

Mute Bride 201

Chapter 201

"I have something to do, so let's end it here today. I'll have a good chat with Uncle Jason about my parents on another day," Rachel said before leaving.

Besides investigating the cause of Hans' death, she came back to run a thorough investigation on the murder of her mother. To her, it didn't matter that the prosecution period had expired.

She could not hold it in anymore, so she told Jefferey that she knew everything. She bet that he would not be able to sit still after hearing so. After all, what right did a murderer have to live in peace?

At that moment, his face turned white and grim as he stood at the desk.

Never had he thought that her memories from when she was a child would come back all of a sudden—not to mention events that occurred more than 20 years ago. What she had said earlier terrified him and sent chills down his spine.

He clenched his fists tightly as he watched her leave. No... If she remembers everything when she was a child, then... She should know about the secret prescription.

Immediately, he made a call. "Hey, it's me. Help me check on Burton Pharmaceuticals' latest product. Send me the ingredients list and lab report of the traditional medicine used as soon as possible. There's no need to

specify the dosage. Just the ingredients will do. Hurry!"

The man on the other side of the phone sounded puzzled. "Why do you want to check on their latest product all of a sudden? Is something wrong?"

"I suspect that Rachel has recalled the Hudsons' prescription and gave it to the Burtons. That ungrateful brat!" Jefferey's face darkened.

Hearing this, the man on the phone did not know what to say.

Meanwhile, Samuel and Charlotte were having a good time with each other in the lounge. As she kept piling up snacks beside him, she bubbled, "Samuel, eat this. It's really good!"

"Thank you."

"There's no need to thank me."

Then, he remembered something halfway through eating the snacks. "Charlotte, how did you know that I'm your brother?"

Putting on a serious face like a little adult, she chided, "I'm your older sister! I saw Daddy say it himself on TV." Then, she continued, "I'm the youngest at home all this while, so they thought that they could fool me and find me a stepmother since I'm just a kid. Now that you're here, he's going to think twice before getting me a stepmother."

"Why would his decision change if I'm here?"

"Are you stupid?" Her eyes widened. "Daddy listens to me, and Mommy listens to you. They'll definitely get back together if we create opportunities for them."

Scratching his head, he replied, "But I never wanted them to get back together... He treats Mommy badly. Besides, Mommy has many admirers."

"Daddy has many admirers too! But you need to remember that we're children from their previous marriage. People who are pursuing our parents don't actually like us when they say they do."

"I don't think so... Mr. Peters and Hernandez like me. They even attended the parent-teacher conference for me."

"Uncle Julian?" She was stunned. "He's also pursuing Mommy?"

"I think so. Mr. Peters and Hernandez always quarrel as soon as they see each other. Godmother said that they are love rivals fighting for Mommy's favor."

Feeling a sense of crisis, she cried, "What? We can't let that happen! We must be on the same side. Do you want to be separated from me and Daddy forever? And what will happen to you if Mommy has other children with another man?"

After a moment's hesitation, he agreed, "I guess that's true..."

With that, she held his hand and spoke earnestly, "That's why you have to listen to me. We need to get them back together."

"Okay."

As they were discussing, Gloria brought them some drinks. "What would you like to have for lunch, Charlotte? Your dad asked me to make a reservation for you two at a restaurant. I'll bring the both of you there."

"Won't Daddy and Mommy be joining us?" Charlotte asked.

"They're busy. I did ask them, but they said that they have a meeting to attend."

When Charlotte heard this, her eyes dimmed. "Then we won't be going out for lunch. Samuel wants to go to the cafeteria with me."

"The cafeteria?" Gloria thought that she had misheard her.

This young lady is notorious for being difficult to take care of. When she gets into a bad mood, she would be dissatisfied with all the dishes ordered for her and would throw them away without even

tasting them. So, what changed her mind and made her decide to eat at the cafeteria?

When it was noontime, Rachel took a look at the time after finishing her work. "Lisa, has Samuel eaten?"

Lisa answered from outside, "Somebody from the secretary's office called and said that Samuel had gone to the cafeteria to have lunch."

"The cafeteria?" Rachel was slightly startled.

Located on the fourth floor, the Burton Group's cafeteria was big and served many types of food. On busier days, Rachel would have lunch there or ask her secretary to pack some food back to the office for her.

Samuel always had a mind of his own from a young age. Now that he had met the fearless Charlotte, both of them were capable of turning the world upside down. Moreover, the cafeteria was Burton Group's public space. Hence, she hurried to the cafeteria anxiously.

Just as she was about to call Samuel to ask where he was when she entered the cafeteria, she saw a figure jumping up by the window, calling out to her, "Mommy! Here!"

Charlotte's voice had caused everyone in the cafeteria to turn and stare at her. As Rachel was about to walk over, she saw Justin sitting beside Charlotte. Instantaneously, she frowned. Why's he here?

"Quickly! Come here, Mommy!" Right then, Charlotte was still shouting. It seemed as if she would keep shouting until Rachel went over. Thus, Rachel could only bite the bullet and walk over to where they were seated.

Obediently, Charlotte ran over to sit beside Samuel and emptied the seat beside Justin. "Sit beside Daddy, Mommy."

Giving Justin a quick glance, Rachel coughed awkwardly. "Why did you two come here to eat?"

Charlotte blinked. "The food here is really delicious, especially the fish and chips. Right, Samuel?"

Upon hearing this, Samuel nodded his head. "Yes, it's really good! Come eat with us."

"It's fine." Rachel looked around. People seated at other tables were secretly gazing at them as if a spotlight was focused on them.

"Hurry up and finish your food. I'll fetch you home after that."

Underneath the table, Charlotte kicked Samuel, causing him to cough.

"Did you choke? Here, have some water." Justin pushed the cup of water in front of Samuel at once.

"Why are you in such a hurry? Don't you know that you can't rush a child who's eating?" Justin furrowed his brows at Rachel.

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Stunned, Rachel explained, "I just wanted to bring Samuel home earlier. People in the cafeteria are watching."

"So what if they're watching? I have nothing to be afraid of. Do you?"

"Why should I be afraid?"

"Then, eat."

She became speechless upon hearing Justin's reply.

"The first wife's always the best. They have to get back together, seeing that they already have two children."

"What a match made in heaven! They look so good together!"

“Everyone in Miss Chris’ department loves her because she has such a good temper.”

“Now that Charlotte’s biological mother has returned, her bad temper has no doubt improved. A child is always best parented by her real mother because a stepmother would only destroy her.”

One after another, the people in the cafeteria plunged into a discussion and offered their comments. Meanwhile, Amber, who had come all the way to bring Justin some food, was trembling as she held onto her phone outside of the office.

“Miss Amber, Mr. Burton is not in his office at the moment. Would you like to wait?” Gloria asked carefully, obviously afraid to tell Amber the truth.

Looking up from her phone, Amber pretended to be calm and smiled. “It’s alright. I’ll leave since he’s not here.”

“Oh, okay. I’ll see you out.”

“There’s no need. The elevator’s here already.”

Watching Amber enter the elevator, Gloria sighed in relief and turned to her colleague to say, “What’s Mr. Burton doing with Miss Chris and Miss Amber at the same time? It’s causing us a dilemma.”

“What dilemma? Haven’t you realized that Miss Amber hasn’t come to the office for some time already?”

“That’s true.”

For the past few years, Amber often brought lunch for Justin when she was free and staked her claim on him. However, she either did not come or did not manage to see Justin these days even if she came. What’s happening?

Quietly, Gloria's colleague said, "I don't think she'll be his fiancée much longer."

Right then, Amber threw the thermal container into the rubbish bin when she came out of the elevator. A loud 'boom' echoed in the parking lot.

As soon as she got into her car, a grim expression was reflected in the rearview mirror. How could that bastard be Justin's son? Did he lose his memory? How could he side with Rachel? What kind of tricks is the b*tch playing?

"Miss, shall we head home now?"

"No. To the Burton Residence."

"Yes, Miss."

With that, the white car was driven out and gradually disappeared from the monitoring range of the parking

lot.

In the cafeteria, Samuel had crumbs all over his mouth after devouring an entire plate of fish and chips.

