

Mute Bride 241

Chapter 241 Setup

Rachel let go, causing the back of Amber's head to slam against the wall. Amber wanted to let out an ear-piercing shriek but her voice was caught within her throat, and she stared wide-eyed at Rachel, feeling so terrified that she couldn't make any sound.

"Let go of her." The two men then let go of Amber, and she slid bonelessly down along the wall to the ground as she looked up in terror at Rachel.

The latter then squatted in front of Amber and raised a hand slightly, but Amber screamed and put her hands over her head.

"So scared?" Rachel scoffed coldly, holding a hand over the other woman's head for a moment before dropping it to her shoulder and brushing away a fallen leaf. Slowly, she stood up again. "It's good that you're scared. I trust you'll mind your own business from now on."

Only after an insurmountable amount of time and when the alley had fallen silent did Amber lift her shaking head. After staring blankly into space for a while, she stood up and raced out of the alley, stumbling multiple times along the short distance.

Meanwhile in the office at the school, Victor was pouring Rachel a cup of tea. "Samuel's gone off to gym class with his friends. Don't worry; I'll stay here in school. Nothing will happen to him."

In reply, she inclined her head. "I feel better with you here. Plus, I don't think Amber will be able to cause trouble for much longer."

"I don't think she's the type to let things go easily."

"Well, if Hudson Pharmaceuticals falls, what more can she do?"

"What do you mean?"

“While abroad, Jolly and I drafted an acquisition plan for Hudson Pharmaceuticals that has been approved by Carter Enterprise’s internal board of directors. When I’m done with my business on hand, the plan will be put in motion.”

“Doesn’t Hudson Pharmaceuticals still have the support of the Burton Group?”

“If Justin still supports them, I wouldn’t be able to do anything to Amber.”

In an instant, Victor understood. “Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ market reputation has been pretty shoddy these few years. Even Jefferey has handed the care of the company over to a general manager. The FDA has found multiple issues, and rumors on the Internet are that Amber doesn’t care much about the company and is focused solely on Burton Pharmaceuticals.”

“It’s not unusual for father and daughter to come to blows considering how capitalistic they both are.”

In truth, Rachel believed Jefferey truly did love Amber as his daughter, but he valued the future of Hudson Pharmaceuticals more. Since Amber wasn’t a fool, how could she possibly allow herself to be manipulated by him?

And the moment there was a rift between them, nothing else would matter.

Once trouble descended, they would each go their own way.

Twirling the teacup in her hand, Rachel asked, “I think grandma would approve of my doings if she were still alive. Don’t you think so, Victor?”

The person that Nancy was closest to in life, apart from Rachel, was Victor. Rarely did Rachel bring Nancy up to other people but in front of Victor, she couldn’t help wanting to reminisce.

Solemnly, he answered, “I wouldn’t know about anyone else, but I think she would support everything you did as long as you were happy.”

“Well, I can’t live my life solely based on my happiness. There are still plenty of issues I have to resolve. Besides, I’m only taking back what I deserve.”

...

At the Burton Group, just as Justin was leaving the morning meeting, Frankie rushed up to him to report, “Amber called you multiple times, President Burton, but I refrained from disturbing you as you were in a meeting.”

“What does she want now?”

“She didn’t specify, but Miss Hudson also called and brought up Miss Charlotte’s bodyguards, so I sent someone to investigate.”

“And what did you find?”

Frankie relayed the incident where Amber trapped Samuel in an alley this morning to him.

Justin’s expression darkened in the blink of an eye. “How dare she do such a thing? And what about Charlotte’s bodyguards?”

Looking conflicted, Frankie answered, “Well, your instructions were to guard only Miss Charlotte, so they didn’t dare to leave her side.”

“Are they stupid? Did they just watch on as Samuel was mobbed by a group of adults?”

“Don’t worry, President Burton. It seems Miss Burton expected such a thing to happen and arrived in time not only to send Samuel to school, but to teach Amber a lesson as well. She scared Amber quite a

bit.”

“Amber deserved it,” Justin muttered coldly. “I don’t want something like this to happen again. Have two more bodyguards assigned to the kids,” he ordered.

“Of course.”

“Also, revoke the section concerning Hudson Pharmaceuticals in last quarter’s investment plans and put the acquisition plan on hold.”

The best option for Hudson Pharmaceuticals, given its current precarious state, was to be acquired by the Burton Group.

Although Arthur had brought up the topic several times, Justin remained lukewarm to the idea. From his perspective, Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ internal management was in chaos, and a thorough investigation had to be conducted so that a few unsavory gray market practices could be done away with prior to acquisition.

Hence, Amber’s actions today not only angered him but essentially put an end to the future of Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

However, Frankie brought up uncomfortably, “About Old Mr. Burton...”

“Don’t worry about him. Just do what I tell you to. I’ll handle him.”

Thoughtfully, Frankie continued, “Even if we don’t take into account what Amber did, I wasn’t optimistic about the acquisition of Hudson Pharmaceuticals.”

“Naturally.”

“Oh—by the way, President Burton, here’s the mall event plan for Valentine’s Day. Please take a look.” As Frankie said that, he placed a document onto the desk.

When Justin glanced at the poster titled 'Blooming Valentine,' he froze slightly. "It'll be Valentine's Day in two days?"

"Yes, it's this Friday." Being an observant person, Frankie was careful as he added, "The restaurants are bound to be packed to the brim on that day. If you plan on having dinner then, it's best to make reservations for a table, a cake, and flowers beforehand."

"Really?"

"Yes, I'll help you make reservations for cake and a table. What kind of flowers would you like?"

Finally, Justin came back to his senses and glared at Frankie. "Did I mention needing reservations?"

Flinching, Frankie answered, "Do you not need them?"

"You're taking more and more initiative nowadays. Why don't I let you sit behind the CEO's desk instead?"

"No, no, no. It's your seat!" Frankie shook his head sheepishly and mumbled, "I was out of turn."

Upon flipping through the document and finding it to be acceptable, Justin put his signature on the last page. "Tell the marketing department to go according to the plan, but switch out half of the red roses for the on-site bouquet arrangements with tulips. Too many red roses would just make the scene tacky."

"Of course. I'll let the marketing department know right away." Taking back the document, Frankie prepared to leave.

"Hold on," Justin called out before pausing once again.

Puzzled, Frankie stopped in his tracks. "Is there something else you needed, President Burton?"

“Make them white tulips. Got it?”

“Of course. Don’t worry, the marketing department can handle such a minor change perfectly.”

Glumly, Justin watched Frankie leave.

Chapter 242 Hoping to Come To a Happy Conclusion

Not long after Frankie stepped out, the originally closed office door suddenly opened a crack as he stuck his head back in and smiled meaningfully. “A bouquet of white tulips for your reservation would be a little drab, President Burton. Shall I have the florist add in a few splashes of color?”

Upon hearing that, Justin was stunned as he glared at him. “Don’t you want to keep your job?” It was noon and after putting her signature on a document, Rachel handed it to Lisa. “You can go and have lunch now.”

“What would you like, Miss Burton? I can bring you back something from the cafeteria.”

As Rachel opened her mouth to speak, her phone vibrated. Taking note of the caller ID, she told Lisa, “It’s fine; I’ll be going down for lunch as well in a bit.”

“Of course.”

The moment Lisa left, Rachel answered the call. “Hello?”

“Are you free, Miss Hudson? I am close to your workplace.”

“Is Old Mr. Burton done considering? Or does he wish to renegotiate terms with me?”

“He wanted me to give you something.”

In response, Rachel narrowed her eyes.

Close to Burton Group was a café. As it was separated from the building by only a single street, the Burton Group logo was clearly visible from the café's window seats.

By the time Rachel arrived, Leon, the Burton Family butler, had been waiting on a booth seat for a while. "Have a seat, Miss Hudson."

Upon seeing the contract-like document on the table, Rachel knew this conversation would not end quickly, so she pulled out a chair and sat down. "What did you want to give me?" she asked.

"This." He placed a translucent plastic bag containing a USB stick on the table. "It contains the video and written evidence you wanted of Hans' murder."

