

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life

Chapter 951

Rhea's eyes widened. "Mental illness?" She hesitated. "Should we... go see her?"

Jace considered it. "Yeah. Let's check on her."

A flicker of disappointment stirred in Rhea, but she pushed it aside. *This just shows how kind he is*, she reminded herself. *That's not a bad thing.*

He turned to her. "Want to come along? You're off today, and since you're studying for your grad exams, it could be helpful."

She blinked. "Me?"

He nodded. "It's a chance to learn about brain-related conditions. Could be useful."

She paused, then nodded. "Okay. I'll come."

Two days later, they arrived at the nursing home the girl had requested to be transferred to. Surprisingly, she'd chosen it herself.

As they approached, they heard her voice inside.

"I want Jace! Find him! I don't want anyone else!"

Rhea froze. Jace gently touched her arm. "Let's wait. She's in the middle of an episode—going in now could escalate things."

Rhea nodded, admiring his calm.

Inside, chaos reigned. Nurses were struggling to hold the girl down.

"She won't take the sedative!" one of them shouted.

Eventually, they managed the injection. The girl's body slumped as the drug took effect.

Rhea peeked into the room. "Can we go in now?"

Jace pushed the door open.

One nurse—glasses askew, eyes red—brightened at the sight of him. "Dean, thank God. We're exhausted."

“You’ve been working hard,” Jace said calmly. “She’s been tough, huh?”

The nurse sighed. “You have no idea. But she’s our patient, so…”

Then she spotted Rhea, standing beside him. Her eyes narrowed.

“You shouldn’t have brought *her* here,” she muttered, just loud enough to hear.

Rhea’s eyelashes fluttered, stung by the comment—but Jace remained steady.

“Let us in.”

Inside, the girl’s eyes lit up at the sight of Jace. “Jace! You came! I *knew* you would!”

She reached for him, babbling about how long she’d waited.

Rhea felt invisible. But Jace gently sidestepped the girl’s grasp. “We’re here to help,” he said, then turned to Rhea with a softer tone. “Can you prep the equipment?”

Relief bloomed in Rhea’s chest. Blushing, she turned away to hide her smile. *How does he always know when I’m uncomfortable?*

But the girl wasn’t done.

“I’m not sick!” she yelled suddenly. “Why does everyone keep saying that? I thought you were different, Jace!”

She lunged—shoving Rhea aside.

Jace caught her quickly. “You okay?”

“I’m fine,” Rhea said. “Go after her!”

The girl bolted from the room.

Despite her fragile appearance, she moved fast. Nurses, Jace, and Rhea chased her down the corridor, through the grounds—but she vanished into the facility’s sprawling gardens.

The staff panicked.

Rhea bowed her head. “I’m so sorry. We didn’t think this would happen. We’ll help search.”

But the nurses were already scattering. There was no time for blame.

Chapter 952

They couldn't afford to waste time. If they didn't find Emberly Croteau soon, things could spiral—fast. So they split up, scouring every corner of the nursing home.

“Emberly Croteau!” Rhea called, her voice echoing across the grounds.

A faint sob reached her ears, muffled by a wall or door. The nursing home housed all kinds of patients—those with mental health issues, personality disorders, epilepsy—most too scared or stubborn to seek hospital care. The thought chilled her. Anyone in here could be unpredictable.

Still, she pressed forward, voice calm but steady. “Emberly? Is that you?”

Just as she neared the sound, a foot shot out from behind a corner, aiming to trip her. But this wasn't a drama series—this was real life in broad daylight, and Rhea saw it coming. She halted and said coolly, “Alright, Emberly. I know it's you. Come out.”

A groan followed. “Ugh, so annoying!” Emberly stepped into view, rubbing her tear-streaked eyes. Her glare burned with rage and hurt, but her face—still soft with youth—made her look more petulant than dangerous.

Rhea softened her tone. “Why're you hiding? Everyone's looking for you. They're worried sick.”

“Worried? Please.” Emberly scoffed, voice bitter. “Not even my parents care. They think I'm an embarrassment.”

Rhea heard the pain under the sarcasm, and it hit her like a punch to the gut. From what the nurses had told her, Emberly's family had all but abandoned her here, doting only on her younger brother. No visits. No calls.

