

Mute Bride 161

Chapter 161

"Rachel's incident is complex but I'm not getting rid of her just yet," Jefferey answered in a faraway tone, but it sounded more like he was talking to himself. "She's important to the company's survival. I wouldn't have kept her around otherwise."

Amber's heart sank. After her father had gone out, she sat on the edge of her bed and gulped a glass of water. She was a spoiled girl, so that was the first time she ever heard her father talking about Rachel in such

a high regard. But instead of listening to him, she got jealous. Really? Important to the company? Why?

Riverdale's winter was hauntingly beautiful and it was as if life itself seemed to have gone into a slumber. Not a soul was stirring, at least not on the surface. In a tailor shop within the old area, Janice pulled the curtains back slightly and rubbed her freezing hands. Ever since she was suspended, she had been helping her grandfather with his tailor business.

"Did you find her?" Julian quickly stood up. It had been two months since he got that slip from Rachel.

However, Janice shook her head. "No. Not even a clue."

"How did this happen? She can't have disappeared into thin air!" Julian was starting to panic. "It's been two months. This can't go on any longer. I'm going to ask him where he's hiding her."

"Do you think he'll tell you?" Janice countered with a serious look. "No news is good news. Perhaps the best news."

"So we're just gonna do nothing but wait?" Julian was already getting ready to take Rachel overseas with him when he got that slip two months ago but when he went to see her the next day, there was nobody left in the

villa, save for Jennifer. That being said, Jennifer knew nothing about Rachel's disappearance as well. After that, he turned to Janice, thinking that she could at least find some clue.

“Justin is a cautious man. We won’t find her that easily now that he has hid her away. And he knows I’m Rachel’s friend, so he’s going to be doubly on guard.”

Upon hearing that, Julian asked, “What should we do then? He’s going to kill Rachel at this rate.”

“He’s your cousin. You should know him better than I do. Since he’s hiding her, that means he’s not trying to kill her. My guess is...”

“What? What is it?”

“He’s worried that you might take her away.”

Julian paled and he plopped back down on the chair. “Great! Now I feel like punching myself. I should have been more careful and shouldn’t have let him know I was taking her overseas.”

“Don’t beat yourself up. We’re not out of options just yet.”

“What else can we do?”

“Since he locked her up, he’ll be seeing her for sure. We can’t get a hold on him, but someone can.”

“Who?”

“Gloria.”

Julian paused for a moment. Oh-yeah! Justin trusts Gloria the most. He’ll be on his guard, but not when it comes to her.

The bell chimed at midnight, announcing the arrival of Springfest. The feeling of festivity rose with each

chime, eventually reaching a fever pitch. Although Springfest was here, someone wasn't in a celebratory mood. She was locked in a claustrophobic room with nothing but a bed, a simple desk, and a TV. It was airing

a Springfest program, though the show was coming to a close.

At the same time, the fireworks display was already starting. Rachel looked outside the window, immersing herself in the flashy display for a moment. Then she held the chair and stood up, revealing her slightly rounded belly. Indeed, she was already four months pregnant.

She only found out about it after Justin locked her in here. Since then, he told everyone to move everything out so she couldn't kill the baby easily. Even the window was locked from outside, leaving just a small crack. It was through that crack Rachel saw the fireworks going up in the city center.

She touched the glass window, blinking at the blooming fireworks. Her eyes were shining a little but when she heard someone opening the door, the light died out.

The one who came in was none other than Justin. However, he was surprised to see Rachel standing before the window.

"I'll be off then, President Burton. I'll be here tomorrow morning," Frankie told Justin, snapping the latter out of

Justin nodded and took the thermos lunch box from Frankie.

The door was then locked but it wasn't the end. Rachel heard the sound of a chain rattling as it passed through the handle. Justin wasn't satisfied with a smart lock, so he had to double up the security by adding a chain. It locked him in as well, but he felt more secure that way.

Rachel looked at the door and sneered at him. Why did you lock yourself in here too? You can't get out in time if something were to happen.

"I'll be fine," Justin said. He then opened the thermos lunch box and murmured in a shockingly gentle tone, "You should eat something."

Rachel put a hand on her lower back as she went over to the desk, but she was shocked to see what was inside the lunch box-pierogies.

"Pierogies are perfect for Springfest Eve. Gloria said you like leek and egg pierogies, so I got the restaurant to make this." Justin set up the plate and poured some vinegar into it before handing a pair of chopsticks to her.

Pierogies always reminded Rachel of her late grandmother. Her grandmother loved to make her leek and egg pierogies back when she was still alive. They tasted different with or without the vinegar. I don't feel like eating.

A frown creased Justin's forehead. He picked up a pierogi, dipped it in vinegar and tried to feed her. "Here, have a bite."

However, she turned away.

"Even if you don't want to eat, the baby has to."

I never wanted this child.

Justin's face fell. A moment later, he gripped her face harshly. "Say that again."

At this point, there was nothing but pure, unadulterated iciness on Rachel's face. Not a day had gone by without misery after she found out she was pregnant. She struggled to come to terms after her first

miscarriage, but she couldn't bring herself to love the child she was bearing this time.

She was like a bird locked in a cage being fed by her owner. Her freedom was snatched away from her and she had lost the most basic dignity of what it means to be human, all because Justin wanted his child to come to this world.

Justin then gripped her face even more tightly, warning her, "Do you really think I can't threaten you anymore? You think you can do anything you want now? I'll have you know that thug who follows you around is searching for you everywhere. He even tailed me today."

Rachel froze up when she thought of Victor. What did you do to him?

Justin let her go and tried to feed her the pierogi again. "Open your mouth."

Rachel bit her lip as tightly as she could, glaring at Justin. She wanted to refuse but in the end, she opened her mouth and let him feed her. However, the pierogi tasted bitter, like despair and sadness.

It had been two months. Two whole months of suffering.

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Rachel covered her mouth after having some pierogies.

"What is it? Are you going to puke?" Justin put the chopsticks down and looked at her suspiciously.

After a hard battle, Rachel finally held her nausea down. That was the worst morning sickness she ever had. The doctor had even come to check on her twice. There were a lot of machines and the checkup was thorough, but they found nothing wrong with the child.

"Better?" Justin asked as she patted her back.

Rachel nodded, but a dark flame rose within her eyes and something flashed within them.

Justin suddenly gasped in pain and flung her away. As he staggered backward, he stared at his abdomen in disbelief. A sharp glass shard was embedded in his belly and his shirt was fast being drenched in crimson.

Quickly, Rachel stood up and using the chair as support, she stood behind the table.

Justin held the glass shard that was embedded in his belly and said through gritted teeth, "Where did you get this?"

Upon hearing that, Rachel looked at the restroom. She shattered the mirror in there during their last argument and hid a shard before the janitor could clear it away. Since then, she had sharpened the shard, finally putting it to good use today.

Waves of pain started coursing through Justin and beads of sweat formed on his forehead. His steps were

getting weak as more blood flowed out of his wound. "Do you really want me to die so badly?"

Rachel took a few steps back, keeping a safe distance between them.

Her indifference stoked Justin's flames of fury, for a wounded pride was more unbearable to him than a wound on his body. "You think you can get away after you kill me? That's not going to happen so easily."

He tried to approach her but everything around him started spinning, and he slowly slid down along the chair's side. Before he lost consciousness, however, he growled, "Rachel Hudson!"

As for the woman in question, she quickly banged on the door after Justin lost consciousness.

Eventually, the window on the door slid open. "Mrs. Burton? Do you need anything?"

Rachel quickly made some gestures but the guard didn't know what she was getting at. In the end, she retreated to the side and pointed at the carpet.

“President Burton!” the bodyguard gasped. A moment later, the chains started rattling.

When Justin woke up, he realized he was in the hospital. In the end, he had to get eight stitches to his wound

and it was now heavily bandaged.

“You’re finally awake, President Burton,” Frankie murmured as he sat beside the bed.