"What is this, then?" She glanced down at the black document folder.

"This is a document that Old Mr. Burton hopes you will sign." As Leon spoke, he slowly pushed the document folder over to her. "As long as you put your signature on it, the USB stick will be yours to do whatever you wish with. We won't interfere whether that's filing a police report or blackmailing the real murderer."

"I take it from your words that Old Mr. Burton knows who the real murderer is." Leon's expression remained impassive and unchanging despite her blunt question. Knowing that she wouldn't be able to get anything from him, Rachel caved in and flipped open the document. As she looked through it, she asked, "What is this?"

"Old Mr. Burton would like you to tender your resignation and leave the Burton Group of your own volition."

"I can do that," she answered without hesitation. "But I still have some work to hand over. Does Old Mr. Burton's resignation deadline include the time I need to pass on my work to somebody else?"

“You’re a smart woman, Miss Burton. Of course you know it’s not as simple as making you resign. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to pay you the damages for breach of contract.”

After all, she was handling many of Burton Pharmaceuticals’ client resources right now, and she was pretty much in charge of the current batch of suppliers. If she didn’t hand those resources over before she left, Burton Pharmaceuticals would be left in chaos.

“I understand. Now, I can sign the document, but I must ascertain whether the video evidence you’re giving me is actually real.”

“I knew you would have such a worry.” He opened the laptop next to him and pushed it up to her. “You can see for yourself.”

As she inserted the USB stick into the computer and was about to open the video file, she couldn’t stop her hands from trembling.

“There’s no need.” She lifted a pen and put her signature on the last page of the document.

Ultimately, she knew Arthur wouldn’t try to trick her with fake evidence, for once she was angered, she would disregard the document completely and stick by Justin’s side.

“Old Mr. Burton also says that he hopes this transaction will come to a happy conclusion.”

“Of course.” She picked up the USB stick and stood up. “We each have what we need. I have what I want and he can finally rest easy.” With that, she walked away.

After she left, Leon made a phone call. “I’ve done what you asked me to and had her put her signature on the document, Old Mr. Burton.”

“Good.”

In the summer villa at the other end of the line, Arthur had only just finished writing something in a cursive calligraphy script. Upon answering Leon's call as he put down his pen, he continued, "Since you're done, come back here. Don't stay out too long or something bad might happen."

"Of course, but there's something I don't understand."

"What is it?"

"Rachel was not at all hesitant about signing her name and she seemed to find no difficulty in leaving Young Master Justin."

"She wouldn't use him as a bargaining chip if she found it difficult," Arthur answered calmly, seemingly having expected such an outcome. "She's no longer the mute woman from five years ago who simply took whatever came her way. If someone wants something badly enough, ability and temperament come second. Most importantly, they must have one trait."

"What's that?"

"Ruthlessness." Arthur looked down at the sheet of paper on his desk. Right in the middle of it was the word he had just written—'ruthlessness'. It was full of curves and flourishes, even looking a bit savage, as if it might leap up from the page at any second. "You have to be ruthless to yourself in order to be ruthless to others. And if she was still that woman from all those years ago, I wouldn't need to fear her so much."

There was no way he could permit someone so ruthless to stay by Justin's side.

Meanwhile, after receiving the evidence, Rachel went looking for Janice.

"Have you watched it?"

Rachel shook her head. "No, but it should be real."

Noting her reluctance, Janice comforted, "It's okay. There's no need to force yourself."

Perhaps it would be too cruel to make Rachel watch the image of Hans from all those years ago. This issue had tormented her for five years and that was long enough; there was no need to add another layer of hurt to her sorrow.

"I'll import it into the computer for a look. Give me a moment."

"That's no problem. I'm not in a rush to get back home." Looking out of the window, Rachel continued, "Can I go out into the courtyard for some fresh air?"

"Of course. You can wait for me outside."

Pushing open the screen door, Rachel stepped outside. The courtyard still looked like it did all those years ago. According to Janice, the building remained standing solely because the old tree in the courtyard was now recognized and protected as an ancient tree, bringing the entire place into the spotlight along with it.

As Rachel walked up to the tree, she couldn't help remembering the scene from all those years ago when Hans, Janice, and herself had sat there drinking tea. At the time, Hans and Janice were doing their best to help her investigate the truth behind her mother's murder, looking through Hudson Family's business records and advising her to flee the Burton Family...

In the blink of an eye, five or six years had passed.

"Rae!" Janice called out from inside the room. "Come here and take a look."

"What's the matter?"

"The video's been edited."

Startled, Rachel stared at the image on the screen for a long time before asking, "Is it missing anything?"

"Part of it has been deleted. Look here... and here..." Janice clicked on the images using her mouse.

"These two images are obviously not linked. There's a part in the middle where a man appeared that has been erased."

"Did Arthur tamper with the video? Why would he want to do that?"

Chapter 243 Hans' Actual Murderer

"I can't think of a reason other than related interests," Janice said as she replayed the video. "But there's enough evidence here to follow the lead and find the real culprit."

Following her line of sight, Rachel stared at the enlarged image of the man in the video. "This is Stanley Tillery," Janice said. "He has a pretty long record. He used to work for Gunny."

"Gunny?" Rachel paled. "Are you saying Hans' death is related to Jefferey?" Upon hearing that, Janice nodded seriously. "I didn't bring it up before, because I couldn't be certain Hans hadn't stumbled upon something illicit by accident and was killed in order to silence him. From the look of things now, I can be certain."

In the video were two groups of people making an exchange. A silver strongbox was in the frame, and the man carrying it was none other than Jefferey's beater, Stanley.

Throughout her years of investigation, Rachel never thought the matter was related to Jefferey.

"After Gunny left the country, Stanley was the one to work under Jefferey, committing murders and robberies and other unsavory types of business. Several of the cases I investigated six years ago were related to him."

"The drug agent cases?"

"Yes."

Unplugging the USB stick from the computer, Janice continued, "Although the evidence has been altered, it meets the basic conditions to serve as criminal evidence. I'll have Hans' cases brought out for retrial as soon as possible. Wait to hear from me."

"Thank you for your hard work."

"I haven't been working hard, you have." Janice gave her a solemn look. "On behalf of Hans, I thank you."

All of a sudden, Rachel felt her nose itch and she had to turn her face away to keep from crying.

Currently, Janice was the only person left in the world with whom she could still bring up Hans and the only person, to her, who was related to Hans in some way. While there were many things they couldn't say outright to each other, a single glance between them could convey what words could not.

Patting her shoulder, Janice continued, "This is the Hudson Family business, though. Are you sure you want me to go through with it?"

"Don't forget that Jefferey murdered my mother," Rachel answered her. "The statute of limitations on my mother's case has passed, but not on Hans' case. He's not getting away with it again. I'm taking him for everything he's worth."

"Alright. I'll help you."

After leaving Janice's place, Rachel drove aimlessly around by herself for a while before finally going back home.

By then, the sky was dark.

The lights in the Burton Residence were on and when Rachel arrived home, the two children were sitting on the rug playing with building blocks.

“Home so late?” Seated on the couch, Justin lifted his head and immediately tossed the magazine in his hands aside. “Where were you?”

“I went to meet an old friend and bought a cake on the way home.” Calmly, she lifted the cake box in her hand.

“Wow!” Charlotte cheered, jumping up. “There’s cake today, Samuel!”

Next to her, Samuel clapped his hands. “It’s strawberry cake, my favorite!”

“Wash your hands and have dinner first,” Justin instructed somewhat sternly. “You won’t be able to eat dinner if you have too much junk food.”

“No! I want cake. I won’t be able to have cake if I eat too much dinner,” Samuel refuted, rolling his eyes at Justin before walking up to Rachel. “Let’s go cut the cake, Mommy!”

Justin did not feel that it was within his rights to discipline someone else’s son, so he could only instruct his own daughter, “Charlotte, go wash your hands.”

Unfortunately, the moment he finished saying that, Charlotte ran up to Rachel. “I want to have some cake like Samuel, Mommy! Can I?”

Faced with the girl’s large, starry eyes, Rachel could only nod her head helplessly.

