

Mute Bride 321

Chapter 321 Escaping From Death's Door

Amber pushed Noah over the railing right in front of Rachel. The man fell from the five-story high deck and plunged into the river with a splash. While the lights on the deck were luminous, the view around them was pitch black. At the same time, the ship was shrouded in fog.

Not even a single soul discovered that a life was lost on that fateful night. "You killed him." Rachel covered her bleeding neck and took a step back.

At this moment, Amber's face was livid, but her eyes were horrendously red. She crouched down to pick up the knife. Even though it was covered in blood, she didn't mind it one bit.

As she stared at Rachel, she sneered, "He deserved it. He tortured me for six years. He should have gone to hell a long time ago! I'm about to get the formula, so he wasn't supposed to stay alive anymore!"

The blade reflected the moonlight as she pointed the knife at Rachel. "Tell me, what's the password?"

With a pale face, Rachel held the railing behind her with one hand.

"Don't expect anyone to save you. Do you think Noah was foolish? Do you believe he'd release Jolly just because you told him to do that?"

Rachel felt her heart skipping a beat. "What did the two of you do to Jolly?"

"Don't worry. He wouldn't dare to harm Jolly; she is just being detained somewhere. We were planning to release her after we got the password from you and left this place." All of a sudden, Amber started laughing. "He shouldn't have been so greedy. Now, he'll never leave this place again; he'll have to stay in this river forever! Alright, stop wasting time. Tell me the password, and I'll give you a decent death."

Apart from telling her the password, Rachel had no other way to stall for time. Left with no choice, she told her a set of numbers.

An eerie light lit up behind Amber's eyes as she fished out her phone to contact someone from the pharmaceutical factory. Right then, she realized that there was no connectivity in this place. "What's going on?"

Pretending to be clueless, Rachel asked, "What's wrong?"

She was certain that Amber had no right to board this ship. That was the reason why Amber had dressed up to disguise herself. Amber must have told Noah to help her sneak into the ship, so she wasn't aware that there was no connectivity in this place.

"Don't move!" Amber pointed the knife at her and warned her before lifting her phone in an attempt to look for some cellular connectivity. "The connection here is terrible. If you dare to move, I'll kill you right now!"

"I'm not moving." Rachel raised her hands as she racked her brain to come up with a way to escape. "There doesn't seem to be any connectivity here, Amber. Why don't I leave with you and head to the factory after the ship reaches the harbor?"

Amber frowned and examined her. "Are you trying to flee when leaving the ship?"

"If you kill me now, how are you going to verify the password I've told you?"

The password? Suddenly thinking of something, Amber sneered. As she kept her phone, she inched closer to the other woman. "What do I need the password for? After I kill you, I'll take over Hudson Pharmaceuticals and get someone to decode it. It's not like your password is unbreakable."

Damn it! Rachel felt her chest tightening. Why has she become so clever all of a sudden?

"You shouldn't have come back, Rachel. All this wouldn't have happened without you. So, you can't blame me for doing this to you. Blame yourself for being sick of living!" As she spoke, Amber grasped the other woman's arm.

A cold glint flashed through the blade. When Rachel was about to be harmed by the knife, she exclaimed as her pupils expanded. At this moment, she could clearly see a figure charging toward Amber from behind.

“Ahhh!” It was Amber who groaned in pain instead of Rachel as the towering figure kicked Amber aside.

When Amber saw the person, her gaze turned as dark as ink. “Justin! I’ll kill you all!”

Like a mad woman, she brandished the knife and dashed toward them.

While supporting Rachel’s weight, Justin hurriedly landed a kick on Amber, who exclaimed and fell backward. Rachel’s pupils contracted as she extended her hand, but it was too late.

They watched as Amber flipped over the railing and disappeared into the river.

Rachel rushed toward the railing and looked down at the river. She could see a billow on the river as it diminished and disappeared in just a while, as though nothing had happened.

“Rachel, are you alright?”

She snapped back to reality upon hearing Justin’s voice. Staring at the man, she asked, “Why are you here?”

“I should be the one asking you this question.” When Justin saw the blood on her neck, he bit his tongue. “Forget it. We’ll go home first. Come with me.”

Presently, Rachel’s mind was completely blank as she let the man lug her toward the cabin.

Before she left, she caught a glimpse of a trace of blood on the railing that was left behind by Noah. It so happened that it was about to rain, and after that, all the traces would be washed away, and no one would discover anything.

Upon entering the cabin, Rachel suddenly thought of something important. "Jolly! Jolly is still held captive by Noah's people."

"Noah?" Justin furrowed his brows.

With no time to explain anything to him, Rachel uttered, "I have to look for Jolly."

Right then, an argument was heard coming from the stairwell. "Release me, Ryan! I said let me go!"

Justin uttered, "It seems that we've found her."

The door of the stairwell was pushed open as Ryan rudely lugged the woman out.

As she was pulled forward, Jolly kicked him and snapped, "I'll scream if you don't release me. Help! Someone is molesting me! Help!"

"Jolly!" Ryan bellowed. "Do you know I have many ways to keep your mouth shut?"

"Do you think I'll be intimidated? Let me go! Who do you think you are?"

"I just saved you!"

"Nonsense! You saved me? I was all good without you. I don't have time to argue with you now. I have to get some people to save Chris!"

Rachel couldn't help but call out, "Jolly."

When Jolly turned her head and saw Rachel standing alongside Justin, she became startled for a moment. Then, she pounced on Rachel and started crying. "Are you alright? I thought you were dead! I couldn't find anyone to help me!"

"I'm fine." Rachel hugged her and patted her back to appease her. "I'm still alive and kicking. How are you?"

Jolly sniffled and said angrily, "I knew that Noah was ill-intentioned, so as soon as I left the place, I started to flee and randomly snuck into a room. Guess what? I came across a perverted naked man. I didn't deliberately try to watch him. I begged him to save me, but he said I was mad and pushed me out of the room. Damn it!"

A puzzled Rachel asked, "What are you talking about?"

A perverted naked man?

Chapter 322 The Engagement

Jolly parted her lips in an attempt to explain herself, but she was unable to gather her thoughts and put it into words. Eventually, she waved her hand and uttered, "Forget it. We'll talk about it later. Where are Noah and Amber?"

Upon hearing that, Rachel sported a conflicted expression and exchanged glances with Justin. There was an infirmary on the ship.

Rachel's neck was severely wounded. If her wounds were any deeper, they would have to be stitched up.

"Alright, don't let your wounds come into contact with water. Go to a hospital to have your wounds checked after you leave the ship. It'd be troublesome if your wounds are infected."

"Thanks, doctor."

"Don't mention it. But what happened? Why are you seriously injured?"

Just when Rachel was about to reply to him, Justin interrupted her by saying, "She tripped over and hit something sharp. It was an accident."

Rachel took a glance at the man with a frown. When she was ready to say something, she saw the man sporting a solemn expression. Therefore, she decided to bite her tongue.

Meanwhile, Jolly and Ryan were waiting for them in the room.

As soon as the door was closed, Rachel asked, "Why didn't you let me tell the truth just now? Two people are dead. I have to call the police now."

Justin uttered, "If the murders that take place here can be solved by calling the police, this vessel will be no different from other ships."

"Two lives are gone for good. No one will care whether Amber is missing. However, Noah is the eldest son of the Hindenburg Conglomerate's boss. Do you think the Hindenburgs won't look into it?"

"I don't think the Hindenburgs are aware of Noah's whereabouts tonight."

Rachel became startled for a moment before turning to look at Ryan.

With an emotionless expression, Ryan stared at her intently. There wasn't a hint of fluster behind his cold-looking eyes. "Even if they're aware of it, they can only call the police. What can the police find out? There are no surveillance cameras on this cruise ship at all."

In fact, Rachel had already discovered it.

Since there were no surveillance cameras, it meant that no one would find out what had happened. Even if there were witnesses, they couldn't provide any solid evidence.

"Do we just pretend that nothing has happened?" Rachel uttered in disbelief, for she reckoned that she should call the police since such an incident had happened.

Ryan uttered rudely, “You’d better pretend nothing has happened. Even if you want to invite trouble to yourself, don’t drag others into it. When the cruise ship reaches the harbor, I’ll leave with Jolly. I don’t care whether you’ll leave this place, but don’t mention Jolly when others ask you about the incident today.”

Rachel furrowed her brows. This guy named Ryan keeps talking about Jolly in a caring manner. He doesn’t seem as cold-blooded as what Jolly had described.