She crouched down. “Even if no one else cares, you've got to care about yourself. Hiding out here isn't safe. What if someone dangerous found you? Come back with me.”

She extended a hand—gentle but unwavering. Emberly stared at it, hesitation flickering in her eyes. Finally, she huffed and followed Rhea back.

“Where'd you find her?” a nurse asked, stunned.

Rhea glanced at Emberly, saw the nervous flicker in her expression. She didn't want her vulnerability on display. “She got scared and hid. I just got lucky,” Rhea said simply.

The staff didn't ask further, too relieved to care. They dispersed with tired sighs, resigned to dealing with a complicated patient.

Jace pulled out the medical kit, handing instruments to Rhea. They braced for the usual fight from Emberly, but to their surprise, she stayed still.

Rhea and Jace exchanged a glance. *Did my words actually get through?* Rhea wondered.

Then Emberly crushed the moment. “Don’t think I’m cool with you just because you said nice things,” she snapped. “As long as you’re with Jace, I’m not letting this go. Once I’m out of here, you’re the first person I’m coming for.”

The threat landed like a slap, but Rhea didn’t flinch. “Alright. I’ll be waiting. Just focus on getting better.”

She walked Emberly through her checkup results, noting what to watch for. Emberly didn’t respond. She was still fuming that her threat hadn’t rattled Rhea.

They left later that afternoon. Emberly clearly didn’t want Jace to leave, but she had no power to stop them—especially not the hospital’s dean. Her usual tantrums wouldn’t work.

In the car, Rhea sighed. “Did you know about Emberly’s family? The nurses said her parents haven’t visited once. Everything goes to her little brother.”

Jace nodded, jaw tight. “Yeah. Her dad’s a CEO. Mom’s a fashion designer. They’re loaded, but that doesn’t mean anything. They’ve been ignoring her for years. She even went through hypnosis therapy. Something traumatic happened to her when she was little, something that stuck.”

Rhea’s expression darkened. “The nurses don’t know what exactly, but whatever it was, it broke something in her. No wonder she’s like this.”

Jace exhaled slowly. “It lines up with what I’ve suspected. But no one knows the full story—not even me.”

Chapter 953

Jace wanted to visit Emberly’s family. As her part-time doctor, it made sense to understand her home life. But barging in without warning? Even he knew that was a step too far.

“Let’s not dwell on it,” Rhea said. “She’s not going home anytime soon. We’ll just keep taking care of her.”

From then on, Rhea visited regularly, always bringing a small gift—usually oranges, Emberly’s favorite. Over time, the girl’s sarcasm softened. She still threw shade, but it lacked its old bite.

One day, Rhea arrived with a bag of ripe, juicy oranges, specially picked for Emberly. She was almost excited to see the girl’s reaction.

But just as she reached the door, yelling erupted from inside.

“Your brother came to visit and this is how you act? Ungrateful brat! I told you to look after him. Did you even try?”

Rhea froze, heart pounding. The woman’s voice was sharp, cruel. Before she could stop herself, she shoved the door open.

“Enough!”

The door banged against the wall. Emberly’s mother—elegant in a camel coat, crimson lipstick flawless—spun around, eyes flashing. “Who are you? You just barge in without knocking? Rude.”

Rhea’s eyes narrowed. “You’re lecturing me on manners? This is a nursing home, not a public square. Yelling like that in a patient’s room isn’t exactly polite either.”

The woman huffed, brushing imaginary lint from her coat. “Who do you think you are?”

“Rhea. Internal Medicine, Central Hospital,” she replied coolly. “Go ahead and report me if you’d like.”

Emberly’s mom scowled but said nothing more. She yanked her son by the arm and stormed out, muttering under her breath.

When they were gone, Rhea sat beside Emberly, who was hunched over, crying silently.

“Hey,” Rhea said gently, handing her a tissue. “Don’t cry. You’ll mess up that pretty face.”

Emberly snatched the tissue. “I don’t need your pity.”

Rhea smiled softly, wiping away a tear from the girl’s cheek. “It’s not pity. Just... don’t blame yourself for their failure. You don’t have to chase their approval. The first step is learning to care about yourself.”

She spoke from experience. Growing up in the Seguin family, Rhea had been invisible. Years of striving for love that never came. Years of realizing not everyone is worth the effort.

