

Mute Bride 221

Chapter 221 Did You Set This Up

Meanwhile, in the nightclub's private room, Rachel's eardrum was hurt by the sound of wine bottles shattering into pieces. "Don't come over!" She walked around the table to evade Mr. Wayne as he approached her, but her head was getting increasingly dizzy.

Something's wrong with that glass of wine, she thought to herself. Indeed, she never expected that there would be something wrong with the glass of wine poured right in front of her.

"Stop struggling. It's useless. You'll lose all your strength very soon, so you'd better behave yourself and go along with me." Mr. Wayne took off his suit jacket and reached out his large hands to her.

Rachel's eyes blurred, and she fell on the carpet as she no longer had the strength to struggle. As her consciousness slowly faded away, she saw Mr. Wayne dragging her onto the bed. He began to unbutton his shirt in front of her, and his face was as greasy and disgusting as it had been six years ago. She broke down and cursed, "You'll die a dog's death!"

"It was Justin who led you to my bed back then. If someone has to die a dog's death for this, he should be the one instead." Mr. Wayne grabbed Rachel's suit jacket and ripped it off her shoulders. Then, his oppressive figure instantly fell on top of her.

"Aaaah!" Rachel screamed, but Mr. Wayne immediately covered her mouth. "I don't like it when you make a sound. That's not exciting enough," he said. Then, he took the whip off the wall and said, "Enjoy it, Mrs. Burton!"

Rachel immediately closed her eyes. Her body seemed to have predicted the pain brought by the whip landing on her body, for the tragic scene six years ago played itself over and over again in her mind.

Just then, a loud bang was suddenly heard, and Rachel didn't feel pain as she had expected.

Before Mr. Wayne could swish his whip, he was suddenly seized by the neck from behind by a pair of hands. Right after that, a forceful kick sent him rolling out of bed, and he let out a blood-curdling scream as someone trampled on his cheek with their leather shoes. "Justin Burton!"

Mr. Wayne's eyes were bulging out of their sockets. This scene was so familiar; the only difference was that he hadn't seen who the man before him was back then, whereas he saw the person very clearly today. "It's you!" He clenched his teeth. "It was also you back then!"

Justin looked as black as thunder. "How dare you touch one of my people? You really think you're indispensable to the herbal market in Riverdale, huh?"

"Aaaah!" Amid his shrill cries, Mr. Wayne covered his groin and curled himself into a ball, writhing about on the floor.

Meanwhile, Rachel clutched the collar of her shirt and huddled in the corner of the bed while forcibly suppressing her physical discomfort.

Justin locked eyes with her the instant he looked up. "Are you all right?"

"Don't touch me!" Rachel suddenly barked frostily as she dodged Justin's hand. Her eyes were extremely cold with no gratitude in them. Instead, the look in her eyes was one of disgust, anger, and profound shame.

An angry look crept over Justin's face as he saw the look in Rachel's eyes. "How could you be so unappreciative of my help when I just saved you?"

"Did I ask you to save me?"

"You—"

Before Justin could finish his sentence, a noise was heard outside the door. "Don't move! This is the police's anti-prostitution operation! Get down with your head in your hands!"

Jolly burst into the room from behind several plainclothes policemen. "Chris! We were held up for a while just now. Are you okay?"

Rachel shook her head.

“Justin? Why are you here?” When Jolly saw Justin and Mr. Wayne, who was lying in a corner, she immediately realized what had happened. She mocked, “Wow, could you be here to play the hero who saves the damsel in distress?”

When Justin saw the chaotic scene of policemen rushing into the nightclub and subduing everyone inside, he gave Rachel a long stare and asked in a cold voice, “Did you set this up?”

Rachel clutched her collar with a terrifyingly calm look in her eyes. “Who else would it be? I’m just doing this to protect myself, President Burton.”

Justin let out a sneer. “Protect yourself? You looked like you were being bullied, and you didn’t dare to say anything this morning. Was that a show you put on in front of me?”

Rachel didn’t turn a hair. “Naturally, you were only too eager to see me walking right into the trap. Am I brainless enough to come to such a place, allow such a person to get me drunk, and then wait for you to save me like a hero so that I’ll be deeply grateful to you?”

“You!”

“What do you want to do?” Jolly spread her arms wide and stood in front of Rachel while glaring at Justin arrogantly. “The police are outside. Do you want to get physical?”

Justin’s eyes were ablaze with anger as his hands clenched into fists at his sides.

“Miss Carter, we need you to assist us by having your testimony recorded.”

“Sure.”

Jolly was called aside by the police to have her testimony recorded, leaving Justin and Rachel the only ones standing in the room. "Come out with me." Justin dragged the woman out of the room right away.

The drug's effects on Rachel hadn't worn off, so she staggered as Justin dragged her. "What are you doing? Let go of me! Justin!" She shook Justin's hand off with all her strength while panting heavily. "If you're displeased because I caused the Burton Group to lose a business partner by setting up a trap for Mr. Wayne to be arrested, I'll find a way to make up for it. You don't have to make an issue out of this."

"Am I such a person in your eyes?" Justin was boiling with rage. "How could you not scruple to use yourself as bait to set up a trap? Did you even think about how you were going to walk out of here if your bestie couldn't arrive in time or if the nightclub had enough backing?" It scared him just to think of how serious the consequences could've been.

Rachel's fine eyebrows furrowed as she stared at Justin coldly. "Thanks for caring about me, President Burton. However, have you forgotten that it was you who forced me to discuss the business deal with Mr. Wayne?"

Justin was stunned.

Just then, Jolly ran out of the room after them upon realizing that Rachel wasn't inside. "Did he do anything to you, Chris?"

"No, he didn't. Let's go."

Jolly helped Rachel by the arm. Before leaving, she shot Justin a fierce glare and said, "Stop pretending to care about her here. If you really cared about Chris, you wouldn't have let her get in touch with such a perverted sc*mbag in the beginning!"

Justin clenched his fists as a trace of regret flashed across his eyes. He admitted that he had forced Rachel to take up the project and get in touch with Mr. Wayne at first to punish her a little. He wanted her to know that not everything was under her control, but he never expected things to turn out this way.

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Jolly sent Rachel home after leaving the nightclub. “Are you all right? I’d better take you to the hospital.”

“I’m all right, and I’ll be fine after having a rest at home. I’ll ask the company for several days off.”

“How could you still think about work at such a time?”

Rachel lay down right away when she got home. As Jolly tucked her in, she sat on the edge of Rachel’s bed and mumbled to herself, “We’d better finish our business here as soon as possible and go back to Montenegro. I really wonder if Riverdale is a bad place for us; we’ve gotten into so much trouble ever since we came back.” As she was mumbling, her cell phone finally vibrated. Jolly’s pupils contracted slightly when she saw the caller ID, and she went out with her phone in her hand.

On the other hand, Rachel had a long dream. In reality, she seldom dreamed about her childhood during the years she lived abroad. After she recovered the memories of what had happened back then, the past events of her childhood became so distinct to her that they no longer appeared in her dream. Tonight, however, she dreamed about her childhood and Justin once again.

Chapter 222 A Dream About the Past

Somerset Mountain was a poor and remote mountainous area. Few people really lived on the mountain except for a gang of human traffickers, so Rachel hadn’t had any friends since she was little.

Then, she met Justin, who was abducted and trafficked to Somerset Mountain. The days since then had been one of the few times in her childhood that she felt truly happy in the company of someone around her age.

“My home is on fire, Justin! I have to go back!” “You mustn’t go back, Katie!” “You should leave first, Justin.”

“Katie!” In the burning courtyard, a man with a scar on the corner of his eye stood at the door of the house and threw the emptied can of kerosene aside. After looking around, he came out and stared at the burning fire as the flames spread out of the courtyard.

“My mom is still inside!”

“Keep quiet!”

The teenage boy covered little Rachel’s mouth, and he wouldn’t let go of her no matter how she cried and shouted. He kept waiting until the man with a scar on the corner of his eye left, whereas Rachel cried so hard that she nearly passed out.

However, the fire was too big. Before the two kids could run down the mountain slope, the thatched cottage collapsed in an instant, turning the courtyard into a sea of flames as the fire kept spreading toward the peak of the mountain.

“Run, Katie! Run!”

“Mommy! Mommy!”

When Rachel suddenly heard a child’s voice, she woke up from her nightmare in a daze and noticed the tiny figure standing beside her bed. Her eyelids felt so heavy that she could hardly open her eyes, and her voice was very weak. “Why are you here, Samuel?”

