

My mute bride

Read Chapter 561

Chapter 561

Right as Jolly finished speaking, the sound of a door opening followed by wheels rolling against the floor traveled to their ears.

“Sis,” Regina called out right as she spotted Rachel.

“Sis?” Jolly glanced at Rachel. “Who is she calling?”

Apart from Rachel, she was the only other woman in this space.

“It’s a long story.” Rachel frowned at Jolly’s bewildered gaze.

There really wasn’t a way to keep this story concise, so Rachel just noted a few key points. Jolly was rendered gobsmacked, having a hard time processing the fact that Rachel’s father was still alive and had married into Yatruinia royalty.

“Pinch me, Leroy—ouch!” Jolly glared at the man. “I can’t believe you actually pinched me.”

“Stop acting. I didn’t even use any strength.” He chuckled under his breath while rubbing her arm.

Meanwhile, Regina had arrived at their side. Despite having been yelled at the day before, she acted like nothing ever happened, approaching them shamelessly. “Come and join us for breakfast later, sis.”

“Thanks, but no thanks.” Rachel turned down her offer. “We’re planning to dine outdoors.”

“I’ll join you guys, then!”

“Lady Regina, you mustn’t eat food from outside,” Regina’s butler, Cordelia, reminded at once, making the young woman frown.

“No food from outside?” Shock enveloped Jolly’s face as she mocked, “Just when you thought you’ve seen everything. Say, Chris, does this mean we’ll have to make an appointment before we get to see you, and the food you eat would be royal-banquet-level if you actually move to Yatruinia?”

“Who are you?” Regina sized Jolly up.

“Me?” Jolly got mischievous. “Why don’t you take a guess?”

“Why should I do that?” Regina couldn’t care less about this woman. “I don’t want to know who you are either.”

“Cranky, much? Just when I thought it’d be a good idea for Chris to follow you guys. Looking at your temper, who knows how you might abuse her? Forget about going, Chris. You’re better off living with me. My parents will keep you safe, and my family isn’t any lesser than royalty.”

“What did you say?!” Regina’s face turned awful. “Who are you, and why should my sister stay with you?!”

“She’s my little sister.”

“Little sister?” Rachel’s revelation stumped Regina. “No way! You only have me as a sister! Rachel, I’m your only sister!”

“Not only am I Chris’ little sister, my parents are also her godparents, and the four of us live a pretty sweet life as a family. Sorry, you’re a few years too late now.”

“You can’t do that!” Livid, Regina shot up from her wheelchair, shocking Cordelia.

“Lady Regina.” She hurriedly supported the young woman.

“Are you going to steal my sister from me?!”

“I’m not stealing her from you. You’re the only one here trying to seize her.”

“You—”

“Alright, quit it. It’s way too early for this.” Rachel stood up, having had enough of the fight. “You guys haven’t had anything to eat when you’ve come all the way here, have you? Come on, let’s have breakfast together.”

Leroy tried to smooth things at that. “I’m getting hungry. I’ll go and get Carmen.”

“Sis!” Regina shouted toward Rachel’s back but only got Jolly sticking her tongue out at her in response, rendering the young woman livid with rage.

“Lady Regina, please sit down. Your ankle still hasn’t recovered yet.”

“That woman is about to steal my sister away, and you want me to sit down?!” Regina gritted her teeth and slumped back into her wheelchair. “No, I have to follow them.”

“Lady Regina.”

“Don’t follow me.” She shot Cordelia a warning glare.

She refused to believe Rachel would leave her like that when none of her people attended to her.

After Leroy came back with Carmen, the gang headed to the diner.

As it was still bright and early, the diner was packed with customers, and the smell of pancakes and milkshakes lingered in the air of the street.

“They have green smoothies here,” said Rachel. “Do you guys want to give it a try?”

“A green smoothie? What does that even taste like?” to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

“Green. Either way, I’m not a fan of it, but he likes it.”

Justin felt helpless at once. “I hate to break it to you, but I don’t like it either. That one time was because you couldn’t stand it, and I didn’t want to be wasteful.”

“Wait a minute.” Jolly gazed dubiously at the former couple. “What’s up with you two?”

Rachel felt heat rushing to her cheeks, and she immediately shoved a forkful of pancake into Jolly’s mouth. “Don’t talk with your mouth full.”

“Mm-mm-hmm...” Jolly swallowed the pancake in her mouth. “I mean, this is great. Personally, I believe people should keep moving forward and not dwell in the past.”