However, Jolly retorted, “Stop scaring us. Am I even close to you? Why should I leave the ship with you just because you tell me to? Ryan, I’m telling you—stop telling my best friend what to do. Who do you think you are?”

“Jolly! Can’t you see I’m helping you?”

“I don’t believe anything you say.”

Ryan’s face fell instantly. “What do you mean by that? I’ve come all the way here to save you because I’m worried about your safety, but in the end, it’s all my fault. You’re just as reckless and unreasonable as back then.”

“Back then? How do you even have the nerve to talk about the past with me?”

It seemed that an argument between them was inevitable.

Just as Rachel wanted to say something, she was pulled into the bedroom by Justin.

“Why are you pulling me away?”

“It’s a matter between them. Let them sort it out themselves.”

“Ryan is a hypocrite,” Rachel said furiously. “If he were a responsible man, he wouldn’t have dumped the pregnant Jolly and married another woman.”

Justin’s face stiffened when he heard that. He had no right to give any comment because he was also a scoundrel, just like Ryan. He had done the same thing to Rachel before. “I’m sorry, Rachel.”

It took Rachel quite some time to understand why he apologized to her. Then, she gazed at him with a frown. “I wasn’t talking about you.”

She had gotten even with Justin, and she had no intention of bringing up the incident from the past.

Upon seeing that she had calmed down, Justin turned around and poured a cup of water. “It’ll take some time before the ship reaches the harbor. Take a rest.”

As Rachel listened to the argument outside, she knew that there was nothing she could do. Instead, she might even worsen the situation if she decided to interfere. After a nod, she took a seat and touched her neck.

“Don’t move.” An agile Justin quickly grabbed her wrist. “You can’t touch it.”

His rather warm palm sent Rachel into a dazed state. It wasn’t until a moment later that she came to her senses and gently struggled out of his grip. “Thanks.”

“What are you thanking me for?”

“Thanks for caring about my safety. If you hadn’t saved me in time, I would’ve been hurled into the river.”

Justin uttered gently, “If you really want to thank me, don’t do anything dangerous again. As you can see, no one will find out, even if murders take place on this ship.”

Rachel fell silent.

Upon seeing her expression, Justin knew that she had taken his advice lightly. At that instant, he was torn between getting furious and continuing to persuade her. His chest heaved with frustration.

The air seemed to have frozen instantly.

Rachel took a sip of her tea, as she had no intention of having a discussion with him. At the same time, she kept looking at the door and listened to the argument between Jolly and Ryan.

“You dumped me in the past because you wanted to pursue a brighter future. How do you have the gall to pester me now? You got married once, Ryan. Do you think you’re still as attractive as before?”

“If you hadn’t lied to me, I would’ve married you!”

“No! It was the young lady of Carter Enterprise who was getting married to you, not me.”

“What’s the difference?”

The argument went on. They used to be lovers, but everything changed when they met again. As expected, their argument revolved around trivial matters.

“Do men always have so many excuses? Parents, career, future... But they still have the nerve to say that they’re doing it for the other party and go on to hurt their women.”

Justin frowned. “I heard that Ryan and Jolly were engaged.”

“Yes.” Rachel nodded. “In fact, Ryan was right. If Jolly hadn’t made a scene back then, they would’ve gotten married. They might even be living a happy life together now. However, he doesn’t have a right to say that Jolly was wrong.”

Ryan and Jolly were engaged at that time, but they had never met each other before. Naturally, she wouldn't want to marry a man she had never come into contact with before. Therefore, she approached the man with a fake name and identity.

"She didn't expect that she'd really get together with Ryan eventually. However, Ryan suddenly told her that he had a fiancée and that he wouldn't call off the wedding."

Upon hearing that, Justin furrowed his brows. "Did he break up with Jolly?"

Rachel sneered, "He would've been considered a gentleman if he broke up with Jolly. The fact is, he wanted to make Jolly wait for him for three years."

Jolly had always been a haughty person. Even though the so-called fiancée was herself, she couldn't put up with the humiliation that the man had inflicted upon her. Infuriated, she decided to go missing.

"Do her parents know that Samuel's father is Ryan?"

"They don't. That's why they've always felt sorry about the wedding that had been called off. Over the years, they've offered a lot of help to Ryan in his business. Why do you think he could be so successful now?"

Staring at the door, she uttered coldly, "How can he say that he still loves Jolly? He's doing all this because he knows that Jolly is the young lady from the Carter Family. It's revolting!"

Chapter 323 Using Jolly for Money Laundering

For some reason, as Justin listened to Rachel lambasting Ryan, he couldn't help but speculate that she might be seeing him in the same light.

"Why are they so silent?" Rachel stared at the door and frowned. She had to check on Jolly and Ryan, as the notion that they were staying in the same place alone unsettled her.

All of a sudden, Justin took her hand. A startled Rachel turned her head and saw the man sporting a solemn expression. "I don't know whether Ryan is really the kind of person you've described, but you need to know that I'm not the same."

At that moment, Rachel was astounded.

Justin went on to say, "From now on, I'll never hurt you using any excuse. If I do, I'll die a horrible death."

The way he made an oath stunned Rachel.

Amnesia was the most inconceivable thing to her ever. The man who used to be ruthless and indifferent was now making an oath to make her happy.

Unfortunately, she didn't take the oath seriously, as she believed that the man was just trying to please her. Justin and Ryan are birds of a feather.

"Chris!" Jolly suddenly exclaimed. "Come here now!"

Rachel came to her senses and replied, "I'm coming."

She took a glance at Justin, who then let her go.

They shuffled toward the living room before seeing that Jolly and Ryan were standing at the table, on which the gift box given to Jolly by Julia was placed.

The box was opened, and the hem of the wedding dress was hung over the edge of the box.

"What's wrong?" Rachel walked over. "Why did you take it out?"

Jolly uttered, "There's something wrong with this wedding dress."

Rachel's eyes fell upon the wedding dress. "What do you mean?"

"Look."

The wedding dress was intricately made, as there were layers of laces. Jolly lifted the hem and took Rachel's hand before leading her to feel it. There seemed to be some very hard objects in one of the layers. They had no idea what those were, but these objects felt as hard as stones.

After lifting the laces, they saw the interfacing in the middle of the dress where the objects were concealed.

If they hadn't deliberately looked into it, they wouldn't have discovered it, as the wedding dress was multi-layered.

"What are these?"

"I don't know." Jolly shook her head. "He discovered it."

While they were having an argument earlier, they accidentally knocked the gift box over.

As soon as Ryan saw the wedding dress, he questioned Jolly about what was going on. Upon learning that it was a wedding dress given to her by someone from the club, he immediately realized that something must be wrong with it. He was eventually proven right.

"Is this some kind of new design?" Jolly ran her hand over the hem as she let her imagination run wild. "Maybe it's for a massage effect or to keep the hem in place."

"I've never heard of such a design before." Rachel touched the dress and felt that something was off. "Why are these objects fixed inside? I can't even move them."

"We just have to cut it and see what's inside." Ryan's voice reverberated in the room.

Jolly planned on selling the wedding dress, so she didn't agree to it. However, she was unable to stop him as the man already had a pair of scissors in his hand.

The next moment, the interfacing in the middle was cut open. As soon as the objects inside it were revealed, all of them were dazzled by the icy glint. With narrowed eyes, they stared at the objects in disbelief.

Presently, they could see that a lot of diamonds as large as nails had been woven on the interfacing as these precious items twinkled under the light.

"My goodness." Even though Jolly was born wealthy, she had never seen so many diamonds all at once.

Ryan put down the wedding dress and said with a solemn expression, "There's no free lunch in this world. Have you ever thought about why Julia Bowman would give you a wedding dress woven with diamonds when you're not even close to her?"

"She said that it's a promise between my dad and her."

"She promised to give you a wedding dress embedded with diamonds?" Ryan shot her a glance. "If I'm not mistaken, she's trying to do some money laundering by using this wedding dress as a disguise."

"Money laundering?" Jolly's expression changed. "What do you mean?"

"If nothing unexpected happens, you'll leave the ship with this wedding dress, and you won't use it in a short period of time. The way I see it, you'll probably sell the wedding dress, which will be resold several times and end up in a foreign country. In the end, it'll go back into Julia's hands, but she'll already be overseas by then."

The customs officers would never discover the diamonds inside the wedding dress. That way, a large amount of money in the form of diamonds would arrive in a foreign country safely, and those from the Investigation Bureau would never find out.