With a humph, Justin grumbled, “Well, she’s certainly found someone to back her up. Go ahead and spoil her, then. I doubt she’ll listen to me again in the future.”

“It’s fine to spoil her every once in a while.” With that, Rachel led the children into the dining room to cut the cake, leaving him alone in the living room.

After cutting the cake, she instructed, "Everyone can have only one piece and once you're done, we'll have dinner."

"No problem, Mommy!"

"Okay."

She even gave a piece to Martha, but when she turned to look over her shoulder, Justin was sitting alone in the living room, rifling through a magazine. And so, she asked, "Do you want a piece? It's fragrant and not particularly sweet."

"How long do you think my arm is in order to reach you from here?"

His tone was full of resentment, for his back and his thigh were still injured.

"Mommy," Charlotte said suggestively behind her, "I think Daddy wants you to go feed him."

Samuel made a face. "Even I don't need Mommy to feed me, so why does he, as a grown-up?"

"It's called romance, Samuel!" Charlotte batted her eyelashes in response.

And so, they bickered happily, completely ignoring the man in the living room who was quickly becoming increasingly embarrassed.

"The cake can't shut either of you up, can it?" Rachel rolled her eyes at the two children. "Your teacher has informed me that you're not allowed to sit together next week because you talk too much and disturb the other children in class."

"What?" Charlotte covered her mouth before whining in protest, "But I don't!"

"And what about eating in class?"

Subconsciously, Charlotte glanced at Samuel.

Guiltily, Samuel dodged Rachel's gaze and muttered under his breath, "We're growing children. We need food."

And just like that, the two of them fell silent. Only then did Rachel smugly carry a piece of cake out into the living room.

"Have a piece," she told Justin as she placed the cake on the coffee table. "I know you're not fond of sweet things, but Charlotte and Samuel both like this flavor."

Flipping through the magazine, he answered haughtily, "No thanks. I'm busy."

"You're holding it upside down."

"Huh?" Reflexively, Justin flipped to the cover of the magazine for a look before realizing that he was, in fact, holding it correctly and that she was teasing him. Instantly, he scowled.

"Come on, now. Have a taste. Do you really want me to feed you?"

"Go ahead and try. If you dare feed me, I'll eat it."

Never did Rachel expect he would say such a thing.

In fact, neither did Justin.

Yet, in the next second, she was cutting up a small piece of cake with a fork and holding it up to his mouth.

Instantly, he stiffened, feeling inexplicably nervous all of a sudden. "It's fine. Put it down; I'll eat it by myself."

"Are you embarrassed?"

"What?"

As he parted his lips to say that, she pushed the fork into his mouth. In an instant, ice-cream cake melted away on his tongue and suffused his senses with the faint fragrance of strawberry.

"Is it good?" she asked.

Swallowing hard, he hummed in agreement.

"Have another bite, then."

"No, thanks. I'm full." Instantly, he picked up his magazine again, blocking her hand.

With a glance at him, she put down the fork and said mildly at the same time, "You're really holding it upside down this time."

All of the tanks on the cover of the military magazine were the wrong side up. Clearly, the more Justin tried to cover his emotions up, the more he revealed.

Chapter 244 Nervous

"I'm going to help Martha prepare dinner," Rachel said, thereafter going to the kitchen. It wasn't until she left that Justin finally dropped the magazine in his hands with an uncharacteristically vexed expression on his face. In fact, he was very dissatisfied with his previous nervousness.

After all, it wasn't as if he was a prepubescent boy. He shared a marriage and a child with her, so how could he still get so nervous? Martha's and Rachel's voices floated out of the kitchen, blending with the sound of the two children talking and laughing in the dining room. Just like that, the large, deserted villa was filled with familial warmth.

As Justin looked down at the cake on the coffee table, he couldn't help picking up the fork once again. Indeed, the cake was quite delicious.

After dinner, Rachel headed into the bathroom to help Charlotte bathe.

As the four yellow rubber ducks floated atop the bubbles in the filled bathtub, Charlotte said, "These two are Mommy and Daddy. This is me, and this is Samuel."

Giving her daughter a conflicted look, Rachel started, "Charlotte, if Mommy and Daddy were to separate, who would you want to live with?"

The smile on Charlotte's face froze and her small, heat-reddened face crumpled up with anxiety. "Are you leaving again, Mommy?"

The word 'again' stabbed into Rachel's heart like the sharp point of a knife, but she steeled herself and persisted, "I'm saying 'if,' Charlotte. If your daddy and I separated, who would you want to go with?"

Instantly, the rims of Charlotte's eyes reddened. "Why do you want to separate, Mommy? Is it because I was bad?"

Seeing her daughter on the verge of tears, Rachel no longer had the heart to continue asking. Quickly, she wiped her daughter's eyes and reassured, "It's not because of you. You've been very good. You're a very good girl."

After carrying Charlotte back to her room, Rachel took some time to placate the child and read to her. Only after an interminable length of time where she watched her daughter fall asleep did she finally let out a deep breath.

Children were the most vulnerable party in a parental divorce. Often, their first reaction would be to find fault with themselves, whether it be 'I wasn't well-behaved enough' or 'my parents no longer wanted me.' The anxiety of abandonment would wire itself into their brains, leaving them with trauma that would not heal for the rest of their lives.

If it weren't for the fact that it was her last resort, Rachel would never subject Charlotte to that.

By now, it was late in the night. The wind on the balcony was strong and it looked like it was about to rain.

Rachel's vibrating cell phone showed an incoming call from Jolly.

"Hey, are you back?"

"I just landed. How are things there?"

"I got what I needed and passed it on to Janice. Barring any accidents, we should see the results soon."

"Is it truly related to Jefferey?"

"Yes. The person in charge of the transaction that Hans stumbled upon is Stanley Tillery, one of Jefferey's men. He currently works as Chief of Security at Hudson Pharmaceuticals."

"Can he be convicted based on one video alone?"

"Janice is looking into him as well as the other people in the video. He's only the face of the group. The others operate more covertly."

While 'Chief of Security at Hudson Pharmaceuticals' didn't sound like a particularly important position, it was tantamount to being Jefferey's right-hand man and monitoring Hudson Pharmaceuticals' every move when it came to underground business deals.

As for the rest of the men, though they looked unremarkable and unrelated to Hudson Pharmaceuticals, they were actually Jefferey's way of protecting himself and avoiding scrutiny from the police should any accident arise.

Presently, Jolly advised, "You'd better stay by Justin's side these few days to avoid arousing any suspicions."

"Of course. It'll only be a few more days."

"Don't take things too seriously, though. When everything is over, I have a surprise for you."

Though Jolly's tone was mysterious, Rachel found it hard to lift her spirits. "Don't give me another plane ticket and send me to another place for a vacation. I don't feel like going anywhere right now."

"Do I seem that clueless? Of course it's not a plane ticket. Right, I can't talk anymore. My ride's here."

Just as Rachel was about to ask what that had to do with not being able to continue talking, she heard a man's voice calling out from the other end of the line, "Who are you talking to?"

"No one!"

In the end, Jolly hung up rather decisively.

It made Rachel narrow her eyes. Who on earth had gone to pick Jolly up?

And so, she texted, 'Is it him?'

Clearly dodging the question and not wishing to elaborate, Jolly only replied with a few emojis. For her part, Rachel didn't feel like pursuing the topic, anyway. As of late, the conclusion of Hans' murder case had been weighing on her heart and she felt the issue becoming more and more imminent.

The closer she got to the last, critical moment, the longer and more nightmare-ridden her dreams felt.

For the next three days, a storm enveloped the city.

“The weather forecast indicates that there will be a storm again tonight, President Burton, so the security team advises that we cancel the celebrity meet-and-greet session lest a safety incident occur. You know how crazy the fans can be.”

A sweaty Mr. Smith, who happened to be the person in charge of publicizing the mall event, rushed over to report on the event progress.

“Don’t you have a Plan B?” From behind the desk, Justin asked coldly, “Did you not come up with an alternative for bad weather?”