“Today’s the weekend. What’s wrong with you, Mommy?”

“I’m feeling a little ill. Can you order some food by yourself?”

“Okay.”

As Samuel’s sensible and obedient voice reverberated in her ears, Rachel soon closed her eyes and fell back into a deep sleep.

After the young boy touched Rachel’s hot forehead with his tiny hand, he immediately went out and got some ice packs from the fridge. Then, he wrapped the ice packs in a towel and put them on Rachel’s

forehead to help her cool down her body temperature. After doing all that, he stood beside the bed for a while, and his face scrunched up when he saw how uncomfortable Rachel looked. It'll be bad if her temperature doesn't come down. As the thought occurred to him, he immediately picked up his school bag and left home.

It was already afternoon, and Justin was reading a magazine in the Burton Residence. He had been in a bad mood all day because of Rachel. Even though he recognized every word in the magazine, he couldn't concentrate on reading at all. Instead, he couldn't stop himself from darting a look at the door from time to time as he read the magazine.

Ding dong! Just then, the sound of the doorbell ringing could be heard outside.

Justin immediately put down the magazine, but he didn't see the person he was expecting when he opened the door. Instead, he saw a cute little boy standing behind the carved iron gate across the courtyard with a school bag shaped like a beetle on his back. The boy was pushing the gate with his tiny hands as he demanded in a forceful manner and said, "Open the door for me."

"Why are you here?" Justin stepped out of the house. "Did you come alone?"

Samuel replied, "Open the door for me first."

Justin reluctantly opened the gate, but he pressed Samuel's head with his hand and refused him entry. "I'm not letting you in. Tell me first—what are you doing here?"

Samuel shook his hand off in displeasure. "I'm here to see you. Hurry up and come with me."

"Go with you? Why?"

"My mom is ill. Come to my house with me."

Justin let out a cold sneer. "You're only a child, yet you're already lying without thinking. I just saw her yesterday. Not only was she as fit as a fiddle, she even plotted against an old fox with her friend. How dare you tell me right now that she's ill?"

“I’m telling the truth. I’m not lying.”

“I don’t care whether you’re telling the truth or lying. I’m busy. If she wants to see me, tell her to come here in person instead of using her kid to make a fuss.”

“I’m not lying to you. Hurry up and come with me!” As Samuel got anxious, he grabbed Justin’s arm and tried to pull him outside.

“Let go of me!” Justin was already in a bad mood in the first place, so he became even more impatient right now. Since he wasn’t careful with his strength while swinging his arm, he directly flung Samuel out of the way, causing the latter to take a pratfall.

“Ugh...” Samuel moaned in pain as he fell to the ground.

Justin was also stunned for a moment, but he adopted a stern countenance soon afterward. “It’s your fault for insisting on pulling me. I’m telling you again—if your mother wants to see me, tell her to come in person instead of using such contemptible means.”

Since Samuel was hurt during the fall, his big eyes—which looked like black grapes—instantly misted over with tears. With an aggrieved look, he then yelled at Justin, “You pushed me! My mom said that adults who hit kids are bad people. I hate you, and I don’t want you to be my dad anymore! I’ll go to Mr. Peters instead!”

Justin was somewhat regretful at first, but his expression changed the instant he heard Samuel’s words. “I’m not your dad in the first place.” After finishing his sentence, he immediately closed the gate and went back inside without looking back.

Samuel got up from the ground and stood angrily outside the gate for a few seconds before he left in a fury. I don’t want to see Justin ever again, nor do I want this person to be my dad anymore. Mr. Peters is 10,000 times better than him; even Mr. Hernandez, that womanizer, is ten thousand times better than him!

Shortly after Samuel walked out of the villa area, a figure stood in his way. He looked up at the man before him and said, "You're blocking my way, mister."

The man leaned down toward him. "Come with me, little kid."

In the meantime, Justin had just returned to the living room. He plonked himself down on the sofa and picked up the magazine he hadn't finished reading, but he could hardly concentrate as his mind was preoccupied with what Samuel had just said. How could that brat say he doesn't want me to be his dad when he is by no means related to me? Does he think he can intimidate me by doing this? That's simply ridiculous. Also, how could Rachel feign illness to seek my pity after doing something wrong? That's the last trick that'll work on me. She should come back by herself if she's so capable.

"Daddy!" Just then, Charlotte's voice was heard upstairs. Her white puff-sleeve nightdress reached down to her ankles as she walked downstairs barefoot while using the handrail to support herself. As she had just woken up from her afternoon nap, she still looked somewhat dazed. "Daddy, I think I heard Samuel's voice."

"Why did you come downstairs barefoot?" Justin immediately put down his magazine and went upstairs to carry Charlotte down.

Charlotte wrapped her arms around his neck, but she was still thinking about Samuel. "I really heard Samuel's voice. Is he here? Where is he?"

"He just left."

"Did Samuel really come?" Charlotte immediately became awake. "Why didn't you wake me up?"

Justin replied perfunctorily, "You were sleeping just now. Haven't you forbidden anyone to disturb you while you're sleeping?"

"How could Samuel be one of those people? He's my brother!"

Justin frowned. "He isn't your brother."

“Yes, he is my brother! How could you speak of him in such a way, Daddy? Didn’t you promise me to be nice to Mommy and Samuel from now on? Where’s Mommy?”

“She’s busy with something else.”

“You’re lying!” Charlotte pushed Justin away and struggled to get out of his arms. “I won’t believe you anymore. I’ll find Mommy by myself!” After finishing her sentence, she ran to the dressing room and got changed.

“Charlotte!” Justin could only go out with her since he couldn’t make the little girl change her mind. They then reached Rachel’s home, but no one answered the door after they rang the doorbell several times.

Chapter 223 She’s Really Sick

Justin said, “I told you she isn’t home, Charlotte. She must have headed out for some business. Let’s go home.” “That’s impossible! It’s the weekend!”

“But there’s nobody here, and there’s no way for us to enter.” “I have the password, though!” As the little girl spoke, she pulled the door knob and keyed in the password.

Before Justin came to his senses, the door let out a beep and opened.

“How do you know the password, Charlotte?”

“Samuel told me about it. It’s the sum of our birthdays.”

Upon entering the door, the girl called out, “Mommy!”

The bedroom door was barely cracked open, and a dim, amber light shone from the other side. After pacing toward the room, Justin pushed the door open and saw a woman lying on the bed.

We've been making so much noise, yet there's not even a single reaction from her. Is she really sick?

Meanwhile, Charlotte rushed over as well and made her way through under his arm, her feet pattering toward the bed. She lifted Rachel's hand gently, but before she could yell her mother's name, she uttered in surprise, "So hot!"

The stupefied Justin hurried over without pondering much.

Beside Rachel's pillow was a fallen ice pack, and no one knew who had prepared it for her.

Justin quickly reached his hand out and placed it on her forehead. He was shocked upon the scorching heat at a gentle touch. Clearly, it was a grave, high fever. She seemed fine yesterday, though. Why has

it become so serious?

"What's wrong with Mommy, Daddy?"

"We're going to the hospital, Charlotte. Tell your uncle we'll arrive at once."

Having said that, he picked Rachel up horizontally from the bed and stormed out the door.

Very soon, he carried the woman into one of the emergency rooms in the hospital, and his hastiness attracted quite a bit of attention.

Meanwhile, Julian, who had gotten the call earlier, was already waiting in the room. When he saw Justin carrying Rachel into the room, he immediately rebuked, "What is it this time, Justin? What did you do to her again? She has always been sick, yet you continue to torture her. Can't you just cut her some slack?"

"How about you cut me some slack instead and take a look at her?!"

As he gazed coldly at Julian, Justin put the woman down as he reminded, "We checked her temperature on the way here. Her high fever is at 39.7 degrees."

As a professional, Julian's temper was easily controlled. As soon as he calmed down, he lifted Rachel's eyelids and shone a flashlight at her eyeballs, questioning as he inspected, "When did the fever start?"

"I'm not sure. The last time I saw her was at 11.00PM yesterday, and she seemed fine. We found her like this half an hour ago."

"Did she consume something she shouldn't have?"

"I have no idea." The moment Justin blurted that, he seemed as though he had suddenly remembered something. "She must have taken some propofol and some wine afterward. It was yesterday night."

