

## Mute Bride 111

### Chapter 111

Justin looked visibly stunned at first, but he calmed down soon afterward. He then asked indifferently, "Did you come all the way to question me just because of this?"

Rachel's eyes were bloodshot, and her hands kept trembling. A human life is so unworthy of notice in your eyes. You were the one who did it!

Seeing how aggrieved Rachel was, Justin immediately boiled with rage. He replied with a sneer, "Who cares if I'm the one who did it? This is Riverdale! What can you, a mute illegitimate daughter, do to me?"

Rachel's eyes were bloodshot. Amid Gloria's scream, she suddenly picked up a bronze figurine from the desk and struck Justin on the head with it.

"Ouch!" Justin let out a loud cry of pain as he failed to dodge in time. Gloria ran toward them like crazy and pushed Rachel away before asking, "Are you okay, Justin?"

The man covered his forehead with his hand. Blood seeped through his fingers and trickled down the scar on the corner of his eye to his neck, making him look fiercely menacing.

Rachel then slumped to the ground, her eyes full of despair and fearlessness. Hans is dead, and Justin's the one who did it. I must avenge him!

Gloria stood in front of Justin and yelled like crazy to those outside, "Guards! Where are the security guards?"

People soon burst into the room, and Rachel was dragged away by the security guards as she continued to clutch the bronze figurine. Before she left, she glared furiously at Justin with a look in her eyes that was terrifying-it was as though she would definitely kill him once she had the opportunity.

Justin felt so suffocated, and it seemed like his chest was about to burst while he watched Rachel being marched away. She actually wants to kill me and then herself for the sake of that guy!

"I'll take you to the hospital." Gloria looked anxious as she supported Justin with her hand.

Janice was the first person to visit Rachel after she was sent to the police station. "I heard about what happened. You're too impulsive-how could you get yourself into such a state?"

Merely half a day had passed, but Rachel's eyes were deeply sunken with exhaustion. She looked like nothing but skin and bones; it was as though she was merely a body without a soul. Upon hearing Janice's words, she turned up the corner of her mouth to form an aggrieved smile. I'm the one who got Hans killed. I'm guilty.

"The prosecutors are already collecting the evidence. Since Justin is the prime suspect, I suppose he'll receive a subpoena from the court very soon."

What can I do?

"You can testify as a witness. He broke Hans' leg, didn't he?"

Rachel nodded while gritting her teeth hard. Now that things had turned out this way, she was no longer afraid of anything. If the worst came to the worst, she would fight to the bitter end to send Justin- that murderer-to jail.

Janice clenched her fists and remarked frostily, "Had you been willing to testify long ago, such a thing probably wouldn't have happened, nor would have Hans died."

Janice had always been outspoken, and her words stabbed Rachel in the heart where it hurt the most like a knife, reminding her that what killed Hans was not Justin but her indecision.

Meanwhile, in the Hudson Residence, Amber was shocked when she heard the news. "What? Rachel wounded Justin?"

Jefferey was putting on his overcoat in a hurry to go out. "How can that be fake? The police department has even called me! She really is out of her mind! How dare she hit her husband? She's putting us Hudsons in jeopardy!"

"Wait a minute, Dad." Amber grabbed Jefferey's arm as he was about to leave. "How on earth did that happen? With her disposition, she wouldn't have the nerve to do such a thing unless she was driven into a corner."

"Does being driven into a corner justify her hitting him? She really is insane!" Jefferey was burning with anxiety, fearing that the Burton Family would be displeased with the Hudson Family for this. Hudson Pharmaceuticals' recently acquired shares might all be transferred back into Justin's hands by then; their company would be handicapped at every turn, and Jefferey would no longer remain in his position as the company's chairman. Since he didn't have time to explain more to Amber, he left home in a hurry.

Amber stood at the door for a while. Then, she took out her cell phone and made a phone call. "Is this the municipal hospital? Hi, I would like to ask about a patient in Ward 402 named Hans Egerton. How is he?"

"Ward 402? Let me look it up. Oh, that patient has been discharged from our hospital."

"Discharged?" Amber was startled for a moment. "Okay, I got it. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Amber had a vague realization when she hung up the phone. The only thing apart from Nancy that could make Rachel so crazy was Hans, so something must have happened to him. Amber clenched

her fists as she recalled how Noah had humiliated her at the hospital earlier on. She must get Rachel to leave Riverdale once and for all; only by doing so could she marry Justin and get rid of Noah.

Rachel stayed in the detention center for half a month. Jefferey had come once during that period, but she refused to see him; she heard that he had made quite a scene outside because of that. Her other visitors were Janice and those from the police station, who came to ask her about some specific details about the

incident.

On the day of the scheduled trial half a month later, Rachel waited in the waiting room for the public servants to take her to the court to testify. Instead, she met Gloria. 'Why are you here?'

"I'm here to get you out." Gloria had lost quite some weight, and she looked at Rachel with a trace of hostility in her eyes. "You probably don't know this yet, but the trial has been canceled."

Rachel was stunned upon hearing her words. 'That can't be possible!'

How could the trial be canceled with so much evidence being present? Janice is there, and I'll testify in court, she thought to herself.

"There isn't enough evidence, and Justin has nothing to do with Hans' death. You have wronged him."

Rachel popped up from her chair and glared at Gloria. She was filled with anger, but she couldn't find an outlet for it.

Gloria, who couldn't understand sign language, looked at her with sympathy. "It doesn't matter if you believe it or not, but I am confident that Justin isn't such a person. He has nothing to do with this. Did you know he had to get seven stitches on his head after you hit him? How could you really have the heart to do that?"

Rachel clenched her fists tightly, not believing a word of what Gloria said.

"You don't believe me, do you? Let me take you somewhere!" Gloria said before she picked up her handbag and stepped outside. Then, she urged snappishly, "Aren't you leaving yet? You've been released on bail!"

Rachel followed Gloria to the western outskirts of the city. The scene had been cleared up; Gloria didn't tell her about it, but Rachel knew what this place was. The chalk marks were still on the ground, allowing one to see a vague human-shaped outline. Upon seeing this, Rachel slowly turned pale.

“On the day Hans was killed, Justin was with me the whole time, so I can testify that he had done nothing.”

Rachel slowly knelt down on the soil, her fine hands touching the withered grass on the ground. Her lips trembled as the jumbled scenes of Hans being killed flashed across her mind. The words ‘He had his throat slit’ as mentioned by Janice kept reverberating in her head. I don’t believe it!

Gloria and Justin are in the same boat, so she will definitely shield him no matter what he does, she thought to herself.

“All right, you won’t believe what I say, but you will probably believe what your friend says, won’t you?”

A stunned Rachel looked up to see Janice standing behind Gloria-she had arrived before Rachel realized it.

Gloria got back into her car and waited, watching from afar as Janice squatted down, touched the withered grass on the ground as Rachel did, and sat down casually on the ground. “The police have collected all evidence. Hans’ cell phone records showed a call from an unfamiliar number that couldn’t be traced. He lost contact with me after answering that phone call, and this isn’t the primary crime scene.”

Rachel was stunned. Well, where was it?

‘It was at the municipal hospital’s parking lot!

## Chapter 112

Janice showed Rachel a video. “This is the surveillance footage of the municipal hospital’s parking lot. Hans had just been discharged from the hospital that day, and I was about to pick him up. But for some reason, he left the inpatient department alone and was caught up from behind by two men.”

Rachel could see the scenes in the video very clearly. Two men dressed in black caught up to Hans from behind and dragged him into a van, leaving only a wheelchair in the parking lot. He didn’t even have the

opportunity to call for help, nor could he run away in time. At the sight of the scene, Rachel felt very suffocated; she felt out of breath with a lump in her throat. How hopeless he must've felt at that time!

"These two men are fugitives with a criminal record. For now, the investigation shows no connection with

Justin. The police suspect that Hans was killed because he saw something that shouldn't be seen." Janice put away her cell phone. "A smuggling transaction, perhaps."

Rachel couldn't breathe as she placed her hands on the ground. Even if Justin wasn't the one who did it, such a thing would never have happened if he didn't break Hans' leg.

After Janice left, Rachel went back to the city in Gloria's car. Since she could no longer stay at the Burton Residence, Gloria took her to her apartment. "You can stay here first for the time being. Few people know about this, so it'll be over once you compose yourself and apologize to him as soon as possible. After that, just go to work as you're supposed to. Life goes on, anyway."

Rachel's face was pale as she gripped the sofa cushion. Do I have to apologize to him? She laughed. Why should she apologize to a madman who had deliberately hurt people?

Gloria darted a look at her. "I understand how you feel right now..." she said. At first, she wanted to say something, but she ultimately bit back the words on the tip of her tongue. "Never mind. Just get a good

rest first."