Justin sat up the moment he regained consciousness. The pain was throbbing, but he ignored it and grabbed Frankie. “Where’s Rachel?” he asked.

“Please don’t move! It will only reopen your wound.”

“Where’s Rachel? Did she escape?” Justin’s fury flared. “Search for her! Don’t just stand there! I’m perfectly fine!”

Frankie froze up in fear. “Mrs. Burton didn’t run away. She’s still there, so please don’t worry.”

This time, it was Justin’s turn to be surprised. “She didn’t escape?”

“Yes. She’s the one who told the guard to take you here while she stayed behind. The guard didn’t even lock the room in the heat of the moment. He was worried Mrs. Burton might run away, but she was still there when he got back.” Frankie then helped Justin down on the bed. “What happened, President Burton?” he asked carefully.

The question didn’t reach Justin, for he was deep in thought. She went a long way to stab me. That was the perfect chance for her to escape, so why didn’t she? Why did she do that?

Then, someone knocked on the door.

"Miss Hochmann's here."

"Justin!"

Gloria called out to him, snapping him out of it.

"I'll be going then, President Burton. Have a speedy recovery." Frankie announced, to which Justin hummed in response.

Meanwhile, Gloria put her bag down in a hurry. "I came as soon as I heard the news. What happened? Did you

get robbed or something?"

"It's nothing. I tripped," Justin answered calmly.

"And conveniently got eight stitches? I've asked the doctor, you know?"

"I'm fine. Don't worry." Justin looked at her. "Haven't seen you for a while. Where were you? Had a lot of fun, huh?"

Upon hearing that, Gloria was annoyed and she countered, "That's my line. You were gone for months. What have you been up to? Nothing illegal, I hope. Couldn't even see you when I want to."

Justin smiled, but that tore on his wound and he gasped.

"Are you alright?" A worried look painted Gloria's face.

"Don't worry, I'm fine and I didn't do anything illegal. How's the new piano?"

“Meh. My old one’s better.” Gloria frowned. “Oh-that reminds me. I sent someone to take my piano from the Southwind villa a couple of days ago. Didn’t see Miss Rachel there. Miss Jennifer said she’s been gone for two months. What happened?”

“She hasn’t been too well, so she’s recuperating somewhere.”

“Where, exactly?”

“Don’t ask. The fewer people who know, the better. It’s for her own good.

Gloria was about to ask again but Justin stopped her by saying, “Alright, I’m retiring for the night. Just go home. I’m fine.”

And so, Gloria had no choice but to oblige. After she left the hospital, she hailed a cab at the exit. “Take me to the old district please.”

Janice was still in the tailor shop, making tea.

Gloria told them about what happened in the hospital after she came in. “I managed to swipe this.”

She whipped out an X-ray image and Julian looked at it. “This wound isn’t caused by a knife. It’s deep and the edges are irregular. It looks like... a glass shard.”

“Bingo.” Gloria took a plastic bag out of her pocket. “And it’s right here, but I got nothing else. I asked him where he’s hiding her but he won’t even tell me. Guess he doesn’t trust me too.”

Janice then poured her a cup of tea. “Calm down. When did this happen?”

“Last night.”

"Then Rachel's probably the one who did this."

A frown creased Janice's forehead and she mused, "Why did she stab him though?"

Julian answered, "Maybe she wanted to escape."

"Not quite right. Justin's not the only one keeping an eye on her, I'm sure about that. There are other guards there, so stabbing him won't make a difference." Janice looked at the plastic bag. "You said this is the glass shard, correct?"

"Yes." Gloria nodded. "I got it from the discarded items like you asked me to, but how is this helpful?"

Janice took the glass shard out and washed the blood off it. "Come here." She beckoned them.

Julian and Gloria huddled around her. After the blood was washed away, they could see a scratch on it, though it was minuscule. As if worried someone might notice it, the scratches looked like they were made nonchalantly, though they could vaguely make a word out of it.

"River?" Janice looked at it for a long while before coming up with a guess. "Guys, take a look. I think these scratches look like a word. See if your guess aligns with mine."

"Looks like 'river' to me."

Gloria's eyes lit up. "Is Miss Rachel trying to tell us she's locked somewhere beside a river?"

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"I'll get my men to check all the neighborhoods that are near a river." Janice put the glass shard down, looking troubled. "But this will be a big project, so we might go a while without any clues." If Rachel is locked up somewhere near a river, that means every neighborhood in Riverdale that is near a river is going to be on our list.

Upon hearing that, Gloria offered, "My friend can help. I'll ask them."

“No. That’s too conspicuous. You’d best lay low or Justin will know something’s up. It’s going to be a problem if he takes Rachel somewhere else.”

“I don’t think he will. He’s seriously injured.” The mention of Justin’s situation saddened Gloria. Even though everyone thought he was a cruel person, she couldn’t bring herself to agree. She was really worried for him when she knew he was injured.

Julian patted her shoulder to show solidarity as he shared her sentiment, after all. Justin was his cousin so even though they weren’t on the best of terms, he was still Julian’s family. “Don’t feel too pressured, Gloria. We’re not betraying him. Just trying to make sure he won’t do something he’ll regret for the rest of his life.”

Gloria nodded.

“Then that’s it for now. I’ll assemble the squad,” Janice said.

“Okay.”

The room was as dim as ever as there was only a small opening on the window that allowed sunlight to shine on the room. Rachel was watching some TV as usual, and a can of sour plums sat on the table before her. Aside from the TV, she had nothing that could connect her to the outside world.

Someone came to dispose of everything that had glass in it the day after Justin was injured. When Justin came himself, he saw a dozen or so plums lying on the table. “You like those plums? I’ll get Frankie to buy more tomorrow.”

Rachel looked at him. Can I even say no? She had no choice but to passively accept everything he gave her. What will it take for you to let me go?

Justin frowned. “After you give birth to the child.”

Don't tell me you can't find anyone else who wants to bear your child. You can get any woman you want with a wave of your hand, so why won't you just let me go? Rachel suddenly got agitated and she gestured, Because I'm Jefferey's daughter? I've already told you that I'm not!

"Calm down." Justin held her wildly waving hands. "I said, calm down," he growled.

Rachel tried to break free but she couldn't. Her chest was heaving and her face became flushed. Meanwhile, her lips were trembling but she couldn't make a sound.

"You have to stay calm. The doctor said so."

Stay calm? She felt a lump in her throat and tears streamed down her cheeks. How can I even do that? Pretend my whole childhood never happened? Pretend that this man in front of me isn't that boy I saved? Pretend that he's not the cause of Hans and Grandma's deaths? At that thought, Rachel flung Justin's hand away.

Justin wanted to hold her, but he hesitated and decided against that in the end. He then poured her a glass of water and put her medicine on the table. "Take your meds."

Rachel wiped her tears away and gulped all the meds without even looking at them, but they were stuck in her throat a moment later.

Upon seeing that, Justin handed her a glass of water. "Have some water."

The water melted the meds, making it easier for her to swallow. The pills were painful to swallow and it made her eyes redder, but it stopped her tears. At least pain could make sure she stayed sober.

The TV was airing a crime movie. The villain was escaping in an abandoned factory but he was shot a moment later and blood splattered everywhere. When Justin saw that, he said, "Watch something else. This

is too gory for the baby." He switched to a cartoon channel that was showing some sheep running in the meadow. "This is good."

So I can't even choose my shows now?

Justin frowned and put the remote control down.

However, Rachel didn't touch it. I'm tired. I want to sleep.

She went to her bed but Justin got angry again and he questioned, "How much longer are you going to throw a tantrum?"

What are you talking about?

"You could have killed me back then. Why did you tell them to save me?"

Rachel froze. She knew Justin would bring that matter up eventually, so she answered, I did want to kill you, but I don't want to die. I can't run away even if you're dead, right?