Paling, Mr. Smith answered, “We... We didn’t take the weather into consideration since the event would take place indoors anyway.”

“So, you’re telling me now that it’s not your responsibility?”

“That’s not what I mean, President Burton. I...” Mr. Smith fell silent, wishing the ground would open up and swallow him whole.

Right then, there was a series of taps on the door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

From outside, the secretary announced, “Miss Hudson is here, President Burton.”

Justin lifted his head. His originally glacial expression had melted somewhat as he said, “Get in contact with the celebrity’s agent. Have the star himself send out a tweet to calm his fan base. Additionally, issue shopping vouchers with no expiry date to anyone who comes to the mall today to make up for the cancellation.”

Caught off-guard, Mr. Smith stared at Justin as he mused to himself, Is he handing me a solution just like that?

“Is there anything else?” Justin gave him a sharp glance.

Startling, Mr. Smith mumbled, “Uh—no...”

“Get lost, then!” Even Frankie was glaring impatiently at him. “Can’t you see that there’s someone else waiting by the door?”

Only then did Mr. Smith come to his senses. “I’ll act according to your instructions then, President Burton.”

As Rachel entered, she happened to come face-to-face with him.

Gratefully, he stared at her, but his gaze made her feel somewhat uneasy and she only nodded awkwardly in greeting. “I’m not disturbing you, am I?” she asked Justin as she carried a document over to him. “Wasn’t that Mr. Smith from the marketing department? Why does he look so uncomfortable?”

“It’s fine. He was simply here to report on the mall event. We’ve finished our discussion.”

“Oh—that’s good, then.” She handed the document over to Justin. “These are HR’s candidates for general manager. All of them were recommended by headhunters. I took a look at them and they all have good qualifications and broad networks. No matter who you choose, they’ll be able to drive the development of the pharmaceutical industry. Take a look.”

“No need.” He pushed the document aside. “I already have a candidate in mind.”

Chapter 245 She Missed the Date

“What? Who is that? Why didn’t you tell me earlier? The Human Resources department has been busy with this issue.” “Was it that hard to come up with this solution?”

Justin’s eyes were raised. “In my opinion, what the Human Resources department needs to consider is to find a new sales director instead of a general manager.”

Rachel froze slightly before she finally understood. Since the last general manager of Burton Pharmaceuticals—the Burton Group’s child company—left, the position had always been vacant.

When Justin hastily hired Rachel from abroad with a high pay, he intended for her to temporarily fill in the role of a sales director while he observed her capabilities to see if she was fit to be a general manager.

However, Rachel’s true intention of returning to the country was not for the promotion and pay raise. “Do you mean me?” she asked in shock.

Justin slightly nodded. “Apart from you, no one else is suitable for the position, isn’t it?”

“I think you should reconsider your decision. Managing a team and managing a company is different. I have no experience in the latter, so I think it’s better if you hire a professional for this position.”

“Everyone has to start somewhere. I believe that you have the capability to do so.”

With a firm expression on his face, he said, “This settles it. I already informed the Human Resources department. After Valentines’ Day, they will issue an official notice to your job scope.”

“Are you in such a rush?”

“Is that so? I even thought that it’s pretty slow. If it weren’t for the formal procedures of the company that we have to adhere to, I would just issue a notice immediately.”

Looking conflicted, Rachel wanted to say something but after a while, she remained silent.

After all, she knew Justin's temperament very well. Once he had already made a decision, it would be very difficult to change his mind.

"Since you have already made your decision, I shall go back first." Rachel got up from her seat. "I think you should take some time to look over the candidates that the Human Resources department gave to you—there might be someone else who is more suitable than me for the job."

"I'll pass."

With that, he threw the documents in the trash right in front of her. "It's decided, then. You don't need to ask me to reconsider anymore. As opposed to handing the task to an outsider, I trust you better."

Upon hearing that, Rachel smiled at him and made her move to leave.

However, Justin suddenly asked, "Wait—I assume you're free after work? Let's have dinner together."

"I still have some matters to settle, so I'll be running late."

"I'll wait for you at the restaurant and I'll send the address to you later."

Without even waiting for her reply, he continued, "You can continue with your work now and try to finish it earlier."

Rachel wanted to say something but in the end, she did not utter a word. Her fists that were next to her body were clenched tightly as she left Justin's office.

It's Valentines' Day today. It's beyond obvious what he is implying by asking me out for dinner on this day.

When she returned to her office, she unlocked her phone and saw a message from Janice.

'The crime scene has already been cordoned off. The suspects and the evidence have already been caught. No one has escaped, so there will be a result tonight.'

Rachel's expression immediately tensed up.

Everything seems like it's predestined, as if karma is real.

In the evening, dark clouds slowly covered the entire sky. With a clap of thunder, Riverdale was shrouded in thick mists as rain pelted down to the ground heavily.

Justin raised his wrist, revealing an expensive watch.

He had been sitting in a private room of the restaurant for almost an hour. When he finished work, he wanted to bring Rachel along but she had a sudden meeting, so he came here alone.

"President Burton, is Miss Hudson still not here yet?"

Slightly shocked, Frankie walked into the room with a bouquet of flowers in his hand. "It's pouring outside. I hope that it's not stopping her from reaching here."

"Why are you so talkative today?" Justin shot him a glance. "Is it raining?"

The private room was sound proof, so he had no clue that it was raining outside.

When he heard Frankie's words, he immediately opened the curtains to take a look.

When lightning flashed, the bright light was reflected in the glass windows. The rain outside was so heavy that he could not even make out the buildings outside.

“President Burton, aren’t you going to call her up? What if the rain is too heavy for her to come here? The roads are slowly getting flooded and many areas are trying to fix it.”

Of course, even without Frankie pointing it out, Justin wanted to call her. However, he did not want Rachel to think of him as a slow and indecisive man.

“That’s fine. We’ll go to the company right away.”

“What? What about the flowers?” Frankie waved the flowers in his hands. “These are what you wanted—white tulips.”

“Take it along.”

“What about dinner?”

“Ask the head chef to make it in the company.”

With that, Justin walked outside immediately.

Frankie quickly followed behind him with the flowers in his hands as he hastily took out his phone to call the manager of the restaurant. “President Burton is leaving now. Ask the head chef to bring the necessary ingredients to the company to prepare the menu for tonight’s dinner. Yes, that’s right—he will be preparing it there. Also, bring all the decorations as well, like the candles and other stuff.

As the other end replied to him, the rain became heavier.

Sitting in the car that was traveling slowly, Justin sent a message to Rachel.

‘The rain is too heavy, so you don’t have to come here. I’m going back to the office now.’

After a long time, there was no reply from the other end. After some hesitation, he called her.

'The number you have dialed is out of service. Please try again later.'

She switched her phone off?

His eyebrows knitted into a frown.

"Frankie, please drive faster."

"We are already going very fast. The rain is very heavy now. If we drive any faster, we will get into an accident."

The wipers on the windscreen were not fast enough to remove the rain. All the cars on the road were moving slowly and carefully. On their way to the company, there were already countless road accidents.

In the car, the news reporter on the radio was announcing the flooded areas with a serious tone.

"Onto the next topic, Riverdale's police caught a group of smugglers trying to smuggle an enormous batch of drugs at the pier. After further investigation, the smugglers were found out to be related to the ex-president of Hudson Pharmaceuticals, Jefferey Hudson. Currently, the drugs are being confiscated at customs..."

Hudson Pharmaceuticals?

Justin lifted his head immediately with tension in his eyes. "Frankie, what was the news just now?"

Frankie also heard the same thing. Looking shocked, he replied, "Yeah, I was listening to it too. It seems like the police caught the smugglers who are related to Jefferey. This—"

Justin immediately called Rachel again.

'The number you have dialed is out of service. Please try again later.'

It seemed that her phone was still switched off.

As soon as they arrived at the company, Justin immediately went to her office to look for her but no one was around.

Meanwhile, Rachel's assistant, Lisa, was working overtime in the office. When she saw Justin, she asked him politely, "President Burton, are you looking for Chris?"

Right behind him, Frankie immediately asked her, "Where is Miss Hudson?"