The door slammed shut with a loud bang, and the house fell silent.

After placing her hand on the sofa to support herself, Rachel got up and looked around her. The apartment Justin had arranged for Gloria was a duplex in an upscale neighborhood complete with a neighborhood security system and property management services. It was furnished extravagantly, which showed how important Gloria was to him.

Rachel felt for the liquor cabinet and took out two bottles of wine. Then, she staggered to push the bathroom door open, filled the bathtub with cold water, and soaked herself in it. The liquor gave a burning sensation as it flowed down her throat, but her body was as cold as ice.

No one knew how much time had passed when the sound of the door being opened was heard outside. By then, Rachel had drunk herself unconscious. When the man pushed the bathroom door open and saw the bathtub filled with red water, his expression changed at once. "Rachel!" A pair of large hands immediately lifted her out of the bathtub. Her clothes were soaked through, but there were no wounds on her body. Only then did Justin notice the red wine bottle in the bathtub.

At that moment, Justin's anger instantly got the better of him. He grabbed Rachel's collar fiercely and bellowed, "Do you want to die? Are you sulking here for someone to see? Just slit your wrists and hang yourself if you have the guts! How dare you threaten to kill yourself for another man's sake? Have you forgotten who you are?"

Rachel looked drunkenly at the man before her eyes. Since she no longer had the strength to push him away,

she laughed maniacally. Isn't this what you want to see? Hans is dead. Isn't this what you want to see?

"How many times do I have to repeat that I have nothing to do with his death? If you really have the proof, go out and sue me right now! Sue me!"

Rachel felt nothing but desolation when she heard how confident and righteous Justin sounded. She thought to herself, Such is the world that we live in. It overflows with material desires, and whoever is rich climbs to the top by stepping on countless dead bodies under their feet. Justin is no different from Jefferey since both of them are murderers.

Seeing how she had made a mess of herself, Justin flew into a rage and slammed her head into the bathtub. "The way I see it, you really are out of your mind. You need to sober up!"

Rachel's mouth and nose were filled with alcohol-flavored water as the sound of churning water resounded in her ears. When Justin's large hand grabbed her by the hair and lifted her head up, she leaned against the bathtub and coughed non-stop. She had become much more sober, and she coughed

until her eyes turned red. Then, she stared at Justin so hard that her eyes were bulging out of their sockets. I want a divorce!

Who cares if I'm sober? I hate him; the more sober I am, the more I hate him! she thought to herself.

Justin's face darkened completely when he realized what Rachel meant. "You really are clueless about ordinary people's sufferings after living a life of comfort for such a long time. Do you think I'll let you off if you pretend that you want to kill yourself? You want to ask for a divorce, riht?" He grabbed her wrist and moved his fiendish-looking face close to hers. Then, as he looked down at her, he uttered word by word, "All right, I'll give you a chance! I'll let you off if you do this. Change your clothes and go out with me!"

Justin took Rachel to a well-known clubhouse in Riverdale. As soon as they arrived, a heavily made-up middle-aged woman took Rachel to the dressing room to change her clothes without the need for his instructions.

Moments later, Rachel was dressed in a black lace slip dress, and the strong perfume she had on almost suffocated her. Meanwhile, Frankie looked nervous as he stood outside the dressing room. "Who will you arrange for her to serve later, Miss Rosaline?"

Rosaline glanced at him perplexedly with a cigar dangling from her lips. "Since when have you started paying attention to these things, Mr. Beckham? Don't worry, someone brought here by President Burton himself mustn't be an ordinary person, so she'll be presented to the Burton Group's important clients, of course."

"To tell you the truth, she is," Frankie began, but Rachel opened the door and came out before he could finish his sentence. "Well, you look really demure." Rosaline immediately went up and grabbed her. "You're lucky, my lady. Mr. Wayne likes pretty and innocent-looking ladies like you."

Mr. Wayne? Frankie's expression changed. Just then, an attendant's voice sounded from behind. "President Burton is looking for you, Mr. Beckham."

While Frankie was distracted, Rosaline had already taken Rachel away. When he saw what was going on, he became incredibly anxious. How is this allowed at all? Rachel is President Burton's wife! How can she...



The moment Rachel stepped into the room and saw the unbearably vulgar furnishings, the purple waterbed, and the tools, she immediately realized what she was about to face. Her pupils dilated, and she turned around in an attempt to run.

“Hey, where are you going?” Rosaline glared at her. “You don’t know the rules, do you? Is this your first time?”

Rachel shook her head desperately, wanting to explain that she wasn’t that kind of person.

“I don’t understand what you’re gesturing about.” Rosaline flung Rachel onto the bed with a frosty face. “No one can get out of my place after entering through the door. Just behave yourself and wait. I’ll teach you a good lesson if you irritate the guest!”

The door closed with a bang. Soon after that, a man came in. Despite his short stature, he was very fat, and his greasy face was all meat. The instant he saw Rachel, his eyes lit up. “The woman Rosaline has arranged this time is not bad. You look like a high-class woman! Why haven’t seen you before?”

Rachel cowered at once; her limbs went cold the instant she looked around the room and saw the blindfolds and the whips hung on the wall. She shook her head. I’m not

“What’s wrong?” The man took a whip off the wall and stepped toward her with a lewd smile on his face. “Will you get undressed yourself, or do you want me to undress you?”

Rachel clutched the clothes on her chest and backed away helplessly. Don’t do this... However, the instant the

man waved his whip and jumped on her, she fell into despair with hopelessness in her eyes.

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Rachel backed away in horror, but she was grabbed by the leg and dragged out of bed. It hurt when she knocked the back of her head against the edge of the bed, but before she could let out a cry, the fat man

reached his hand out and ripped the strap of her dress in two. Then, a storm of lashes rained on her like crazy

“Aaaah!” She couldn’t dodge the lashes in time, but her muffled and hoarse cries of pain filled the man with great sensual pleasure. His greasy face was glowing all over as he became more and more excited, and he impatiently reached for Rachel’s chest.

Just then, the door was kicked open with a loud bang. Mr. Wayne was startled by this as he shuddered and paused what he was doing. “Who the f\*ck=” Before he could look back, everything suddenly went black before his eyes. Someone had quickly covered his head from behind with a piece of black cloth and held him down in a corner. As he was being beaten up, he screamed repeatedly.

Meanwhile, Rachel cowered beside the bed. She looked like a rag doll; her hair was disheveled, and her clothes were in tatters. At the sight of the scene, Frankie turned pale. He hurriedly took off his suit jacket and covered her body with it.

Then, the sound of someone’s slow footsteps came from the door. Upon taking the hint from the frosty look in the man’s eyes, Frankie immediately made a gesture to the security guards and signaled them to drag Mr. Wayne-who was still screaming and moaning inside the bag-out of the room.

The door closed again with a click, and Rachel lay prostrate at Justin’s feet, her whole body trembling. I know I’ve done something wrong.

Don’t do this...

As he looked down at the woman before him, Justin’s eyes were as cold as a block of ice. He squatted down and lifted her delicate, pretty face in a subtle and gentle manner. “It’s good that you’re aware of

your mistakes. Remember what you felt today, once you leave the Burton Family, you’ll become a nobody who can be trampled on by anyone.”

Rachel shivered as she grinded her teeth. Why? Why me? Justin still had numerous choices even without her. Why would he insist on torturing her like this? Why wouldn’t he let her off?

“That’s because you’re Rachel Hudson. You’re a daughter from the Hudson Family on paper, but in reality, you have no one at your back. Compared to Amber, you’re easier to manipulate. Besides, even if you die at the Burton Residence one day, do you think anyone would ask me anything about it?” Justin’s words reached Rachel’s ears one after another, jabbing at her every nerve like thorns.

Meanwhile, Rachel’s limbs were as cold as ice as she was plunged into the depths of despair.

Justin stared at her face and studied it for a moment. Then, he let go of her and turned around before saying, “I’ll give you a night to compose yourself. Go to work on time tomorrow morning.” After that, he left without looking back.

Rachel placed her hands on the floor to support her trembling body. She tried hard to clench her hands as if to grab something, but all she could grasp in her hand was nothing but a handful of air. It’s my fault for overestimating the meaning of my existence and underestimating how cruel Justin can be. I got Hans killed by thinking too highly of myself. Since she felt extremely dirty all over, Rachel kept rubbing the areas on her shoulders where the man had touched her. As she recalled what had happened just now, she felt a surge of gastric juices from her stomach. “Ugh...” After placing her hands on the floor, she puked her guts out like crazy.

Meanwhile, Frankie straightened up when Justin walked out of the private room. “How should we deal with Mr. Wayne, President Burton?”

“Beat him up, sever his tendons, and leave him in the suburbs. Make sure to leave no trace behind.”

“I got it. By the way, Miss Hochmann just called to ask your whereabouts. She seems to have something urgent to talk to you about.”

