maybe it’s Peach. She’s a Hayes... after all, and her family name is quite powerful.” The cameraman said.

“You think? I thought after her father got kicked out of the Hayes Family house, they lost the right to such power and influence.”

“She shares a bloodline with Henry Hayes. Of course, the power and influence are still there... if she knows how to harvest it.”

“Will her step-grandma even allow her to do that? I heard Mr. Hayes’s will has never been read, and his lawyer was never given the go-ahead from his mistress to read what his dying intentions were.”

After putting his devices in his bag, the cameraman frowned and said, “Honestly, the Hayes is powerful, but to get the chief constable from behind his desk to do such fieldwork, only bigger fish than the Hayes can make this happen.” “Like who?” The Journalist asked, curiosity written all over his face. Raising the megaphone to his mouth again, the chief constable repeated in a loud voice, “No reporter is allowed on this premise! I repeat!! Absolutely no reporter, News crew, Journalists,

or photographers are allowed to come back here!!”

“This is ridiculous,” A journalist complained, shaking his head in disgust as he turned towards his colleagues to discuss the situation.

“You will get arrested for trespassing and we are allowed to use force if you refuse to listen to orders.”

“We should get in the van... like now!” The sound of a click echoed when James turned the key into the lock, and when he pulled the door open, gazing outside, his jaw dropped and his eyes widened once he saw what was going

The blue and red lights from the police cars glowed and flash, and the vehicles were parked one after another in the parking lot with numerous officers standing guard outside the motel, watching the news crews’ vans drive off, one after the other.

“What’s going on?” Elijah asked as he and Matt entered the lobby.

Turning around to meet Elijah’s gaze, Ryan seemed still in a state of shock as he blurted out, “Police... they are everywhere.” Furrowing his brows, Elijah glanced at Ryan before taking a step forward, and when he got to

the open Motel’s door, he frowned, glaring outside at the flashing lights.

“Is this your doing?” James asked in disbelief, still staring back at his Boss.

“It might be Bryan doing,” Elijah said with certainty in his voice. “This is good, right?” Rookie inquired nervously, feeling like there was more to this. For a moment, Elijah remained silent before sighing, running his hand through his hair, and then he answered, “I hope so.”

When the chief constable turned his focus to the Motel entrance and saw the men crowded in the doorway, he recognized Elijah immediately from the news, and he lowered his megaphone, walking over to them. “Elijah, right?” The chief constable asked when he was a foot away from him. “Yes,” Elijah responded, looking at the chief constable without any emotion on his face.

“How did a man like yourself get Bryan Checks to pull me out of my office?”

“I, myself, am wondering the same.” Thinking Elijah was kidding, the chief constable laughed faintly, but when he saw that Elijah remained unfazed, giving him a questioning stare, he asked, “Are you serious?” Elijah stared at him for a few seconds before nodding solemnly, “That’s correct.” The police chief constable furrowed his brow, his expression darkening as he muttered under his breath, “And I’m supposed to believe that?”

“Well, you can choose whatever to believe, sir. It’s not my job to convince you to any conclusion,” Elijah replied, his tone indifferent and uninterested, not showing any emotion whatsoever.

“Checks won’t just heat up my ass and pull me out of my office for just anyone.”

“Is that so?”

Knowing that he was never going to get the truth out of Elijah made him not mad, but more intrigued and curious than anything else.

So he sighed, scratching the side of his beard as he muttered, “You seem like a smart man, Elijah, and I think it’s obvious that Checks protecting you is very telling... So here’s my card. If you can get Checks to do this, then I wouldn’t mind a call from you or to help you in the future.

Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a business card and handed it to Elijah, waiting for his response.

"Thanks," Elijah said calmly and took the card from his hand.

At that moment, an aging fellow with gray hair and wrinkles on his face approached the group, wearing a white shirt, black slacks, black shoes, and a dark gray tie. "Greetings," He said in a humble tone as he nodded at the chief constable.