In response, Justin yelled, "You're still trying to escape? You literally stabbed me! That should have been enough, so what more do you want? Fine! I broke Hans' legs, so do you want to get back at me for him?" He suddenly put a dagger on the table. "Here's a dagger. Stab me anywhere you want. You

can do anything as long as you'll stay here safely and bear the child." He put the dagger in her hand. "Go on, stab me!"

All the color drained from Rachel's face as Justin tried to guide the dagger into his chest. You're mad! Why are you doing this? She was terrified.

"I thought you wanted to kill me. If you do it now, they'll let you go. You can leave Riverdale-heck, even the country-and nobody will try to catch you." He let her hand go, but the dagger was still inches away from his chest.

All Rachel had to do was stab him in the chest and he would die. However, everything started spinning around her, even Justin. The closer the dagger was to his chest, the more the world spun.

Eventually, she lost her grip on the dagger and it fell down. All her strength left her and she plopped on the ground, laughing and crying at the same time.

“You don’t even have the guts to kill me.” He held her chin, looking at her with dead, dark eyes. “I gave you a chance, Rachel. You lost it, so now you can’t complain anymore. Stop giving me that attitude, you hear me?”

To Justin, anything could be forgiven as long as it was an eye for an eye. However, he had no inkling that some wounds were so deep that forgiveness was out of the question, and that those wounds would simply not heal.

Rachel thought Justin’s gesture was laughable. A long, long while later, she gestured with trembling hands, I’ll give birth to the baby.

Justin was surprised, but that reply worked well in calming down his temper. While Rachel went to bed, he stood there for a while before going up to her.

Rachel could feel him getting into her bed and hugging her through the blanket. The hug got tighter and tighter as time went on.

“You don’t have to worry about the baby’s future. Once I finish my business and after you give birth, we’ll get remarried. You’ll still be my wife,” Justin said, like it was some sort of divine gift.

Rachel, on the other hand, was suffocating from the hug but she didn’t struggle.

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Rachel slowly closed her eyes. She didn’t care about being his wife or if the baby would be a b*stard. Ever since she got her memories back, she knew the both of them could never be together again.

It had been a month since Janice and her subordinates started the search in all the riverside neighborhoods. "Still nothing?" Julian asked as he handed her a bottle of water.

The wind was blowing against Janice's hair. She took a sip and shook her head. "We searched all the riverside neighborhoods. One by one as well. No clue until now."

"Maybe she's locked in a mountain somewhere?"

"No. It's mostly manors there. The Bureau of Real Estate has records of the manors' owners."

Bureau of Real Estate? All of a sudden, Julian had a stroke of inspiration. "I think we've been looking at this the wrong way. Even if Justin locked Rachel up, he wouldn't put her in a place unrelated to him."

"What are you getting at?"

"She's either in a hotel or a personal estate he owns."

Janice gripped the water bottle and she realized what Julian was getting at. "Hotels are out. There are too many people there."

Which meant there were only estates left.

With how cautious Justin was, he would never take Rachel out of Riverdale, so she must be in one of the estates in the city.

Julian frowned. "But what's up with 'river'? What's she trying to say?"

"Probably the neighborhood's name." Janice then made a call. "Hello? It's me. I want all the details of Justin Burton's estates in Riverdale ASAP."

Janice received an email not long after she hung up. "He has a lot of properties in Riverdale."

Julian nodded. "Good thing it's still just this one city."

"I'll get my men to search the neighborhoods that have 'river' in their names. If we still can't find her, we'll expand the range. Don't worry about it too much. No news is the best news."

"I know." It had been more than three months since Rachel's disappearance, and Julian knew Janice was worried as well.

At the same time, Gloria came to the Burton Group to settle some matters. However, she ran into a janitor coming out of the other elevator when she arrived at her floor. He was pushing the cart as he went toward the president's office. The janitor was lanky and a tuft of yellow hair sprouted from under his cap. Gloria's heart sank when she realized who the janitor was, so she chased after him.

Justin's secretary would usually stand guard outside his office when he wasn't in. When the secretary had to leave, she would lock the door to keep any unauthorized personnel out. So when Gloria came to the office, she saw the 'janitor' trying to unlock the door. "What are you doing?"

The 'janitor' leaped in shock, revealing the face underneath the cap. It was none other than Victor. Before he could say anything, they heard someone talking just around the corner. Hence, Gloria quickly grabbed him and put her finger on the fingerprint scanner. The door swung open a moment later and she dragged him in with her.

After the door swung shut, they heard the secretary's voice saying, "Who left this cart here? Assistant Beckham's going to yell at someone if he sees this."

"I'll get the janitor to pick this up."

Meanwhile, Gloria and Victor were in the office. "Are you mad?" She glared at him as she questioned, "Why did you come here? How did you manage to even get in?"

Victor took his face mask off, his face as handsome as ever. That being said, he looked more gaunt and there were a few bruises on his face.

Gloria was surprised to see that. "What happened to your face?"

"Ask Burton." Victor looked at her in disgust, which in turn angered her.

"Why are you looking at me like that, silly kid? I just saved your *ss! You're so ungrateful."

"I don't need your help, you hypocrite." With that, Victor went to Justin's desk, leaving Gloria behind.

"Hey, what are you doing? Don't go through someone's stuff without permission."

Victor rummaged through all the drawers and cabinets.

"What are you looking for?"

"I'm seeing where he has hidden Rachel!"

"Are you mad? She can't be here! What do you think she is? A rabbit?"

Upon hearing that, Victor snapped, "Do you have any better idea, then? I've tailed him for three months but I got nothing!"

He had tailed Justin almost every day for the last three months but every time, he would end up losing

Justin's track or getting beaten up by his bodyguards.

"Be quiet! Someone might hear you!"

"So what? I'm taking this straight to Burton anyway."

"You-" However, someone opened the door before she could say anything. Gloria's face fell and she dragged Victor into a cubicle in the room. She managed to close the door before the people outside could come in. Victor tried to break free, but she held him back. "You'd better stay put if you don't want to get messed up."

Victor didn't want to listen, but she had a point. He would only get a beating if he went out right now.

A moment later, Justin and Frankie came in.

"We bought the video and everything related to Hans with five million, just like you asked. But we didn't expect another one to pop up. Seems like Windfall wasn't the only one who got it on camera."

Hans? Victor was angered, but Gloria quickly covered his mouth and glared at him.

Justin answered, "Not quite. Perhaps we paid them the five million too readily, so they let their greed get the better of them. They're working with another outlet to get more out of us."

"You're saying Windfall has a backup?"

"Hans saw Winston at the hospital by accident. It's only by chance Windfall's reporter got it on video. There's no way a reporter from another outlet was there."

Frankie nodded in assent. "That's true. This is no coincidence, and they could have asked us for the money if they had gotten it at the same time as Windfall. This is just extortion with extra steps."

"Settle this as soon as possible. I want it to end here."

"Roger that, President Burton."

Meanwhile, Gloria was still in the cubicle. Since the door was ajar, she could see that the cabinets and

drawers were open. If Justin were to approach his desk, he would know someone was here. At that thought, she cursed deep down.

Just as she feared, Justin stood up after he was done talking. From the looks of it, he was going to go to his desk.

Suddenly, Frankie's phone rang. "Hello? I see. I'll be right there." After he hung up, Frankie said, "President Burton, the doctor is in the underground car park. When are you going over?"

Justin nodded and put down the file he was holding. "Right away."

After they left and locked the door, Gloria finally heaved a sigh of relief. However, Victor pulled the door open and made a beeline for the desk.

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"What are you doing, Victor?" Gloria caught up to him.

Victor, however, picked up the document on the table. The first thing he saw was the stamp of the most famous media outlet in Riverdale, but what caught his attention was the content. It was shocking to say the least. "Burton's the one who killed Hans!"

"Impossible! You're lying!"

"See for yourself." Victor handed the document to her.

The document detailed an illegal transaction that happened near a hospital. There were even pictures to prove it. The one who was holding the safe box was the same person who pulled Hans into the van

-it was none other than one of Justin's bodyguards.

“Winston?” Gloria asked, recognizing the bodyguard right away.

