

Mute Bride 291

Chapter 291 The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Friend

Startled, Gloria froze. Supporting her weight, Rachel turned back to ask Jolly in exasperation, “Can’t you say something good for once in your life?”

“Well, it’s my first time meeting a piano prodigy! I never knew prodigies were like that—so full of emotion that they would weep the moment they met someone.” Obviously irritated, Jolly had her arms crossed and was rolling her eyes at Gloria as she spoke.

Frowning, Gloria asked, “Who are you?” “Jolly Carter, the heir of Carter Enterprise,” Rachel explained. “And Rachel’s best friend!” Jolly immediately added, emphasizing ‘best’ as she stood with hostility behind Rachel.

At that, Gloria’s frown deepened. “Best?”

Jolly took measure of her, and her expression seemed to say, “What? Do you have a problem with that?”

To her surprise, Gloria didn’t reply to her but instead caught hold of Rachel’s arm. “Let’s have dinner in the evening, Miss Rachel. I haven’t had the local cuisine in a while.”

“Local food? I want some as well!” A young voice said behind the trio as Charlotte rushed up to them. “Mommy, Aunt Gloria, I want to go with you!”

Before Jolly could interject, Rachel was already agreeing amiably as she ruffled Charlotte’s hair.

Infuriated, Jolly caught hold of Samuel, whom she saw strolling in. “Samuel and I want to go as well, Chris. He loves the local cuisine.”

Mystified, Samuel said, “Huh? But I want to have pizza today.”

"Are you sure?" Jolly glared at him.

Grimacing, Samuel corrected, "I mean... I want to have dumplings."

"Let's go, then," Justin's voice echoed over from behind Samuel.

Annoyed to see him, Jolly snapped, "What does it have to do with you? Did we say we were bringing you along?"

"I'm merely welcoming Gloria," he pointed out self-righteously.

Of course, Jolly was enraged to have everyone gang up on her like that.

Suddenly, Gloria shot Justin a look and spoke mildly. "There's no need. Miss Rachel can take me out today; the both of us can meet up some other time."

And just like that, Justin froze, as did Jolly.

What on earth was going on?

"Ria?" Justin asked with a frown.

"Go home, Justin." Gloria left no room for refusal. "There are only women and children here. Why are you coming along?"

Instantly, Justin was disgraced.

Although Jolly greatly disliked Gloria, she was still entertained and gratified to hear the latter speak like that.

After all, Jolly hadn't seen anyone close to Justin speak to him like that in all her time back in Riverdale. Clearly, Gloria was another matter.

As if on purpose, Rachel kept silent and after a long stalemate, Justin finally left with a thunderous expression.

Once they had chased him away, they went to the Eastern Eating House.

Before she took the two children to the restroom, Rachel said, "You can start ordering first."

After a long, awkward silence, Jolly announced haughtily, "Allow me to reintroduce myself. I'm Jolly Carter. Since none of us like Justin and the enemy of my enemy is my friend, we shall be friends from now on. With this drink as a substitute for alcohol, I offer you a toast."

However, Gloria simply raised a hand. "Two bottles of beer, waiter."

Startled, Jolly paused. "I never knew pianists liked to drink."

Right in front of Jolly, Gloria uncapped the beer bottle using her teeth. "Pianists even drink directly from the bottle when making friends."

All of a sudden, Jolly was thrilled.

This was fated!

By the time Rachel returned with the children a short while later, the other two women had already finished a round of beer and were the best of friends.

"Goodness, who ordered the beer?" Rachel asked in disbelief. "I was only gone a short while. Have you both been drugged? Why have you drunk so much?"

“There’s no such thing as drinking too much when you’re with a good friend,” Jolly told her.

Nodding in agreement, Gloria agreed, “New acquaintances are no different from old friends.”

And just like that, Rachel was rendered speechless.

How could she have forgotten that Gloria was a madwoman? Who could believe that the elegantly dressed pianist was the same person as the tomboy drinking directly from the bottle?

Meanwhile, with a straw in between his teeth, Samuel exchanged looks with Charlotte. “Are you sure about your reinforcements?”

By now, Gloria was practically sworn sisters with his godmother. How could Gloria possibly help Justin?

Nevertheless, Charlotte nodded surely.

Her Aunt Gloria was always reliable.

“Well, don’t drink so much.” Rachel poured the two adults a glass of fruit juice each. “Don’t go mad. Gloria still has a performance tomorrow.”

Waving a hand, Gloria disagreed, “It’s fine. I rarely get to drink, anyway.”

“I heard Charlotte say you rarely return to Riverdale,” Rachel started.

“That’s right.”

“That’s a good thing. Why would you come back for this scum?” Jolly pouted disdainfully. “You have the right idea on life, girl! I applaud you!”

Exasperatedly, Rachel interjected, "Ignore her. She has a bad alcohol tolerance—it only takes two glasses for her to become like that."

Gloria chuckled. "She has a good personality."

Although Gloria's tolerance was clearly much better than Jolly's, Rachel felt a sense of unease whenever Gloria spoke calmly. Who knew what she had experienced all these years?

"What happened between you and Justin?" Rachel questioned. "You no longer seem as close as you were before."

Denying the assumption, Gloria said, "I merely don't like him making decisions on others' behalf. After you left five years ago, I argued with him, but that was before his car accident and he's forgotten all of it now."

The slap Justin gave Gloria after she sneaked Rachel away all those years ago because she hadn't wanted to see them torture each other had ruined the mutual affection she held for him.

Even though he later lost his memory due to the car accident, Gloria was no longer willing to bring Rachel up around him and simply left the country to study, only coming back to see Charlotte.

"Why did he argue with you?"

"We didn't simply argue—he hit me." Gloria felt her right cheek as if she could still remember the pain at this moment.

Shocked and in disbelief, Rachel stared at her.

If Justin had any soft spot five years ago, it would have been Gloria. After all, he protected Gloria like a little sister or even a daughter.

"Was it because you let me go?"

“That was part of it, yes. The other part was that he was under the impression that I knew where you went and refused to tell him. He was like a hedgehog at the time, hurting whomever he got his hands on. No one could talk him down, and that was how he got into a car accident on the way to the airport.”

Resting her alcohol-flushed face against her hand, Gloria recounted the events from all those years ago. “At the time, you had just left, so he went through every single person and matter related to you. I think it was on the third day that he got confirmation you left with Julian, so he drove to the airport alone. After that, he got into the car crash and was in the hospital for more than half a year.”

Rachel’s gaze grew troubled when she heard that.

All she had known was that Justin lost his memory from a car accident five years ago. She never knew what actually happened.

Chapter 292 Smart Aunt Gloria

As she spoke, Gloria studied Rachel’s expression. “At that time, doctors said it was highly likely that he would fall into a vegetative state where he would never wake up.”

“Does that mean you took care of Charlotte before he regained consciousness?” Rachel asked. “Huh?” Gloria paused for a moment before nodding. “Yeah.”

“In that case, thank you so much.” Rachel took her hand. “It’s arduous to take care of a newborn and if it weren’t for you, Charlotte might not have been able to survive.”

“There’s no need to be this courteous with me, Rachel. Charlotte is my niece, so how could I have neglected her?”

“I still wish to thank you, so this glass is for you.” Without saying anything else, Rachel snagged Jolly’s glass and gulped it at one go.

Now that Jolly was startled awake, she mumbled blearily, “Drink! Drink!”

However, as she was unable to stop Rachel in time, Gloria could only watch on and frowned as Rachel finished drinking from the glass. Weren't we talking about Charlotte? How did the topic change?

"You were doing fine abroad, Rachel. Why did you suddenly come back?"

"You must have heard about what happened to the Hudson Family."

"A little bit."

"One of the reasons is that we've finally sought revenge for Hans. Another cause is that I'm worried about leaving Charlotte here alone."

Rachel had never once brought up Justin throughout her speech.

"Well, Justin has taken care of her quite well all these years," Gloria pointed out. "Although I don't talk to him a lot, his personality has changed a bit since he lost his memory. You must have noticed it as well."

As she declined to answer, Rachel instead poured Jolly a glass of water, exhorting her to have a drink of it before sleeping.