Even if they discovered anything, this wedding dress belonged to Jolly, and there was no evidence to suggest that it had anything to do with Julia.

A horrified Rachel uttered, "You mean Julia is using Jolly for money laundering by sending these diamonds abroad?"

"Yes."

A nonchalant Jolly said, "It's not like I care. Since I've discovered these diamonds, I won't sell them. Instead, I'll go to a jewelry shop and turn them into diamond accessories."

"Do you think Julia will let you keep these diamonds?"

As Ryan's voice reverberated around the room, Rachel knitted her brows.

At this moment, she couldn't help but admire the fact that Ryan was truly astute. If he hadn't found these diamonds, Jolly and she would leave the ship with these precious items without knowing it.

If they came across any danger in the future, they would never realize that it had anything to do with the wedding dress.

"The ship is reaching the harbor soon."

All of them came to their senses upon hearing Justin's words.

These precious items were undoubtedly hot potatoes for them now. If they left the ship with these diamonds, they'd invite trouble to themselves. However, if they left these diamonds behind, they'd still fall into danger.

Without needing Ryan to break it to them, Rachel and Jolly were aware that some people were paying close attention to the wedding dress outside the room.

Rachel asked, "Please stop putting us on tenterhooks, Mr. Sutton. We're about to reach the harbor. What should we do now?"

"Keep it inside the box and leave the ship with it."

"Before Julia retrieves these diamonds, we'll be continuously monitored, right?"

"They're keeping a close eye on the wedding dress, not you all. What if the dress is in someone else's hands?"

Rachel and Jolly were startled upon hearing that.

As she listened to the sound of the ship's horn, Jolly uttered impatiently, "Cut to the chase. Stop beating around the bush with us! I don't understand it, and I have no time for this."

Ryan suggested by saying, "When we leave the ship, I'll bring the wedding dress with me."

Jolly was shocked. "You want to take this dress with you?"

Upon understanding his intention, Rachel and Justin exchanged glances.

Ryan was doing this to protect Jolly. Once the wedding dress was in his hands, Julia's subordinates would only have their eyes on him. After what happened on the cruise ship, Rachel became aware of what Julia was really like.

She might appear to be a gentle and elegant lady, but she was actually a ruthless person who had no qualms about killing people. Otherwise, she wouldn't have organized such a banquet on the Golden Cruise.

However, Jolly snorted. "Ryan, you're trying to take these diamonds away, right?"

Chapter 324 Men Cannot Be Trusted

As soon as Jolly finished speaking, all of them in the room fell so silent that one could hear a pin drop. The veins on Ryan's hand pulsated as he grasped the wedding dress. Even though he remained silent, his expression suggested that he was incensed. Rachel was starting to sweat upon seeing that.

In fact, Rachel wasn't fond of Ryan either. However, in this kind of situation, they had figured out that the diamonds in the wedding dress were nothing more than hot potatoes, so there was no way he could swallow them up.

Jolly had gone overboard by saying that.

"Jolly." Rachel took her arm. "I believe Mr. Sutton is sincerely trying to help you. You've got him wrong."

"Really?" Jolly stared coldly at the man. "If he really doesn't have any ill intentions, why doesn't he leave an IOU?"

Rachel pursed her lips and uttered in a small voice, "You're crossing the line..."

Ryan had offered to help them handle this wedding dress and divert Julia's attention. Instead of thanking him, Jolly doubted his sincerity and even demanded an IOU, which was ridiculous.

What was even more inconceivable was that Ryan nodded in agreement without hesitation. "Alright. How do you want me to write it?"

Initially, Rachel thought that Jolly was just trying to enrage Ryan, but she never expected her best friend to pick up a piece of paper and a pen before passing them to Ryan. "Jot down what I'm about to say."

Right in front of everyone's eyes, Ryan directly took the pen and paper before sitting down.

"I, Ryan Sutton, have borrowed D Color five-carat diamonds from Jolly Carter on the Golden Cruise..." Just then, Jolly turned to look at Rachel. "Count how many diamonds there are."

Rachel came to her senses and straightened the interlacing before doing a quick multiplication by using the grid method. "Three hundred."

Given the grade of these diamonds, one five-carat diamond would cost somewhere between 600,000 to 2 million. Hence, the diamonds hidden within the wedding dress were worth over 100 million.

That revelation made Rachel gasp.

Even if Julia and Richard were close to each other, there was no way she'd give Jolly diamonds that were worth over 100 million. Moreover, if these diamonds were really meant to be given to Jolly, why were they hidden in a wedding dress? Wasn't she worried that Jolly might lose them by accident?

Hence, Ryan's analysis was right. There must be something off about it. The diamonds were most probably used for money laundering.

Jolly went on to say, "There are three hundred five-carat diamonds in total. You have to return them to me in one month. If they're damaged or lost, you have to give me compensation that is equivalent to the market value of these diamonds."

"One month?" Ryan shot her a glance. "I can't guarantee that Julia will believe the wedding dress will never go back to you in one month. It's dangerous."

"How long do you need, then?"

"One year."

"One year?"

"Don't worry." Ryan could clearly see the displeasure at her gaze. "I'll return the diamonds to you in one year. If I fail to do that by then, I'll compensate you double the market value of these diamonds."

Upon hearing that, Justin was surprised as well.

Despite knowing that Jolly was just trying to con him, Ryan didn't mind it one bit. Not only was he willing to give her hundreds of millions, but he was also bearing the risk in her stead. There was no doubt that he was a generous and valiant man.

Jolly traded glances with Rachel, who nodded at her. It was apparent that Jolly should stop pushing her luck.

"Alright, one year that is. Write it down."

Certainly, Rachel had figured out what was on Jolly's mind.

Jolly didn't have the courage to keep the wedding dress by her side, but she was also reluctant to throw it away. Obviously, she would want to con Ryan into giving her a large amount of money. Now, she secretly hoped that the man would lose the diamonds and give her the money.

This way, not only did she not have to bear the risk, but she would also earn hundreds of millions. She believed that she would have a sweet dream later that night.

On the other hand, Rachel was alarmed. What is Ryan trying to achieve by agreeing to a deal that will certainly make him lose money?

"What is he trying to achieve?" When leaving the ship, Jolly directly helped Rachel clear her doubt. "This kind of man places himself first, and the people related to him by blood come second. I'm not important, but he believes that Samuel is his son. Isn't Justin the same?"

Upon hearing that, Rachel balled up her fists. She's right. The reason Justin always follows me around is that Charlotte is my daughter. The child only wants me and no one else.

Jolly remarked, "Men cannot be trusted."

Rachel took a look at the bag in the other woman's hand and said, "Only diamonds can be trusted. Am I right?"

"That's right." Jolly arched her brow.

The cruise ship had been parked at the harbor. At the lower end of the ladder, two ushers were retrieving all of their electronic bracelets and registering their departure. Presently, Ryan and Justin walked in front of the ladies.

There were many people around, so Rachel was unable to identify the person sent by Julia to keep an eye on the wedding dress. Maybe the person was a dapper young man who disguised himself as one of the guests. Maybe the person was the usher at the door.

She realized that she was too anxious.

On the other hand, Jolly was calm and collected. Right in front of everyone, she yelled at Ryan, who was facing away from her. "Ryan! Can you wait for me?"

The man played along and turned around to wait for her in the same spot. There was a helpless but loving expression on his face. It wasn't certain whether he was putting on a show or being sincere.

Jolly walked over in a haughty manner. When the electronic bracelet was taken away from her, she passed the bag to Ryan. "Take it."

The two ushers traded glances.

Upon seeing that, Rachel felt her palms sweating.

If Ryan and Justin hadn't come, or if Jolly and Ryan hadn't gotten into an argument, no one would've discovered the diamonds inside the wedding dress. In that case, they would be targeted the moment they left the ship, and no one knew what would happen next.

It was already the small hours, but the banquet on the cruise ship was still ongoing.

When Julia, who was seated in a luxuriously decorated room, heard a subordinate's report, her expression changed. "Did you see it clearly? Did she pass the dress to Ryan?"

"Yes."

"Aren't they together?"

"No. They parted ways after leaving the ship. Ryan left the place alone. Miss Carter seems to be living in the Burton Residence for now, so she has left with Miss Hudson and President Burton from the Burton Group."

"I told you that it wasn't going to work! Ryan is a scheming man. Through the contact between us, I know that it's not easy to manipulate him, so I've always restricted his right to attend the club's events so that he won't be able to leak our secrets. However, you sent the diamonds straight to him!"