Julian lifted his head, dumbfounded. "Propofol?"

Meanwhile, Justin glowered and said, "Why are you staring at me like that? I didn't give her the drugs."

"Prepare for a blood phlebotomy."

"Yes, Dr. Peters."

After hassling for almost half an hour, the test results finally came out. As they expected, the fever was caused by the incomplete fading of the anesthetic component in the drugs.

After setting up an infusion for Rachel, Julian pulled the curtains and came out of the ward.

"What happened?"

"Ask her yourself when she's awake."

Obviously, Justin found it troublesome to explain everything to him.

When he saw how apathetic the other man was, Julian furiously grabbed his collars and lifted him up. "D*mn it, Justin! Do you even know that she once planned to leave Riverdale after giving birth and ended up with a profuse bleeding at the airport? If I hadn't been beside her, she would have lost her life. All those years, her life depended on a substantial amount of drugs. Do you intend on destroying her once again?"

Justin shoved Julian away, visibly irked. "What the f*ck are you talking about? You're acting like I have no idea that she wasn't the promised spouse I was supposed to marry! Since she decided to deceive everyone, am I obliged to show her any respect? Instead of showing her baseless affection, I seriously think we're better off divorced!"

"Bullsh*t!" Julian gritted his teeth. "Rae? Deceived everyone to marry you? Who on earth told you that? It was Amber, wasn't it? Rae only married you because Jefferey threatened her with her grandmother's life and forced her to marry you in Amber's place!"

Justin was baffled by this and questioned, "What are you talking about?"

"If you actually cared about this, you would have looked into it instead of blindly taking Amber's words for it. Look at you getting fooled like d*mn clown. After all these years, you're still clueless as to what kind of woman Amber is, huh?"

When he heard how Julian reprimanded him, Justin tightened his brows.

Meanwhile, after an awfully long dream, Rachel woke up and found herself in the hospital. When she came to her senses, she saw Julian yawning by her bed, and it felt like five years back in Montenegro all over again.

Back then, her health was so atrocious that she was constantly frequenting the hospital, and always woke up by Julian's side.

“Are you awake yet?” After being a doctor for years, he could never fall into deep sleep anymore. “How do you feel? Better?”

Rachel expressed apologetically, “I’m sorry for troubling you again.”

“We’re family, aren’t we? Your fever has gone down. Get some more rest, and you’ll be discharged tomorrow morning.”

“Okay.”

Since she felt drained, Rachel shut her eyes once again and was welcomed by the scenery in her dream; it seemed like time had stopped, and her yard was covered in flames while a teenager was

pulling her away.

Initially, she had been contemplating how to face Justin when she returned to Riverdale, only to find out later that he had already forgotten about everything he had to do with her. Well, it works for me.

The next morning, Julian was about to send Rachel home after finishing up his shift. Much to his surprise, the ward was already empty by then.

When a nurse saw him standing there idly, she said, “Miss Hudson just left, and she told me to inform you about it.”

“All right, I got it.”

With that, Julian immediately gave Rachel a call.

“What’s the rush, Rachel?”

"There's something I need to manage in the office, so I left in a hurry. Sorry, Julian, I didn't manage to say goodbye."

"As long as you're fine."

"By the way, if you have the time, could you check on Samuel for me? Jolly has been missing these few days and the kid has been home alone. He's only going to school tomorrow."

"All right."

Right when the call ended, Rachel arrived at Burton Group where Lisa was waiting for her in the lobby. "Morning, Chris. Mr. Howard somehow heard about our contact with Mr. Wayne and explicitly expressed to discontinue our partnership contract."

"Did you try talking to him and clarifying that we have no intentions to work with Mr. Wayne?"

"They're refusing to have any contact with us. Perhaps we should get President Burton to handle this."

Rachel frowned and answered, "Okay, I got it."

Meanwhile, Justin was studying some project plans in his office.

Suddenly, Frankie came over and handed him a couple of documents that needed his signature. "President Burton, I've amended these as you requested. If there aren't any other issues, you may sign them."

"Okay."

"I'll take my leave, then."

"Hold on," said Justin, stopping Frankie.

“What is it, President Burton?”

Chapter 224 The One Kidnapped Was Samuel

“When Rachel and I were married, was I a monster to her?” At those words, Frankie’s heart skipped a beat as he warily quizzed, “That’s... out of nowhere.”

“I was, wasn’t I? Although I can’t remember those times clearly, Julian has no reason to lie to me about them.” Justin tensed his eyebrows, attempting to figure out what it was that made him so upset with a woman. Even if Rachel, a trick sent over by the Hudsons, wasn’t the person he wanted to marry, what did she do so wrong to deserve his ill treatment?

As he held the documents in hand, Frankie paused at the door and muttered, “Don’t overthink it, President Burton. Things must have happened for a reason.”

“What happened to Rachel’s grandmother later on?”

After hesitating for a while, the assistant answered, “She was kidnapped, and her health failed her afterward.”

“Did they find out who the kidnappers were?”

“Yes...” Frankie had a hard time speaking up, but he forcefully answered, “They were some desperate lackeys who had bad blood with our company. They couldn’t catch anyone, so they targeted her grandmother. Actually, you went to negotiate right away, but it was already too late by then.”

“And that’s the reason for our divorce?”

Upon seeing how Frankie stayed silent, Justin confirmed his assumption and his eyes darkened. “You may leave.”

“Yes, Sir.”

After changing her clothes in her office, Rachel went to look for Justin.

Since he was the one who decided to switch to a new supplier, it was only natural to let him settle the issue. After all, Burton Pharmaceuticals was his blood and sweat, so who would take care of it if not him?

“Come in.”

The office door was pushed open after a series of knocks, and the sound of Rachel’s heels tapping on the floor echoed in the room. When Justin looked up from his computer, he was stunned when the woman fell into his vision. “Why are you here?”

“There’s nothing weird here, though. I haven’t resigned, have I?”

Placing a file on his table, Rachel stated, “This morning, I received news regarding Mr. Howard’s refusal to renew our partnership contract. Mr. Howard, who has been the supplier of Burton Pharmaceuticals, must have heard something and assumed that we intend to work with Mr. Wayne.”

“You rushed to work from the hospital just because of this?”

“How did you know I came from the hospital?”

Although she was slightly baffled, she didn’t give it much thought. Before Justin could answer her, she steered off from his question and continued, “Anyway, Mr. Howard is definitely not the only one who has heard about it. If this were to spread, the rest of our suppliers would want to cut ties with us, and our upcoming line of distribution will surely fail.”

“I’ll manage it. Take a couple days off and get some rest.”

“What’s that? Are you firing me?”

Justin glowered as he said, "What are you saying?"

Is he not going to fire me?

Rachel's first instinct was getting fired. After all, other than the issue with Mr. Howard, the other suppliers were rather troublesome as well, and all of these happened only after she took over the company.

All of a sudden, a thundering ringtone interrupted their conversation.

Justin answered his phone right in front of Rachel and said, "Hello?"

From the other side of the phone, a man's voice was heard. "Justin Burton, your son is in my hands. If you still wish to see him breathing, come to the abandoned theater in Eastown at once!"

When he glanced at the screen, he saw a fabricated number and hung up right away.

For God's sake, when will these scammers ever learn?

They didn't even try to find out that he only had one daughter, yet they had the audacity to threaten him.

After ending the call, Justin then said to Rachel, "I'm saying that since you're sick, you should go home and rest for a couple days. It's just sick leave and not a dismissal, okay?"

Rachel asked in a dazed manner, "You're allowing me to take some days off?"

She was thoroughly confused by Justin's kind-heartedness.

“Do you think I’m a maniacal boss who wouldn’t let his sick employees off?”

“I didn’t mean it like that...”

Before she could complete her sentence, Justin’s phone rang again.

After accepting the call, he impatiently said, “What son? I don’t have a son. You’ve gotten the wrong man, dude.”

“D*mn it, Justin, can’t you even recognize your own son?”

Before the caller could finish, he was already listening to the sound of a disconnected call.

“Piece of sh*t!”

As he stared at his phone’s screen, the man instantly frowned. “How can the man not care about his own son? No wonder he’s such a successful businessman.”

“I told you calling Justin was no use. He doesn’t like me one bit.”

A child’s voice was heard from behind.

It was Samuel, who had his limbs tied and tossed onto a broken couch. Despite the horrible situation, the boy, who was unusually calm, then said, “It’s not like I like him anyway. He’s never treated me as his own son, and I don’t care if he isn’t my dad!”