Justin took a look at his cell phone and noticed several missed calls from Gloria. After pondering for a moment, he then replied, “Stay here and send her home later.”

“Yes, President Burton.” Frankie sighed as he looked at Justin’s receding figure. I simply can’t understand what’s going on in his mind, he thought to himself.

Gloria looked anxious as soon as Justin arrived at her apartment. "Why are you so late? Miss Rachel is missing! She was still here when I left. Could something have happened to her? Should we call the police?"

"She's fine."

Gloria was stunned. "Did you take her away?"

Justin nodded slightly. Then, he let go of Gloria's hand, went to the sofa, and sat down. "Do you have any liquor?"

Gloria silently curled up her fingers. As she looked at the man from behind, a hurt look suddenly flashed across her eyes. "Yes, I do."

Later on, Frankie sent Rachel back to the Burton Residence. When Sue saw her, she looked like she had seen a ghost. "It appears that you still know how to return, eh? Your husband was injured, yet you went back to your parents' home for more than half a month. Since your parents' home is so good, you might as well not come back at all."

Rachel went straight upstairs without explaining a single thing.

Sue still wanted to say something else, but Frankie stopped her. "Please don't mind that, Madam. Mrs. Burton is tired after helping President Burton deal with some work-related matters."

"Work-related matters?" Sue rolled her eyes. "She made a career for herself only by depending on Justin, and now she's putting on airs with me. She'll regret it one day."

Frankie smiled in embarrassment. "Please have an early rest. I'll be leaving first."

"Wait a minute! Why hasn't Justin come back yet?"

"President Burton has gone to Miss Hochmann's place."

Sue was startled. Then, she asked with a frown, "Just who is this Miss Hochmann? Justin cares so much about her."

Frankie shook his head to show that he had no idea about it.

"Do you really have no idea about it, or do you not want to tell me about it?"

"I really have no idea about it. In any case, she is probably someone important to President Burton," Frankie replied with an indifferent expression. After excusing himself, he promptly left.

When she heard the sound of the door being closed upstairs, Sue snorted coldly and sat down sulkily on the sofa with a shawl draped around her shoulders. "I haven't even gotten rid of the mute, yet there's already another lady popping out. Why weren't there so many issues before this?"

Mrs. Duncan came over with a cup of tea. "I don't think you should be worried, Madam. Miss Hochmann looks young, and it's said that she's still a college student."

"That's what I'm curious about. How did a little girl who's just starting college get to know Justin? Furthermore, he's so protective of her that he even allows her to mess around with the company's

affairs." Sue pondered for a moment. "No, this won't do. Mrs. Duncan, have someone check this little girl's background. I can't help but feel worried."

"Yes, Madam."

Justin didn't come back that night. The next day, Rachel went to work early as she didn't dare to disobey him. As soon as she arrived at the office, she heard the door opening behind her before she sat down. Gloria waved the paper bag in her hand and said, "I bought some breakfast, and I bought one for you while I was at it."

'Thanks!

Gloria put down the breakfast, but she had no intention of leaving. "Hey, do you have any books about sign language? Why don't you lend me one or two?"

Rachel was dumbfounded as she didn't understand what Gloria's words meant.

"Well, I can't keep talking to myself all the time. It's tricky to communicate with you," Gloria explained. Then, before Rachel could respond, she suddenly changed the subject and said, "I'll be reporting back to college at the end of this month. By that time, you'll be the only person left by Justin's side. You must be happy, right?"

Rachel knitted her brows, and her eyes darkened. 'Do you think I should be happy to be coerced into living a life worse than death in such a prison-like place?' Gloria was like a flower that Justin kept in a greenhouse all the time. Since she had never experienced pain, she thought that what she wanted was also what others wanted. In reality, one man's meat was another man's poison.

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"That's not what I mean." Gloria's childish stubbornness was written all over her face. "Never mind, I can't explain it clearly to you anyway. In short, Justin isn't as devoid of human feelings as you perceive him to be. He cares about you a lot, you know."

Does he really care about me? All of a sudden, Rachel felt like laughing.

When she saw how unmoved Rachel was, Gloria felt annoyed. "How could you be so ignorant of what is good

for you? I have made myself so clear to you, yet you don't even understand a word of what I have said. Anyway, I'll stop being nice to you if you dare to hit him again!" she warned. Then, she picked up the breakfast bag from the table and lamented, "I must be out of my mind to have bought breakfast for you!"

With that, the office door slammed shut with a loud bang. Rachel could see clearly through the blinds how Gloria threw the breakfast she had initially bought for her into the trash can before leaving

exasperatedly. She took a deep breath, swept the discarded documents on the table aside, and sat down.

Meanwhile, Gloria went back into Justin's office in a huff. Then, she plonked herself down on the sofa and gulped down a glass of water. "What's the matter? You look so mad." Justin's voice came from behind the computer.

"I was bitten by a dog." Gloria replied in a petty manner. "I seriously don't understand your taste for women. The ladies around you are weirder than one another."

Justin looked at Gloria in bafflement and was about to say something, but Frankie knocked on the door and came in just then. "President Burton, the human resources department needs you to sign this letter of appointment. Amber Hudson can come to work from tomorrow onward."

"Give it to me."

"What?" Gloria sprang up from the sofa. "Amber is coming to work at the Burton Group? Why didn't I know about this?"

Justin replied impassively, "You never liked to concern yourself with work-related matters in the first place."

"Isn't she working at the hospital?"

"The Burton Group's research team is short of hands, so I asked her to come."

"That won't do." Gloria hurriedly ran over to Justin and held his hand. "You mustn't sign the letter."

"Why not?"

"I don't like her," Gloria replied with a frown. "She's obviously a vain woman. Don't you feel sick to your stomach with her around you every day?" Despite her limited contact with Amber, Gloria disliked her very much.

Justin let go of her hand and said seriously, "This is about work, Gloria. Be a good girl."

"Even I can tell that Amber has evil designs on you. If you let her work at the Burton Group, she and Miss Rachel will meet frequently. Don't you care about what Miss Rachel might think?"

However, Justin's eyes darkened at Gloria's words. "What if I tell you it was Rachel's suggestion to let Amber come and work at the Burton Group?"

Gloria was stunned. How could that be possible?

After letting go of Gloria's hand, Justin quickly signed the appointment letter. Meanwhile, Frankie hurriedly took to his heels with the document to stay out of trouble. Justin said, "Gloria, you just need to

stay happy. These matters are none of your concern."

The woman looked at Justin while forcing a wry smile on her radiant and beautiful face. For some reason, she couldn't help feeling that she had made a wrong decision by giving up piano and coming to Riverdale to

further her studies. It wasn't until she was here that she realized that Justin's world was much more complicated than she had imagined, and it seemed that her life was no longer as happy as it used to be.

In the afternoon, Rachel went to Justin's office before clocking out. This is some financial information about Hudson Pharmaceuticals. Since five years ago, huge amounts of money have been transferred into a secret offshore account in batches every year.

Justin leafed through the documents, but he didn't have quite the patience to continue reading them. "Does Jefferey have a trusted confidant who lives abroad?"



Rachel shook her head. As far as she knew, there wasn't such a person.

Justin explained, "It's almost impossible to have these sums of money transferred to an offshore account unless someone is managing the money overseas."

There's one possibility

Justin and Rachel looked at each other as a name crossed their minds. When it came to a trusted person, no one could be more trustworthy than Jefferey's own daughter. "I'll ask Amber out for dinner this evening," Justin said.

Okay. Rachel gathered up the documents and put them into her handbag. If there's nothing else, I'm clocking off first. I'm going to visit Grandma.

Justin didn't even realize that his brows had furrowed in sullenness when he saw how apathetic Rachel looked. However, the latter noticed something and looked at him calmly. If you don't agree to it, I can go home right now.

Justin's eyes darkened at once. "Are you telling me to make a choice or teaching me how to do things?"

Rachel remained silent. She was doing everything Justin told her to; now that Hans was dead, she had nothing to be afraid of except her grandmother.

Justin shot her a cold glance. Then, he left first with his cell phone in tow.

The office became empty in an instant, and a cold wind blew through the window, causing Rachel to shiver with cold before she clutched the collar of her suit jacket. On her way to visit Nancy, she drove to Old Street to buy some of her grandmother's favorite old-time snacks for her. This street, which was about to be demolished, was the only place in Riverdale that still made these traditional snacks. After everything was packed up, she walked out of the shop with the snacks in her hands. When she looked up and saw the sign of the tailor's shop across the street, the scene of her talking and joking with Hans and Janice suddenly flashed across her mind, and her heart ached terribly at once.

“Rachel?”

