

Mute Bride 341

Chapter 341 She Has Lost a Baby Before

Charlotte's arrival marked a turning point in the court hearing. After all, civil cases like child custody battles were the hardest to adjudicate on. There were no black-and-white rules on this, but it was almost common practice that the child's wishes would have a huge impact on the court's verdict.

Justin frowned at once. "Miss Carter, who let you bring my daughter here? Frankie, take Charlotte out of here now!"

Hernandez stood up at once. "Your Honor."

The judge banged the gavel in his hand. "Silence!"

The scene went silent at once.

Hernandez accused sharply, "How could a kid grow up under the control of such a domineering father?"

Justin looked as black as thunder as he struggled to suppress his displeasure. "Rachel, why do you have to have Charlotte brought here?"

Instead of answering him, Rachel continued to make her case. "Your Honor, there's one other thing that I need to make clear. I gave birth to Charlotte while I was divorced and technically single. The time of her birth and the time of my divorce could be verified, so her custody should've been mine in the first place."

All at once, a discussion broke out among the jury.

Justin wanted to say something, but his attorney stopped him, saying, "Your Honor, I'd like to ask for a recess." After all, Charlotte's sudden presence had made the situation somewhat complicated.

The judge nodded slightly. "The court will recess for 15 minutes."

Justin stopped Rachel as soon as they left the courtroom. "Come with me. I'd like to have a word with you!"

"Justin." Hernandez tried to stop him.

Rachel was imperturbable, though. "It's okay. I'll be back in a minute."

Only then did Hernandez relent.

After following Justin into the lounge, Rachel asked straightforwardly, "What do you want to say? Shoot."

Justin took a deep breath and let it out slowly. After barely calming himself, he said, "Rachel, whatever means you use for this lawsuit, I can understand it, but why do you have to be so cruel? Why let Charlotte see us at each other's throats? She's just a kid!"

Rachel argued, "She's already six years old. Do you think she doesn't know anything? Rather than coaxing her into living a fairytale, it's better to let her choose her own future life. At least she won't blame me in the future for not giving her the opportunity!"

"That's too cruel! You're her mother!"

"It's precisely because I'm her mother that I want her to know I've never given up on her! I'll do my best to win this lawsuit."

Justin was on the verge of breaking down. "Do you have to do this? I told you that you can visit her anytime you want. You—"

"I don't want that!" Rachel interrupted him snappily. "It made me feel very uncomfortable the first time I heard this from you. You sounded like you'd made a huge concession or something. Do you honestly think I should be eternally grateful for that?"

Justin was at a loss for a reply. Rachel's words punctured the man's eardrum and pierced through his nerves one after another like needles.

"If there's nothing else, I gotta go. The hearing will continue in a minute."

"Wait a minute." Justin grabbed Rachel's arm. His deep voice dripped with humbleness as he said, "I'm not making concessions; I'm begging you. I can't lose Charlotte."

In a small movement, Rachel broke free of Justin's grasp and flicked the nonexistent dust off the cuff of her shirt.

When Justin saw this, his heart clenched all of a sudden. To think that she loathes me to such a degree!

Just then, Rachel said, "I don't believe you. Since you could marry me and then divorce me for the sake of your own interests in the past, you could also abandon Charlotte for the sake of your own interests in the future." Her heart was desolate as their past was brought up again. As she stared at Justin, everything that had happened five years ago flashed vividly before her eyes. "You probably have forgotten about it, but I lost a baby back then." The baby she had lost before conceiving Charlotte was always a pain in her heart, and she had never gotten over it over the past five years.

Upon hearing her words, Justin turned pale and staggered. "I... I didn't forget it. I still remember that, Rachel. I still remember that."

Rachel turned her face away, not wanting to look at him.

As they both silently refused to budge, Justin's voice sounded more and more muffled up. "I know it's useless for me to say anything, but I'll spend my whole life making it up to you and Charlotte. I'll have the Burton Group's shares that I have added to the will." At the mention of his will, he felt like he had clutched his lifeline, and his eyes lit up somewhat. "Rachel, didn't we agree that I'll make a will to protect Charlotte's rights in the Burton Family so that you don't have to worry about her suffering wrongs in the Burton Family? Please let Charlotte stay with me. Take it as my plea to you."

However, Rachel replied coldly, "Your will will only be valid when you're dead." With that, she pulled the door open and left the lounge right away without looking back, leaving the man standing at the door with his face as white as a sheet.

"Mr. Burton!" His attorney hurried over with an anxious expression. "Why are you here? We need to rediscuss our strategy."

"What else can I do?"

"Your child's wishes are crucial to the case. If you can convince your child to live with you, then there'll basically be no problem."

Justin barely pulled himself together. "Where's Charlotte?"

"The public rest area."

At this moment, Charlotte was holding a bottle of fruit juice given by Jolly in the public rest area outside the courtroom, but she didn't drink it.

"Why not drink it, Charlotte? You don't like it?"

Charlotte's little face was clouded with unhappiness. She asked with a frown, "Godmother, why are Daddy and Mommy fighting for my custody? Can't they be together?"

"You probably still don't understand the matters between adults. In that case, let me ask you this: if you have to make a choice, who do you wish to live with?"

Charlotte's eyes reddened somewhat. "Daddy and Mommy have asked me this question before." In the past, she would cry at the question, and Rachel and Justin would feel sorry for her and stop questioning her. But now, it seemed that it'd be useless no matter how she cried.

“You see, don’t you always want to be with your mom? Now your mom has come back for you. If you live with her in the future, you’ll get to play with Samuel, who will go to school with you every day and go to the playground with you on weekends. We’ll travel together during the winter and summer breaks... How happy we’ll be!”

“But I’m also very happy to be with Daddy. He’s very nice to me, too.”

“What’s good about him? He—”

Before Jolly could finish her sentence, she was interrupted by Justin’s voice from behind. “Charlotte.”

At the sight of Justin, Charlotte immediately jumped down from her chair, ran to the man, and flung herself into his arms. She sobbed in an extremely aggrieved voice, “Daddy!”

Justin was very saddened to see how aggrieved Charlotte looked.

Just then, Charlotte said, “Daddy, Godmother said I have to choose between you and Mommy, and I can’t choose both of you.”

“Who would you like to choose, then?”

Charlotte lay in Justin’s arms without speaking.

They had lived together for such a long time as father and daughter, so if anything happened, Justin would be Charlotte’s biggest support. Regardless of what Jolly might have said, Justin was still confident of this. Rachel has made a mistake in trying to use our child to win the case.

At the sight of the scene, Jolly secretly clenched her fists and made up her mind. I still can’t let Rachel go easy on him this time. If she still doesn’t harden her heart, it’ll be too late.

Chapter 342 Profligate Lifestyle

The hearing continued after the court's recess ended. The judge directly asked Charlotte who she'd like to live with.

However, before Charlotte could give her answer, Hernandez suddenly stood up. "Your Honor, before we ask the child who she'd like to live with, I'd like to present a new reference material for the case. I think you, the jury present, and the child herself have the right to see it."

The judge nodded slightly.

Hernandez whispered something to the projectionist at the scene. Soon after that, a few photos appeared on the LED screen.

At the sight of the photos, Justin turned pale at once.

The photos were selfies taken on a large hotel bed by a woman resting her head on Justin's arm—the woman who had turned up next to him the morning before yesterday.

Frankie hurriedly covered Charlotte's eyes, but it was too late.

Charlotte was stunned for a while with her eyes covered. Then, she mumbled quietly, "Does Daddy have another new girlfriend?"

Rachel was startled for a moment before she clenched her fists.

Hernandez exchanged a brief look with Jolly in the public gallery. Then, he stood up and explained, "The woman in the photos is a sex worker, or, in layman's terms, a hooker!"

In an instant, Justin's pupils shrank, and his temples throbbed. He had never been humiliated like this before.

The jury's peculiar gazes were all focused on the man as they discussed the photos.

Just then, Hernandez continued, "The hiring of prostitutes is prohibited by law and by moral standards. My client didn't want to bring this up at first, but as an attorney, I believe this is a key piece of information that can prove that the defendant has a profligate lifestyle. He's simply a shameless man who lacked the morality necessary to raise a child!"

Justin's attorney panicked. "Please watch your language, Mr. Hernandez! By accusing my client of having a profligate lifestyle based on a few photos alone, you and your client are essentially committing libel!"

"Silence!" The gavel struck. The judge said in a serious tone, "Mr. Hernandez, please don't bring out materials irrelevant to the case for an argument."

