

Mute Bride 141

Chapter 141

It was late at night and beside Rachel was a sleeping Justin. The sound of steady breathing was right next to her ear like a slight breeze. As such, she carefully lifted the corner of the quilt and left the bed. After confirming that Justin was asleep, she left the bed on her bare feet. Then, she pushed open the door of the second bedroom and entered the bathroom. Pulling apart the shower curtain, she found the bathtub empty and even the blood stains had disappeared. Where was the said person?

Rachel blinked hard to make sure she wasn't hallucinating. Where was the woman covered in blood and on the verge of dying? She looked around and tried to locate blood stains in the bathroom, yet she found nothing. However, she noticed that the clothes she wore that day were also gone. However, a USB flash drive was left on the washroom table. Her mind snapped back to what Coraline said-to go and look for Janice.

The next day, Rachel brought the tea into the study and saw someone known as President Shaw, whom Coraline had accompanied the day before, sitting in the study as he lit a cigar. There was a silver safe on the coffee table. He elaborated, "Yesterday's incident was an accident. I was not careful in choosing my people and almost ruined the big event."

Justin asked, "Has the person been caught?"

"No, but she can't make any waves. She definitely can't escape from Brookville."

"You have always been very thorough in your work."

"Thank you. Integrity is paramount in business. Our business is risky, so let's check the goods first..."

President Shaw's hand rested on the safe as his cigar smoke curled in the air. Next, he suddenly glanced at Rachel.

Justin ordered, "Rachel, why don't you head out first?"

Thus, she nodded obediently and left the study. Back in the bedroom, she quickly wore headphones and soon heard the conversation in the study coming from the device. In fact, she had recorded the wiretap, which Janice had sent to the hotel for her under the tea tray.

President Shaw was saying, "If Burton Group's medical line can achieve such quality, regarding this opportunity abroad, I can pull the strings and give half of it to Burton Group."

"Just half, President Shaw? The price we are giving is much cheaper than Hudson Pharmaceuticals."

A laughing President Shaw responded, "Those in our business know that we shouldn't put all our eggs in one basket. They do not change suppliers easily and it's their first time doing business with Burton Group. Therefore, I hope you understand that they're also taking risks."

"That's understandable, but I wish for Burton Group's personnel to be the one to escort and deliver this batch of goods."

"That's not possible."

"President Shaw, you can't let my company undertake all the risks, right? Don't you think Jefferey will send

someone to follow you if you're making a deal with Hudson Pharmaceuticals?"

"Um..."

As she listened to the conversation in the headphones, Rachel felt anxious. Justin had intervened in Hudson Pharmaceuticals' business, but what business was it that required such caution? That silver safe was also similar to what Janice described about the box in which Hans saw in the hospital before he was harmed. Perhaps what he found was also a similar deal.

Justin came out of the study after President Shaw left. So, Rachel went to the study to remove the tea tray. However, Justin responded, "Leave it. Just place it aside and let the hotel attendant clean it up. Come over

and sit with me for a while.”

Her hands tightened slightly, but still, she put down the tea tray to walk over.

“Come over and sit.” His big hand patted the seat beside him.

What’s up?

“We’ll return to Riverdale in the morning. We’ve found a nursing home for Grandma, so we’ll make an appointment tomorrow and I’ll accompany you back to see her.”

No need. “What’s wrong? You don’t want me to see her?”

Rachel’s face was tense as she pursed her lips. Grandma still doesn’t know about my miscarriage.

A flash of unhappiness flashed across Justin’s cold eyes. After a long time, he held Rachel’s hand and said, “Then, don’t let her know yet. I’ll let Frankie handle the matter of the nursing home, so you don’t have to bother about it.”

She nodded. Upon seeing her obedient appearance, he felt the exhaustion of the past few days subsiding. He lowered his body and leaned down to get closer to her. Nevertheless, she reflexively turned away and blocked him with a hand on his chest. At that instant, he noticed the disgust in her eyes, causing his expression to instantly sink. His big hand pinched her cheek as he forced her to look at him. “What are you thinking?”

Rachel whimpered twice in pain.

“Your meekness these few days is all pretense, right? In fact, you still hate me in your heart. Why don’t you continue to pretend? It’s because you are returning to Riverdale tomorrow, right?”

Her face reddened and she tried hard to struggle. However, the strength in his hand increased as he angrily continued, "Even if you are pretending, you should continue it for longer. How do you plan to live in the future if you can't even pretend for more than two days?"

Rachel grimaced as she felt like she was at the mercy of others. This man in front of her only treated her as a plaything; he would make her laugh or cry whenever he wanted to. He knew that her obedience was all pretense, but he enjoyed it; he did not care what she really thought as long as she obeyed him and what she showed was enough to satisfy him.

As the pain on her cheeks gradually numbed, she tried to soften her gaze. Then, she began begging for mercy with the man in front of her with tears rolling down the corners of her eyes. Justin felt moved by her actions and impatiently released her.

With a loud bang, he left and slammed the door behind him. Rachel's heartbeat slowed and she covered her chest as the air rushed into her nasal cavity, making her cough.

The sound of a vibrating phone soon came from the coffee table and it had been vibrating for a while. Upon seeing that the caller ID was Victor, she immediately replied to the message. 'What's wrong?'

'Your grandma is missing!

After she saw these words, Rachel's expression changed abruptly. 'When did it happen? How could she have disappeared?

"Your grandma's cart for groceries is not at home; she went out early in the morning and hasn't returned till now! I'm looking for her in the market, but the vendors who are acquainted with her said

that she didn't come to buy vegetables this morning!

Rachel was about to ask some more questions when her phone suddenly vibrated to indicate an unfamiliar caller ID popping up.

“Hello? Is this Rachel?” The voice on the other end had been specially processed and it sounded eerily creepy, causing her heart to stutter with an ominous feeling.

“I know it’s not convenient for you to talk, but it’s okay. Just listen to me. Your grandma is now in my hands and if you want her to return safely, do one thing for me. Beg Justin to voluntarily surrender the bid in Brookville.”

Upon hearing that, Rachel turned pale. How could Justin possibly listen to her?

She screamed into the phone for a long time as she tried to explain, but she couldn’t make a normal sound to communicate with the other party, who directly hung up the phone after adding, “Rachel, you don’t have much time. The old woman’s body won’t be able to withstand the torment.”

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When the call was disconnected, Rachel’s body was trembling and she hurriedly tried to return the call. “Sorry, the number you dialed is unavailable.”

She screamed at the wall and her hoarse voice echoed in the large living room as her brain buzzed. Justin...

Justin is now the only person who can save Grandma.

Without thinking, she ran out of the lobby of the hotel. There, she saw Justin entering a car at the entrance as soon as he exited the elevator. She quickly went after him, trying to call out to him, but no sound came out of her throat and she could only watch the black car drive away from the entrance. She chased after the car on foot, as if she could not feel the pain on her soles, while she desperately tried to catch up. Soon, the car stopped at a traffic light intersection, but when she was about to catch up, her knees weakened before her whole body fell forward toward the ground as her vision went dark.

As the intense pain from her knees spread throughout her body, she almost did not even have the strength to raise her head. All she could do was curl up on the side of the road like a dying shrimp. At this moment, passersby pointed at her and gossiped.

“What’s wrong with that woman?”

"I don't know; should I call the police?"

"It's a woman."

"Is it a car accident? Why is she not even wearing shoes?"

After a long time, a male voice came from among the chaos of voices, "Mrs. Burton?"

Rachel's head buzzed for a moment.

"President Burton, it's her!" Frankie shouted sharply toward the back.

When she lifted her head, a tall figure was coming through the crowd and striding toward her. The moment they looked at each other, Justin's cold, frosty face was scrunched up in anger. "Are you seeking death? Why are you chasing the car along the road?"

Please, save Grandma.

Rachel was lying at Justin's feet, resisting the pain and gesturing toward him for help.

"Get her back to the hotel and call a doctor."

"Yes, President Burton."

There were wounds all over Rachel's knees, elbows and soles of her feet. After the doctor had treated her wounds, he threw all of the bloodied cotton balls and gauze into the trash.