Rachel thought it was an illusion when the familiar voice came from behind. Then, a figure emerged from a corner in an alley. Sporting neatly-cut short hair, the person looked her up and down with a pair of deep eyes. “Why are you here?”

Rachel waved the bag of snacks in her hand.

There was a trace of disappointment in Janice’s eyes when she realized why Rachel was here. “Are these for your grandmother?”

Rachel nodded. It was entirely through Hans that she got to know Janice. Now that Hans was dead and she was the person who caused it, her relationship with Janice became strained. They used to be friends who hit it off right from the start, but now, they could only look at each other in silence, and it made both of them feel awkward.

Janice eventually said, “I’m still investigating Hans’ death. I’ll seek justice for him. Justin didn’t do anything to you, did he?”

No, he didn’t.

“That’s right.” Janice sneered coldly. “He didn’t hold you accountable even after you hit him, so why should I be worried about you? Hans came to such a tragic end because he was so worried about you.”

Rachel was rendered speechless. Her mind was in turmoil, but she couldn’t say a word to refute Janice.

They then went their own separate ways. As Rachel looked at Janice from behind, she suddenly put her snacks on the roof of her car and went after her. Wait a minute. She tugged at Janice’s sleeve. I have something to tell you.

Janice cast an inquiring glance at Rachel with a frown.

I suspect that Jefferey wants to transfer Hudson Pharmaceuticals' assets. He's preparing to short-sell the company, leave it a shell of itself, and then move his entire family out of Riverdale. He might even leave the country

Janice's pupils shrank. "How did you come to such a conclusion?"

I'm certain there's something wrong with Hudson Pharmaceuticals' trademark prescription. The company has been sustaining itself using fake prescriptions, but medicinal product regulations have become increasingly strict over the past few years, and accidents have happened more frequently. I suspect that the agent you talked about had been killed because he discovered something off.

## Chapter 115

"Is this why you quit your former job and went to work at the Burton Group?" Janice looked at Rachel. "Did Justin ask you to look into it?"

Rachel averted her eyes in the face of Janice's questioning. I have something else to attend to, so I'll be leaving first.

"Hey!" Since she was unable to stop Rachel, Janice could only watch as her car drove off into the distance.

When Rachel reached Nancy's place, she pressed the doorbell several times, but nobody answered the door. Just then, the door of the opposite house suddenly opened, and a middle-aged woman poked her head out. "Are you Madam Tiller's granddaughter?" She looked Rachel up and down with a look of puzzlement. "Madam Tiller has been sent to the hospital. Don't you know that?"

Immediately, Rachel's expression changed upon hearing the woman's words.

When Rachel arrived at Tran-Q's emergency department in a hurry, she nearly bumped into a nurse holding some medicine. She gesticulated at the medical staff at the nurses' station for a long time, but no one understood what she meant.

Just then, a familiar male voice sounded from behind. "Rachel?"

Hi, Julian. Rachel turned around to see Julian. After she explained the situation to him, Julian asked the staff at the nurses' station. Upon learning that Nancy was receiving emergency treatment, he hurriedly took Rachel there.

"Hi, Madam Tiller."

"Hey." Nancy, who was lying on the sickbed, was startled for a moment when she saw Julian and Rachel. "Why are you here, Rachel?"

Rachel's eyes were red with worry. How are you, Grandma?

"Oh, I'm fine. I just took a tumble and grazed my skin; it will heal once I go home and apply some cream to it. But Victor was worried, and he insisted on sending me to the hospital."

Rachel followed Nancy's gaze and saw the young man standing nearby. It's you?

The young man's blond hair was particularly obtrusive in the white-painted emergency department. Isn't he the young man who had a fit of epilepsy in the neighborhood that day? Rachel thought to herself.

At the sight of Rachel, the young man scratched his head with a look of embarrassment. He explained awkwardly. "Madam Tiller is old, and I was worried that it would be bad if she had a sprain or bone fracture, so I brought her here. I have probably overreacted."

Rachel shook her head. Thank you.

After that, Nancy took Rachel's hand. "I have to thank Victor for helping me catch the thief. Didn't you say that you were coming over for dinner? I thought of going out to buy some fish, and I ended up having my handbag snatched. I went after the thief, but I fell while doing so."

How could you go after a thief at such an old age? You shouldn't have done that. Rachel was exasperated. What should I do if anything happens to you?

Julian comforted her at one side by saying, "It's fine as long as Madam Tiller is okay. I have asked the doctor who applied medicine to her wound-it's only a superficial wound, so she doesn't need to be hospitalized."

Only then did Rachel breathe a sigh of relief. Still, her heart ached a lot when she saw the gauze bandage on

Nancy's knee.

Victor then carried Nancy piggyback to Rachel's car, whereas Julian went out after them and handed the medicine to Rachel. "The dosage and directions for use have been written inside. I'll find time to visit Madam

Tiller over the next few days, so you don't have to be too worried."

Thank you.

"Don't mention it." Julian took a glance at Rachel's car. Then, he asked with a frown, "Do you know that young man?"

I guess so. We met once before.

"One should always be mindful of guarding against harm from others, Rachel. This young man seems-"

I know that. I'll ask about it. Rachel also felt strange as Nancy seemed to be quite familiar with this young man. Besides, she felt somewhat disturbed upon recalling how he had previously stalked her in the neighborhood.

Following that, Rachel drove Nancy back to the latter's place. After opening the door, she pointed toward the bedroom and signaled for the young man to help her grandmother inside. Please get some rest first, Grandma. I'll go and prepare dinner.

“Oh, sure. Why don’t you stay for dinner as well, Victor? I have to thank you for what happened today.”

Victor immediately waved his hand, but Rachel nodded. I got it.

After leaving Nancy’s bedroom, Rachel poured the young man a cup of tea. Then, she keyed in a sentence on her phone’s screen and showed it to him. Thank you for what happened today!

The young man immediately shook his head. “It’s nothing-that’s what I should do. You saved my life before, and this is nothing compared to it. By the way...” He produced an envelope from his pocket. “This is for you.”

Rachel took the envelope and opened it to see a stack of banknotes contained inside. It was a thick stack consisting of banknotes in small denominations, including banknotes of 100, 50, 20, and even five bucks. Victor then explained, “This is for covering my medical expenses last time. I haven’t collected enough money yet, so I can only give you this much for the time being. I’ll work to return the rest of the money to you bit by

bit.”

Rachel was startled for a moment before she pushed the envelope back to him. ‘It’s not necessary.’

“No, you have to keep it,” the young man said stubbornly. “I never owe anyone favors.”

Rachel had no choice but to drop the subject for the time being. So you’ve been helping Grandma by her side these days?’ She had heard from Nancy several times that a young man often helped her around and scrambled to help with all the dirty and heavy work. At first, Rachel thought the young man was a volunteer serving the elderly in the community.

The young man nodded his head somewhat uneasily.

‘You were stalking me last time, weren’t you?’

Seeing what Rachel's gestures meant, the young man suddenly turned pale. He looked like he wanted to explain, but he didn't know where to start.

Rachel studied him closely for a long time and was helpless when she noticed that he was sweating profusely. 'What's your name?'

Only then did the young man come to his senses and suddenly stand up as straight as a ramrod. "I'm Victor Wade; it's spelled as V-I-C-T-O-R. You may call me Victor."

Rachel nodded. 'It's not a big deal, so you don't have to overthink it. Since you've paid the money back to me, you no longer owe me anything.' When she noticed that Victor's expression was still somewhat strained, she offered him to stay. 'Please stay around for dinner later!'

Only then did Victor's expression ease, and he immediately helped to carry the vegetables into the kitchen. "I'll help you. Usually, I'm the one helping Madam Tiller to pluck the vegetables. According to your grandmother, the vegetables I pluck are very clean."

Rachel smiled and nodded.

Victor appeared to be in his early twenties. Normally, a person at his age should still be a student, but he seemed to have entered the workforce for a while.

Later on, Rachel left after having dinner with Nancy. She asked Victor, 'Where do you live? I'll drive you home!'

"It's not necessary." Victor immediately shook his head. "I live nearby, so I'll go home on foot. Please go ahead with your affairs."

Seeing how fast Victor had run away, Rachel failed to stop him, and her outstretched hand froze mid-air for a long time before she retracted it. She then drove her car around the neighborhood. When she saw from a distance that Victor had gotten on a bus, she followed him. Julian is right; one should always be mindful of guarding against harm from others, she thought to herself.

The night was dark, and Rachel drove for half an hour and waited until Victor got off the bus at the stop before the final stop. When she looked at her surroundings, she was surprised to find herself in the old district. The tailor's shop owned by Janice's family was nearby, and she had been there in the

afternoon. The walls around her were marked with the words 'To be demolished.' Furthermore, Victor lived in a remote valley with low houses.

Since Rachel couldn't drive her car into the alley, she could only get out of the car and follow him at a distance. After tailing him for a while, she suddenly lost sight of him.