Hernandez nodded, accepting the judge's words with an open mind. Naturally, as an attorney, he knew very well that these photos wouldn't have any direct impact on the ruling; they would only make the jury take them into consideration at most. However, the usefulness of these photos lay in Charlotte.

As he had expected, when the judge asked Charlotte again who she'd like to live with, she answered, "I want to live with Mommy."

The blood visibly drained from Justin's face. He exclaimed in disbelief, "Charlotte!"

Charlotte turned around and hugged Jolly, her eyes reddened. She was still too little to know what the words "the hiring of prostitutes" meant, but in her view, Justin had found another new girlfriend, which was a huge blow to her. Kids were the most insecure, and yet Justin always had all kinds of women

around him. Now that someone else had turned up after Amber was finally gone, how could she accept it?

With the trump card played, everything was decided. As Hernandez and the others had expected, the court ruled that Rachel would have Charlotte's custody.

When Hernandez walked out of the court building with the written judgment in his hands, Rachel smiled the most relaxed smile she had had in recent days.

"Let's go, Chris." Jolly's voice sounded from the entrance; she was holding Charlotte's hand next to her.

Rachel immediately went over to Charlotte and scooped her up in her arms before giving her a kiss. "Charlotte, from now on, you'll be staying with me, and we'll never be separated from each other. Let me take you home."

Charlotte seemed somewhat tired, though; she buried her head on Rachel's shoulder without making a sound.

Suddenly, some quick footsteps came from behind. "Charlotte!"

It was Justin. With a stubbly chin, he looked a sorry sight and was no longer as high-spirited as he had been in the past; even his footsteps were weak.

Lifting her head from Rachel's shoulder, Charlotte stared at Justin with glistening black eyes. Her eyes reddened slightly, and her lips quivered, but she didn't make a sound. Instead, she merely mouthed the word "Daddy."

"Charlotte, do you not want Daddy anymore?" Justin hurriedly walked over to Charlotte in an attempt to explain about the photos.

Hernandez stopped him, though. "I'm sorry, Mr. Burton. The court has stated in the written judgment that you may visit the child once a week, but today is not the day."

"Step aside!" Justin's eyes were bloodshot. He exuded chilliness from every pore of his body, as though he hated Hernandez's guts.

"There's no need to say anything else, Hernandez. Let's go." Rachel left with Charlotte in her arms without looking back.

Hernandez gave Justin a warning look before quickly catching up to her.

Justin stood frozen in place for quite a while before it occurred to him to go after them. He rushed after them, but he didn't even manage to touch the trunk lid of their car. In the end, he could only watch helplessly as their car drove away from the court building's entrance.

As the summer was transitioning to autumn, the autumn wind swept up fallen leaves in the glaring sunlight.

"President Burton!" Frankie hurried over to Justin. "That woman was a hooker, and she posted the photos on social media. Now the photos have been retweeted more than 10,000 times, and news reports of you hiring a prostitute are everywhere! The Burton Group's share prices have started to drop!"

Justin looked expressionlessly in the direction the car had left as if he hadn't heard Frankie's words.

Just then, a ringtone played like the final nail in the coffin. Seeing the caller ID, Frankie blanched at once. "President Burton! It's Old Mr. Burton calling!" Needless to say, Arthur was calling to ask about the rumors of Justin having "hired a prostitute."

The phone kept ringing. After a long time, Justin answered the phone.

In an instant, questions came pelting down on the man from the other end of the line. "What have you done? What the hell's going on with those news stories online? Come back now!"

"Grandpa, I can't go back now."

"What are you talking about?"

"I've lost the lawsuit. I'm gonna apply for a retrial."

Upon hearing this, Arthur became even more furious. "You wrongheaded b*stard! Do you know you've been tricked by Rachel, that woman?"

“This is a matter between her and me, and I don’t need you to step in.”

Arthur could be heard banging his stick on the ground on the other end of the line. “Do you think that I want to step in? She’s set you up in such a despicable and shameless way, and you’re still unable to realize how sinister this woman is even now? She’s not only snatching the child from you; she’s also trying to bring down the Burton Group! She was up to no good from the very start!”

Justin frowned. “What do you mean, Grandpa?”

“You still don’t get it, huh? That woman was hired by her!”

Justin didn’t expect to hear such words from Arthur. The instant he heard these, his mind instantly went blank, as though it had exploded with a loud boom. Impossible!

“You don’t believe me, huh?” Arthur let out a snort. “If you don’t believe me, then look into it yourself! This woman has done lots of things behind your back, and this is only one of them!”

The speech on the other end continued, but Justin was no longer listening. “Cough, cough...!”

“President Burton!” Frankie cried out in alarm. With quick reflexes, he held onto Justin, preventing the latter from falling. “Are you alright?”

A pool of blood spewed out of Justin’s mouth and spread on the ground like the red blossoms of thorn apple flowers. He clutched his chest, which ached with acute, suffocating pain, as though it would explode at any minute.

Chapter 343 The Root of All Evil

At the Burton Group, the phone outside the company president’s office had rung all afternoon. The sound of someone coughing came from behind the desk.

Just then, Frankie hurriedly entered the office with the document in his hands. “President Burton, we’ve found out that Miss Carter was also at Hotel Platinum that day. Unless proven otherwise, that woman could have indeed been hired by President Hudson and her company.”

Justin sounded very calm. “Got it.”

Frankie suggested gingerly, “President Burton, I asked our company’s legal department about this, and they said we’d better sue Hudson Pharmaceuticals for libel.”

“That’s unnecessary,” came the man’s terse and unequivocal reply.

“So, you mean...”

“Put this matter aside first. Just suppress the news.”

“Aren’t we gonna do anything, then? President Hudson has smeared your reputation by doing this. If we don’t do anything to clear your name, the company’s board of directors will call you to account—”

Justin lifted his head from his laptop, his stony face gaunt and craggy. “Didn’t you hear what I said?”

Although Frankie dared not disobey Justin, he was indignant deep down. He muttered, “I just feel sorry for you. It was unnecessary to resort to such underhanded means for the lawsuit. And besides, President Hudson wasn’t such a person in the past.”

Justin’s grip on his fountain pen tightened slightly. “She’s not to blame.” Rachel used to be an unsophisticated and kind-hearted person who was sincere to others, but she never got to meet a nice person, and the few relatives and friends who were nice to her ended up leaving her one after another. It was me who drove her into becoming the person she is today. I’m the root of all evil, he thought.

Darkness slowly shrouded Riverdale, while the Golden Cruise lay at anchor on the river with its bright lights and the neon lights in Riverdale echoing each other. Aboard the cruise ship, the party was still in full swing, but one private room deep in the restaurant formed a sharp contrast with the raging noise outside.

Lila and several bodyguard-like men were standing guard outside the private room, forbidding even the waiter to enter to serve dishes. “Just give it to me.” She took the food tray from the waiter and entered.

At this moment, only two people were in the private room—Dillon and Randall.

“Young Master Porter, I heard that you found a new partner?”

“No, it’s not really new. It’s Hudson Pharmaceuticals, whom I’ve worked with before.”

Randall was taken aback by Dillon’s words. “After his arrest for what happened to Hudson Pharmaceuticals, Jefferey gave up a name list that implicated a lot of people. Young Master Porter, how could you take chances by working with them?”

“The most dangerous place is the safest. Don’t you know that?”

“But that’s too dangerous.”

Dillon replied, “Don’t worry. Even my dad has approved of this, so there’s no way the collaboration could go wrong.” Still, when he recalled how Lila and his father had worked together to keep him in the dark, a hint of gloom crept into his eyes, and he sulkily took a sip of his wine.

Just then, Lila came in to serve food, only to be greeted with a glare from a sullen-faced Dillon.

Randall seemed lost in thought. “Young Master Porter, I’ve never heard of Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ new president before. All I heard was that she was an illegitimate daughter and that she personally sent Jefferey to prison. How could you guys trust her?”

“Would anyone who isn’t cruel dare to do business with us?”

“Still, you can’t be too careful, Young Master Porter.”

Dillon leaned back in his chair with a nonchalant sneer. "What trouble can she make? She's just a woman. And besides, she's supplied plenty of goods this time. As long as we make sure that nothing goes wrong, the goods will be enough for us to sustain ourselves in hiding for a year or so."

"Master Porter's asking you to go back?"

"It can't be helped. After all, a higher profile draws greater scrutiny. Perhaps he thinks that I've stayed too long in Riverdale. Things have been quite tense lately."

Upon speaking of this, Randall became worried as well. "The Riverdale Investigation Bureau has always been watching us. It's just that they're not able to get hold of any evidence, so they can't say anything. But the amount of goods is large this time. Young Master Porter, I think you'd better not escort the goods yourself lest you get caught."