Rachel pretended not to understand what her best friend was saying, but her flushed cheeks were betraying her.

After taking the hot tea from the server, Justin placed it in front of Rachel before adding teaspoons of sugar to it. He moved so proficiently that it looked like the two had been living in this town for years.

“How long do you guys plan on staying here?” Leroy asked.

“We’ll see after some time, I guess. I kind of like it here.”

“What about this one?” Jolly shot a glance at the next table where Regina was sitting. She hadn’t ordered anything but only kept an eagle eye on Jolly. “What are you looking at? I’m not leaving if my sister isn’t leaving.”

“Do you think you have the final say? I bet your butler will drag you onto the plane along with your wheelchair once we head back.”

“You—”

Jolly blew a raspberry at her in response.

“Why argue with a kid?” Leroy asked helplessly. “Cut it out now. Eat your breakfast.”

Just then, Carmen happened to return with a plate of mini muffins. Seeing that Rachel’s table was already taken up by food, she decisively turned to Regina’s table.

“Can I sit here?”

“Whatever.” Regina couldn’t care less about this woman. She wouldn’t be nice to anyone who sided with Jolly.

As if Justin wasn’t already enough, three more people popped up. At this rate, it was impossible for Rachel to follow them.

On the other hand, Carmen was good-natured as she voluntarily pushed her plate toward Regina. “Here, help yourself.”

“I’m not eating it!”

“It’s pretty nice. There are sweet and savory ones.”

“I’m not hungry.”

Much to her disappointment, her stomach growled the next second.

She had just woken up not too long ago and hadn’t had anything to eat, so she was long starving.

Then, there was Carmen and her crystal-clear eyes staring at her with enthusiasm and sincerity.

“Is it really good?” Regina hesitated.

“Yeah, they’re really nice. I’ve already had two.”

“I’ll take one, then. I’ll pay you back later.”

“Don’t worry about it. It’s on me.”

As Regina ate the muffin, she noticed Carmen staring at her. “Why are you staring at me?” she asked with displeasure.

“That’s because you look like a doll.” Carmen cupped her cheeks, tilted her head, and looked affectionately at Regina, who was wearing a black bowknot hair clip on her wavy chestnut-brown hair and a white lace dress underneath her waistcoat. The latter was the epitome of a doll.

“You look like a doll!”

“I don’t. You do.”

Well, it wasn’t right for one to bite the hand that fed them. As much as Regina didn’t like people calling her so, she silently swallowed her temper upon noticing Carmen’s abnormal behavior.

“The muffins are getting cold,” she said.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 562

“Hey, this tastes rather weird. It’s not my thing.” Jolly took a sip of the green smoothie and unhesitantly pushed it to Leroy, who was sitting across from her. “You finish it.”

The usefulness of a boyfriend would always reflect in the various details of life.

For instance, he would walk on the outer side of a sidewalk, voluntarily carry all her shopping bags, or even become an emotionless robot who finished off her leftovers toward the end of a meal.

No man could be exempted regardless of his social status.

After breakfast, Rachel and Justin headed to the market to get some stuff to redecorate the old house. Jolly tagged along, having tons of energy to spend.

“Aren’t you exhausted? Doesn’t lying in the homestay bed sound tempting to you?”

“What’s so exhausting about a road trip? Besides, I want to see the place you lived in as a kid.”

"It's not finished yet."

"Perfect. I can help."

While helping Rachel choose a wall calendar in a bodega, Jolly noticed Regina lingering by the shelves from the corner of her eyes, unwilling to let them leave her sight. At that, she deliberately raised her voice. "We're sisters. There's no need to stand on ceremony."

Sure enough, a certain someone became livid with rage.

Their custom-made furniture could only be delivered in the afternoon, but the chaise lounge Jolly chose, which she claimed would add to the liveliness of the house, was delivered over at once.

"I heard there are wild matsutakes in this mountain. Where are they, Chris?"

"All the matsutake would be long gone if you can find them," Rachel said helplessly. "Amateurs like us can only find them if we're super lucky. You can definitely find them if you wake up early and follow the homestay owner up here, though."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, she has a spot here."

"Is it still considered wild matsutake then?"

"It is. She just knows where the matsutake grow, and they grow in the same spot nearly every year."

Though they couldn't find any matsutake, Rachel still took the gang up the mountain. After all, it was Jolly and Leroy's first time here. It gave Rachel a sense of being a host, hoping the guys would like Somerset Mountain a little more as she introduced the place.