A man's voice was suddenly heard in the room. He was one of the founders of the Jockey Club, Randall Baxter. Presently, he was criticizing Julia with a dark expression.

Julia refuted, "How would I know that Ryan would interfere in this matter? After Jefferey got into trouble, the situation in the country was terrible for us as we were targeted by the Investigation Bureau. If we don't get rid of the diamonds quickly, are we going to wait for inspection?"

"What do you think we can do, then?"

"Keep an eye on Ryan." Julia's face fell as she ordered, "All of you, keep a close eye on him and retrieve the diamonds as soon as possible. If there's something wrong with him, just kill him and remember not to leave any traces behind."

Chapter 325 The Reason She Stays by His Side

It had been a night of a roller-coaster ride, which felt surreal to all of them. At the break of dawn, they finally arrived at the Burton Residence.

Justin took a look at the time and uttered, "You two can wash up first. The chauffeur will fetch me later. I'll tell him to buy you breakfast. You can have some food before sleeping."

A surprised Rachel asked, "Aren't you going to have a rest?"

"No. My flight will take off at about 9.00AM. I have to go on a business trip for a few days."

"What a busy man." Jolly yawned. "I'm not going to have breakfast. I'm dead-tired. You guys can have all the food."

Rachel was exhausted, but she wasn't sleepy at all. Both Noah and Amber fell into the river right in front of her. As soon as she closed her eyes, she would recall those horrifying moments.

Knowing what was on her mind, Justin comforted her by saying, "Stop thinking about it. They only have themselves to blame."

Rachel pursed her lips as consolation was the last thing she needed now. "I'm not going to have breakfast. I need a rest now."

When she left, she staggered and almost fell to the ground. An agile Justin wanted to support her weight, but before he even touched her, the woman moved away from him. Upon seeing the aversion behind her eyes, he became startled.

Without saying anything, Rachel frowned and headed upstairs.

As Justin's bony fingers curled inwards, all he could grasp was air, and he felt hollow in his heart.

"Daddy."

Justin came to his senses when he heard a child's voice from upstairs. Charlotte was clad in pajamas with strawberry patterns, and as she rubbed her eyes, she looked like she was still very sleepy.

In a sweet voice, she said, "Did you just come home, Daddy? Where's Mommy?"

Justin replied, "She has returned to her room."

Charlotte yawned as her chubby face turned to Rachel's room. Still in a groggy state, she shuffled toward her mother's room.

Upon seeing that, Justin scurried upstairs and quickly picked up the young kid before uttering in a gentle voice, "Your mommy is exhausted, Charlotte. Let her have a rest."

"But I want to sleep with Mommy."

"I'll keep you company."

Charlotte's eyes were only half-open, as she was still sleepy. Upon hearing that, she subconsciously nodded and rested her head on her father's shoulder, almost dozing off in his embrace.

With the young kid in his arms, Justin ambled toward her room and put her down on the bed. When he saw that she had slumbered off with stable breathing, he couldn't help but smile.

Was she sleepwalking or something?

When he thought of the fact that he wasn't going to see his daughter for a few days, he decided to take a seat by the bed and examine the young kid. Her gaze looked just like Rachel's, and there seemed to be a permanent smile on her lips.

While he was doing that, he caught a glimpse of a palm-sized paper crane on the bedside table. It was supposed to be her holiday homework.

The paper crane was beautifully folded. The only problem was that it was folded from a piece of plain white paper. Moreover, there seemed to be some words written on it.

When Justin took a closer look at it, he narrowed his eyes.

At this moment, Rachel was taking a shower in the guest room's bathroom as she let the water coming from the showerhead rain on her. As soon as she closed her eyes, she recalled the moment Amber jabbed her knife into Noah's body as the blood splashed on her.

Amber wasn't supposed to stay alive. If it weren't because of Jeffery and her, all this wouldn't have happened.

Rachel lowered her head and rubbed her fingers under the running water, but she still felt as though she could take a whiff of blood. When she opened her eyes, she became frustrated.

It wasn't until her fingers turned pale that she stopped and turned off the running water. After putting on her pajamas, she stepped out of the bathroom and saw Justin sitting on the couch. "Why are you here?"

Justin uttered, "I'm going on a business trip for a few days, so I won't be able to contact you during this period of time."

Rachel frowned. "I'll take good care of Charlotte."

"Don't you have anything else to say to me?"

"Have a safe trip." She didn't even bother to conceal her perfunctory behavior when she said that.

Instantly, Justin's face fell. "Do you think you'll only be at ease when I'm not around, Rachel?"

"You're overthinking. Isn't your flight going to take off at 9.00AM? Where's the chauffeur?"

“Let’s get married.”

His sudden announcement caught Rachel off guard as she stopped toweling her hair and gazed at the man. “What did you just say?”

“I said let’s get married.”

“We’ve had this conversation before. I won’t consider getting married now.”

“Tell me when you’ll ever consider it and whether you’re even taking me into your consideration. Perhaps I’ve never been in your future plans, am I right?”

“What’s wrong with you?” Rachel furrowed her brows. “I’m not in the mood to talk about it now, Justin. Aren’t you going to board a plane? We’ll talk about it when you return.”

“When I return?” Justin suddenly snorted as his gaze was filled with coldness. “Will you wait for my return? When I’m back, you’ll probably have left this house with Charlotte.”

“What on earth are you talking about?”

Just then, Justin slammed a piece of wrinkled paper on the table and roared, “This is the real reason you’re staying by my side, Rachel!”

The contents of the paper could be seen clearly—it was a lawsuit for the child’s custody.

Rachel narrowed her eyes and gripped the towel tighter.

“Why are you silent? Explain yourself!”

“What do you want me to say?” Rachel’s gaze was so calm that she almost seemed indifferent. “Are there any reasons for me to stay in this house if not for Charlotte?”

“You’ve never told me about it!”

“What do you want me to tell you? I’m leaving with Charlotte? Or I’m ready to fight for the child’s custody? What would you say if you were me?”

Justin stared at the woman in disbelief. “Is this what’s on your mind all along? I thought you...”

He didn’t finish his words as he found what he was about to say laughable. He thought that since they had stayed in the same house for quite some time now, she would see him in a different light. With that said, he was aware that it might be difficult for her to forget the grudges between them. However, it never crossed his mind that all she wanted all along was the child’s custody.

“So, you’ve always had an ulterior motive and never been frank with me since your return.”

“Frank with you?” Rachel uttered with a disdainful sneer.

At this moment, she stared at the man with an indifferent gaze, but at the same time, she found him laughable and pitiful. He was the one who taught her not to be frank with anyone five years ago, but here he was accusing her of concealing her intentions from him now. In a slow manner, she uttered, “Do you think you’re suffering a loss, Justin? You’re still so conceited. You’ve never changed one bit.”

Chapter 326 You Don’t Deserve to Be a Father

“Rachel Hudson! What have I ever done to you for you to treat me in this manner!? I’ve resolved all the misunderstandings and apologized for everything. Isn’t that enough!?” Justin’s roar reverberated throughout the house.

On the other hand, Rachel was calmer by the minute. “Do you think I’m trying to get revenge on you? I don’t think so. I just feel that you don’t deserve to be a father.”

Justin had many opportunities throughout these five years to raise Charlotte well, but he had failed to do so. Willful, arrogant, overbearing, and conceited... These were all the bad traits that could be found

in the five-year-old girl. This was the most important reason as to why Rachel wanted to take Charlotte away.

"I'm not worthy?" He was so furious that he laughed. "You vanished for five years, but you think I'm not worthy?"

"I refuse to argue with you about this. Since I've said everything that needs to be said, I'm going to take Samuel away with me today."

Rachel went to take her luggage as she spoke. She never intended to stay here for long in the first place, so the items that she brought with her were minimal. Spreading her luggage open on the bed, it only took her a short while to finish packing most of her things.

"I won't allow you to leave!" Justin pressed down on her luggage. In his rage, he pushed the luggage to the ground.

Crash. Everything inside was overturned.

She only frowned and looked at him as he held her hand. "Let go."

He gnashed his teeth together. "What do you take this place for? Did you think you can just come and go as you please?"

"You can refuse to let go." She turned on the voice recording function of her phone right in front of him and coldly added, "However, I will keep the evidence. I don't mind asking Hernandez to help me to file another personal injury lawsuit."