“Bullsh*t. He’s outright acknowledged that you’re his son. With you being the only son of the Burtons, there’s no way he’d ignore you.”

“Your belief is up to you. Either way, he won’t come regardless of your petty attempts, and I’d rather be released. Besides, kidnapping is a crime. If the police know you did this, they’ll surely catch you!”

“Shut it, kid!”

“It’s a cliché drama, and the bad guys always get caught. Do you think you can run away from this? If you let me go now, I’ll let this pass.”

Although Samuel was only a young boy, his sense of reason was pretty sharp.

The kidnapper was surprised after seeing how the victim was so composed. Moreover, since the kid was barely ten, the kidnapper couldn’t bear to lay a finger even if he wanted to. Thus, he viciously warned, “One more word and I’ll stuff your mouth. How’s that?”

Upon hearing that, Samuel reluctantly shut his mouth.

The kidnapper gazed at his phone and claimed, “Daddy doesn’t care about you, but I’m sure mommy does!”

After saying that, he dialed another number.

Meanwhile, in Burton Group, Rachel had just exited Justin’s office after being escorted out by Frankie. “Miss Hudson, do not be worried about our suppliers. President Burton has it all under control, and these trivial matters will be dealt with very shortly.”

“He’s prepared for it?”

“To be frank, Mr. Wayne isn’t a suitable partner, or he wouldn’t have made it in the company’s blacklist back then. We’re only using him for other reasons.”

“Other reasons?”

Before she could ask more, her phone suddenly rang.

"I'm sorry. Let me get this."

"Please do."

Upon tapping on her phone, she heard a man's malicious tone. "Your son is in my hands. If you wish to see him alive, have Justin Burton come to the abandoned theater in Eastown. Do not call the cops, or you'll get to see the lifeless body of this boy!"

Rachel's expression changed, and she quickly questioned, "Who the hell are you?"

Nevertheless, the kidnapper didn't care to explain to her. Out of the blue, Samuel's voice could be heard from the phone. "Save me, Mommy!"

Chapter 225 Surprised?

When Rachel heard the familiar voice, her hands trembled. "Samuel!" Meanwhile, Frankie sensed that something was off and asked, "What's wrong, Miss Hudson? What happened?"

"Samuel's..." As she was about to explain, she remembered the kidnapper's warning, so she immediately stopped. After all, she was reminded of the incident with her grandmother, and all she could feel in that instant was panic.

"What about Samuel?" Since she was too panicked to explain anything, Rachel grew impatient while waiting for the elevator and turned around before she stormed toward the staircase. On the other hand, Frankie couldn't even stop her.

"President Burton, Miss Hudson just received a call and rushed off. Something seems to have happened to Samuel." Upon returning to the office, Frankie relayed the situation to Justin.

The latter asked doubtfully, "What can possibly happen to that brat?" The brat's always acting as if he's a grown-up, running to my home to look for me and all that. Even if he were to bump into a trafficker, he'd be the one to traffic the trafficker.

“I’m not sure either, but it seemed urgent. Perhaps something has really happened to him. Why don’t we send someone to check it out, President Burton?”

As he scowled, Justin suddenly remembered the phone call from earlier. Instantly, he gripped the pen in his hand. To the outside world, Samuel was his own son—he was being kidnapped!

Meanwhile, Rachel phoned Julian as she rushed to the abandoned theater in Eastown. “Hello? Are you at my place? Is Samuel at home?”

“I was going to ask you if Samuel went out by himself. There’s no one here.”

Upon hearing Julian’s words, Rachel affirmed the kidnapper’s threats.

“What’s wrong, Chris?” Julian queried as he sensed something wrong with her tone.

“Nothing. There’s something I need to do. I’ll talk to you later.” Upon finishing her sentence, she quickly hung up on him.

Since Rachel feared that the kidnapper might be monitoring her phone calls, she didn’t dare to tell him about Samuel’s kidnapper. Otherwise, the kid would be dead.

After half an hour, the cab started navigating to the abandoned theater in Eastown.

The sky was rather cloudy, as if a downpour would occur very soon. While bushes of grass filled both sides of the path to the old theater, the complementing tall trees were left unmanaged. Nonetheless, they had grown quite healthily as the rich leaves shielded the sunrays. Despite being the afternoon, the place was so dark it felt like the sun had already set.

Once Rachel got out of the taxi, she stormed right into the theater. In the spacious hall, dust covered every surface as cobwebs pervaded the walls.

“Samuel!” Rachel immediately yelled when she entered the building as her concerned voice echoed throughout the hallway.

Unfortunately, the room was empty as there was no one to be seen. After countless shouts, the speakers in the corner suddenly sounded with piercing static noises that would force frowns on faces. “Have you come alone?”

The dumbfounded Rachel saw someone approaching. On the stage full of fixtures, a figure showed up from backstage, and he was followed by two men that seemed to be bodyguards who carried a chair with them.

“Mr. Wayne?” Rachel felt a chill. How is he already out of jail?

The chubby man sat on the chair; the wound on his face was still visible as the bruise under his eye made him appear even more intimidating.

“Are you surprised to see me, Mrs. Burton?”

“Don’t call me that. Justin and I divorced five years ago. I bear no relationship with him!”

At that moment, Rachel was aware that even if she had offended Mr. Wayne, a nobody like her could ever cause such big trouble that the man would come to her himself. Hence, it was obvious that the feud was between him and Justin, and that was why he addressed her that way. When she thought back to the earlier phone call, he did explicitly ask for Justin to show up.

“Am I a moron to you? Can’t I tell whether there’s a connection between the two of you?” Mr. Wayne leered at Rachel icily and continued, “Six years ago, you guys played me like a fool; six years later, you guys managed to clown me once more! What a pair you guys are! Masters of deceit, huh?”

“I have no idea what you are talking about, Mr. Wayne, but Samuel is innocent!”

“Bullsh*t! If Justin fails to come and kneel before me, I’ll feed the boy to the sharks. You better believe it!” As he finished speaking, another bodyguard appeared from backstage with a child all tied up before tossing him to the ground.

At once, Samuel let out a muffled sound. Since his mouth was taped, he couldn’t voice much.

“Samuel!” As the sight of her tormented son devastated her, Rachel charged toward the stage. However, she was easily pinned down by the two bodyguards.

“Let him go!” Rachel was about to collapse. Samuel’s only a boy! What did he do to deserve being tortured like this?

Mr. Wayne lit up a cigarette, and the subtle smoke wafting in the air of the gloomy theater was barely visible. “Let him go? What leverage would I have on you if I were to let him go? That sh*t you two pulled off years ago f*cked me up bad! In that case, who should I seek revenge from?”

“I still have no idea what you’re talking about! Justin and I divorced a long time ago!”

“Cut the sh*t! You were still together when you set me up. And now you’re all slithery, pushing sh*t to each other! Dream on, f*ckers!”

“What the hell do you want?”

“Where’s Justin? I want to see him.”

“He won’t come. Samuel’s not his son!”

“Ten minutes.” As if he didn’t hear her, he raised his hand and revealed a priceless stopwatch. “I’ll give you ten minutes. If he doesn’t show up by then, I’ll cut off one of the brat’s hands; another ten minutes will cost him the other hand. If he still doesn’t show up after twenty minutes, the brat is as good as fish food!”

At that moment, Rachel was utterly terrified. She opened her eyes wide and shrieked, "Don't touch my boy!"

"Guess you better have Justin over as soon as possible if you want to keep your boy safe!" Mr. Wayne's voice reverberated in the theater.

After shaking off the bodyguards grabbing her, she attempted to give Justin a call with her shaking hands.

"Sorry. The number you've dialed is unavailable. Please try again later."

No one answered the call.

"He's not picking up!"

"Seven minutes, Mrs. Burton."

Even though she was losing hope, Rachel was still desperate. Hence, all she could do was phone Justin repetitively. After a while, the call finally got through as the man's emotionless voice was heard. "Yes?"

At the end of her tether, she panickedly pleaded, "Please save Samuel, Justin!"

"What are you talking about? Where are you now?"

"Give me that sh*t!" As Mr. Wayne extended his hand toward Rachel, the bodyguard beside him snatched away the phone that was in her hand and handed it over to his boss.

Mr. Wayne proceeded to turn on the speakers right in front of Rachel. "How have you been, President Burton?"