“He’s the one who took Hans. What do you have to say for Burton now?”

All the color drained from her face when she heard that. “No. This is a misunderstanding. Even if Winston’s behind Hans’ death, that doesn’t mean Justin ordered him to kill Hans. No, there’s no way

Justin would do that. He wouldn’t!”

“He wouldn’t do it? What a farce.” Victor snereed. “Didn’t you hear what his assistant said? They had this for a long time and there is even a video too. If he’s not guilty, why did he spend five million on this?” With that, he took the document and was about to walk out of the room.

“Where are you going?”

“To the cops. I’m reporting this.” Hans was hospitalized because of me. Truth was, Victor had been feeling guilty about it ever since he talked with Rachel. He wanted to apologize but alas, Hans was murdered before he could. Victor knew he could never make it up to Hans anymore, so the only thing he could do was expose the murderer so Hans could rest in peace.

“Victor, are you mad? Hold it right there!” Gloria quickly got in his way. “You can’t report this to the cops.”

“You’re helping that b*stard?”

“No. This is for your own good! Do you think you can get Justin arrested just because you have this information? This is just a trouble magnet.” Gloria gritted her teeth. “Even if he’s really the murderer, he’s just going to get alarmed if he finds out about this.”

Upon hearing that, Victor paused.

Since he was starting to calm down, Gloria extended her hand and reassured, "Listen to me. Give me that article and pretend you never saw this."

Victor, however, doubted her. "You'll look into this?"

"I've been looking into this for a long time now," Gloria insisted. "I've been looking for Rachel for ages. You can help me out if you want to."

Meanwhile, Victor was still holding the five-million-dollar article, suspicious about Gloria. "And how can I know you're not trying to get rid of this evidence for Justin? How do I know you won't kill me just like he killed Hans?"

"Get rid of the evidence? Me?" Gloria glared at him furiously. A short while later, she stomped on Victor's foot.

"Ow!" Victor gasped in pain. "What was that for?"

"I wouldn't have taken you with me earlier if I wanted to kill you. You'd already be dead by now."

Victor was gasping from the pain, and Gloria took the article from him. "What are you doing? Give that back!"

"You'll really die if I give this back to you." She glared at him and put it back on the table. "Give me your phone."

"What are you trying to do?"

"Just give it to me." She whipped out an old phone from Victor's pocket and snapped some photos of the article, then she tossed the phone back to him. "You can't take the manuscript, but you can have these photos. Happy?"

Victor was surprised.

Gloria closed the drawers and cabinets before turning around to stare at him. "You're ungrateful, you know that?" She then left the company but Victor followed her. "Why are you following me?" Gloria

growled. "I'm a hypocrite, aren't I?"

Victor skidded to a halt and was petrified for a while. "Hey! I just want to say that I'm sorry."

Gloria finally stopped in her tracks. "That's all? Just an apology?"

"What do you want then?"

"Food. I'm starving!" With that, Gloria turned around. She was still looking angry, and her cheeks were puffed.

Victor scratched his head. "Sure. My treat."

The night breeze brushed against Riverdale's river. It was early spring, so some people were still wearing winter clothes on the street. Gloria was sitting on a bench, chomping down on her chicken drumstick and hamburger.

Victor then asked, "Are you sure that's all you want?"

"What's wrong? I like these." Gloria raised her chin and muttered, "Give me the Coke."

Victor gave her the Coke, but since she was holding something in both of her hands, she nudged over to take a big sip. A moment later, she let out a big burp, and an awkward silence fell between them.

Gloria rolled her eyes. "What are you looking at? Never seen a hot girl burp?"

Victor looked at her with blatant disgust. "If you call yourself hot, then there'd be no uglies in the world."

"If I'm not hot, who is?"

"Rachel. She's kind, gentle, knowledgeable, and nice to everyone around her. I've never seen anyone as beautiful and kind as she was." The more Victor talked about Rachel, the sadder he was. "I wonder how she's doing."

Gloria dropped her smile too. "Don't worry. Justin's not the monster you think he is," she said. "He

won't torture her. Janice said that Justin hid Rachel because he's worried Julian might take her away."

"He's a madman. Locking her up is already a form of torture. She's not a prisoner!"

"Calm down." Gloria put her food down and wiped her hands off. "Let's not talk about this. Janice is almost done with the neighborhood, but there's still no sign of Rachel. Where could she be?" It's been

three months. She's gotta be somewhere livable. Gloria then mumbled, "She must be somewhere in Riverdale. Justin was taken to the hospital right after he was injured. If she's somewhere in the rural area, he would have been dead on arrival."

Victor frowned. "He was injured? He deserves it. No wonder he was going to see a doctor."

"A doctor?" Gloria was surprised. "He wanted to see a doctor?" She didn't hear what Justin and Frankie were talking about in the heat of the moment, since she was trying to keep Victor quiet and praying that Justin didn't notice his drawers were open.

"Yeah," Victor answered. "His assistant said Dr. McCarty or something is in the car park. Asked Burton when he'd be seeing the doctor."

Lots of thoughts were racing in Gloria's mind. "Why didn't the doctor go to the office if he's there for Justin then?" No. He was not there for Justin, which is why he didn't go to the office.

Chapter 166

"This is all the surveillance footage of the Burton Group this afternoon."

Inside the surveillance room of the Riverdale Investigation Bureau, Janice's subordinate was operating the computer and swiftly displaying the surveillance footage on the large screen. There were eight split screens showing the situation on the third floor of Burton Group's underground garage.

Gloria couldn't help exclaiming in admiration, "How amazing!"

Janice stared at the video on the screen with her arms folded in front of her chest. "Do you remember the approximate time?"

Gloria and Victor exchanged a glance. "It was around 2.00PM. We heard Assistant Beckham saying that the doctor had arrived at the garage, so it should be around that time."

Janice nodded. "Jesse, please adjust the time."

"Yes, Officer Hawkins."

The image on the screen played at an accelerated speed and soon came to the time Gloria and Victor had mentioned. All four of them stared intently at the surveillance footage on the screen.

All of a sudden, Gloria exclaimed, "Wait! I see it!" She pointed at the monitor showing the entrance of the garage. "The person driving this car is one of Justin's bodyguards. I've seen him before."

Janice acknowledged it. "Change cameras and follow this car."

The screen immediately began to follow the movements of this car in the garage until it finally parked in one of the parking spots. Then, a middle-aged man in a suit and leather shoes got out of the back seat

with a box in his hands. One could forgo the white lab coat, but the medicine box was a must for a doctor who was visiting a patient.

“Pause for a moment and zoom in on this image.” Janice walked closer to the screen. “This is probably him. Run a check on his identity and background information.”

“Wait.” Julian’s voice suddenly came from the side. “I think I’ve seen this person before.”

They all showed stunned expressions on their faces. Meanwhile, he leaned closer to the screen and carefully confirmed. “Yes, I’ve seen him at Riverdale’s second quarter medical seminar. He was the representative of Rosewood Hospital, Flynn Mccarty. He is the Director of Rosewood Hospital’s Obstetrics and Gynecology Department.”

Janice was stunned. “The Obstetrics and Gynecology Department?!”

Likewise, Gloria and Victor had expressions of disbelief on their faces too. The Obstetrics and Gynecology Department?

After the doctor left, Rachel leaned back against the head of the bed and placed both hands on her swollen belly. Due to her pregnancy, Justin would have a doctor examine her twice every month to check on the development of the fetus. Furthermore, he would visit her every time the doctor came.

“According to the doctor, the fetus is developing well. It is very healthy.” Justin’s voice sounded from behind her.

Lowering her head, she stared at her belly. She was now more than five months pregnant, so her belly was showing an obvious bulge. The side effects had changed from morning sickness at the beginning of her pregnancy to the recent constant drowsiness. Thus, she spent most of her time sleeping.

“I hope it’s a girl. What about you?”

