

Second Chances Protecting Mrs. Hall by Colby Stanford

Chapter 41

Chapter 41

Emma could feel

Crew.

uld feel the footsteps behind her closing in. Liam was less than 6 feet away, almost within reach to tear off her mask. Her arulety

Leaping onto that rusted steel building was her only chance to escape, but it was clearly dilapidated, and she doubted it could withstand the impact of her jump. If the building collapsed, she would likely be crushed, her internal organs bleeding, meeting a gruesome end,

“Still not talking?” Liam continued to approach. “I’ll ask once more. Who sent you here?”

Clearly, Liam thought Emma had come to rescue Aria. Moreover, any stranger who stumbled upon Liam’s deeds would face a fate worse than death. “You have three seconds . Three, two, one.”

As he reached out to grab Emma, she leaped down. She was determined, even if it meant death, she had to escape; she couldn’t let Liam discover her deception

He was always sinister and suspicious, lacking a sense of security, hating lies and betrayal the most. Trust was the greatest luxury for him, and in the world, he trusted only Emma. He had **given** her all his trust. If he found out she had deceived him, his love for her would be over She didn’t want that to happen.

Before Emma jumped, a flicker of despair **and** resolute sorrow flashed in her eyes. It was unknown if it **was** a telepathic connection between them or not, Liam’s pupils shook violently upon seeing that look in her eyes.

That familiar feeling and expression are unique of my Emma... thought Liam.

Almost simultaneously, Liam instinctively reached out and grabbed her wrist tightly, just like that day he had held her in Watery Garden when she jumped from the cliff behind the mountain, nearly falling off the edge.

At that time, Liam had firmly grasped her wrist and shouted, "Hold on to me!"

But this time, Emma didn't hold on to Liam's hand. She bit down hard on the fleshy part of his hand, and **he** released her involuntarily due to

the pain.

She soon fell downward, landing with a thud on the ground. It was the second floor, not very high, but her landing posture was limited, and despite her curling up to cushion the fall, she still felt a burning pain in her spine.

Liam watched her escape into the night.

Two figures swiftly passed by Liam's side; his subordinates were about to chase after Emma, but he stopped them. "No need to follow."

"But her..." Liam's subordinate was cut off before finishing the sentence. His gaze coldly swept over his men. "They've already arranged people around us; haven't you noticed?"

The subordinates remained silent, ashamed. Indeed, without Liam's reminder, they had not detected anything.

Liam had a **suspect** in mind but wasn't sure. "Let's go **back** to Iovine Estate now."

"What about **the** woman in the villa." Liam's subordinate reminded him.

Speaking of Aria, Liam's expression gradually turned cold. "Watch her. Don't let her be taken away"

"**Okay**"

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08:27 Mon, 8 Jul W

Chapter 41

Liam hurried back to Iovine Estate to confirm his suspicion.

There was a secret passage from the abandoned villa to Iovine Estate, very close in a straight line, which he could reach in just ten minutes. If it was Emma, there was no way she could get home before him.

if he arrived at Iovine Estate and Emma wasn't there, his guess was likely correct.

At the entrance of the Estate, Liam sat in his wheelchair, straightening his collar, and took a deep breath.

Creak

He pushed open the door, greeted by the old maid Wilmot. It was late at night, everyone else was asleep, only she was preparing breakfast for tomorrow, warmly welcoming him at the entrance. "Hi, Mr. Hall,"

"Is Emma back?" Liam asked.

"Hmm, Mrs. Hall has been home all along. Has she gone out?" Wilmot was puzzled.

Liam's handsome brows furrowed slightly as he directed his wheelchair straight to the second floor.

The bedroom door was closed, and Liam, forgetting to knock,

pushed it open. The large double bed was empty, Emma wasn't home!

Liam's mood grew increasingly complex at **that** moment, as various signs indicated Emma...

"Mr. Hall?" Just then, Emma's soft voice came from the room.

Liam's body relaxed. "Emma? Are you taking a shower?"

sleep until now."

"Yes." Emma's voice sounded completely normal. "I was so tired from homework today that I couldn't sleep

"I'm coming in." Due to his suspicious nature, Liam wasn't content with just hearing her voice; he needed to see for himself that she was in

the room.

"What? Okay, let me just wrap myself in a towel..." In fact, Emma hadn't fully wrapped herself in the towel before Liam had already entered.

He

saw Emma naked in the bathtub.

She looked displeased. "What's wrong? Couldn't you wait for me to finish speaking?"

Liam scanned the bathroom before looking back at Emma, smiling calmly. “I haven’t seen you all evening and was afraid you might have sneaked out.”

Emma raised an eyebrow. “Now you’ve seen me, satisfied?”

He watched her, and she was actually equally **cautious**.

Tonight’s events were too thrilling. She didn’t know how much Liam had **guessed** or why he had reached out to save her in the end. “You’ve seen me now. I’ve finished my bath, so I’m going to change. Why don’t you go out first?”

Liam gave a faint smile. “Go ahead and change.”

Emma provocatively curled her lips. “What? Do you

want to watch me change?” She licked her hair and climbed out of the bathtub, her arms were flawless and smooth, Leaning against the edge of the tub, she **said**, “Be careful, or I might just eat you up here.”

Emma in the bathtub was enchantingly beautiful, her hair tied up in **a** bun on top of her head, her face small and delicate, and **her** body

Chapter 41

wrapped in the towel tantalizingly hidden, utterly captivating.

Liam bent down, close to her nose, lifting her chin with his finger, and said enigmatically. “My dear, you forgot to close the window.”

Emma’s heart skipped a beat, but her face remained impassive.

When Liam entered the room, the first thing he noticed was that the bathroom’s always-closed window was wide open, the curtains dancing in the wind, making it hard not to think that someone had just passed through the window.

“Your bathroom is too good; I almost passed out from lack of oxygen last time. Today, since you weren’t home and no one was watching me, I deliberately left it open.” Emma’s lies were flawless, and Liam just smiled, sliding his wheelchair over to close the window.

Emma’s heartbeat didn’t slow down. “What is he thinking now? Has he let his guard down or does he suspect me even more?”

However, Liam’s next words

ds kept Emma awake all night. “Remember to close the windows in the future. Although there are no other residential buildings around here, we can’t avoid helicopters passing overhead.”

Emma tossed and turned in bed. She had indeed climbed in through the bathroom window tonight. In her haste, she had indeed forgotten to

close it.

The reason she had been able to reach Icovine Estate so quickly was by helicopter. Liam took the underground passage while she took a helicopter, both traveling in a straight line.

Emma’s helicopter had landed some distance from Icovine Estate, so the servants hadn’t noticed anything unusual. But did Liam’s last remark imply that he knew everything?

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Chapter 42

Chapter 42

Emma was thinking about it when, suddenly, there was movement from Liam behind her. His hot hand wrapped around her waist from the side, delving deeper into her fitted nightgown and tracing over her flat belly, his fingers exerting force.

Emma felt his hand moving upward, soon touching the area above her belly. It tickled, but she couldn’t resist as she **was** pretending to be asleep, so she had to let his hand roam.

She did her best to maintain her steady heartbeat and breathing until Liam’s kisses landed.