Justin was stupefied for a moment, but he calmly said, "Mr. Wayne? Are you with Rachel?"

Chapter 226 Keep Her for Yourself if You Like

“That’s right. Are you that surprised?” “Indeed, I’m a bit surprised. Could it be that you’d like to continue working together with Burton Pharmaceuticals, Mr. Wayne? If that’s the case, we can put off firing Rachel for the time being.”

“Don’t give me that crap! Don’t you dare think I have no idea that you and your wife are just pretending in front of me again. I’m telling you, Justin—your son is in my hands right now!” Mr. Wayne suddenly darted a look at Rachel. “Your woman is now in my hands as well. If you don’t come over, I’ll throw your son into the river and feed the fishes. Guess what will happen to your woman then.”

Justin let out a sneer on the other end of the line. “Are you kidding me, Mr. Wayne? Everyone in Riverdale knows that I only have a daughter. Since when did I get myself a son?”

Mr. Wayne frowned upon hearing Justin’s words.

“As for the boy you kidnapped, I’m also curious about who his biological father is. Please find that out on my behalf before throwing him into the river. As for Rachel, just keep her for yourself if you want to.”

“Justin! You—”

The call was disconnected right away.

Meanwhile, the bodyguards in the theater looked at each other in amazement; this was the first time they had ever seen such a cruel man. Doesn’t he care about his son and woman?

Mr. Wayne glared at Rachel angrily. “You two are pretending in front of me here, aren’t you?”

Rachel replied, “I’ve told you earlier that he doesn’t care about us. Even if we aren’t divorced, you cannot threaten him by abducting us both.”

Mr. Wayne's face turned livid with anger. Just then, one of the bodyguards suggested, "Mr. Wayne, it seems that Justin Burton cares about his daughter the most. How about we find a way to get her here?"

"Do I need you to say that?" Mr. Wayne shot a glare at the bodyguard. "I would have gotten her here a long time ago if I could!" Charlotte had bodyguards around her all year round, and no ordinary person could get close to her. Evidently, this showed how much Justin cared about her.

Rachel pleaded anxiously, "Please let us go, Mr. Wayne. We mean nothing to Justin, so it won't work if you try to get even with him by using us."

"Do you think I'm a fool? If I let you go, you'll call the police as soon as you get out of there, won't you?"

"I won't, Mr. Wayne. I swear that I'll never call the police," Rachel replied. "After all, I have no evidence to prove that you've abducted Samuel. Even if I call the police, there's no way to build a case against you. As long as you let us off, I'll pretend that nothing ever happened. I'm just a nobody, Mr. Wayne. It isn't worth it to ruin your business in Riverdale and the standing you've enjoyed for so many years because of me."

Mr. Wayne seemed to be persuaded by Rachel's words. He waved his hand and ordered, "Let them get out of here!"

One of the bodyguards dragged Samuel to his feet and pushed him to Rachel's side. "Did you hear that? He's telling you two to get lost! Hurry up and get out of here!"

Rachel immediately lifted Samuel up. "Thank you, Mr. Wayne."

It was somewhat dark outside, and the rain poured down after a rumble of thunder. As soon as Rachel walked out of the theater with Samuel in her arms, she untied him and carefully tore off the adhesive tape on his mouth. "Are you all right, Samuel?"

Samuel shook his head sensibly. "I'm fine, Mommy. It's just that my mouth hurts a little. Could you blow on it, Mommy?"

“Okay, let me blow on it. Let’s go home.”

There wasn’t even a soul near the abandoned theater in the heavy rain, and Rachel couldn’t call a taxi as Mr. Wayne had taken away her cell phone. Just when she was at a loss for what to do, a black sedan emerged from the rain and pulled up at the theater’s entrance. After the driver’s door opened, the man’s tall figure got out of the car and walked toward them while holding a big black umbrella.

Justin? Rachel was stunned and in disbelief. Didn’t he say that he wouldn’t come?

“Are you okay?” Justin’s voice brought her attention back to the present. “Let’s go. Get into the car.”

Rachel felt like she was in a dream as she and Samuel sat in the car. “Did you drive here alone? Didn’t you say that you wouldn’t come?”

Before Justin could respond, Samuel revealed his pretty face from under the soft and fluffy towel. “How could you not know this, Mommy? Daddy must’ve been afraid that we might be threatened if the kidnappers know we’re important to him, so he deliberately pretended not to care about us so that they would let us off! Am I right, Daddy?”

“You know quite a lot.” Justin shot a glance at Samuel. He then asked, “Didn’t you say that you hated me the most before vowing to never speak to me again?”

Upon that, Samuel blinked his eyes and replied, “Since you’re smart enough to come and pick us up in time, we’ll forgive you! Isn’t that right, Mommy?”

Rachel frowned, and her feelings were mixed. However, just as she was about to say something, the side window of the car broke into pieces with a loud crash.

The sound of the car’s window shattering into pieces was drowned out by the rumbling thunder as the shattered tempered glass smashed into the car like an ice storm during winter. Surprisingly, it didn’t hurt at all when the pieces of glass hit them.

Perhaps because of a mother's instinct and reflexes, Rachel's first response was to hug Samuel, shielding him in her arms as the shards of glass hit her back. Amid the child's screams, the car door was opened, and she was forcibly dragged out of the car. Then, she was flung to the ground in the rain with a loud thud.

Justin immediately opened the car door and got out of the car after her. "Let go of her!" he shouted. When two bodyguards stopped him, he kicked one of them out of the way and seized the other by the collar before giving him a hard punch. Then, he helped Rachel up in the rain and asked, "Are you all right?"

"Justin!" A voice thundered in the heavy rain.

"Mommy!" Justin and Rachel's expressions changed when they heard Samuel's scream.

A third hatchet man emerged from nowhere and dragged Samuel out of the car. At this moment, he held a gleaming dagger to Samuel's throat and dragged him to the theater's entrance in the heavy rain.

The curtain of rain separated Samuel from everyone else as a pair of black leather shoes appeared beside him. It was still the chair, the bodyguards, and the man with a greasy face, but he no longer looked as brainless as he had been just moments before.

On the contrary, Mr. Wayne had a sneer on his fleshy face. "It's enough that you've tricked me once. Do you really think that I'll still believe you? No one will ever let their children get hurt. Besides, if you really didn't care about this b*tch, you wouldn't have hurried to the nightclub anxiously that day. Do you think that I'm an idiot, Justin?"

"Mommy!" Samuel shouted while crying.

Rachel was so anxious that she tried to rush toward Samuel, but Justin stopped her. "Let go of me!" she urged.

"Calm down!" Justin said to her. Then, he said to Mr. Wayne, "Let go of Samuel. The child is innocent. Just come at me if you bear any grudges against me."

“So now you’re willing to be honest, huh? Didn’t you say that you don’t care about him? Mr. Wayne mocked. “If you had admitted this earlier, I wouldn’t have needed to wait here for such a long time. Seeing you three having a nice time in the car makes me want to throw up.”

“What the hell do you want?”

“Don’t you know what I want? Have you forgotten what you did to me six years ago?”

Chapter 227 Keep On Running, and Don’t Look Back

Mr. Wayne looked as miserable as sin while he spoke of what had happened six years ago. “You offered your wife to me six years ago, only to go back on it at the last minute. Not only did you steal my business away, you even crippled me! How should I get even with you for that?”

Rachel’s expression changed in disbelief when she heard this. Did Justin cripple Mr. Wayne back then? I never heard him talk about this, though, she thought to herself. “Mr. Wayne!” she called out anxiously as she came to her senses.

“So much time has passed since what happened six years ago. No matter what he has done, you look healthy and fine right now. We can negotiate over what compensation you want, so don’t hurt Samuel.”

“Fine?” Mr. Wayne suddenly flew into a rage and grabbed Samuel toward him. Amid Samuel’s cries of pain and Rachel’s screams, he seized Samuel by the throat and asked, “Look! It’s been six years. You two have kids, whereas I’ll die childless. Is this what you mean by saying that I’m healthy?”

Die childless? Rachel was stunned. What has Justin done to Mr. Wayne back then...

“Let’s settle the score today for everything you’ve done to me!”

“Don’t touch him!” Rachel’s screams were almost desperate. “Let go of Samuel, please!”

However, Justin grabbed her and stopped her from going to Samuel's side. He then said to Mr. Wayne, "Now that things have turned out like this, you can't make up for anything by hurting a child. What exactly do you want? I can promise you anything as long as you let go of Samuel."