She did not respond to those words. In her opinion, it did not matter whether it was a boy or a girl who was born to the Burton Family. After all, things did not end well even for Tina, who was loved by all, so

why would it matter whether it was a boy or a girl?

Your wedding with Amber should be approaching, right? You don't need to come and visit me so frequently if you are busy. It's better for you to concentrate on the wedding preparations.

When he heard that, the joy in his eyes immediately disappeared without a trace. A touch of sorrow slowly rose up in his eyes instead. "Are you trying to drive me away?"

You're overthinking things. Besides, this is your territory. It's not my place to kick you out. She quietly looked out the window. Even though it had been boarded up securely, she gazed out into the distance in silence, as though she could see the scenery outside.

He clenched his fists tightly and stood behind her for a while before slamming the door behind him as he left. He did not know how many times it had been, but over the past few months, they had always parted on bad terms every time he came here. She had changed from her previous timid and gentle nature to becoming cold and indifferent instead. Her attitude toward him was of almost complete disregard; she looked at the window more times than she looked at him. Despite that, he came even more diligently than before.

The sound of the door loudly slamming shut behind Justin made the entire room tremble in response. Only then did Rachel turn back. She calmly clenched her fist, got up, and walked over to the window. The gap the size of a fist was just enough for her to see the river view in the distance.

The Burton Group was located right in the commercial center by the riverside. It was the most prosperous area. Traffic was heavy 30 floors below her, and the crowds were bustling about like ants. Nobody could have expected Justin to lock her up on the topmost floor of the Burton Group. It was where he worked every day, so he could monitor her every move at any time and from anywhere.

Will Janice and the others be able to find me? she wondered as her eyes gradually closed.

That night, Rachel slept very restlessly. The frequency of her nightmares was increasing. It felt like there was a huge hammer knocking against her temples in her dream, causing her to suffer from a splitting headache. Jerking awake, she suddenly realized that the tapping sound was not from her dream-it was coming from the window.

This is the top floor of the Burton Group! What could be outside the window?! She abruptly threw aside her blanket and ran over to the only gap in the window.

Knock Knock. The tapping sound was definitely coming from the window. She tentatively knocked on the window twice in response, then there was a few seconds of silence from the outside. Just as she was thinking that it was only her imagination, two more taps on the window sounded. Knock Knock.

Suppressing the surging feelings in her heart, she glanced at the fist-sized opening on the window out of the corner of her eyes. It was the only corner in the room that had not been covered by a curtain from the outside. Thus, she jogged over to that piece of glass, lifted her hand, and tapped on it three times. Knock Knock Knock.

After waiting for some time, somebody suddenly blocked the glass from the outside, whereupon Rachel's heart sank suddenly. But, in the next moment, she saw a beam of light moving around slightly through the window and shining into the room. Immediately after that, a large corner of the curtain sealing this room from the outside was ripped away to reveal the top of Riverdale's clock tower in the distance. At the same time, it also revealed the figure of the person leaning against the glass window.

Rachel covered her mouth with her hands in disbelief, her eyes reddening immediately. Meanwhile, the

other party was hanging from a safety rope and communicating with her in sign language. I finally found you!

It was Coraline Harper! Caroline was a woman Rachel had met once before in Brookville; she helped Rachel out of a sticky situation at the dining table and later asked her to help hand over a USB drive while the former was on the run from being chased.

At this moment, Coraline was dressed in pitch-black tight-fitting clothes. She had practically blended into the night. There were two safety ropes hanging from her body as she walked on the glass surface of the high-rise building as though it were flat ground. Her nimble and agile skills indicated that she was no ordinary person.

Seeing that, Rachel recalled something Janice once mentioned to her-Coraline was an undercover agent of the Riverdale Investigation Bureau. Suppressing the shock in her heart, she hurriedly signed back at Coraline. Why are you here?!

Janice asked me to find you. How are you?

After following the doctor who came to Burton Group every two weeks, Janice and the others had quickly inferred where Rachel was being detained. The word 'River' on that piece of glass was referring to Green River Street, where Burton Group was located.

Rachel quickly nodded in response. I'm fine.

The rest will be easy since we've confirmed that you're here. We will rescue you from here. Don't be afraid.

Rachel quickly shook her head and pointed at her belly with a complicated expression. I can't leave right now.

Coraline was slightly taken aback as she stared at Rachel's swollen belly through the pane of glass.

Chapter 167

"She can't go now."

As Coraline passed Rachel's message, everyone was surprised.

"Why?" Victor stood up suddenly. "Is she scared of being found out by Justin?"

"No. She is pregnant."

Everyone else was taken aback.

Although they had guessed that Rachel was pregnant when Julian mentioned that Flynn was the director of the gynecology department, it was still unbelievable to hear the truth right from Coraline's mouth.

No one wanted to believe that Justin actually imprisoned a pregnant woman.

Victor said coldly to Gloria, "Are you still going to help him out now? He is a lunatic."

Gloria bit her lip and had nothing to say.

Janice glanced at them. "Then what do we do now? What does Rachel want to do?"

Coraline replied, "We'll have to wait until after she gives birth."

"After she gives birth? Wouldn't it be more troublesome to escape with a child?" Victor was puzzled.

Coraline hesitated for a while. "She said that she will leave the child behind."

The room fell quiet all of a sudden.

No one could imagine how much Rachel was wronged and tortured to the point that she didn't even want her child and only wanted to run away from that man.

Two months later, Justin officially announced the wedding date with Amber.

This meant the marriage between the Burton Group and Hudson Pharmaceuticals was set in stone. The Hudson Pharmaceuticals' stock market had skyrocketed overnight, and its market value had doubled as well, effectively lifting them from the past turmoil.

On the night of the press conference, there was a gala dinner.

Amber held Justin's hand and toasted with the guests with a smile.

"Thank you, Mr. Riley."

"Congratulations!"

"Justin, the designer I invited from Italy has designed a few wedding dresses for me. Can you help me take a look at them later?"

"Just get whichever you want."

Frankie hurriedly walked in from outside but stopped talking as soon as he saw Amber. "President Burton."

Hearing that, Justin's eyes narrowed as he let go of Amber. "I have something to deal with. You can go ahead first."

Amber was taken aback by Justin's action and was trying to hold him back to ask what was going on, but he had already walked away.

Seeing Justin's hurried departure, Amber frowned and beckoned to her assistant. "Follow them and find out what's going on."

Right then, Justin and Frankie walked to a quieter place.

"What is it?"

Frankie replied, "Mrs. Burton suddenly showed signs of premature delivery."

"How come? Wasn't everything okay during the check up? There's supposed to still be two more months until her due date!"

"It was said that Mrs. Burton had accidentally fallen in the bathroom. Don't worry, President Burton. She has already been sent to the hospital immediately."

Justin's expression froze. "Prepare a car-we're going to the hospital."

"What? Then what about the banquet?"

Justin obviously couldn't care less about the banquet. Frankie glanced back, and while following Justin, he called the secretary to make sure someone would oversee the banquet.

Meanwhile, in the operating room.

"Ah!"

Rachel was lying on the delivery bed with her legs spread apart-her jaw was tightly clenched, and her voice was hoarse.

She could feel nothing but numbing pain in her lower body.

"Breathe in. Breathe out."

"Push."

The amniotic sac had long broken, and she even showed symptoms of hemorrhaging.

"Hold on for a little bit more. Just a little bit more, and the baby will be here-it's not that big."

The midwife's voice rang in her ears.

Rachel nodded hard and raised her neck high-it was covered in sweat from the labor.

Outside the operating room, Justin arrived hurriedly.

“How is she?”

The bodyguard who sent Rachel here hurriedly stood up and said, “President Burton, s-she is still inside, and the doctor hasn’t come out. I’m not sure what is going on in there either.”

Just as Justin was about to erupt in anger, the door of the operating room opened up, and a nurse came out from inside. “Which one of you is her family member?”

“I am.”

Justin stepped forward immediately.

Looking at him, the nurse asked Justin, “Who are you to the mother?”

“I am her husband.”