"Burrp!" He burped satisfactorily and rubbed his belly. "Charlotte, stop giving me so much food. I really can't eat anymore. I feel like my stomach's about to burst!"

"I'm your older sister, so you better listen to what I say!"

"Well, you don't look much older than me."

Hearing this, she crossed her arms and put on a serious look. "I'm still your older sister regardless of that. You need to know your manners, so stop grumbling already, okay?"

"Fine, I won't grumble anymore. Happy?"

"Now, that's a good boy. Have a meatball."

"I really can't eat anymore..." Seeing how she kept feeding him out of love, he cried as he patted his belly, "I'm turning into a ball!"

Upon hearing this, Rachel couldn't help but let out a chuckle. "Alright, stop feeding him already, Charlotte. He's had enough. He'll get sick if you keep feeding him."

"But he's too skinny." Charlotte shook her head. "Mommy, it must have been hard for you to raise him all alone."

"It was alright. Samuel has always been a good boy."

"Obedient children don't live good lives. Daddy said that we don't need to be obedient children."

Hearing that, Rachel froze. Though it was a childish remark, it sounded pitiful if carefully considered. Samuel never had to endure any hardships while staying with me, but he did not have a father while growing up. Besides that, Jolly had to juggle between work and study, so she did not have time to take care of him. Hence, it was understandable for him to be an obedient child.

Noticing the strange look on her face, Justin remarked, "Raising a boy is very much different from raising a girl. Boys should be more sensible." Without waiting for a reply, he stood up. "I see that we're done here. Let's

go."

Rachel held Samuel's hand while he held Charlotte's. At the same time, Charlotte held Justin's hand. Together, the family of four walked out of the cafeteria as the people around them spectated admiringly.

Before falling asleep at night, Charlotte told Justin, “Daddy, I want to go hiking during the weekend.”

Closing and putting the fairy tale book aside, he responded sternly, “I’m not free this weekend. We’ll go next week.”

“But I’ve already made plans with Samuel. I’ll just go with him if you can’t come.”

“Samuel?”

That means Rachel will be going too, he considered thoughtfully.

“Do you want to go, Daddy?” She studied his expression. “Daddy?”

“We’ll see. I might not have time.”

After saying this, he tucked her into her blanket. “Alright, you should go to sleep now.”

Extending her small arm out of the blanket, she held his thumb and spoke softly, “Daddy, I’m really happy I got to meet my little brother today.”

“You like having a little brother?”

“Yeah, now I have a little brother to grow up with. I’ll protect him when he’s young, and he’ll protect me when he’s older. Besides, we have Daddy and Mommy...” She was clearly tired as she slowly closed her eyes and fell asleep before finishing her sentence.

Gently patting the blanket, he stared at her adorable face for a long while before closing the berth curtains and leaving

The next day, Rachel had taken a half day's leave. The old city had been demolished and high-rise buildings had been rebuilt. Alleyways from five years ago had also disappeared. Following the path in her memory, she found herself arriving at an empty public bookstore.

Just as she was about to leave, a familiar voice sounded from behind. "Rachel?"

Rachel froze. When she turned, she saw Janice holding a stack of old books at the entrance of the bookstore. The interior of the bookstore was almost the same as the old tailor shop.

As Janice poured Rachel a cup of tea, she said, "I thought my eyes were playing games on me. When did you come back?"

"For quite some time now. I've been meaning to contact you, but I didn't know what to say, so I came here to look for you. I'm actually very surprised you're still here."

"What a coincidence! It's my day off today; otherwise, it's my grandfather who usually takes care of the shop."

"Yes, what a coincidence."

Catching sight of Rachel's silence, Janice questioned, "You received all the emails I sent, right?"

"Yup."

"I saw you on the news a few days ago. To be honest, I knew you were back. I was just waiting for you to find me. Hans was right for trusting you. You even came back to investigate his death." Janice sounded

determined without the slightest hint of doubt in her statement.

Taking a deep breath, Rachel confessed slowly, "I wouldn't have looked for you if I wasn't in trouble."

It did not end well for those who were involved with Rachel in the past. Hence, she did not want to drag Janice into this.

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“Let’s not talk about that. What’s the matter?”

“In your email, you stated that Justin has the videos and rejected news articles from that time, but I couldn’t find them in his safe at home. It didn’t look like he would keep them anywhere else in his house.”

Thoughtfully, Janice admitted, “Five years ago, he went to the investigation hall to look for me not long after you left.”

“Why did he look for you?”

“I’m not sure. My secretary told me that he brought some documents, but I wasn’t at the office at that time. So, we agreed to meet on another day, but he didn’t show up.”

Documents? Rachel narrowed her eyes. “What kind of documents?”

“I didn’t get to see them, and I couldn’t contact him. After that, his attitude toward the Hudsons took a 180 degree turn. From harboring deep-seated hatred and using any means to get rid of them from Riverdale’s market, to supporting their every move. Since I wasn’t able to meet him in person and the Burtons kept a tight lip on everything, I couldn’t find out anything about the situation at that time.”

Suddenly, Rachel realized something. “This must have something to do with his amnesia.”

“Justin has amnesia?” Janice was surprised to hear so. “When did that happen?”

Rachel shook her head. “I’m not sure myself, but he didn’t recognize me when I first came back. Up till now, he still doesn’t remember what happened between us back then and even forgot that he was abducted by human traffickers when he was a child.”

"That explains it. I couldn't wrap my head around his sudden change of attitude toward the Hudsons before this."

"I'm afraid he probably doesn't even remember what the video evidence was anymore."

Hearing this, Janice furrowed her brows. "Seems that way. But it seems a bit weird. Even if Justin has lost his memories, why did the Burtons have to hide it from him and even agreed to his marriage with Amber?"

"It must be Old Mr. Burton's doing. At that time, he did say that he didn't want Justin to dwell on what happened when he was a child, so he made me leave."

"So, the Burtons are keeping him in the dark."

"Exactly."

Janice was deep in thought. "If that's the case, then Justin wouldn't have the evidence anymore since Old Mr. Burton wants to keep the past from him." Then, she continued, "The evidence must be at Old Mr. Burtons."

When Rachel heard this, she froze.

"There's one more thing that I didn't get to tell you in the email because I wasn't sure," Janice reminded Rachel

"Go ahead."

"I suspect there's something going on between Jason and Sue. She was well aware of your grandmother's kidnapping and talked to him frequently on the phone."

Rachel squinted. Jason and Sue?

Back then, it was Jason who kidnapped Nancy, so Rachel was determined to bring him to justice regardless of whether she would leave or not. However, it never occurred to her that the Burtons would find someone else to take the fall.

Jason, the murderer, was still at large. Things are smooth sailing for wicked people like Jason, Jefferey, Sue, and Amber. How will Hans rest in peace if I didn't come back? Rachel clenched her fists.

"I'll try to get closer to Justin and make him bring me to the Burtons' summer villa. Old Mr. Burton should be there during this time of the year."

"Be careful."

"I will."

Soon, it was the weekend and the skies were bright and clear.

Early in the morning, Rachel and Jolly got ready to head out with Samuel. Jolly, who was wearing a flowy sundress, almost had her wide-brimmed sun hat stuck at the door.

Speechless, Rachel asked Jolly, "Are you going on a holiday at the beach?"

"The weather's so hot. I'll die of heatstroke if I don't bring this hat."

"We're going on a hike, not a spring outing. How are you supposed to hike in this outfit?"

Jolly put her hands on her hips. "Pretty girls don't hike. What's the use of getting all smelly and sweaty from hiking? It would ruin my image! I'll be taking the cable car up, of course."

"Sure, take the cable car then." Rachel rolled her eyes as she put the picnic basket into the trunk.

In fact, Rachel did not want to tell Jolly the actual condition of the cable car and wanted to let her get a taste of her own medicine so that she would not be so smug next time.

When they arrived, they parked the car at the foot of the mountain.

As Samuel held onto Rachel's hand, he shouted, "Mommy, it's my sister!"

From afar, Charlotte, who was wearing a blue denim suspender skirt, dashed toward them. "Mommy! Samuel!"