"It's nothing serious, but just be careful to keep the wounds dry to prevent an infection."

“Thank you, doctor.” Frankie sent the doctor out. “President Burton, there is something fishy about this matter.”

“Definitely.” Justin’s expression sank. “We just confirmed the winning bid. Then, someone kidnapped her grandmother in Riverdale to threaten us to withdraw the bid. The biggest suspects are our two rivals.”

“However, in the end, which one of them is the culprit?”

“That depends on which one of them knows more about my affairs.”

The culprit did not kidnap a member of the Burton Family nor his rightful fiancée, but instead captured the grandmother of his long-rumored neglected ex-wife in order to threaten him to withdraw the bid. It

was obvious that there was something fishy about it.

“In your opinion, which one of them is it? Golden Growth Corporation?”

“I’m afraid it’s neither.”

Frankie was stunned at Justin’s words. “Neither?”

“Go and check on what Jason Burton has been doing lately.”

With that being said, Frankie was instantly enlightened. “On it right away.”

Soon, Rachel was awakened by a nightmare. When she woke up, it was already completely dark. She violently sprang from the bed, feeling her cheeks drenched in cold sweat and messy hair over her face. On top of that, her entire body was frighteningly pale.

"You're awake?" A man's voice came from the bedside. She snapped to her senses and gestured at him. How is Grandma? Did you save her?

"I've asked Frankie to resolve it and the police should have the results soon."

The police? Rachel's face turned pale. You can't call the police! You absolutely must not call the police. If the kidnappers are alerted, Grandma is as good as dead.

"What can I do if the police can't help?" Justin's indifferent tone was so cold that she felt like she had just heard those words in her nightmare. In the dim light, she gritted her teeth and lifted the quilt. Ignoring the pain in her knees and feet, she fell on her knees in front of him with tears immediately flowing from her eyes. Please, I beg you. As long as you save her, I'm willing to do anything. She is my only family now and I can't lose her.

At this moment, Rachel gave up all her dignity. The other party said that as long as you are willing to surrender the bid in Brookville, she will be safe!

She choked as her tears couldn't stop falling to the point where her eyes were reddened.

As he pinched her jaw, he coldly stared at her and asked, "When you left the wiretap in my study, did you ever think of begging me?"

Wiretap? He found out?

As he raised his hand, a phone fell on the carpet in front of her before the recording inside the device played. It was the entire conversation about Justin and President Shaw's deal in the study. Her face was instantly ashen at that. After sending it to Janice, she forgot to delete the original recording in her phone and he had peeked into her phone.

Justin fiercely pinched Rachel's cheek, forcing her to look up at him amidst her cries of pain. "Tell me, what are you trying to do? I can't believe I didn't know that you have guts in you. Who have you given this recording to?"

Rachel gritted her teeth so hard that blood seeped out from the corners of her lips. No, I didn't give it to anyone. I really didn't give it to anyone!

She knew very well that once she admitted that she had done so, he would no longer save her grandmother.

"So, why were you listening to us? Were you just curious?" Justin snapped. "Do you think I'm stupid? I've been overly patient and indulgent with you, haven't I?"

In order for Frankie to identify the source of the kidnapper's call that she received as soon as possible, he had checked her phone, but he didn't expect to find such a thing. The moment that this recording

appeared, it melted all the pity in Justin's heart.

Unable to say anything, Rachel stared at him in hopelessness with her large eyes. Even if he wants me to die, I'm fine with it. I just wish he can save Grandma.

When Justin saw the tears swimming in her eyes, he suddenly felt moved somewhere in the depths of his heart. As he was suddenly irritated, he threw her aside and prepared to leave, but he had just taken a step when something blocked his foot. When he lowered his eyes, he saw that she was clinging onto his leg for life.

Please save Grandma, I beg you.

"Why should I save her? Who is she to me? Is she worth me giving up a project worth a hundred million?" Justin impatiently pushed her away and coldly added, "Stay here and you're not going anywhere without my permission."

After a loud bang, the room fell into silence. As she rushed up and smashed the door, Rachel hissed with a hoarse and unpleasant voice, but all her anger and despair were drowned in her throat.

After he closed the door, Justin's face was clouded with gloom. He tossed Rachel's phone to Frankie and said, "Give the phone to the private detective. I'm sure the kidnappers will call again."

"Certainly."

"Also, inform the project manager in Brookville and prepare to withdraw the bid."

Frankie looked at Justin in amazement and disbelief. They had been discussing this project for a long time, in which the entire company knew its importance because it was not only reflected in the profit value, but also in the opportunities for long-term cooperation in the future.

However, Justin had ordered them to withdraw the bid.

Over at Riverdale the following afternoon, an argument was close to ensuing.

"Miss Hochmann, you can't enter now. Miss Hochmann!"

"Justin!" Gloria pushed open the door and barged into his office in a rage.

Justin had just finished his morning meeting and he was sitting behind the computer. Upon seeing her appearance, he frowned. "What's wrong?"

"You're still asking me what's wrong? Where is Rachel?"

"She has something to attend to and won't be back for a while."

"She's not coming back for a while?" Gloria nodded. "Okay. Then, I'll ask, where's Rachel's grandma?"

He frowned but did not reply.

“She has been kidnapped; do you know about this?”

“Yes.”

“Yes?” Gloria’s anger immediately rose and she raised her voice. “Then, how can you still sit here to leisurely drink coffee? That is Rachel’s only family member. Do you know that if anything happens to her grandma, Rachel will never forgive you?”

Justin asked, “Who told you this?”

“Never mind! Just tell me whether you care about this matter or not!”

“I’m not a police officer, so how can I resolve this?”

“The kidnappers are obviously after you. What has Rachel and her grandmother done wrong? If they weren’t involved with you, who would disturb them? I know that better than anyone!”

“What you mean by that is that you are blaming me for having endangered you all these years?”

Gloria’s face stiffened as her anger froze at the corners of her mouth.

“Get out. I still have things to do.” Justin converged his gaze on her, his pair of cold eyes frosty.

She clenched her fist indignantly and shouted, “Fine, I’ll leave!”

After she left the Burton Group, Victor stopped her at the entrance. “How did it go? Did the talks fall apart?”

“You saw that and you’re still asking?” Gloria glared at him. “I really didn’t expect Justin to be so stone hearted. Is Rachel’s grandma’s life less important than money? If the kidnappers want money, just give it to them! How is he short of money?”

He only knew that Rachel's grandmother was kidnapped and Rachel had suddenly lost contact with the world, so he could only come to look for Gloria. It had already been two days, but Justin was drinking

coffee in the office leisurely like nothing was wrong. When Gloria saw this, she lost her temper..

"All business is treacherous. I have already said that before. Anyway, do you know where Rachel is? Did you find out?"

She was taken aback as she replied sheepishly, "I forgot."

Victor stared at her. "So, you just went to quarrel with him?"

"When I am angry, I forget everything!"

"You're really something! I might as well not look for you!"

"Wait for me!" Gloria caught up with him and said analytically, "I probably know where she is! They went to Brookville; it's a place where Justin and I have been before. He always stays in the same hotel!"

"You mean we should go directly to Brookville to find Rachel?"

"Yeah, let's do so!"

Once Gloria left, Frankie cautiously entered the office. "President Burton, the coffee is cold. Shall I get you another cup?"

"No need. How are things going?"

“There’s progress. It’s as you expected-it was Jason Burton who had people do the deed. Although the surveillance cameras in the area did not capture the suspect, it caught the suspect’s vehicle cruising around that day and the license plate number belonged to one of his men.”

Justin’s expression slowly fell. “He is too hasty and intends to go all out.”

“I’m afraid that in his view, he is intending to fight to the death. If we withdraw the bid, he can take advantage of Golden Growth Corporation and seize the opportunity to work with them to establish another business.”

“That’s not the issue right now.”

Frankie returned to his senses and replied, “Yes, I understand. The private detective is already following up on the address of Jason’s hideout. There should be news soon. By the way, the private detective also added that on the day your second aunt died in that car accident, Amber visited the hospital morgue, where Jason was also present. However, she did not leave the hospital that day.”