"She went back after work."

Justin's expression was icy as he questioned, "When did she leave?"

Chapter 246 The 'Surprise' on Valentine's Day

"It was around half an hour ago. Chris received a phone call right after the meeting ended and she left after that." "Do you know who the caller was?"

"Umm..." Lisa shook her head. How would I know? Upon seeing Justin's expression, Frankie quickly consoled, "President Burton, don't be anxious. The news was just reported, so maybe Miss Hudson saw the news and quickly went home to resolve the matter."

"You're saying that she went back to the Hudson Residence?" "That's not impossible, is it? Even though Miss Hudson is not close to her father, he is still her father after all. If she knows of such a big incident happening to the Hudson Family, I'm sure she won't turn a blind eye to it."

The timing had matched as well—they had just left the company half an hour ago. Not long after that, they heard the news on the radio. It was highly probable that Rachel had received a call from her family.

“Where are you going, President Burton?”

“The Hudson Residence.”

After leaving three short words with Frankie, Justin left the office in large strides. Frankie had no choice but quickly match Justin’s footsteps with a huge bouquet of flowers in his hands.

‘Hudson Pharmaceuticals is suspected to be involved in the smuggling of drugs and having close contact with the military abroad. As the police already have concrete evidence of this incident, they have detained the man who controlled the company, Jefferey Hudson, for further investigation.’

The news of Hudson Pharmaceuticals being involved in a case of drug smuggling quickly spread like wildfire and was reported by all of the major news outlets. Because of that, Hudson Pharmaceuticals

immediately stopped all their operations, which caused their stock prices to plummet.

While holding a black umbrella, Rachel stood at the gate of the Hudson Residence—a place where she had lived for two decades. At this moment, it was both a familiar and a strange area for her.

Jefferey was in handcuffs as he had already been detained by the police and at this moment, he was being brought out of the mansion by them. He acted as though she was his lifesaver the moment he saw her. After quickly shoving the police aside, he rushed to her. While they were under the heavy rain, he grabbed her arms and said, “Rae, you have finally returned. Please save me—ask the Burton Family to save me. At this moment, they are the only ones who are able to save me.”

The umbrella in her hand was tilted by him. The rain pelted on her shoulders, leaving her drenched. However, she had a terrifyingly indifferent and cold expression. “Uncle Jefferey, no one can save you now.”

“What did you just call me?”

As soon as he heard the words ‘Uncle Jefferey’, Jefferey’s old face seemed to have cracked like a dried tree branch. He stared at her fearfully, unable to believe his own ears.

“What? Don’t you like this salutation of mine?” Rachel smiled stonily. “If my parents were aware of this, they would have hoped that I would behave this way. No matter what you have done, I should still be polite. It’s manners that I have to address you as ‘Uncle Jefferey’. Those manners which are already solidified in my bones.”

Although he staggered backward in trepidation, he was immediately captured by the policemen who caught up to him. “Trying to escape? In your dreams!”

Jefferey merely stared at Rachel with fear in his eyes.

“Dad! Let go of my dad!”

Amber had arrived at the scene a tad bit too late. Jefferey had already been forced into the police car, which had departed from the mansion. The lights of the vehicle and the roar of the engine disappeared in the rain.

“What is going on?” She did not have a chance to even speak to her father, so she asked Rachel anxiously, “Why was Dad taken away by the police?”

Rachel was still holding her umbrella when she coldly gazed at Amber. “Aren’t you clear on why he is being arrested?”

“Clear on what?”

“What Jefferey Hudson has been secretly doing in Hudson Pharmaceuticals. Do you dare to say that you are unaware of anything? Aren’t you in charge of the secret bank account abroad?”

“What nonsense are you spurting now?” Amber’s expression immediately changed. “Are you nuts? Or, are you planning to harm the entire family?”

“Family?” Rachel snorted. “At this moment, you guys still think that I’m your family now? Don’t forget, you sold me to the Burton Family. When you didn’t even care whether I was still alive or already dead,

have you considered me as a part of the family? Now that you are in trouble and have reached a dead end, you finally remembered that I'm your family?"

Amber blanched. "No matter what, you are still part of the Hudson Family. Even though we have different mothers, we still share the same father, which makes us related by blood. You simply can't take advantage of us at dire times like this!"

"Looking at the current state of the Hudson Family, do I even need to take advantage of you guys?"

"You—" As Amber appraised Rachel, Amber suddenly realized something. "How did you arrive earlier than me?" The maids in the Hudson Family called me as soon as Dad was in trouble and I rushed home immediately. Where did she get the information from?

"What do you think?"

"Miss Amber!" Her driver's voice rang as he quickly brought his phone to her. "Look at this, Miss Amber!"

Amber then looked at the news on the man's phone. The media had already received first hand news about the entire story. 'According to our insider news, Jefferey Hudson had ordered his men to kill the witness five years ago to cover up his drug smuggling business. He killed the person and left his corpse in the wild. The said witness was a certain Mr. Egerton.'

As soon as Amber saw the last name of Egerton, she immediately understood what had been going on. As she looked at Rachel incredulously, Amber questioned, "You are behind all this?"

"Is it important to find out who did this? It's fair and square to get retribution for killing someone."

"My dad did not kill Hans."

"Stanley Tillery was the man who killed him and he was working for Jefferey. Don't you know Stanley?"

Amber's face turned ghastly pale. Everyone knows that Stanley is Dad's spy in Hudson Pharmaceuticals. "You are planning to ruin the Hudson Family. You returned not to take revenge on the Burton Family, but on us!"

Amber suddenly charged forward in fury. However, Rachel had caught the woman's raised hand.

"What are you planning to do?" Rachel's cold gaze swept past Amber. "It's just something that I'm supposed to do. Jefferey has killed many over the years. The law will never miss anyone."

"You mad woman, let go of me!" Amber shrieked and struggled from Rachel, who then shoved her away.

With another loud scream, Amber staggered and fell in the rain.

Julian quickly sheltered her with his umbrella. "Miss Amber."

"Enjoy your days as Miss Amber. Once the Hudson Family is captured, you will be left with nothing. The little princess of the Hudson Family might need to live on the streets by then."

Rachel coldly looked at Amber. Her arrogance felt like a mountain weighing on Amber, who felt like she was unable to breathe.

Apart from arresting Jefferey, the police had also seized all the valuable properties in the mansion. They even placed a banner on the front door—once the court had come to their decision, all of the properties would either be auctioned off or returned to the Hudson Family. No matter what, everything related to the Hudson Family would be frozen during this period. Hence, Amber's access to her card would definitely be affected as well.

"Rachel!" she yelled angrily. "Does Justin know that you returned for Hans's death? No wonder you stayed by his side like a loyal dog no matter how bad he treated you. You're like a dog that can't be chased away!"

“Of course he doesn’t know that, but the evidence is in his grandfather’s hands. Do you think I can easily leave?”

Chapter 247 Aren’t You Going to Explain?

When Amber heard those words, her eyes widened in shock. At this exact moment, a cold man’s voice rang behind Rachel. “So, the reason why you are sticking to me is just to obtain evidence of Hans’ death from Grandpa?”

Rachel jolted violently. A black umbrella was held firmly by the man’s slender fingers. His tall figure cast a long shadow that covered the ground and his face looked even colder than usual.

Justin? She did not even notice when he had arrived. “Is this the exchange you made with Grandpa?”

“Justin.” Amber quickly scrambled to her feet and she ran to the spot under his umbrella. “Justin, I already told you that she is up to no good, but you refused to believe me. Look at the crazy things that she just did! She even threw her own father into jail. I wonder what else she is capable of doing!”

Justin’s face darkened as he stared at Rachel. “Aren’t you going to explain?”

However, Rachel merely tightened her hold on her umbrella with a tense expression on her face. “Didn’t you hear everything for yourself earlier?”

She calmly looked at the man in front of her, but her grip on her umbrella tightened.

Everyone could tell that she had ulterior motives when she returned and became closer to Justin. Even he himself was aware of this and even asked her many times in the beginning about the reason for her return.

It was just that he forgot about it later on.