When Charlotte plunged into Rachel's arms, she lifted her head to look at the lady wearing a floral dress standing beside them. Immediately, Charlotte's eyes twinkled before she greeted the lady politely, "You must be my godmother!"

Leaning against the car, Jolly pulled down her sunglasses. "Wow, what sharp eyes you have! How did you know?"

"Samuel told me that you're young and pretty, so I recognized you almost immediately!"

"Such a sweet girl." The corners of Jolly's mouth lifted into a smile. "Sweeter than your mom."

Praising a woman was the best way to get close to her.

Then, Rachel stood up as she saw Justin walking over slowly. "I thought you weren't coming?"

"I don't trust anyone else to take care of my daughter."

Upon hearing this, Rachel was speechless.

Instantaneously, Jolly took off her sunglasses and crossed her arms. "What do you mean by someone else? Rachel is Charlotte's biological mother. How could you say that you don't trust Charlotte's own mother when you're willing to let someone else who's clearly unqualified be her stepmother?"

Right then, Justin glared at her.

"Who are you glaring at? I'm just telling the truth. You can ask Charlotte to see if she likes to be with her own mother or that b*tch who seduced her brother-in-law."

At that moment, Rachel wanted to cover Charlotte's ears but it was too late. "Jolly, the kids are here."

Looking at him irritably, Jolly told her, "It's good to let the children know how dangerous the world can be so that they wouldn't suffer when they grow up. They have such a blind dad after all."

"Miss Carter, I have nothing against you, right?" Justin frowned, not understanding why Jolly was acting this way.

Before Jolly could say anything else, she saw someone walking over behind him. At once, her face brightened as she waved excitedly. "Julian! Right here!"

Julian? Justin frowned.

Dressed in a white casual outfit, Julian got out of a car and approached them with a bright smile.

"Mr. Peters!" Samuel rushed over. Immediately, Julian hugged him.

In truth, Charlotte also liked Julian very much, but considering what Samuel had told her before, she stepped back and looked back and forth between her parents hesitantly. This is awkward.

As expected, Justin questioned, "Why's Julian here too?"

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Before Rachel could say anything, Jolly rolled her eyes at Justin. "I invited him to this trip. What if both of us defenseless women bump into someone or get into trouble up on the mountains? We'll need a man to help us."

Immediately, Justin frowned. "Am I not one?"

"Well, who knew you were coming?"

Trying to mediate the dispute between them, Rachel cut in, "Alright, you guys. It's getting late. Let's go quickly while the weather's not hot." As she spoke, she walked toward Julian. "Hurry up and come down, Samuel. You're too heavy."

"He's not." Julian grinned as he handed her a bottle of water. "Here, drink some water."

"Aww... Juice made out of love?" Jolly jeered, "Only Rachel gets a drink and I don't."

Glancing at her, Julian replied, "I have more in my car. I'll get some for you."

While the three joked around intimately, Justin stood behind and watched. His face turned dark as he felt left out.

"It's fine. I don't deserve it. I've already gotten used to it abroad."

Suddenly, a sigh sounded beside them. "Ugh..."

Arms crossed like a little adult, Charlotte shook her head at Justin. "Daddy, I already told you to bring some breakfast, but you refused to listen. Look at that. Somebody else has taken the chance!"

He tensed. "If such trivial matters could win her favor, it need not wait till today."

“Don’t worry, I’ll help you.” She patted his hand. “Watch me and Samuel later.”

When they reached the entrance to the mountain, Jolly parted ways with the others at the intersection to take the cable car while the rest walked up the mountain.

With that, Jolly went away light-heartedly in her eye-catching wide-brimmed sun hat. Rachel sighed in relief as she didn’t want to be caught walking with Jolly who dressed up as if she was going on holiday to the Maldives. How embarrassing.

“Let’s go!” Rachel beckoned the others.

On cue, the three adults and two children followed the trail and walked up the mountain.

Along the way, Julian chatted with Rachel. “The hospital seminar this time seems to be pretty long. You’ve been back for quite some time already.”

“They offered me a permanent position here, but I’m still considering it.”

“Tran-Q is the most prestigious surgical hospital here. Besides, there are very few cases abroad. I think staying here would suit you best if you’re committed to doing clinical research.”

“I’m not worried about that.”

“Then, what is it?”

Julian didn’t reply to her question but asked her in response, “Are you planning to stay here, or will you be returning to Montenegro?”

Hearing this, she was dumbfounded for a moment. All of a sudden, he grabbed onto her. “Hey, careful!” As a result, she narrowly avoided a rock that rolled down from the mountain. The rock hit the spot where she was earlier and rolled to the side of the trail.

Right then, they were standing so close together that she was almost in his arms already. Shocked, her face turned pale.

Watching the both of them, Justin frowned even more. Hastily, he stepped forward and pulled Rachel over. When he did that, she stumbled.

Fortunately, Julian noticed it and pulled her other hand at once. Taking her other arm, Julian looked at Justin with a cold expression. "Justin, what are you trying to do?"

"Shouldn't I be the one asking what you're trying to do?"

Julian, who was usually gentle and calm, exploded. "Do I have to discuss with you before I do anything? Don't forget that there's nothing between you and Rae anymore!"

"So what? She's Charlotte's mother. How could you behave like that in front of Charlotte?"

"There are some things that the kids should know earlier to avoid wishful thinking."

"What do you mean?" Justin's eyes darkened as he stared at Julian intensely.

Both of them held onto her wrist tightly and argued without giving Rachel a chance to speak. Just listening to them gave her a headache. Right then, she shook Justin's hand off and drew her hand back from Julian. "Can we go?" Then, she kicked the rock to Justin and stared at him sullenly. "Would you be happy if I got hit by a rock?"

Just as Justin was about to reply, Charlotte shouted, "Mommy!"

Rachel gazed at Charlotte. "What's wrong?"

"I'm hungry."

“Hungry?” Rachel looked around. “There’s a restaurant at the top of the mountain. Hold on a little longer, okay? We’ll be reaching soon.”

“But I’m really hungry now.” Charlotte pouted. As she said this, she kept winking at Samuel.

Immediately, the boy knew what she was trying to do. “Ouch! It hurts!” He wrapped his arms around his belly and crouched.

“What’s the matter?” She rushed over to him. “Where does it hurt?”

“I’m having a stomach ache. I want to go poo,” Samuel told her.

“Didn’t you go to the toilet just now? What happened?”

Seeing this, Julian came over. “Samuel, let me see.”

Samuel shook his head intensely, scrunching his face while hugging his stomach. “I want to go poo!”

“There’s a washroom at the top of the mountain. Can’t you hold it?” asked Rachel.

“How can anyone hold their poop?” Pulling Julian’s hand, Charlotte told him, “Uncle Julian, you should take the cable car down with Samuel quickly. Otherwise, he would poop in his pants.”

Upon hearing this, Samuel smirked but kept his hand on his stomach as he crouched on the floor, pretending to be in pain.

Then, Julian asked him, “Can you hold on a little longer? I’ll take the cable car down with you.”

Samuel nodded his head furiously.

Immediately, Charlotte blurted, "I want to go too!" At that moment, a sense of triumph filled her. As long as we distract Uncle Julian, Mommy and Daddy will get some alone time. With that, the chances of them getting back together will be greater.

It was at that moment that Justin understood what she meant by 'watch me when they were at the bottom of the mountain. That little minx. She's young but she sure has many tricks up her sleeve.

Initially, he had wanted to say something, but he got annoyed thinking of how close Julian and Rachel were, so he pretended not to care and said nothing.

"Alright. I'll bring the kids down, Rae." Without any hint of doubt, Julian took Samuel's hand and asked Charlotte to come along.

"Hold on" Rachel stopped him.

"What's wrong?" He turned to look at her with a puzzled expression.

Squatting down to meet Samuel's gaze, she asked, "Samuel, look me in the eye and tell Mommy. Do you really want to go to the washroom because you're having a stomach ache?"

Julian froze upon hearing this.

Meanwhile, Rachel held Samuel's hand and looked at him seriously. Charlotte always had funny ideas, and Rachel could see through her easily.