“Sometimes,” she added, “letting go is the best thing you can do.”

Emberly looked up, her voice barely a whisper. “You’ve been through this, haven’t you?”

Rhea hesitated, then nodded. She offered a brief glimpse into her past—not too much, just enough.

Emberly listened closely, something shifting in her eyes. She didn’t say thank you, but she didn’t need to.

Rhea left soon after. A research paper was waiting at the hospital, and she stayed late to finish it.

The next day, she handed it to Jace, nerves buzzing. He scanned it, brow arching slightly.

"It's... alright?" she asked cautiously.

He set it down with a smile. "It's great. You're writing at a master's level already."

She blushed, waving him off. "Stop. It's not *that* good."

Still, the praise lit her up. She submitted the paper, hoping it might open a serious discussion on cell division surgery and the price of chasing immortality at the expense of real people.

Then came the email: **Rejected.**

From the **Tree of Life Association**, no less.

"What?" Rhea stared at the screen, stunned. "They rejected it?"

Harlow, walking by, leaned over. "What's that?" He glanced at the sender and let out a low whistle. "The Association rejected you? Damn. That's rare."

Chapter 954

"Maybe my topic doesn't align with their... 'values,'" Rhea muttered.

Harlow winced. "Don't say that too loud or they'll actually blacklist you. You really went after the Association?"

"I'm venting," she sighed. "I poured my soul into that paper. Can't I at least complain?"

Harlow dropped into the chair beside her. "You're bold, I'll give you that. You and Jace must be the only ones reckless enough to tick off the Tree of Life Association."

Rhea let out a dry laugh. Jace's own paper had been rejected too. They were probably on the Association's blacklist now. But she wasn't giving up.

She told Jace about the rejection later.

"I figured they'd pull something like this," he said calmly. "Didn't think they'd be *this* obvious."

They let it drop for now. But two days later, when Rhea went looking for Jace for a new research project, she couldn't find him.

"Where's the dean?" she asked one of the doctors.

He shrugged. “No idea. Didn’t say. We’ve got surgeries stacking up, though. We need him back.”

Jace’s schedule was no joke—two to three major surgeries a day. His absence was a big deal. Rhea stepped in for one of his operations, finishing late, shoulders aching.

As she left the OR, she heard it.

“Dean! Hey, Dean—you’re back!”

She turned, spotting Jace. “You’re back! Where were you?”

He handed her a bag. “Medical university. Saw an old professor. These are study materials.”

Rhea peeked inside—and froze. “Professor Joseph Dobson?”

The Joseph Dobson. A legend. He taught only a handful of elite courses, always packed. His students were already master’s-level or higher. Unlike Mr. Lussier of the Tree of Life Association—who lived for influence—Dobson was a reclusive genius.

Jace smiled. “I got you a spot to audit his class this Wednesday. He just got back from a trip. Might be able to help with your paper.”

Her eyes lit up. “Wait, seriously?”

“Seriously,” he said, voice warm. “He knows Mr. Lussier well. He could help turn things around.”

Rhea was too excited to question his motives. She didn’t see how much Jace hated watching her suffer the Association’s games—games he’d already chosen to walk away from.

Wednesday arrived. Rhea stepped onto the medical university campus, tree-lined paths buzzing with student chatter. She stopped one of them. “Hi, do you know where Professor Dobson’s class is?”

The student looked at her oddly. “Junior or senior? How do you not know?”

She laughed awkwardly. “I’m just auditing.”

Another student overheard and pointed. “Third floor, classroom two. Hurry, or you won’t get a seat. Get someone to save you one.”

She nodded, confused. *Why would I need a saved seat if I’m just auditing?*

Behind her, the student muttered, “Another one who won’t get in. Dobson’s classes are chaos...”

Chapter 955

Rhea slipped into the lecture hall just as the bell rang, eyes scanning the packed rows. She slid into a seat in the gallery, feeling the curious stares of the students around her. An auditor in Professor Dobson's class? That was practically unheard of.

Professor Dobson arrived late, as rumored, ambling in with a thermos in hand. With his silver hair and casual jacket, he looked more like someone headed to a park bench than a medical podium. "Hello, students," he greeted with a warm smile.

A chorus of responses followed.

Rhea joined in, pulling out her laptop, notebook, and pen. Just as she was settling in, Professor Dobson's eyes landed on her.