In that instant, his cold face was almost overcome with fury. Even though he tried to suppress his anger, the throbbing vein on his forehead betrayed his current emotions.

"From the beginning, you returned to avenge Hans' death. Not only did you not consider my feelings, you didn't even consider Charlotte either. You even used your own daughter!"

Upon the mention of Charlotte, Rachel's temples throbbed. The emotions that she had repressed quickly flashed on her face before it disappeared. "I don't care what you think about me."

"You don't care about my thoughts? Aren't your thoughts exactly like how I have described?"

"I still have other things to attend to."

Justin grabbed Rachel's wrist as he bellowed, "I'm not allowing you to leave!"

Although pain shot through her wrists, Rachel did not groan whatsoever as she merely frowned at him. "It's meaningless whether I leave or not since my job here is done. What more do you want?"

Justin tightened his hold on her; it was as if he would only give up until he crushed her wrist.

At the same time, he could not believe his ears. This cold woman in front of me just prepared dinner in the kitchen last night and we were chatting happily. She even took the initiative to bring me a bowl of soup and asked me to have more of it for my stomach's health. After just a night, everything has completely changed. Her behavior has changed so fast that it feels like she's a different person compared to yesterday.

"You have been putting on an act around me, haven't you?"

The pain she felt was so intense that she could not even speak.

"Is that the case?!" His loud voice reverberated in her ears as it crushed her nerves.

“Let me go!” Rachel tried to wring free from his grasp, but to no avail. The umbrella that she had been holding even fell off from her hand.

The heavy rain immediately pelted on her head like ice cubes.

Justin’s eyes reddened as he forced her to retreat. “Since you were already putting on an act, why didn’t you continue with it? How long has it been since you returned? Why don’t you continue with the act? Is it because I don’t have any value for you now that you have gotten what you want? Or, is it because you have always been treating the Burton Group lightly?”

A clap of thunder roared in the background.

A car stopped by the roadside amidst Amber’s shriek. A figure alighted from the car and he immediately walked to them. He then pulled Justin’s collar and sent Justin falling to the ground with a punch.

“Justin!”

She quickly approached Justin with an umbrella to help him on his feet, but he pushed her away.

He wiped his lips with his slender hands, leaving a bright red blood trail on his face.

After the man had punched Justin, he calmly picked up the umbrella on the ground and held it above Rachel’s head. “My darling Chris, I’m late. I’m sorry you have suffered greatly.”

“Hernandez?” A shocked Rachel froze as she looked at the man in front of her. “Why are you here?”

Amidst the rain, the man with chestnut brown hair looked like he was on a beach vacation with his flowery shirt. He showed his pearly whites as he answered, “Isn’t it a lovely surprise? Do you miss me after not seeing me for such a long time?”

Is this the time to talk about this? Rachel frowned. “Hernandez, the situation here doesn’t bother you. Why don’t you return to where you came from?”

“That won’t work. It’s been difficult to catch this moment to save a damsel in distress.”

“Who is he?” Justin rose from the ground with an expression that was as dark as the night.

“Me?” Upon hearing Justin’s voice, Hernandez returned to his senses and began to appraise Justin from head to toe.

“I should be the one asking who you are to treat Chris so roughly!” Hernandez stood in front of Rachel to protect her. As he looked at Justin with vigilance, a look of understanding suddenly flashed across his face. “Oh, I understand now! You must be her ex-husband! It seems like Chris is still as attractive as ever! After many years, you still can’t get over her?!”

“Rachel! I’m asking you who this guy is!” Justin looked incredibly stony.

After all, a random man had suddenly popped up and addressed Rachel as ‘Chris’ and the way he had protected her illustrated that there was intimacy. It was enough to leave Justin imagining things.

Hernandez spoke way before Rachel could even answer. “I’m Chris’ fiancé, but we haven’t had our wedding.”

The word ‘fiancé’ was firmly enunciated, which angered Justin even more.

“Fiancé?” With a deathly expression, he stared at her with ferociousness. “Is he your fiancé?” She actually has a fiancé abroad?

Rachel pulled Hernandez’s arm. “Enough of the nonsense. Justin, he is not my fiancé and you don’t need to sentence me for the crimes I have never done. I admit that the reason for my return is to avenge Hans. It’s fair and square to seek revenge for his murder. You were the one who indirectly caused his death, so I don’t think I’ve done anything wrong here.”

To Justin, the more she spoke, the more her voice began to sound shriller.

Nevertheless, she continued with her words, "If you didn't break his leg, he wouldn't have gone to the hospital. As a result, he wouldn't have stumbled upon Jefferey's drug smuggling. You have also played a part in his death." The source comes from him. He is not able to escape from this responsibility forever.

"You have always thought I'm the cause of that man's death?"

Rachel's silence explained everything.

Justin tightly clenched his fists beside his body as blood dripped through his fingertips and onto the ground. Then, it was quickly flushed away by the heavy rain.

"You don't need to continue the nonsense with him any further." Hernandez grabbed her hand. "You have finished your job here. Let's go."

Then, Justin watched as Hernandez left with Rachel.

Chapter 248 Damsel in Distress

In the heavy rain, the white sports car sped away with a loud roar of the engine. Amber and Justin were the only ones standing outside the Hudson Residence.

As she was still holding the umbrella, she shielded him from the storm as she asked, "Justin, let's get some shelter. You don't have to ill-treat yourself."

"She said everything was caused by me. What do you think?" Amber's heart sank as she looked at him in surprise. "What does Hans' death have to do with you? That's because he's unlucky. We don't see anyone else encountering something like this, do we?"

"I was the one who broke his leg, though," Justin mumbled. He could not recall the incident, but a memory suddenly flashed in his mind.

...

“Hold him down.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Aaaah—” The man yelled in pain. After that, his voice broke off as if he had died.

Then, someone next to him poured a bucket of cold water to wake him up.

“Continue.”

...

Justin remembered the white walls in the hospital. The smell of disinfectant was just as strong even in his memories.

And bit by bit, he started to remember the past incidents.

“Justin, what’s wrong?” Amber suddenly shrieked as she supported his wobbly figure. “Justin, hang in there! Someone, please call the police! Call the police quickly!”

...

Janice’s subordinates had always been keeping an eye on the Hudson Family for years. Now that Jefferey’s men were caught red handed at the pier and he was thrown behind bars, the tangible evidence led to a positive verdict by the court.

“Jefferey Hudson, the suspect and former president of Hudson Pharmaceuticals, has been involved in huge sums of money associated with drug smuggling. Among his illegal activities, he has killed two people to cover up his crimes. Since he has been convicted for his many crimes, we hereby announce

that he would be subjected to a total of 15 years imprisonment and all his properties will be confiscated.”

In the solemn atmosphere of the court, the judge’s voice rang loud and clear when he announced the guilty verdict.

As Amber cried so hard that she almost fainted, she was helped out of the courtroom. Meanwhile, when Rachel heard the verdict, she slowly stood up and looked at Jefferey, who was seated in the dock with his striped clothes. She was surprised to realize that she felt nothing but calmness.

15 years of prison meant that he would have to spend a part of his life in prison. Even though he would be released after 15 years, he would barely be able to do anything after losing touch with society for so long.

After Hernandez and Rachel walked out of the courtroom and to their car, a shrill voice rang behind them.

“Are you satisfied now, Rachel?” Amber struggled from her assistant and chased Rachel. “I bet you are finally satisfied now that you have broken our family apart, you vicious woman!”

Before Rachel could speak, he blocked her with his back to protect her. “Miss, are you going to attack her in front of the court? I don’t mind suing you for insult and assault.”

“So, it’s you!” Amber recognized him in an instant. Then, she scoffed and continued sarcastically, “Rachel, do you think that you are invincible in Riverdale now that you are friends with a lawyer? Let me tell you this—you will have your fair share of crying in the future!”

Hernandez had wanted to respond, but he was stopped by Rachel, who coldly looked at Amber.

“You have been threatening me since we were young,” Rachel reminded. “I’m sure you are so used to it that you have forgotten what evidence I’m now holding against you, right?”

Amber blanched.