"Hernandez! It's always Hernandez!" Hearing this name again at this time undoubtedly served to add fuel to the fire. It felt as though all the rage in Justin's heart rushed to his head. He was unable to control the strength in his arms. It was almost as though he could keep a firm hold on her by doing this. Thus, he refused to release Rachel's hand no matter what.

Looking at the woman in front of him who was holding back but being indifferent at the same time, he felt as though he was a clown who had been taken for a fool all this time. She had him wrapped around her finger. “Don’t forget that you and I have a common-law relationship right now. There are some things that cannot be defined by the law!”

“What are you doing!?”

Rachel stumbled and fell on the bed as the pupils of her eyes abruptly contracted. In the moment that her shoulder was forcefully pressed down, her voice was stuck in her throat. The magnified face of a man suddenly appeared right in front of her.

Justin pinned her arms down with absolute overwhelming force, holding them high above her head. It was not a kiss. It was possession. This was the most primal and basic instinct a man had toward a woman since it was the most brutal possession and the most arrogant control over her.

“Umm—”

In desperation, she bit down on him.

His eyebrows trembled fiercely, but he refused to stop. The taste of blood spread in his mouth, causing the mouth cavity to be filled with blood. Blood trickled out from the corner of her mouth and dripped onto the gray bedspread. One drop... Two drops...

He freed one of his hands before the crisp metal sound of his belt being unbuckled echoed in the space between them.

When Rachel realized what he wanted to do, a feeling of nausea immediately flooded her. She did not know where the strength came from. Her eyes glinted and she viciously raised her knee.

“Argh!” Justin let out a pained cry and released her, clutching at his abdomen. It hurt so much that he felt like he was going to die.

Even so, she seemed to feel that it was not enough. She used all her strength to kick him straight off the bed as a result. Without the slightest hesitation, she then grabbed her phone and ran outside.

It took a long while before Justin could recover from the extreme pain.

His eyes turned crimson when he saw Rachel's departing back. The hand that was supporting himself against the bedpost suddenly lost all strength and he slid onto the carpet. There was no space for him to place his feet, so his legs were curled up together. It was truly a miserable sight.

The words 'You don't deserve to be a father' echoed in his ears and it lingered for ages.

I don't exist in her heart, not in the slightest. She only stayed here for her daughter. She planned all of this from the beginning. Approaching me was only to use the Burton Family name to gain a firm foothold in Riverdale, bring down the Hudson Pharmaceuticals, and take revenge on Jefferey and Amber to avenge Hans. Agreeing to stay here was only because it was more convenient for her to take care of Charlotte and learn more about me in preparation for future custody battles. How laughable. And, here I thought that she still had some feelings for me.

At this moment, his phone rang. It was a call from Frankie.

"President Burton, I'm going to buy breakfast now. Are there any special requests?"

"Don't need it anymore."

"Huh?" Frankie was stunned for a moment. "Then, should I pick you up right now and head for the airport?"

"Book another ticket. I'm bringing Charlotte with me."

"You're bringing Charlotte?"

"You don't need to go anymore. Stay in Riverdale and get the best divorce attorney available."

He was completely confused at this point. "A divorce attorney? Who is getting a divorce?"

Justin's expression was extremely grim. The veins in his hand that was holding the phone throbbed as he responded coldly, "Not a divorce. It's about the custodial rights for Charlotte."

His daughter was his bottom line. He would never allow anybody to take his daughter away from him, not even Rachel.

On the other side, Rachel was still in a bathrobe when she ran out of the Burton Residence. Moreover, she only had her phone on her.

She entered the garage and locked the car seconds after she hopped inside. At the same time, she dialed Hernandez's number.

Hernandez had the habit of waking up early to exercise. Therefore, he was already awake and running in the gym. While running, he answered Rachel's phone call in high spirits. "Hey, Chris. Did you miss

me so early in the morning, Babe?"

Rachel was in no mood to joke around with him. She clenched her fists to suppress the trembling of her fingers and forced herself to remain calm. "You can begin the litigation process now."

"What's wrong?" He could tell that something was wrong from her voice. "Why so suddenly? Did something happen?"

"Justin saw one of the draft lawsuits that I left behind earlier."

"Just only?"

"Yes, it happened just now."

“Where are you right now? I’ll pick you up.” Hernandez’s first reaction was to worry about Rachel’s safety. Thus, he immediately leaped off the treadmill.

“No need, I’ve already left the house. I’m inside my car. I will drive myself. Please come here to pick Jolly and Samuel up later.”

Jolly and Samuel were still staying there. Rachel was not worried that Justin would do something to them because Jolly was the precious daughter of the Carter Enterprise after all. In addition, he was also aware of Samuel’s origins. He would not offend the Carter Enterprise just to take revenge on Rachel.

Hernandez agreed immediately. “Don’t worry. Leave it to me.”

Even after ending the phone call, Rachel’s hand that was holding the steering wheel continued to tremble lightly. She was not afraid but disgusted. Whenever she thought of what Justin was going to do to her earlier, she was overcome with a physical sense of disgust.

The darkest days of her life were the days after she was locked up five years ago. She would never forget those days and yet, the initial perpetrator dared to question her why she felt nothing for him.

How laughable. Rachel did not think deeply about this matter. Driving the car out of the garage, she left quickly. I had no intention of fighting this lawsuit so early, but it would seem that things are out of my control now.

Chapter 327 Fighting for Custodial Rights

Hernandez went to pick Jolly and Samuel up in the afternoon. As soon as they arrived, she sent Samuel to wait in his room. “Chris, Justin took Charlotte with him.

Rachel was sitting on the sofa and playing with her tea set. “He is going on a business trip. Furthermore, he suddenly learned that I plan to fight him for Charlotte’s custodial rights. He must be worried that I will take Charlotte away when he isn’t around, so he took countermeasures in advance.”

“Does he think that everybody is as despicable as him? We had plenty of opportunities to secretly take Charlotte away if we wanted to. Why would we wait until today?” Jolly plopped herself down on the sofa. “Just because he himself is shameless, he thinks that everybody else is shameless too.”

“Hernandez, how high are our chances of winning this lawsuit?” Rachel handed a cup of tea to Hernandez.

Hernandez replied, “50-50.”

“Only 50-50?” Jolly raised an eyebrow at those words. “Hernandez, that’s not what you told me previously.”

“First of all, as the incident from five years ago had occurred too long ago, there’s not enough evidence. That’s why we planned to target the fact that Justin has a tendency for violence, but it might be a little difficult. Not to mention that there’s no way to build concrete evidence around the fact that he visits a psychologist. If the other party provides a medical report, then it won’t work if we accuse him of having psychological issues... There’s one more point and the most important one at that.”

“What is it?” She was a little anxious. “Don’t keep us hanging. Just tell us.”

Hernandez continued, “The issue regarding Samuel. This is not an absolute stipulation. Nevertheless, the local divorce laws generally state that each parent would obtain custody of one child in situations where there are two children and no issues with the parents’ respective economic power.”

“Samuel is not Chris’ child, though.”

“As long as he is her child in the legal sense, then that’s enough.”

Jolly furrowed her eyebrows. “In the worst case scenario...”

“There’s no need for that.” Rachel suddenly interrupted Jolly. “I know what you’re thinking. There won’t be any problems with Samuel to be registered under my name as I’ve already thought of a way.”

“What way?”

“We might not have concrete evidence for the incident five years ago, but what about now?”

She unlocked her phone and placed it on the table. Justin’s thunderous roar sounded from the recording. It was what she had recorded when he came to her room to question her after he discovered the lawsuit papers earlier this morning.

Hernandez stood up abruptly and shouted furiously. “This beast! How dare he treat you like that! I’m going to sue him for rape!”

“Calm down, Hernandez. We need to focus on the big picture here.”

He clenched his fists tightly and revealed a rare menacing expression. “Chris, I will definitely win this lawsuit for you. This man is neither deserving of you nor a daughter.”

“Thank you.” Rachel nodded lightly.

“I didn’t even know anything. I was asleep at the time.” Jolly held Rachel’s hand. “Did you get hurt?”

“Don’t worry. I’m fine.”

Ever since returning to the country, Rachel had already mentally prepared herself to face everything. A leopard could not change its spots. Even if Justin had lost his memories, the selfish and cruel nature that was etched into his very bones would never change. As he could not tolerate betrayal and schemes, she was not surprised by how today’s incident had played out.

Hernandez affirmed her words. “It’s true that this recording can serve as part of the evidence.”