"I'm thrilled to have a new student with us today," he said.

Every head turned. Rhea froze, heat creeping into her cheeks. So many eyes. But as the lecture began, the attention faded, and she was quickly swept into the rhythm of Dobson's teaching.

He was brilliant—taking convoluted medical theories and unraveling them with ease. In just 45 minutes, he'd answered questions she'd wrestled with for months. When the class ended, she didn't want it to be over.

As the room emptied, she overheard murmurs from students around her. "His classes are great, but I always lose track halfway." "If only he taught more often."

Rhea agreed—she'd come back in a heartbeat.

As she packed up, a woman in her twenties approached. Poised and bookish, she offered a gentle smile. "I'm Professor Dobson's assistant. He's expecting you—come with me."

Rhea followed her to a private office—a rare luxury on campus. Inside, her eyes were drawn to a framed piece of calligraphy. It was... bad.

"Pretty rough, huh?" a gravelly voice said behind her.

She turned. Professor Dobson was leaning against the door, amused. "I wrote it ages ago. Full of confidence. Everyone told me not to hang it up, but here we are."

Rhea realized, mortified, she'd spoken out loud. "I'm so sorry, Professor. I didn't mean—"

He chuckled. "You youngsters are too polite. It *is* ugly—say it." He gestured to a seat. "Sit. You're one of Jace's, right? His students are like my own."

Rhea blinked. "You know Dean Harriman?"

"Of course. How else do you think you got in here?" His expression softened. "Jace... Well, never mind. You're here about your paper. Got it?"

She handed over the manuscript. He slipped on a pair of reading glasses and started skimming it, humming softly. Rhea fidgeted, nervous.

"It's my first paper," she said. "I know it's not perfect. I hope I didn't waste your time."

He looked up, eyebrows raised. "Waste my time? This is excellent for a first submission."

Her eyes widened. Praise from Professor Dobson?

"But the Tree of Life Association rejected it," she blurted. "They said it didn't meet their standards—that it was off-topic."

He snorted and tossed his glasses aside. "That's just how they are. Don't let their politics get to you. You've done solid work."

"So... can I publish it?"

He leaned back, gaze sharp. "First, tell me—what do *you* think?"

Rhea hesitated, then met his stare. "I think doctors should focus on healing, not playing political games. When the powerful control the conversation, everyone else gets silenced."

His eyes lit up. "You *are* like Jace. Good. With people like you around, maybe us old folks can finally retire in peace." He sighed. "I'll talk to Lussier. He's too old to be bullying young talent. Ridiculous."

For the first time in weeks, Rhea felt hope take root.

Chapter 956

Professor Dobson promised to talk to Lussier—or find another way to push the paper through. Rhea was overwhelmed with gratitude, though her thoughts kept drifting to Jace. He'd made this meeting happen.

On the way back, she mulled over thank-you gifts. Jace had everything. What could she give him?

Her phone rang.

"Are you done with Professor Dobson?" Jace's voice was tight.

"Yeah, I just left. What's wrong?"

"There's been an emergency. Emberly... she tried to hang herself. She's in the ER."

Rhea's breath caught. "What?"

"I can't leave right now. Can you go?"

"Of course."

She rushed to the hospital. Emberly had just arrived—oxygen-deprived, bleeding internally. Rhea jumped into emergency treatment, working nonstop for over an hour to stabilize her. Then she sat by her side, waiting. At 7 p.m., Emberly stirred.

"You in pain?" Rhea rasped, her voice dry.

The girl shook her head, eyes dull. The bruises on her neck were stark against her pale skin.

"Why, Emberly?" Rhea asked gently. "Things were getting better."

The girl said nothing.

Rhea softened her tone. "Okay. No pressure. Just focus on healing."

Emberly's voice was barely audible. "My mom said my brother's sick. Needs bone marrow. I refused. She said I was ungrateful—that they shouldn't have had me. I didn't know how to face her, so I figured... I'd give her my life back."

Rhea's chest ached. Then Emberly whispered, "You shouldn't have saved me."

Half an hour later, Jace arrived—dusty, exhausted. He headed to the ward but stopped short when he saw Rhea sitting on a bench in the hallway, hands in her coat pockets, face lit by a flickering bulb. She looked small, and unbearably tired.