After a moment of hesitation, Gloria decided that Rachel still had a cold attitude toward Justin and swallowed the words that she wanted to say.

It was fine since they still had time.

Meanwhile, in the restaurant's children's play area, Charlotte went down the slide and into the ball pit. She was clearly thrilled to see Gloria return.

At this point, Samuel looked up from his tablet game to glance at her. "Are you sure Aunt Gloria's return will do any good? She doesn't seem very close to Justin either."

“You don’t know it, but she has her own reasons for doing so.”

“What are those reasons?”

“I don’t know yet,” a confident Charlotte announced.

“How are you so sure, then?”

“Because she’s Aunt Gloria. My smartest Aunt Gloria. She was the one who told me how to deal with Amber so that Amber wouldn’t marry Daddy.”

Any mention of Gloria was accompanied by a starry-eyed look of worship from Charlotte.

Samuel thoughtfully paused. Did that mean Gloria was intentionally pretending to act cold toward Justin?

Gloria and Rachel dined together that evening until it was very late.

By the time Rachel returned home with the two children, the streetlamps in the neighborhood were already lit.

“Thank you,” she soberly thanked the cab driver before leading one child in each hand to head home.

The moment she opened the door, a figure blocked the entrance. “Why are you back so late?” it asked in a low voice.

A confused Rachel looked up through the haze of alcohol at the cold, imposing figure shrouded in shadow. “Who are you?”

The strong smell of alcohol made Justin frown. "How much have you had?"

It was obvious that she drank quite a bit. What she had used to send the cab driver away was merely the last bit of her sanity and sobriety, and now that she was home, the alcohol was rushing to her head and making her somewhat uncontrollable.

After tilting her face to stare at Justin for a while, Rachel suddenly reached out to pinch his cheeks. "I asked a question. Who. Are. You?"

Despite him wanting to push her hand away, she helplessly clung to him like sticky candy.

Perhaps because it was all too comical, but the sound of children muffling their laughter with their hands echoed next to him.

Justin immediately caught hold of Rachel's wrists and instructed with a stern face, "Charlotte, Samuel, wash up and head to bed first."

"Take good care of Mommy then!" Charlotte chirped.

Although Samuel looked like he wanted to say something, she had dragged him along with her.

An annoyed Justin chastised, "You were out with the kids. How could you drink so much?"

"Are you lecturing me?" Rachel braced her hands against his shoulders and repeated impatiently, "You're lecturing me!"

So, he could only change tactics. "Call me next time. I'll go and pick you up."

As she waved him away, she stumbled toward her room. "There's no need. We took a cab!"

"Slow down!" Afraid that Rachel would fall, Justin attempted to catch her.

However, he had only just caught her when she shoved him aside and rushed into the bathroom with a hand over her mouth.

“Blaargh—” Unable to stop her stomach from churning, she hugged the toilet bowl and began to puke like there was no tomorrow.

Upon sprinting after her and being greeted by the ghastly sight, Justin immediately turned and went to grab a glass of warm water for her instead. Kneeling next to her, he told her, “Come, take a sip. Rinse your mouth and spit it out.”

Surprisingly, Rachel did as she was told to. She was so obedient and well-behaved that he practically felt bad for her.

“I know you’re drunk, but do you remember whether the other two arrived home safely?”

“Yes,” she muttered with her eyes shut. “Gloria said she would stay at a hotel instead of coming back. Why did you hit her?”

“Who did I hit?”

“Are you still not admitting it?” Rachel suddenly threw an arm around his neck with so much force that she haplessly dragged him down to the floor with her. “What did my departure have to do with her? You shouldn’t have hit her!”

Thinking that she was speaking in her drunken state, Justin responded, “No, I shouldn’t have.”

“You must apologize to Gloria now.”

“Now?! Can I do that tomorrow instead?”

“Now.”

Since Rachel refused to budge and Justin couldn't convince her, he agreed, "Alright, I'll apologize to her now, but let me send you back to your room first." With that, he carried her to her bedroom.

As he stared at her flushed face after tucking her under the covers, he suddenly felt drawn to her.

Yet, right as he was about to lean in, Rachel suddenly turned over and rolled on the bed for a second before wrapping herself up like a cocoon with her back facing him. Then, she fell asleep.

When he saw that, Justin gave up.

However, before he exited, he adjusted the temperature of the air conditioner and made sure that all of the curtains were drawn, thereafter leaving the room and closing the door after him.

As he did so, he heard the sound of a vibrating cell phone in the bathroom.

Following the sound, Justin discovered that Rachel had left her phone next to the toilet bowl at some point. It was still vibrating with an unmarked number flashing on the screen.

As he bent down to pick up the phone, he frowned once he could properly read the number.

He always had a good memory and knew the number belonged to his uncle, Jason.

Why was Jason calling Rachel at this hour?

As Justin thought about it, the ringing automatically ended before a notification popped up not long after that. It was a short message: 'I've contacted them. Everything is ready. Waiting for your goods.'

And just like that, his hand tightened. Is Rachel working with my uncle?

Chapter 293 A Collaboration With Someone Using Unconventional Methods

Rachel had a terrible headache when she woke up the next morning. After her morning routine, she went downstairs and saw Justin having breakfast in the dining room.

"Are Charlotte and Samuel awake yet?" Justin hummed in response as he pushed the phone on the table toward her. "You left your phone in the living room last night."

"Thanks. I was looking for it." As she was checking her notifications, she pulled the chair back to take a seat. She seemed to have seen something that caused her brows to frown. After sipping her coffee, she rose to her feet and added, "I have something to attend to. I shall head off first."

"Where are you going?" he questioned, his cold voice echoing in the spacious room.

"To the office."

"You aren't going to see Jason, are you?"

Rachel turned to face him. "Did you check my phone?"

"I saw it by accident. Why are you in touch with Jason? What are you going to do?"

"This only involves me and Hudson Pharmaceuticals. I don't think that I need to report to you about this?"

"Rachel!" Justin rose to his full height with a stern look. "I believe that you know what Jason is up to without me having to remind you. Are you going to lead Hudson Pharmaceuticals into taking the crooked path once again?"

"The crooked path?" She furrowed her brows. "As far as I'm concerned, Jason's men have been the one to ensure that many matters of the Burton Group smoothly proceed. Since the Burton Group can use them, why can't I?"

"It's not the same."

"How so? You walk in integrity if you use it, but I'm taking the crooked path if I do the same?" Rachel's rebuttal had rendered him speechless.

Not wanting to make things tense between them, she half-heartedly explained, "Don't worry, Hudson Pharmaceuticals is currently in a difficult position, so we need to use some unconventional method to ease the situation. I won't go beyond the principles."

"Rae, let me help you."

"No need. I prefer to depend on myself." With that, Rachel turned on her heels and left.

Judging from Justin's attitude, he seemed to have known what Jason did in secret. Otherwise, he wouldn't have given such a huge reaction.

Without wasting any more time for further consideration, she gave Jason a call once she had left the house. "Mr. Burton, I'm sorry for not answering your call last night, but I saw your message. The goods are ready. From your message, you seemed to agree to collaborate with me?"

"Of course. To show my sincerity, let's have a meal together where I'll introduce you to a few friends."

"No problem."

"I'll send you the exact time and location later."

"Sure."

"Remember to bring the drug formula along with you."

“Of course.”

Rachel hung up the call and tightly clenched on the steering wheel.

According to the address given in the evening, she drove all the way to a small private restaurant in Riverdale.

The building that featured an architectural style from the 20th century seemed rather historical while the surrounding shady trees formed shadows that danced under the street lights.

Rachel remembered that Janice had once said that this sort of place, where there were many obstructions, would make catching criminals extremely difficult. If they weren't careful enough, the suspect could easily climb the trees or over the walls to escape.

While Rachel followed the waiter who led her to the table, she intentionally and casually posed a question. “Does Mr. Burton come here often?”

The waiter, who seemed to know the unspoken rules well, flashed a smile at her. “I'm new, so I'm not very sure.”

Judging from the way he was able to handle the question with such ease, he didn't seem like a new staff member, but his reaction had given Rachel a rough idea of the situation.