"Careful, it's slippery here." Justin held Rachel's hand when they were climbing a slope.

"Thanks."

Behind them, Jolly smiled dubiously when she saw the former couple's interaction and deliberately asked, "Leroy, where's Carmen?"

"She ran off," Leroy said. "She's picking pines up ahead."

"Come on, let's go find her lest something happens. I heard there are wild boars in this neck of the woods."

“Wild boars?”

Seeing that Leroy was still reeling in perplexity, Jolly pinched him and dragged him away, leaving Rachel and Justin on the slope.

“Don’t run too far off either, guys. The forest here is pretty deep, and you might get lost,” Rachel shouted toward the couple.

“I got it!” Jolly’s voice came from afar, echoing through the woods.

The morning sun came through the gaps in the woods. As the cold mist dispersed, the dampness of the forest transpired, gradually warming up the place.

“Mr. Lee’s apprentice said they’ll deliver the furniture this afternoon; it’s just that the new furniture still has some chemical odor on it and will need to be aired for a while. As such, it’ll be some time before anyone can live in it.”

“No worries, there’ll be plenty of chances in the future.”

Rachel took a deep breath as she enjoyed the mountain view. “We’ve only been here for a few days, yet it feels like years have passed.”

“I’ll stay here with you as long as you want.”

“Actually, I kind of want to go back to Riverdale.”

Justin’s gaze paused for a split second.

“Like animals, humans constantly migrate from one place to another that’s more suitable for them,” said Rachel. “I’m already used to my life in Riverdale.”

The memories of her eight years living in Somerset Mountain had long been buried in the archives. What she remembered most were her days in Riverdale, even if these twenty-plus years were somewhat miserable. However, with bitterness came sweetness. Those who were miserable would already feel content when given a sliver of sweetness. Besides, Charlotte and Samuel were still in Riverdale.

“We’ll go back in a couple of days,” Justin suggested. “Since the other guys just arrived, we’ll show them around before we leave. Just think of us as hosts entertaining our guests around.”

As he was a head taller, Rachel would have to raise her head slightly to look into his eyes, and right then, she found his side profile basking under the sun. Coupled with the shadows of the leaves enveloping the top of his head, he looked exceptionally affable.

“Sure.” Rachel nodded with a smile.

As they spoke while heading further into the mountain, they spotted a familiar figure on the other mountain path far ahead nearly at the same time, and they stopped in their tracks at once.

Rachel's dangling hands balled into fists while her brows furrowed.

The figure belonged to Lionel.

What is he doing here in the mountains?

"I'm going to take a look."

"Rachel." Justin wanted to stop her, but he chose to follow her in the end.

Lionel had come to the mountains alone with a grocery bag in his hand. It was clear that he wasn't familiar with the area as he stopped in his tracks aimlessly every now and then.

The former couple stalked him for quite a while and nearly lost him after crossing a slope.

"There." Justin pulled on Rachel and gestured for her to stay quiet.

Two massive ancient trees had blocked their view, but in fact, Lionel was just up ahead, mumbling to a tree.

Still, they were too far away to hear him. "What is he saying?"

"Don't go any closer. He'll see you." Justin grabbed her.

It was so silent here that one could even hear a wild hare passing by; what more two living adults?

It was safer that they kept their distance.

Meanwhile, Lionel pulled a glass-bottled soda out of the grocery bag and uncapped it with ease. After taking a sip, he suddenly chuckled.

"This tastes a little different from when we were kids, and I bet you'd complain if you tasted it. I still remember how much you love drinking soda, Selena, especially the ones you stored in the icehouse. There weren't refrigerators yet at that time, and no one had done what you did either. You always figured a way out. Dad has two sons, but he loved you the most, and it turns out he was right. You're the most excellent among us."

He continued, "I wonder if you ever regretted it. Maybe you would've had an easier life if not for all that medicine and whatnot. How great it would've been if you followed me and

studied abroad. But you refused to go, saying you were afraid no one would take care of Dad. Well, you were the most pious among us. Selena, Rachel has grown up now. I bet you'd be happy if you could see her. She looks so much like you. I would've recognized her in a heartbeat if I stayed in Riverdale. But I've failed her..."

Everything in this world had a soul. Apart from the soil, these massive ancient trees lived the longest in this neck of the woods, and people could always leave their mourning with them.