He draped his coat over her shoulders. "Why are you out here alone?"

She didn't look up, just breathed in his scent. "I heard once that hospitals have more prayers than churches. I used to think it was just a line. But now... I get it."

He pulled her into a hug. At first, they both froze—but neither let go.

"I see so much suffering," she whispered. "I care. But I can't always help. I pity them, and I hate that. Does that make me a hypocrite?"

"No," he said softly. "You're kind. And you do more than most."

She leaned into him. His warmth, his steadiness—everything she needed right now.

The next morning, Rhea bounced back. Pain couldn't be avoided in a hospital, but she refused to let it consume her. She kept visiting Emberly daily, lifting her spirits and watching

for any sign of despair. Even in a monitored home, the girl had found a way to harm herself during a nurse's break. Rhea wasn't taking any chances.

And it worked. Emberly slowly improved—her cheeks gained color, her eyes began to shine again.

But peace never lasted.

One afternoon, Rhea heard shouting from Emberly's room.

"You refused to help your brother and *this* is how you repay us? Your father might lose his job because of you! You're worthless—why don't you just die?!"

Rhea flung the door open. "That's enough!"

Mrs. Croteau turned, fury on her face. Emberly looked like a ghost.

"This is a hospital, not your personal stage," Rhea said, voice trembling with rage. "You don't get to talk to my patient like that."

"I'm her *mother*! I'll discipline her however I want!"

Chapter 957

Rhea stepped forward, her voice steady and cold. "She's my patient, and this is my hospital. You're not in charge here—we are."

Mrs. Croteau's face twisted with fury, but she faltered. She was used to people backing down. Rhea didn't flinch.

Muttering curses, she stormed out.

Rhea turned to Emberly, who was quietly crying. She sat beside her. "Don't let her words in. You're stronger than this. She's not worth your pain."

The girl wiped her tears. Her voice was shaky, but resolute. "I won't do anything stupid again, Sister Neufeld. You're right—they're not worth it."

"Good." Rhea handed her a tissue. "No more crying. It's bad for your eyes."

But just outside the ward, the receptionist stopped her. "Her mother said they're not covering any more bills. Medical fees included."

Rhea gaped. "She said *what*?"

"She's refusing to pay."

Furious, Rhea pulled out her card. "Use mine for now."

"That's a lot—"

"I said it's fine."

Later, in the cafeteria, she vented to Jace.

He took a rare seat beside her, casually ignoring the curious looks from passing staff.

"Her grandmother should be back from her travels soon," he said between bites.

Rhea's eyes lit up. "But isn't their family super patriarchal?"

"Grandma's different."

Still, he wasn't sure when she'd return, so Rhea said nothing to Emberly. Somehow, though, the girl found out Rhea was covering the bills.

One day, Emberly shoved a card into her hand. "Take it. It's my pocket money. I don't need charity."

Rhea blinked. "What, like fifty bucks? Keep it."

"More like a million," Emberly said flatly.

Rhea nearly choked. *A million?!* She'd forgotten who she was dealing with—CEO father, designer mother.

She shoved the card back. "No way. Doctors can't take money from patients. That's how you end up in jail."

Emberly hesitated. Then, grudgingly, took it back. "Fine. But if you ever need anything—ask."

"I've got a job, kid," Rhea said with a tired smile. "You just focus on getting better."

Just then, a nurse came in to change the IV, and a commotion erupted outside.

Rhea sighed. "Mrs. Croteau again?"

But it wasn't. This time, a sharp-tongued older woman swept in, berating the middle-aged man beside her.

"Useless! Your job's in jeopardy and you're blaming Emberly? And your wife—Tianze is her son, so Emberly doesn't count? Favoring boys in *this* century? I'm old, not stupid!"

Rhea nearly laughed. *Now this woman has some fire.*

"You must be Emberly's grandmother," she said, stepping forward.

The old woman paused, eyeing her. "And you are?"

"I'm Dr. Rhea Ning. Emberly's attending. Come, I'll show you the way."

The older woman's face softened. "Doctor Ning! I heard you saved her life. Thank you."

"Just doing my job," Rhea replied, smiling.

As they walked, chatting warmly, Emberly's father trailed behind—utterly ignored.