All she could be sure

powerful man.

ire of now

was that **Liam's**

am's leg **was** fine and he **wasn't** impotent. And judging by his stature and size, he should be a **sexually**

Realizing what he might be about to do to her at any moment, Emma was about to lose control of her heartbeat. Suddenly just then, Liam's tongue pried open her teeth..

She thought at first that it was just a normal kiss until she felt that he was consciously rubbing the tip of his tongue delicately over her front teeth, and an idea suddenly exploded in her mind—she overlooked a crucial detail; she left a bite mark on his hand, and now he was confirming the shape of her teeth.

At the thought, Emma's heartbeat snapped up instantly, whereas breathing and demeanor could be controlled, trying to control the rate of her heartbeat was not so easy. Liam quickly sensed her nervousness, his voice muffled. "Awake?"

"Well... How am I supposed to sleep when you're kissing me like that?" Emma said.

"I thought you were going to pretend to be asleep." Liam's half-joking tone made it hard to gauge what he was really thinking. "To avoid me make out with you."

"It's not like we can't make out." Emma maintained her composure. "Mr. Hall. Do you want it?"

"Very much so." What Liam really wanted to say was, "I've been thinking making **out** with you for a long time. Since the day you moved into my house, my mind has been filled with all sorts of images like this." He had restrained himself for so long, and it was already the limit of his strong willpower. He thought to himself, "You don't want me to know your secret but it's fine if I tell you mine."

Feeling Liam's breathing becoming more and more rapid, Emma felt a bit nervous. Just **as** Liam was about to move his whole body and flip over to press her down fiercely, she suddenly burrowed into his embrace, hugged his waist, and at the same time, lay him on his side on the bed. "Don't worry. We have a long life ahead to make out."

Her sudden embrace took Liam by surprise, interrupting his original action, and there was a moment of silence in the air. Their bodies were pressed together, and even the rise and fall of each other's breath could be clearly felt.

She felt his hot, big hand stop moving. After a while, he also hugged her from behind, indulgently patting her shoulder gently.

Emma was still thinking about last night's events when she went to class the next day. If it hadn't been for her sudden move last night, Liam might have **already** revealed the secret of his legs/it was not that she didn't want him to be honest, but if he was open and she **kept** her secret, she would feel **guilty**.

"Just wait a little longer... thought she.

The atmosphere in the classroom today was a bit strange. Emma sensed that everyone seemed to be whispering about something, yet they deliberately avoided her. It wasn't until

after the first class in the morning that the homeroom teacher personally came to Emma's classroom **door**. "Emma, come with me to the office now."

Upon arriving at the office, Emma was met by two uniformed police officers. She glanced at the homeroom teacher, and the officers said, "We've received a call from your parents saying your sister has been missing for at least three days and nights. Have you seen your sister, or

84%

Chapter 42

perhaps do you **have** any information about her?

"No," Emma replied, her gaze unflinching, her expression so resolute that it took the officers slightly aback.

"Please think about it carefully. Really no?" the officer asked again. Emma had a history of discord with Aria, so it was quite natural for the police to question her when Aria missed.

She **said**, "Hasn't she been arrested? How could she be missing?"

"Your sister was previously released on bail. Didn't you know?" the officer asked.

"I seem to have heard about it, but I didn't care about it, thinking it was just a rumor. After all, seeing is believing." Emma didn't lie. Even yesterday at the abandoned villa, she didn't see Aria with her own eyes; she was merely guessing based on various pieces of information that **Aria** might be there. But before she could enter the villa, she **was** already **entangled** by Liam and his men. So, she didn't have absolute

evidence to prove that Aria was indeed there.

"Alright, you can go back to class now; we'll continue the search," the police officer said.

After the police left, the homeroom teacher sighed. "Alas, it's such a pity for Aria. When she was excellent in her studies, all the teachers liked her. But as one scandal followed another, trust in her gradually waned. I just heard from two officers that she might have been killed."

"For real?" Emma asked nonchalantly, "Did the police say who they suspect might be responsible?"

"I'm not sure. I don't know," the homeroom teacher replied. "But you should be mentally **prepared**; there might be public opinion surfacing soon. However, the innocent ones will prove their innocence, and your focus should still be on your studies."

"Thank you. I'll head back to my class now," Emma said without changing her expression.

Just as she was about to leave, the homeroom teacher stopped her. "Hey, Emma. Do you know how to fix computers? If I remember correctly, you were at the top of the class in the last computer exam, right?"

Emma wanted to say that what she learned about computers had little to do with fixing them, but the homeroom teacher said with a worried look, "**Alas**, I'll have an open **class** next yet I can't get my teaching materials to copy."

"I'll check it for you." Emma stepped forward, clicking properties and the background system configuration, quickly identifying the problem. In less than a minute, the computer was back to normal. "You should save your teaching materials regularly and not store everything on one computer to prevent crashes."

"**Wow**, Emma, your c

asked.

computer skills are amazing! Are you also planning to become a programmer in the future?" the homeroom teacher

Emma was speechless but still smiled and half-jokingly said, "Yes, in fact, I am the famous hacker Stox."

The homeroom teacher's facial features instantly stiffened, but the next second, she burst into laughter. "I can't take it. You're too funny. When you become Stox, don't forget to give me an autograph. I'll tell everyone that Stox fixed my computer..."

Seeing the homeroom teacher not believe her, Emma couldn't help but laugh along. After Emma left the office, the homeroom teacher, while

booting up the computer, couldn't stop laughing "I thought Emma was quite a loner, but it turns out she has a sense of humor. The previous rumors were too outrageous, claiming that Stox was attending our school. That's simply impossible. No wonder even Emma made a joke out of it. It's hilarious."

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Chapter 43

Chapter 43

Emma stepped out of the office and into the classroom, her teacher's words still echoing in her mind, making her smile. Just then, her phone buzzed.

"Hello, Emma. Are you in class right now?" asked the voice on the other end.

Despite the time that had passed since they last spoke, Emma immediately recognized the voice. "Uncle Daniel?"

It was her uncle, Daniel Rivera, who was ten years her senior. His voice sounded warm and familiar. "I've been swamped with work, traveling a lot. Sorry for not keeping in touch."

"It's okay, Uncle Daniel, Everything's fine here; don't worry," Emma reassured him, pleased to hear from her caring uncle.

"Emma, I actually called because I have something important to tell you," Daniel revealed.

Emma was a little surprised. "What is it, Uncle Daniel?"

"A friend of mine who works at a police station mentioned that your half-sister, Aria Wilson, might be dead. Have you heard anything about this?" Daniel inquired.

Emma **was** shocked, wondering, 'Could Liam be involved in this?'

"I... I had no idea," Emma managed to say, trying to sound calm. "Do you know what happened, Uncle Daniel?"

“Not yet, but it seems to be linked to the Gomez family,” Daniel said.

“The Gomez family?” Emma was confused, thinking. How could Ana, last seen with Liam, **be** connected to the Gomez family? She felt a strange relief that Liam might not be involved after all

“It’s Sebastian’s family. Just be careful, Emma. There might be some rumors floating around school or online,” Daniel said. He had taken the time out of his busy schedule to give her a reminder, which showed how much he cared about her.

Emma smiled. “Thanks for looking out for me, Uncle Daniel.”

“Oh, and one more thing.” Daniel added, his tone lightening. Your uncles and I **have** a surprise for you. It should be at your school’s reception right now. Check it out during your lunch break.”