"Have you been following me?" A male voice was heard from the darkness behind.

#### Chapter 116

Rachel's heart tightened, and she instantly pressed her back against the wall.

Victor emerged from the shadows. Just then, an aged voice suddenly came from inside the alley. "Victor, is that you?"

Before Rachel could come to her senses, Victor had walked up to the person. "Why are you coming out by yourself, Grandma? How many times have I told you that it's hard to see things clearly at night? What if you trip and fall again when you come out?"

Rachel followed the voices with her gaze and saw the innermost small house. The house was dimly lit, and an old woman was standing tremblingly at its door, supporting herself with a walking stick. Meanwhile, Victor addressed her as his grandmother.

The small house was in a dilapidated condition. It was in disrepair for years, and its walls were mottled; there wasn't even a decent chair in the house. Victor pushed the clothes away from a corner on the sofa before taking off his jacket and spreading it over the surface. "I hope you won't frown upon this, Miss Hudson. Please have a seat."

Rachel looked at the old woman who was bustling around in the house.



Victor explained, "My Grandma is old, so she can neither see nor hear well. But for some reason, she can hear my voice."

'Are you and your Grandma the only ones in your family?'

"Yeah, I have lived with Grandma since I was a child."

Rachel couldn't bear to listen to such words. After all, she and Nancy had also depended on each other for

survival as she grew up.

Just then, Victor's grandmother's voice came from the room inside. "Victor, come and look for the tea caddy. We should pour a cup of tea for our visitor!"

Victor hurriedly went into the room. "Don't trouble yourself with that, Grandma. We don't have tea in the house..."

"I recall having some tea around the house, though. How could we let the visitor leave without having something to drink?"

With some difficulty, Victor finally managed to coax his grandmother out of bustling around. He lifted the curtains, came out, and was about to talk to Rachel, only to discover that she had already left with the envelope placed on a corner of the old and shabby table. He was startled by this, and he quickly grabbed the envelope before going out after her, but all Victor heard was the sound of a car engine at the entrance to the alley.

When Rachel got home, Justin hadn't come back yet. She checked the time, and it was a little past 11.00PM. A dinner wouldn't have taken such a long time, so it seemed that he must be sending Amber home. Since Rachel didn't give it much thought, she entered the kitchen and helped herself to some water.

Just then, Julian came out of his bedroom. He asked, "How is Madam Tiller?"

She's all right. She'll be fine after getting some rest at home.

"What about the young man then?"

There's nothing wrong about him either. I have helped him before, so he probably wants to return the favor, which is why he has been helping Grandma around these days.

Julian was still worried, though. "I'll help you look into his identity. This person suddenly popped up from

nowhere, after all."

Rachel shook her head. Victor and his grandmother depended on each other for survival, and he was filial to the elderly. Even if he seemed slovenly on the outside, he hadn't done anything bad, so he probably wasn't a bad guy.

When he saw that Rachel was reluctant to do so, Julian decided not to insist. "By the way, the results of the

drug analysis you asked me to do earlier have come out."

Rachel took the documents from Julian, but she was somewhat confused as she read them. She had never studied medicine and had only a smattering of herbal medicine, so she couldn't quite understand the ingredients listed in the report.

Justin explained, "These kinds of herbal medicine and healthcare products, including the pills and the oral liquids, have little effect on the human body. One might as well say that they deserve neither credit nor blame. Technically, the Food and Drug Administration should have been able to discover this."

Everything stays quiet most of the time as long as no human lives are involved.

Julian was somewhat stunned, whereas Rachel looked very calm. Hudson Pharmaceuticals had set foot in Riverdale for so many years, so it more or less had some connections in the government. Otherwise, it would have gone out of business long ago with the prescriptions Jefferey had. After all, these prescriptions were handed down from their ancestors without the dosage specified. With Julian's lab test results and the previous results from Janice's investigation, Rachel was now certain that Jefferey had been crying up wine and selling vinegar these years by selling fake medicine. The Hudson

Family's century-old clinic had six prescriptions handed down from the ancestors, but none of them ended up falling into Jefferey's hands.

As they were talking, the sound of a car engine was heard from outside. As soon as Justin came in, he saw Julian and Rachel standing together; they looked like a well-matched couple under the kitchen's bright light. He frowned for a moment, but he quickly assumed his usual expression soon afterward.

"Hi there, Justin," Julian greeted first.

"Mm-hmm," Justin responded. "Aren't you going to sleep yet?"

"Rachel asked me to test some stuff earlier, and the results happened to come out today, so I'm giving it to her."

Justin looked thoughtful as his eyes fell on Rachel's hands. Meanwhile, the woman collected the documents and gestured to him. Let's talk about it upstairs.

Justin nodded slightly.

Rachel truthfully recounted Julian's words and her own conjecture in the study.

Justin looked at the lab test reports in his hand. "I also had someone test the sleeping pills before the research and development laboratory was closed, but the results aren't out yet. This is quite thoughtful of you. However." He suddenly raised his head with darkened eyes. "Didn't you say that Jefferey doesn't have the prescriptions in his hands? What about the prescriptions you gave me?"

Rachel's heart skipped a beat, and her hand trembled, causing the lab test report in her hand to float down on her feet. I have forgotten about this, she thought to herself.

Justin stared at her coldly. "Aren't you going to explain this?"

Rachel's throat tightened. I didn't mean to lie to you. I did so at the time to stay alive.

"Then why didn't you tell the truth?"

You wouldn't have believed me. Rachel's expression was strained as she gestured carefully with her hands. 'Under the circumstances at the time, you wouldn't have believed me at all if I told you that the prescription I'd

seen had no dosage listed in them.'

Justin's originally deep and cold eyes looked stunned for a moment. He had the impression that Rachel seemed to have said many times that he wouldn't believe her, and he had indeed never done so. Whenever she came into contact with Jefferey or other men, his first response was always to think that she wanted to betray him and run away from him. "Just forget it. I hope that you won't hide anything from me anymore."

Rachel breathed a sigh of relief. I need to clock out earlier for the next few days. May I do that?

"What's the matter?"

Grandma has hurt herself a little, so I need to go to her place every day to look after her.

Justin nodded. "Okay."

Also, I saved a kid several days ago when he had an epileptic fit. He has been taking care of Grandma lately, so if you're worried, you can have someone check him out.

“Why are you telling me this?”

He’s only in his twenties, and he lives with his grandmother in poor conditions as they depend on each other for survival. Earlier today, I followed him to his place to take a look. His grandmother can only

sink or swim by herself without him. Rachel gestured expressionlessly like a machine devoid of feeling.

Justin felt irritated for no reason. He chided, “Am I a person who kills people indiscriminately as I please in your eyes?”

Rachel kept a straight face. That isn’t what I mean. I’m just telling you these things in advance to avoid any unnecessary misunderstandings. Now that Hans had died, she couldn’t let any innocent people get hurt because of her anymore.

“Is that so?” Justin stared at her coldly. “Why do I feel that you’re making a stand against me, though? You’re provoking me in such a way!”

## Chapter 117

Rachel clenched her fists, but her eyes looked as calm as a deep pool of stagnant water.

“Are you so unwilling to stay by my side?” Justin recalled the night of their wedding when he first saw her. At the time, she looked so weak and serene with a pair of innocent and kind eyes. However, his extreme hatred for the Hudsons was so tangled up with his pity for her that it ultimately gave rise to a desire to imprison her by his side forever.

Meanwhile, Rachel clenched her fists without uttering a sound. Hans’ death was something she could never get over. Even if Justin didn’t kill him, he had indirectly caused his death by breaking his leg. Therefore, she couldn’t forgive the man before her. Of course, perhaps he didn’t need her forgiveness at all.

“Get out.”

As soon as the two words were uttered, Rachel turned around and left without hesitation.

The sound of the door being closed reverberated in the study. After several flicks of the lighter, smoke curled upward behind the desk, blurring the man's stony and gloomy face as he knitted his brows tightly for a moment.

A week later, a batch of drugs sold overseas by Hudson Pharmaceuticals was inspected at the aviation transportation center, and it revealed serious issues regarding the drugs' quality. This incident was instantly publicized in the news media, causing a public uproar. As a result, a large number of agents gathered at the entrance of Hudson Pharmaceuticals and condemned the company, demanding refunds and payments of liquidated damages.

"You must help me this time, Rachel! If Justin doesn't help us, Hudson Pharmaceuticals will be finished once these agents make trouble!"

However, Rachel remained calm and composed as she poured a cup of tea and handed it to Jefferey. Don't worry. No one wants such a thing to happen. Don't you know someone in the Food and Drug Administration very well?