“Mr. Burton, Miss Hudson is here.” The waiter knocked on the door and mentioned, to which Jason's voice came from the private room. “Come in.”

The door of the ancient building swung open and the door hinge creaked from the friction. Rachel stepped over the threshold on her high-heels onto the carpeted floor. Jason and his assistant were seen in the private room, as well as two bodyguards, one standing at the window the other at the door.

Jason nodded at her and made pleasantries. “I reckon it wasn't easy for you to locate the place. Thank you for your patience.”

“It’s fine, although it was a bit difficult. Mr. Burton, how did you know about this place?”

“A friend had recommended this place to me.”

She thoughtfully surveyed the surroundings. “Is this person the friend who is coming? Has he arrived?”

“What’s the rush? We’ve just finalized our collaboration and haven’t even established complete trust between us. Ms. Hudson, perhaps you should show your sincerity?”

Jason’s gaze landed on Rachel’s side where her purse was since that was the only thing which she carried with her.

Before Rachel had managed to react, a swift bodyguard snatched her purse and emptied its contents onto the table in front of Jason.

Thud! All her belongings—cosmetics, car keys and a phone—fell on the table, and lastly, her empty bag.

“Where’s the drug formula?”

Rachel seemed unfazed by the situation, as though she had expected this. Calmly, she replied, “Mr. Burton, what’s all this? Are you planning to scam me?”

“Ms. Hudson, you are surely a bright person. You didn’t bring anything with you.”

“Of course I brought it. I’ve said that I’ll show you my sincerity and I will never eat my words.” She touched her temple and added, “The drug formula is in my head. If you use this sort of rough method, I’m afraid that things may not go according to your wish.”

Jason’s expression fell.

Without beating around the bush, she straightened her posture and continued, "Mr. Burton, I know that you have been dissatisfied with me because of the incident that involved President Gunson. However, if you continue to push my bottomline like this, I'm afraid that our collaboration may be delayed until God knows when and nobody will benefit from it."

After saying that, she took out a list. "This is the latest batch of medicines made by the factories of Hudson Pharmaceuticals and you only need to give me 10 percent of the price stated here. You are free to decide who you want to sell them to and at what price."

Jason's eyes brightened, especially when he saw the quantity of the medicine on the list. "So much?"

Rachel sipped her tea and asked, "What's wrong? Is it difficult for you?"

"Let me think for a moment." Arthur had long been dissatisfied with Jason and as a middleman, Jason had no proper business in his hands as his income came from his connections. Although he seemed successful on the surface, in fact, he didn't earn much. Hence, it was apparent that this batch of goods was rather tempting to him.

It was the reason why Rachel was certain that he would accept her condition.

Sure enough, after some consideration, he took the list. "According to the rules, I'll transfer 30% of the amount as deposit to your account while the rest will be transferred once the transaction is completed and the goods have been safely received."

"No problem."

She glanced at her watch. "Alright, may I take my leave now? From the looks of it, there won't be any friends coming over today, right?"

Jason stood up. "Don't blame me for being distrustful. It doesn't hurt to be extra careful when I'm in this line."

"It's understandable."

“Speaking of which, Ms. Hudson, I heard that you are quite close with Officer Hawkins from the Riverdale Investigation Bureau.”

Rachel remained impassive. “What’s the matter? Do you need her to pull some strings? She’s an impartial person, so I’m afraid that it won’t work.”

Chapter 294 Dishonest

Jason’s expression greatly eased. “Is that so? Forget about it, then.” Rachel nodded before she took her bag and left the scene. After she left, he walked to the window and drew the curtain. He watched as she exited the old building and headed toward the car park before he closed the curtain.

“Master Jason, can this woman be trusted?” “Nobody is really trustworthy. We can work together as long as there are benefits.”

Jason glanced at the list. “The Hudson Pharmaceuticals is facing a dire situation, so they must be having a large backlog of their inventory. If she intends to revive the Hudson Pharmaceuticals, she needs a huge working capital to fill that bottomless pit. As for her relationship with Janice, we will have someone keep an eye on that.”

Meanwhile, Rachel drove her car onto the main road that headed toward the city before pressing on her right ear stud, which was an exquisitely designed communication device.

“Hello?” Janice’s voice was heard from the other end. “It seems like Jason is still wary of you.”

“He will take the risk when there’s benefit involved.”

“He is rather concerned about our relationship, so this is something I’m afraid that we have to mull over.”

“I already have an idea.” Rachel held the steering wheel with a calm gaze. “Bucky is going to be released from prison soon, isn’t it?”

On the other end of the call, Janice's heart skipped a beat when she heard that. "What are you going to do?"

"I have to question him about my grandma's matter."

"Don't do anything rash."

"I know what I'm doing."

Looking at the traffic light in front, she touched her ear. "I'm almost home. I'm hanging up."

She ended the call, after which the car returned to silence.

As soon as she arrived home, Charlotte pounced onto her. "Mommy, Aunt Gloria said that she will bring us to the water theme park tomorrow!"

Rachel caressed her head. "Aunt Gloria told you that?"

"Yes, she is not working tomorrow, so she said that she will bring Samuel and me there! Mommy, you should come with us too!"

"Sure." Rachel carried her up and took her into the room. "Aunt Gloria won't be able to look after the two of you by herself." As Justin was nowhere to be seen, she asked, "Where's your daddy?"

Charlotte shook her head. "He hasn't returned."

Rachel nodded.

She thought that it was for the best if they didn't meet each other. As of late, she and Justin were arguing with each other, which led to a rather awkward and uncomfortable interaction.

The next day at noon, she brought the two children to the Water World.

As it was currently near the end of summer, the sun was not as scorchy as before; the weather felt cozy, in fact.

They encountered a problem when they were about to enter the changing room.

"Boys below six can only enter with the company of a male adult." The strict employee at the door stopped Samuel from entering the changing room.

Rachel explained, "My kid can change his clothes by himself, so you only need to give him an entry pass."

"No, I can't bear the responsibility if there's any kidnapping involved."

His explanation rendered her speechless.

When they were in a stalemate, a male voice came from behind. "I'll take him in."

Rachel was stunned at first. Then, she looked back and saw a familiar figure. "Why are you here?"

Justin was dressed in white casual top and shorts. Under the sunlight, his intimidating presence seemed to have become much gentler. "Is this the wrong time for me to show up?" He raised an eyebrow as he carried Samuel up and entered the changing room.

Rachel cast a glance at Charlotte beside her, who scratched her head and giggled in response. "I also thought that it would be tough for you to look after the two of us. Having a man with us will ease your burden!"

Rachel flicked her nose and helplessly uttered, "You little mischief!"

After they changed their attire, they found Gloria by the beach.

Before they managed to say anything, a strong wave pounded on the shore and splashed water in all directions. At that moment, a white figure emerged from the water and caused those around them to scream.

"Hernandez?" Rachel, who had water splashed all over her, broke into a smile when she recognized the person who emerged from the water. "Why are you here?"

"Surprise!" With a broad grin that revealed his teeth, Hernandez sprang out of the water and gave Rachel a bear hug.

"Let go of my mommy!" Charlotte pounced out from behind and aimed her water gun at Hernandez. "Curly Weirdo! Let's defeat the Curly Weirdo!"

Hernandez had no choice but to release Rachel and ran in rounds with Charlotte chasing after him from behind.

"What are you two doing? Stop messing around. You are giving me a headache." Rachel was caught up in the center of the 'fight'. The water from the water gun that landed on her by mistake as well as the two figures, one large and the other small, running in circles around her made her dizzy, although it had amused her at the same time.

Justin, who was standing at one side, wore a dark expression. He stopped Hernandez and questioned, "How did you know that we are here?"

Hernandez avoided Charlotte's water shots with a smug look on his face. "Why wouldn't I know?"

Justin attempted to seek for Samuel, but the kid had long jumped into the water and disappeared from their sights. Without giving it any thought, he knew that it was Samuel who betrayed him again.

"I didn't come alone, though," Hernandez elaborated before he whistled.