"No, I have to. I can't trust the minions to do it. We had a batch of goods confiscated last time, and my dad was very unhappy about that."

Randall had a thoughtful expression on his face. "Young Master Porter, how about this? Let Rachel, that woman, escort the goods."

"You mean to let her take part in this? Are you crazy?"

"Young Master Porter, I think you've not fully trusted her yet, right?"

"That's of course. We only collaborated once, and the goods didn't come from her, but from Jason. I reckon that fellow must have earned a fortune by pocketing the price difference."

Randall advised, "The only thing that makes me worried about this woman is her relationship with the Carters."

"You mean Richard Carter?"

“That’s right. As you know, Richard and I used to be on good terms. Since he’s acknowledged Rachel as his goddaughter, he has to have a good opinion of her. If she’s a person of upright character, do you really believe she’ll be in cahoots with us?”

Dillon’s hand froze slightly as he played with his walnuts.

Just as Randall was about to say something again, he saw Lila making tea nearby, which made him grow wary. “Miss Lila, please leave the room for a while.”

Lila nodded and left without a change in her countenance, but her brows furrowed as she closed the door. Contrary to Dillon, a good-for-nothing, Randall was a deep one. Every word he had just said hit the nail on the head with his suspicions toward Rachel. Things are gonna get tricky, I’m afraid, she thought.

It rained during the night, causing a sudden drop in temperature. As a result, Jolly sneezed as soon as she got out of bed the next day.

“The weather’s cooler today. You should put more clothes on,” came Rachel’s voice of reminder from the kitchen.

Jolly sniffled while pulling out the dining chair. After seating herself, she listlessly leaned back in her chair and said with a sigh, “Now that we’ve won the lawsuit, I can finally relax.”

“In that case, let’s give you a day off so that you can rest up.”

“Really?” Jolly straightened up at once, her eyes sparkling.

“Really.” Rachel took out three tickets. “I happen to have these. Just take Charlotte and Samuel to the Marine Aquarium to have fun.”

Jolly propped her head on her hand while looking at the tickets on the table. “Are you worried about Charlotte being upset?”

"This kid always has a lot going on in her mind. The photos..." Rachel merely frowned without finishing her sentence.

Jolly's expression turned serious. "Sorry that I did it without your permission." Taking those photos had been part of their plan at the start, but before the hearing, Rachel decided against using the photos, fearing that the photos might impact Charlotte too much given the girl's young age. However, Jolly had gone over Rachel's head this time.

"I know you did that for my own good."

"That's of course. Now that you have your daughter's custody, you can finally put your mind at rest," Jolly said smugly. "The Burton Group's PR is too slow this time. Justin has turned from a wealthy bachelor to a universally-spurned whoremonger overnight. It'll probably be hard to wind this matter up without holding a press conference to explain this."

"I'm afraid not even a press conference will be helpful this time." Rachel took a document out of her handbag and handed it to Jolly. "Help me get this done when you return to work."

Jolly's eyes lit up as she took the document. "He really signed it?"

"Of course." Rachel didn't turn a hair. "Signed his name in black and white. If anything happens, the Burton Group's gonna take full responsibility."

Just as she was speaking, her phone suddenly rang on the table.

Jolly saw the caller ID first, and she was startled for a moment. "It's Dillon."

Rachel's eyes darkened as well. Seems like we're gonna meet up again.

Chapter 344 Making a Comeback Overnight

When Rachel arrived at Westhill Golf Club in the morning, Dillon and Jason were already there playing golf on the lawn. "Have I kept you waiting? Sorry, I was stuck in traffic for a while," she said, greeting the pair as she walked up to them.

Dillon waved his hand nonchalantly before pushing up the brim of his baseball cap. "It's okay, Miss Hudson. You're different from us loafers. We came here early for relaxation."

"Not at all, Young Master Porter. It's modest of you to say that."

"Miss Hudson, do you know how to play golf?"

"Not really."

"You've got to learn a little." Dillon waved his hand into the distance. "Bring me my golf club."

The caddie immediately ran to get the golf club.

"Take it. I'll teach you." Dillon handed the golf club to Rachel.

Rachel was startled.

"What are you waiting for, Rachel? Hurry up and take it!" urged Jason beside them. "Young Master Porter plays golf even better than professional players do! You should consider it an honor that he's willing to teach you."

Jason was hell-bent on sucking up to Dillon, but his obsequious demeanor was somewhat revolting.

Rachel wasn't interested in golf, but she knew from her previous dealings with Dillon that he was a very proud man. If she were to make him look bad, it'd be difficult for her to do what she wanted to do in the

future. "Thank you, Young Master Porter."

“Why stand on ceremony? We’re now in the same boat, anyway.” Dillon pointed to the golf ball on the ground. “Now play a stroke and let me take a look.”

Rachel went over with the golf club in her hand, looking exceptionally charming in her white sportswear. Then, she effortlessly made a stroke, sending the white golf ball swooshing across the air in a beautiful arc.

“Wonderful!” Dillon clapped his hands unreservedly. He praised, “You’re being modest, Miss Hudson. You play golf much better than ordinary people do.”

“I’m no match for you.” Rachel put away her golf club, her face lacking much expression as she looked emotionless the whole time.

Dillon had seen all kinds of women—the flamboyant ones, the innocent ones, and so on. After all, he always had different types of women revolving around him. However, he felt that Rachel was very special. Besides being taciturn, she had a gentle and demure quality about her that made people feel she was calm and serene even when she was discussing such a dangerous business deal. Such a quality had never been present in the women around Dillon before.

Seeing that Dillon’s eyes were almost glued to Rachel, Jason immediately said, “Young Master Porter, it suddenly occurred to me that I’ve got something to deal with, so I gotta make a phone call. You two have a nice chat first.”

Dillon nodded slightly.

As soon as Jason left, Dillon offered to teach Rachel the right posture for playing golf. “I noticed that you didn’t have enough strength in your waist and abdomen. That’s the key to playing golf.”

“I’m not much of an athlete,” Rachel said while handing the golf club to the caddie.

“What’s the hurry? I’ll teach you.”

"No, please don't bother, Young Master Porter. Didn't you say you've got something serious to talk to me about?"

"There's no hurry for that. It's still early. Come on, play another stroke for me," said Dillon peremptorily.

Rachel had no choice but to play another stroke. Unexpectedly, as soon as she took her stance and was just about to swing her golf club, Dillon crept up from behind. Before she realized it, he had put his arms on hers and held her hands as she was holding the golf club. The man's voice came from behind, saying, "Don't stop. Go on."

"Young Master Dillon, I'll do it myself."

"You're not exerting your strength in the right place. Let me correct your posture a little."

"It's not necessary." Rachel's face darkened as she jerked free of the man's grasp and walked a few steps away from him. "I said it's not necessary!"

Seeing Dillon staggered by the shove, the bodyguard behind him immediately walked over to him. "Young Master Porter."

"I'm fine!" Dillon raised his hand, signaling to the bodyguard to step back. His eyes darkened somewhat as he looked at Rachel and said coldly, "There's never been a woman who dares to treat me like this."

Rachel didn't turn a hair. "Are those women you're talking about doing business with you as well? Even if they are, I'm afraid the business they do with you and the business you do with me aren't of the same kind."

Dillon was startled for a moment before he suddenly clapped his hands and burst into laughter. "Interesting!" He walked a few steps toward Rachel.

Rachel instinctively stepped back.

Dillon said, "Don't worry. I won't touch you. Let's talk business."

Only then did Rachel feel relieved. Still, she kept a safe distance from Dillon the whole time while clutching the golf club in her hand.

Just then, Dillon said, "Miss Hudson, I'm asking you out this time for two reasons. Firstly, I'd like to inspect the goods, and secondly, I want to pick a suitable date to have the goods shipped out. Miss Hudson, you need to get the warehouse ready for the shipment."

"The goods are ready. They're all in the warehouse, and you may inspect them anytime."

"In that case, let's be spontaneous and do it tonight."

"No problem."

"There's one other thing. I'd like you to escort the goods out of the country with us this time."

Rachel was startled. "You're telling me to go with you?"

"What's the matter? You're scared?"

"This isn't part of what we previously agreed on."

"I don't trust anyone else, and I believe you're the only person other than me who cares about this batch of goods more than anyone else does."

"No, I can't," Rachel refused right away. "Young Master Porter, I have no choice but to be frank with you. Doing this is too risky. If we're found out, losing this batch of goods won't be a big deal, but what if I'm implicated in this?"

“The more risky it is to do something, the more profitable it is. If you’ll escort the goods in person, there’s another business deal that I’d like to discuss with you.”