However, Samuel was not a simple-minded child, so it was difficult to predict what they were trying to do. As he bit his lip, he caught Charlotte blinking at him desperately from the corner of his eye. There was nothing he could do now, so he bit the bullet and nodded. "Yes, it hurts."

"You're having a stomach ache, right? Mommy will go with you then."

After saying that, Rachel got up and extended her hand to Samuel. Then, she turned to Charlotte to say, "Didn't you say that you were hungry? Come along with me to the cable car."

However, Julian, who still hasn't grasped the situation, insisted, "Let me do it. You rarely have the chance to come out for a walk."

"It's okay. Taking the cable car together is the same anyway."

As soon as Rachel said this, the corner of Charlotte's mouth twitched as she looked toward Justin intuitively. Softly, Charlotte asked, "Mommy, if we're to take the cable car together, what about Daddy?"

Immediately, Rachel turned to look at Justin. "Would you like to take the cable car or continue hiking?"

Upon hearing her question, he could feel his temples pulsing. "What do you think?" Surely she did not expect me to hike up the mountain myself while all of them took the cable car, right?

Not long after, they reached the cable car station.

"One cable car can only fit up to three people. You guys will have to split into at least two groups." The staff pointed at the boarding guidelines while looking at them with a complicated expression. What are two grown men and a woman doing here with two children?

Decisively, Justin instructed, "Julian, you'll bring Samuel with you while Rachel and I will bring Charlotte with us."

Immediately, Samuel's eyes widened. "Why are you separating Mommy and me?" he questioned.

This time, he was clearly unhappy no matter how many times Charlotte tried to wink at him. "I want to sit with Mommy."

"It's not a good thing if a boy gets too attached to his mother," Justin noted expressionlessly.

In response, Samuel snorted and hugged Rachel's arm tightly.

Just as the two stared at each other, Julian had come back with the tickets. "So, how are we splitting?"

Without waiting for Justin and Samuel to speak, Rachel decided, "I'll bring the kids along with me. You two will go onto the next cable car together."

In the cable car, Rachel asked the two children to sit across her quietly, "Don't move around. We'll reach soon."

Gazing out of the window, Charlotte watched as the cable car behind followed closely and sighed. Poor

Daddy

Right then, Justin and Julian sat in the cable car behind Rachel's. An awkward silence filled the air. Two grown men sitting in such a confined space was already awkward enough. With them being cousins and love rivals only made it worse.

"It'll be great if Charlotte used her cleverness elsewhere," Julian broke the silence.

Casually, Justin glanced at Julian. "My daughter doesn't have to be of great use elsewhere. I'll be content as long as she's happy. Besides, I can give her whatever she wants."

"Including her mother?" Julian stared at Justin coldly. "You'll give Charlotte whatever she likes, including a mother that she likes, am I right?"

"What are you saying?"

"You're trying to get close to Rachel just because Charlotte likes her."

After saying that, Rachel got up and extended her hand to Samuel. Then, she turned to Charlotte to say, "Didn't you say that you were hungry? Come along with me to the cable car."

However, Julian, who still hasn't grasped the situation, insisted, "Let me do it. You rarely have the chance to come out for a walk."

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In response, Samuel snorted and hugged Rachel's arm tightly.

Just as the two stared at each other, Julian had come back with the tickets. "So, how are we splitting?"

Without waiting for Justin and Samuel to speak, Rachel decided, "I'll bring the kids along with me. You two will go onto the next cable car together."

In the cable car, Rachel asked the two children to sit across her quietly, "Don't move around. We'll reach soon."

Gazing out of the window, Charlotte watched as the cable car behind followed closely and sighed. Poor

Daddy

Right then, Justin and Julian sat in the cable car behind Rachel's. An awkward silence filled the air. Two grown men sitting in such a confined space was already awkward enough. With them being cousins and love rivals only made it worse.

"It'll be great if Charlotte used her cleverness elsewhere," Julian broke the silence.

Casually, Justin glanced at Julian. "My daughter doesn't have to be of great use elsewhere. I'll be content as long as she's happy. Besides, I can give her whatever she wants."

"Including her mother?" Julian stared at Justin coldly. "You'll give Charlotte whatever she likes, including a mother that she likes, am I right?"

"What are you saying?"

"You're trying to get close to Rachel just because Charlotte likes her."

Hearing this, Justin frowned. Then, Julian continued, "It's good that you've forgotten the past, so don't try to get close to Rae. Actions like hurting someone shouldn't be done over and over—once is enough."

"Who are you to intervene in our matter?"

"Consider the fact that I saved her life last time."

With that, Justin furrowed his brows, causing deep wrinkles between them. Before this, he never had the means of finding out what happened five years ago, but now, he was feeling pressured to find out what

actually happened. Even when he pretended to be calm, the feeling of being the only one kept in the dark annoyed him and made him feel uneasy. What did I forget? What exactly happened between Rachel and me?

After that, silence filled the air once more. When they finally reached the top, Samuel went to the washroom with Julian to keep up the act.

"Daddy, Mommy, I need to go to the washroom too. Wait for me, okay?" After saying that, Charlotte followed Julian and Samuel.

When they were gone, Rachel and Justin were left alone. The cypress trees at the top of the mountain towered over them, creating shadows on the stone pavement.

"Why did you come back?" he asked.

When she heard that, she gave him a surprised look. From what she could recall, this was the first time that he had asked this question seriously. Before this, he seemed very sure that she had come back for him.

"What did Julian tell you?"

“Why must it be him who said something?”

“What’s the matter with you?”

“...” Tongue-tied, he swore that he had never been so furious before. Before she came back, he had never felt that losing a part of his memory had any major impact on his life, but everything changed when she returned.

“Why did you leave Riverdale back then?”

Immediately, the puzzled look in her eyes disappeared. Coldly, she replied, “I don’t feel like answering that question. Go ask the Burtons if you’d like to know. I’m sure someone must know.” She did not want to talk about the things that happened before and after she left because that was the most humiliating and undignifying period of her life.

“I’ll go look for Jolly. Wait for them here.” After telling him that, she prepared to leave as she did not want to stay a moment longer.

All of a sudden, he got upset and grabbed her wrist so that she’s facing him. “I didn’t say you can go. You need to make things clear right now.”

“What are you doing? Let go of me!”

“I’ll let you go once you explain it to me. Every single one of you won’t tell me the whole truth. Do you think it’s fun being mysterious? Do you think it was reasonable of you to abandon Charlotte and leave Riverdale then?”

She ground her teeth. “Fun being mysterious?” She raised her hand to slap him.

However, he had already seen that coming, so he stopped her. Grabbing hold of her hand, he pinned it behind her back. She let out a painful cry as her back hit the tree trunk.

Coldly, he said, "I've never been patient with women, and you're no exception. If you hated me so much before, why did you come back to see me?"

As every deafening word sounded clearly in her ears, there was not a single hint of expression that could be found in his cold voice. Her ears buzzed and her wrists hurt, making her recall those days from five years ago that were filled with endless humiliation and torture. How dare he ask me such questions unapologetically? Am I the one at fault? No, the only thing I did wrong was easily agreeing to marry him in Amber's place back then.

"I didn't come back for you." She endured the pain and lifted her delicate yet unyielding face. "Don't forget that Charlotte's also my daughter. You can't deny that no matter what I've done."

"So? Will you tell her that you've been with another man all these years? And that the man's her uncle?"

At that moment, he was furious. Squeezing her shoulders, he snarled, "Did you come back to do that?"

Chapter 206

"So what? I think Julian's right. I'm not related to you anymore, so it's better to let the children acknowledge the fact earlier."

"Rachel Hudson!" Justin forcefully punched his fist beside her ear.

Rachel closed her eyes in shock as wind gushed by her ear as a result of Justin's force. Moments later, she opened her eyes only to be met with Justin's which were still filled with rage.

"Are you done?"

Rachel's eyes were as calm as still water when she spat the three simple words while staring quietly at Justin. "Let go of me if you're done. Charlotte and Samuel are coming out soon. You don't wish for them to see you treating me like this, do you?"

"Are you threatening me?"

“Threatening you?” Rachel snorted and looked downward.