"A pleasant morning to you," The chief constable responded with a nod.

Taking his attention off the officer, he fixed his eyes on Elijah, took a fancy-looking black envelope out of his pocket, and said, "My boss told me to hand this to you,"

"Who's your boss?" Elijah asked, even though his first guess was Bryan. "Mr. Checks. He said it's the invitation for your meet-up."

"Hmm, I see."

Taking the envelope out of the old man's hands, Elijah stared at it for a second before shoving it into his sweatpants pocket.

"Tell your boss that I will be there," Elijah said, looking up at the man who was still smiling kindly at them.

"As you wish," the older gentleman said before turning around and walking off.

For a minute, there was an awkward staring moment between the chief constable and Elijah as he gazed at Elijah's unreadable expression.

Then he sighed and darted his gaze at Matt, James, Ryan, and Rookie before mumbling, "Well, since my work here is done, I will take my leave."

Swaying his focus back on Elijah, he smiled faintly and said, "Don't hesitate to use the card when you need our help. I mean it."

With a nod, Elijah's lips slightly pulled upwards for a split second before he said, "Sure. Thanks for your help Chief."

"Officer?" Miss Grace mumbled as a look of horror crossed her face. "Why are the police here?"

Looking back, James smiled widely at her and walked over to meet her, reassuring her, "Everything is okay, Grace. They are here to get rid of the reporters." "Really?" Grace said, still in disbelief, even though she heard what the chief constable said on the megaphone the whole time.

“Hmm,” “Who called them?”

Silently, James eyed Elijah, and even though he didn't utter a word, Miss Grace knew who her thanks belonged to in that instant.

After a while, the driveway was clear of all police cars and news crew vans, leaving the space empty with only Elijah's car and the dirty pickup. Finally, Elijah turned from the doorway and focused on Miss Grace, who gave him a big smile, her eyes gleaming with relief.

“Thank you,” She said in a sincere tone. Nodding in reply, Elijah gave a faint smile before walking off, leaving her alone with Matt, James, Rookie, and Ryan. When he got into the hallway, he stopped when his gaze rested on Peach coming out of her room, closing the door quietly behind her. Then she turned, her expression becoming blank once she noticed Elijah's presence, and then her head dropped, avoiding eye contact with him! In that instant, he realized that his words yesterday did affect her deeply, and it

made him feel horrible about causing her pain, especially because he had lied to her. Her eyes, to him, were beautiful, alluring, and full of innocence, and to him, that made her irresistible.

So much so that he had to pretend that they were deceptive because what he saw in them, he refused to believe... to trust that the kindness in her eyes, the innocence she possessed, the tenderness she showed him, was anything but lies. But now, as she stood before him, he could tell that she was hurt by his actions, and that broke his heart, shattering the walls he built around it.

He would have never expected Peach to react the way she did. He had thought she would not give a damn about his words, but apparently, that wasn't the case.

The last thing he wanted to do was hurt her, but he couldn't deny that it was the easiest solution to solve their problem. He knew he was being selfish, but he needed time to calm down and gather himself from his divorce from Melina.

“The reporters are gone,” Elijah murmured, breaking the silence.

“They are,” Peach whispered in return, her eyes widened, yet her head still kept bowing low as she avoided his gaze.

Silently, Elijah walked over to her, placed his hand under her chin, tilting her head up until he was able to catch her eyes, and said, “Yes,”

A look of confusion flashed across her eyes, and she looked down at his hand holding her chin lightly before blinking slowly. Then she let out a breathy chuckle as if trying to relieve some tension within herself.

"That's good then." Peach said, lowering her head again.

But Elijah did not remove his hand from under her chin, instead, he raised it high enough so that she was forced to lift her head to look at him, her eyes still sparkling with unshed tears.

She looked so vulnerable and small standing there, almost as if she was afraid of making him angry, or worse, hurting herself by saying the wrong thing that would ruin this moment.