“The umbilical cord of the newborn is tied around the neck, so the mother can’t give birth naturally. We have to prepare for the cesarean section. Please follow me to sign some documents.”

Justin’s pupils constricted. “Are there any risks? How is she now?”

“Well, any woman is inherently at risk when giving birth. On top of that, she is giving birth prematurely. Now that the fetal position is not correct and she can’t give birth naturally, we can only perform surgery on her. Please sign it quickly.”

Holding the pen, Justin immediately signed his name on the consent form for the operation.

The operation light stayed on while Justin stood in the corridor steadfastly.

Time passed by, and even when everyone else, including Frankie, couldn't stand it anymore, Justin stood straight and did nothing but stare at the operating room's doors.

In the early morning, the operation lights finally went out.

The nurse took a baby out of the ward. "Congratulations! It's a girl."

Justin asked anxiously, "How is she?"

"Both the mother and daughter are safe."

Justin breathed a sigh of relief before he lowered his head to see the child in the nurse's arms. The pinkish baby was curled up into a small ball, her eyes still closed.

The moment he saw her, Justin suddenly felt that his heart, which had been frozen for many years, began to thaw from the inside out. His eyes were fixed on the child's face, and he couldn't bring himself to look away.

This was his first child-a daughter.

After the effect of the anesthetic passed, Rachel, who had been out cold for a long time, finally woke up.

It was late at night when she regained consciousness, and as she moved her hands, she found that her hand was being held-only then did she see the man lying on the side of her bed, fast asleep.

All of a sudden, Justin woke up, his eyes filled with grogginess.

Seeing how Rachel was looking at himself, he immediately sobered up and asked, "How are you? Let me get a doctor."

Rachel held his hand. Her pale lips moved, but she still couldn't make a sound.

"What's wrong?"

Rachel raised her hand weakly and made a gesture.

I want some water.

Justin was stunned for a moment before he understood what she meant. "Oh. Wait a moment. I'll pour some for you."

Rachel leaned on the pillow and drank half a glass of water to moisturize her chapped lips.

Justin then said, "Our baby is in the nursery. Do you want me to get the nurses to bring her here for you to see?"

Rachel shook her head.

It's okay. I'll see her tomorrow.

"Alright. You just woke up anyway. Get some rest."

Justin sat down again, not intending to leave.

Rachel looked at him quietly. All his harshness and indifference to her during this period had dissipated. Overnight, it was as if she had returned to the time when she first married him-his eyes were gentle and calm.

Justin held her hand. "It's a girl. She looks very much like you."

Rachel pointed to her lips. If she's mute like me too, then it's not good.

Justin was taken aback for a moment, and then he chuckled. "She won't be. Don't worry."

Rachel also laughed.

Looking at her smile under the dim light, Justin was in a daze. He hadn't seen her smile so naturally and happily for such a long time now.

Did I tell you before that I was not born mute?

"Nope. Was that not the case?"

Rachel shook her head. I got terribly sick when I was a child and damaged my voice box.

Justin was startled slightly. As he was about to inquire further about it, his phone suddenly vibrated.

Out of the corner of Rachel's eye, she caught a glimpse of Amber's name on the caller ID.

"I have to get this."

Sure. She nodded.

With that, Justin went out with his mobile phone.

After a while, he opened the door and walked in. "Rachel, I have to deal with something for a bit."

Rachel nodded. Go ahead.

"Get more rest." Justin leaned down and tucked her hair behind her ears. His voice was exceptionally soft and gentle as he uttered, "I'll come see you again tomorrow morning."

Chapter 168

Rachel did not refuse.

Come early tomorrow.

Seeing how docile and well-behaved she was, Justin's eyes oozed gentleness, and he couldn't help but drop a kiss on her forehead. "I'll come back when I'm done."

Watching Justin's figure disappear at the door of the ward, Rachel's eyes slowly dimmed.

3.00AM in the morning.

Over the Riverdale International Airport, planes sliced through the clouds, roaring as they flew.

Under the night, Riverdale became smaller and smaller, eventually becoming a small dot that easily disappeared under the clouds.

Rachel's gaze retracted from the window of the cabin-her face was pale.

"Hello, madam. Are you feeling uncomfortable?"

The flight attendant's inquiry came from beside her. Before she could explain, Julian shook his head and answered, "She's fine. Could you please give me a blanket and a glass of warm water?"

"Okay. One moment please."

Julian covered Rachel's legs with a blanket and looked at her with worry. "Why didn't you rest for a few more days before leaving? I'm afraid that you will have to re-stitch the incision and suffer again when we get there since we left in such a hurry."

Rachel twitched the corner of her mouth weakly.

I'm reborned once I left Riverdale. How would I be suffering?

"The baby-did you even get to take a look at her?"

I can't bear to see her. I know I won't be able to leave if I did.

Rachel squeezed her palm. In fact, she was awake when the baby was born, and the nurse did hold the baby to her, but she couldn't bring herself to look at the baby and only closed her eyes.

Since it was destined that she could not be with this child, she thought she should cut all ties right from her birth.

Julian was afraid to continue, worrying that it would make her feel uncomfortable, so he sighed silently. "Take the medicine first and get some sleep-it's all in the past now."

Rachel slowly closed her eyes.

Indeed, it was all in the past.

Five years later.

In Yatruinia.

he SG Pharmaceutical Group Conference Center located in the center of the capital city of Yatruinia, the company executives were engaged in a heated discussion.

“The market for traditional medicine is further deteriorating. The market has extremely poor reviews; it

is obviously already a sunset industry. No matter how you look at it, the future will be the world of Western medicine, but we are doing research on traditional medicine at this time? What are we trying

to do? Return to the ancestors?”

The blond middle-aged man pointed at the data on the presentation screen and threw out a bold statement.

Everyone in the room nodded.

Most of the people in the conference room were from Yatruinia, and it caused the two foreign women to stand out even more.

On the seat closest to the presentation screen, a short-haired woman who was dressed in a chic dark

green suit maintained a calm expression as she quietly listened to the speech.

When the speech was over, she knocked on the table slightly. “David, I don’t agree with you.”

The meeting room fell into pindrop silence immediately while David’s expression changed.

“The market has never deteriorated. It’s just that the industry is too chaotic right now, and people have started to lose faith in traditional medicine-this just proves that the market has a huge opportunity, and there are gaps we could fill. It’s the perfect time for us to venture into it.”

“Chris, you are being unrealistic. Do you want to reshape the entire industry by yourself? This is something that not even the government can do. Do you think you will be able to achieve this alone?”

“Yes, I do believe that.”

Hearing that, David sneered and looked at her with his arms crossed on his chest. “Being pretty does not mean that you can succeed in doing everything.”

“Bullsh*t!” Next to Chris, another young woman leaped off her chair. “David, you should focus on the matter! That was a completely personal attack.”

In response, Chris held the woman’s hand and spoke calmly. “I have submitted the plan to enter the Asian market many times before, and the risk assessment indicated that we are good to go, but David, you have been difficult about this with me, and you could not provide me with a sensible reason. Hence, I would like to ask the executives to make a resolution.”

David propped his hands on the conference table with a defiant expression on his face.

“Sorry, but I have already rejected it. Your rank is not enough to ask for a resolution, unless you wait for Ormand to come back from vacation. Based on your relationship with him, you can do whatever you want with him supporting you.”

“What do you mean by this? What are you suggesting? David, be mindful that we can sue you for slander like this!” Jolly protested.

“Jolly.” Chris’ tone was neither light nor heavy.

Jolly was so angry that she switched to her native language and said to Chris, “He has insulted you so much. How can you just tolerate it?”

“Who said I was tolerating it?”

With this, Chris stood up suddenly. At once, she took off the employee’s badge on her chest, put it on the table, and said lightly, “There’s no need to wait for Ormand to come back. I quit. I’ve prepared the resignation letter. David, remember to sign it later.”

The crowd was in an uproar.

Without waiting for others to speak, Chris took a look at David and left the conference room.