"When someone falls from power, those beneath him tend to run away. Who would dare to help me right now if the public outcry isn't dealt with? What's lacking isn't people, but money!" Jefferey was so anxious that he broke out in a cold sweat. After all, the situation this time was much more serious than the previous one. "Rachel, you're now Hudson Pharmaceuticals' major shareholder, so you're both responsible and obligated to help solve this. Otherwise, this won't do you any good either!"

Are you threatening me?

Jefferey's face froze at her question. "T-That's not what I'm saying."

Rachel turned around and took a document out of the cabinet.

"What is this?"

The solution to the problem. I thought about it as soon as the incident broke out. Now, it depends on whether you're willing to do so.

Jefferey's face gradually hardened as he opened the document and turned a few pages. "Do you want me to cede the land in the southern Suburbs of Riverdale? Is this what you want or what Justin wants?"

I don't have the capability to ask Justin for help without you having to sacrifice anything. Rachel responded with a cold expression. By the way, isn't Amber working at the Burton Group as well? If you think I can't help you, you can ask her instead. Perhaps she can persuade Justin better than I can.

Jefferey's face darkened. Would he have to go so far as to come here and ask for Rachel's help if Amber could really persuade Justin? Justin is obviously coaxing her by spending money to buy her

some presents, but she can't see through this herself, he thought to himself. "I'll take it back and think about it."

All right then, goodbye and take care. Rachel rang the bell at hand. Soon after that, her secretary opened the

door and came in to escort Jefferey out of the office.

After Jefferey left, Rachel sat down with a text message from Justin displayed on her phone's screen. It read, 'Has he agreed to it?'

'Not yet, but I think he'll agree to it.

'Add fuel to the fire then.'

Rachel slowly clutched her cell phone as she read the text message.

On Friday, Hudson Pharmaceuticals' share price plummeted before the stock market was closed for the day, the company's stocks even hit rock bottom once.

At the Hudson Residence, Jefferey threw the contract onto the table. "They're forcing me to sign my own death warrant!"

Amber quickly advised by saying, "Take a sip of tea and calm down, Dad. I told you long ago that Rachel is unreliable. Right now, she can do anything just to please Justin."

"That b\*tch is living off me while secretly helping someone else!" When Jefferey recalled how Rachel had climbed her way up to her current position and how he had to do things according to her likes and dislikes these days, he felt that he had been tricked. He was so angry that he could hardly breathe.

"Don't worry, Dad. I'll definitely find a way to kick Rachel out of the Burton Group."

"I don't need you." Jefferey clenched his fists with a slight twitch in the corner of his eyes and his aged face covered with lines. "It's time to let her know that it's not that easy to stay by Justin's side."

"What do you want to do, Dad?"

Jefferey made a phone call. "Jeremy, have someone go to Somerset Mountain and pick up a person for me."

After signing the land transfer agreement with Jefferey, Justin and Rachel came to the southern Suburbs of Riverdale together. Frankie pointed at a piece of land in the distance and said, "According to the development plan, a hot spring resort is to be built on that site. However, we can reduce the area covered by the hot spring resort and build a hotel instead. Meanwhile, this large piece of land is suitable for being made into a golf course."

Justin nodded before glancing at Rachel. "What do you think?"

Rachel was startled for a moment before she answered him solemnly. I don't think that a sole golf course built here will be competitive enough with the golf course in the western suburbs. People prefer quietness nowadays, and this place is very close to the temple. As a matter of fact, we can consider integrating Buddhist elements into the project and build a secluded holiday resort.



No one knew how much time passed in the mountains as the morning bell rang and the evening drum sounded every day. Since this place was near Briscola Mountain, one could clearly hear the sound of the monks ringing the bell on the mountain.

Justin looked thoughtful upon hearing Rachel's words.

"Justin!" Just then, Gloria trotted over from a distance and held Justin's arm. She asked excitedly, "I saw some horses being raised over there. Is a horse ranch going to be built here?"

"Do you wish to have a horse ranch built here?"

"Yeah! That way, I can come over to ride horses after its completion. This place would be huge! If a horse ranch is built, it'll be the largest one in Riverdale!"

Justin shot a glance at Frankie and ordered, "Get it done."

Frankie looked at Gloria in a stunned manner before he glanced at Rachel in amazement. In the end, he bit back what he wanted to say and sighed inwardly.

On the other hand, Rachel pursed her lips with a bitter taste in her mouth. Since he had never planned to accept my suggestion in the first place, why did he even ask for my opinion? she thought to herself.

Gloria, who was unaware of their previous conversation, cheered happily when she heard that a horse ranch would be built here. "Let's go and take a look at the horses over there. It's still early, so let's ride a horse!" Then, she dragged Justin away.

Rachel stood where she was, whereas Frankie turned around and spoke to her after taking two steps. "Let's go there and take a look together, Mrs. Burton."

Okay.

“Actually, the horse ranch might not be built in the end. Building a horse ranch here is a huge investment with little profit and high risk. When a feasible plan comes out in the end, your plan would probably be more practical.”

I just mentioned it without thinking, so it has nothing to do with me. Rachel looked unperturbed as she followed the two talking and joking figures ahead of her toward the stable.

Meanwhile, Frankie caught up with her from behind. “Have you ever ridden a horse, Mrs. Burton?”

Rachel shook her head.

“In that case, I’ll choose a docile horse for you later to avoid any accidents.”

## Chapter 118

Rachel followed behind Justin and Gloria at a distance while listening as the staff member explained the horse before them. “This horse is quite small in stature, and it’s quite docile. Mrs. Burton, since you’re a novice at horse riding, you may try riding this one,” he said.

Rachel tried to touch the colt’s head. When she saw that the colt didn’t resist her, she breathed a sigh of relief. She had never ridden a horse before, but she was looking forward to it.

After everyone had chosen their own horses, the staff members in charge led the horses out of the stable. At the sight of the scene, Rachel became somewhat nervous.

“This horse is so good-looking!” Gloria’s voice came from behind. “Miss Rachel, your horse is much more good-looking than the one I chose. I’d like to swap my horse with yours.”

Rachel hesitated somewhat as she looked at the horse behind Gloria. The horse Gloria had chosen was too tall; Rachel had never ridden a horse before, so she didn’t dare to ride such a tall one.

“What are you two talking about?” Justin, who had already mounted his horse, rode over and eyed the two of them.

Gloria explained, "I like Miss Rachel's horse, so I want to swap my horse with hers, but she seems a bit reluctant."

Justin frowned. "Didn't you choose this horse yourself? Why don't you like it anymore?"

"I didn't see Miss Rachel's horse just now. Her horse is so adorable."

Rachel looked visibly troubled. However, when Justin was about to say something, she suddenly stepped aside and gestured. "I'll give you my horse then."

Gloria smiled. "Hehe, thanks! I just know that you have a big heart, Miss Rachel," she said. After finishing her sentence, she got on the horse, snatched the reins from the staff member's hand, and rode off with a squeeze of the horse's belly. Her voice could be heard in the wind as she shouted, "I'm riding off first! Hurry up and catch up with me!"

Justin straddled the horse while looking at Rachel. "If you're afraid, just choose another smaller horse."

Rachel shook her head. "It's not necessary. I'll give it a try."

"The horses in our ranch are quite good-tempered," said the staff member as he mounted her on the horse. Luckily, despite the horse's tall stature, it was quite good-tempered, and it walked slowly. With the staff member leading the horse, Rachel was no longer afraid after riding the horse for a while.

Justin didn't seem to be worried about Gloria, who was galloping her horse in the distance, as he followed behind Rachel with just the right distance between them. Rachel's long hair was swaying in the wind, and her white shirt, brown vest, and riding outfit fit her figure very well. The scene looked lively from behind as the sun slowly set in the west.

"Would you like to try riding it faster, Mrs. Burton?"

Rachel hurriedly shook her head.

“Actually, you can give it a try,” the staff member kept persuading as he pulled the reins, patted the horse, and quickened his pace.

Rachel instantly became nervous, and her back tensed up. The staff member comforted her by saying, “Relax, Mrs. Burton. The horse isn’t trotting fast.”

Rachel couldn’t speak and wanted to gesture something, but the staff member couldn’t see it since he was leading the horse at the front. At the sight of the scene, Justin immediately bellowed, “Slow down!

Who told you to lead the horse at such a quick pace?”

The staff member was so startled that he stumbled, but he didn’t manage to stop the horse in time. Rachel cried out in alarm and nearly let go of the reins in her hand. Luckily, the staff member grabbed the reins with all his might. Still, Rachel broke out in a cold sweat as she felt terrified.

“Aaaaah!” Just then, a scream was suddenly heard from a distance.

Upon being surprised by this, Rachel watched from afar while Gloria’s horse raised its hooves high, and the reins snapped in two mid-air. As Gloria failed to catch them, she fell off the horse.