The next second, Justin gasped all of a sudden. He started jumping on one foot while holding his other foot which was stomped and stared at Rachel in disbelief.

While Justin was still wincing, Rachel quickly kept a safe distance away from him.

“You’re still as arrogant as always. I have many other ways to make you let go of me. Why would I threaten you?”

Rachel crossed her arms. Justin was blood-boiled hearing her sarcastic tone, but the pain in his foot was so intense that he couldn’t even say a word. Sure enough, Rachel did not show mercy at all when she stepped on him.

Just then, Julian came out with the two kids. Seeing Justin leaning against the tree with an agonized look, Julian darted a perplexed glance toward him and Rachel. “What happened?”

Rachel shrugged. “He said he’s having a stomachache. Maybe he has eaten some unclean food in the morning.”

Julian asked kindly, “A stomachache? Let me take a look.”

“No, thanks!” Justin shot a fierce glare at Julian.

After that, they went to a restaurant to meet Jolly

“My elegant queen who’s going on a vacation, where’s your hat?” Rachel started teasing Jolly’s flyaway hair the moment she saw her.

Jolly, on the other hand, looked crabby. “Who knew the wind would be so strong at the peak of the hill? My hat was blown away!” After that, she glared at Rachel. “You already knew that, didn’t you?”

“Even if I did, you wouldn’t believe me if I told you so. You would surely insist that the hat wouldn’t fly away if you held it tight.”

“Oh, sure. You just wanted to see me being embarrassed!”

“There, there. I’ll buy you another hat, alright?”

“That’s more like it!”

Seeing the two men from a distance who accompanied the kids to take some fruits, Jolly nudged Rachel.

“Do you feel that the atmosphere is rather tense today?”

“What do you mean?”

“The silent competition between the two men.”

Following Jolly’s gaze, Rachel stared at Justin and Julian in the distance.

Samuel pointed at a piece of cake and said, “Mr. Peters, I’d like to have that.”

“Sure.” Just as Julian was about to get that piece of cake, Justin quickly took it away. “I’m sorry. Charlotte loves this.”

Nevertheless, Julian soon regained his composure. “It’s okay. I’ll ask the waiter to get us more.”

A waiter who happened to be serving dishes near them overheard their conversation and said apologetically, “I’m sorry. That is the last piece of the cake. There are many customers since today is a weekend.”

"It's okay." Julian caressed Samuel's hair and cooed, "Samuel, let's get other desserts."

"Samuel can have mine," Charlotte offered generously.

But before Samuel spoke up, Justin quickly replied, "Charlotte, some things can't be shared."

With that, Julian immediately fought back. "Charlotte is willing to share, so why not? It's just a piece of cake."

"That's because she has never lacked cakes, but it would be a different story when it comes to other things."

"You're not referring to the cake? Then it's not an issue of whether to share or not. Samuel wanted the cake first anyway."

"A family can't be shared."

Julian's pupils dilated at once. "Justin!"

Although Samuel was not Rachel's biological child, Rachel had been raising him ever since he was a baby, so he was just like a biological son to her. On the other hand, Samuel had always thought that Rachel was his biological mother since the adults had never mentioned anything in front of him. How could Justin say such things in front of the kids?!

While the atmosphere was getting tense, Samuel blurted, "A cake can be shared."

Justin was stunned.

"Yeah, a cake can be shared." Charlotte held Samuel's hand. The two kids then looked at Justin and Julian in puzzlement. "What's wrong with you guys?"

Justin and Julian exchanged glances. At this moment, both their eyes were filled with complexity. The atmosphere was rather weird at the dining table; Justin and Julian were in a stalemate to divide the cake.

To clear the tension, Jolly couldn't help but speak up, "Come on guys, it's just a piece of cake. Why do you have to be so particular about whether it is divided fairly?"

"Have you heard that inequality rather than poverty is the cause of troubles?" said Justin.

"What are you talking about? Can't we just simply cut it?"

"No way." Justin rejected it resolutely.

Jolly grumbled impatiently, "What do you want to do then? Are you going to let the kids have the cake or not?"

Justin glanced at Rachel and said, "You can divide it for them." He would like to see who was more important to Rachel-the adopted son or the biological daughter.

Frowning, Rachel did not hesitate but directly placed the cake in front of the two kids and gave each of them

a fork. "Samuel, Charlotte, you guys can have them together, alright?"

The two kids had no issues with that to begin with, so they answered at the same time, "Sure!"

Rachel said, "Not everything has to be divided equally. There's no need to be so calculative between friends and family."

Justin wore a complicated look as he was being snubbed.

After the meal, they went to the musical fountain on the hill. There were many pigeons flying all over the square. Julian bought two packets of corn and passed them to the two kids. However, Charlotte shook her head incessantly and shrunk into Justin's arms. "I don't want them."

Rachel was confused. "What's wrong?"

Justin caressed Charlotte's hair. "She's afraid of birds."

Rachel was startled. "I'm sorry, Charlotte. It's my fault. I didn't know you were afraid of birds and I even brought you here."

Justin looked into the distance and said nonchalantly, "How would you know? We came here because of Samuel, am I right?" With that, he carried Charlotte and walked away immediately, leaving Rachel stunned for quite a while.

On the other hand, Samuel loved feeding pigeons and had already started feeding them with Jolly. There were even a few pigeons that stopped on his shoulders and made him giggle joyfully.

"Rachel," Julian's voice emerged. "Don't worry. It's normal for children to be afraid of something. You didn't mean it anyway."

Rachel passed the packet of corn to Julian. "I'll go check out on Charlotte."

The absence in the past 5 years couldn't be made up in a short time. As much as Charlotte was fond of Rachel, the latter felt that she had not fulfilled the responsibility of a mother.

Meanwhile, Justin had already walked away from the square with Charlotte. "Charlotte, there are no pigeons here. Don't be afraid."

It was only then did Charlotte lift up her head from Justin's arms, but her face was still pale as a result of fright when she saw the pigeons which were flying from afar.

"It's okay." Justin patted Charlotte's back gently.

"Why is Charlotte so afraid of pigeons?"

When Justin heard the voice, he saw Rachel who caught up with them from the corner of his eye.

Chapter 207

Charlotte seemed to be tired as she lay against Justin's shoulder and remained quiet. Justin patted her back intermittently as if he was putting her to bed. Then, he sat down on a bench while carrying her.

Rachel followed him over. "What's wrong? Is she tired?"

"She was too frightened when she saw the birds. She gets sleepy once she's relaxed."

"How did this happen?"

Justin furrowed his brows. "Charlotte was injured by a bird before when she was younger."

It was only after hearing from Justin did Rachel know that Charlotte had not always been staying with Justin since young. More often than not, Justin was too busy and did not have time to take care of her, so Arthur would take her to his place.

"There are quite a number of kids from the extended families who are around the same age as Charlotte. They actually don't have many connections with the Burton Family anymore, but some of them are still racking their brains to claim a relationship with us."

Justin was talking about the distant relatives which were barely connected to his family. They knew the Burton Family had very few heirs, so quite a number of them had wicked intentions. Arthur was old now and had started missing his hometown for some reason. He had actually brought Charlotte back to his hometown a few times. At that time, he even had the intention to adopt a few of the distant relatives' children.

Just then, Charlotte, who was lying on Justin's shoulder, spoke up all of a sudden. "There are pigeons at Great Uncle's place, and they'll peck my eyes." While saying that, Charlotte rubbed her eyes.

Startled, Rachel lifted Charlotte's hand and caressed the scar at the corner of her eye. Even though it was not obvious, Rachel had noticed it before this.

Justin explained, "That injury was by a pigeon."

Rachel felt her heart squeezed. Initially, she thought Charlotte had accidentally injured herself. Kids were playful, so it was common to get some injuries and it didn't sound like a serious matter. However, from what

Justin said, it seemed like the incident was not as simple.

"The doctor in the neighborhood's clinic disinfected Charlotte's wound after she was injured, but she started having a high fever that night. When I rushed over the next day, she was already in a coma due to the high fever. So, we quickly rushed to the hospital and were told that she had an infection."