"I want you to kneel down and kowtow to me now!" Mr. Wayne's bellow reverberated in the rain.

Rachel's face turned deathly pale. Before she could come to her senses, the man beside her knelt down toward Mr. Wayne without batting an eyelid, splashing rainwater as his knees hit the wet ground.

Rachel looked at him in disbelief, for no one knew how proud he was better than her.

Obviously, Mr. Wayne hadn't expected that either. After being stunned for a moment, he burst into laughter. "Serves you right, doesn't it, Justin? How could you say you don't care about this little brat now that you're kneeling before me?"

"Can you let go of him now?"

"In your dreams!" Mr. Wayne replied while holding Samuel by the throat. He threatened, "I want you to kneel down and kowtow to me until I'm satisfied!"

Justin's hands clenched into fists at his sides. "Justin!" Rachel said as she tried to drag him up, but before she could reach out her hand, she saw him bending down and kowtowing in Mr. Wayne's direction.

"It's not loud enough. I can't hear it."

Without hesitation, Justin kowtowed again in the rain, his forehead knocking against the ground.

"I want you to apologize to me and beg me for mercy while you kowtow to me!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Wayne. Please be the bigger person and let Samuel off."

“That’s nice. Just go on.”

Justin bent down and kowtowed in the rain over and over again. Soon, his forehead was grazed, and the blood that trickled down his cheeks was washed away by the rain.

The rain got heavier and heavier, and Rachel could hardly keep her eyes open as her tears were mixed with the rainwater. He’s such a proud man, yet he’s allowing Mr. Wayne to humiliate him like this. She shouted anxiously, “Isn’t this enough, Mr. Wayne?”

“Enough? How could this be enough?” Mr. Wayne threw Samuel aside and took a document from the bodyguard beside him. “Here’s a contract. I want you to transfer the piece of land that the Burton Group has acquired to me unconditionally.”

Rachel’s head buzzed, for the same condition had been put forward six years ago.

Justin got up from the ground and stood in the rain, drenched. In fact, he could hardly keep his feet if it weren’t that Rachel was helping him by the arm. “Okay.”

“Come over and sign the paper then.”

Rachel supported Justin as they walked step by step toward Mr. Wayne.

Mr. Wayne’s bodyguard handed the pen to Justin, turned the pages of the contract right away to the last page where the signature was supposed to be, and let Justin sign his name.

Justin was holding the felt-tip pen, but Rachel stopped him as soon as the tip of the pen touched that page—she wanted to persuade him to wait a minute and rethink it. After all, Samuel wasn’t related to him by blood, so he needn’t go to such lengths. However, she couldn’t bring herself to say that since she wanted to save Samuel as well.

It seemed as though Justin knew what she was thinking; he held her hand tightly for a moment and signed his name on the document right away without saying a word. “I’ve signed it, Mr. Wayne.”

Mr. Wayne took the document from the bodyguard and looked it over with satisfaction. “Justin, I really didn’t expect you to be so flexible as to agree to transfer such a huge project without protest.

Unfortunately, it’s not that easy to forget about what happened back then. I’m still going to throw this boy into the river—”

Before he could finish his sentence, Justin suddenly kicked the bodyguard beside him out of the way and knocked over the hatchet man who was holding a dagger to Samuel’s throat. After pushing Samuel toward Rachel, he shouted, “Run!”

Rachel turned around and fled with Samuel in her arms. She didn’t dare to look back, for all she could think about was what Justin had whispered to her ear just now when she supported him to let him sign the document. “I’ll stall them in a while, Rachel. Run away from here with Samuel, and do not look back!” The words ‘Keep on running, and don’t look back!’ keep reverberating in her ears.

Rachel ran into the rain with Samuel in her arms. She didn’t dare to look back, nor could she do so. She knew that there was still hope for everything if she ran away, but Mr. Wayne would never go soft on them if she was caught. She didn’t know how she had run away from there, nor did she know how she found the courage to stop a car by the side of the road. All she knew was that something snapped inside her when she saw that the person who got out of the car was none other than Julian. “Save us, Julian! Call the police!” The sound of police sirens and ambulance sirens mixed together was the only sound she remembered before passing out.

...

Rachel found herself in the hospital’s ward when she regained consciousness. “You’re awake.” Julian held down her arms. “Lie down, and don’t move.”

Rachel felt dizzy as soon as she got up.

Julian said, “You’re very weak because you got caught in the rain when you hadn’t fully recovered from your fever. You need to rest for a few more days lest you contract pneumonia.”

Rachel’s throat itched as soon as she opened her mouth, and her head buzzed as she coughed.

“Don’t worry, Samuel is fine. That kid’s in good health, so he’s already alive and kicking. Jolly has taken him back.”

Rachel nodded in relief. Suddenly, she recalled something and asked anxiously, “What about Justin?”

Julian’s face instantly wore a complicated look.

“How is he?” Rachel became anxious at once. I ran away from there at the time, leaving him all alone with those thugs. Also, Mr. Wayne hates his guts, so he definitely wouldn’t go easy on him. And it took so long for the police to arrive... “How exactly is he?”

“He’s fine!” Julian held her down. “Calm down, okay? He just injured one of his legs and will recover after some rest.”

“Really?”

“Yes, he’s really all right.”

However, Rachel didn’t believe Julian until he stressed that repeatedly. Julian had a complicated look on his face when he saw how distracted she looked. “Chris, you still care a lot about him, actually.”

Chapter 228 One Should Always Repay the Kindness That People Have Shown Them

Rachel was stunned upon hearing Julian’s words.

“Just have a good rest and call me if you need anything,” Julian said. Then, he got up and left with no intention of hearing her response.

Rachel’s lips quivered as she watched him leave, but she didn’t explain anything in the end.

Thanks to the conclusive evidence, Mr. Wayne was detained for the kidnapping and was awaiting trial. Furthermore, he had previously been charged with running a prostitution business. Therefore, it was almost impossible for him to escape punishment by law this time, and his predicament had been reported on the news quite a number of times.

Frankie told Justin about this in the ward. He said, "Now that things have gotten so serious, no one would dare to shield Mr. Wayne anymore. Also, you'd better have another string to your bow. Who settled the case of his nightclub's involvement in prostitution last time? Collect the evidence and have it mailed anonymously to the Discipline Inspection Bureau."

"I have sent someone to get it done already."

"Great." Justin leaned his back against the head of the bed, his leg still in plaster. Then, he glanced out of the door and asked, "How is she?"

Frankie hesitated for a moment. "Miss Hudson has been discharged from the hospital."

Justin immediately straightened up in disbelief. "She's already been discharged?" How could she leave the hospital without a word after I did her such a huge favor?

Frankie explained in embarrassment, "You've been unconscious for two days, whereas Miss Hudson was only in frail health. She was discharged from the hospital after a day's rest, and that is quite normal."

"Normal? Do you think it's normal for her to leave right away without even saying thank you to the person who saved her life?"

"I'm sorry to say this, President Burton, but it was because of you that Samuel got kidnapped, so this matter is actually—" Frankie said, but he got a dirty look before he could finish his sentence. Since he didn't dare to say another word, he quickly buttoned his lip. "Uh, please have lunch first."

"I'm not eating. Take it away!" Justin's face darkened as he flipped the pages of the contract in his hand loudly.

Frankie scratched his head. Did I put my foot in it again?

Frankie looked at the lunch box he was carrying as he left the ward. After hesitating for a long time, he dialed a number. "Hello, Miss Hudson? It's me, Frankie."

Rachel was making lunch at home. After answering the phone, she turned down the heat, walked toward the living room, and asked on the other end of the line, "What's the matter?"

"Uh, Miss Hudson, could you come to the hospital if you're free?"

"Why? Did something happen there?"

"Nothing. Actually, something did happen." Frankie sounded very troubled. "President Burton refuses to eat anything. The way I see it, he isn't going to eat anything until you're here. You don't have to do anything, though—all you have to do is come here and say that you made the food. I'll get the meal ready."

Rachel fell silent at once.

After a long time, Frankie sighed on the other end of the line. He said carefully, "I know such a request is a bit too unreasonable for you. President Burton has forgotten what happened back then, but I know all of it. I'm sorry for making such a presumptuous request, and please pretend that I never called you."