“Gloria!” Justin immediately turned his horse around and hurried there.

Rachel was startled as well, and she hurriedly got off the horse before rushing over to the scene. When she arrived, Gloria was lying on the ground with a look of agony on her face, whereas Justin squatted down next to her but didn’t dare to move her carelessly. He looked back and yelled at Rachel, “What are you waiting for? Call the ambulance!”

Rachel shuddered upon being yelled at. She fumbled for her cell phone in a panic, only to recall that she had left her cell phone in the dressing room while changing her clothes there.

Meanwhile, the staff member nearby had called the ambulance. “Hello, is this the first-aid center?”

There was a first-aid station in the park. Frankie hurried over with the staff members and carried Gloria away on a stretcher, whereas Justin followed them all the way with a look of anxiety on his face that one had never seen before.

Rachel was somewhat at a loss as she stood where she was. Suddenly, she noticed from a distance that several staff members couldn't get Gloria's horse to move even after they had pulled on the reins. Instead, it kept giving backward kicks like crazy. The voice of the staff member who had led her horse

just now came from behind. "It's strange. Why is this horse so irritable today? Has it eaten something wrong?"

Rachel's heart suddenly skipped a beat. Somehow, she instinctively sensed that someone had been fixing their gaze on her the whole time. When she looked up toward the direction of that gaze, she saw what seemed like a figure disappearing from the rooftop of the park's hotel some distance away. If Gloria hadn't swapped horses with her today, she would've probably fell off the horse instead.

At Tran-Q Hospital, Justin kept waiting outside the operating room as Julian operated on Gloria himself.

When Rachel arrived, the surgery wasn't completed yet. When Justin saw her, he said, "You aren't needed here. Go home first."

Just then, the door of the operating room suddenly opened from the inside. Julian took off his face mask and came out. "She's all right, so don't worry," he said.

Justin heaved a sigh of relief.

"She broke two ribs and tore her thigh muscles, so she needs to be kept under observation in the hospital for quite some time. Isn't she said to be very good at horse riding? Why did she have such a nasty fall?"

Justin looked upset. "I shouldn't have allowed her to fool around. She wasn't very familiar with the horses in the ranch."

Suddenly, Rachel shook her head and handed Julian a packet; it was a sealed white bag that contained some particles.

Julian and Justin were both startled. "What is this?"

The horse feed from the ranch. Before Rachel left, she deliberately went to the stables and took a look. Surprisingly, the manger used to feed Gloria's horse had been emptied. Since Rachel had a weird feeling about this, she scratched the bottom of the manger while no one was noticing. Then, she packed the

particles and left.

Justin's face instantly clouded over. "Are you suspecting that this has been premeditated?"

Rachel nodded.

"Julian."

"I got it." Julian took the bag of horse feed. "I'll take this to my friend and ask him to help test this to see if there's anything wrong with it."

"Thank you."

"It's getting late, and Gloria is still under anesthesia. Why don't you two go home and rest first?"

Justin shook his head. "That's not necessary. I'll be here with her."

The startled Julian subconsciously looked at Rachel, only to see her imperturbable expression. She seemed to have become accustomed to such situations. In that case, I'll be going back first.

Justin then looked at Julian. "Haven't you gotten off duty yet, Julian? Go home with her then."

"Okay."

Justin wheeled the gurney himself as he followed behind the medical staff to the ward; it was as if his entire mind was focused on the person lying on the sickbed.

It wasn't until Justin's figure disappeared in the elevator that Rachel came to her senses. Suddenly, she felt a surge of gastric juices in her stomach, and she couldn't help but rush to the trash can before she retched into it.

"Are you okay, Rachel?" Julian's concerned voice sounded from behind.

The woman waved her hand to signal that she was fine.

Julian suddenly recalled how he had once seen her throwing up at home. His tone changed abruptly as he asked, "Does this often happen to you these days?"

## Chapter 119

After a long while of dry heaving, Rachel suddenly lifted her head at Julian's question.

Following his line of sight, she lowered her head to see her abdomen. In that instant, she zoned out as if she had just realized something.

Meanwhile, Justin was taking care of Gloria in the ward.

After getting anesthetized the night before, she finally woke up. Seeing the man that was snoozing beside her, she carefully lifted her hand and caressed his face.

Justin opened his eyes. "You're awake."

Gloria hastily withdrew her hand as she trembled and gasped.

“Don’t move, they’ve put a cast on your leg.” Justin pressed her shoulders and continued, “The doctor said that you should rest more, but don’t worry, it’s nothing serious.”

After nodding her head, she rested against the pillow and turned to Justin.

“Something was wrong with the horse I rode.”

“I know. I’ve sent my men to look into it.”

“The horse was meant to be ridden by Rachel, so whoever did it wasn’t actually targeting me.”

Upon hearing that, Justin’s eyebrows furrowed somewhat. “Are you saying that someone wants to cause Rachel harm?”

“Yes.”

After letting out a deep sigh, Gloria lifted her head and lowered it back down into a more comfortable position. “Many people hate seeing her hanging around you. Even though I haven’t been in Riverdale for long, I’ve seen numerous people who detest her, but I cannot tell who the suspect might possibly be.”

“Don’t worry, they’ll figure it out.”

After covering her with the sheets, Justin then informed, “I’ll go get the doctor.”

Just as he was about to leave, Gloria suddenly grabbed his wrist. “Justin.”

He was slightly dazed by this and asked, “What is it?”



Gloria's eyes were filled with a sense of dependence as she asked, "You will never abandon me no matter what happens, right?"

Justin's gaze was firm as he held her hand and answered, "Never."

He then continued, "Stop thinking about these things and get some rest. I'll help you to apply for a few days off from school."

"Okay." When Justin disappeared from the door, Gloria's eyes gradually dulled.

Ever since she was hospitalized, Justin rejected as many projects as he could while Rachel constantly traveled back and forth between the hospital and the Burton Group.

In the afternoon, Rachel walked out of Tran-Q with the burning sun above her head.

As she clutched the test report Julian had given to her earlier, she could feel the dizziness in her head.

"You've been pregnant for two months."

His words sounded in her ears continuously, yet she couldn't accept this reality.

As she caressed her stomach, she couldn't believe that she was bearing a new life within her-a life she and

Justin made.

What should I tell him?

Since her head was spinning with thoughts, Rachel drove around Riverdale's city center without knowing where to go, and she ultimately decided to visit her grandmother.

She had just entered the neighborhood when she saw Victor holding her grandmother as they walked around the area.

“Rachel!”

Since Victor had perfect eyesight, he spotted Rachel with one glance and waved at her.

As she held her purse, Rachel walked over to the duo. How are you, Grandma?

Grandma squatted and patted her knees. She then smiled and said, “It’s been ages since I recovered. It’s only

a scratch, so it’s nothing serious. In fact, I’ve been bored as hell these past few days!”

Still, you’ve got to take care of yourself. Old people heal slower, after all.

“I know, so you should just stop worrying.” As she spoke, she stood up and grabbed Victor with one hand and Rachel with the other. “Let’s go home. We’re making pierogi today!”

Victor immediately suggested, “In that case, I’ll go get some sauerkraut since Rachel loves to pair them with cheese.”

After he finished his sentence, he left Nancy with Rachel and rushed out of the neighborhood.

As they watched his fading figure, Grandma chuckled. “Oh, look at that child! I only mentioned it once, and he has already carved it into his brain. He’s quite an attentive boy despite being so clumsy most of the time!”

Meanwhile, Rachel smiled without saying a word.

As she helped her grandmother up the stairs, a senile man's voice was sounded from behind them.

"Nancy!"

Rachel hadn't realized it at first, and it wasn't until her grandmother halted her steps did she remember that it was her grandmother's actual name.

They saw an old man after they turned around, and he was sporting a camouflage outfit with an aged, torn, leather bag. Meanwhile, he studied them hesitantly.

Rachel was stunned for a short while, but she eventually recognized the old man as her eyes lit up.

Grandpa Irwin?

Before she was sent back to the Hudson Residence, Rachel lived together with her mother and grandmother. Grandpa Irwin was one of the people she could barely remember from back then.

Although her memory was somewhat hazy, she could remember him—he always returned with gifts like candies, books, and toys from the city.

After all, kids remembered the happy moments in their lives very clearly.

With Grandpa Irwin's presence, all the memories from her childhood surged through her mind.

In Nancy's living room, Grandpa Irwin started tearing up after finishing his third bowl of pasta. "A big flood happened in our area, and the entire house collapsed eventually. Since then, I've been living alone. After racking my brains, the only ones I thought I could depend on were you guys, but Riverdale's so big that it took me more than a month to find this place."

"More than a month?" Grandma frowned. "How did you know we were in Riverdale?"

“20 years ago, the car that sent you and Rae away came from Riverdale!”