Justin looked behind the man. Jolly, who looked as though she was on a vacation to Hawaii with a wide brimmed hat and red polkadot swimwear, elegantly walked in their direction. Julian and Victor were beside her with beaming faces.

Great, everyone's here.

Victor was the happiest one as he jogged toward them while waving at Rachel. "Rachel!"

Rachel was surprised. "Why are you guys here?"

Jolly adjusted her hat and replied with a smirk, "We are free. What's wrong? You don't want to see us?"

As she spoke, she darted a look at Gloria. "Someone here wasn't being honest. That's an underhanded action that you have pulled off. I thought that I met a true friend, but it turns out that I had nearly invited a wolf into the house."

A guilty Gloria simpered awkwardly.

She had to admit that today's outing was actually a plan to set Rachel and Justin up, but never expected that there was a traitor among them who had invited everyone here.

Victor coldly snorted, "It's never easy to change one's true nature. Our so-called Piano Prodigy has always been like this."

Upon hearing that, Gloria, who had been suppressing her temper, was pissed. "Who are you exactly?"

He rolled his eyes at her and mocked, "Oh, my, our Piano Prodigy doesn't recognize an insignificant peasant like me now."

With her brows tightly knitted, she appraised him from head to toe but still couldn't recognize him.

Rachel couldn't bear to watch on and chimed in, "Ria, he's Victor."

"Victor?" Gloria was so stunned by the answer that she stared at Victor for a while. "Silly kid, did you have plastic surgery?"

"What plastic surgery?"

"Where's your blond hair?" she asked, reaching out with her hand to tug his hair. "Is this a wig?"

"Hey, we can talk, but don't touch me!" Victor shrank backward to avoid her hand.

Chapter 295 You Are Not Only Charlotte's Mother

"You really are Victor!" Gloria suddenly became so excited that she went after him to touch his hair. "Hey, why are you behaving differently now from when you were on stage?"

"Victor, stand right there! Let me see your hair!" "What? This is my real hair. Don't pull it!" Then, he continued to roar, Gloria! Gloria Hochmann! I'll be mad if you continue to pull my hair!"

The two of them had run far off. Jolly removed her sunglasses and asked Rachel a question while the corner of her lips twitched. "Are we going to just let them be? Are we going to turn a blind eye when our Piano Prodigy pulls on a teacher's hair like a crazy woman?"

Rachel smiled and nodded. "They have always acted like this."

Hernandez snatched Charlotte's water gun from behind and spritzed water at them with Charlotte hot on his tail. "Are you guys just going to stand around? Let's play!"

Jolly, who was wet because of him, screamed at him, “Hernandez, are you out of your mind? Can’t you aim properly and shoot in that direction?”

“Not a problem. Everyone will have a fair share of it!”

The next second, he squirted water at Justin’s face. Justin’s expression had already been gloomy earlier, but it now seemed thunderous when he had water dripping from his hair.

“Come on!” Hernandez hopped around like a grasshopper, provoking Justin with his words. “Why are you still standing there? Come after me!”

An irritated Justin wiped the water off his face and furiously charged at Hernandez, who immediately ran off without forgetting to spritz water at Justin again. Hernandez fled because he knew that he was

no match for Justin after being in an unfavorable situation once.

As he ran, he squirted water at everyone on the way.

Jolly, Rachel and Victor were not spared; their faces were all dripping wet because of that.

“Hernandez!!!!” Jolly, who could no longer hold back her anger, adjusted her hat and went after Hernandez to land her blow on him.

“Curly Weirdo! Return the water gun to me!” Charlotte chased after him as well.

“Charlotte!” Rachel, who was afraid that Charlotte would be injured, went after the group.

On the other hand, Victor had somehow joined in as well and just like that, the group of people were in a game of tag.

Gathering could always allow people to temporarily forget their usual positions and disputes and focus on what was currently happening. All of them were relaxed as they indulged in the current excitement.

At the high-altitude semi-enclosed slide of the Water World, rows of people were being pushed down from the platform. The screams of the people echoed in the air along with the sound of water splashing.

"No, I can't do this..." Gloria kept on stepping backward. "I can't. I really can't."

As it was a rare sight to see Gloria actually afraid of something, Victor grabbed her hand without giving her any chance to reject. "There's nothing to be afraid of. I'll go with you."

"I can't! I really can't!"

"Let's go!"

With that, he pushed her onto the inflatable tube while she screamed at the top of her lungs, "Ah! I can't do this! Let me get off!"

"Let's go! Here we go!"

He pressed on her shoulder and waved at the employee. The next second, the inflatable tube was pushed down the slide.

"Ah!!!! Victor Wade, I'm going to kill you!"

Gloria's tragic cries made Rachel take a few steps back. "I'll skip this since it's a little too high. You guys can go ahead."

"What's there to be afraid of? I'll go down with you." Hernandez held her hand. "Don't be scared."

Before Rachel even managed to reject his offer, Justin pressed his hand on Hernandez and warned with his cold gaze. "She has already said that she doesn't want to play, so let go of her."

"Release your grip first!" Hernandez hissed and inhaled sharply. "Let go of me!"

Justin was unfazed by him.

"What are they doing?"

"Are they acting out a scene from a Korean drama?"

As there was a long line behind them, their quarrel made Rachel feel so embarrassed that she wished that the earth would swallow her up. She struggled and broke free of the two men and declared, "You two can enjoy yourselves!"

Then, she covered her face and walked to the side. This is so embarrassing.

Only then did Justin release Hernandez and glared at him before turning to chase after Rachel.

She exhaled in relief after she got off the tower and stepped her foot on the beach.

"Look out!" A sudden force on her arm pulled her back, which allowed her to barely avoid a volleyball that flew past her ear. The ball had been thrown from the beach.

As he had his hand placed on her waist, Justin mumbled in a cold and firm voice, "Are you alright?"

His voice had stunned Rachel. At that moment, they were so close to each other that when she raised her head, her nose nearly whacked his chin. It felt as though the man's breath landed on her forehead. Amidst the gentle sea breeze, his presence made her heart skip a beat.

The person, who ran over to grab the ball, apologized, "I'm sorry. I didn't notice that you guys were here."

It was only at that moment when Rachel returned to her senses and pushed Justin away in a fluster. "Thank you, I'm fine."

Justin nodded. "Let's go then. Samuel and the others should be over there."

"Okay."

The two of them walked along the beach shoulder to shoulder to a less crowded place to search for Samuel and the others.

As it was currently near the end of summer break, there were many children in the theme park, making the entire beach packed like sardines. They couldn't even stand next to each other without their skin touching the other person if they didn't leave the crowded area.

"I wasn't at my best yesterday. I'm sorry."

"No worries. I know that you meant well."

"Jason has always been extreme in the way he does things. Five years ago, when he left the Burton Group, he started to be involved in gray area businesses. He even went all out in forming gangs."

Rachel slightly frowned as she pretended to be unaware of this. "Why are you telling me this?"

He replied, "I wanted to tell you that Jason won't be a good business partner. He does things unscrupulously and uses underhanded means. You will get involved in his schemes if you are not careful enough. It won't benefit you whatsoever."

"Don't tell me that you never used all these underhanded means when you were doing business."

“That’s another story. The Burton Group is a large company and I’m his nephew. No matter how ruthless his methods are, he won’t betray the Burton Group for the sake of the family. However, it’ll be a different case for you; he even thought of killing you before this.”

“There’s no enemy that lasts forever. Everyone can become friends when there’s a benefit.”

“You have made up your mind to work with him, haven’t you?”

“Yes.” Rachel’s reply was simple, yet it reflected her adamant attitude.

With a deep frown between his brows, Justin remained quiet for a moment before he acknowledged, “If you have made up your mind to work with Jason, I hope that you can inform me whenever you are going to collaborate with him. This is to ensure your safety.”

She was stunned by his words. “Inform you?”

“I can at least help you to gauge the chances of Jason doing something fishy in the business so that you can reduce the risk.”

“Why are you helping me to this extent? He’s still your uncle.”

Justin suddenly paused in his tracks; a complex expression apparent on his cold face under the bright sun.

“What’s wrong?” Rachel turned to him.