As Rachel and Justin watched Lionel sitting in front of a tree and mumbling away, they suddenly figured out why he had come into the mountain alone.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 563

Selena had been burned to death by mountain fire after being mutilated, so there wasn't even a skeleton left of her. Even if Rachel didn't say much, Lionel could probably guess that Selena wasn't buried in this part of the mountains.

However, trees had souls. Since Selena was buried deep beneath this soil, he'd be mourning for her indirectly by talking to these trees.

Meanwhile, Rachel wasn't sure how to feel when she looked at the man in his fifties.

Justin, on the other hand, let go of her. "Go to him if you want to."

Slightly stumped, Rachel hesitated for a moment before standing up straight behind the tree.

Before she could go over, a grunt came from behind. She turned around upon hearing that, only to be muffled. The last thing she saw before passing out was Justin being dragged away.

"They still haven't returned?" Jolly cornered Bobby as soon as she returned to the homestay at noon. "Are you sure about this?"

"I swear they didn't come back." Bobby shook his head in response. "I've been here all day. No one came in after you guys left in the morning."

"Which room is Chris staying in? I want to take a look."

“Upstairs—”

Jolly rushed upstairs at that, not waiting for Bobby to finish his words. Alas, Rachel and Justin’s rooms were as they left them in the morning, and not a single soul was inside either.

“What’s wrong?” Lionel came out of his room and into the lobby when he heard noises outside.

Leroy happened to come back inside right then, and he explained, “We, Justin, and Rachel went up to the mountain together. We split up for a while, but we couldn’t find her or Justin after that. We assumed they had come back before us, but as it turns out, they didn’t.”

“Have you guys tried calling them?”

“We did, but we couldn’t get through either.”

“Could it be because of the poor signal?” Bobby explained. “The signal has always been bad up in the mountains. You can never get a call there.”

“It’s been two hours, and Chris isn’t a careless person. It’s impossible for her not to contact any of us after disappearing for so long.” Jolly dashed down the stairs frantically, stomping as she went. “Something terrible must’ve happened. I’m sure of it.”

Just then, Carmen dashed right inside. “Leroy, Jolly, it’s going to rain.”

“Carmen, we don’t have time for this right now.” Leroy, too, believed the situation was getting serious. “Maybe they got lost in the woods. Can we get those living in the mountains to help?”

“There’s a huge, dark cloud. You can’t go there. It’s going to rain in the mountains.” Carmen pointed outside as she tugged on Leroy’s sleeve. “Look, Leroy, there’s a dark cloud.”

“What dark clouds?!” Jolly became irritated. “It’s a sunny day today.”

“No, Jolly. Look!” Leroy’s grave tone made everyone look outside.

Thick smoke came from somewhere in the mountains, and it seemed like it had been going on for a while as massive black smoke billowed into the air, slowly concealing the sky above the mountains.

Hell, that was no dark cloud—it was wildfire!

“Wildfire!” Bobby’s shriek awoke everyone, and Jolly’s countenance turned awful. “Chris and Justin might still be in there!”

At that, the gang rushed over.

Meanwhile, the smoke had long billowed where the fire was happening in the mountain.

Awoken by the choking smoke, Rachel then found Justin tied to a tree across from her with piles of dried leaves and wood surrounding him.

Terrified, she struggled to get to him, only to discover she had been tied to a tree as well.

The thick rope was so tightly wrapped around her that she thought her bones would break. There was no way she could break free.

“Justin! Wake up, Justin!” At last, the man finally woke up amidst her desperate cries and coughs.

Justin reacted about the same as Rachel after regaining consciousness. “Rachel.” His expression turned grim.

“We got ambushed.” Rachel looked at the surrounding smoke with despair. “We’re going to die here today.”

“We won’t.”

Justin’s face tensed up. His face had been scorched bright red amidst the wildfire, and beads of sweat kept rolling down his cheeks. Even so, he kept fighting the rope tied to his hands behind his back.

Who knew how long had passed when he finally managed to free his one hand with a forceful tug? However, nearly the entire skin had been scraped off his back, mangled.

“Rachel!” He charged toward the woman and hurriedly untied the ropes the second he broke free. “Rachel, wake up! Don’t sleep!”

Rachel kept coughing, and her voice was already raspy. “Forget about me and just get out of here.”

“What are you talking about?! We’re leaving together.” Justin removed his jacket, wrapped it around her, then carried her in his arms and strode out of there.

However, fire enveloped their surroundings, and the way down was completely blocked. Their only option was to head up the mountain, but the thick smoke made it hard for Justin to tell where he was going. Worse, the fire was only getting bigger.