“Another business deal? What is it?”

“I heard that Hudson Pharmaceuticals will be exporting a batch of medicine to Jublen in the middle of next month?”

“You’re really well-informed, huh? That batch of medicine was supposed to be shipped out this month, but you asked for your goods to be shipped out urgently, so the factory had to put off manufacturing those medicines.”

“Miss Hudson, if you’re willing to put this deal through, not only can you make up for the breach-of-contract damages caused by the factory’s delay in manufacturing, but you can even make a fortune, closing the breaks in Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ funding chain overnight.”

“What deal?”

“There’s something that I’d like to get exported to Jublen along with those medicines.”

Stunned, Rachel looked at Dillon in surprise. She had predicted long ago that medicine smuggling couldn’t have been the only trade Dillon engaged in. “What is it that you want to get shipped, Young Master Porter?”

“You’d better not know what it is. This is the price I’m offering you.”

Seeing the fingers Dillon extended, Rachel became even more certain that her guess was right. It’s either firearms or drugs. Only these two kinds of stuff deserve such a price.

Dillon continued, “Miss Hudson, as long as you agree to escort the goods this time, once our collaboration next month turns out well, Hudson Pharmaceuticals will be able to make a comeback at full speed. I can guarantee you that with my help, Hudson Pharmaceuticals will be even more successful under your direction than under your father’s!”

Rachel was stunned for a while. "I need time to think about it."

"No problem, but I hope you can reach a decision sooner. After all, the goods are gonna be shipped in a few days."

"I will."

"Let's go over there to take a look."

The pair walked into the distance on the lawn. Without any of them noticing, however, a telescope placed on the second-floor balcony of a three-story villa located in the golf course's holiday resort had been following them all this while.

Chapter 345 All in This Together

"President Burton." Frankie came to the balcony with the documents in his hands. "This is Westhill Golf Club's business performance report for this quarter. The assessment has been made that it's indeed better to resell this property than to redevelop it. What do you..." He talked on his own for a long time, only to realize that Justin wasn't listening at all. "President Burton? What are you looking at?"

Following the direction in which the telescope in Justin's hands was pointed, Frankie vaguely saw several figures walking in the distance on the lawn. The figures seemed to be those of a man and a woman followed by a few escorts. Who else could draw so much attention from President Burton other than Rachel? Surprised, Frankie said, "Why would we even run into her here?"

Justin's expression was gloomy. "Did you find any information about Dillon Porter as I asked you to?"

Frankie was startled for a moment. Then, he replied with a troubled expression, "I did find some information, but they're not very detailed."

"Shoot."

“Dillon Porter is an Astronian with Montenegro citizenship. The information shows that he runs a foreign trading company in Riverdale that specializes in import and export trade, but he rarely comes to Riverdale. Even if he does, he stays on board Golden Cruise. Oh, by the way, he’s on good terms with the two owners of the Jockey Club.”

Justin clenched his fists. “Get a few people to follow him.”

“Huh?” Frankie was startled. “President Burton, Dillon has a complicated background; even your uncle fawns on him respectfully. It’s better for you to have nothing to do with such a person.”

“Just do as I say,” came the man’s terse reply in a peremptory tone of voice.

Frankie could only button his lip.

At the thought of Dillon being related to the Jockey Club, Justin recalled someone whom he thought he could probably ask about Dillon’s origins. He dialed a number.

“It’s me.”

“I’d like to know about the Jockey Club. Are you free?”

Ryan’s voice came from the other end of the line. “I don’t think we’re that close. And besides, I think it’s better for me to keep my distance from you at this time.” Ryan was courting Jolly, and he was only too eager to let everyone in Riverdale know about it. However, Jolly was never shy of expressing her likes and dislikes, and she hated Justin so much that she almost had the words “I hate Justin Burton” written on her face. Ryan couldn’t suit her fancy, but he could easily distance himself from Justin.

Clutching his cell phone, Justin replied impassively, “I have some background information about Leroy, which I think you might be very interested in.”

Ryan was apparently stunned on the other end of the line. After a while, he said, “I’m free tomorrow afternoon.”

“See you tomorrow.”

After hanging up the phone, Justin looked into the distance again, clenching his fists so hard by his sides that his knuckles turned white. If it weren't for Rachel not wanting to see him, he would've rushed to them just now, pulling Dillon—that *sshole—away and chopping his hands off for touching Rachel!

That night, Jason booked a private room at a nightclub to entertain Dillon.

Outside the private room...

“I gotta go, Jason. I've got something else to do.”

“Wait a minute.” Jason stopped Rachel. “Can't you tell for whose sake Young Master Porter is doing us the honor of staying here? Won't you disappoint him if you leave?”

Rachel's face darkened slightly. “Jason, I'm not prostituting myself. Do you think it'll do you any good to pimp me to Dillon? Don't you worry that I'll cast you aside when you're no longer needed?”

Jason was startled for a moment. By the time he came to his senses, Rachel had left. “Please take good care of Young Master Porter for me. Put it on my tab.”

Even though Jason intended to “pimp” Rachel to Dillon, he couldn't force her into it, so he could only watch helplessly as she strode off.

His subordinate was a little anxious, though. “Master Jason, how could you let Miss Hudson go? What if Young Master Porter asks about her?”

“What else can I do if I don't let her go?”

“But what about Young Master Porter...”

“Just get a few pretty girls and get them into the room.”

“Yes.”

“Who the f*ck does she think she is?” Jason looked at Rachel’s receding figure with a gloomy expression. “She’s but a mute illegitimate daughter who has no one to depend on in Riverdale. Does she honestly think she can cast me aside and make a fortune by herself now? We’re all in this together.”

It was late at night at this moment, and there were faint signs that it was going to rain outside. As soon as Rachel’s car drove away from the nightclub’s entrance, the doorman immediately made a phone call, saying, “Mr. Beckham, President Hudson left all of a sudden just now.”

There was no answer on the other end of the line.

“She left alone.”

There was still no answer.

On the other end of the line was a private room in the nightclub. Unlike the other private rooms, this room was strangely quiet. It didn’t have any hostess entertaining the clients, nor was its stereo turned on. The only person in the room was Justin, who sat on the couch with a glass of iced whiskey before him.

Having answered the phone, Frankie immediately turned to look at him. “President Burton, President Hudson probably has gone home.”

Justin nodded slightly. Then, he said in a grim voice, “In that case, serve more liquor to the room. Just stay that the nightclub would like to thank its customers for their support.”

“Yes, President Burton.”

Half an hour later, the inebriated Dillon was helped out of his room.

“Young Master Porter.”

Dillon knocked off the bodyguard holding him up. “You don’t have to hold me up. I’m going to the restroom and will be back in a minute to continue to have fun.”

Lila asked, “Isn’t there a restroom in the private room?”

The bodyguard explained, “Says that the toilet’s not working.”

Lila frowned. “In that case, you guys follow Young Master Porter and don’t let anything happen.”

“It’s not necessary!” Dillon shoved them away in exasperation. “If any of you dare to touch me, I’m gonna shoot you dead! You guys are treating me like a good-for-nothing, huh? I’m telling you, it’s not your turn to judge me!” he said while staggering toward the restroom.

“Miss Lila, should—”

“Never mind. Let him go on his own.” Lila frowned. She knew Dillon’s temper better than anyone else did, so she knew that whenever he got drunk, he would act unreasonably.

Having drunk a lot of liquor, Dillon staggered all the way into the restroom; his hands were weak as he spent a long time unbuckling his belt. However, he didn’t notice that a tall figure had come in after him and locked the restroom door from the inside with a click.

After fumbling for a long time, he finally found his belt buckle. “Gotcha, you little thing!”

Just then, a shadow enveloped him from behind. Before he realized what had happened, he had been strangled from behind, causing him to be overwhelmed with a sense of suffocation. His cheeks flushing, he uttered, “Who—”

The next instant, he was kicked brutally into the urinal, causing him to hit his head against the urinal with a loud thud. “Aaaah!” He let out cries of pain that were louder than one another, but no one noticed them as they were all drowned out by the blaring music in the nightclub.

At this moment, the men’s room had a “Closed for Maintenance” sign placed outside its entrance, signaling those who wanted to relieve themselves to go to another floor instead.

“Why hasn’t Young Master Porter come back yet?”

Lila glanced at her watch. “I’ll go take a look,” she said before heading toward the restroom alone.

She saw the yellow sign placed outside the men’s room’s entrance, but just as she was about to leave as the others did, she faintly heard a blood-curdling scream from the restroom. The scream was clearly Dillon’s. In an instant, her pupils shrank, and she reflexively stepped forward while clenching her fists. After years of training, her hearing had always been exceptionally good.