“You are the person whom I love.”

She was shocked.

“You are not only Charlotte’s mother but also my lover. I will take responsibility for your safety.”

Amidst the sound of the waves and people, Rachel was certain that she didn't hear him wrong. The man before her had looked into her eyes when he said those words—it was a sincere confession of love.

Seeing that she was as still as a statue, Justin held her hand. "Rae."

Chapter 296 Their Only Photo Together

Rachel suddenly took a step back while furrowing her brows. Even though the obvious resistance in her eyes had quickly flickered away, Justin was able to capture it. "I'll pretend that I didn't hear what you said earlier." After that, she turned around and walked off.

He was left dumbfounded for a few seconds before he suddenly caught up to her with annoyance and blocked her path. "I've always wanted to ask you what you think of our relationship. You are Charlotte's mother, and you live in the same house as me. Doesn't that make us lovers?"

"No," Rachel answered firmly. "I'm glad that you know I'm Charlotte's mother. After Jefferey was imprisoned, I said that I wanted to move out, but I decided to stay in the end. Have you forgotten why?"

Justin was slightly infuriated. "I thought it was because you were angry at me."

"I'm sorry, but I don't have the time to play these childish games with you."

"Aren't you angry at me now?"

Looking at the raging man in front of her, she felt that she needed to draw a line between them.

"To me, you're just my ex-husband in a legal sense and Charlotte's father. If you really want to know what our relationship is, I want us to be business partners. We are just friends."

Friends? Justin gritted his teeth. "Same as Hernandez and the others?"

A frowning Rachel reluctantly nodded her head.

She hated to admit that to her, Hernandez and Julian were friends that felt like family whereas Justin wasn't even close.

However, she didn't wish to be too harsh on him since it wouldn't benefit her future plans if they had a fallout.

"What if I don't want to be your friend?"

"Then, I'll just move out of the house?"

"You..."

"Charlotte and I have talked about it before. We can take turns taking care of her every week. No one will be at a loss. What do you think?"

"Who says that I'm not at a loss?"

"Then, what do you suggest?" Rachel calmly crossed her arms.

After holding back his anger, Justin gritted his teeth and responded, "Who said that you can move out? If you want to be friends, then we'll just be friends."

I need to look at the bigger picture and endure this for the moment. I don't believe that I can't break through her icy heart.

Then, a familiar sound of cheering was heard in the distance.

Gloria and Jolly were now competing to see who could hold their breath the longest with Victor as the judge. There were also a bunch of onlookers around them.

“2 minutes... 2 minutes and 15 seconds...”

Finally, Jolly could no longer hold her breath, so she emerged from under the water. “This doesn’t count. We choose the best out of three rounds.”

Gloria raised her brow and clarified, “Even if we play 30 rounds, you still won’t beat me. It’s best if you just give up now.”

“She learns music, so her lung capacity must be larger than any normal person. You’ve miscalculated,” Victor murmured to Jolly after suddenly realizing this loophole.

However, she was still dissatisfied with the result as she pushed the sunglasses to the top of her head. “No, let’s play one more round.”

“You still won’t give up? Fine, let’s have one more round then!” Gloria didn’t panic at all since she was full of confidence. “However, if I win this time, you have to promise me that you won’t bring anyone to mess with me whenever I start a game.”

“Alright. It’s a deal.”

When Jolly winked at Victor, he nodded his head in agreement.

After he let out a scream, Gloria and Jolly quickly pinched their noses and sank into the water. Then, Victor took down the rubber crab toy hanging around his neck and sneakily reached into the water to approach Gloria’s calf.

Pfft!

Gloria immediately lifted her head in panic.

Meanwhile, Jolly calmly wiped her face and announced, "It's a draw!"

Gloria wasn't stupid enough not to have noticed the rubber crab toy in the water, so she pointed at Victor and shouted, "You cheated. Both of you cheated!"

He hid behind Jolly and made a funny face at Gloria. "Hehe, you didn't say that we are not allowed to cheat! It's a draw anyway!"

An angry Gloria then jumped. "There's still one more round!"

"I'm not playing anymore. Let's go and play something else."

"Hey, don't run away!"

In the meantime, Rachel and Justin saw Julian piling sand with the two children on shore.

She asked, "What are those three doing again?"

Julian smiled. "They are just playing around."

"Mommy, come and help me build a castle!"

When Charlotte saw Rachel, she quickly pulled Rachel aside.

When Julian saw Justin behind her, his eyes darkened a little. "Justin, why do you look like you are clinging onto something?"

Justin had just suffered defeat from Rachel and was now enraged, so after listening to his sarcastic words, it was enough to make Justin infuriated. "What about you? I didn't see you achieving any success

when you were alone with her abroad for so many years. Not only that, you even let the Curly Weirdo approach her.”

“A curly weirdo?” Julian chuckled. “Did you learn that word from Charlotte? How old are you?”

When did he become this childish?

“Just mind your own business!” Justin glared at him.

Listening to their squabbling, Samuel breathed a thoughtful sigh. Even though he was playing with the sand, his face radiated a sense of calmness that exceeded his peers. “You two are the same, so quit the squabbling!”

Julian was happy to hear his words, so he moved closer and asked seriously, “Samuel, out of the men present here today, who do you think has a better chance of winning your mommy’s heart?”

Samuel looked around with his huge eyes before unfolding his hands. “None of you.”

“If you have to choose one, though?”

“If I have to choose one, that’ll be him.” Samuel pointed his chubby finger at Justin.

At first, Julian thought he had a good chance of winning, but when he saw the direction that Samuel was pointing at, the smile on his face instantly froze. “Why him?”

“I saw his photo in mommy’s notebook before.” Both Julian and Justin were startled. “It was a wedding photo. After staring at it, Mommy cried and threw it in the trash can, but she picked it up afterward.”

Therefore, Justin subconsciously looked into the distance and quickly found Rachel’s extremely skinny back. Her swimsuit had revealed her butterfly-like silhouette as she built a sandcastle with Charlotte.

Some time ago, he searched every corner of the house, but he still couldn't locate the photo he had taken with her. After asking Frankie, he retrieved a photo from their previous wedding certificate.

They were both wearing white shirts in front of a red background in the photo, but it was unsurprising that it was the only photo that they shared together. If Rachel had never loved me before, why would she take that photo with her when she left?

Suddenly, a slimmer of hope was suddenly ignited inside his heart and it gradually grew into a huge flame.

"Thank you, kid!"

Justin suddenly pinched Samuel's cheek before walking toward Rachel and Charlotte in the distance.

Chapter 297 Quarrelsome Lovers

"Mommy, I want to build a huge castle so that you, Daddy, and Samuel can all fit inside." Charlotte was a talkative kid, so she kept on mumbling while piling the sand. Meanwhile, Rachel was helping her. "Do you need my help?" Justin's voice was heard from behind.

She was startled for a moment before turning to see him smiling brightly at her. This man really changes his mood frequently. A while ago, he looked as though he was about to explode in anger, but now, he is looking cheerful again. I don't know whether his heart or brain has a problem.

However, she wasn't in the mood to think about it, so she allowed Charlotte to pull him over to sit down.

"Daddy, you can help me to build a garden in front of the castle. I want a fountain with a mermaid on top."

While holding a shovel, Justin didn't know where to start. "This is a huge project. Should I ask someone from the engineering department?"

“Why don’t you just bring your entire company here to build a sand castle?” Rachel rolled her eyes at him.

He was at a loss upon listening to her. Who can make fountains and mermaid sculptures with their bare hands?

“There are molds in the bucket next to you,” a speechless Rachel simply said. How high of an IQ or skill do you need to play with a kid on the beach? That is why companies develop these tools to help. “By the looks of it, I can see that you rarely hang out with Charlotte.”

“I always accompany her.”

“I said that you rarely hang out with her. The main point is hanging out.” She made every word clear to him. “Keeping someone company and hanging out are two different things. In your eyes, does bringing Charlotte to your office so that she could play by herself counts as ‘hanging out’?”

Justin was rendered speechless because she was telling the truth.

However, she didn’t bother to pay attention to him any longer.