Jolly was stunned for a long time before she came back to her senses. Then she, too, removed her employee tag and said, “I quit too! All of you can do whatever the hell you want.”

With that, she chased after Chris.

“Chris, wait for me. Chris!”

Even though Jolly kept calling out for her, Chris walked like a gust of wind without stopping, so Jolly grew anxious and shouted in a loud voice, “Rachel Hudson!”

Upon that, Rachel’s twelve-inch high-heeled shoes came to a halt on the floor in the corridor.

In the past five years, this name of hers had rarely been brought up, and even Julian had gradually become accustomed to calling her Chris like the others around her. The name ‘Rachel Hudson’ seemed to have disappeared when she left Riverdale five years ago.

Jolly quickly followed while panting. “I knew it’d work with your old name. Since I was a child, I have been terrified when my parents called me by my full name. So do you, I guess!”

Soon, Rachel came back to her senses and looked at Jolly helplessly. “It’s not about that. I told you didn’t have parents. I grew up with my grandma.”

Jolly waved her hand dismissively. "Anyway, they are all the elders. I don't care about your reasons as long as it's useful. What did you walk so fast for? I'm exhausted from chasing you."

"I've resigned anyway. Shouldn't I pack up and leave immediately? I'm afraid David won't want to see me for even one more second."

"Are you really quitting?"

Rachel shrugged. "What do you think? You thought I was just playing around with David?"

"Wow. I thought you were just bluffing."

"Why would I bluff him? I only feel that SG is developing in a different direction than mine, so there are no more reasons for me to stay."

In just three years, Rachel went from being an intern to becoming the financial director in the top 500 pharmaceutical group, SG. This was an achievement that no one could imagine achieving. David, as the veteran of SG, had long been upset with her.

Jolly gave a thumbs up to Rachel. "You're impressive, alright. How straightforward and decisive. Well, I've long gotten sick with this stupid company anyway. I wouldn't even have stayed here in the first place if it wasn't for Samuel."

"You've quit too?"

"Of course. Why would I stay if you're leaving? Hey, Chris, if it wasn't for you not wanting to go back to Riverdale, I would definitely have asked my dad to give you the position of vice president. It's totally doable."

Rachel stood still and solemnly told Jolly. "I am going back."

Jolly's eyes widened in surprise. "For real?"

"Yes."

Rachel's tone was determined.

She had fled and stayed hidden for five years. Five years was long enough for her to think things through and finally deal with the things that should have been resolved a long time ago.

When she returned this time, she would finally get her vengeance-once and for all.

Chapter 169

Night fell.

Jolly came out of the bathroom after taking a shower and walked toward Rachel while drying her hair. "It's so late already. Why are you still not sleeping? You've quit your job, but you're still staring at the computer in the middle of the night."

Rachel clicked on an email on the computer and said lightly, "This is an email sent to me by a friend of mine two weeks ago."

"Is it the friend from the Investigation Bureau?"

"Yup."

"Let me see."

Jolly pulled a chair out and sat down next to Rachel.

"This is the case that you've been investigating?"

“Yes.”

“It says here that there is a video that can prove that it was your ex-husband who caused the death of your lawyer friend.”

Rachel’s pupils constricted slightly. “Yes.”

Back then, she was abused physically and mentally by Justin; she could hardly protect herself to the point that she had to leave Riverdale in a hurry, so she couldn’t find out who was behind Hans’ death.

After five years, Janice finally received news from a retired media reporter that Justin had bought a top-secret video from the media five years ago-one which was related to the death of Hans.

Jolly finished reading the email. “Is this why you decided to resign and return home all of a sudden?”

“Not only this, but also my grandma’s death. So far, the real murderer has not been found.”

These were the two lives she must get justice for.

Rachel clenched her fists, her expression solemn.

Jolly took her hand. “Chris, I will support you no matter what you do.”

“Thank you.”

“Thank you? We’re each other’s ride-or-die. When we arrive back in the country, it’ll be my turf, so when we get there, whoever dares to bully you would have to go through me.”

Rachel’s gaze became much softer, and a faint warmth reflected in her eyes.

Meeting Jolly was the best thing that had happened to her in the past five years.

One month later, at Riverdale International Airport.

The announcement of the flight's arrival was broadcasted in the lobby, and the voice of the stewardess was sweet and gentle as always.

A red figure ran through the crowd.

"Miss!"

"Miss! Please run slowly."

"Please make way! Look out!"

The small red figure passed through the crowd all the way, and the person pushing the luggage in front of her could not manage to dodge, so the figure crashed directly into them and bounced to the ground like a ball.

"Ouch!"

The adult and child exclaimed at the same time.

The red figure that fell on the ground was a five-year-old girl with a red suspender skirt and two little pigtails. She looked bright and delicate, like a child that had walked straight out of a painting.

Then, her eight bodyguards finally caught up to her.

"Miss, are you okay?"

“Am I okay? Would you be okay if you fell like I did?” The little girl was young, but her eyes were full of deterrence as she glared at them. The big bodyguards in front of her didn’t dare to speak after hearing what she said.

After scolding the bodyguards, the little girl turned around and stared at the person she ran into. “Hey! Didn’t you watch where you were going? And shouldn’t you apologize for crashing into me?”

The other party who was pushing the luggage was a woman wearing jeans and a white shirt; she looked very chic and capable. Her face under the sunglasses was very cold, and her magnetic voice was rather unique. “Hey, kiddo, for all I know, I was only standing here; you were the one who ran into me.”

“You were obviously blocking my way!”

Rachel frowned when she heard this.

It had been a while since she was back here. Who would have thought that she would meet a kid like this as soon as she came back? If parents don’t educate their kids well, they will definitely suffer sooner or later.

The little girl glared at Rachel. “Are you not going to apologize to me?”

“You ran into me. It’s you who should apologize, kiddo.”

“What did you say? How dare you tell me to apologize!”

“Haven’t your parents taught you that you shouldn’t lie, and that you have to apologize when you did something wrong?” Rachel pointed to the camera above her head. “There are surveillance cameras everywhere. If you are not convinced, I don’t mind accompanying you to get some surveillance footage.”

Hearing what Rachel said, the little girl’s pink face turned red from anger.

All of a sudden, the little girl seemed to have noticed something, then she immediately sat down on the ground as she burst into tears.

Witnessing that, Rachel's brow furrowed deeper.

What the hell is going on?

In a flash, the eight bodyguards behind the little girl suddenly stood in a line.

"President Burton."

"Daddy.."The little girl bawled even louder.

Behind Rachel, a man's voice rang. "What's the matter?"

The familiar voice of this man had haunted Rachel's dreams for the past five years. As if time and space fell into chaos and rewinded five years, Rachel's brain exploded with a buzz-she was only staring blankly at the incoming person.

Staring at his face that was so cold and handsome, she was stunned for a while.

The scar on his face was gone. But even so, she could recognize that face anywhere.

It's him-Justin Burton.

Rachel looked at the little girl who was sitting on the ground in disbelief. She called him 'Daddy', which meant that she was Justin's daughter. If that was the case, then she was...

Her heart throbbed right then.

She even questioned the little girl just now on whether her parents properly educated her.

The little girl choked and squeezed out more tears. "Daddy! I want a hug!"

Justin went straight to the little girl and bent down, saying warmly and patiently, "Charlotte, what's the matter? Why are you crying like a silly baby?"

The little girl pointed in Rachel's direction while crying. "Daddy... she... didn't want to admit that she ran into me and kept bullying me! It hurts so much! Sob, sob."

Following the little girl's gaze, Justin noticed Rachel, who was just standing at the side.

Through the sunglasses, their eyes met.

Rachel wanted to avoid his gaze, but it was too late.

However, Justin only glanced at her and then retracted his gaze naturally. Then, he casually said to the bodyguard in front of him, "Take care of it."

Rachel was startled.

Justin's gaze was too cold; it could even be said to be estranged. He didn't even take any extra glance at her, not even a second glance-as if he was only looking at a stranger that he had never seen before.