Chapter 346 A Familial Organization

Lila stood outside the men’s room. One man probably didn’t notice the sign and was just about to go inside, but she stopped him all at once, saying, “Mister.”

Surprised, the man turned to look at her. Lila pointed to the sign at their feet. “The men’s room is temporarily unavailable for use. You should go to another floor instead.”

“Oh, thank you.”

Lila watched the man leave before staring at the door to the men’s room for a while. After that, she turned around and left as well.

The next day, Dillon woke up in the hospital ward and looked at his badly battered and bruised face in the mirror. He smashed the mirror right away with a loud crash, growling, “Who did it?!”

Lila stood beside him. "We don't know. The nightclub's CCTV went wrong last night, so we didn't find anything."

"You bunch of morons! What's the use of having you guys?" Dillon yelled furiously. "Find that person no matter what. I'm gonna chop him to bits to feed the dog!"

Lila frowned and stepped out of the ward without saying a word.

A little while later, from inside the ward came the sound of things being smashed; Dillon had smashed almost every smashable object in the room. After all, he had never come to grief so badly before in his whole life.

Hearing the noise inside, the bodyguards trembled with fright. "Miss Lila, what should we do about this?"

Lila didn't turn a hair. "Since it happened in Jason's nightclub, he has to take full responsibility. Let him do the investigation."

"Yes, Miss Lila."

It was afternoon, and one could enjoy the view of the river from the booth next to the French window at the tenth-floor cafe in Green River Tower. The river water looked murky during the day, but it didn't hide the grandeur of the river scenery.

The waiter served two cups of Americanos.

Ryan asked straightforwardly, "What do you want to ask me?"

"About the Jockey Club and Dillon's background."

"What for?"

Justin darted a look at him. "Are you so fond of asking questions to which you already know the answers?"

Ryan cocked an eyebrow. They were both intelligent people, so there was no need to beat around the bush. "You probably know what the Jockey Club does without me having to tell you. It's a place for debauchery that's far from the place it purports to be. To put it nicely, it's a social hub. Everybody who goes there does so with their own purposes; they go there to make friends with all kinds of people that'll be of help to them." Being a self-made man, Ryan had made himself a member of the club and made a lot of friends there back when he needed a network of contacts in his early years, which was why he was able to take Justin on board the Golden Cruise to search for people last time.

Justin's eyes were tense. "You know that these aren't what I'm asking about. These are superficial."

Ryan knitted his brows slightly. "Here's my advice: don't ask too much about it. Knowing too much won't do you any good."

"Here's the background information about Leroy." Justin pushed the manila envelope at hand across the table. "I believe you'll no longer think of him as an ordinary little artist after you read this. He's by no means ordinary."

Ryan's gaze fell on the manila envelope.

Justin's hand kept pressing down on the manila envelope, and both him and Ryan knew the reason for that. They were both businessmen, so this wasn't an afternoon tea between friends, but a business deal for information exchange.

Recalling the recent rumors about Jolly's relationship with Leroy, Ryan felt somewhat irritable. "Fine, I'll tell you everything. Still, I'd like to advise you to not get involved even if you know about it. I'm afraid you might get yourself in trouble before you're able to get her out of this."

"Thanks for the reminder."

"I really don't know much about Dillon's identity. He only came to Riverdale in recent years, but he became a guest of honor on board the Golden Cruise all of a sudden. I looked into him, but I couldn't

find anything about him.” Ryan was very thorough. “So, I can only tell you my conjecture based on my experiences in dealing with those people in the Jockey Club all these years.”

“Shoot.”

Ryan explained, “You probably know that the Jockey Club runs a casino in secret. The Riverdale Investigation Bureau has been keeping an eye on Randall Baxter, the club’s boss, over the past few years, but they couldn’t find anything. This is because the Jockey Club is merely a cover for S in Riverdale.”

“S?”

“It’s an organization, or rather a family, an evil smuggling ring, that specializes in smuggling goods—mostly medicines—to war-ridden countries to make huge profits.”

War-ridden countries had little to no productivity, and supplies—especially medicines—were scarce there. As a result, even a box of cold medicine could be sold at an exorbitant price at such places.

“The Jockey Club gathers all the upper-class people in Riverdale under the guise of recreation and socializing. People are greedy, and they always want to make more money. If my guess is correct, Randall chooses from those people and observes them for a long time on his own initiative. Then, he waits for a chance to strike, ultimately drawing them into his circle.” Ryan shot a glance at Justin. “Jefferey, that ex-father-in-law of yours, was probably among the earliest bunch of people he recruited.”

“What about Dillon, then? What role does he play in the organization?”

“I only met him a few times. He’s an idiot, but Randall is very respectful to him, so I guess he’s a member of the family at the top of the organization. He might even be the heir to the organization.”

“Would the organization’s heir be sent out to take risks?”

“Well, here is something you don’t understand. The people there don’t raise their children in the lap of luxury. Only the strongest among them will be respected, so the children have to see the world and

toughen themselves. Otherwise, of so many smuggling and drug-trafficking rings in the world, why do you think S would become such a large organization that even Interpol has a headache dealing with them?"

Justin seemed lost in thought.

Ryan continued, "These are just my conjectures, but I've been dealing with them for quite a number of years. And besides, the Riverdale Investigation Bureau has been investigating them recently. Moreover, there were those diamonds last time. I think Randall and his men are probably gonna run away, and they're now trying to transfer their assets."

"Run away? What about those in Riverdale?"

"Would they care about the fate of their partners once they run away? Even if the Riverdale Investigation Bureau turns the Golden Cruise upside down by then, I'm afraid they'll only be able to arrest useless small fry like Jefferey and your uncle."

"When are they gonna run away?"

"How could I possibly know that?"

Justin pondered for a moment. "Are those diamonds still in your hands?"

Ryan was startled before he suddenly realized what Justin meant. Those people would definitely have to transfer their assets before leaving. In other words, the time they laid their hands on these exorbitantly-priced diamonds would be the time they were going to run away.

"Ryan, you'd better keep watch over those diamonds in your hands."

"I know that, and I don't need you to tell me about it. Hey, where are you going?"

Justin left the cafe right away. Rachel was in a dangerous situation right now. After all, no one could tell what those men would do to those related to them before leaving Riverdale. I've got to stop Rachel from continuing to deal with them by hook or by crook, he thought. "Hello? Frankie, find out where Rachel is right now."

"You mean President Hudson?" Frankie was startled for a moment on the other end of the line. After coming to his senses, he said in a complicated tone of voice, "President Burton, you'd better put the matter about her aside first. I'm afraid you have to come back to the office now."

"What's wrong?"

"The Burton Group is holding an impromptu board meeting. Someone proposed that you be removed from your position as company president."

Justin frowned. "Did Robin propose it?"

"No, it was Old Mr. Burton who proposed it."

Chapter 347 Stay as an Assistant

The air in the Burton Group's large conference room was heavy and solemn as all the board members of the company were present. "President Burton has arrived."

Justin arrived late for the meeting. "Apologies, Grandpa and everyone. Sorry for being late." Arthur looked as black as thunder. Before he could speak, Robin's mocking voice rang across from Justin. "You're quite puffed up, aren't you, Young Master Justin? To think that you could even be late for the board meeting! Do you need someone to personally pick you up for the next meeting?"

Frankie could no longer stand his words. "President Gunson, how could you—"

Just then, an elderly voice rang. "Shut up! What gives you, an assistant, the right to speak here?"

Frankie shuddered before turning to look at Arthur.

Obviously, Arthur wasn't just expressing his displeasure at Justin's late arrival for the meeting today. Having stepped down from his position for years, he rarely attended the board of directors' annual meeting despite being the chairman of the company's board of directors. Therefore, the fact that he had gone out of his way to call a board meeting this time showed that his dissatisfaction had accumulated to a certain degree. "Since everyone's here, let's take our seats."

The conference room was silent once again.

Then, Arthur said, "As everyone knows, the purpose of today's board meeting is to have everyone vote on the motion to remove Justin from his position as the Burton Group's president on the spot."

Someone argued, "Old Mr. Burton, we'd better be more circumspect about removing the president of the company."

"That's right. Ever since Young Master Justin took over the Burton Group, the company's performance has gone up quite a few notches."

The other board members quickly chimed in.