A while later, Justin took a mold from the bucket and asked shyly, “I should be using this, right? Is this how you use it?”

Seeing how clumsy he looked, Rachel couldn’t help but move over to give him a demonstration. “This is how you use it.”

“Really?”

In the meantime, not far away on the beach, Samuel was sucking on his lollipop as he lamented, “It seems like dumb people have their advantages. He has actually mastered the art of playing dumb!”

“It’s useless. Your mommy definitely won’t be with him,” Julian uttered with a calm face.

“Why?”

“He isn’t being himself at the moment.”

Samuel looked bewildered because Julian was the only person who knew Justin well since those two adults had grown up together. Julian knew that the personality Justin had before and after losing his memory was completely different.

Meanwhile, Gloria and Victor formed two groups with Jolly and Hernandez as they played all kinds of exciting games while screaming.

“Damn you, Victor. If you dare to push me down, I’ll kill you!”

“Get down now! We are losing!” Victor pulled Gloria down the slide immediately afterward.

At the same time on the other slide, the two extreme sports lovers had already reached the end.

On the way down, she continued to scream before drinking a mouthful of water when she fell into the water. The moment she rose from the water, she grabbed his head and pressed him into the water. “I’ll kill you!”

He struggled at first when she pressed his head down, but he suddenly stopped moving after a while.

Gloria furrowed her brows. “Stop pretending to be dead. I won’t believe it!” Even so, she released him. “Let’s see how long you can last.”

She crossed her arms and waited for him to catch his breath.

However, 5 minutes had passed and Victor was still motionless. His arms and body were floating in the water, as if he was a floating corpse with his face down.

Her expression slowly changed as she shouted, "Hey, Victor!"

Then, Gloria grabbed his arm. "Please don't scare me!"

Splash!

Suddenly, the water splashed on her face, which scared her and she instinctively covered her face.

Victor laughed aloud. "Do you really think you are the only one good at swimming? You grew up next to the sea, but I grew up next to a river! I can still hold my breath for another 5 minutes with ease! Haha, I got you!"

"Victor!" Gloria wiped her face to reveal a gloomy expression. "You want to die, right? Then, I'll fulfill your wish!"

"Ouch, let go of me!"

Not long after, he was begging for mercy while he was being beaten up.

In the meantime, Jolly and Hernandez were looking at them from afar. While leaning on the inflatable boat, an emotional Jolly sighed. "Hernandez, why do I feel that we are the clowns here? It feels like we have lost even though we've won."

A confused Hernandez asked, "What do you mean?"

"Can't you see those two quarrelsome lovers?!" Jolly lifted her chin at Gloria and Victor. "I don't want to play anymore. It's so sunny, so I need to wear some sunscreen."

"Then, I'll look for Chris!"

He whistled and jumped into the water before swimming toward Rachel and the others.

Soon, it was nighttime, but the beach was still as lively as ever.

Hernandez had rented a private barbeque spot and watched the atmosphere ignite while the crowd jumped around in the water.

“Chris, the chicken wings are ready. This will taste especially good because I added the honey that you like.”

Rachel received the plate. “Thank you.”

However, before she could grab it, Charlotte, who was next to her, picked up the chicken wing and responded, “I also like to eat my chicken wings with honey. Thank you, Curly Weirdo.”

“Charlotte, you should call him Mr. Hernandez.”

“I won’t.” She shook her head. “What’s wrong with calling him a Curly Weirdo?”

After that, she ran off with the chicken wings.

Rachel could only apologize to Hernandez. “I’m sorry, I still need to work on her temperament.”

“It’s fine. Do you really think I would argue with a child? She is so adorable.” He looked at her with a wide smile to reveal his white teeth. “Just like you.”

She nodded and intentionally teased, “I admit that I’m adorable, but this wasn’t what you said when we first met.”

When she brought up the past, Hernandez scratched his head awkwardly and said, “I’ll go and grill another chicken wing for you.”

Seeing him running away in an embarrassed manner, Rachel smiled.

At the same time, Justin came over with his grilled food and asked, "What's so funny about your first meeting with him?"

After a day of relaxation, she was in a good mood, so she had lowered her guard. She received the grilled fish from him and explained with a smile, "I first met him at a bar. At that time, he bought Jolly a drink, but she thought that he was a hooligan, so she splashed the drink on his face."

"He looks quite like one." Rachel gave him a look, so Justin shrugged his shoulders and added, "Alright, I won't criticize him. Please continue."

"The next day, I went to SG Conglomerate to apply for a job as an assistant. Surprisingly, he was my interviewer and a strict one indeed, but he passed me so that he could get back at me. After that, I suffered a lot from him for almost a year."

Thinking about that year, she felt as though the workplace was a hellish torture.

However, she also thanked him for that year. Because of how harsh Hernandez had been, she was able to massively improve her speaking skills and learn French all by herself. She quickly became independent a year later from being a rookie who didn't know anything at the beginning.

Chapter 298 How She Gained a Sense of Security

"I'm sorry." Justin suddenly apologized to Rachel, which startled her. "Why are you apologizing to me?" "If I was by your side at that time—"

"It's useless." She shrugged her shoulders, looking relaxed. "There are some things in life that you just have to experience yourself. It's no use to rely on others."

Ever since she was a kid, this was how Nancy had taught her to gain a sense of security by herself. When she was being alienated at school, she did her best in her studies and graduated with flying colors.

When she was being oppressed in the workplace, she did her best to gain a promotion as fast as possible. "If I had done nothing at that time and waited for someone to save me, I would have been doomed long ago." Rachel revealed a soothing smile, but in Justin's eyes, it was a little hard to bear for him.

"Chris!" Jolly's voice was heard from afar. "Come over here!"

"I'm coming." Rachel jumped from the rock and walked two steps toward them before looking back to wave the grilled fish at Justin. "It tastes a bit bland. Remember to sprinkle more cumin on it next time."

Suddenly, his stern face softened as he couldn't help but smile.

Meanwhile, Gloria asked Victor, "When Miss Rachel left 5 years ago, why did you disappear?"

"Miss Janice told me to leave Riverdale so that I wouldn't be targeted by some people." He flipped the lamb skewer and stared at Justin in the distance. "It wouldn't be nice if I was killed and silenced."

"What are you talking about? No matter how insane he became, he wouldn't actually kill someone."

"He wouldn't do it to you," Victor noted angrily. "As for us, he wouldn't have that much patience."

Gloria didn't know what else to say. "You're going to overcook the lamb, you know."

"It's not ready yet. Do you really want to eat raw meat? Go and get some cumin. Rachel loves to eat those."

"You only know what she wants." Gloria rolled her eyes at him. Even though she had said no, she still quickly headed off to get the condiments.

Victor was the only one left in front of the barbecue grill.

As he looked at Justin in the distance, the two of them stared at each other. Suddenly, Justin nodded his head politely as an acknowledgment, which startled Victor, so he turned around and pretended not to see Justin.

It's even worse now that you have lost your memories. Now, everyone is treating you as the innocent one while the rest of us are the bad guy.

It was finally deep into the night when the last light at the Hudson Pharmaceuticals' research lab was switched off.

The highly-paid pharmacist whom Rachel hired removed his white coat and exited the automated sliding door. It was only after he checked whether the entrance was locked that he left.

This was the core research department of Hudson Pharmaceuticals where all the data of the new drugs were stored.

A rustling sound was suddenly heard in the lab a short while after the main entrance was closed. The sound was particularly clear in the peaceful lab.

Then, the light from a phone screen came through the locker.

Creek!

The locker was opened from the inside before a slim figure crept out. After looking around to make sure that no one else was there, the person quickly went to the front of a lab machine to locate the experimental data on the table.

In fact, those were the new drugs, but they were all halfway done since they were still undergoing medical trials.

Amber furrowed her brows and looked around one more time.

Rachel wouldn't tell others about the dosage of the drugs because that was the core secret of the pharmaceutical. However, the pharmaceuticals needed these data to mass produce those drugs, so the data of those dosages was only stored in the computer that couldn't be accessed without deciphering the codes.

Amber endured everything and came to this hellhole just to retrieve the dosages.