“Another gift?” Emma chuckled. The last time they met, her uncles had given her a staggering gift—a savings card with an annual profit of **a** million dollars.

Daniel’s voice was affectionate, “You’re our only little princess, Emma. Of course, you deserve the best. Go check it out. I’ve got to run now, busy **as ever**. Bye.”

“Goodbye, Uncle Daniel!” Emma ended the call and hurried toward the reception. She had only met one of her four uncles so far, and her eldest uncle had hinted that she would meet the others **soon**. She wondered what the gift could be today.

As Emma reached the reception area, her excitement grew. Along the way, she heard snippets of conversation from her classmates about **an** upcoming concert.

“Have you heard it? Starry is coming back to our country! He’s going to perform in Trpin City soon!” a girl exclaimed.

Oh my gosh, I’ve been waiting three **years** for this! I **need** to get front row tickets!” another **said** excitedly.

“Oh

Emma wasn’t familiar with Starry, but the buzz from her classmates made it clear he was handsome and popular. While her mind was more

08:27 Mon, 8 Jul

Chapter 43

focused on the surprise waiting for her, she couldn’t help but be curious about him.

As Emma pondered just how famous Starry must be, she arrived at the reception and ran into someone she'd rather avoid.

"Yeah, this one," Kate declared, grabbing a package before locking eyes with Emma, her look quickly turning sour

Emma ignored Kate, not bothering with a greeting, and went straight to the mail shelf to retrieve her envelope. Just as she was about to open it, a sharp nudge sent it flying from her hands.

With a smirk, Kate stepped deliberately on the envelope with her high heel as she passed by.

Emma picked up the envelope now marred by the imprint of Kate's shoe.

"Seriously? How could Miss Johnson do that?" a student nearby asked.

"Yeah, that's just plain bullying" someone murmured.

Kate turned back with a sneer. "It's just a letter. What's the big deal? I can pay for it if it's that important!"

The Johnson family was known for their wealth, and Kate's attitude reflected a long-standing superiority complex. After her remark, she strutted away with her shopping bags branded with luxury logos.

Fueled by anger, Emma caught up to Kate and gave her a firm push.

"Ouch!" Kate cried out as her belongings tumbled to the floor, her box of perfumes shattering **and** releasing a potent, overwhelming fragrance into the air.

"Emma! **What's** wrong with you?" Kate bellowed.

Emma held up the envelope. "Just a few broken perfume bottles, right? I can pay for them if they're **that** important!"

"You think you can afford these?" Kate snapped, her embarrassment mixing with her fury. Those perfumes were meant to curry favor with the higher-ups at school. Glaring at the shattered bottles, she had no idea how she would manage this afternoon.

"I could afford them, but I changed my mind. I won't **pay**."

"You asked for it," Emma retorted with a sneer.

“It was an accident!” Kate tried to play the victim, but the onlookers in the reception were not buying it.

“An accident? We all saw you bump into Emma and deliberately step on her letter. Do **you** think your perfumes are worth more than **our** deliveries?” someone retorted.

“That’s right!” another student exclaimed.

The students, tired of Kate’s entitled antics, rallied around Emma, leaving Kate momentarily speechless.

Emma hadn’t yet seen what was inside the envelope, but she knew everything from her uncles **was** valuable to her. She wouldn’t let anyone

ruin it.

“Kate, stop messing with me at school, or I’ll make sure you regret it,” Emma warned. Just then, something slipped from the envelope—3 beautifully illustrated cards with a seat number and a close-up photo.

Curious students peeked over, and **gasps** of excitement filled the room.

“Oh my! It’s Starryll Tickets for Starry’s 10th-anniversary concert in Troln City” a girl shrieked.

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Chapter 43

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“And it’s a front-row seat! This can’t be **reall**” another exclaimed.

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As her classmates erupted in excitement, Emma bent down to retrieve the ticket, puzzled. ‘Is this the surprise Uncle Daniel mentioned?’ she thought.

Turning the ticket over, Emma found **more words** in an elegant script, reading, “Emma, looking forward to seeing you at the concert—Love ya, your Starry.”

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Chapter 44

Chapter 44

Emma quickly scanned the ticket she had just picked up, concealing the details from the prying eyes around her. However, the buzz about Starry's newly announced concert in TroIn City spread like wildfire. Tickets were scarce, with many unable to secure them due to high demand or steep prices. Holding a front-row ticket, Emma suddenly became the center of attention, almost revered by her classmates.

Kate, despite not fully grasping the ticket's significance, knew well of Starry's fame. The singer had maintained a veil of mystery around his personal life, never revealing his real name or personal details, yet he had captivated fans for a decade with his talent.

Moreover, he was not just a pop icon; he was also strikingly handsome and incredibly wealthy, rumored to be worth over 20 million dollars more than Kate's entire family fortune.

"Emma, where did you get this ticket?" Kate asked, her voice tinged with disbelief.

"Is that any of your business?" Emma retorted, clutching the ticket as she walked away.

Kate watched her leave, then glanced down at the broken perfume bottles at her feet, frustration mounting. She was desperate to attend Starry's concert and knew she had to find a way to get a ticket.

Meanwhile, Emma was on her phone, looking up Starry. The photos she found showed a man who looked cold yet incredibly charming—strikingly similar to Daniel. But as she continued to search, she realized this was actually her third uncle, Sean Rivera. Emma was astonished to discover that her third uncle was a music industry legend.

That same night, Kate visited Brad in his opulent apartment. The room was dimly lit, and Brad remained expressionless and detached throughout their sex.

After that, Brad shrugged off Kate's arms and headed toward the bathroom.

“I was bullied by Liam’s girlfriend today,” Kate began, following Brad.

Brad’s interest was piqued slightly at the mention of Liam. “So what?”

“She pushed me and smashed my things on the ground. She’s just too rude. How could Liam be with someone like that?” Kate was astute, knowing well that Brad’s dislike for Liam could be leveraged. She continued to disparage both Liam and Emma, hoping to sway Brad to her

side.

Brad sneered, his amusement tinged with disdain.

Kate glanced at Brad’s reflection in the mirror, taking in his chiseled abs and striking physique. A frown creased her forehead. “Aren’t you upset? Your girlfriend was bullied! It was that despicable couple again!”

After drying his hands, Brad turned to face her with a piercing gaze. “First off, you’re not my wife. And secondly.” His tone grew colder. “I got you into Vark College, but you can’t even handle someone like Emma on your own. Do you really expect me to sort out such petty issues for

you?”

“But aren’t I your girlfriend?” Kate’s eyes welled up with tears. “When Emma gets into trouble, Liam is always there to defend her. Why **don’t** you stand up for me after she bullied me? You hate them, don’t you?”

“Enough!” Brad’s voice was sharp, his disdain for Kate growing. He had initially been drawn to her under the false impression that she was involved with Liam. But since **Emma** came into the picture, it became clear that Kate meant nothing to Liam.

Brad’s interest in Kate dwindled rapidly, his patience **thinning**. The fact that Liam’s girlfriend had confronted Kate only intensified his aversion toward Kate.

Chapter 44

Mon, 8 Jul

“We’re just fuck buddies, Kate. Don’t flatter yourself” Brad sneered.