Later, they realized that the pigeon that injured Charlotte had an infectious disease. It was quarantined in the pigeon farm and was about to be slaughtered. However, for some reason, it injured Charlotte and even appeared in the dishes which were prepared 'specially' for Charlotte that night.

Justin did not elaborate further on the details, but Rachel was already petrified hearing that. There were many schemeful people in an established family like the Burtons—they would not even spare an innocent child!

"It's Mommy's fault, Charlotte. I didn't even know this happened." Feeling sorry, Rachel rubbed Charlotte's cheeks. "I will never bring you to see birds again."

Charlotte continued lying obediently on Justin's shoulder and said softly, "I want a kiss, Mommy."

Rachel lowered her head and gave Charlotte a kiss on her forehead.

Because Rachel drew close to Justin, the latter could smell the faint scent of Rachel's perfume, and it actually made him absentminded for a while. A gust of wind carried away the fragrance, but Justin's memory resurfaced.

Rachel lifted her head to see Justin staring at her. Only then did she realize when she was kissing Charlotte just now, she subconsciously held onto Justin's arm. The moment their eyes met, it was as if the temperature

of their surroundings increased while Rachel started blushing.

Suddenly, Charlotte wanted to come down from Justin's arms. "Daddy, Mommy, I want to go to the washroom."

Instantly, Rachel and Justin snapped out of their daze. Before they could say something, Charlotte smiled. "You guys carry on." Then, she quickly scurried away.

Justin and Rachel glanced at each other as the atmosphere became awkward. What's the little girl thinking?

"What happened next? Did you bring Charlotte back to you?" Rachel initiated a topic to ease the awkward atmosphere.

"No." Justin shook his head. "There were too many things to attend to in the company, so I couldn't bring Charlotte with me all the time. It was Grandpa who sent the adopted child back to his hometown to stop those people's wishful thinking."

Sure enough, although Arthur was advanced in age, he was very resolute in handling things. He clearly knew how to make a decision between his real great-granddaughter and a son from the extended family.

Rachel nodded slightly. Justin said, "Because of this incident, Grandpa hopes that I'll get married soon and find someone to take care of Charlotte."

“With Amber?”

“Yeah.”

This was the first time they mentioned Amber after Rachel had left for 5 years. Rachel frowned and said firmly, “Anyone else but her.”

“Why?”

“She won’t treat Charlotte well. Do you really think that she’ll willingly become Charlotte’s stepmother and take good care of her?”

“You don’t even trust your own sister. Who else do you think is fit to be Charlotte’s stepmother?”

“She should at least be someone whom Charlotte likes.”

“Are you implying yourself? Who else does Charlotte like besides you?”

Tongue-tied, Rachel looked at Justin in shock.

“If I were to ask you to come back and look after Charlotte, what would you say?”

Rachel clenched her fists. Before she could give an answer, the sound of a phone buzzing emerged—Justin’s phone was ringing.

After seeing the incoming caller ID, Justin stood up. “Excuse me.”

“Sure.”

Justin walked toward a tree and picked up the call under it. Amber's voice came forth from the other end of the line. "Hey Justin, where are you now?"

"I took Charlotte out to the hills. What's up?"

"Oh, nothing. The surveillance camera in the mansion was spoiled before this. I'm worried that something will happen to Charlotte again, so I asked the technician to come and check the cameras. However, little did I

expect that..." Amber paused.

"What?"

"I don't know if I should say this, Justin. I'm worried that you'll think I'm deliberately sowing discord."

"What exactly is it? Just spit it out." Justin had gradually lost his patience. Although Amber had been staying by his side all these years and was his legal fiancée, he didn't have any feelings toward her; he couldn't even recall having any relationship with her. The woman had always behaved in a coy and coquettish manner, which made Justin impatient to deal with her.

"There's an issue with the surveillance camera's footage. I'll send it directly to you."

As soon as Amber said that, Justin received a notification on his phone-she had sent him footage of the camera in the mansion.

In order to ensure Charlotte's safety and supervise the nanny who took care of Charlotte at home, Justin had installed many surveillance cameras in the house. One of them was hidden well in the corridor and wouldn't be noticed easily by the others.

The footage that Amber sent was captured by the camera in the second floor's corridor. When Justin saw a familiar figure appearing in the scene, his eyes darkened. "When did this happen?"

“Before and after you went on the business trip. I don’t know why she would want to enter your bedroom. Unfortunately, there’s no surveillance camera in your bedroom. Given this situation, I can’t say for sure if she has done something. It could be a misunderstanding.”

However, Justin hung up the call before Amber could finish her sentence.

“Hello? Justin?” Looking at the dark phone screen, Amber was not annoyed at all but wore a triumphant sm instead.

Chapter 208

Based on what Amber understood about Justin, she knew he would surely investigate the authenticity of the footage. Justin was a skeptical person, so Amber reckoned he would definitely install surveillance cameras at important places like his bedroom. As for the rest of the matter, she wouldn’t have to worry about it.

Meanwhile, Justin called Frankie with a darkened face and ordered, “Turn on the laptop in my office right now and retrieve the footage of the surveillance camera in my bedroom. I’ll send you the time.”

“President Burton, didn’t you go hiking? Why are you suddenly,”

“Just do as you’re told.”

Frankie was startled, “Yes, sir.”

Moments later, Justin received the footage from his assistant. Based on the timestamps he had provided, Frankie sent him 4 footages.

Justin clicked into the first footage and saw the familiar woman standing in front of his wardrobe while entering a password. All the 3 other footages were similar—the woman had gone straight to his safe after entering his bedroom.

In the last footage, the safe was opened. The scene of the familiar woman taking out documents while uttering something after opening the safe made Justin’s blood boil. His fists slowly curled into a ball

while he clenched them tightly to the point his knuckles were cracking. The reason she approached me and Charlotte is not because she misses us!

"Has the call ended?" Seeing Justin's return, Rachel subconsciously glanced toward the direction of the washroom. "Charlotte is not back yet. I'll go look for her."

"Stop there." Suddenly, Justin hailed her in a solemn tone.

"What's wrong?" Rachel was confused.

Justin clenched his fist as the content of the footage replayed in his mind. With his eyes filled with coldness, he questioned, "Rachel, what exactly is your intention of coming back?"

Rachel frowned. "Who called you?"

Justin strode forward and seized Rachel's arm. "Answer me."

Rachel winced as her frown deepened.

"Let go of me."

"I asked you to answer my question. What exactly is your intention of coming back?!"

"Justin Burton!" Struggling, Rachel inhaled deeply and gritted her teeth. "Did you forget that you were the one who sent me an invitation and headhunted me from SG Pharma?"

"Indeed, I was the one who headhunted you, but you could reject it."

"Why should I reject it? Just because you're in Riverdale? Just because you're the president of Burton Group? Should I then never set foot in Riverdale for the rest of my life?"

Justin sneered. "You sound so reasonable that you almost got me."

"I don't care if you trust me or not."

"Was it easy to guess the password of my bedroom's safe?" Justin asked coldly, which stunned Rachel at once.

He knows. No wonder...

Justin tightened his grip on her arm as if he wanted to break it. "I'm asking you one last time. What are you looking for? Why did you come back?"

After a short panic, Rachel forced herself to calm down but did not answer Justin's question. "Let go of me."

"What on earth were you looking for in my room?"

Justin approached Rachel while the latter exclaimed as her back was pressed against the edge of the rail. Her body was slanted, so she could fall down the hill at any time if Justin let go of her.

"Justin Burton! What are you doing?!"

A furious male voice emerged from behind Justin. Before Justin could react, he felt a gush of wind followed by a punch in his face. Julian's forceful punch made him stumble backward, releasing Rachel in the process.

At the same time, Rachel screamed as she almost fell out from the rail. Fortunately, Julian reacted swiftly and grabbed her hand. "Are you okay?"

Rachel slumped onto the ground, ashen-faced, as she had not recovered from the shock.

Julian was irritated to see Justin who fell at the side. He grabbed Justin by the collar and gave him another punch. "Have you lost your mind? Are you actually thinking of killing Rachel?!"

Then, the two men started landing blows on each other.