“However, this is not enough. The Burton Family has deep roots in Riverdale. Unless we have an overwhelming advantage, even I lack the confidence to win the lawsuit.”

He was slightly taken aback by those words. As he looked into her eyes, he asked, “Chris, what do you plan to do?”

“If there is no evidence, then we can always create it.”

The look in Rachel’s eyes was unexpectedly cold and fierce. It was a huge difference from her usual gentle and quiet appearance. She slowly tightened her hand around her teacup until even her knuckles had turned white.

Ever since I was young, my grandmother taught me to be considerate and righteous. She taught me to be kind to others. However, society is a place governed by natural selection and the survival of the fittest. If I don’t deal with other people decisively, then those people will turn on me instead.

Late at night in Cred Valley.

“I don’t want to stay here! I want to go back to Riverdale! I want my mommy!”

“Miss Charlotte, please don’t make things difficult for me. President Burton is in a meeting right now and has informed us to take care of you. We can get you anything you want.”

“I don’t want anything! I want to go home!”

“Miss Charlotte, please behave. Eat something first. After you finish eating, President Burton will bring you home once he is done with his work.” While speaking, the servant walked over with a plate of food.

Crash. Charlotte unceremoniously knocked the plate over, which caused the food to scatter all over the ground.

The five-year-old girl did not hold back at all when she screamed. Her eyes blazed with rage as she yelled with great authority, “Who are you trying to fool?! Don’t think I don’t know that Daddy didn’t ask you to take care of me! He asked you to lock me up instead!”

When she woke up this morning, she found herself in a hotel. In her drowsy state, she originally thought that it was just a dream. It was not until she saw the two servants in front of her that she understood—she had been brought along on one of her father’s business trips.

The two servants knew that this spoiled child was not easy to serve. One of them knelt on the floor to clean up the mess while the other blocked the door to prevent Charlotte from leaving. “Miss Charlotte, you cannot leave. Please don’t make things difficult for us.”

“Move aside!” A childish voice echoed throughout the room. “I told you to move aside!”

The sound of a door opening came from the living room, to which the two servants reacted like salvation had come for them. “President Burton, you’re back!”

Justin immediately knew that Charlotte was being difficult when he saw the mess in the room.

“What’s wrong?” He entered the room patiently and waved his hand to dismiss the two servants. “Is the food not to your liking?”

“I don’t want to eat! I want Mommy!” Charlotte crossed her arms in front of her chest, looking extremely angry. “Why did you bring me here?”

He responded without batting an eye. “Didn’t you always say that I spend so much time on business trips that I don’t have time to take care of you? That’s why I brought you along with me this time. I’ll bring you back once I’m done with my work.”

“When will you be done with your work?”

“I don’t know.”

“Daddy! You’re lying to me!”

“What did I lie to you about?”

“Did you fight with Mommy again?” Charlotte hit the nail on the head. “I want to call Mommy. Give me your phone.”

Justin frowned. Looking at his daughter who was nearly six years old, he suddenly felt as though time had passed very quickly. Back then, she was just a baby with big and innocent eyes swaddled tightly in cloth. The child who used to know nothing and only knew how to cry was now able to eloquently argue and rebel against him. In fact, she often caused so much trouble that he didn't know what to do.

There were some questions that he needed to ask clearly. “Charlotte, come here.”

“Why?” She was still angry at him, so she walked over to him unwillingly. “Don't even think about trying to coax me. I want to see Mommy. Why don't you bring Mommy here? Don't forget Samuel, Godmother, and Aunt Gloria. Bring them all here.”

He crouched down and asked in all seriousness, “Charlotte, what if your mommy and I will never be together again? Who will you follow?”

She was stunned by those words. Her furious expression immediately collapsed and she burst into tears with a loud wail.

Chapter 328 Secret Rivalry

Raised by Justin himself, Charlotte was used to being spoiled and willful. It was true that she often burst into tears and kicked up a fuss, but most of the time, she only did so to frighten others into doing what she wanted and rarely cried for real. However, her eyes reddened at this moment as large drops of tears rolled down her cheeks. She couldn't stop her tears.

Justin immediately panicked. “Charlotte.”

“Sob, sob, sob...” She wept uncontrollably. “I finally waited until Mommy came back. Why are you guys separating again? You don't love me at all. Sob, sob, sob...”

“I love you, Charlotte.”

“Then, what about Mommy? Doesn’t Mommy love me too?”

He was very reluctant to answer this question, but he could not deny that Rachel loved Charlotte a lot. If not for the child, why else would she choose to remain in the Burton Residence even though she clearly hated him so much?

“She loves you too.”

“Sob, sob... You are liars! If you love me... Sob, sob... Then, why can’t you stay together for my sake?”

Charlotte was still young and did not understand the relationships between adults or the principle that something done by force would not turn out well. In her mind, having a family was a happy and blissful thing. It was something that could be done, so why couldn’t they just do it?

Unable to explain his reasons to her, Justin could only hold her and comfort her. Besides, she no longer heard what he said to her at this point since she was crying her heart out with all her might.

It was hard to say how much time had passed before she became exhausted from crying. There were no more movements from her except for the occasional shudder of her shoulders as she choked back a sob. She was clearly in extreme distress.

He sighed and walked around the room while carrying her in his arms. Just like how it was when she was younger, he patted her back and coaxed her to sleep.

Three days later, in the Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ pharmaceutical factory.

“Chris, it’s not a problem for the workers to work overtime or to produce the medicines that Dillon ordered on time. However, the warehouse is unable to keep up with the supply. The previous batch of new medicine that the factory mass-produced has basically filled up the warehouses.”

Jolly and Rachel were inspecting the pharmaceutical factory together. At the same time, she reported the situation to Rachel while they walked.

Rachel asked, "Are there any other warehouses in the vicinity for rent?"

"Originally, there were. The people below have been discussing this matter. It's just that these warehouses all belong to the same logistics company. The boss of the logistics company, Mr. Ollie Foster, seems to have had some disputes with Hudson Pharmaceuticals in the past. He has refused to work with us for years."

"They should know that Hudson Pharmaceuticals has changed hands."

"While that's true... According to the report of the person who went there to negotiate, the other party believes that the change was in name only. They claim that we are all the same and refuse to cooperate with us..."

"I'll visit them myself. Give me the number; I'll make a call to Mr. Foster and ask him when he's free."

"I'll do it." Jolly dialed the other party's number without another word. "Hello? Mr. Foster, it's me. I have contacted you previously. My name is Jolly, the special assistant of Hudson Pharmaceuticals' president."

She was greeted with silence from the other end of the line.

"It's like this; President Hudson understands that you had some misunderstandings with Hudson Pharmaceuticals before, so she wants to find a time to discuss matters with you. When would be a convenient time for you?"

She waited for Ollie's response.

"What!?" Jolly's tone suddenly changed. Rachel glanced at Jolly, not understanding what was going on. She did not know what the other party was saying on the other side of the phone while Jolly's expression darkened considerably. "I got it. I understand. Thank you."

After ending the phone call, Jolly exploded in a fit of rage. “Justin, that despicable and shameless man!”

“What’s wrong?”

“According to Mr. Foster, Justin rented out all the vacant warehouses near the factory! There’s not a single one left!”

“Justin did that?”

“Who else could it have been but him?!” Jolly nodded strongly. “He obviously knows that our factory is currently attending to a large number of pharmaceutical sales in order to obtain funds as soon as possible. That’s why he is doing this on purpose! It’s going to rain in two days. The batch of medicines stored outside must be stored into warehouses. Otherwise, the losses will be huge.”

Rachel glanced at the sky. Her hands that were hanging by her sides clenched into fists as she quietly said, “He is giving me a warning not to fight him.”

“How despicable!” Jolly spat in disgust. “Does he think that such trivial means will make you bow to him in defeat? Who is he looking down on? I’ll go and ask my father for help.”

“No need.” Rachel shook her head. “Not only are the Carter Enterprise’s warehouses a distance away, the costs of transporting the goods back and forth are also over our budget. There’s no need for that.”

“It’s still better than letting the medicines go to waste under the rain, right?”

“I have my ways. Don’t worry.” Rachel took the inventory list and retracted her gaze to study the list.

That evening, a plane swept across the sky above the Riverdale Airport and it was already night time when the aircraft landed.

Justin carried Charlotte in his arms. He was greeted by Frankie and Martha, who came to pick him up. Handing the child over to the nanny, he asked Frankie, "How is it going with the warehouses?"