"It's not you," Elijah finally said, feeling guilty as hell. "What I said yesterday..."

"I know what you said, and I don't want to make you uncomfortable, while you stay here... with us. You paid a good amount of money to be here, and I don't want to be the cause of you being inconvenienced."

"Peach," Elijah started to say, but she beat him to it.

"I am fine. I am okay with not looking in your eyes. I can do it, so don't worry about me, okay?"

"You are..."

Pausing, Elijah frowned as he tried to form his thoughts together, trying to find something to say. But no matter how hard he thought, he couldn't come up with anything, and it felt so awkward that he felt like he had no choice but to say nothing. "It's alright, Elijah," Peach assured, smiling softly at him. For what felt like hours, he continued to look at her, searching for any sign that she was lying,

and every time, he found none.

Eventually, after he was sure that she was telling the truth, he finally removed his hand from her chin, giving her one last soft, lingering look. "They are beautiful," Elijah said calmly. "Your eyes," Then he walked off, leaving Peach in stunned silence, her cheeks feeling warm as she listened to his footsteps fading away in her ears.

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Chapter 29

Did you steal that

The sound of her office door opening made Melina raise her head and looked at Josh, the reporter that Elijah punched.

his nose had a bandage on it, and it was still swollen, and Melina's brows snapped at the sight of him.

"What are you doing here?! I told you to call me. Not show up in my face, and not without warning me!" Melina said, resting back in her chair, crossing her arms against her chest and narrowing her eyes as she stared at him. "I just got laid off from my job!" Josh said as he sat in the empty seat in front of her desk. A look of confusion filled Melina's face as she cocked her right eyebrow, waiting for him to explain further.

"The news I covered about Elijah and your cousin was pulled down from the media," Josh said, making her look at him in shock.

"What?!" Melina exclaimed, her voice cracking as she spoke through clenched teeth. "Who would dare cross me and my family like that?!"

"My boss said the news offended someone powerful and he couldn't risk us getting involved with a scandal by spreading such bad rumors. So, he decided to pull the plug on everything we published about Elijah."

"Someone powerful? Are we still talking about my ex-husband?!"

"Who else did you hire me to spread those stupid stories about?" The raise in his tone made Melina clench her jaw tightly, her eyes turning into slits as she glared at him angrily as she coldly uttered, "Don't forget who presence you are in. I will advise you to not piss me off," Josh simply grinned at her and replied, "I'm just a humble reporter... Well was a reporter, so I won't dare-" "I can make your life a whole lot worse than losing your job, so I suggest you watch what you say before speaking. Got it?" Grinning even wider, Josh leaned forward and winked before saying, "Got it."

"Did your boss tell you who this powerful person was that is suddenly backing my ex husband?!" Melina asked, raising an eyebrow. "No, he didn't. But he wrote me a check and told me to forget about the charge I plan to file against Elijah for punching me. He said that I would be doing myself a favor if I don't mess with such a man."

"What the hell is going on?!" At that moment, a knock came on the door, and both Melina and Josh turned their heads toward it, seeing Celina, a journalist, walking into the room.

You too?!" Melina exclaimed, staring at her with wide eyes.

"Sorry, but I desperately need to talk to you," Celina said, shrugging apologetically,

"What is it?!"

“The chief of police showed up at the motel and demanded all reporters to leave the premises. According to him, we are not allowed to stay at the motel any day, or else we will be arrested for trespassing.”

Melina closed her eyes briefly and nodded, knowing that if the chief of police had arrived at the motel and insisted, then there was a serious reason for why.

“But why is he willing to go against the Hayes for my ex-husband’s sake... A man with no title, no money, and no power, or connections?!” Melina asked, furrowing her eyebrows.

Nothing was adding up... It made no sense whatsoever to her! Why did the Chief of Police want to protect Elijah, when he was just a man that lived off her for years and had nothing to his name.