It was hard for me to get in, so I can't go back empty-handed. Looking at the computers in the lab, she tightly gripped the flash drive in her hand. This is the only way.

The next day, when Rachel came to her office, the secretary rushed toward her. "President Hudson, why didn't you answer the call this morning?"

"What is it? What happened?"

"Chairman Holt called you this morning, but he said that he couldn't reach you. He asked me to tell you to call him back as soon as possible."

Rachel glanced at her and asked, "Did he tell you why?"

"I'm not sure." The secretary shook her head sheepishly.

Rachel already had something in mind as she placed her bag down and pulled out the chair to have a seat. "Then, there's nothing to worry about. I'll call him once I'm done with everything in hand."

Seeing that Rachel wasn't panicking, the secretary became worried. "There's no time to deal with anything else. Amber sneaked into the lab last night and copied the computer data to steal the prescription."

"I can see that you are well-informed." Rachel glanced at her with eyes so calm that it would make anyone panic.

The secretary's expression froze. "President Hudson—"

"I was wondering why Mr. Holt would know about the company's situation quicker than me. Is it because he is well-informed, or is it because you were quick enough to tell him?"

"President Hudson, I'm doing this for the company's good. Chairman Holt is also afraid that you are being set up by Amber."

"Then, I should thank Mr. Holt for his concerns."

"Chairman Holt was right. Amber actually stole the prescription. Shouldn't we deal with this first?"

In front of the secretary, Rachel made a call to Evan. "Hello, Mr. Holt. It's me."

"Rachel, I was about to head over to the company if you didn't call me sooner. Don't worry, I'll come to the company right now to meet you."

"There's no need to rush. Is it because of the theft in the lab last night?"

"So, you do know about it. Don't worry, I'll come over to help you deal with it."

"Mr. Holt, you don't need to come over. The prescription is fine. Nothing is lost other than some useless medical trial data of the new drugs."

"Really? How are you so sure?"

"Why would I simply leave such an important prescription in the computer for anyone to decipher? Even if Amber had copied all of the data, she wouldn't locate the prescription."

"I see. T-Then, that's great. I'm relieved.

"Thank you, Mr. Holt, for your concerns. I'll deal with the company myself so that you and the people around you don't have to worry," Rachel said while looking at the secretary next to her.

The secretary was obviously feeling guilty, so she didn't even dare to look Rachel in the eye.

After hanging up the phone, Rachel uttered faintly, "There's something I'm curious about. Isn't the lab so heavily guarded that even a fly can't enter? How did Amber break into the place?"

The secretary was startled. "I'm not sure about that."

"Where have I heard that before?"

Listening to her, the secretary's face turned pale.

Then, Rachel handed a document over. "Send this to the lab and tell Mr. Jonas that someone broke into the lab and stole something. Tell him to re-encrypt the security codes."

"Alright. I'll do it now."

As the secretary left, Rachel's eyes grew darker as she stared at the secretary.

It seems like Hudson Pharmaceuticals is a den of wolves. Everyone might look friendly on the surface, but they would actually do anything to get their hands on the prescription. Amber is just a smokescreen. If she did retrieve the real prescription, Evan wouldn't even inform me about it and take it for himself. Otherwise, why would he wait until this morning to call me?

Chapter 299 Playing Both Ends

After the morning meeting, Rachel returned to her office and noticed that her phone on the desk suddenly lit up as a message appeared. Her eyes darkened slightly when she glanced at it.

“President Hudson, where are you going?” “I have something to do.” “When will you be coming back?” “I don’t know. Call me if anything happens.”

After that, she went into the elevator. Looking at how hurried she was, the secretary quickly went back to her office to make a call. “Chairman Holt, President Hudson just went out.”

Meanwhile, Rachel drove out from the parking garage and drove straight to the suburbs. This wasn’t the first time that she arrived at Riverdale Penitentiary.

The last time she came was because Jefferey had suddenly died, so as her legal daughter, she was summoned by the prison guards to collect his body.

She came this time because Bucky was being released.

2 hours later, Rachel drove to the entrance of Riverdale Penitentiary and took a look at her wristwatch. It’s almost time.

Then, a small door that only a person could walk through was opened on the side of the bulletproof door. The prison guard was the first to come out before he was followed by a dark-skinned man with a shaved head. The man’s dark expression seemed to exude a cold aura under the sun.

“You better behave now.” The prison guard’s voice echoed in the air.

As if by reflex, the man nodded his head and agreed.

Bang!

When the prison door behind him was closed, he lifted his head once more to look at the sunlight outside.

Five years. He had stayed in this place for five whole years.

Other than a big empty road and some weeds scattered around, there was nothing in front of the prison's entrance. He didn't hope for anyone to come and pick him up as he carried a bag and took out half a pack of cigarettes and a lighter that he had before his imprisonment.

It didn't matter whether the cigarettes were expired or not, but after sticking a cigarette in his mouth for a while, he realized that the lighter was useless.

As he felt a bit frustrated, he finally noticed the woman walking toward him.

"Are you Bucky? I came to pick you up."

In fairness, she wasn't asking him because the certainty in her eyes told him that she came here looking for him.

After finally being released from prison five years later, he could only dream of having a beautiful woman pick him up on the first day, so he went into her car without any hesitation. My life is cheap anyway. What else can I do?

As for Rachel, she wasn't surprised that this man agreed to follow her without saying a word. Once a violent outlaw like him has his eyes on a beautiful woman and luxurious cars, there is nothing to be afraid of.

"Do you have a lighter?"

"I don't smoke, but you can have something to eat."

Rachel pressed the button on the right hand side, and the lid in between the driver's seat and the passenger side slowly opened, revealing some water and snacks.

Not holding back, Bucky unwrapped a bag of bread and a bottle of water.

“Don’t you want to know who I am?” she asked.

“Why do I need to know who you are? I have never known that many rich people in my life, but the only one who values me is him.”

Him? I knew it. Rachel secretly smiled. Does he think that Jason sent me here?

On the surface, she remained unmoved. “I came to ask you something. To prevent any misunderstandings, let me introduce myself first. I’m Rachel Hudson.” Suddenly, he paused while eating and looked at her in shock. “The person that you kidnapped 5 years ago was my grandma,” she uttered calmly.

The atmosphere in the car became tense all of a sudden.

As Bucky’s hands trembled, he didn’t know how to react to the situation, so he instinctively grabbed the door handle.

Rachel glanced at him from the corner of her eye. “The car is now traveling at 55 miles per hour. If you jump out of the car, chances are you won’t live.”

“What do you want? You’re right. I kidnapped your grandma, but I’ve already served 5 years of my sentence.”

“I know. I didn’t come to you for revenge.”

Seeing how calm Rachel looked, Bucky slowly regained his composure and leaned back in his seat. “Then, why are you looking for me? Do you want to scold me? Beating me up won’t bring her back. Also, I didn’t know that she was in such bad health at that time.”

She tightened her fingers around the steering wheel. "I want to ask who ordered you to kidnap my grandma back then."

"No one ordered me. I was desperate for money at that time."

"Are you sure? I can understand that an ordinary person like you would want to blackmail the rich, but why did you tell Justin to surrender the development rights of that piece of land? What good does it do to you?" As he listened to her, Bucky furrowed his brow. "Who ordered you to do it?"

"I want to get out of the car."

He is obviously refusing to spill anything.

However, Rachel wasn't in a hurry as she slowly uttered, "When you took that bread earlier, you might not have noticed that there is a photo next to it. Why don't you take a look at it?"

A startled Bucky turned his head and saw a photo wedged between two bottles of water.

His face suddenly froze and turned pale when he took out the photo. "What did you do to Lily?"

"Nothing. I only funded her school so that the poor students could head abroad for a month for an exchange programme. During this period, all her traveling expenses, food and accommodation would be covered. However, what do you think about her being abroad in a place where she is unfamiliar with —"

"What are you going to do to her?" He suddenly raised his voice and roared, "If you have any problems, you can take it out on me, but if you dare to lay a finger on my little sister, I'll kill you!"

Then, the screeches of the brakes were heard as Bucky almost slammed his head on the windshield.