After hanging up the phone, Rachel sat on the sofa in a trance with her cell phone in her hand. Samuel poked his head out of the crack of his bedroom door and watched for a long time before calling, "Mommy!"

Rachel came to her senses at once. "Are you hungry, Samuel? The soup will be ready in a minute."

"Mommy, I'd like to go to the hospital to visit Daddy. Can I do that?"

Rachel was startled. "We don't need to go to the hospital. Somebody is looking after him there."

Samuel grabbed Rachel's hand. "But Daddy is staying alone in the hospital with no visitors. Besides, the food in the hospital must be tasteless. If he can't eat the food in the hospital, he'll fall sick. That's pathetic."

"He won't fall sick."

"He will, and I heard it. Didn't Mr. Beckham say that he's refusing to eat anything?"

Rachel frowned. "Do you really want to see him?"

"Yeah." Samuel nodded solemnly. "Daddy saved my life, after all. Mommy, didn't you say that we should always repay the kindness that people have shown us?"

Rachel's feelings were mixed; she couldn't tell Samuel that he had been kidnapped only because he was unaccountably acknowledged as Justin's son. If it weren't for Justin, his life would have been

peaceful, and nothing would have happened. The same was true of what had happened to Nancy back then. Despite all the efforts Justin had made, it was because of him that Nancy died in the end. However, the words 'Keep on running, and don't look back,' had been reverberating in her ears these days ever since she heard them in the rain. These words kept invading her dreams at night as they overlapped with the voices she had heard during the fire back when she was little.

Just as Frankie was at a loss for what to do in the hospital's inpatient department, he saw a familiar figure coming out of the elevator. When he saw the figure walking toward the ward with short legs, his eyes lit up at once. "Samuel?"

Samuel was carrying his school bag with a lunch box in his hand. "Hi, Mr. Beckham."

"Samuel, where's your mom?"

"Mom said she wouldn't come, but she told me to bring this here." Samuel handed the lunch box to Frankie. "This is for Daddy. Mommy made this herself."

Frankie took the lunch box and glanced behind Samuel hesitantly. "Is your mom really not here?"

Samuel winked and put his tiny hand on his lips as he whispered, "Shh! It's a secret."

How could Rachel possibly allow Samuel to go out alone after the latter had been kidnapped once? Frankie smiled as he realized what the boy meant. He knocked on the door, entered the ward, and said, "Look who's here, President Burton."

Justin's cold eyes lit up visibly the instant he saw Samuel, but he regained his composure soon afterward. "Why are you here?"

Samuel entered the ward like an adult and put the lunch box on the table. Then, as he put down his school bag, he replied, "I'm here to bring you your lunch. It's delicious; my mom made it herself."

"Where is she? Why didn't she come in person?"

"My mom is very busy."

"Is she so busy that she doesn't have time to deliver the meal that she had time to prepare?"

Samuel turned around and looked at Justin with a stern countenance. "Are you going to eat it or not?"

Justin was rendered speechless by his words.

Meanwhile, Frankie called a nurse over to help adjust the armchair and the small desk beside the sickbed to the right angle so that it would be convenient for Justin to rest his plastered leg properly and eat his lunch.

"Mommy said that the fish soup is rich in calcium. You should drink more of it."

“No man keeps talking about their mom like you,” Justin needled Samuel as he drank the fish soup. Perhaps because people of the same gender often found each other repugnant, he had always given Samuel the cold shoulder. Even after his narrow escape from death this time, he was still impatient with the boy. Frankie seriously suspected that Samuel would have been thrown out of the ward as soon as he entered if it weren’t for the fact that he had brought the food Rachel prepared.

Samuel disagreed with Justin, though. “My mom is right, so why can’t I say that? Don’t you have a mother?”

“You...” Justin was so speechless with rage that he could only drown his indignation in food.

Chapter 229 A Meal Made With Love for a Patient

Meanwhile, Charlotte got out of the car outside the hospital under escort by her bodyguards. She came to the hospital to visit Justin. She had been angry with him a few days ago when Rachel didn’t return home. However, while she was still in a sulk, she heard that he had been hospitalized. She got anxious at once, and she insisted on coming to the hospital.

As soon as Charlotte exited the elevator and walked toward the ward, she saw a familiar figure standing against the wall from a distance. “Mommy?” she called tentatively at first. The instant Rachel looked back, her eyes immediately lit up, and she ran toward her. “Mommy! Why are you standing here instead of going in?”

Rachel was startled as well. Evidently, she didn’t expect to run into Charlotte here. “Why are you here, Charlotte?”

“I’m here to visit Daddy. You’re here to visit Daddy too, aren’t you, Mommy?”

“No, I’m not—”

Before Rachel could finish her sentence, Samuel was heard lecturing Justin in the ward. “Don’t waste the food. You must finish the meal Mommy prepared, or I won’t bring you meals anymore!”

Charlotte instantly figured out what had happened. “Mommy, did you prepare a meal for Daddy?” she asked. Then, before Rachel could speak, she immediately dragged her into the ward. “Come in with me, Mommy. Come in with me!”

Since Rachel wasn’t prepared, she staggered while Charlotte dragged her into the ward.

“Mommy?” Samuel looked back and winked at Rachel while standing in front of the sickbed. When he saw Charlotte, the two clever kids looked at each other knowingly.

Justin, who was eating the fish soup, started coughing at once when he saw Rachel.

Rachel frowned as she handed the box of tissue beside her to him.

Justin stopped coughing and resumed his overbearing manner. “Didn’t you say you wouldn’t be coming?”

Rachel replied, “Frankie called me and said you refused to eat lunch because the food in the hospital wasn’t to your taste.”

Justin hemmed twice. “What a busybody.”

Charlotte chimed in, “Daddy, you always say one thing and mean another. You wanted to see Mommy, so you should give Mr. Beckham a pay raise. If it weren’t for him, you wouldn’t have had a meal made with love for a patient!”

A meal prepared with love for a patient? The atmosphere in the ward suddenly became somewhat awkward as Justin and Rachel exchanged glances.

Justin put down his cutlery without leaving any food in the lunch box. He then said in embarrassment, “I’ve finished the meal.”

Rachel didn't say much either. She went over, packed up the lunch box, and beckoned to Samuel. "Time to go, Samuel."

Samuel was startled by this, and he subconsciously shot a glance at Charlotte. The latter immediately asked, "Mommy, won't you stay a little longer? Will you come again tonight?"

Rachel's fine eyebrows furrowed slightly. Obviously, her troubled expression explained everything.

Justin's face darkened at once. "Just leave. I'm going to have a rest."

"Daddy!" Charlotte called out to him in displeasure.

Rachel was about to leave with Samuel when Frankie suddenly knocked on the door and came in. "President Burton, Mr. Jenkins would like to visit you."

"I won't see him! Just tell him that I'm asleep," Justin replied impatiently as he picked up a book and read it.

Frankie looked at Rachel with a troubled expression. As he sensed the awkward atmosphere in the room at this moment, he didn't dare to say another word, so he left obediently.

Meanwhile, Rachel carried the lunch box in her hand. After some consideration, she said in the sickbed's direction, "I'll come again later in the evening. If you're hungry, eat something first to suppress your hunger."

Justin's hands froze for a long time before he responded, "Okay."

"I'll be leaving then. Have a good rest and call me if anything happens to Charlotte," Rachel said before leaving with Samuel.

After Rachel left, Charlotte peeped at Justin from under the book with her head tilted to one side. “She’s left, Daddy. Just stop pretending. You’re happy!” As she spoke, she climbed onto the bed, reached out her hand, and snatched the book from him.

Justin deliberately kept a straight face despite the obviously unconcealable trace of a smile on his face, which was typically stony all year round. “Why should I be happy about it?”

Charlotte curled her lips. “You’re obviously happy—in fact, you’re bursting with joy. Mommy meant that she’ll bring you meals until you get discharged from the hospital. You must seize such a great opportunity.”

“Did I ask her to deliver meals to me?”

“Daddy, neither Samuel nor I can help you anymore if you keep going on like this.” Charlotte folded her arms across her chest like an adult lecturing someone. “One must be sincere when chasing women, but you look very insincere. I wouldn’t want to talk to you if I were Mommy!”

Justin pinched her nose. “You’re just a little girl. What do you know about chasing women at such a young age?”

“I know that! I just know that.”

“Know what?”

“Hahaha, that’s itchy! You’re so naughty, Daddy!”