“Is this Peach doing?” Melina mumbled beneath her breath, shaking her head and laughing humorlessly. “The chief of police though. There is no way she has a connection to pull that kind of strings,”

With a confused look on their faces, Josh and Celina glanced questioningly at Melina, but neither of them had any idea what she was talking about.

“But I could be wrong, can I,” Melina muttered, closing her eyes once more as her thoughts ran rampant through her mind, making her feel dizzy.

For years Peach has kept her distance away from the family and refused to acknowledge their existence, so Melina had never seen her as a threat or competition.

But she refused to believe that Elijah had the means to convince the Chief of Police to stand up for them, so that left her with only one explanation... Peach and her mother. After all, her father is the biological and first son of the Hayes family.

‘I think it’s time to snip my cousin before her wing grows, and she starts flapping it,’ Melina thought to herself with a smirk as the corner of her lips curled upward.

Standing outside the room, Matt knocked on his boss’s door and waited patiently for him to open it.

Once Elijah did, Matt cleared his throat and said, “Are you okay...? You have been in here for quite a while.”

“I am,” Elijah mumbled, looking at James, Ryan, and Rookie standing behind Matt.

Then he stepped aside and waited for them to walk into his room before shutting the door closed behind him, turning to face the four of them.

“What is in the envelope?” James asked, looking at his boss with concern clear on his face.

The truth that he would never tell his men is that he got lost in his thoughts and feelings after he met Peach, and he forgot about the envelope. Reaching into his pocket, Elijah took out the fancy black envelope and carefully opened it. Taking out the letter inside, he read it out loud slowly, “Invitation to ‘League private club’ at Hotel Del Rey...”

Taking out his phone, Rookie stared at it, ignoring the others and focusing on his screen. Then after a moment, he mumbled, “That’s the club for Elite men in the country... I just research it and only the rich, famous, and important people get invited.” “Checks said there was no catch behind the invitation, just a drink. But why invite me to such a club?” Elijah questioned himself, frowning.

“Why is this Bryan Checks guy so obsessed with you anyways?” Ryan asked. Putting the invitation back into the folder, Elijah sighed before replying, “It beats me.” The room fell quiet, nobody having another thing to say until Rookie finally raised his gaze from his phone and suggested hesitantly, “Because his grandfather is from Bordoria.”

Everyone’s attention snapped towards Rookie when he said that, but Elijah remained silent.

“His grandfather owned a big corporation there.. My best guess about why he is obsessed with you is because he knows exactly who you are.” Rookie said nervously, scratching the back of his head. “Maybe he probably already knew that your dad is a billionaire and has a huge business empire.”

“Well, meeting this dude just became quite interesting,” Elijah murmured. “Now, let’s see what he wants from me.”

At seven fifty-nine, Matt drove the black Mercedes SUV up to a tall skyscraper, Hotel Del Rey, downtown and stopped the car in the parking lot.

After parking the car, Matt took off his sunglasses, wore it, and got down from the vehicle, approaching Elijah’s door side.

When he opened the door, Elijah stepped out in black jeans, a navy coat, and a plain white shirt underneath, with sneakers on his feet.

When he and Matt entered the hotel, he was immediately recognized by a bunch of people because of the news about Peach and him, in the hospital parking lot.

The whispering immediately began and people were giving Elijah dirty looks, not even hiding the fact that they were judging him harshly for ruining his marriage with Melina and cheating on her with her cousin.

Of course, even though some people chose to whisper, others didn't try to hide it, and a flashy dress gentleman walked over to the counter, where Elijah was and started to talk loudly, "It's funny how someone can have a precious Diamond and yet, goes around collecting filthy rock."

It was clear to Elijah that Melina was the diamond and Peach was the filthy rock to this dude, and that made Elijah pissed, but he tried his best to calm himself down before confronting the bastard.

"Excuse me," Elijah said calmly, resting his elbow on the counter, looking at the dude in his eye with a cold expression. "Is there something you want to say to my face, pal?!"