Rachel held the rail and as her legs were so weak from the shock she couldn't even stand up. Seeing the scene, she had no energy to stop the two.

Julian was always gentle and kind, but at this moment, he was like an enraged lion and showed no mercy at all as he scowled fiercely. "Haven't you hurt her enough back then?! 5 years have passed, yet you still refuse to let her off. How can you call yourself a human?!"

"What the hell are you saying? Do you know what on earth she has done?!" Justin blocked Julian's fist with his arm and bellowed furiously, "Julian, you must be crazy!"

"I'm crazy? You are the one who is crazy! Don't assume that all that has happened doesn't exist anymore just because you've lost your memory. You can never make up for the hurt that you've caused Rachel. The loss of memory is just a result of you running away from your remorse deep down!"

"Remorse?"

While Justin was stunned, Julian gave him another punch in the corner of his mouth. Immediately, a stench of blood spread in Justin's cavity.

"That's enough!" A weak retort came forth. Holding the rail, Rachel stood up slowly. "That's enough, Julian."

Clenching his fists, Julian gritted his teeth and let go of Justin's collar after a while. Then, he stood up and said, "Let's go, Rachel."

Rachel nodded slightly and went down the hill with Julian's support.

It was moments later only did Justin get up unsteadily. Seeing Rachel and Julian walk away. Justin could feel his temples pulsating, and he gritted his teeth hard. Rachel was the one who had an ax to grind. Furthermore,

Julian was his own cousin. How could he side with her? As such, Justin wouldn't possibly believe that there was nothing between the two.

After heading home, Charlotte kept questioning Justin about Rachel's whereabouts. "Did you make Mommy angry again? Otherwise, why would she leave without even telling me?"

"No."

"I don't believe it. Call Mommy. I'm going to ask her."

"You're not allowed to call her from now on. Don't bring her to our place and don't meet her too."

Charlotte was frightened by Justin's cold order because he had never been this stern toward her. "What happened, Daddy?"

Justin did not answer her question but ordered the servant, "Take good care of Miss Charlotte." After that, he left home.

"Daddy!" Charlotte wanted to go after Justin but was stopped by the servant. "Miss Charlotte, Young Master Justin doesn't seem to be in a good mood. It's better to just stay here."

Charlotte frowned as she watched Justin leave in a hurry. After a while, she went upstairs and closed the door before making a call.

"Hey Samuel, it's me."

Meanwhile, with a sleepy look, Samuel was yawning on the other end of the line. "What's up, Charlotte?"

"What happened between Daddy and Mommy?"

"What do you mean?" Samuel sounded perplexed.

"Daddy brought me home all of a sudden and doesn't allow me to see Mommy anymore. Did Mommy tell you anything?"

Chapter 209

"Nope." Samuel shook his head as he turned to the bedroom and added, "But Mr. Peters and Godmother came home with us, and they're chatting outside right now. It sounds like they are talking about Daddy."

"Quickly, go listen to what they're saying."

Hastily, Charlotte expressed, "Something big must have happened."

Rolling out of the bed, Samuel tiptoed to the door and cracked it open before putting his ear against the thin

gap. In the living room, Julian was seen to be applying some blood-circulating ointment on Rachel's arm.

While doing that, he instructed, "Just rub it like this. Twice a day and the swelling will subside in two days."

"Thanks."

With an expressionless face, Rachel unrolled her sleeve. As she was doing that, Jolly furiously questioned, "Is

Justin some kind of bruiser? Is he sick in the head? How dare he lay his hand on you under broad daylight! That man would have murdered you if we weren't here!"

"He asked me about the safe box. He must've figured out something."

Stunned, Jolly seemed to have understood something. "What did you say?"

Shaking her head, Rachel assured, "Nothing, and that's how things ended up this way."

Based on everything that had happened up until now, Justin would surely bar her from seeing Charlotte and himself and be overwhelmingly defensive against her.

In response, Jolly defended, "So what if you opened the safe box? What about the things he did in the past? He could be sent to jail for those!"

"Have you forgotten that he lost his memory? He doesn't remember anything from the past."

"How convenient. He's taking advantage of his memory loss, yet you're still defending him."

Leering at Jolly, Julian blurted, "Calm down, Jolly."

At once, she held in her frustrations as she reluctantly gnarled her teeth.

After remaining silent for a long while, Rachel clarified, "I'm not defending him. However, one thing is certain. Memory loss or not, that's his true color-vicious to his bones. I'm simply trying to stand in his shoes to figure

out how to search for those proofs."

To that, Julian queried, "Have you found out how?"

"Old Mr. Burton's birthday is near."

In the meantime, Justin, who had just arrived at the company, summoned his assistant into his office.

"I thought you went hiking, President Burton. How are you back so soon?"

"Tell me every detail about what happened five years ago."

With that, Frankie was in a daze. "That's... sudden. Why are you asking me this? What happened to your face, President?"

At the corner of Justin's lip was a visible bruise. It wasn't as obvious when he traveled down the hills, but now that the bruise had turned worse, the sight of it was rather spine-chilling.

"Just answer me instead of giving me such crap."

"It's not that I don't want to, President Burton. Old Mr. Burton had specifically ordered me to not tell this to anyone."

With a troubled face, Frankie pleaded, "Please don't make things difficult for me, President. To be honest, forgetting about the past might actually benefit you. We should always look forward to the future, not the past."

"Rachel entered my bedroom and opened the safe box!"

"Oh, is that so?" Despite his slight daze, Frankie didn't show much shock.

"You look like you've expected this." Justin straightened his back as he gave Frankie a mean gaze.

Hastily, the assistant shook his head. "No, I don't. I know nothing about it. Uh... I'll take my leave if there's nothing else, President Burton. Just call me if you need my assistance. I'll have the secretary fetch the medkit and tend to your wound."

"Did I dismiss you?" Irrked, Justin grabbed a file on his table and tossed it toward Frankie. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

"Something wrong with the file, President Burton? I'll check it right away." After successfully evading the attack, Frankie hugged the document to his chest as he ran out with a forced grin.

Watching Frankie departing hastily, Justin grew even more frustrated. He couldn't put his head around why Frankie was unbothered when he told him such fatal information about how Rachel opened his

safe box. It was as if Frankie's composure was telling him that it was natural for Rachel to do such a thing.

What's in the safe box? What was Rachel looking for? The more he pondered, the tenser his brows grew.

In a flash, a week had passed, and Rachel never got to see Justin nor Charlotte. Based on the rumors, Justin temporarily sent Charlotte to the summer villa because Arthur's birthday was coming. He planned to only pick her up when it was over. Although that might be the case, Rachel knew that Justin simply didn't want Charlotte to contact her by any means.

"How do you like this school, Samuel?"

Holding Samuel's hand, Rachel walked out of an elementary school. "This school follows an international

school system. So, you're going to have classes like usual even when other schools are having summer breaks. Since this school is near our home, if your godmother and I are too busy to pick you up, you can walk home yourself, okay?"

Blinking his eyes, Samuel quizzed, “Are we not going back to Montenegro, Mommy?”

“Not yet. There are things Mommy needs to settle, so you’ll be going to school here for now.”

Initially, it wasn’t part of Rachel’s plan to bring Samuel along to Riverdale. However, the boy had come by himself. So, she felt it was best for him to attend school in Riverdale for the time being. Besides, leaving the kid alone in Montenegro would be rather worrying. Furthermore, after scouting a number of schools, Rachel finally found one that shared similar modules to those in Montenegro—she even brought Samuel to a trial class in fear of his discomfort.

Despite her answer, Samuel pursued, “So are we going back?”

“Yes. It won’t take long.”

Hearing that, the boy seemed to have some thoughts. Before getting into the car, he snapped a photo of the school and sent it to someone.

Soon, Saturday had arrived. Thanks to the Burtons’ fame, many had gathered in the Burtons’ summer villa for Arthur’s eightieth birthday. This year’s event was unlike the others where Arthur would merely have a simple dinner with the entire family at home instead of hosting such an extravagant banquet, shattering the dreams

of countless individuals that intended to engage connections through banquets.