"I did as you instructed. We have rented all the vacant warehouses available for rent in the vicinity of the Hudson Pharmaceuticals' pharmaceutical factory and signed a two-year lease contract."

"Good job." Justin nodded lightly.

"It didn't take a lot of effort. The boss of the logistics company has had some disputes with Hudson Pharmaceuticals in the past. He actually lost a lot of money over the years because he occupied those places and refused to leave. Hudson Pharmaceuticals is the only pharmaceutical factory in that area after all, so it was basically impossible to find any other tenants if he refused to rent to them. However, President Burton, are you really planning to be so ruthless? Hudson Pharmaceuticals is only just

beginning to make a comeback and improve their circumstances. Their inventory turnover is definitely not enough at the moment. Moreover, it's going to rain in two days."

"If Rachel does not want those medicines to go to waste in the factory, then she will come to me."

"Why do you need to go this far? You're just making a scene. I'm sure President Hudson will not be happy about this."

Justin glared at Frankie fiercely. Frankie immediately shut his mouth in obedience. Watching his boss enter the car, he retorted in his heart, He is clearly trying to force President Hudson into meeting him but refuses to be straightforward about it. Isn't he just asking for trouble by doing this?

When they all entered the car, Martha sat in the backseat while carrying Charlotte in her arms. She commented in a quiet whisper, "Sir, Charlotte doesn't look too good."

Justin replied, "Don't worry about her. She should fix that temper of hers."

Charlotte had barely eaten anything over the past three days, screaming and crying to return to Riverdale. He had to deal with work matters during the day and coax her into eating something when he returned to the hotel at night. It had been very exhausting for him.

Despite saying those words on the surface, he couldn't bring himself to actually do that. "Frankie."

Frankie turned around from the front passenger's seat. "What is it, President Burton?"

"Draft a warehouse rights-sharing agreement and hand it to me tomorrow morning."

He stiffened slightly. "A rights-sharing agreement?"

"Draw up an agreement for capital injection in the form of intangible assets, including all the warehouses we have leased recently."

Frankie suddenly returned to his senses and immediately broke into a smile. "Are you planning to inject capital into Hudson Pharmaceuticals? Are you planning to cooperate with President Hudson? I knew you wouldn't actually confront her. Why didn't you say so earlier?"

"Have I ever mentioned that this rights-sharing agreement is meant for her?"

"You didn't say that. You didn't say that at all. I misspoke." He pretended to slap his mouth, but his face was all smiles. How should I say it? Everything has its vanquisher. Even a decisive man like President Hudson is helpless after meeting a woman like Rachel. Even though she has angered him to the point of driving him mad, he still turned into putty in her hands once he has calmed down.

Chapter 329 The Highest Bidder Wins

By the time Justin returned home, it was already late at night. The servant took Charlotte to the bedroom to rest. When she came out of the bedroom, she saw that the lights of the study were on and the door was open.

Knock. Knock. Knock. Justin looked up to see the servant. "Sir, have you eaten dinner? Should I make something for you?"

"Is Gloria not back yet?"

"She said that she'll be back soon as she has dinner with the troupe tonight. Sir, do you have anything you want to eat?"

He pondered for a moment. "Please make me some noodles."

"Alright. Please wait for a moment. It'll be ready soon."

"Okay."

After the servant left, he sat in front of his computer for a long time but could hardly comprehend any of the words on the screen.

The house had been lively before he left on his business trip. It used to be filled with the sounds of Jolly and Gloria bickering whenever they met, Samuel and Charlotte running up and down the stairs, and Rachel chasing after the two children while shouting for them to slow down. However, the house suddenly seemed empty and dreary when he came back from this business trip.

Justin looked at his phone on the table. There were several times when he reached out to pick the phone up, but he held himself back. A long while later, he decided to get up and leave his phone

behind to head downstairs.

"Sir, why did you come down? I was just about to call you." The servant had finished making the noodles. It was just a simple bowl of egg noodles with tomatoes and an additional sunny-side up egg that was served with a side dish.

He had only just taken his seat when the electronic lock made a beep to indicate the door opening.

“When did you come back?” Gloria looked at Justin while changing to her indoor shoes.

“I just arrived.”

“Are you having dinner?” She walked into the dining room, opened the fridge to grab a bottle of coke, and gulped half a bottle in one go. “Then, take your time eating. I’m going upstairs to sleep.”

“Don’t you have anything that you want to ask me?”

Justin’s words made her pause mid-step.

“Ask you about what?” Gloria turned around to look at him. “Ask you why you have chased Miss Rachel out again? Or, why did you take Charlotte away?”

“She left on her own.”

“In my opinion, there is no difference between the two.” Her gaze was gloomy. “She also chose to leave five years ago, but did she really leave because she wanted to?”

He scowled. “Do you all take me for a heinous villain? Does it not matter what I do now? Is it impossible for me to make up for all the damage I caused back then? If that’s the case, then why does every one of you act like you’re so magnanimous? Why do you act like the past is behind you? Even

prison sentences have a time limit and life sentences can be replaced with shorter sentences. Did I murder somebody or caused an arson? Can’t I get a chance to be forgiven?”

The more he talked, the more agitated Justin became. The veins in his hand that gripped the corner of the table throbbed.

The past three days had been incredibly depressing for him. He had to maintain a good mood every day to take care of Charlotte, so only he knew just how torturous it had been. The woman he loved the most had been scheming against him all this time, but he didn't even have the right to blame her!

Gloria looked at Justin quietly. "An apology does not mean saying the words 'I'm sorry'. Those who made a mistake have to suffer the consequences of their evil actions. This includes the other party's refusal to forgive you. It is the victim's right to do so. Why should you be forgiven just because you have apologized and repented for your actions?"

"Then, tell me! What should I do?! She can retaliate against me a hundred times or a thousand times over for what I did to her. Will that be enough!?"

She suddenly sighed heavily. "Forget it."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm saying you should return Charlotte to Miss Rachel and stop disturbing her."

Upon hearing those words, the pupils in his eyes contracted abruptly in disbelief.

Meanwhile, Gloria went upstairs without another word. The dining room fell into a dead silence again following the sound of a door closing upstairs.

Justin gripped his fork and stared blankly at the noodles that had gone mushy in front of him. When he thought back to the past few months, those days felt like a dream.

The woman cooking noodles for him just a few days ago had betrayed him without any warning. Moreover, the reason for her betrayal was something that did not exist in his memories. Everything that he knew, he heard from the people around him. He supposedly deserved to be spurned and abandoned. However, the most outrageous part was that he could not recall anything.

The more he stewed in his thoughts, the more aggrieved he felt. He angrily took a few bites of his noodles, but it felt like he was chewing on wax.

Clatter. He threw his utensils onto the table in a rage.

The next day, Justin instructed Frankie to give Rachel a call as soon as he arrived at the company. "Ask her to visit the Burton Group. As long as she signs the agreement and allows the Burton Group to become one of the company shareholders, the warehouses located in the vicinity of Hudson Pharmaceuticals can be used at will."

Frankie was holding some documents in his hands. "I was just about to report this matter to you."

"What is it?"

"Mr. Foster called to cancel the leasing agreement. He is willing to pay us three times the fee to terminate the contract. He has already signed a contract with Hudson Pharmaceuticals."

Justin paused mid-step as his expression darkened. "When was that?"

"Just last night." Frankie looked at Justin's expression fearfully. "President Burton, I've already handed this matter over to the Legal Department."

However, Justin didn't seem to have heard Frankie as he gnashed his teeth and spat out a name. "Rachel Hudson!"

Afterward, he strode toward his office.

At this moment, Rachel was in a meeting. The sound of her vibrating phone came from her pocket before she had a look at the caller ID and said, "Continue with the discussion. I'm going to take this call. Hello?"

"Aren't you a capable woman? You managed to terminate a contract that the Burton Group has already finalized." As soon as the call connected, Justin's voice rang out from the other side. He was blunt and straight to the point.

She answered lightly. "It has not been finalized. The contract for the transfer of rights for use has not been signed. All you did was pay a deposit. I can still afford to pay the contract-breaking fee."

"Mr. Foster has a grudge against Hudson Pharmaceuticals. What did you do?"

"Don't you understand the principle of 'the highest bidder wins'? I offered an extravagant price to buy those lands. It doesn't matter how stubborn one is; there's no way a businessman will turn his nose up at money. Besides, I'm not Jefferey Hudson. I explained some of the past grievances and we decided to leave well enough alone."