Taking back by Elijah's words, the man smirked arrogantly before replying, "Do you have clearance to be here, or did you come to cause problems as you did for your marriage?!" Sneering, Elijah pulled out the invite from his pocket and rested on the desk, saying to the receptionist, "I have a meet-up with." "How did you get that?!" The dude blurted out, his eyes widening at the sight of the invite."

Did you steal that from someone out there at a hotel?"

At this point, Elijah's patients were running thin with this fellow, but he knew eyes were on him, and he didn't want to act like a fool and give this guy satisfaction of getting a rise out of him.

Keeping his cool facade, Elijah simply replied to the guy, "No, 1-" "Get security and do not let this thief get away with this disgusting behavior." The asshole shouted angrily

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Chapter 30

A criminal

In less than a second, security came rushing towards Elijah and this dude because of the commotion this guy was creating, and Matt quickly stood in a defensive position, ready to take care of whoever dared to attack his boss if things went awry.

"What is going on here?" The security guard asked angrily as he stopped right next to Elijah.

"This thief stole someone's invitation to the League private club and is using it to get access and benefits of the membership. I suggest that you arrest him!" The guy barked, pointing an accusing finger at Elijah.

“Sir, you are.”

“We all know he’s Melina’s, cheating, good for nothing, ex-stay-at-home husband. There’s no way he can afford to get into such a club... Hell, I have been trying to get into that club for years now.”

“Just-”

And you think this idiot here can get in?! He must have stolen that from someone else or he used a fake one. Either way, I demand the arrest of this criminal!” Frowning, Matt clutched his fist as he glared at the man, then mumbled beneath his breath, “Who is this dickhead calling, ‘Idiot?’ Criminal?” Haha, does he think I would not knock the shit out of him for disrespecting my boss just because we are in public?!” People started whispering amongst themselves as they watched the scene unfold with wide eyes and that only hyped this dude up more.

Shaking his head and taking a deep breath, the security looked at the guy and said, “We would like to see this matter resolved as much as you do, but we need you to calm down now, and let the receptionist check the records.” “What’s the need of checking when it already proves that this man has the card, and he is not qualified to have such a membership! You should be investigating this matter and toss this scum out before he does more than steal a card.” The fellow stated with an angry sneer.

Deciding that he had had enough of this piece of garbage speaking nonsense about his boss, Matt couldn’t wait any longer and stepped forward, but Elijah gave him a side-eye, warning him to stand down.

With a restless look in his expression, the guy continued loudly, “You are wasting time here, why don’t you just go ahead and put this thief behind bars? It might save us all some trouble.”

Suddenly, the receptionist looked at Elijah with an apologetic expression on her face and said, “I am so sorry, Sir. Mr. Checks have been waiting for you for like fifteen minutes now.” The dude’s face turned blank when he heard the level of respect in the receptionist’s voice for Elijah, making him raise his brow in surprise. Looking away after Elijah nodded, the lady gazed at the securities and said, “Please escort Mr. Glenn out of the premises. He is attacking guests and it’s a direct violation of our policies.”

The look of shock on Glenn’s face and the dumbfounded expression he wore when he heard those words were amusing, to say the least, but Elijah managed to keep his composure.

“Your membership to this hotel will be revoked, and you are not allowed to set foot inside the building again unless authorized because we don’t condone bullying against other guests or patrons within our grounds.” The receptionist finished sternly.

The security glared at Glenn, and he knew they were about to escort him out, so to avoid more embarrassment, he shoved his hands into his pocket and started walking away feeling others' eyes on him and the weight of embarrassment hitting him hard.

After watching him walk out of the glass door, the Receptionist looked at one of the security and said, "Can you please escort Mr. Darius to the private room?"

"Yes," The security said humbly, before looking at Elijah. "Please follow me, Sir."

"Thanks," Elijah mumbled, staring at the security's back as he escorted him and Matt away.

When they got to the private room area which had a balcony, a large pool area, and a bar, Elijah's gaze rested on Bryan, seated inside with a glass of whiskey in front of him.