However, thanks to this one in a million opportunity, the entire Riverdale was able to make a move on Burton with the strategies they came up with. Evidently, the guests’ dazzling vehicles had already filled the parking lots in the villa before the opening ceremony at sunset.

“Long live Arthur Burton!”

Before the arrival of the guests, the Burtons were congratulating the old man.

“Great-grandpa!”

A sweet, delicate voice interrupted the crowd’s wishing.

Turning to the voice, Arthur immediately beamed. “Who is this little princess?”

Donning a white dress and diamond tiara on her head, Charlotte appeared rather dazzling as her ebony leather shoes tapped rapidly on the carpet while she ran toward her great-grandfather for an embrace.

“Happy birthday, Great-grandpa!”

“Aww.” As the child stormed into his chest, Arthur carried her onto his lap while smiling. “You’re getting taller and prettier each day. Who bought you this dress?”

“Aunt Gloria did.”

Surprised, the old man queried, “Gloria is back?”

“Not yet,” Sue answered from the side. “She has too many performances going on, so she couldn’t make it. She shipped some snacks and clothes over for Charlotte to cheer her up.”

Hearing that, Arthur nodded his head in silence.

“I have a wish, Great-grandpa!”

Clutching the old man’s arm, Charlotte inquired, “Can you grant my wish, Great-grandpa?”

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Hearing that, Sue reminded the little girl, “It’s Great-grandpa’s birthday, Charlotte. He should be the one making a wish.”

However, thanks to Arthur's adoration for the girl, he simply waved his hand. "It's fine. What's your wish, Charlotte?"

"I want to go to school."

"School?"

At once, every single soul in the room was dazed by the little girl's request.

Everyone knew that the Burton Family's golden little girl was self-willed, so it was normal for her actions to be unexpected. However, what shocked everyone was that she had been to school before—in fact, she had been to every school around here, but she always managed to cause trouble wherever she went. Because of that, she was assigned a private tutor at home to overlook her academics instead. Despite everything, the little she-devil actually proposed to go to school?

"You want to go to school, Charlotte?" Even Justin was dumbfounded.

Ignoring her father, Charlotte didn't even care to spare him a glance as she continued to beg Arthur, "Please, Great-grandpa?"

"That's great! How could I say no to that?" Caressing the child's head, the old man continued, "I'll have someone find you the best school right away!"

"No need for that. I've already found one myself."

"You did?"

"Yup, it's this one." As she was speaking, she presented a stack of documents she had been carrying by her side to her great-grandfather. "I had someone search it for me. All that's left is a guardian's signature and I'm good to go. You'll sign it for me, won't you, Great-grandpa?"

Suspicious, Justin scowled. "When did you start looking for a school, Charlotte? Let me see!"

"No!"

Immediately, Charlotte dodged Justin's hand while giving him a disdainful stare and scorned, "I'm asking for Great-grandpa's signature, not yours! Why do you even care?"

Hearing that, everyone was even more baffled.

Sneakily, Sue went to Amber and tugged on her sleeve, whispering, "What's the brat's deal? Why is she quarreling with Justin again?"

Nonetheless, Amber casually countered, "Who knows?" The little girl has no idea what she's up against yet

she's so bold to take on an adult!

Since Arthur was always spoiling the little girl, he took a look at the documents to verify them before signing his name. "Okay, okay. Since the princess has requested for my signature, I shall grant her wish."

Suddenly, Frankie rushed over to the scene and whispered something to Justin, to which the latter wanted to stop the old man from signing. Unfortunately, it was already too late.

"It's done. Now you can go to school!"

Wrapping her arms around Arthur's neck, Charlotte gave his cheek a peck. "Thank you, Great-grandpa. You're the best!"

"If you want to thank me, stay in the villa with me for a few more days."

"Okie-dokie!"

Hearing that, Arthur beamed sweetly.

Very soon, the banquet was about to commence. Since the family's wishing session was coming to an end, the old man ordered Justin to greet the guests in the hall. "Go tend to the guests, Justin. I won't be heading in."

"Yes, Grandpa."

While walking out of the room, Arthur questioned Frankie, "Who gave Charlotte the registration form?"

"It was Miss Hochmann, sir."

"Isn't she on tour overseas?"

"It seems that she had her friend send the form over."

Scowling, Arthur questioned, "Why would she suddenly arrange for Charlotte to go to school?"

"I'm not sure either, sir. Would you like to give Miss Hochmann a call?"

Pulling out his phone, the old man ordered, "Yes, head to the hall without me."

"Yes, sir."

At this very moment, the guests at the Burton Family's banquet were gradually filling the hall.

Meanwhile, Amber, who attended as Justin's fiancée, was welcoming the guests at the door with Sue.

Although they weren't from the Burton Family, they behaved as if they were.

"Isn't that the mute?" Staring into the distance, Sue notified Amber, who in response raised her head and looked in the same direction.

A black Porsche Cayenne was parked at the door and a woman, who appeared rather glamorous, alighted from the car. The woman wore an off-shoulder emerald evening gown which complemented her fair milky skin; the hems of her gown dragged gracefully across the carpet as she walked, catching everyone's attention.

Rachel? Clenching her fists, Amber stepped forward and stopped Rachel. "Why are you here?"

"Why can't I be here?" Letting go of the hem of her dress, Rachel smirked at Amber. "I thought it was the bodyguard's job to stop the guests. You don't have to stoop this low even if the Burtons don't like you, you know? Dad's heart would break if he were to see you being this pathetic."

"What." Frowning, Amber gritted her teeth. "Did Justin invite you? Who invited you here?"

"What's wrong, Chris?"

As the sisters were interacting, a middle-aged man's voice was heard from behind. The man seemed to be around fifty. Although there were patches of white hair on his head, he appeared no less menacing. Sporting a full black suit, he dashingly walked to Rachel. Arriving at Rachel's side, the man interrogated, "Why haven't you gone in?"

Before Rachel could answer, Amber glanced at the man and scoffed, "Jeez! How long has it even been since you returned, and you already found yourself a sugar daddy, huh? He's almost as old as Dad. Gotta give it to you, sis!"

With a dull face, Rachel responded, "What do you mean?"

Crossing her arms, Amber continued, "Doesn't matter what I mean. Everyone's watching you attend the party

with a senile man. Is this your way of shaming the Hudsons, or the Burtons?"

"Watch it, Amber."

"I'm just stating the obvious. Justin doesn't know about you seducing an old man, does he?"

"What the hell are you on about?"

Before Rachel and the man beside her could clarify anything, a furious woman's voice was heard, interrupting the awkward situation.

The angry voice belonged to Jolly who was ascending the stairs, hurrying to the trio as she was holding up the skirt of her amber dress. As she was pacing toward them, she leered at Amber. Before anyone could react, a spank landed.

Smack! The sound of the slap thundered across the entrance. Seeing that, the guests were stunned and each of them started gossiping.

Pressing her face, Amber peered at Jolly in disbelief with her eyes wide open.

"This one's for making sh*t up!" Shielding Rachel, Jolly aggressively scolded Amber, "B*tch and her unmannered mouth. Do the Burtons not fear offending the entire Riverdale with you out here attending to the guests?"

"You.." Utterly infuriated, Amber covered her cheek as she pointed at Jolly and Rachel. "How did you get in here? What do you think this place is? Where are the guards?"

"Ah, looks like I finally get to witness Hudson's Second Young Lady's true colors!"

At those words, the crowd was taken aback.

Behind Jolly and Rachel, an elegant figure walked up the staircase in a jade dress. Blessed with a noble appearance, the woman, who seemed to be in her forties, joined in on the young ladies.

“Mrs. Carter?” Stupefied, Sue, who had been silent the whole time, suddenly blurted as her pupils contracted.

Gazing coldly at Sue, the missus wrapped her arm around the middle-aged man’s arm.

“Mrs. Carter, this is.”

“Madam Parham, it’s my first time hearing someone describe my husband as a ‘senile man’ and publicly insulting both my daughters.”

Mrs. Carter has two daughters? Baffled by the statement, Amber and Sue were visibly shocked. They are actually the President of the Carter Enterprise and his wife? But, how is Rachel their daughter?