“Amber?” Justin suddenly raised his eyebrow. “Let’s go to the Hudson Residence then.”

Brookville was a long way from Belleview, so in order to save time, Gloria and Victor had boarded the high speed train, saving half the time on their journey if they had driven.

“This is the hotel.” She pointed at the doors. “Justin will only stay at this hotel when he comes to Brookville. I’m 99% sure of it.”

“Then, how about the remaining 1%?”

“Don’t jinx it!”

Gloria glared at Victor and went into the lobby, going straight to the reception to ask about Rachel’s stay there

“Rachel Hudson, right?” The receptionist carefully checked the records and suddenly had a strange look. “Sorry, but we don’t have this guest in this hotel. You and your friend may have come to the wrong place.”

“Wrong place? That’s not possible.”

“How is it impossible?” Victor rolled his eyes. “Brookville is a large place with many hotels. Are you confident that Justin will definitely come and stay here? You’ve been cocksure. I think I’m out of my mind to come here with you. I might as well head home and go to the market to find out who kidnapped her grandma!”

However, Gloria was extremely stubborn as she asked the employee, “If Rachel Hudson did not stay here, then what about Justin Burton? He is your VIP guest here.”

“Sorry, there’s no such guest too.” This time, the receptionist didn’t even check the guest list.

Upon seeing this, Gloria understood what was going on.

As Victor argued to return to Riverdale, she pulled him toward the hotel’s employee room before they sneaked inside.

“What are you doing?”

“Shh.” She covered his mouth. “Keep your voice down or they’ll discover that you did not leave.”

“What the hell are you doing?”

“Wearing a disguise to save someone.”

“Save who? Didn’t they tell you that Rachel is not here?”

“You believe what they said? Where’s your brain?” Gloria snorted before continuing, “I don’t even have to think ... to know that the employee was lying. He first looked at Rachel’s information and he must have stumbled upon something because his expression changed. When I mentioned Justin, he did not even check and simply denied it.”

“So what? Even if Rachel is in this hotel, how can we find her? Do we have to check one room at a time?”

“Who said we have to do so?”

She handed a couple of employee’s uniform to Victor. “Justin only lives in suites and there are only two of each per floor. It’s not much trouble at all.”

He suddenly felt that the blonde girl in front of him was actually intelligent. “So, what are we going to do now?”

Gloria responded with a straight face, “Go to each suite and knock on the door to clean the room!”

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“Room service.”

Gloria and Victor were pushing a janitor cart that belonged to the hotel.

A man in a black attire opened the door and moved aside. “Come in.”

She was slightly shocked as she quickly placed her hand on Victor.

The man was one of Justin’s bodyguards and they both had met him before. If it hadn’t been for the masks, the bodyguard would have immediately recognized them.

If there weren’t any accidents, Rachel should be right here in this suite.

The door to the master bedroom was kept shut.

Rachel sat on the carpet as she helplessly hugged her knees to her chest. Her tears had run dry a long time

ago.

She didn't know how much time had passed when someone knocked on the door.

Knock knock

The door opened from the other side and the bodyguard entered with a meal tray in hand. "Mrs. Burton, you haven't eaten anything in two days. The hotel has prepared some soup for you, so please at least have some. If something happens to you, President Burton will hold us responsible."

Rachel flipped the meal tray over as her shoulders trembled.

When she did so, the hot soup scalded the bodyguard's hand. He took in a sharp breath, but he dared not say anything as he silently cleaned up and left. Once he was out of earshot, he cursed as he walked.

"She's still not eating?" The other bodyguard outside gave a pitiful look. "You were scalded?"

"Obviously. No matter what they say, I won't send the food later tonight. You should do the job."

"She won't eat even if we send in the food, so let's just stop taking the food in."

"If Frankie and President Burton learn about this, they'll rip us into shreds. We're simply unlucky to be in this position, so let's just submit to fate."

“Let’s eat first, I suppose.”

The hotel had already sent the bodyguards their lunch and the food was on the dining table.

The two bodyguards walked over to the table to sit down. As they ate, they glanced at the two janitors who were still tidying up the room. “Why are you guys so slow today?”

“Huh? You don’t have to clean the master bedroom, so you can leave that alone.”

Gloria and Victor hastily nodded and collected their things as they prepared to leave.

Behind them, the two bodyguards feasted on the meal. They hadn’t eaten much and suddenly fell over before Gloria and Victor could even reach the door. The motionless bodyguards flopped on the table.

“Timber!” Victor pulled at Gloria’s sleeve. “Isn’t your drug a little too effective?”

“I swiped a bottle or two when I visited Justin’s medical research institute. No one dares to sell this sort of drug on the market. Good thing I had foresight.” Gloria beamed gleefully. “Now, let’s get down to business.”

The two then ran toward the master bedroom.

“Miss Rachel!”

A complete mess had greeted them when they opened the door to the bedroom. Rachel was seated on the carpet next to the bed and she looked so frail that she could topple over at any moment.

When she saw Gloria and Victor, she was stunned for a long while as she thought she was dreaming.

The three of them then rented a car and sped to Riverdale the same night.

Gloria was the one behind the wheel on their way back.

Rachel had borrowed Victor's phone and contacted Janice first and foremost.

Since Justin refused to help, she could only turn to Janice.

"Victor, tell Rachel to calm down first. I'll check the texts and calls on her phone to see whether I can track where the kidnapping occurred."

"Okay, got it."

After hanging up the call, Victor comforted Rachel, "Miss Rachel, perhaps things aren't as bad as you think they are. Maybe they would leave Madam Tiller alone when the kidnappers realize that Justin wouldn't help."

"Yes, that's possible." Gloria clutched the steering wheel as she intercepted. "Justin isn't a heartless person, so I think he might have the same idea."

"Come on, are you still sticking up for him? This isn't the first time something like this has happened. This madman even dared to lock Miss Rachel up!" At the mention of Justin, Victor's expression turned sour. "He has a few screws loose, you know? What does he think other people are—criminals and

animals? Is that why he locks people up without thinking twice? He won't come to the rescue and even pushed the whole problem onto Miss Rachel!"

Gloria responded, "When we arrive in Riverdale, wait for me while I have a word or two with Justin."

"Would he even listen to you?"

"It's still better than nothing. Miss Rachel, don't worry much since I'll think of a way. It's your grandma, so I'm sure Justin won't just stand by and watch."

It was only after meeting Rachel that Gloria knew about the kidnapper's demands.

According to her understanding of Justin, Gloria felt that he wouldn't trade someone's life for this tiny little bit of benefit, much less allow any harm to befall Rachel's grandma, who was her one and only family left in the world.

At that moment, Rachel couldn't think of anything but her grandma's safety.

Victor's words were logical, but most kidnappers were cruel people. If they knew that Justin was stubborn and wouldn't give in, there was a high possibility that they would just kill their hostage.

She had never heard of kidnappers sending their hostage back in one piece after a failed negotiation.

As for Gloria...

Rachel felt that Gloria was merely used to Justin's obedience, which was why she believed that he would go to the rescue.

Meanwhile, a black car was speeding down the streets of Riverdale.

On the passenger seat, Frankie had received a call and his expression immediately fell. "President Burton, I just received a call from Brookville Hotel reporting that Mrs. Burton has escaped."

Justin's cold eyes were reflected in the back mirror as he raged, "Escaped? What do you mean by 'escaped'? There are many people there, but none of them can keep an eye over her?"

"Gloria was the one who took her away."

His expression darkened before he immediately made a call.

Gloria's phone was repeatedly ringing.

Seeing the incoming call on the display, she said hastily, "Oh no, I think Justin found out that I helped Miss Rachel escape."

Victor sneered, "You're simply doing the right thing. What can he complain about?"

"Shut up. If you don't want to complicate things. don't you dare say a word later."

With that. Gloria gingerly pressed the button to initiate a handsfree call.

Justin's voice immediately filled the inside of the car. "Gloria, where are you right now?"

"Me? I'm having a night out with my friends."