Justin had been running the Burton Group for years, so many of the company's board members supported him. Unfortunately, Arthur was unshakeable in his determination this time. "His merits can't make up for his faults. The Burton Group's performance has visibly dropped this year. This is not because of the market, but because of the person heading the company." Arthur darted a look at Justin. "Since there's a problem, we have to solve it in time. The Burton Group belongs not only to us Burtons but also to all the board members present here. I can't let the Burton Group be ruined in the hands of a single person."

The instant he said that, the board members instantly broke into a discussion. Just then, someone asked, "But, Old Mr. Burton, if we remove Young Master Justin, who's gonna be the president of the company?"

All of a sudden, a strange silence descended on the room. Everyone knew that Arthur only had two grandchildren. One of them was Justin, who was about to be removed right now, and the other was Tina, who had been sent abroad six years ago to be treated for mental illness. If Justin were to be removed from his position right now, who else could replace him?

Arthur's face clouded over. "We, the Burtons, have few descendants, but it's not that difficult to find a capable descendant from our family. However, the Burton Group's century-old foundation is not to be squandered by someone as they please! Carrying the surname Burton doesn't mean he can rest easy!"

Everyone was puzzled by Arthur's words.

Arthur then continued, "I've decided to let Robin take over Justin's position as the Burton Group's president."

Justin's pupils instantly shrank at Arthur's words. Having learned his ways from Jason, Robin was prone to resort to crooked ways. How could Grandpa hand the Burton Group to such a person?! "I oppose it!" he replied on the spot.

Robin scowled at once. "For what reason do you oppose it? This is Grandpa's decision. What gives you the right to oppose it?"

Justin didn't even bother to say a word more than necessary to Robin, though. He tried his best to dissuade Arthur, saying, "Grandpa, it's true that I have to take responsibility for the Burton Group's performance issues these days. I have no objection if you want to remove me as president, but Robin can't be the company's next president."

Robin was one of Jason's men. By handing the Burton Group over to Robin, the company would essentially be handed over to Jason. Now that Jason was on such close terms with those from the Jockey Club, he would bring the Burton Group down one day. By then, the Burton Group would be the next Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Robin slapped the conference table in anger. "Whether I can be the company's next president is up to the board of directors. What does it have to do with you? Young Master Justin, I admit that you've done well in managing the Burton Group previously, but now you're being led by the nose by a woman!"

“Watch your language, President Gunson!” blurted Frankie.

Justin raised his hand to stop Frankie. Let him say it, he thought.

Robin stood up. “Perhaps you guys aren’t aware of this yet. Young Master Justin has transferred the ownership of the development site at Northlane for free in order to please a woman. That’s a 3 billion-worth project!”

“What? He transferred the ownership of the development site?”

“How could he do that?”

“That’s right! Isn’t that nonsense?”

One of the board members immediately asked, “Young Master Justin, what the hell’s the matter with this? Who did you transfer the ownership of the development site to? Is this part of your plan or... Please tell us about this.”

“That’s not part of his plan or anything! He did that just to please that ex-wife of his. Hudson Pharmaceuticals has already set about starting construction on that site!”

Hudson Pharmaceuticals? In an instant, the conference room was in an uproar.

However, Justin didn’t give a word of explanation.

Arthur’s eyes showed nothing but disappointment as he looked at Justin. Having spent most of his life enduring all kinds of hardships, how could he possibly not know that Robin wasn’t a decent person? But now, everyone in the company was critical of Justin, and he was torn to shreds in the press. If he wasn’t replaced sooner, the Burton Group would be in great peril.

It wasn't until Arthur hemmed twice that everyone finally fell silent. Then, Arthur said, "I hereby announce that we'll now be officially voting on the motion to remove Justin Burton from his position as president. Those who agree to the motion may raise your hands."

Everyone in the conference room looked at each other. After whispering to each other for a while, they gradually fell silent and raised their hands one after another.

Seeing the overwhelming number of votes, Robin was incredibly smug. He had dreamed about the scene at this very moment countless times. After so many years, he was finally able to get something on Justin, so how could he possibly not take advantage of this opportunity to make an issue out of it?

Arthur ran his eyes over the crowd while concealing the hint of disappointment in his eyes. "I see that everyone has made themselves clear. The motion has been passed. From now on, Justin is no longer the Burton Group's president. Justin, do you have any objections to this?"

Everyone's eyes fell on Justin as they waited for him to express his stance. After a long time, Justin said, "No, I don't."

"Alright then. In that case, let's vote on the next motion. Those who agree to let Robin Gunson take over as the Burton Group's president may raise your hands."

This time, the number of hands raised was almost the same as the previous time. As a result, it was decided that Robin would be taking over as the Burton Group's president.

"Robin will be running the Burton Group from now on." Arthur's bony fingers curled slightly as he darted a quick look at Justin from the corner of his eye. Seeing how Justin remained unmoved, he felt even more disappointed. He said in a grim voice, "Justin, hand your work over to Robin and leave the Burton Group as soon as possible."

"It's not necessary," Robin cut in all of a sudden. "Old Mr. Burton, it's not necessary to make Young Master Justin sever all ties to the company. We all have witnessed his capabilities, after all, so I think he doesn't have to leave the Burton Group. Why not let him stay in the Burton Group as vice president to assist me in my work?"

The instant Robin said that, Justin's stony eyes turned chilly, whereas Frankie's face turned livid.

Chapter 348 Fallen From Grace

In an instant, the conference room was so silent that one could hear a pin drop. Someone let out a gasp. After all, Justin was Arthur's only grandson. Even if he had now been removed as the Burton Group's president, no one would dare to speak to him like this. Essentially, Robin was testing the man's limits.

Despite his suggestion that Justin stay in the company as vice president, everyone knew how completely incompatible he and Justin were. If Justin were to stay in the company's headquarters, he would definitely have a hard time.

Just when everyone thought Justin would definitely lose his temper, Arthur suddenly spoke. "Sounds like a good suggestion to me. Staying at the top for too long would make one forget that one should have their feet on the ground at all times. What do you think, Justin?"

Isn't Old Mr. Burton gonna stick up for him?

"Old Mr.—"

Justin raised his hand, cutting Frankie short. He stood up and fixed his eyes on Robin across from him, uttering, "I accept it."

As soon as the meeting ended, Frankie followed Justin out of the conference room. "President Burton, how could you agree to stay in the headquarters as vice president? Now that the company has been handed over to Robin, he'll definitely give you a hard time at every turn if you stay here. This is—"

"Do you think I'm scared of him?"

"That's not what I mean. President Burton, I'm just worried that you'll be humiliated." In Frankie's eyes, Justin was a proud and aloof man who had stayed in a high position for many years without ever letting

Robin have his way regardless of what the latter did. Now that Robin had triumphed over Justin, what Frankie feared most was that the former would play dirty tricks on Justin. "President Burton, why don't you talk to Old Mr. Burton? It's okay even if you have to go to the branch office. In any case, it's better than staying here and running into Robin often."

"It's not necessary." Justin's brows furrowed, but his tone of voice was peremptory. It was precisely because Robin had become the company's president that he had to stay. If the Burton Group were really to be handed over to Robin, no one knew if he would lead the company down a path of self-destruction.

Seeing that Justin had made up his mind, Frankie had no choice but to hold his tongue.

The pair had reached Justin's office when they saw Miss Evergreen standing at the door with an uneasy expression. "President Burton, Frankie. President Gunson, he..."

Frankie's face tautened at her words. He pushed the door open, only to see Robin sitting behind the desk with his feet on it. Not only that, but he rested the heels of his leather shoes on a book on the desk that Justin hadn't finished reading, tearing its pages.

Frankie turned red with anger at the sight of the scene. "What do you mean by doing this, President Gunson? This is President Burton's office!"

"President Burton?" Robin smirked. "Watch your language, Assistant Beckham. I am President Gunson, the president of this company. You should be calling him Vice President Burton from now on. Adding or skipping one particular word makes a huge difference in its meaning."

"How dare you—"

"Frankie." Justin came in while looking indifferently at Robin with a stony face and cold, piercing eyes. "What are you doing here?"

Robin looked around the office with his hands clasped on his stomach. "I'm here to ask you if we should swap offices. After all, I'm the company's president now."

Frankie got agitated at once. "Don't go too far, President Gunson!" This office had always belonged to Justin ever since he officially took over as the Burton Group's president 12 years ago. Without his permission, no one could ever step into his office as they pleased.

"Am I talking to you?" Robin looked incredibly smug. "Justin, tell your lapdog to stop barking!"

"Robin!" Justin's voice turned chilly all of a sudden.

Seeing the chilling gleam in the man's stony eyes, Robin shuddered at once. There were certain times when he was still somewhat afraid of Justin. In an instant, he straightened up and stared warily at the man across from him.