“Bear in mind that if any of the evidence in hand is leaked to the public, you can forget about staying in Riverdale altogether. You better take care of yourself. Let’s go, Hernandez.”

Rachel stared at Amber’s figure in the rearview mirror until Amber became a tiny dot as they went further into the distance. It was only at that moment that Rachel retracted her gaze.

Hernandez, who was sitting next to Rachel, yanked her hand toward him and pried her fist open. “Don’t be so tense now. It’s time to relax now that the case is over.”

After she returned to her senses, she responded with a conflicted expression, “Thank you for accompanying me here.”

“It’s my honor to be of your service.”

“Even though Jefferey is behind bars and Amber will not have a good life from now onward, I still have the muscle memory from twenty years of living with them. I can’t even relax now. Sarcastic, isn’t it?”

“It will be better,” Hernandez insisted. “Even if it doesn’t, you will feel much better once you leave Riverdale and never see these people again.”

“I still haven’t decided when to leave.”

“You don’t have to rush. I still need some time to collect the evidence for your daughter’s case anyway.”

“Are we really going to court for this?” Rachel frowned. “She might blame me in the future.”

“Instead of thinking that she might blame you, it’s better to use the effort to consider whether it’s really appropriate for her to grow up in Justin’s care, especially when he’s short-tempered. Isn’t it better for her to be with you—her mom— and your friends like us? Think about Samuel too.”

Hernandez’s words had swayed her.

Rachel had never seriously considered going to court to obtain Charlotte's custodial rights before he came to riverdale. However, everything had now changed—and there was no better option apart from bringing Charlotte away.

"Don't bother about it anymore. Leave the rest to me and have a break at home."

"No, I would like to go to the Burton Residence first."

"I'll accompany you."

"No, it's fine."

Jolly had already brought Samuel abroad with the excuse of school activities. Although he had not been attending school for the past few days, Rachel still had some luggage at the Burton Residence that she wanted to collect and move out for the time being.

It was already noon when Rachel arrived. She had deliberately chosen Charlotte's schooling hours to return so that only the nanny would be at home.

"Miss Hudson, you must be back from your work trip." The nanny treated Rachel as usual when she saw Rachel.

However, upon hearing those words, Rachel froze. I haven't returned for such a long time. I guess Justin had to give Charlotte an explanation. Otherwise, that kid would continuously pester him. Well, a work trip is a good excuse for this.

"Yeah, I guess so." She refused to elaborate. "Continue with your tasks. I'm merely back to collect some items."

"I see. Alright."

Rachel walked upstairs alone and she went to the room to keep the items belonging to her and Samuel away.

Just as she was about to leave, she saw the glass photo frame from the corner of her eye and immediately froze.

In the picture was her, Justin, Charlotte and Samuel—it was taken when they were on a trip to the mountain last weekend. Rachel had no idea when the picture was printed out. Since it wasn't framed when she left, it could have been printed out some time over the last few days.

"What are you doing?"

A cold voice rang from the door, which made her jump. The frame in her hands fell to the ground and shattered into pieces.

Justin took a huge step forward reflexively as if he wanted to catch the frame, but he retracted halfway through.

Chapter 249 Under the Same Roof

Rachel apologized, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do it." "Do you think an apology will fix the issue? You should apologize to Charlotte herself. After all, she's the one who printed this picture out."

She froze upon hearing that. "Charlotte printed it out?" "Do you think it's possible that I printed it out? I can't wait to throw all of your belongings away, but Charlotte still treats you as her mom and waits for you to come home everyday. However, she has no clue that you merely treated her as a tool for you to collect evidence!"

"I didn't treat her as a tool," she explained. "I never had the plan to use her since she is our daughter." "You really treat her as your own daughter?"

"Forget it, I can't possibly explain everything to you." Rachel refused to speak to the man anymore and immediately walked outside with her luggage.

“Stop right there!” Justin grabbed her wrist. “Where are you going?”

“Of course I’m moving out! Didn’t you just say that you can’t wait to throw all of my belongings away? You don’t need to do that—I’ll move out myself.”

“You have wreaked havoc in my household and you want to leave just like that? Where do you think this place is? A place where you can come and go as you wish?” Justin was beyond furious. “I don’t care what deal you had with Grandpa! You are forbidden to move out from this place without my approval for you to leave!”

“Calm down.” Rachel tried to shake his hands off her but to no avail. With a frown, she added, “I’ve already completed my plan, yet you still want me here to cause more trouble for you?”

“I have already told you that I don’t agree! Can’t you understand my words?!”

He grabbed hold of her wrist even harder as fury spewed out of his eyes.

“Let me go!”

Amidst their conversation, Rachel tried to harshly push Justin’s hands off, making him groan and clutch his shoulders.

It was only at this moment that she remembered that his shoulder was still injured. “How are you doing?”

“I don’t need your fake concern.” Justin leaned against the door with a dark expression. “Aren’t you leaving? Why are you pretending to care about me now?”

When she heard that, her fists tightened. When Jefferey made a scene in the company some time ago, he would have stabbed her with the scissors if Justin wasn’t there. No matter what, it was because of her that Justin sustained his injury.

No matter how much she hated him, there was no way she can absolve herself from this responsibility. "I'm sorry about that. I'll send you to the hospital. Or, I can also ask Julian to come over."

"I don't need any option. If you really feel sorry, don't move out first."

When Rachel heard that, she was stunned.

Justin continued, "Don't think too much about it. It's just that I told Charlotte that you will be coming home today when she asked me about you yesterday. If you really want to leave, you have to explain to her yourself."

With that, he shot a glance at the luggage behind her and added coldly, "Compared to never obtaining something to getting it and losing it in the end, which do you think is crueler?"

His words sent a jolt to her heart like a clap of thunder.

Charlotte had always been the reason why her emotions had never fully recovered over the years. She craved for her mother's company and Rachel also hoped to stay by her side as well.

After a moment of hesitation, Rachel replied, "I'll stay for the time being then. I'll leave when your wounds are fully healed."

It would take some time for Justin's wounds to make a full recovery while Hernandez would also need a while to prepare for the suit to gain Charlotte's custody rights. As such, it would be a good plan for Rachel to stay here to avoid any suspicions.

No matter what, she had already made a decision to take Charlotte with her.

It was only at this moment that Justin's coldness receded slightly.

During dinner, Charlotte was loquacious as she asked loads of questions. "Mommy, why were you away on a work trip for such a long time? I thought you don't want me anymore!"

Rachel shot a glance at Justin as she replied, "Mommy has been quite busy at work. See, now I'm back! How is it possible that I don't want you anymore?"

"What about Samuel? Why hasn't he returned? Where did Godmother bring him to?"

"The signal isn't excellent abroad, but he will return in two days."

Justin seemed like he was deliberately giving Rachel a cold look as she was being questioned by Charlotte. As he listened to her lying to Charlotte, he did not utter a single word.

Under his oppressive glance, Rachel felt quite anxious, as though he had seen through her. She peeled a prawn for Charlotte as she said, "Charlotte, quickly finish the meal and sleep earlier. You still

have to go to school tomorrow."

"Without Samuel here, I don't even feel like going to school anymore," Charlotte muttered with a sigh, but she obediently finished her meal.

After dinner, Rachel emerged from her room after she finally put Charlotte to bed.

Then, after she saw Justin looking for something in the living room, she asked, "What are you looking for?"

"The medicine Julian prescribed last time."

"Are you changing your bandage?"

"Yeah."

Rachel took a medicine kit from a drawer in the living room. Then, she perused the types of medicines in the kit before she passed him a tube of cream. "Here it is."

"Thanks."

"Are you able to change it on your own?"

As soon as she asked this question, she regretted her words.

Since Justin's wound was on his back, it was beyond obvious that he could not change the bandage himself. Unfortunately, the nanny was off duty, so Rachel was the only remaining adult in the house.

"Let me help you," she offered through gritted teeth.

He nodded slightly as he placed the cream on the table.

Then, he removed his shirt to reveal his tanned shoulders as well as the bandage in the living room. His heaving chest somehow increased the romance in the air.