This scene was like a nightmare, one that had accompanied them for twenty-plus years.

To think this day would actually come.

When he heard Rachel coughing, Justin loosened his grip on her slightly. "Don't worry, Rachel. We'll definitely get out of here."

"Forget about me. Neither of us will be able to get out of here if you carry me."

"We can."

"Justin Burton."

"You always call me that, and it makes me feel like we're only acquaintances. Call me something else."

Rachel could see his moving face as she lay in his arms, but he was moving so much that she felt dizzy. She was well aware that he didn't care what she called him; he just wanted to distract her.

At that, she felt a massive lump in her throat. However, she chose to play dumb and went along with him. "What do you want me to call you, then?" she asked while nodding.

"Anything but that."

"Do you have a family nickname?"

"I don't think so."

"Liar, you clearly do." Rachel's voice was so weak that it nearly drowned in the crackling noise of burning trees. "I remember it well. Your grandpa and aunt used to call you... Jay."

"In that case, call me that too."

"No."

"Why not?"

"It'll be like everyone else. I don't want that."

"Why don't you come up with one, then?" A hint of laughter laced his voice.

"Okay."

Rachel's head spun terribly, and right then, Justin had been standing on the same spot for quite some time.

The blazing fire surrounded them, inching their way closer to Rachel and Justin. The fresh leaves held back the engulfing flames, but just barely. Then again, the gradually thinning oxygen would probably get to them before the fire could.

"Don't sleep, Rachel."

Justin was still desperately trying to find a way out, but the thick smoke made his bloodshot eyes water badly.

Meanwhile, Rachel's grip on his neck began loosening, and her voice was becoming barely audible.

"Justin, I'm really sleepy."

"No, don't sleep. We're almost out. Rachel, stay with me here! Stay with me and don't sleep. Talk to me. Think about our girl. Charlotte and Samuel are still waiting for you to go back to Riverdale!" Justin cried out in a shaky voice. He couldn't take losing her another time.

He had already lost her twice, and both times nearly ended him.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 564

Rachel was never in perfect health as the wildfire from when she was eight left her with a chronic condition despite surviving it. Apart from giving her a broken voice box, she also suffered from minor asthma and other respiratory illnesses. It was just that she rarely brought it up with others.

She couldn't go anywhere that had insufficient oxygen, or she would suffocate if she wasn't careful.

While Justin only felt unbearable from the smoke, Rachel hadn't been breathing properly for long, and she could feel her energy being sucked out of her body gradually.

Nonetheless, she kept fighting her consciousness. She believed if she kept talking to Justin, his desire to survive would increase, and if he could hang on longer, he might eventually find a way out—just like he had twenty-six years ago.

Meanwhile, Justin held a death grip on Rachel as he searched through the thick smoke. The moment he saw the two massive, ancient trees, his bloodshot eyes lit up with joy.

“Rachel, I’ve found the way out. We’ll reach your home if we go down this path. Wake up, Rachel.”

Justin carried her in his arms as he hurried down the mountain. The two of them had walked on this path so many times in the last few days that he knew hope was just up ahead, even when he could barely see the road in front. Everything would be okay once they left the mountain.

Just then, Rachel’s hand slipped from his neck.

“Rachel.” His voice trembled from the suddenness, and he stopped in his tracks.
“Rachel!”

No matter how Justin called her, she no longer responded this time.

At that, he quickened his pace down the mountain. However, he was faced with an oncoming fire. The heat wave nearly came at them as well, scorching their cheeks while preventing them from leaving.

Justin hadn’t thought the road down would be blocked by fire as well.

had also been blocked by fire.

Rachel had already passed out at this point, clearly on her last legs. As Justin coughed violently, the immense pain caused him to slip and fall with Rachel in his arms.

“Rachel!”

Rachel lay on the ground, unresponsive.

“Rachel!” shouted Justin. His eyes were red as he tried to pick her up, unwilling to resign to fate.

However, the dizziness from the carbon monoxide in his system made it hard for him to do something as simple as this. He tried again and again, but his arms were spent. He couldn’t pick Rachel up no matter what.

Justin scanned his surroundings while fighting his urge to cough, but all he could see was thick smoke. Even if he could hold on until he found a way out, Rachel couldn't anymore.

Suddenly, he calmed down as he looked at the motionless woman in his arms.

He pulled her closer to him and planted a kiss on her forehead. His voice was so raspy now that it sounded like he had washed his throat down with sand. "It's okay. I won't abandon you like I did back then. I'll stay here with you forever."