Five years. It wasn't that short, but it also wasn't a lifetime ago. Is he now unable to recognize me anymore?

In the next second, the bodyguard quickly blocked Rachel's sight.

"Madam, I'm sorry. Our young lady has a bad temper. Please forgive me if there was any offense."

Rachel wanted to take another look at the child, but she could only see Justin walking away with her in his arms.

“This is the business card of our company. If you want to make any claims or request for compensation, you may go directly to this address.”

Seeing the bronzing body of the ‘Burton Group’ on the namecard, Rachel’s eyes slowly tightened.

“Chris!”

As soon as Justin and his entourage left, Jolly rushed over from outside the hall, panting. “Thank God I caught up with you. Why do we have so much luggage anyway? The car is parked outside. Let’s go!”

After walking two steps further and realizing that Rachel stood frozen, Jolly showed a puzzled look. “Chris, what are you standing around for? Come on!”

Rachel squeezed the business card in her hand and said solemnly, “I just saw Justin Burton.”

“Huh?” Jolly immediately became vigilant and looked around. “Where? Where is he?”

“He just left.” Rachel’s expression was complicated. “But he didn’t seem to recognize me at all.”

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“Justin couldn’t recognize you?”

Jolly was stunned for a moment, then she suddenly laughed. “Isn’t that normal? You are completely different from who you were five years ago. If I hadn’t been with you all the while, I wouldn’t have recognized you too.”

“Is that so?”

“Of course. Besides, you were a mute five years ago. Even if you told him you are Rachel, would he even believe it?”

Rachel thought about it for a while.

With that, Jolly hugged her neck and continued, “That’s enough. Stop thinking too much. My parents have prepared a welcome-home banquet for you, and they’ve been urging me the whole day. Hurry up!”

Rachel didn’t have time to think any more; she was immediately pulled into the car by Jolly.

On the other side, a black commercial car was speeding on the expressway leaving the airport.

“Where did it hurt when you fell? Show me.”

“No!” The little girl looked upset. At once, she crossed her arms and stared at Justin. “Daddy, you lied to me again.”

“What? Why would you say so?”

“You told me that you would only be away for three days. Tell me-how many days have you been away this time?”

Justin was helpless.

“Five days!” The little girl raised her little hand, showing five fingers. “You have been away for five days.

“Charlotte, something came up, and I couldn’t just walk away. But I brought you your favorite chocolate.”

“You keep lying to me! Daddy, do you not want me anymore? I know you are going to marry that woman. When that happens, you will have children of your own, and you will leave me.”

Hearing this, Justin frowned slightly. “Charlotte, who told you all these?”

“Everyone says so.”

Justin’s expression sank. “Well, we’re going to have to get a new batch of servants in the family.”

However, Charlotte didn’t care one bit about what he said. “Daddy, why do you even need to change them out? It is not going to solve anything. Even if you don’t let them say it, they will still think so in their hearts.”

“Charlotte.”

“Daddy, I don’t like her. You can’t marry her.”

Justin replied, “This is a grown-up’s affair.”

“Auntie Tina told me that she is not a good person. If you marry her, I will ignore you forever! Bad

Daddy!”

The more Charlotte spoke, the angrier she became. Her cheeks were puffed up, as if there were two balls stuffed in her mouth.

Hearing that, Justin immediately felt a headache.

The car headed to the summer villa.

As soon as Justin got out of the car, Amber came out to greet him with smiles painted all over her face.

“Justin, you’re back! Your mother and grandpa are all waiting for you to eat.”

With that, she reached out to take Justin’s hand.

Seeing that, Charlotte immediately stretched out her arms toward Justin. “Daddy, carry me!”

Justin had always fulfilled his daughter’s wishes, so he immediately picked her up and even helped her pull the corners of her skirt; his cold eyes were now filled with doting love.

Amber lowered her hands disappointedly. “Charlotte, I didn’t know you would come too.”

Hearing that, Charlotte rolled her eyes at her. Her sweet voice was filled with anger. “Please, this is my house. Do you think it’s problematic that I’ve come home with my Daddy for dinner? Do you think I am the extra person here? Aunt Amber?”

Charlotte placed a lot of emphasis on the word ‘Aunt when she said it, as if she was deliberately hinting at something.

Even though she was only five years old, she was clever; just a few words from her could be just as maddening as an adult’s criticism.

Amber froze. “Of course I didn’t mean that, Charlotte. You misunderstood.”

“I didn’t. Aunt Amber, look at you-you already despise me so much now, so if you marry my daddy in the future, wouldn’t you throw me away in a heartbeat?”

Amber was shocked from hearing what Charlotte said. "Charlotte, who told you this? When your father was not at home, have I ever treated you badly? I gave you whatever you wanted, and I bought you so many dolls and dresses."

"I didn't ask you to buy anything for me. Besides, those dresses are so ugly-I threw them all away."

"You threw them all away?" Amber was about to vomit blood as she stomped her feet while speaking to Justin. "Justin, how could she do this?"

Justin only replied lightly. "Why are you getting so hot and bothered with a child? Didn't you say that everyone was waiting?"

After speaking, he walked into the house while holding Charlotte.

Charlotte leaned on his shoulders and stuck her tongue out at Amber.

Amber was about to pass out from the anger, but she couldn't do anything about it, so she could only swallow her anger and follow behind as they walked into the house.

When Justin and I get married, I'll send you away, you devil child. Just you wait.

On the other side, Rachel was sitting in Jolly's car, looking at the night scene through the car window.

"Riverdale has changed a lot, huh?"

Jolly's voice came from the driver's seat.

"Yeah. I can't even recognize many places here."

"You're exaggerating-only a few more buildings have been built here. The development is focused more around the area surrounding the airport, and the city center is almost the same. After all, it has

only been five years.”

Listening to Jolly mumble along, Rachel leaned on her seat as she let her mind drift away.

In a mere five years, more high-rise buildings had been built, and more generations of people had flourished in this city.

There was no huge turmoil in her heart when she returned to Riverdale. The only thing she remembered was her daughter, whom she abandoned at birth.

“Damn it. I forgot that I shouldn’t take this road. There’s so much traffic on Green River Street. I was stuck here several times during the two weeks that I returned last time. I was so mad that I wanted to just abandon my car and walk my way back.”

Green River Street?

Hearing Jolly’s complaint, Rachel felt a thud in her heart. She turned her head to look out the window, and she saw the tallest building in the distance getting closer and closer to her.

The Burton Group’s logo gleamed under the night sky.

Rachel clenched her fists abruptly.

Jolly was busy driving. Not noticing Rachel’s reaction, she asked, “By the way, do you really want to accept the offer from the Burton Group?”

Rachel snapped back to her senses. “Yeah. I will start work in two days.”

Jolly said in a worried tone, “Are you not going to give it further thought? It was an accident that he didn’t recognize you at the airport, but if you really work in Burton Group, both of you will meet easily, and he will definitely recognize you then. What will you do if that happens?”

“One of the reasons I came back is to look for him anyway. I would have to get close to him no matter if he recognizes me or not. Didn’t Janice say that the evidence is most likely in his hands?”

“But it’s too dangerous. Julian told me that they barely managed to get you away from him back then. What if he-” Jolly caught herself and suddenly covered her mouth. “Forget it! Knock on wood!”

Rachel said, “Don’t worry. What happened in the past stays in the past. You should know how important Hans and grandma were to me. I won’t be at ease if I don’t find out who was behind all that. And I know for a fact that these two matters were definitely related to the Burtons.”

Jolly glanced at her. “Don’t worry. I will help you.”

Rachel nodded and smiled comfortingly at Jolly.

She didn’t expect Justin to not recognize her when she returned to the country. After all, she didn’t undergo any plastic surgery or change her identity, she was Chris, and she was Rachel as well.

Jolly asked, “Then what should we do as our first step?”

Rachel’s brows eased up, and she said lightly, “First off, we’ll meet some old friends.”