"Spare the nonsense. Gloria, did you go all the way to Brookville Hotel to get Rae out? Is she with you?"

Now that the beans had been spilled, Gloria couldn't maintain the pretense anymore. "So what if I did? You never had any right to lock people up and I'm actually on my way to talk to you about this. What are you thinking? Is a business deal more important than someone's life?"

"I'm doing this for her safety, Gloria. Listen, is Rae with you right now? If you've already taken her back to Riverdale, send her over right now."

Her anger rose when she heard those words. "You still refuse to help, eh? How long do you think you can maintain your relationship with Miss Rachel if this continues? If you won't help us, we're better off taking this to the police!"

"Don't!"

"Why not? Miss Rachel's friend would definitely lend a helping hand."

“Because I said so!”

“Now that’s going overboard! I thought you were someone more decent.”

With that, Gloria ended the call as her face reddened with anger.

Victor was about to drop a sarcastic word or two when his phone rang. “It’s from Officer Hawkins. Does she already have some news?”

Rachel’s eyes brightened.

As soon as the call went through, Janice’s voice rang from the other end of the line. “I’m sorry, Rachel. I couldn’t make it in time.”

She forcefully pinched her palm. Couldn’t make it in time?

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Janice’s voice sounded like the air before the rain-heavy and depressing.

“When I arrived at the scene immediately after receiving the news, the police team had already been dismissed. The ambulance was still there, but they didn’t manage to save Madam Tiller. She’s gone.”

Rachel’s head seemed to implode with a bang’. Grandma is... gone?

Brakes screeched on the street as the high-pitched noise pierced everyone’s ears.

Gloria turned back in a panic to see the color being drained from Rachel’s face. “Miss Rachel!”

Rachel didn't hear Gloria's voice as she snatched Victor's phone from him. Rachel was in disbelief as she tried to communicate through the phone, but the only thing that came out of her open mouth was a heart wrenching 'Aaaaaah!'

She couldn't believe Janice's words. How could Grandma be dead?

Nancy's surgery was a success, especially after all of the hardship that they had to endure. Julian even informed that grandma would live a healthy and peaceful life from then on.

In the hospital morgue, as soon as the doctor removed the white cloth, Rachel fell to her knees with tears streaming down her face.

"Miss Rachel"

Gloria wanted to say something, but Victor interrupted, "Let's head out first. She needs some time alone with Madam Tiller."

No one had understood the feeling better than him-to have only one person left in the whole wide world to depend on and support. If his own grandmother passed away, he probably would have reacted in the

same manner.

Upon seeing Nancy's lifeless face, Rachel couldn't breathe for a moment before she leaned against the bed and wept.

Her wails echoed in the corridor.

After what seemed like an eternity, arguments started to come from the corridor.

"How dare you be here! Who gave you the right to do so? Leave at once!"

“Calm down, Victor. He’s not the one who caused this to happen, so stop barking.”

“If it weren’t for his heartlessness, grandma wouldn’t have died! He has no right to see her!”

“What are you doing?” Gloria exclaimed, “Justin, tell them to let Victor go! What are you doing?”

The sound of shoes walking came from the door.

Rachel knelt in front of Nancy with reddened eyes. When she heard footsteps behind her, her hands, which were on the bed, balled into fists and even her lips trembled.

“Rae.” Justin’s hand hung mid-air before it was retracted after a while. “What is gone is gone.”

What is gone is gone?! Rachel whipped her head and she glared at the man in front of her. How can he speak of this so nonchalantly?

Justin frowned. “I’ll ask someone to arrange Madam Tiller’s funeral and other related matters. We’ll purchase a cemetery lot with a beautiful view. Don’t worry too much about what comes afterward. Just take care of yourself for now.”

There were still injuries on Rachel’s body, but they couldn’t even be compared to the wounds in her heart.

Upon seeing Justin’s cold countenance, she couldn’t stand it anymore as she gave him a rough and mighty push. Who gave you the right to come?! Who? What right do you have to be here?

In her fury, Rachel landed blows after blows on Justin. However, he didn’t dodge her attacks as he stood still and endured it.

The weak fists did nothing to him and she couldn’t even see the hurt in his eyes as she went on her rampage of fury and hatred.

Why couldn't you save Grandma? If you did, maybe I could forgive you for everything you've done. I would've owed you my life, so no matter what you did to me, I would endure it. Yet, you just stood by and watched.

Rachel was greatly indebted to Nancy, who had raised her. Although they were not related by blood, Nancy had still loved Rachel like she was her own granddaughter.

Rachel bitterly sobbed; her voice was so hoarse that every heart would break at its sound.

She could feel the intense pain as she thought how she had to continue surviving in this world without her grandma. She had lost her only family who loved her wholeheartedly and protected her. There was no longer anyone to pull her hand as they nagged and no one to treat her like a child either.

At that instant, the world warped to a point where she could only see a black scene.

"Rae!"

"Frankie, call the doctor!"

The man's panicked voice faded into the background and that was the last sound Rachel heard before losing consciousness.

When she regained her consciousness, it was already afternoon.

Victor was keeping watch by the bed and as soon as he saw her rousing, he immediately called, "Miss Janice! Miss Rachel is awake!"

Janice then poured some water for Rachel. "How are you feeling?"

Rachel leaned against the headboard and shook her head to gesture that she didn't want to drink. Her eyes were red and swollen.

A helpless Janice sighed. "We have to look ahead."

The words once again sent pain through Rachel's heart.

From now onward, there would no longer be any more future with Nancy.

"The police team was dismissed by the time I arrived. As the culprits have criminal records, they have been arrested. The trial is still ongoing and we'll apprehend the mastermind soon, don't worry."

Rachel gripped her blanket. The murderer was aiming for Justin. He thought that he could threaten Justin if he held Grandma hostage, but they didn't realize that he never cared about me. Grandma died in vain.

As she conveyed her thoughts, her tears ran down her cheeks once again.

Janice didn't know how to comfort her, so she sighed again.

At that moment, they heard the door opening before it was followed by sounds of high heels clicking against the floor with the squeaky friction. "It's a pretty decent ward, eh? You must be so pampered to be hospitalized so often."

Amber stood at the door, looking like a busybody more than anything.

What are you here for?

Rachel's expression turned sour.

Janice frowned as well. "Why are you here?"

Amber was a little intimidated at the sight of Janice, so Amber edged toward the table without any intention of getting closer. "What's all the fuss for? Even though Rachel's grandma wasn't my own

grandmother, we still kept in contact with each other. She's dead now, so what's wrong with me popping in for a look?"

Janice's expression darkened. "I don't remember you being so nice."

"What beer do I have with the dead, Officer Hawkins?"

Rachel kept her gaze on Amber. You're not only here to see Grandma off, are you?

Amber never did anything that wouldn't benefit her, which meant that her presence wasn't for simple reasons.

Just as Rachel had expected, Amber wore a wry smile. "You are mistaken. I really am here to see Grandma off. After receiving news about the incident, I tried to convince Justin since it's someone's life at stake after all. Still, he thought that such things should be handed over to the police, so I had no choice. Rachel, I'm not the one at fault. Please believe me."

Amber's words were like icy knives that stabbed Rachel's ears as it began to ring.

Justin was the one who reported it to the police, so he's the one who caused Grandma's death? No, he won't. Even if he really did prioritize his benefits and decide to stand by and watch, he won't do something unprofitable that harms people. She had already begged him earlier not to call the police.

"If Justin hadn't called the police, why would the kidnappers quickly kill the hostage? Also, since Officer Hawkins is here, you should just ask her for confirmation."

Amber's words had thrust Rachel into the dark depths of the abyss.

As for Janice, her expression was complicated as she added with great difficulty, "It is true that the police had intervened in the matter earlier on."

“I have said everything I should. It’s pretty obvious how Justin thinks of you.” Amber sneered with a scornful look. “Your dearest family is gone just like that and if you still insist on remaining by Justin’s side, I’d feel sorry for Grandma.”

Rachel gripped her chest through the fabric of her shirt; her heart was hurting so much that it was on the verge of exploding from her chest, which caused her exquisite face to contort in pain.