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Kate was taken aback. “How can you say that to me?” She had once been engaged to Liam, but Brad had wooed her with **his** attentiveness and warmth, making her feel deeply

loved—

more so than she ever felt with the aloof Liam. Now, hearing Brad dismiss her **as** a “fuck buddy” broke her heart.

Kate watched as Brad emerged from the bathroom with an aloof expression. She hurried after him. “Brad, what did you mean by that? You need to **explain** yourself..

Before she could reach the bed, Brad pushed her back onto the sheets and tightened his grip around her neck with **a** malicious glint in his eyes. “Keep quiet unless you have to moan in bed!”

As the days flew by, the tension at Vark College mounted with the release of the semester rankings. Emma, consistently a top student, expected to see her name at the top of the list. Instead, she **was** shocked to find herself ranked tenth.

Frowning, Emma scanned the list further and noticed Kate’s name at the bottom with a score of zero. Determined for answers, she stormed

into Kate’s office.

Kate sat nonchalantly at her desk, painting her nails as if she had been expecting Emma’s arrival. “I guess you’re here about your grade. Let me tell you something. I control the scores, and nothing you say can change that.”

Emma’s anger flared. “Why would you do this?”

matters into her own hands to

“I simply don’t like you,” Kate retorted, her voice cold. Since Brad wouldn’t support her, she decided to take matters into her own hands to prove she wasn’t beneath Emma.

Emma scoffed. “You’re compromising fairness and ethics over personal dislike? People like you shouldn’t be in charge of anything at Vark

College.”

As Emma turned to leave, Kate called out in **a** sly tone, “Hold on. If you want your grade changed, I can give you a chance. Just give me your ticket to Starry’s concert.”

Kate had been desperate to attend Starry’s concert but had failed to secure tickets, much to her dismay. Her rich friends had spent all night raving about the event. Scoring a front-row ticket would certainly boost her social standing.

Emma looked back at Kate with a disdainful look. “You think I’d trade the ticket for my grade? You’re delusional.” Despite the threat to her academic standing, Emma

new she would never compromise her integrity, especially not for a concert ticket given by her uncle.

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Chapter 45

Chapter 45

“Finel” Kate snapped, her voice dripping with malice. “Just you wait! A zero in this school means a call to the parents. I know you dread dealing with your family the most.”

Emma was taken aback by Kate’s audacity to use such a threat over a mere concert ticket. The thought of her parents getting involved did unsettle her. She was keen on keeping her relationship with Liam under wraps a bit longer.

Emma turned to leave when her phone buzzed with a call from an unknown number. She answered cautiously, “Hello?”

“Emma, are you at school right now?” a man asked.

“Uncle Sean, is that you?” Emma recognized the voice as her third uncle’s, recalling the letter from Sean.

“I was supposed to attend an event at your school tonight, but I’ve canceled it to come see you instead!” Sean said.

Emma, already stressed about Kate’s threat, responded, “That sounds great, Uncle Sean, but I’m in a bit of a situation here...”

After Emma ended the call, Kate’s curiosity got the better of her. “Who **was** that on the phone?”

With a shrug, Emma retorted, “You were eager to involve my family, right? Well, one of them is already here. Let’s head to the administration

office!”

“Your family?” Kate was confused. She always thought of Emma’s father, Mateo, as distant and uncaring, especially now with the Wilson family’s financial troubles. His presence would likely be more embarrassing than helpful.

“Fine, keep your ticket.” Kate sneered. “But remember, you defied your teacher and scored zero—don’t expect me to show you mercy when

you get expelled.”

Emma ignored Kate’s threats and walked confidently toward the administration office.

Inside the administration office, various staff members of Vark College were gathered as Kate began to dramatically portray Emma’s supposed misconduct and previous altercations with Ruby. The administration was **deep** in discussion about how to proceed.

“The school policy is clear,” the dean of students said, his tone serious. “A student who scores zero on a major assessment should be suspended for a month. However, Emma has consistently shown excellent academic performance. It’s puzzling why she would receive a zero solely in your art class.”

Kate **was** confident. “This was my first time teaching them. I asked Emma to paint in class, but she didn’t even show up. And take a look at her written assignment—it’s clearly beyond her skill level. Our entire art department agrees that it’s likely plagiarized or ghostwritten!”

Accusations of academic dishonesty were severe, carrying potential repercussions for both the student’s integrity and the college’s

reputation.

The dean adjusted his glasses. “Emma, can you respond to these allegations?”

Emma, lounging back in her chair with her usual defiant air, replied, “I don’t need to explain myself. It’s simple—today, if Kate is not leaving, then I will.”

The room fell into an uneasy **silence**. Kate, backed by the influential Hall family, was not to be trifled with. No one dared cross the Hall **family**, and technically, Kate hadn’t broken any school rules to warrant expulsion.

Seeing Emma remain silent, Kate smirked. “I didn’t come to Vark College on a whim. I’m not going anywhere—so maybe you should leave

Chapter 45

right now.”

Mon, 8

Kate was confident, especially knowing Emma wouldn't likely call on Liam for help.

But just then, a confident voice interrupted from the doorway. "Is that so?"

Heads turned toward the entrance. A man stood there, imposing at nearly 6'3", dressed in white sportswear accented with flashy silver jewelry. His presence was charming. Even Emma, usually unfazed by drama, was taken **aback** by the sudden shift in the room's atmosphere.

"Emma," said Sean as he strolled in, flanked by bodyguards and agents, his entrance grand and domineering.

"Uncle Sean," Emma greeted him in a soft voice.

Sean removed his sunglasses, unveiling a strikingly handsome face. Emma, dressed in her school uniform of a mid-length pleated skirt and a white blouse, had her hair pulled back into a high ponytail, lending her an air of cool elegance.

Sean's eyes lit up with pride. "Well, there's the Rivera family spirit, my little princess!"

Kate, caught off guard, stared at the man talking with Emma. Her heart skipped a beat. 'Isn't this guy Starry?' she exclaimed inwardly.

Despite usually carrying herself with poise, Kate felt suddenly plain and unremarkable in his presence.

Sean's

gaze

shifted to Kate. "And who might you be?"

"She's the art teacher I told you about," Emma quickly filled him in, having already briefed **Sean** over the phone.

Sean's warm demeanor turned frosty. "So, you're the ugly woman who unfairly targeted Emma and marked her

Kate's face flushed with embarrassment when Sean called her an "ugly woman, a comment that made the other teachers in the room clear their throats with embarrassment. "Mr. Rivera, we weren't aware of your connection to Emma. We assure **you** that there was no

intention to mistreat her. We just believe that the situation needs to be discussed openly.”

Sean’s influence was well-known, and his ties to the powerful Rivera family made him a formidable figure. The room grew tense as the staff realized the gravity of challenging someone with Sean’s backing.

With a sneer, Sean replied, “Don’t play coy with me. I know exactly who put this ugly woman up to this.” His gaze sharpened as he turned back to Kate. “Go tell Brad he’s nothing but Liam’s lapdog. If he messes with Emma again, he’ll regret it”

Kate clenched her fists, her nails digging into her palms as she defended herself, “I was only doing my job. Emma hasn’t been focusing on her studies. Is it wrong to expect a student to do her best?”

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08:28 Mon, 8 Jul W

Chapter 45

right now.”