Chapter 958

Emberly's eyes widened as her grandmother stepped into the ward. "Grandma? Weren't you traveling?"

"Oh, my sweet Emberly, just look at you—so thin!" Grandma Croteau fussed over her, then shot a withering glare at the middle-aged man standing beside her. "Has someone not been taking care of you?"

Father Wang gave an awkward smile. "Sorry, Emberly. Work's been crazy lately..."

But Emberly didn't bite. Her grip on the bedsheet tightened, and her expression hardened. She wasn't the naive girl who used to cling to every excuse. *Work's more important than me?* Rhea's words echoed in her mind: *Those who don't value you aren't worth your pain.*

She turned her back on him and tugged her grandmother closer to Rhea. "Grandma, Dr. Neufeld's been amazing. She always brings me what I need."

Grandma Croteau beamed. "I'm so grateful to Dr. Neufeld. Thanks to her, my precious girl's okay."

Rhea offered a warm smile, letting the awkwardness of Father Wang's presence slide. *They made this bed—they can lie in it.*

Grandma Croteau turned to Rhea, her concern clear. "Doctor, is Emberly well enough to leave the hospital?"

"You're wondering if she can be discharged, right?" Rhea asked knowingly.

The old woman chuckled. "Can't hide anything from you. The hospital's too far, and those two"—she jabbed a thumb toward Emberly's parents—"aren't reliable. I'd rather take her home myself."

Rhea nodded immediately. "Absolutely. She's nearly fully recovered. Just no strenuous activity for a while, but otherwise, she's ready to go." At nineteen, Emberly needed love, not cold responsibility. Grandma Croteau was the anchor she needed.

The older woman lit up. “Really? Thank goodness.”

They handled the discharge that same day. As Emberly gathered her things, she hesitated, clearly torn. Her pride made it hard to say goodbye.

Rhea saw it and smiled. “You’ll be back to visit. Don’t worry.”

“Yeah,” Emberly mumbled, nodding, trying to keep her composure.

But as the car door shut, she suddenly jumped back out and threw her arms around Rhea. “Sister Neufeld,” she whispered, her voice tight, “I’ll never forget you.”

Rhea’s heart melted. She wrapped her arms around the girl, gently stroking her hair. *She’s so starved for love.* Emberly’s fixation on Jace wasn’t really about romance—it was about survival, about finding someone who cared. *I just hope things start getting better now.*

After they drove away, Rhea returned to her routine, feeling lighter—as if a storm had finally passed. In the break room, Harlow spotted her and raised an eyebrow.

“You let the girl go? I thought you were gonna adopt her or something.”

Rhea choked on her water, coughing. “What? I’m not *that* old! Adopt an adult? That’s insane.”

Harlow leaned against the counter, totally unfazed. “Hey, I just call it like I see it. Anyway, I heard you’ve got a new research project?”

Rhea gave her a sidelong glance. “You’re too plugged in.”

“Gossip queen of Internal Medicine, baby,” Harlow said proudly. “Now spill.”

Rhea sighed. “It’s not official yet. The head office is reviewing it, but I haven’t gotten any updates. Not even sure when it’ll be approved.”

She’d been stunned when she first saw the project brief—an opportunity unlike any other. She’d waited for days, eager for news, but hadn’t dared bother Jace. He’d been juggling a mountain of responsibilities.

Harlow grinned. “Oh, it’s *done*. They approved it a couple days ago. You were so caught up with Emberly, nobody told you.”

Rhea froze. “Wait—what?”

“Two days ago,” Harlow repeated. “Hospital’s already prepping. It’s an overseas trip, too. Can you ask the dean to let me tag along?”

“I’ll ask,” Rhea said, already spinning on her heel.

She beelined to Jace's office, practically bursting through the door. He looked up, amused. "From that face, I'm guessing you heard?"

"Is it true?" she demanded, breathless.

"Sit," Jace said, handing her a glass of warm water like it was routine. "I'll fill you in."

Rhea plopped into the chair, sipping the water, nerves buzzing. Jace watched her, clearly entertained by her energy.

"So," he said, "want to go?"

"Obviously!" she said, nodding so fast she looked like a bobblehead. "When?"

"Two days from now. But we're flying out tomorrow night to make it in time," he said, handing her a folder. "Here's the head office brief."