Justin played boisterously with Charlotte in such a good mood that he didn’t hear the knock on the door. When Dennis Jenkins, the Burton Family’s butler, pushed the door open and came in right away, he immediately dragged Charlotte out of the sickbed after witnessing this. “Miss Charlotte, you mustn’t get too crazy while playing. Young Master Justin has a plaster cast on his leg right now.”

Charlotte was instantly displeased when she was dragged out of bed. “I didn’t touch Daddy’s leg!”

Justin frowned as well. "What brings you here, Mr. Jenkins?"

"Old Mr. Burton has learned of your injury and is worried, so he told me to come and visit you. You really are too neglectful of your health, Young Master Justin."

Justin's eyes darkened slightly. "The summer villa is so far away, but the news traveled there pretty quickly, eh?"

"Old Mr. Burton is concerned about your safety, after all," Dennis replied with a stern look. "Also, Old Mr. Burton has learned about this time's incident. How could you put yourself in danger to save a kid who's totally unrelated to you?"

"Mr. Jenkins! That boy isn't unrelated to me. He's Charlotte's brother as well as my son."

"Old Mr. Burton isn't in his dotage yet. That boy—"

"Mr. Jenkins!" Justin's face suddenly clouded over as he brought Dennis up short with a cold and penetrating glare. "Charlotte, go out and play with Frankie."

"Okay." Charlotte broke free of Dennis' grasp and ran out of the ward reluctantly.

As soon as the door to the ward closed, Justin shot Dennis a cold glare. "It doesn't matter whether Grandpa knows Samuel's parentage or not. I have made a statement at the press conference, so he's my son as long as I acknowledge him as mine."

"You mustn't act on impulse, Young Master Justin."

"You guys don't want the Burtons to be seen as a family that goes back on its words in the eyes of the public, do you? Who could bear the responsibility for the impact on our family's business if we can't win the public's trust at all?"

Dennis was rendered speechless by Justin's words. After a long time, he said, "Even so, you're still engaged to Miss Amber, Young Master Justin. In any case, you should keep some distance from Rachel."

Justin frowned slightly upon hearing his words.

Chapter 230 The Real Reason Behind Her Care

"The Old Master has reminded you to discuss your marriage with him once you recover. If everything goes well, he wants everything to be done by the end of the year. Besides, it's been too long since the Burton Family last had any weddings."

"Rest well, Young Master. I shall take my leave." After finishing his sentence, the butler immediately left the room.

Meanwhile, Rachel's car was leaving the hospital's parking lot. After making a circle around the hospital, she got nervous when she saw the Burtons' butler exiting the hospital entrance.

Suddenly, Samuel's sweet voice broke her concentration from behind. "Will you be coming to visit Daddy every day from now on?"

"Yeah. What about it, Samuel?"

"I used to think that Justin was a bad man after how he smashed the music box I gave Charlotte. Later, he pushed me to the ground and hurt me so much. But when he rescued me, he looked very brave, so I think he's able to protect you."

"He pushed you?"

"Yes. He did that when I went to look for him the day you got sick. It was the same day I got kidnapped by that bad man."

Upon hearing that, Rachel revealed a frown.

“But he saved me, so I’ve already forgiven him.”

Since she was too focused on the fact that Justin had shoved Samuel to the ground, Rachel missed everything else the boy had said afterward, but that was enough for her to determine she made the right decision today.

As the most exceptional heir to the Burtons, Justin was highly respected by Arthur. Back when they got married, Arthur had expressed that Justin was allowed to date any woman even if they weren’t as outstanding as him, and he could even be with a nobody. However, the catch was that he couldn’t let the woman affect his business.

Six years ago, Rachel was nothing but menace to him, and she was someone not even close from being a suitable option to be with.

Now, in Arthur’s eyes, Chris was someone who had come forth with indecent purposes, and that made her even less of a choice.

Thus, the old man would surely notice her if she got closer to Justin—this was also the very reason she had decided to visit Justin in the hospital every day.

Later that night, the sky was already pitch black when Rachel reached the hospital.

After pulling the curtain, the nurse asked Justin if he wanted to eat for the third time.

“I’m not hungry. Thanks.”

As he said that, his eyes were fixated at the door.

Upon seeing his expectant look, Frankie instinctively felt helpless.

How the tables have turned!

"You're here, Miss Hudson."

Upon those words, Justin instantly lay back on the bed and exhibited an apathetic look as if he heard nothing.

Rachel put down the lunchbox and naturally scanned the room. "Where's Charlotte?"

Meanwhile, Justin was dissatisfied with the fact that she was only paying attention to the kids. Nonetheless, Charlotte was their daughter, so there was nothing he could debate with. "There's bound to be lots of germs in the hospital, so we had the maid get her earlier."

Rachel opened the lunchbox and asked, "Will you be sending her back to Old Mr. Burton since no one is going to take care of her for now?"

"What do you mean?" Justin gazed at her. "Are you not going to take care of her?"

"Jolly is on a business trip, and Samuel is alone at home."

"Charlotte's home alone too!"

Rachel glanced at him and continued, "Eat up. I'll have to go back early. Samuel's alone at home, and I feel uneasy about that."

Although she missed Charlotte, there were maids and guards at the Burton Residence, so the girl didn't have to worry about food and security. Plus, after the kidnapping incident, no one could blame Rachel for worrying about her son being alone at home.

Upon revealing a gloomy face, Justin then questioned, "Are you still mad at me?"

"No."

“Cut the act. You must be blaming me for Samuel’s kidnapping, right?”

Rachel took a deep breath before she raised her head. “Fine, since you’re that persistent, I’ll do you one better. Do you think Mr. Wayne would have kidnapped Samuel if you hadn’t offended him?”

“You must have been dying to say that during the last few days, eh?”

Rachel remained calm and stared at Justin. “More like the past years.”

In fact, it wasn’t just Samuel. Back then, her grandmother’s abduction could also be traced back to Justin.

Upon hearing the woman’s comeback, Justin became even more furious.

The man smashed his cutlery against the table. “I don’t feel like eating anymore. Get this away from me!”

After Frankie had told him the details of the kidnapping of Rachel’s grandmother, he was aware that the abduction was caused by himself. Nevertheless, he bore no such a memory, so it was rather difficult for him to accept it, feeling wronged with how people around him were saying that he mistreated her when she came back to Riverdale.

Unfortunately, he couldn’t recall those memories no matter how hard he tried.

Frustrating. How frustrating!

After glancing at the angry man, Rachel started packing the meal without hesitation.

When he saw that she was about to leave after collecting her belongings, Justin yelled in a vexed manner, “I didn’t say you were allowed to leave!”

With that, she countered, "Why should I stay if you're not eating anyway?"

"I..." Upon being rendered speechless, he responded, "I'm a patient, okay? Can't you just compromise with me?"

"No can do."

At that, Justin was so displeased he could tear the hospital down. However, he clenched his teeth after a while and reluctantly stated, "Samuel may stay at my place."

At once, Rachel was stupefied.

Justin avoided eye contact with her and clarified, "I mean that he can only stay there while I'm here! For now, Samuel and Charlotte stay together. Since there are people taking care of them, they should be safe, and you'll be able to come here without any distractions."

Before she could come to her senses, the man impatiently expressed, "I'm starving here! I need some food!"

Despite that, Rachel still couldn't get over the fact that he would propose to let Samuel stay over at his place.

After handing him a new set of cutlery, she watched as Justin wolfed down his meal. All of a sudden, the man in front of her felt like an entirely different entity from the one in her memories as there was not even a hint of resemblance between the two.

To what extent did he lose his memories for him to turn into a new man?

As she packed up the lunchbox and used cutlery, Rachel said, "Tell me what you feel like eating tomorrow, and I'll prepare it for you."

“Anything is fine.”

“Plain porridge it is.”

“Plain? Are you actually serious?” If his leg wasn’t hanging above the bed in a cast, Justin would have jumped on her.

Although she was merely teasing him, when her eyes fell on his leg, her emotions were immediately disrupted.

Upon seeing her expression, Justin comforted her by saying, “I’m fine. I’ll fully recover after half a month, so don’t worry.”

“I’m not worried at all.”

“In that case, why were you staring at it?” Justin gave her a condescending look. “Well, you must have seen how good I eat countless times by now.”

Having no intention to entertain him, she took the container and left. “I’m leaving. Samuel’s waiting for me.”

“Wait,” Justin blurted out. “Grab something for me, will you?”