Justin regained his composure soon afterward, though. He said nonchalantly, "You like this office? I'll give it to you."

"President Burton!" Frankie was in disbelief.

Justin unhurriedly walked up to the desk.

Robin was a little nervous, and he subconsciously pulled his feet off the desk while gulping some saliva. Then, he straightened up, asking, "What are you doing?"

Justin picked up the book on the desk and dusted it off with his hand before pointing at the room's furnishings. "If you like these things, you can use them as you please. If you don't like them, you can take them apart and have them reinstalled. As for these books, I'll be taking them with me." He waved the French book in his hand. "You can't read these books anyway, so let's not keep them here to take up space."

Robin's face instantly turned livid one moment and pale the next. Although he had a master's degree in finance from abroad, he had only earned it from a diploma mill, so he couldn't speak any foreign language other than very poor Latin. He was able to fool the nonexperts by having his underlings work hard for him all these years, but his academic qualifications were completely worthless in front of Justin.

“Frankie, get someone to pack up my stuff and move them downstairs.”

“Yes, President Burton.”

Despite having fallen from grace, Justin maintained his dignity with an innately noble air unmatched by a vile character like Robin.

As soon as the man left, Robin swept everything off the desk in anger.

Startled, Miss Evergreen, who was tidying the office, shuddered with fright before turning to look at him in a panic.

“What are you looking at?” Robin’s face was sullen. “Starting from today, I’ll be calling the shots in the Burton Group. Justin, on the other hand, is nothing!”

Meanwhile, Justin left the Burton Group right away.

“President Burton, I’ll have your office cleaned up as soon as possible.”

“There’s no hurry for that. Give me the car keys.”

“Are you gonna drive by yourself?” Frankie’s face showed a look of surprise. Since losing his memory in the car accident five years ago, Justin had been unable to drive by himself. According to the doctor’s diagnosis, this was a result of post-traumatic amnesia.

Justin didn’t explain much about it, though. After taking the car keys, he said, “You don’t have to follow me.” With that, he got into the car alone.

Frankie was startled again as he watched the car whizz off. Could President Burton have regained his memories?

Meanwhile, Justin drove to Hudson Pharmaceuticals right away. "I'd like to see Rachel."

The lady at the front desk was startled for a moment. "President Hudson isn't in the office today."

Thinking that the front desk lady was stalling him off, Justin stressed again, "I have something important to talk to her about."

"President Hudson really isn't in the office, President Burton. If you don't believe me, you can call Miss Carter to ask her about it."

Had I been able to get through to Jolly on the phone, I wouldn't have made a special trip here, thought Justin.

Just as they were conversing, the front desk lady suddenly pointed behind Justin. "Miss Carter's here. You may ask her directly."

Justin looked back. When he saw Jolly, who had just entered the building with documents in her hands while dressed in a white suit, he immediately strode up to her.

Jolly had just come back with a stack of documents in her arms, only to scowl the instant she saw Justin face to face. "Why are you here?"

"Miss Carter, I'm here to talk to Rachel. Where is she?"

"I don't know." Jolly rolled her eyes crossly before turning around to leave.

Justin strode up to Jolly and blocked her path. "I have something urgent to talk to her about."

"It's useless no matter what you want to talk to her about. To tell you the truth, Chris isn't in Riverdale."

Justin's pupils shrank at her words. "Where did she go?"

Chapter 349 A Thrilling Night

Jolly darted a look at Justin. "Why would I tell you?" Justin suddenly had a bad feeling.

Three days later, darkness fell as heavy fog shrouded a dock in Jublen, cutting visibility to near zero. Only with the aid of a flashlight could one barely see a line of trucks parked on the dock. At this moment, workers were moving goods off the freighter in the dark, and they had been doing this for two hours.

"Be careful," said Rachel as she directed her people to move the goods off the freighter.

Just then, a black sedan came to a stop in front of her. Lila got out of the car first, and she went to the trunk to take out a wheelchair before helping Dillon to it.

Despite the impenetrable darkness, Rachel noticed Dillon's badly bruised face at a glance and was instantly surprised. "What happened to you, Young Master Porter?"

"I fell and bruised myself while drinking in Riverdale." Dillon let out a snort. "I'm afraid Riverdale doesn't agree with me."

"How did you fall so badly?"

"That doesn't matter." Dillon shot a glance at the goods on the dock. "How's the move going?"

"It's almost done. We'll finish moving the goods before dawn."

Dillon nodded. "You're indeed a lucky star, Miss Hudson. The trip went well, and I heard that we'd gotten through all the checkpoints without a hitch. Both our men and our goods have arrived safely."

"Well, it is a smooth trip, but I won't be doing something like this anymore."

“Why? You’re scared?”

“That’s only part of human nature, right?”

“Well, that’s understandable. But now that we’re already here, there’s nothing to worry about. This is my turf, so why don’t you stay a few days longer and let me show you around, Miss Hudson?”

“Thanks for your kindness, Young Master Porter, but I have to hurry back to Riverdale tomorrow. Now that I’ve vanished for such a long time, my friend is probably worried.”

Just as Dillon was about to continue persuading Rachel, the driver of the car behind him suddenly poked his head out of the car window. “We’re in trouble, Young Master Porter! Hurry up and get in the car!”

As soon as he finished his sentence, the sound of a gunshot was heard in the distance.

Frightened, Rachel shuddered and crouched down while covering her ears.

Dillon turned pale at once. “What happened?”

“It’s the Interpol!”

“Sh*t, how did Interpol find their way here? Get the loaded trucks to leave at once and abandon the rest!”

As the sound of gunshots were approaching, Lila said, “It’s too late. We have to leave now.”

Dillon pounded his wheelchair in anger. This batch of goods was supposed to be a great chance for him to shine in front of his father, but now, these goods had slipped through his fingers right under his very nose!

Lila immediately yanked Dillon to his feet and shoved him into the car, leaving the wheelchair behind right away. Then, she ordered, "Drive, Benny!"

After the car drove off, Rachel hid behind the containers. Hearing the gunshots in the distance, she gritted her teeth and ran away from the dock alone with the aid of the fog.

"There's someone over there! Chase after them!"

This was Rachel's first time coming across such a situation. Although she had prepared herself for this, she could hardly remain calm, so she merely ran outside based on her survival instincts.

Just then, she heard a screech of brakes as a car stopped in front of her. Then, a large hand reached out from the car and pulled her inside amid her screams. A man's chilly voice reverberated in the car, saying, "Drive!"

The streetlights on the expressway illuminated the inside of the car as it drove out of the dock.

Looking at the man before her in horror, Rachel uttered a name in disbelief. "Alex?"

The man's face was thin, with pronounced mixed-race features and a pair of inky dark eyes. One could even describe his looks as pretty. Staring at Rachel with a smile, he said, "It's been a while! You never thought our reunion would be so thrilling, didn't you?"

Rachel didn't come to her senses for a long time.

...

The next day, the confiscation of smuggled medicines on the port in Jublen was reported on the news. News spread all over the surrounding countries that Interpol had intercepted all the medicines on the whole ship, arresting countless people involved in the case.

Jolly was reading documents in her office in Riverdale when the door swung open with a loud bang that shook the entire room.

“You can’t go inside, Mr. Burton!”

Jolly’s face fell when she heard the secretary call the intruder “Mr. Burton.” She stood up from behind her desk grumpily, saying, “What brings you here again? Aren’t you done yet?”

Justin didn’t seem to hear her, though. As soon as he entered, he asked, “Where is Rachel now?”

“Didn’t I tell you that she went to Jublen on business and wouldn’t be back in a while?”

“Who is she doing business with? Dillon?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Jolly didn’t know why Rachel had to have dealings with Dillon, but because of Rachel’s instructions, she had been keeping a tight lip these days without telling Justin what was actually going on.

“You don’t know that, huh?” Justin looked around before picking up the remote control on the coffee table to turn on the TV.

At this moment, the TV was airing a news broadcast. “We interrupt this program to bring you an international newflash. Last night, large amounts of smuggled medicines were confiscated at a port in Jublen. According to the report, a total of 100,000 tons of smuggled medicines have been confiscated this time, and they were all shipped out from the docks in Riverdale. A total of 74 people involved in the case have been arrested, including 24 Riverdale citizens...”

Jolly’s face turned pale at once.

On the other hand, Justin was in a great rage. “I’ve looked into it, and the pharmaceutical factory’s warehouse on the outskirts of Riverdale is empty! What the hell are you guys doing? Are you trying to get yourselves killed?”

“What are you yelling at me for? You’re slandering us! You’re talking about a smuggling case here! Do you have the evidence to claim that it’s our doing? And what does it have to do with us? And besides, how are we supposed to get 100,000 tons of medicines?”