He wasn't a buff man as one could tell that he did not work out regularly. His shoulders were rather thin and pleasing to the eye; it was something that he naturally had since he never exercised to build muscle in the gym.

"Have you had enough of looking at me?"

"What?!" Rachel returned to her senses to notice that Justin was coldly staring at her.

"If you would like to feel the life you had before marriage, I don't mind."

At once, her face darkened. "You are overthinking. If you want me to change the bandage for you, turn around." I'm not in the mood to make flirty jokes with him. Once Hans' matter has come to an end, I don't need to flirt with him anymore. I see no difference whether Justin is enthusiastic or cold.

Hence, Justin turned around to face her with his back.

After Rachel undid his bandage, the blackened, stitched wound gave her a shock as she thought, It has been so long, but why does his wound still look like this? It even looks as though it was just torn. "Didn't you say that the stitches will be taken away on Monday? Why are they still here?"

"They have been removed once, but the recovery hasn't been going well, so the doctor stitched it up again."

Justin's indifferent explanation explained many things.

Rachel frowned upon hearing his reply.

Initially, she wanted to ask why the recovery wasn't going well. However, as she thought about the incidents that happened lately, she figured that it had impacted his recovery, so she did not voice out the question she had in mind.

When the cream was rubbed into the wound, it caused Justin's back muscle to tense even though he did not utter a single word. His reaction had caused her to be more gentle in her actions.

After that, she bandaged the wound and kept the medicine away in the kit. "It's done."

As Justin wore his shirt, Rachel added, "You still have to take care of your diet. Don't eat anything that's spicy, raw, and cold."

"Are you now concerned about me?"

Chapter 250 The Murderer Is Still at Large

"I guess so, but I'd usually treat this as being polite." After Rachel kept the medicine kit away, she walked upstairs. "It's getting late. I'm going to rest now." I should try my best to avoid spending time with Justin alone, now that both of us are living together. After all, I know how strong he is as a man.

The incident from five years ago was clearly imprinted in her memories, forcing her to defend herself. While she was walking halfway up the stairs, Justin's voice rang.

"Rachel!" "Yeah?" She turned around and saw his slightly raised head as he stared at her under the bright lights of the living room.

"What is your relationship with Hernandez?"

"We're just friends. Rest earlier."

After giving a short answer, Rachel directly headed into her room without any intention of staying any longer for further explanation.

Hence, Justin was left alone in the living room. He tightly clenched his fists next to his body with a dark expression.

He never believed in any pure friendship between a man and a woman.

Apart from that, Hernandez was overly close to Rachel—the man kept addressing her as 'babe'. Just the mere thought of it was enough to infuriate Justin.

Meanwhile, as soon as Rachel entered the second bedroom, she received a message from Janice.

After reading the message, her expression stiffened and she immediately gave Janice a ring.

"Janice, what do you mean by that? Old Mr. Burton has silently agreed to Jefferey's drug smuggling? Is this related to the Burton Family as well?"

Janice's voice rang from the other end. "To be precise, it's related to Jason Burton."

Jason Burton?

Upon hearing that name, Rachel tightly clenched her fists.

"Old Mr. Burton's video evidence indicates that there are three people involved in the case. It's obvious that a few frames have been deleted, but he missed something this time although he's usually meticulous. When we managed to recover the video in its HD quality, we saw a fourth person in the reflection on one of the car windows."

...

Now that they were seated inside a cafe, Janice shoved a few pictures to Rachel from across the table.

It was all pictures of Hans witnessing the smuggling deal that Hudson Pharmaceuticals was engaged with in the hospital. The car on the left of the picture had been zoomed in, which illustrated another man standing near the corner of the wall.

Rachel only thought that he looked familiar, but she could not recall his identity. "And this man is?"

"He's Bucky. Does it ring a bell now?"

As soon as she heard that name, her eyebrows trembled and she tightened her grip on the edge of the photograph.

Five years ago, her grandmother was kidnapped. After that, the police had been tracking one of the kidnappers who evaded arrest. In the end, the remaining perpetrator was sentenced to jail for

orchestrating Nancy's kidnapping. This man was none other than Bucky.

“What you’re saying is that Bucky is also involved in Hans’ case?”

Rachel could not believe that the same person who caused her grandmother’s death had also killed Hans.

However, Janice shook her head. “This is not what I meant. At this point, it’s not important whether he is involved in Hans’ case or not. What’s more important is that Old Mr. Burton has deleted Bucky from the video. Have you thought about what this means?”

Rachel shook her head as well.

Janice explained, “Bucky is actually not an important person among this group of people since he is just a trivial gangster. My guess is that even he is unaware about the context of the transaction. He was merely running errands for them. In their kind of circle, the less information they know, the safer it is for them.”

Rachel still did not understand what Janice wanted to tell her.

Her main reason for returning was Hans’ death. Since Bucky was unrelated to Hans’ death and the mastermind of the incident—that’d be Jefferey—was already behind bars and received the punishment he deserved, she was unbothered with the rest of the matters. What smuggling case is she referring to? I’m just a normal person, so I don’t have the resolution like Janice, who is a public servant. Apart from that, I don’t even have the intention to contribute much to society.

Janice could tell that Rachel was confused, so she patiently explained, “I know that bringing up the older incidents would hurt you again. However, after reflecting on it for the past two days, I figured that you have the right to know the truth.”

“What’s wrong?”

“The mastermind behind your grandmother’s kidnapping is still at large.”

When Rachel heard that, her expression immediately changed. “What did you just say? Hasn’t Bucky already been sentenced to prison?”

“Haven’t you thought about this? Bucky is just a trivial gangster having a hard time to even buy meals for himself. Would he threaten a big shot like Justin Burton and kidnap your grandmother because of Brookville’s bid? He hasn’t even graduated primary school—I’m afraid he doesn’t even know what a bid means.”

So, he’s just a scapegoat.

Nancy’s death that year was a huge blow to Rachel as Rachel was at the darkest period of her life. She was being imprisoned by Justin and had no means to track down the mastermind who orchestrated her grandmother’s kidnapping. When the cops arrested Bucky, she thought that he was the perpetrator.

However, everything she knew in the past was no longer the truth now.

Rachel’s hand suddenly jolted.

While looking at her, Janice hesitantly added, “Rachel, you have the right to decide whether you want to know about this or not. If you don’t want to, I won’t say another word and the matter will end here. After all, we can’t revive the dead no matter what. I guess your grandmother also wants you to move on and have a good life.”

As soon as Rachel recalled Nancy’s smile, her heart started to ache. If she knew about this in her afterlife, I’m sure she wouldn’t want me to investigate this case. After all, six years have already passed. It is meaningless to find out who the mastermind behind the case is now. Be it Grandma or

myself, we are just collateral damages among business battles. No one will remember us. Just because we are just ordinary people, should they sacrifice us?

“Just tell me. I only want the truth.” Rachel’s voice trembled, but she firmly said, “Who was the mastermind who kidnapped my grandma?”

Janice took a deep breath before she slowly exhaled and mentioned a name. "Jason Burton."

Upon hearing that, Rachel remained silent.

The cafe was only a street away from Burton Group.

Rachel left on her own after she met up with Janice. The traffic lights had turned from red to green, yet she continued to stand by the crosswalk. She looked as if she had lost her soul and forgot to cross the road.

Her mind continued to think of what Janice said earlier.

"Six years ago, after your grandmother's kidnapping, the police had actually suspected Jason. However, the case was suddenly intercepted by someone else within 24 hours and the biggest suspect was now Bucky. The motive was changed to a gangster kidnapping for money. All the logical deductions and the business schemes behind the scenes completely disappeared. After Bucky was caught, Old Mr. Burton slowly revoked Jason's responsibilities in the Burton Group and even transferred all of Jason's shares to Justin. Within a year, no one in the Burton Family and the entire business circle in Riverdale ever discussed Jason Burton, as if the man never existed in the family. I'm confident that Bucky is somewhat associated with Jason."

As Rachel recalled Janice's words, she was deep in her thoughts.

"Chris!" A voice rang from the near distance.