“Are you okay, Rachel?” Janice comforted her. “I’ll get the doctor.”

Upon seeing Amber still standing there, Janice snapped, “What are you still here for? Get lost!”

Amber was so frightened by Janice’s tone that she stumbled a step backward. “Sheesh, fine. Don’t worry, I’m leaving. Do you think I’d want to stay here any longer than I should?”

The click of high heels then disappeared down the corridor.

Janice was about to call for the doctor when Rachel stopped her from doing so.

“What’s wrong? Where does it hurt?”

Rachel gritted her teeth because she was so depressed that she couldn’t even sign her words.

She finally opened her mouth a while later, but only blood came out.

“Rachel!” Janice paled.

The moment that the infusion needle found a vein, the doctor reduced the rate of infusion as he elaborated, “She’s experiencing some strong emotions now. So, she should rest and recover in a more peaceful environment; she must not be provoked a second time.”

“Okay, understood. Sorry for the trouble, doctor.”

“No problem. I’m just doing my job.”

It was after the doctor left that Rachel gradually regained her consciousness.

Janice took a seat by Rachel’s bedside. “Are you alright?”

Rachel didn’t affirm or deny the notion since her mind was filled with Amber’s words.

Justin was the cause behind Nancy’s kidnapping. Even though Rachel had begged him to save Nancy, he didn’t do anything about it. Not only that, he even reported it to the cops, which caused the kidnapper to kill the hostage.

As he had indirectly caused Nancy’s death, it made him a murderer.

“It’s reasonable to call the police under those circumstances.”

Janice draped the blanket over Rachel as she assured, “Don’t think too much about what Amber said. She just wanted to see you suffer, so she just came to add fuel to the fire.”

She is right, though.

Rachel reached out and passed Janice a pen drive.

“What’s this?”

When I was in Brookville, Justin took me to a gathering where I met a girl, who asked me to pass this to you.

Janice’s pupils constricted as she stared at the pen drive in disbelief. “Is her name Coraline Harper?”

Rachel nodded.

After being stunned for a long while, Janice asked, "Have you looked at its contents?"

With the shake of her head, Rachel responded.

From the moment that Coraline had passed the pen drive to her, Rachel never had the chance to decipher what was inside the pen drive. Still, she guessed that it was somewhat related to the deal between Justin and that group of people. It must be related to the matter leavesdropped on last time.

Janice was slightly shocked. "You want to get revenge on Justin?"

An eye for an eye.

Rachel's face was pale and due to all the tears that she had shed, her eyes were reddened and swollen beyond recognition. However, at that moment, her eyes were like a stagnant puddle without any ripples on the surface.

She was helpless on her own since she had no way of having Justin pay for his crimes. However, she knew that the deal itself could help as she was fairly certain that the deal between Justin and President Shaw was illegal.

Janice tightly held onto the pen drive. "Don't worry, I'll investigate it right away. If it is really related to Justin, I will throw him into jail with my own hands."

Rachel arduously nodded with a desolate heart.

"Rest well. I'll visit you when I have time."

Okay.

When Justin arrived home at night, he saw the patrol cars parked at the entrance to his house.

“Mr. Burton, we have received a report that you are suspected of smuggling. Please come with us for a while.”

The policeman at the front showed his credentials with a serious expression.

A panicked Sue kept shouting, “How is that possible? You must be mistaken!”

However, Justin was emotionless as if he had already anticipated this turn of events. “Sure, but I hope you have concrete evidence. I wouldn’t want to waste my time on false accusations.”

The policeman was taken aback for a bit. “Get in the car, Mr. Burton.”

Although the patrol car had driven away, Sue was still adamant about asking Old Master Burton for help.

Mrs. Duncan said, “Madam, the police have already left.”

The look in Sue’s eyes stilled to a sense of calm before she went inside the residence to make a call.

“Sorry, the person you called is unavailable.”

She had called thrice and received the same automated message. In irritation, she threw her phone on the couch. “Where on earth did he go? He’s been missing for days!”

Mrs. Duncan brought over the tea. “Madam, please calm down. I don’t think things are that serious yet.”

“Not that serious? How much more serious must it be? I just received news that the board of directors at Burton Group are preparing to hold the year-end meeting where they will discuss the distribution of stock rights.”

“What are you afraid of? Young Master Justin is a major shareholder. No matter what happens, your position will not be affected.”

“It’s not easy having to depend on someone for a living.” Sue leaned against the couch with a dark expression. “I thought once the mute girl is gone, things will proceed smoothly. Who knew that Amber would be so vicious as well? And that Gloria? She’s a pain in the neck.”

“Don’t panic, we still haven’t received any news from that party. No news is good news.”

Now that Mrs. Duncan had mentioned that party, Sue glanced at her phone on the couch while being lost in thought

At Nancy’s funeral three days later, the gray sky was accompanied by a drizzle.

Rachel held Nancy’s photograph in her arms while Julian held an umbrella for her, which caused his shoulder to be drenched.

Victor and Janice attended as well, and Grandpa Irwin too.

Julian was the one who helped with the arrangements for the grave. The funeral host had placed Nancy’s ashes within before a few workers worked to cover the plot with dirt.

“Say your last goodbyes.”

Rachel tried to suppress her tears as she bowed her head.

She never had the chance to repay Nancy’s kindness in this lifetime and she would never have the opportunity again.

“My condolences, Rae. Grandma wouldn’t want to see you suffer like this.”

His voice rang beside her. “The murderers will receive their due.”

“I agree. Isn’t Justin already arrested? That sort of person should be put in jail forever,” Victor cursed viciously

Three days ago, after Justin had been brought away by the police, he was continuously interrogated about drug smuggling. Janice was directly in charge of the case and the evidence contained in the pen drive was enough to sentence him to jail.

She didn’t say anything as she patted Rachel on the shoulder before placing a bouquet of flowers at Nancy’s grave.

Suddenly, a car’s motor sounded at the graveyard’s entrance.

The black car was parked at the gates and a figure alighted from the car with an umbrella in hand before it approached them.

Victor was the first to recognize the man and his eyes widened in disbelief. “Justin?!”

As soon as she heard the name, Rachel was immensely shocked as she quickly turned around with constricting pupils. He’s already been released?!

Chapter 147

“Who allowed you to come?”

Victor had just taken his first step toward the man when two bodyguards grabbed Victor to drag him aside. As for his curses, the rain had drowned it.

The black figure walked in from the rain and he advanced toward Rachel at a steady pace.

She staggered backward.

An icy cold face was revealed beneath the black umbrella, his eyes colder than winter rain.

Justin hadn't even said anything when the police accompanying him walked past and spoke, "Officer Hawkins, we received a notice from the higher ups with regards to the case you're currently handling. The inspectorate wishes to carry out an investigation with you. Please come with us."

Janice frowned and stole a glance at Justin standing behind them.

Rachel quickly stepped in front of her.

What do you want?

"It's okay, Rachel," Janice comforted Rachel and turned to the police who came to take her away. "I'll go with you."

Victor shouted from a distance away, "What are you doing? Is there no regard for the law these days? Is everyone in Riverdale under the Burton Family?"

Under the black umbrella, Justin raised his hand to give a slight wave.

Victor gave a painful yelp and as he fell flat on his face into the grass, his cursing stopped.

Rachel panicked. Victor! What do you want? Let him go!

Justin held the umbrella with one hand to reveal a dark expression. "You seem disappointed to see me here."

Her shoulders trembled. Should I be happy? Elated that the man who caused Grandma's death has turned up at her funeral in one piece? What is wrong with this world? He has clearly smuggled drugs and committed many crimes, but it's like he's above the law to the point where he can shamelessly show up in front of his victims to continue doing all these horrible things.

He added, "So, this is why you exercised so much effort and even worked with Janice to throw me behind bars?"

You deserved it!

"I did?"

The coldness in Rachel's eyes was so painful for Justin to see that his anger started to boil within him.

Julian was quick on his toes as he pushed her behind him. "What are you trying to do, Justin? If you have anything to say, find another time to do so. We're at Nancy's funeral!"