Kate was confident, especially knowing Emma wouldn’t likely call on Liam for help.

But just then, a confident voice interrupted from the doorway. “Is that so?”

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Heads turned toward the entrance. A man stood there, imposing at nearly 6’3“, dressed in white sportswear accented with flashy silver jewelry. His presence was charming. Even Emma, usually unfazed by drama, was taken aback by the sudden shift in the room’s atmosphere.

“Emma,” said Sean as he strolled in, flanked by bodyguards and agents, his entrance grand and domineering.

“Uncle Sean,” Emma greeted him in a soft voice.

Sean removed his sunglasses, unveiling a strikingly handsome face. Emma, dressed in her school uniform of a mid-length pleated skirt and a white blouse, had her hair pulled back into a high ponytail, lending her an air of cool elegance.

Sean's eyes lit up with pride. "Well, there's the Rivera family spirit, my little princess!"

Kate, caught off guard, stared at the man talking with Emma. Her heart skipped a beat. "Isn't this guy Starry?" she exclaimed inwardly.

Despite usually carrying herself with poise, Kate felt suddenly plain and unremarkable in his presence.

Sean's gaze shifted to Kate. "And who might you be?"

"She's the art teacher I told you about," Emma quickly filled him in, having already briefed Sean over the phone.

Sean's warm demeanor turned frosty. "So, you're the ugly woman who unfairly targeted Emma and marked her zero?"

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Chapter 46

Chapter 46

Brad might not have the same prowess as Liam did at his peak, but it was widely acknowledged that Liam's influence had waned, and now, Brad was the one calling the shots. He stood at the helm of the Hall family.

Now, Sean boldly called Brad a lapdog, silencing everyone present. They wondered if Sean was too confident or maybe he just cared too much about Emma.

Kate was quick to shift the blame to Emma, but Sean wouldn't allow it to happen. He fixed his gaze on Kate and challenged her, "Really? You claim she plagiarized. Where's your proof?"

Caught off guard, Kate stumbled over her **words**. "I... I don't have any! But I'm sure it's beyond her capabilities. I'm her teacher. Shouldn't I know?"

Just then, Emma stepped forward, holding a voice recorder. "You might not have proof of me cheating, but I have proof of your corruption." With everyone's eyes on her, she played the recording of Kate's private conversation with her earlier.

"You're compromising fairness and ethics over personal dislike? People like you shouldn't be in charge of anything at Vark College." Emma's voice sounded.

"Hold on. If you want your grade changed, I can give you a chance. Just give me your ticket to Starry's concert," came Kate's sly voice.

The room erupted in gasps. People stared at Kate in disbelief, her face cycling from pale to a flushed red with anger.

The recording didn't stop there.

"You think I'd trade the ticket for my grade? You're delusional." It was Emma's voice.

"A zero in this school means a call to the parents, I know you dread dealing with your family the most," came Kate's retort. "Fine, keep your ticket. But remember, you defied your teacher and scored zero—don't expect me to show you mercy when you get expelled."

"Stop it! Turn it off!" Kate couldn't bear it any longer and blurted out in her defense. "This recording is fake, Emma, you're framing me!"

“Is that so?” Emma retorted with a smirk. “Miss Johnson, guess what? I also **have a video**.”

Kate, usually **so** composed in front of the school administrators, stood exposed, her misconduct drawing concerned looks from the office

staff.

“Miss Johnson, your actions were clearly out of line,” a teacher said, shaking his head in disappointment.

“It’s ridiculous!” the dean declared sternly. “We don’t need to discuss this further. If Emma hadn’t kept evidence, we could have misjudged her. Miss Johnson, you need to leave now.”

“You can’t fire me!” Kate exclaimed, her eyes flashing with anger. “I’m Brad’s girlfriend! He’ll have your school shut down!”

Sean watched the drama unfold and couldn’t suppress a chuckle. “Stop making a fool of yourself. Brad can hardly take care of his own issues, let alone shut down a school for you.”

Kate bit her lip, her mind racing back to the night she **had** confided in Brad about Emma, remembering his indifferent response. It was obvious he wasn’t going to help her against Emma.

As Kate’s expression darkened, Emma remained poised and collected. She waited for Sean before she presented her evidence, sealing Kate’s

fate.

After the confrontation, some school officials approached **Sean** to discuss potential collaborations. Sean directed them to his manager and

Chapter 46

turned his full attention to Emma.

“Emma, you’re so smart, just like your mom,” Sean said with a fond smile, his admiration for her evident.

Emma’s smile wavered at the mention of her mother. She missed Stella, whom she had never met.

Noticing the shift in Emma’s mood, Sean quickly apologized. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“Was my mom... smart too?” Emma inquired.

“Yes,” Sean nodded, his voice tinged with a mix of pride and sadness. “She was the brightest of us all, brilliant from a young age. Many **believed** she could have been the leading economist of our time, but...” He let out a sigh.

Emma listened, a sense of awe mingling with her surprise. She had never known about her mother’s genius. It seemed Emma’s sharp intellect might be a family trait.

“Let’s put that aside for now. How do you like the concert ticket I got you?” Sean asked with a warm smile.

“I love it! I’ll definitely be there on time!” Emma replied, her eyes lighting up.

“Great! I’ve secured the best spot for you and even arranged a little surprise,” Sean assured her.

“Thank you, Uncle Sean!” Emma smiled.

“Don’t mention it,” Sean said as he affectionately patted her head. “You’re my precious little princess, Emma.”

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Later, when Emma mentioned Sean and the concert to Liam, Liam’s first question was about Sean’s age.

“He is my uncle. I think he’s in his thirties, perhaps. Maybe late twenties? He’s definitely younger than my mom...” Emma hesitated when she mentioned her mother. “He’s really handsome and looks so young!”

Liam’s expression darkened slightly. “He likes to pat your head, right?”

Emma blushed slightly. “Yeah... Are you jealous?”

“I’m coming with you to that concert,” Liam declared.

Emma felt a bit awkward. “But you probably can’t get tickets at this point, right?” She knew that even Kate, with all her wealth, couldn’t secure tickets, proving it wasn’t just a matter of money.

Liam’s **eyes** narrowed slightly at her words. “Are you doubting my capabilities?”

“**No**, of course not. Well, I’m going to take a shower first!” Emma quickly excused herself. After all, Sean had mentioned that Brad, such a formidable figure now, was once considered less significant than Liam. It was a reminder

of how formidable Liam truly was. She wasn't ready to delve into the darker aspects of Liam's past.

As the day of Starry's concert in TroIn City approached, the **area** around the venue was bustling. Traffic restrictions were in place, and security was tight, with an estimated crowd of over a hundred thousand people.

While chaos reigned at the entrance, Emma was comfortably seated backstage next to Sean, enjoying the company of a global idol.

08:28 Mon, 8 Jul

Chapter 46

Sean had brought along a variety of tasty snacks for Emma. In his **eyes**, she was just a young college girl, albeit an extraordinary one.

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Chapter 47

Chapter 47

"In a bit, some of my trusted people will take you to your anything, feel free to signal me, okay?" Sean **offered**.

ar seat. It's in a great spot—I'll be able to spot you from the stage easily. If you need

"Thank you, Uncle Sean!" Emma said with a smile.