“Like you’ve said, it’s already been 20 years. What made you so sure that we’d still be here?”

Grandpa Irwin was stunned for a bit, but he then explained, “I wasn’t sure either. Since I had no one else left, thought of just trying my luck. Honestly, if I couldn’t locate you guys, I would’ve just looked for a job here in Riverdale and live a lonely old man’s life to the end.”

Just as Nancy was about to continue asking, Rachel interrupted her.

‘Where are you living right now?’

“Rae?” Since Grandpa Irwin didn’t know about Rachel’s condition, he was stupefied by how she presented her message by typing into her phone.

Nancy explained, “The fire from 20 years ago burned her throat, and she never recovered from it.”

“How could that be? Can’t it be cured even with Riverdale’s top-notch medical standards?”

Grandpa Irwin had a look of sympathy as he continued, “Rae used to be adorable back when she was a little

girl. Why would the Gods curse you this way?”

On the other hand, Rachel ignored his words and shook her phone to indicate that he had yet to answer his question.

Upon seeing that, Grandpa Irwin answered, “I’m currently staying in an underground spot not far from here. Right, I came here because I heard that the neighborhood is looking to hire a security guard. Look at me, almost forgetting what’s important!”

As he spoke, he pulled out a piece of wrinkled paper from his pocket. "It's written here."

'Looking to hire a security guard for 2,000. Food and shelter provided.

Rachel took the paper and read it before handing it over to her grandmother.

"That is indeed our neighborhood." Nancy nodded her head. "However, security is tight around here and the owner has high expectations, so they wouldn't accept an outlander. Perhaps you should look somewhere else."

Upon hearing that, Grandpa Irwin was visibly disappointed. "Is that so?"

However, Rachel waved her hand and signed enthusiastically. 'I can recommend you to the management and discuss your rent as well as the owner's suggestions. I'm sure it'll be no problem to secure your employment here!

Suddenly, Grandma pulled her arm under the table.

As she turned to her, Rachel saw her grandmother giving her an odd look.

She failed to comprehend her grandmother's hints, and she felt rather confused.

Shouldn't she be happy to see an old friend?

## Chapter 120

Shutting the door, Nancy gripped Rachel's arm.

"Why would you find him a job?"

Rachel, however, was dazed. Grandpa Irwin is our neighbor and he is always good to me. If he were to move in, you could take care of each other! Besides, you don't know a lot of people in Riverdale, so it's a win!

Seemingly anxious, Nancy frowned and mumbled, "You don't have to worry about me."

What's wrong, Grandma?

"Irwin... However, Nancy stopped after muttering his name. "Nevermind. I'm sure it's hard for him as well, being so old and living without his children. We'll go as you wish, then. Plus, he gave us a lot of help back then."

Revealing a smile, Rachel grabbed Nancy's hand.

I know what you're worried about, Grandma. Often, those who approach us come with ill intent, but not all people are evil, are they?

Besides, seeing Grandpa Irwin today reminded me of many fond memories from my childhood.

"Really?" Nancy asked, her eyes shimmering.

Yes.

Rachel sternly nodded her head.

At the sight of Grandpa Irwin, Rachel was able to piece together many fragments of her memory, including the one when he bought her a cotton candy from town and it was her mother that opened the door for him.

"Cotton Candy for Rae! Do you like it?"

“Say your thanks, Rae.”

Her mother whispered into her ears. The scene was rather unreal. After all, this was the first time Rachel had recalled it after twenty years.

Pondering on it, Nancy expressed, “Must have been fate. Some things are meant for you to remember.”

Very soon, Victor returned with the chives and Nancy promptly started making the dumplings.

Meanwhile, Rachel contacted the management team about the security post, which the administration kindly agreed to.

‘Where do you live, Grandpa Irwin? I’ll help you move to the workers’ hostel tomorrow’

Grandpa Irwin shook his head and rejected, “It’s fine. I don’t have much to transport. I’ll go home later and return tomorrow. You just carry on as usual, Rae. Now, I can easily take care of your grandmother!”

Upon hearing that, Nancy was visibly annoyed as she revealed a scowl.

“The pierogi is done!” Victor then served the main dish on the table along with some condiments.

“Eat up before they get cold, Madam Tiller and Rachel. I shall go home now.”

However, Nancy quickly interjected, “Join us, Victor!”

“It’s fine. My grandma’s waiting for me to have dinner with her and it’s getting late.”

Upon hearing that, Rachel caught his arm. ‘Let me send you back.

“There’s no need for that, Rachel.”

After giving her grandmother a signal, she grabbed her bag and put on her shoes, thereafter walking out the door.

In response, Grandma uttered, “Go on. Drive safe!”

Following behind Rachel was Victor, who scratched his head and was forced to follow her lead.

Having sent Victor to his doorstep, Rachel gave him a box of pierogi and told him to share it with his grandmother.

Victor was taken aback by this, and he murmured, “That’s too much, Rachel.”

After shoving the container into his hands, she pulled an envelope from her bag and placed it on his knees.

Stunned, he opened the envelope and saw a neat stack of hundreds. He was utterly stupefied by this and asked, “What’s all this, Rachel?”

In response, she showed him a pre-written message.

I’m lending this money to you, so remember to write me an IOU. Take this money and sign up for night school. Take up classes that you’re interested in so you can take care of your grandma even better and let her be rest assured!

Victor peered at Rachel dumbfoundedly and hastily turned away.

Meanwhile, she could hear choking voices from the co-pilot seat.



As she was about to comfort him, he pushed open the car door, fearing that she would see his weeping face. It was not until he was far away that he shouted, "I'll pay you back for sure!"

Rachel beamed and started driving the car amid the night.

Unfortunately, she didn't notice that when she had left the alley, Victor was stopped by several unknown figures.

"What are you doing?"

"Grab him!"

As soon as he heard those words, he was restrained by two big men and his face was pushed against the unpainted concrete wall. Eventually, he started bleeding as a result of rubbing his face against the wall.

Meanwhile, the pierogi and envelope had fallen to the ground.

From the dark, a woman in a pair of heels appeared and bent down to pick up the envelope. "And I was wondering why you've been so distant with me. It seems to me you have found yourself a new mommy, huh?"

"Give my stuff back!"

"Your stuff?" The woman got closer to her and patted his face with the envelope. With a vile expression on her face, she pressed his head down and sneered, "So this is what you've been doing for me?"

"F\*ck you! Who agreed to help you, anyway? You begged for a favor, and it's solely up to me whether to fulfill it or not!"

Upon getting spit on her face, the woman grew infuriated as she thundered, "Sick of life, aren't you?"

“F\*ck me up if you have the balls to do so, b\*tch!”

“You think I wouldn’t dare?” The woman took a step backward. “Go on! Rough him up!”

The young man let out screams of pain as he was trapped in a corner.

After a while, the woman stepped on Victor with her heels as she looked down on him. Then, she grabbed the money from the envelope and threw it all over his body.

“What happened today is merely a lesson. If you fail to meet my expectations by the end of this month, I’ll make sure that nobody finds your body. Just know that I was only sparing you some pride, you son of a b\*tch!”

“Let’s go.”

After the gang of men departed, Victor, who was lying flat on the ground, eventually helped himself up with tremendous effort.

Accordingly, he picked up all the cash on the ground and attempted to press it flat before keeping it safely. Seeing how the box of pierogi was smashed to bits, he gazed at the ruined pieces and finally found some intact ones. He placed them back into the container, cherishing every untouched piece like they were gems.

After that, he wiped the bloodstains on his face and returned home as if nothing happened.

That night, Rachel had a nightmare.

In the dream, she was holding her child’s hand and was running across the field.

Out of the blue, the sky turned dark and she could only feel the air in her hands. No matter how hard she tried, she could never find the child again.

All of a sudden, Justin's face appeared out of thin air.

"Just do what you're expected of. Don't even think of anything you shouldn't."

The view then cut to Hans with a bloody face. "He broke my leg and caused me to die, yet you're bearing his child and living a happy life with him? That's so unfair, Rachel!"

Meanwhile, she was surrounded by countless mockeries and scoffs, as if the demons and their underlings had been unleashed from hell and were staring at her with their green, demonic eyes.

"Ah!"

She shrieked huskily. Upon being awakened by her nightmare, she got up with her back drenched in sweat.

By then, the sun was already shining brightly.

While her heart was still palpitating, she subconsciously touched her abdomen.

It had only been two months, yet she could already feel the tiny life inside of her.

Are you comforting Mommy, Baby?

However, Mommy is too weak to protect you as countless people would hate to see you being born.

Hans has died... Uncle Hans, the one who was always kind to Mommy has died, so she can't shake your father off herself.

How could Mommy give birth to your father's child?

I'm sorry, Baby!

As numbness tingled Rachel's nose, tears started dripping down her face.