"This is between me and my wife. Keep your nose out of this."

"Justin!" Julian gritted his teeth. "Don't forget, you two are already divorced. You are now engaged to Amber, so if you keep doing this, what sort of position would she be in?"

"Move."

Justin pushed him aside unapologetically before the bodyguards secured him in place.

Rachel cried in pain when Justin grabbed her wrist. Let go of me! Let go!

"The funeral is over and my patience with you is running thin. Come with me right now."

Where are you bringing me to? Let me go!

Rachel struggled while her free hand frantically whacked Justin. She had managed to push the umbrella in his hand away, causing the freezing rain to pelt down on them.

He tightened his grip on her hand. "Have you had enough?"

Nancy's grave was disappearing from sight and no matter how much Rachel struggled, Justin had no intention of releasing his grip. Amidst Julian's shouting, she grabbed Justin's arm and fiercely bit it.

A man's muffled groan sounded above her head.

Justin glared at Rachel in disbelief. His eyebrows were trembling as they knitted together and his thin lips were tightly pursed. Even so, he didn't let go of her as he watched blood trickle down his arm.

The foul taste of iron had spread in her mouth. As she kept her glare on him, her eyes turned red before the tears flooded her vision.

In the teary blurriness, her body started to shake uncontrollably.

He carried her in his arms and walked to the entrance of the graveyard without looking back.

Soon, the rain washed away all traces of the blood on the ground.

The bodyguards then released their hold on Julian. He rushed to the entrance of the graveyard and could only watch as Justin's car drove away, which left him in a state of helplessness. Then, Julian turned around to see an unconscious Victor on the ground before deciding to treat the man first.

Justin took Rachel to his villa on the south side of town,

Once they had entered, he dragged her to the bedroom and threw her on the couch. "It's quiet here. This is your home now."

Rachel's hair was in a mess. Her head was lowered as she kept silent, her hands on the cushion beneath her in a death grip.

Her sad demeanor irked Justin, who proceeded to call for a servant.

Soon, a maid gingerly ran in. "Sir."

"Take her to the bathroom. Make sure she gets a bath and a change of clothes before coming to see me."

"Yes, sir."

Justin gave Rachel a cold glance before he added, "Stop playing the victim. There's nothing pitiful about you since you asked for it."

Jefferey had married Rachel off to the Burton Family. When she met Justin, she willingly married him in Amber's place. So, since she was the one who started the ball rolling, she shouldn't do whatever she liked in the end.

After closing the door to the room, Justin felt a chill down his spine.

The servant outside noticed the traces of blood on his hand. "Sir, you should get your hand treated. It's still bleeding."

The teeth marks were clear on the back of his hand-Rachel had bit through his skin and flesh. After he was

soaked in the rain, the wound looked like it was rotting, making it a ghastly sight. "Grab me the first aid kit."

The servant then went to execute Justin's orders while his phone vibrated in his pocket.

It was a call from Amber.

"Hello?"

"Justin, I heard you're fine now?"

"Everything's okay."

"That's great! Where are you now? Let's have a celebratory meal tonight."

"I'll pass. I have some matters to attend to."

Amber's tone changed. "Are you with Rachel right now? Don't forget you are now my fiancé. Why do you keep spending time with another woman?"

Upon hearing that, Justin couldn't suppress the anger spilling onto his face. "I have no obligation to report to you, you know. Even if we're already married, you still don't have any control over me. If you have nothing else to say, I'm hanging up."

With that, he ended the call.

In his entire life, he hated being nagged at. Although Amber possessed something he desired, it didn't mean that he had to obey her.

On the other end of the line, Amber said a few more 'hello's before realizing that the call had ended.

She was so pissed that she wanted to slam her phone on the ground.

Justin was released from the detention center today and it was a piece of news that she had received earlier. She thought that he would come to look for her, but the first person whom he went to meet was Rachel. He still can't get over that woman!

As she recalled his cold attitude moments before, Amber was suddenly afraid. She had worked so hard to attain the position of his fiancée. If this continued, her effort would all be in vain.

She had to plan a way to get Justin back.

After thinking for a while, she typed out a message on her phone and sent it.

Ding!

A message alert rang out in the spacious living room of the villa in the south.

Justin glanced at his phone before he jumped off his seat.

About that matter which you've asked me about, I've thought about it. I have the evidence with me. I don't trust other people, so I want to give it directly to you'

That text was from Amber.

Chapter 148

"Mrs. Burton, your wounds..."

As the maid attended to Rachel's bath, she was shocked to see the numerous injuries on Rachel's body.

Rachel had sustained all those wounds while she was in Brookeville and she didn't take proper care of them nowadays; this was why they were infected and inflamed.

However, she didn't seem like she cared. She simply lay in the bathtub and stared at the lights above her.

The light from the ceiling lights cast flickering shadows, making her dizzy. Everything that happened in the past half year replayed itself like a movie in her head.

At first, she wanted to get Nancy's sickness treated, which was why she was forced to marry Justin in Amber's place. However, it was exactly because of her lingering ties with him that caused Nancy's death in the end.

At the end of the cycle, Rachel felt like everything she did was for naught.

After Rachel emerged from the bath, the maid helped her to the bed and to rest on her back. "Mrs. Burton, rest well. Young Master Justin went out moments ago and we're not sure whether he will be back tonight."

Upon tearing that, Rachel covered herself with a blanket and made herself comfortable. She didn't have the slightest curiosity on where Justin went.

When the maid saw that, she sighed and left, closing the door after her.

Meanwhile, the night breeze was blowing on the river bank.

After hearing the sound of a car motor, Amber immediately turned around. "Justin."

He wore a jet black suit and seemed to melt into the dark night. "Where's the item?"

She gritted her teeth. "I brought it, alright, but Justin, don't you think you owe me an explanation? I went around and worked tirelessly these few days for your sake, but the moment you were released, you looked for Rachel instead. If you really can't let go of her, why bother getting engaged with me?"

“Because you are Amber Hudson.” The look in Justin’s eyes was unfazed. “Right from the start, the one I am supposed to marry is you, not her.”

Amber was stunned.

“If you do not wish to get married, there’s still time to turn around.”

“I don’t mean it like that.” Amber was suddenly flustered. “Of course I’m willing to get married, but Rachel-”

“No ‘but’s. Your father is to blame, for he shouldn’t have allowed Rachel to marry into the Burton Family in your stead. Every woman I have touched would be mine forever, even after divorce.”

The cool breeze carried the cold words unforgivingly into her ears, causing her heart to tremble.

Amber was no fool. Right from the start, she knew all too well what Justin thought of her and her background.

If she wasn’t Jefferey’s daughter and the sole heir to Hudson Pharmaceuticals, Justin wouldn’t even spare her another look.

Still, she could not understand something. There were many young women from families on par with the Burton Family in Riverdale, but Justin paid them no mind. She didn’t know why he had his sights

set firmly on the Hudsons. Her father’s words then echoed and resonated in her head as she mulled over it.

“I can give you the item, but I want our wedding date to be brought forward so that we can get married as

soon as possible.”

Justin wasn't quick to agree. Instead, he questioned Amber coldly, "You were the one who sent people to Southwind Villa on the night of our engagement party, didn't you?"

Under the moonlight, his cold eyes seemed to threaten her.

Amber trembled violently before she quickly denied the notion. "Of course not. No matter what the circumstances between Rachel and I are, we are still sisters in the end. I wouldn't dream of doing such things to her."

"You wouldn't, but Jason would."

The people who were sent to Southwind Villa were clearly not the same people whom she had hired. Amber was a spoiled girl from a rich family, so she wouldn't have connections to vicious criminals. The most she could find were some street ruffians to do her bidding.

However, someone took advantage of her involvement and switched up the members to be sent there. They were all criminals aiming to take Rachel's life.

Amber paled. "Justin, are you suspecting that I was working together with Jason? I didn't do it-I swear!"

"Really? If you didn't, how did you manage to escape from Jason in one piece?"

Jason had brought Amber away when she was in the hospital, but she was released that same night. It was something that she had said herself.