Sean doted on Emma, treating her like a child. Emma, who had long craved familial warmth, basked in the affection of her uncle, eagerly anticipating the concert,

Yet, as Emma entered the venue, a nagging sense of unease crept over her. It felt like she was overlooking something crucial. Compelled by this feeling, she called Josiah. "Josiah, I need you to do something for me."

“Boss, aren’t you supposed to be enjoying the concert right now? What’s so urgent?” Josiah’s voice crackled through the phone; he was in the middle of hacking into a major building’s control system in Nuverland, and her call **had** caught him off-guard.

“I need you to check out this venue,” Emma instructed.

“Seriously, a concert venue? It’s not as critical as the main building I’m in right now. Boss, you’re really pushing it... Josiah’s tone mixed frustration with disbelief.

“Am I not the boss anymore? Or are you thinking of quitting?” Emma’s voice was stern, prompting silence from Josiah.

After a moment, he replied, “I’m on it right away...”

While waiting for Josiah’s report, Emma couldn’t shake off her unease. Though she couldn’t recall ever visiting this venue in a previous life, her instincts screamed that something was off.

“Boss, I’ve got news!” Josiah’s urgent voice came through soon after. “You need to get everyone out now! It’s very dangerous!”

“What?” Emma’s heart sank. Her intuition had been right. “What **did** you find?”

“I intercepted some chatter on the black market. There’s a high bounty for an explosion at this venue today!” Josiah exclaimed.

Emma’s heart raced as memories from her previous life flooded back. It was during this period in her previous life that a devastating terrorist attack had rocked the city.

At that time, Emma was deep undercover in a **foreign** secret organization, isolated from the world. Despite this, she learned of a terrorist plot targeting a megastar’s concert attended by a hundred thousand fans. The attack resulted in thousands of casualties. The star survived but was left severely **burned**, paralyzed, and disfigured in his attempt to save his fans.

Emma could never have guessed that the star would be her uncle. In her previous life, she had seen horrific images of him, bloodied and burned, **never** realizing the connection.

“Boss, you need to get your uncle to start evacuating people now!” Josiah warned,

“It’s too late, Emma said through clenched teeth.

The venue was already packed with nearly a hundred thousand fans. Starting an evacuation now would cause chaos and might not prevent a disaster. Moreover, if the attack proceeded, Sean's career and freedom were at risk. Besides, he had always been adamant **about** not leaving until every fan was safe.

"Get everyone on this immediately, I need the enemy's location in five minutes!" Emma ordered.

Meanwhile, Sean was backstage, obliviously to the impending danger. He **was** gearing up for his performance, just as he had in Emma's

08:28 Mon, 8 Jul

Chapter 47

previous life.

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At 31 minutes and 25 seconds into his concert, a devastating explosion would tear through the venue. Sean wouldn't run. He would try to help the **fans**, only to be overtaken by the flames that would ravage his body, leaving him disfigured and unable to sing.

Sean was putting the final touches on his appearance. He turned to his manager. "Is Emma in her seat?"

The manager checked the live feed from the camera focused on Emma's designated front-row center seat. It was empty. "That's odd; she's

not there."

Sean frowned. "Could she have gotten lost?"

"No way, I walked her to her seat myself with Tommy. Maybe she's in the restroom? Mr. Rivera, should we start the show?" the manager

suggested.

"Let's wait a little longer," Sean instructed.

The assistants, knowing how much Sean cared for his niece, didn't push further. But as ten minutes ticked by past the scheduled start time, the audience grew restless, and Sean remained backstage, unwilling to start without ensuring Emma's safety.

"Mr. Rivera, should we start the show? The crowd is getting restless," the manager reminded him.

“Has Emma shown up yet?” Sean inquired.

The manager shook their head.

Sean tried calling Emma, but her phone was off. “Emma...” He was on the verge of going to search for her himself, worried that something might have happened, when someone came to the door.

“Are you Mr. Sean Rivera? I have a letter for you from Miss Emma,” **the** person said.

“Yes, I am.” He quickly accepted the letter, which read, “Uncle Sean, I’ll be back soon. Don’t wait for me. Even if I’m not in my seat, I’m still with you. Go on and give a great show!”

Sean let out a relieved breath after reading the letter. At the same **time**, the delay in starting the concert was causing unrest in the audience, with some fans demanding refunds and the media gearing up for a critical report.

Suddenly, a spotlight hit the stage, and a man appeared from above. As he descended, the crowd erupted in cheers, shouting out his name like crazy to express their love for him.

The voices of one hundred thousand fans merged, echoing through the venue. Sean’s signature color was purple, symbolizing royalty. Tonight, the sea of fans each held a purple glow stick, lighting up the night. The crowd was dense, everyone packed tightly together, atmosphere electric with excitement.

Meanwhile, Emma was acutely aware of the potential disaster looming over the densely packed crowd. As she moved against the tide of fans, her phone rang.

“Boss, are you really trying to disarm the bomb yourself? It won’t work!” Josiah’s voice was laced with concern. “Please, wait for backup. The venue is huge, and it’s clear they planned this meticulously. You could die!”

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Chapter 48

Chapter 48

“Even if it costs me my life, I have to do this.” Emma ignored Josiah’s frantic warnings.

Josiah failed to fully grasp the catastrophic potential of the looming explosion. However, Emma knew the grim reality all too well. She had witnessed the aftermath in her previous life.

As she hurried through the crowd, images haunted her—the newspaper photos of Sean, his features obliterated by burns, and the list of victims: a high school student fresh from graduation, a couple who had just celebrated their long-awaited engagement, a son who **had** brought his terminally ill mother to enjoy what might be their last concert together.

These were ordinary people, living their lives with simple hopes and dreams, all cruelly cut short by a merciless explosion.

Behind the countless victims lay a world of shattered families. Sean, once vibrant and **full** of life, had spent his later years in a vegetative state, a shadow of his former self.

weighing heavily on her heart, Emma was resolved—she would prevent this tragedy at any cost, even if it meant facing

With these thoughts we

death herself

“Boss, I found it! It’s on the west side of the roof, D29, at ten o’clock!” Josiah reported.

“Got it!” Emma left the concert and sprinted toward the roof. With Josiah’s guidance, she quickly located the **bomb**.

The roof’s surface was soft and tricky to navigate. Emma, relying on her athletic prowess, crawled across the expansive, slippery roof. There seemed to be nothing special here. Everything appeared normal at first glance,

“Boss, there’s nothing here,” Josiah said.

“Look.” Emma rotated the camera in her hand.

Josiah gasped. “It’s... it’s C41”

“Yeah, it’s tucked inside the steel framework in a **massive** black box,” Emma **added**.

C4, known for its devastating power, could send shockwaves strong enough to severely damage structures. Emma's face set into a determined expression as she pulled out her tools, ready to disarm the bomb,

"Boss, this isn't safe. The police are on their way, and the roof can't bear much weight. You need to get off here, now!" Josiah warned.

By then, Emma was in a precarious position, practically suspended in mid-air. With half of her body leaning out over the edge, she barely managed to reach the black box. Any slight mistake could trigger the explosion, potentially killing her and many others.

Emma clenched her teeth. "Don't worry. I've got this." Her past experiences in high-stakes situations had taught her a crucial lesson—to survive, one must **face** fear head-on. The greater the danger, the calmer she became.