Justin didn’t have time to waste his breath arguing with Jolly, though. “Give me the phone!” He snatched her cell phone to call Rachel, only to hear a voice saying, “Sorry, but the number you’ve dialed is currently unreachable...”

Jolly angrily snatched her phone back from him. “Give it back to me! What are you doing?”

“Did you get through to her on the phone? When was the last time you called her?”

“The last time I called her?”

Seeing the look on Jolly’s face, Justin immediately realized that she hadn’t gotten in touch with Rachel at all. “Tell me! Did she leave with Dillon?”

“Let go of me!” Jolly broke free of Justin’s grasp with all her might. Then, she swore, “Justin, are you crazy? What nonsense are you talking about here? How could Chris be involved in smuggling? Dillon? I’ve never heard of such a name at all!”

“Yes, I am crazy!” Justin shook Jolly off with bloodshot eyes as the muscles of his stony face trembled. “It’s been three days, and yet nothing has been heard from her! Tell me—are you able to get in touch with her? Do you know where she’s gone? If you do, how could you help her keep her whereabouts a secret? Is it really worthwhile for her to sail close to the wind and get herself in danger for the sake of Hudson Pharmaceuticals?”

Jolly’s head was buzzing after she had been yelled at without rhyme or reason. On the other hand, Justin was already frantic with anxiety, and he turned around and left.

“Hey, where are you going?”

“Jublen!”

Jolly's expression changed. "Hey! Do you know where she is? It's useless even if you go there!"

Unfortunately, Justin was determined to go, and he turned a deaf ear to Jolly's words.

As soon as Justin left, Jolly started to get worried while clutching her phone. Indeed, Rachel had gone missing for too long.

Recalling what Rachel had told her before leaving, Jolly unlocked her phone and dialed a number.

Chapter 350 She Saved His Sister's Life Three Years Ago

The phone call never got through. Clutching her cell phone, Jolly started to worry for Rachel's safety. This is bad. I gotta go to Jublen as well.

Just as she was about to leave, her cell phone suddenly beeped, and a text message from a virtual number popped up on the screen. The short message only had two words. It read, 'She's fine.'

Seeing the text message, Jolly was startled for a moment.

A white arc streaked across the sky above the airport in Jublen as the plane touched down amid the roar of its engine.

It was already late at night, but the small two-story building on a hillside estate was being heavily guarded. Those patrolling the entrance were dressed in plain clothes, but they were all armed with guns and walkie-talkies.

"You moron!"

A loud slap landed on Lila's cheek, causing her head to tilt sideways with blood trickling out of the corner of her mouth. Even so, she didn't make a sound.

Dillon, who was sitting in his wheelchair by her side, frowned. "Lila isn't to blame for this, sis."

It was a woman who had slapped Lila. Dressed in black leather, the tall woman looked cold and beautiful and yet gloomy with her short hair and red lips. "She's not to blame, of course. She's only in charge of your safety, while getting the business done is part of your duty." Sabrina Porter darted a cold look at Dillon, making him shudder with the oppressive look in her eyes. "But could I hit you instead of hitting her?"

Dillon braced himself and explained, "The stuff had been shipped to the dock, and everything went well along the way. No one thought that Interpol would turn up! Clearly, we didn't get the news in time."

"Still making excuses, huh?"

"Young Master Porter." Lila put her hand on Dillon's shoulder in time to stop him from continuing to argue with Sabrina. "Miss Sabrina, it was indeed my fault for being unable to stop Young Master Porter, causing the 100,000 tons of goods to be confiscated and the hard work you'd put in over the past year to come to naught. I'm sorry for my lack of forethought."

"Hmph." Sabrina let out a sneer. "Lack of forethought, huh? I'm curious about how you egged Dillon on to have your goods put on my ship."

"It's got nothing to do with her," Dillon couldn't help but say. "It was my decision. After we escorted our goods out to the high seas, something went wrong with the previous ship, so I decided to have the 10,000 tons of goods moved to your ship and have the two shipments transported together."

"And look what happened?"

Upon hearing Sabrina's icy words, Dillon was at a loss for a reply.

"What happened was that you got my whole ship confiscated for that little amount of goods you brought with you!" Sabrina's face was livid with anger. "This matter isn't over yet. Who tipped the police off? Dillon, you should take a good look at the people around you!"

Dillon frowned. "How could you be certain that something was wrong with my people? Weren't your goods on that ship as well? Why don't you suspect your people instead?"

Sabrina's chilly and vicious gaze swept over everyone at the scene before finally resting on Lila. She said coldly, "I'm gonna check my people, of course. No matter whether it's your people or mine, we

have to check everyone out." After all, they had suffered such huge losses this time that they had to find out the traitor urgently.

Just as they were speaking, Dillon's phone suddenly rang, and he answered it grumpily. "Hello?"

"Young Master Porter."

Hearing the voice on the other end of the line, Dillon immediately sat up. "Miss Hudson?"

The instant Sabrina heard this across from Dillon, her face slowly tightened.

"Glad to hear that you're alright. We can talk about our collaboration later."

The caller said something on the other end of the line.

"You go back to Riverdale first. Things are very tense lately, so let's plan our next steps later."

Dillon hung up the phone with a thoughtful expression.

Sabrina asked, "Was it the woman who did business with you?"

"Yeah. To think that she didn't get caught! She was quite lucky."

“Lucky?” Sabrina’s eyes gleamed with chilliness. “Not necessarily. So many unwitting stevedores were arrested at the scene, and she, a person in the know, was unscathed?”

Dillon frowned. “What do you mean? Are you saying that it was her who tipped the police off? What good would it do her to do that?”

Sabrina darted a look at him. “You idiot! This matter is no longer of your concern. I’ve gotten Dad’s permission to let me manage the business in Riverdale for the time being.”

“What? I disagree!”

“It’s not up to you,” Sabrina said. Then, she shot a frosty look at Lila. “When things have calmed down, you’ll go to Riverdale with me, and Dillon will stay here. If it really was that woman who leaked the information, I’d chop her to bits and throw her remains into the river with my own hands.”

Lila’s cheek was badly swollen with a visible slap mark on it, but she nodded without turning a hair. “Yes, Miss Sabrina.”

The night was dark. At a street payphone in Jublen, Rachel had just made a phone call. Dressed in a black hoodie with the hood up, she looked around after ending the phone call. Making sure that nobody had noticed her, she tightened her clothes around herself and walked into the depths of an alley, crossing two streets before finally returning to the hotel.

A man who looked like an assistant stood in front of the door to her room. “Miss Hudson.”

Rachel stepped back warily. “You’re...”

The man waved the bag in his hand. “Mr. Alex had me come over to bring you something.”

Only then did Rachel heave a sigh of relief. “Come in.”

The suite was large, with a living room and a small inner room. Alex had always been a big spender, after all.

"Here's the new cell phone that Mr. Alex asked me to bring you, along with some cash and a credit card."

Seeing the limitless black card, Rachel was startled for a moment, though she wasn't very surprised. "Where is he?" Alex had left in a hurry after sending her to the hotel that day, so she didn't get to speak

much with him.

"Mr. Alex has something to deal with, so he's left Jublen."

"He's left? Why such a hurry?"

"There's something that he needs to deal with. Mr. Alex said he'd find time to visit you after he finished his work these days, and he wishes you to stay healthy and smile more."

Rachel had a thoughtful look on her face. "Don't tell me he came all the way here specially for me."

The assistant replied, "As he once said, whenever you're in danger, he'll show up by your side immediately."

Rachel subconsciously reached for her right arm with a complicated look on her face. "He doesn't have to do this, actually..."

"Miss Hudson, you saved the life of our lady back then, which was equivalent to saving Mr. Alex's life. This is just our duty, so you don't have to take it to heart."

Three years ago, Rachel had saved Laura Kennedy, Alex's younger sister, by chance in an accident. At the time, she didn't know who the siblings were. If it weren't for Laura showing up when Alex pointed his

gun at her head, she would've died right then and there. As for how they had cleared up the misunderstanding afterward and how Alex became very grateful to her, that was another story.

Still, Rachel was lost for words upon hearing the assistant's words.

After Alex's assistant left, Rachel was lost in thought for a while while staring at the stuff on the table. After a while, she came in front of the bathroom mirror and rolled up the right sleeve of her hoodie to the shoulder to reveal her fair-skinned arm. There had been a small cut on the inside of her arm before, which was hardly visible unless one looked closely, but a tiny chip had been inserted there.

It was thanks to this chip that Alex was able to find her wherever she was.