She had nothing to say in return.

"Justin, you can't accuse me like that. I have not the slightest intention of harming you." Amber frantically rummaged through her bag and managed to produce an envelope. "Here's the recorded evidence of him ordering people to kidnap Rachel's grandma. Here, take it. Feel free to pass this to the police for verification. Then, he'll have to spend his whole life in jail. If I really were working together with him, I wouldn't hold on to this piece of evidence, would I?"

Justin took the envelope, the joints pronounced in his slender fingers. "There are many things you shouldn't concern yourself with around me. I hope you know where your limits are. The things I hate most are betrayals and threats."

The river breeze breathed past Amber and she felt chills running down her spine.

Rachel was woken up by the servant for breakfast the next day and when she descended the stairs, she found Justin there as well.

She had no idea when he had returned.

"Mrs. Burton, Mr. Burton had hurried home this morning to accompany you for breakfast. He didn't want you to feel too bored being alone."

The maid had thrown in a good word for Justin as she pulled a chair for Rachel to sit at the table.

Rachel didn't respond much after hearing those words. She simply took the cutlery and sliced into the sandwich and sausages on her plate. She took a few casual bites before she set aside her cutlery and moved to get up.

"Mrs. Burton, you're already done?"

Yes.

Before Rachel could even manage to leave the table, someone had grabbed her by the wrist.

Justin's grip was on her hand when he questioned, "Are you full, or did you lose your appetite at the sight of me?"

She couldn't struggle free of his grasp, nor did she have the energy to. The calm look in her eyes was so cold that it brought chills. What do you think? Should I have an appetite when I look at you? You murderer!

Why would a murderer think that someone would be overjoyed to have meals with him?

His expression darkened in an instant before he flung her away forcefully.

Rachel fell back onto the chair, the pain distorting her delicate features.

Justin placed his hands on the back of the chair and the table, locking Rachel into the tight circle formed by his body. His action had cast a shadow on her. "Do not try my patience. You are not allowed to go anywhere unless you finish the food on your plate."

With that, he threw her a cold glare before he returned to his own seat. "Miss Jennifer, pour another glass of fruit juice for her."

The shocked maid was standing at the side before she nodded hastily. "Understood. I'll attend to it right away."

Rachel's shoulders were furiously trembling as the anger and embarrassment billowed in her chest.

Justin spoke, "I have all the time in the world to spend on you this morning. If you can't finish your breakfast, I'll just sit here and wait until you do. If the food gets cold, I'll get them to warm it up for you. If the food is reheated too often, I'll have them make a fresh batch. If you want to keep me in view so badly, I have all the time in the world to humor you."

The tension between them continued for a long time in silence.

Under the man's persistent gaze, Rachel finally gave up. She picked up the cutlery and tightly held them. Then, she proceeded to slice away at the bacon on her plate.

It was only then when Justin averted his gaze to drink coffee while he read the newspaper at his side.

"From now on, I'll return home every day to accompany you as you eat. Be prepared for that."

Rachel was cutting some bread when she paused in the middle of her actions. Then, she gritted her teeth.

Chapter 149

When Victor regained consciousness, the first thing he saw was Gloria beside him. "How did I end up here?"

"Come on, you had a concussion. Where else would you be except for the hospital? The crematorium?"

A still slightly dazed Victor sat up on the bed. "I remember now. It's Justin. That b*stard knocked me out. Right, where's Miss Rachel? Where is she right now?" If he wasn't awake before, he certainly was by now. "Justin took her away, didn't he? I have to look for her right now!"

Gloria immediately stopped him as she used every ounce of her strength to keep him on the bed. "What are you going to do in this condition? You know it's useless!"

"That good-for-nothing took Miss Rachel away! I can't just stand by and watch!"

"She's fine; she's now staying at Southwind Villa. I sneaked in to check on her before." Her expression was a little complicated. "I feel she wouldn't want to see me, so I didn't enter, though."

Victor slammed his fist on the bed. "What does he want with Miss Rachel? They're already divorced, but he still won't let her go! He even caused a scene at her grandma's funeral!"

"I'll ask him about this matter later. Don't worry about it."

"What do you think his answer would be? How are you still able to see him as a proper human being after all he has done?"

Victor was so furious that he would blow the roof off the ward if he could. "Look at all the pain he has made Miss Rachel endure!"

“There must have been a misunderstanding!”

“Gloria, there’s something wrong with you! You were raised by him, so you’re unable to have unbiased thinking!”

Gloria’s expression suddenly changed as she rose to her feet. “Fine! I’m biased! Are you happy now?”

Her hands were clenched into tight fists as her eyes reddened. She managed to swallow her suppressed emotions as she spoke, “Don’t worry about the matters concerning Grandma; I’ve asked someone to take care of them.”

With that, she took her bag and left the ward without looking back.

Victor watched her leave before he scratched his head in frustration. He was starting to regret not choosing his words earlier.

To Gloria, Justin was a benefactor who raised her.

Even if he really was a wretched criminal, she wouldn’t be able to criticize him like everyone else did.

After she left the hospital, Gloria hailed a cab.

“To Burton Group, please.”

The driver had just passed the traffic lights when Gloria suddenly thought of something. “Sir, please change the destination to the Burton Medical Research Institute on Central Street.”

Since it was already in the afternoon, the heater was switched on in the café as the winds outside were freezing.

“Ria, what’s the matter? You didn’t inform me of your visit beforehand; what if I’m not there? You’d have come here for nothing.”

Amber stirred the coffee in front of her as she studied Gloria.

“Don’t call me that. We’re not that familiar with each other.” Gloria’s expression was cold. “Justin wanted you to help with the development of a new drug, so you’d definitely spend time here on a daily basis to have your efforts recognized. You wouldn’t be anywhere else.”

“You don’t have to be so wary around me. We had a misunderstanding before, which Justin has already explained to me. You are his savior’s daughter, so after I’m married to him, I will also treat you well.”

“No need. That was between me and him.”

“I’m not here to discuss relationships. I just want to give you a piece of advice: leave Justin.”

The spoon in Amber’s hand halted as she answered warily, “Don’t tell me you like him?”

“If I really did, you wouldn’t even have a chance.”

“Then, why should I leave him?”

“Do you know why Justin wanted to marry you and no one else?” Gloria frowned as she quietly looked at Amber. “The Hudson Family isn’t exactly on par with the Burtons. Why would he insist on marrying you? Haven’t you wondered about that?”

The tension in Amber’s eyes was unmistakable. “Why?”

While they were all at the dining table in Southwind Villa at night, the maid brought out the final dish and moved aside to await further orders.

Rachel had her head bowed as she ate and she soon finished half of the food on her plate.

Justin gave her a look and placed a piece of meat on her plate. "Take your time. What's the rush?"

She tightened her grip on the utensils as she glared at the meat on her plate. She suddenly felt her stomach churn, so she covered her mouth as she ran to the bathroom where she started to puke.

His expression soured at lightning speed.

With a loud 'bang', he slapped the utensils on the table.

Rachel gave a painful shout as she felt searing pain on her scalp.

Justin grabbed her hair and forced her to look at him, "Are you that disgusted with me? Is it so nauseating to dine with me?"

"Ahhhh!"

She tried to struggle free as if her life depended on it and her face was flushed.

As he held her collar in a death grip, Justin dragged her to the dining table and placed a whole plate of meat in front of her. "Eat! Finish it all!"

Rachel gritted her teeth, not making a sound.

"Am I expected to feed you?"

She paled as she picked up the pieces of meat and forced them into her mouth.

The oily smell suffocated her and she had to suppress her urge to throw up again.

Justin's fury never receded. He stubbornly watched Rachel eat the food even though she really could no longer endure the smell, which caused the anger inside him to grow even stronger.

"Stop eating!"

She didn't seem to hear him as she kept stuffing the meat into her mouth like clockwork.

"I said, stop eating!"

Justin snatched the plate away.

The white porcelain plate crashed to the floor. As the plate broke into two against the tiles, the meat and broth that it contained splashed everywhere.