Rachel stopped the car and gave him a warning gaze. "I don't like to threaten people, so I'll give you a day to consider it. You can come and meet me at this address tomorrow morning."

As he looked at the business card, his tanned face only grew darker. He immediately exited the car upon receipt of the card.

Seeing the car in front speeding away, he smashed everything in his hands before making a call right after. A while later, someone answered the call and an impatient voice was heard on the other end. "Hello?"

"Mr. Walsh, it's me."

"Oh, are you Bucky? Are you already released?"

"Mr. Walsh, I'm looking for Master Jason. Where is he?"

"You're looking for Master Jason? I thought you just came out." The other party's voice immediately turned cold. "What's the problem? Are you not getting enough money, which is why you want to ask for more? Let me tell you something. There's nothing to be gained by being greedy."

"My little sister has been kidnapped! I really don't have any other choice. If Master Jason chooses not to help me, I have no other choice but to tell the truth."

The other end went silent for a moment. "Are you sure? Do you know who did it?"

"She says her name is Rachel Hudson."

The phone on the other end was on speaker-mode. The game room was filled with smoke and seated on the leather couch in the corner was Jason, who stuck a cigar in his mouth while his face darkened a little.

"Master Jason, what should we do?"

"Kidnapped?" He chuckled coldly. "This is Riverdale. Unless she wants to be imprisoned, would she dare to do it?"

“Bucky’s sister is indeed abroad right now, though.”

“Then, we’ll just report this to the investigation bureau. Isn’t that officer in the investigation bureau on good terms with her? Let’s see if she decides to be righteous or help a criminal.”

No matter what the outcome was, if he played both ends correctly, eliminating any one of them would be beneficial to his business.

Chapter 300 Julian’s Necklace

In the evening, the afterglow of the sunset spread throughout the sky. The sound of an engine in the garage reached the living room. “Why are you back so early? Have you finished all your work?”

Seeing Rachel coming in, Justin was a little surprised. “I’m a bit tired, so I came back to rest. Where are Charlotte and Samuel?” “Gloria took them out.”

She thoughtfully nodded her head before walking toward the stairs. Looking around the large house, he thought about the harmonious scene last night when they hung out on the beach. All of a sudden, he became restless and sent a message to Gloria immediately.

‘Charlotte and Samuel can stay with you tonight. Don’t need to send them back.’ After sending the message, he quickly made a call. “President Burton.” It was Frankie on the other end.

“I want you to order two dinner sets and deliver them to my house.”

“Two dinner sets?” Frankie was slightly stunned as he carefully asked, “Is President Hudson alone with you at home?”

“Where’s all this talk coming from? Just order the dinner sets.”

“Okay, I’ll also prepare a bouquet of flowers for you, but are you sure there won’t be any accidents this time?”

“Shut your mouth!”

As Justin thought about how she had stood him up the last time because of the sudden change of plans in the Hudson Family, his face darkened a little. Will there be something worse than last time? Impossible.

At the moment, Rachel had already returned to her room to rest.

Even though she maintained her composure when she met Bucky, deep in her heart, she couldn't wait to kill the man in front of her. However, she knew that he was just a smokescreen and not the true mastermind behind all this.

As for who the mastermind was, Rachel and Janice both knew it in their hearts, but they couldn't locate any evidence.

As long as Bucky was willing to be the witness, they could appeal the case back then and directly convict Jason.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Suddenly, a few knocks were heard outside the door.

“What is it?”

Other than her and Justin, there wasn't anyone else in the house.

“I've ordered a meal. You can come down later to eat your dinner and rest afterward.”

“No need for that. I'm not hungry.”

“Are you sure you’re going to keep on talking to me with the door closed? This is my house.”

A moment of hesitation later, Rachel opened the door. “What do you want to say?”

Justin was so tall that his head had almost touched the door frame. The moment his shadow descended on her, it almost engulfed her whole body. The unspeakable sense of oppression made her subconsciously take a step backward and stumble on her feet.

“Be careful!”

Justin was quick enough to support her waist.

With a rustling sound, the coat rack behind Rachel fell down at the same time. However, he was able to hold her as they fell to the side. If he was a little late, the rack would have slammed into her body.

When she lifted her head in shock, her forehead bumped into his chin.

After letting out a muffled grunt, he endured the pain and released his hands that were supporting her above the floor to lower her.

Rachel’s eyes were wide open, but she couldn’t stop the kiss landing on her forehead.

Justin’s thin lips were a little cold when they were pressed on her forehead for a long time without leaving. As their body temperature rose, the atmosphere around them seemed to be ignited as it became inexplicably hot.

He also froze while trying to lift himself up with his hands, but in the end, he couldn’t stop himself from kissing her eyes and nose.

Meanwhile, her fingers instinctively tightened.

Rachel was still wide awake at that moment, but she didn't wish to be. Maybe I need to do something crazy to forget about my meeting with Bucky today. Maybe this is the only way to relieve the pain in my heart no matter if it was Justin or anyone else.

Therefore, she slowly relaxed her body, but there wasn't a hint of love in her eyes except for her desperate need to relieve her emotions.

Ding dong!

Suddenly, a doorbell was heard from outside.

Justin immediately came around and uttered 'damn it' inside his heart, but as soon as he lifted his head and saw her eyes, he was shocked to see how sober she was.

He thought that his actions had angered her again, so he quickly rose to his feet. "I'm sorry, Rae. I didn't mean to offend you. I-It was because..."

Should I say that it was because I couldn't control myself? That'll only make things worse.

However, Rachel calmly tidied herself up and responded, "The dinner you ordered is here, right? Let's head down to eat."

Justin returned to his senses. "Yes, I'll head down first then."

Seeing him leaving in a hurry, she couldn't help but find him somewhat cute.

The second the idea came up in her mind, she immediately regained her composure as her face turned gloomy. Cute? If it was Justin 5 years ago, this would not be possible.

The best chef in Riverdale had personally arrived at the house with fresh ingredients so that he could cook on the spot.

Rachel and Justin sat at opposite ends of the table with a bouquet of roses and a candle between them.

“This is the meal you ordered?” She glanced at the chef next to her. “Why did you have to bring a chef and an entire kitchen to the house just to order a meal?”

Although Jolly was a huge spender, she didn’t pay much attention to eating, so this was the first time Rachel saw someone hiring a top chef to cook in his house.

“You don’t like it?”

“That’s not what I meant.” Rachel smiled and explained, “This experience is quite... bizarre.”

Justin breathed a sigh of relief. “As long as you like it. By the way, I’ve prepared a gift for you.”

“A gift?” Looking at the box that he handed over, she furrowed her brows slightly.

“Open it.” After opening the box, she saw a necklace inside. It was a perfectly designed diamond necklace with an emerald embedded in the pendant. “You don’t need to care about the price too much. I only asked Frankie to randomly select one in the shop for you to try on.”

After that, he finally noticed that on Rachel’s neck, there was a necklace with a pendant shaped like the side of a black cat.

Looking at it, Justin was stunned. Where have I seen that necklace before? “This necklace...”

Rachel instinctively touched her neck. “This one? Julian gave it to me before as a birthday gift. I especially like it.”

He clenched his fists. “Julian gave it to you?”

She looked at his eyes and nodded blankly. “Yes.”

Julian gave her this birthday gift and accompanied her during the darkest period of her life. Also, it was one of the few gifts that she had ever received in her life, so she always wore it all these years.

“Before I left Riverdale, he accompanied me on my birthday. I remember that we couldn’t finish the cake ourselves, so we gave it to the other children in the community,” she talked about the past as if Justin wasn’t there.

However, he wasn’t focused on her words. When he stared at the cat-shaped pendant, it felt as though he was pierced through the heart. Suddenly, he held the table to support himself while his face turned pale.

“What’s wrong?”

At that moment, Justin’s mind had become a mess.

A birthday gift? Giving out cakes in the community? No. This pendant feels very familiar to me. How could it be given to her by Julian? All of a sudden, the image of the woman speaking in sign language appeared in his mind. I don’t want that child anyway.

Then, he felt his heart contracting before it was followed by an immense pain.