Josiah recognized that expression on Emma's face—it meant things were serious. It **had** been ages since **he'd** seen her look so resolved.

Trained in bomb disposal, Emma knew the risks involved. Not only was her physical safety on the line, but the mental strain was enormous. Any error could be catastrophic, endangering thousands.

Taking a deep breath, Emma kept her hands steady as she methodically worked on the bomb. Her bold yet careful approach made deciphering and disarming the device manageable, despite its complexity.

Below, the concert had started. Although she wasn't in her seat, the music's vibrations reached her, mingling with the tension **of** her **task**. **The** threat of the bomb under her hands made sweat bead on her forehead.

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08:28 Mon, 8 Jul F

Chapter 48

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Meanwhile, just across from the arena, Liam was stuck in a traffic jam in his Rolls-Royce. He was supposed to meet Emma, but the congestion

had delayed him.

As they finally passed the last traffic light, Levi's phone rang, his face draining of color as he reported, "Mr. Hall, there's trouble! The police just called about a dangerous object near the arena. They're blocking roads and evacuating the area."

Liam's eyes widened, "Stop the car; we need to go **now!**"

"Mr. Hall!" Levi tried to intervene, but it was too late. With Emma still potentially in danger, Liam couldn't just wait.

Meanwhile, the police were on their way. On the roof, Emma continued her work, unaware that the threat was already looming.

"You foolish woman..." The person was ready to pull the trigger, but Josiah's sharp senses caught on.

"Boss, get down!" Josiah roared.

Reacting almost on instinct, Emma ducked, narrowly avoiding the bullet. The threat was neutralized swiftly, and darkness reclaimed the

scene.

"What's behind me?" Emma asked without turning her head, her focus unwavering as she continued to work on the bomb.

"There's a building at your six, but whoever was there seems to have left—they didn't want to give **away** their position," Josiah responded.

"I'm almost done here. Keep your eyes on the surrounding buildings for me," Emma instructed.

"Got it, Boss. I'm on it," Josiah assured her.

The bomb was not overly complicated, and Emma was making good progress. As she snipped the final wire, a sudden "Bang!" echoed. A bullet, muffled by a silencer, shot toward her from the direction of the arena's spectator stands.

"Boss!" Josiah exclaimed.

The silenced shot was unexpected, especially coming from the crowd. Amid the heated atmosphere, no one seemed to notice the sinister act unfolding in the shadows. Then, bullets flew toward her. Emma, already straining to maintain her balance, lost her footing and fell from the roof, a drop of about 100 feet.

"Boss!" Josiah's voice was filled with panic as he shouted into the phone.

Meanwhile, at the concert, Sean felt a sudden chill. He glanced toward Emma's usual spot, only to find it empty.

"Why hasn't Emma been back yet?" Sean's concern grew. He had just finished a song, and the crowd's cheers mingled with the bright fireworks lighting up the sky. Unnoticed in the festive chaos, a girl was falling.

'Am I going to die?' Emma wondered, looking into the night sky as she fell.

After the noise of the fireworks died down, darkness enveloped the sky again. Memories of a past fire, which had lit up the night like daylight, flashed through her mind. It reminded her of Liam's engagement ring, which had sparkled brilliantly when he proposed. But now, all seemed to be slipping into nothingness.

Emma closed her eyes, resigning herself to fate. Suddenly, a beam of light from a helicopter **cut** through the night, piercing the **silence**.

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Chapter 49

Chapter 49

As Emma plummeted through the air, a man leaped from the helicopter, catching her in a strong embrace. A familiar voice whispered in her ear, "Emma, I want you to live!"

She tried to look up at him, but he held her tightly against his chest. She couldn't see his **face**, but his presence was unmistakable. 'Could it be Liam?' she wondered.

Suddenly, a "Bang!" rang out. A bullet whizzed past Emma's ear, slicing through the air. The man holding her grunted, and the faint smell of blood filled the air. At that moment, she realized the horrifying truth—Liam had taken a bullet for her.

When Emma opened her eyes, she found herself in a hospital.

***Are** you feeling alright? Is your vision clear? Any pain?" The questions came from a man in a white coat, standing in a beam of sunlight that made him look like an angel.

"You are..." Emma began.

“You can call me Dr. Duncan. I’m your attending physician,” he replied with a reassuring smile.

Memories of Elijah’s past betrayal made Emma cautious. “Which hospital is this? What happened at the concert? Who saved me yesterday?” Her questions were sharp, reflecting her inner turmoil.

Aaron Duncan chuckled. “You’re quite interesting. Most patients first ask about their own condition, but here you are, concerned about everything else. Were you a detective or something?”

Emma didn’t respond, her gaze steady, waiting for the answers.

“You’re in TroIn Hospital, the best in the city,” Aaron explained, showing his ID with a smile. “The explosion didn’t happen, and your quick actions are being praised across the country. You’re quite the hero now!”

Emma felt uneasy. “And where’s the person who saved me in the helicopter?”

“I’m not sure about that,” Aaron admitted. “You were brought here by ambulance. Anything before that, you’d need to check with the police.”

Disappointment flickered across Emma’s face, mirrored by an unexpected pang in Aaron’s heart. “Besides the police, was there anyone else involved in saving you last night?” he asked.

Emma regained consciousness and murmured, “I’m not sure. Maybe I imagined it.” She thought it might have been Liam who saved her, but

she couldn’t be sure.

Suddenly, Emma remembered something important— if Liam had been shot saving her, a wound on his shoulder would confirm it was him,

Eager to call Liam, Emma reached for her phone only to find it dead.

“Your phone’s battery is drained,” Aaron informed her gently. “You can use your uncle’s phone once he’s finished with the paperwork.”

“My uncle’s here too?” Emma asked, surprised.

“Yes,” Aaron replied with a smile. “He’s been by your side for over twenty—four hours, making every nurse in the department quite jealous.”

Emma's lips twitched into a wry smile. It was almost unheard of for a celebrity like Sean to stay in a hospital that long.

08:28 Mon, 8 Jul W

Chapter 49

"Did anyone else come to see me?" she asked, her voice tinged with hope. She thought Liam might have come.

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Aaron shook his head. "No, just him." He noticed the disappointment on her face. Despite his professional detachment, Aaron found himself concerned about her vulnerability. He saw her as a little girl, probably because Sean had told him that Emma was Sean's niece.

Emma looked stunning **even** in her sleep, her beauty undiminished by the hospital setting. Aaron, usually unfazed by the affluent families he treated, found himself unexpectedly won to her. He reached out, gently smoothing her tousled hair. "Have a rest," he advised softly. "You have your uncle here, so don't worry too much, okay?"

Emma's situation seemed unusual. With such a major incident, only her uncle had come to the hospital. Her parents and friends were nowhere to be seen. Aaron wondered if she was perhaps waiting for someone special who hadn't yet appeared, which probably meant a

chance for Aaron.

Lost in these thoughts, Aaron was unaware that the door had silently opened. A man in a wheelchair witnessed Aaron's tender gesture.

Liam's expression darkened when he saw Aaron touching Emma's head and Emma smiling back at Aaron.

"Thank you, gratitude.