Rachel covered her mouth with her hand as she tried to resist the nausea at her throat. However, the moment her digestive juices rose up, her nasal cavity was filled with the smell and she was helpless as she vomited

everything.

As the smell of vomit invaded their nostrils, Rachel was especially affected by it. She uncontrollably emptied the rest of the contents in her stomach onto the floor.

Justin was fuming as he grabbed the tablecloth and flipped everything on the table over.

Amidst the loud crashing of items, he turned and left the scene.

The maid hurried over the moment he departed. "Mrs. Burton! Are you all right?"

Rachel could hardly straighten herself as she weakly waved her hand to signify that she was alright.

“I’ll bring you some water. Please take a rest.”

The maid had only just gone when Rachel slid to the floor while holding the chair for support. It was as if all her energy was drained from her and with a sour feeling in her nose, the tears fell from her eyes.

She didn’t know how much longer she had to play the puppet in a puppeteer’s hands.

Did she really have to live the rest of her life facing Justin and enduring the pain they inflicted on each other?

The maid prepared a glass of honeyed water for Rachel. “Come, Mrs. Burton. Have a drink.”

“I’ll tidy up and prepare another set of dinner for you.”

It’s okay. I don’t want to eat anything now. Rachel placed the glass down and she straightened the pajamas she was wearing. Please take me to my room to rest. I’m tired.

Justin didn’t show up at the villa for a number of days.

After the morning assembly, Frankie brought Justin two documents that required his signature.

The moment when Justin signed his name and returned the documents to his assistant, he asked, “How is she these days?”

“Miss Jennifer said that Mrs. Burton has been taking her meals as usual for the past two days. She’s also recovering well from her injuries and she even took a walk in the yard today.”

The look in Justin’s eyes clouded over. Just as expected. As long as I’m not there, she will live happily!

Chapter 150

"Mrs. Burton, have some herbal soup."

Thanks, Miss Jennifer.

Rachel was reading a book on the couch with a sweater draped over her when Jennifer came with a bowl of soup.

The recently disgruntled Rachel had finally managed to recover a little thanks to Jennifer's help in taking care of her by providing nutritious food.

"Why are you thanking me? All these bowls of herbal soup were sent by Frankie. He had been sending these tonics for the past two days and it would be a waste if you don't eat them."

While she drank the soup, Rachel glanced at one corner of the living room where Frankie placed all the tonics

earlier from the corner of her eye.

Although Justin hadn't visited for the past few days, the items at home still continued to arrive as Frankie would swing by with bags after bags of things every morning.

Even though Rachel didn't talk to Justin, she still acknowledged everything that he did.

Miss Jennifer, thank you for the past two days.

"You're welcome." Jennifer pointed at the kitchen. "There's still more herbal soup in the kitchen. You should drink some since you haven't eaten lunch yet, Frankie. I'll go and get some for you."

"It's fine," came Frankie's reply.

Nevertheless, Jennifer still proceeded to the kitchen despite his refusal.

At the same time, Rachel placed her bowl of herbal soup back on the table before she lowered her head to read her book

Upon seeing that, Frankie hesitantly responded, "Mrs. Burton, the reason why President Burton hasn't been returning home is because he's afraid that you'll lose your appetite at his sight. He actually cares about you."

However, she snorted.

For the past six months, everything that Justin had done made her feel like throwing the towel. As for Hans and Grandma's deaths, which one of them wasn't caused by him? What is he trying to do by being nice to me again?

This isn't him caring for me; this is him being possessive.

I'm just a toy to him that he bought from Jefferey. Even though Justin doesn't like me, he would never let anyone have me since he has purchased me and I belong to him forever.

"Mrs. Burton, it's not like that." Frankie didn't know how to defend Justin. "Do you still blame President Burton for Nancy's death?"

Shouldn't I? Rachel shot Frankie a cold look. If she was your family member, would you have acted like nothing happened?

"It's not like President Burton didn't want to save her, though. He already asked his men to withdraw the second it happened,"

She was stunned before she thought, Justin asked his men to withdraw? Still, he made the police report! If he hadn't done so, Grandma wouldn't have died.

“Police report?” It was his turn to give her an odd look. “Who told you that President Burton made a police report? When the kidnappers demanded a case filled with gold bars, President Burton made a deal to hand

them the gold bars in exchange for Nancy. He even went alone without me!”

At this moment, Rachel sat up in disbelief. That’s impossible. How did Grandma die, then?

“Didn’t the doctor tell you? Nancy’s illnesses acted up again, which was why she passed away the second day after she was kidnapped. The only reason why the kidnappers continued to mess around with us was for more money!”

Her face immediately turned pale. That’s not possible. How could this be?

Then, her hand, which was holding the book, started to tremble.

The book page was torn apart as a dazed Rachel stared at the book on her lap before tears started to drop on the page. Her vision became blurry and she couldn’t tell what was written on the book any longer. Justin wanted to save Grandma?

Frankie sighed. “The police came after that. I don’t know who made the police report, but it’s definitely not President Burton since he went for the deal alone. If it weren’t for the police, something might have already happened to him. You don’t even know how serious it was!”

His clear voice broke through all the allegations that she had made up in her mind. It was her hatred toward

Justin that caused her to make a fool out of herself.

The truth was the complete opposite of what Rachel had imagined.

“Mrs. Burton, please don’t be angry at President Burton anymore. He has been staying at the company all this time and even lost a lot of weight.”

After Frankie left, Rachel was left alone as she stared at the book. Did I misunderstand him?

Although it was already late, she somehow couldn’t fall asleep.

The sound of the car engine rang out from the window’s direction after a long time and she immediately got up from bed.

Upon reflecting on Frankie’s words, Rachel finally decided to thrash it out with Justin.

Nevertheless, voices rang out from outside after she waited for a long time.

Rachel was slightly taken aback as she thought she had misheard and went to open the door.

“Justin, why did you bring me here all of the sudden? It’s too far.”

“Is that so? Well, it’s quiet here since the city is overpopulated.”

“Still, doesn’t Rachel stay here?”

“What about it? She’s just another decorative object in this house anyway. Does anything I want to do or anyone I bring home concerns her? Moreover, you’re my fiancée!”

Upon hearing those two voices, Rachel’s grip on the staircase’s rail tightened. Her fingernails dug deep into the rail as her face paled.

Just a decorative object?! As expected, I’m nothing more than that in his eyes. I can’t believe that I was like a fool to have actually believed what Assistant Beckham claimed. I even thought that I misunderstood Justin when he cared about me.

When she heard those two heading upstairs, she quickly hid in her room.

However, she could still hear those ear-deafening noises from the back of the wall.

“Justin, stop it!”

“Wait for me. I’ll go and take a bath.”

There was silence at this point.

Rachel covered her ears and shook her head helplessly, trying to remove those images in her mind. Still, she couldn’t lie to herself as she fell to the carpeted floor while bitterness filled her mouth.

The sound of water splashing down continued to ring in her ears.

Not able to withstand it anymore, Rachel staggered to the bathroom where she sat in the bathtub without removing her clothes. Then, she turned on the tap. In no time, the bathtub was filled with water before she submerged herself in it as she tried to block all the noises that plagued her.

At the same time, a neatly dressed man sat on the couch and lit up his cigar in the room next door.

He wasn’t affected by the noises of water in the bathroom whatsoever.

Nevertheless, his face darkened in the midst of the smoke.

Throughout the past few days, Rachel had never tried to contact him or send any texts. Even after he had brought Amber home, he did not see Rachel emerging from her room after he waited in the living room for what seemed like eternity.

Looks like that woman really wishes for me to disappear from her sight since she doesn't want to be related to anything about me. Well, it's true that she didn't get married into the Burton Family anyway.

Justin's expression darkened at that thought.

At this moment, Amber's voice rang out from the bathroom. "Justin, why aren't there any towels in the bathroom? Can you grab one for me?"

As he snapped out of his daze, he frowned.

"Justin, are you outside? Justin?!"

Amber poked her head out of the bathroom in confusion.

However, Justin had already left some time ago, only leaving a midst of cigar smoke around the couch.