"Excuse me," The security said and then walked out of the area.

"Ahha," Bryan uttered as he suddenly looked back at Elijah's unreadable face. "You didn't keep me waiting as I thought you would, even though you are five minutes late."

"I had an issue at the front desk," Elijah answered simply.

Laughing softly, Bryan looked down at his whiskey and shrugged, mumbling, "I see. Honestly, I thought you would have stood me up."!!

"For a man with such a high reputation, you show worry a lot about a 'nobody' like me. Why is that?" Elijah asked casually, sitting opposite Bryan.

Another faint chuckle echoed from his lips, but this time, Elijah could hear genuine amusement coming from his voice. "That's a little personal, but I guess... It's just natural to be generous to someone I take a liking to." Bryan answered, leaning back onto his chair, and looking at Elijah.

"Bullcrap. Hit me with a different reason, because if you are just doing this out of concern for someone you don't know, I'm not buying it." Elijah replied, raising a brow.

Bryan smiled faintly and took a sip of his drink before sighing, shaking his head slightly, and saying, "Honestly, I have been way too into your business recently, and I know you paid Grace Hayes's hospital bill. Why? What do you stand to gain from helping total strangers?"

"I see what you are doing," Elijah said bluntly, narrowing his eyes at Bryan and crossing his arms in front of his chest.

"Are you just helping two strangers out of concern? Should I not buy that explanation? Should I believe the news about Peach and you then?" "We both know there is more to

your interest in me... You see, you are not the only person who did some digging into someone's business. So, we can spin this conversation with either the truth or lies."

It fell silent between them for a while until Bryan rested back against the leather armrest, taking another sip from his whiskey glass and then saying, "How did the only heir of the Maxwell's become a nobody in another man's country?"

Staring into each other's eyes, Elijah finally gave a half-smile and said, "I guess we are spinning this conversation with the truth then. But answer me... What do you stand to gain from helping me?" "Syldavia doesn't know what they got, but us, from Bordoria, know. Considering how enormous of a country Bordoria is compared to Syldavia, I am not confused that they don't know who they are dealing with." Biyan explained, leaning forward in his chair and giving his full attention to Elijah, waiting for his response "And you know who you are dealing with?" "Yes, I attended a fundraiser once with my grandfather when I went back home, and that's when I was lucky to spot the hire of the Maxwell family with his mother and father... You were much younger then."

"Hmm, I see."

"My mother is from here, but I visited my grandfather often, even after moving on this end to start a branch of our company... He's a big fan of your father... My grandfather..."

"Well, that's not the first."

"I wasn't kidding when I said that you are someone I want on my side. That's the catch." Both men drew back into a silent moment, watching each other's eyes while drowning in their thoughts.

"Even after all that you have said, why would I trust you?" Elijah asked seriously. "I don't ask for your trust. I just need you to use me, however, you need to, but remember me too, in my troubled days when I need your help. And that's enough for me."

"You make it sound like a millionaire like you, needing my help is a simple thing, but we both know a rich man's problem is not always easy to solve," Elijah told him, tilting his head to the side and narrowing his eyes.

Frowning, Elijah looked at his untouched wine glass and said, "It can get messy, so why should I entangle myself in a future minefield that I don't know when it will explode."

"I don't know what game you are playing in Syldavia, but I have a good connection, power, and influence with the right people here. My friends and allies could help you in ways that no one else could, and if you help me, we'll both benefit greatly." Bryan explained earnestly, smiling lightly. Looking over at Matt, Elijah stared calmly, but his eyes told Matt that he might consider Bryan's offer.

“Until I can find up that you haven’t gotten yourself into some deep shit, I will not work with you,” Elijah said firmly, turning his gaze back to Bryan.

Trust is a very complex thing and one that cannot be easily gained through words alone. Elijah knew this better than anyone, and he wasn’t going to risk getting himself involved with Bryan when he didn’t know if there is a wolf under all those wools.