Dr. Duncan. You've really shown me that there are still good doctors out there," Emma said, her voice filled with genuine

Liam's mood turned stormy when he saw her smile at another man, his face clouding over with jealousy and pain. The ache in his shoulder, where the bullet had been hastily removed without anesthesia, flared up with renewed intensity. He had endured a night of agony, driven by his concern for Emma, only to find her flirting with someone **else**.

Unaware of the figure lingering at the door, Aaron continued the conversation. “Most doctors mean well. Have you ever had a bad experience

with one?”

“Sort of,” Emma replied noncommittally.

Aaron chuckled. “You seem wise beyond your years. I’m glad to have played a part in your story today. Just remember to take good care of yourself.”

Emma nodded politely in response. Just then, a noise at the door caught her attention. “What was that?”

Aaron turned to look, his brow furrowing as he saw nothing amiss. “Probably just a patient dropping something in the hall. I’ll check on my other patients now. You should stay here and wait for your family.”

“Okay.” Emma nodded.

Once Aaron left, Emma cautiously got out of bed and approached the door. There, on the floor, lay a beautifully wrapped paper bag, still warm and emitting a delicious aroma, bearing the logo of her favorite restaurant.

“It has to be from Liam!” Excited, Emma scooped up the bag and hurried into the hallway. At the end of the corridor, she spotted two bodyguards in black suits, one pressing the elevator button, the other holding the door open for a man in a wheelchair.

“Liam!” Emma called out, her voice echoing down the hallway.

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Chapter 50

Chapter 50

“Mr. Hall...” The two bodyguards hesitated, unsure whether to close the elevator doors, but Liam showed no intention of stopping.

“Wait!” Emma rushed forward, holding food in her hands. “If you brought food, why not give it to me **in** person?”*

Without waiting for a response, she grabbed the handles of his wheelchair and pulled him out of the elevator.

The bodyguards were stunned.

“You two can go now. I’ll take care of **him**,” Emma said, dismissing the bodyguards and leading Liam into the fire escape.

“What’s wrong? Are you mad?” Liam’s mood softened slightly as he **saw B** Emma leave the doctor behind to chase after him.

He gently held her face, making her look at him. “You knew I’d be upset, **yet** you were chatting with the male doctor, huh?”

“You weren’t here yet, were you?” Emma teased with a smile, seeing his darkened expression. “Just kidding. It was just a polite conversation. What were you up to last night?”

“I should be asking you what you were doing last night,” Liam countered.

Emma had defeated the national boxing champion, outsmarted Vere, and even received courteous nods from the world-famous pianist Darell. Now she could even dismantle bombs. Liam wondered what other surprises his wife had in store for him.

Emma pursed her lips. “Last night I disarmed a little something.”

“You call a bomb a little something?” Liam squinted.

“I didn’t know what it was. I just couldn’t stand the thought of Uncle Sean getting hurt, so I had to face it.” Emma trailed off, finding it hard to continue her lie. “But last night, I felt someone jumping down from a helicopter to save me. Was that you?” Emma looked into Liam’s eyes. Her intuition told her it was him.

Due to his injury, he hadn’t shown up all night, only coming to the hospital the next morning. Everything seemed to fall into place.

Emma waited for Liam’s response.

Suddenly, Liam **asked**, “Aren’t you hungry?”

“Yeah. What did you bring?” Emma’s attention immediately shifted.

Emma quickly took out the beautifully packaged snacks, still steaming. "Do you want some too?"

Seeing her focus change so quickly, Liam couldn't help but smile. "No, **they're** for you."

The warm and sweet treat instantly lifted her spirits.

Liam watched her, in her hospital attire, sitting on the stairs and munching like a little hamster, occasionally brushing crumbs off her pants

"*sit here; the ground is cold," Liam said with concern and then gestured that she should sit on his leg

Emma glanced up at him, thought for a moment, and then moved, "Fine. I'll come over

She leaned back against him and sat on his legs, then heard him say coldly, "Turn around."

"What's wrong?" Emma asked, puzzled.

Chapter 50

"I bought enough for two. Aren't you going to share with me?" Liam **said**.

"Alright." Emma rummaged through the bag again, finding several snacks. She took out a box of cookies. "How about these?"

"No." Liam refused.

She then took out a bottle of beverage. "What about this?"

"This one's for you." Liam shook his head.

"What do you want to eat then?" Emma asked,

Liam remained calm. "You go ahead. I'll let you know if I want something."

"Okay." Ignoring the darkness in his eyes, she **sat** on him like a little pet and ate by herself.

Just then, the door to the fire escape opened.

"Mr. Hall..." The person entering was Levi. He paused mid-sentence, seeing Emma straddling Liam, a bit of creamy filling lingering at the corner of her lips.

Levi was taken aback by the scene. "You are... I'm sorry, Mr. Hall, I shouldn't have disturbed you. I'll leave now!"

Emma was probably too exhausted from disarming the bomb to realize how her current actions with Liam might look to others. She couldn't understand Levi's exaggerated reaction. "Why did Mr. Carter act like that?"

Liam, his hand—resting on Emma's waist, said calmly, "He probably thinks we're being a bit too intimate."

"What?" Emma felt her face heat up. Ever since she found out his legs weren't paralyzed at the abandoned villa, she got nervous whenever things got a bit too close.

She g

quickly climbed off his lap. "... I'll just sit on the floor to eat. It's cooler down here."

Liam maintained a mysterious smile.

Emma glanced at his profile, his hand supporting his forehead, a light smile playing on his lips. "Is this... okay?" she asked.

"Up to you," Liam replied, watching her.

Minutes later, they left the hospital.

The news of Emma defusing the bomb had just started gaining traction when Liam suppressed it. Overnight, all online reports about the incident vanished. Only a few rumors remained, which would soon be censored.

Emma scrolled through her phone. "You're pretty powerful, huh? So, this is what it's like to be wealthy, where even big news can be suppressed."

"I took some effort," Liam said.

Emma raised an eyebrow, probing, "Uncle Sean said Aria might be dead. Do you know about it?"

"Yes, both legs were dismembered," Liam said without emotion.

Emma shuddered, "D... dismembered?" She wondered if Liam had anything to do with it out of curiosity, she asked, "How did you find out??"

08:29 Mon, 8 Jul

Chapter 50

“From the forensic photos,” Liam replied calmly, his emotions unreadable.

Emma probed again, “Do you know who did it?”

“It’s still uncertain. The police are investigating,” Liam’s tone remained steady.

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Emma knew he wouldn’t tell her. Aria had been kidnapped by Liam in the abandoned villa before her death, so Emma suspected he was

involved in her demise.

Emma’s heart grew colder, not out of sympathy for Aria, but because her husband was becoming increasingly unpredictable.

“Who planted the bomb at Uncle Sean’s concert?” Emma asked.

“It was Sebastian’s uncle, Parker Dow,” Liam replied.

The name was unfamiliar to Emma. She had never heard of Parker.

“In recent years, the Gomez family has been getting bolder. Sebastian’s uncle moved abroad early and became a top tycoon. The Dow family has a feud with the Rivera family overseas. The Rivera family’s four sons are too influential, making them hard to tackle directly. So, they targeted your uncle,” Liam explained.

Emma narrowed her eyes. Clearly, her uncle had been put in grave danger.

The names Gomez and Dow were now etched in her memory.

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