There was nothing in the vicinity of Hudson Pharmaceuticals' pharmaceutical factory. It was given that some pollution would occur due to factory production. In addition, it was located in a remote area, which was why Mr. Foster's logistics and warehousing business had been very bleak and it was more so since he broke off relations with Hudson Pharmaceuticals. It was practically a money-losing business. Not to mention, he had to pay high land taxes for those properties every year.

Rachel's actions of holding out an olive branch represented a solution to one of his major concerns. These warehouses were very important to her, but they were a thorn in his sides. It was better to get rid of them as soon as possible.

Justin's voice was mixed with a hint of rage. "Rachel, Riverdale is not like abroad. An acquisition does not rescind the lease. So what if you bought the land? My two-year lease still stands, but your transaction is illegal. You can't use the warehouse as long as I don't agree to it."

"Go ahead. Why don't you send more men to block the warehouses?"

"Do you think I won't dare to do so?"

"I'll be waiting." Three cold words sounded through the phone, sounding extremely contemptuous.

"You..." Before he could finish his sentence, the other party ended the call.

A ball of rage brewed in his chest while he gripped his phone tightly for a moment. Crash. Everything on his desk was swept to the ground with a resounding crash before he gripped the corners of the table, looking extremely furious.

Chapter 330 The Dusty Truth

Justin supported himself against the table as blood rushed to his head, making him feel very dizzy. Frankie was worried. "President Burton, are you okay?"

"I'm fine." Those words had only just left Justin's mouth when he abruptly stumbled. He could barely stand as all the strength left his knees.

Frankie moved quickly to support Justin. "President Burton, are you feeling dizzy again? I'll send you to the hospital."

"No need!" Justin clenched his fists tightly and it took a long while for him to recover his strength.

The difference in Rachel's attitude almost made her seem like she was a different person altogether. Her voice over the phone was so cold that she sounded like a stranger when he would rather have her show some emotions for him. However, there was nothing—not the slightest hint whatsoever.

"President Burton, please don't be angry. The Legal Department is urgently working on this matter. Mr. Foster has no contractual integrity either. You originally planned to hand these warehouses to President Hudson out of kindness, but now... What a terrible mess. I'll go and explain to President Hudson."

"No need." Justin leaned against the chair and slowly lowered himself into the seat. "You can leave for now."

Frankie was slightly taken aback by those words and glanced at Justin a few times with worry. Before he left, he quietly heaved a sigh in his heart. Who could have imagined that things would turn into such a huge mess? I'm sure President Hudson thinks that Mr. Burton is deliberately finding faults with her. At this point, it's impossible to clear up this misunderstanding.

After Frankie left, Justin quietly sat at his desk alone. A pounding headache threatened to split his head apart as he tremblingly pulled open the drawer on his left to search for his medicine. It took some searching before he found the bottle of medicine, only to discover that the bottle was empty.

A moment of dizziness washed over him, causing him to collapse to the floor. The pain was so intense that he could barely breathe. His entire body curled up into a ball; his complexion was pale and his body was drenched in cold sweat.

He did not know how long passed. All of a sudden, an image of the accident that occurred five years before flashed through his mind.

Crash. There was a loud crash that was accompanied by the sharp squeal of brakes. The car he was driving had slammed into the protective barrier along the highway to the airport, after which the entire car teetered on the edge of the road and his vision gradually turned hazy.

Before he lost consciousness, he was staring up at the sky. A plane swept across the shattered sky beyond the shattered windshield in an arc, passing through the clouds and heading for the other side of the ocean.

“Ahhh!” Justin suddenly let out a cry of pain and clutched his head.

Resembling the floodwaters that rushed out of a broken dam, various unfamiliar memories flooded his mind. These memories gradually washed away the original and inaccurate memories, replacing them with abusive and violent behavior...

He remembered everything.

He did not know how much time passed, but the hand that was clutching tightly at his head slowly relaxed. Using the chair and desk nearby to support himself, he staggered to his feet with difficulty since he was breathing heavily and his entire body trembled.

At this moment, the dusty memories that had been sealed away for five whole years were swirling madly in his head.

Five years ago, he was the one who wronged Rachel. Everything was a mistake. Be it gratitude or revenge, all of them were wrong.

A layer of mist suddenly covered the man's eyes. Forbearance, regret, pain... He was flooded with a myriad of emotions that tangled together, which left him feeling guilty and remorseful for the distant past.

Five years ago.

It was the third day since Rachel left. Justin searched the entire Riverdale but failed to locate even the slightest hint of her shadow.

He sat on the couch in the living room of the Burton Residence. A scar stretched from his forehead across his stern face and it was this scar that made him look terrifying as though his entire face had been divided into two. At this moment, his expression was extremely gloomy.

Frankie couldn't help shuddering when he entered and saw this sight, after which he cautiously said, "President Burton, the person you wanted has been brought here."

Upon hearing those words, Justin immediately rose from the sofa. "Bring him in."

The words had only just left his mouth when two of his subordinates entered from outside with an old man who was being restrained.

The old man was none other than Irwin Chase, the human trafficker, whom Rachel called 'Grandpa Irwin'.

Irwin immediately fell to his knees with a thud and shivered in fear like a leaf in the wind when he saw Justin. "I beg you, please let me go. I have no grievances against you. Why do you keep capturing me? Why?!"

"No grievances?" Justin snorted coldly. "Old man, take a good look at me. Have you forgotten who I am?"

Irwin had met Justin before. He looked up only to see Justin's ferocious expression, which frightened him so much that he shuddered and immediately lowered his head again. "I... I really don't remember. How can I forget an influential person like you if I've met you before?"

"What? That's not what you said when you kidnapped me and locked me up in the underground dungeon twenty years ago."

What? Twenty years ago? Irwin stiffened at those words. The man in front of him seemed to be approximately thirty years old. Twenty years ago, he would have been around ten years old.

Those who worked in human trafficking rarely targeted children of that age. The first reason was that these children were older, so they remembered more things and were more opinionated. Hence, they were not easy to manage. The second reason was that older children were not easy to sell. Their buyers preferred younger children.

Among all the children he kidnapped and sold in the past, there was only one child who was around ten years old or so. His complexion turned deathly pale when that thought occurred to him. "You... You are..."

"Have you remembered me now?" Justin stared at the old man coldly. "That's good."

"Please let me go! I beg you! I had no choice back then!" Irwin desperately prostrated himself in front of Justin and groveled. "Please have mercy on me. I'm nothing more than a sack of old bones now. How

much longer can I live? Just... Just let me go, for Rachel's sake. Please let me go."

At the mention of Rachel's name, Justin abruptly clenched his fists. "For her sake? Even that would require her to intervene personally. Where is she?"

Irwin was taken aback. "Rachel? Hasn't Rae been by your side all this time?"

“So, you won’t say?” Justin turned his back to Irwin and coldly instructed, “Drag him back and chop one of his fingers off. If he refuses to speak, then chop another finger off.”

Before Irwin could say a word, he was marched out by the two bodyguards standing beside him. “Save me! Save me! I really don’t know anything! I really don’t know anything! Ahhh!”

A terrible scream came from the courtyard outside. Even Frankie couldn’t help closing his eyes as he lacked the courage to look.

“Young Master Justin, the man has fainted!” The voice of one of the bodyguards came from outside.

Justin didn’t even glance over. “Wake him up.”

“Yes.”

Not long afterward, Irwin was awoken by a bucket of cold water. The intense pain made him lie on the ground as he trembled uncontrollably. “I really don’t know where Rachel went. I have not seen her since her grandmother passed away. She—”

“Chop off another finger.” The cold voice of a man came from within the house.

The bodyguard immediately grabbed Irwin’s hand and placed it on a rock. Then, he raised the knife in his hand again.

When the cold glint of light flashed, Irwin’s eyes widened in fright. In his desperation, he yelled, “I saved your life before!”

Inside the house, Justin raised a hand. The bodyguard’s knife stopped right above Irwin’s finger, nearly chopping it off.

Irwin gasped for breath. Cold sweat dripped down his neck as he shivered uncontrollably. "I was not the one who kidnapped and sold you. Back then, you would have died in that fire if I had not turned the other way and let you escape! I saved your life!"

Justin sneered. "You sure dare to say just about anything in order to survive, don't you?"

"I'm not lying!" Irwin knelt on the ground, gasping due to the pain. "Rae... Rae can be my witness. Back then... Back then, she was the one who came to beg me. She begged me to save you!"

Justin jerked his head in surprise. "What did you say?"