The blazing fire was coming toward them; everywhere it went, dead leaves turned into ashes in an instant. However, Justin turned a blind eye to it, only pulling the woman in his arms close to him. She was who he cherished the most in this life; not even death could make him think otherwise.

Justin had a dream. In the past twenty-six years, the dream he most often had was about the wildfire incident.

The fire scorched the entire mountain, and the blazing fire chased after them from behind. He was pulling a little girl's hand. She was scrawny, yet her eyes were crystal clear like spring water.

Though they ran fast, they still tripped.

"Go, run away!"

"Katie!"

Every time, the dream would end with him being shot wide awake, drenched in a cold sweat. In his dream, he eventually let go of Katie's hand and watched her slip down the slope without being able to do anything.

"You were the one who saved my life. Either we live together, or we die together." This life should've been returned to you twenty-six years ago, Rachel.

The heaviness in Rachel's chest woke her up, making her feel like she was drowning, and as her eyes shot wide open, she gasped. She then parted her lips, only to discover she couldn't make a sound.

She was wearing an oxygen mask and had been given a ventilator.

As the notion crossed her mind, the sudden sound of a woman exclaiming sent a sharp pang to her ears, resulting in her inability to hear a word the woman said. Other than that, her ears buzzed from a twinge.

The next second, many gathered around her bed. There were men and women, old and young. She could seemingly see through her blurry eyes, but at the same time, she couldn't see clearly.

"Chris!"

"Mommy!"

"Rachel!"

No one knew which voice pulled her consciousness back. But all of a sudden, she could see what was before her eyes clearly, and the first image she captured was of a teary-eyed Jolly. Her eyes were so swollen from all the crying that Rachel nearly couldn't make her out.

"She seems awake. She's awake." Victor grabbed Gloria's arms. "Rachel's finally awake."

Gloria, too, was in tears. "It's good that she's awake." She kept wiping her tears away.

"Do you know how long you've slept, Chris?! You scared the sh*t out of us!" Jolly grabbed Rachel's hand. Her grip was so tight that Rachel frowned in pain. She wanted to complain, but the ventilator prevented her from doing so.

"Rachel looks like she wants to say something." Thank heavens for Victor's quick reaction.

Jolly hurriedly leaned closer to Rachel. "What is it, Rachel? We're listening."

"Tube..." Rachel took pains to finally utter a word.

"Tube? What tube?" Jolly scratched her head, bewildered. "What tube?"

Just then, Gloria exclaimed, "Jolly, you're pressing down on her breathing tube!"

Jolly nearly jumped up at once, feeling guilty and mortified. "Sorry, sorry, I was too excited to realize it. I'm sorry!"

"What's apologizing going to do?! Move aside. To think she survived the fire only to die of suffocation because of you!" Gloria frothed at the mouth.

Everyone here had been hoping for a whole week for Rachel to regain consciousness. No thanks to Jolly, she pressed down on Rachel's breathing tube right as the latter finally woke up. Jesus!

On the other hand, Rachel still had something to say, though she barely had any strength.

“What else do you want to say, Rachel? I’m listening.” Gloria leaned closer to Rachel and took a long time before finally making out what she was trying to say. to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

She wasn’t talking about the tube—she was asking about a certain someone.

Gloria’s eyes shrank, and she fought back her tears while pulling a smile. “Don’t worry. He’s all okay. You should rest for now, and you can see him once you’re better.”

Rachel nodded at that and closed her eyes once more.

She was well spent. Only saying a couple of words already got her lethargic, but she could now be at ease when she knew he was okay.

When the doctors came to check on Rachel, the others went out of the ward.

At that, Jolly pulled Gloria over. “What did Chris ask you?”

“What else?” Gloria sighed.

Jolly understood at once. “Why didn’t you tell her the truth? She’ll find out eventually.”

“Do you think I can do that right now? She just woke up, you know. We’ll see how things go after she gets better.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 565

It wasn’t until three days later that Rachel came off the ventilator, and during that time, she got more conscious by the day. Only when her condition had stabilized and the doctors were certain there wouldn’t be risks did they stop the ventilator.

“You have to tell me at once if you don’t feel comfortable. Alternatively, you can press the bell. Don’t fight it. You’ve inhaled a lot of smoke, and it’s pretty severe.” It was like Jolly and Rachel had switched overnight, with Jolly becoming the motherly one.

Gloria, however, didn't buy her act. "Yeah, right. You pressed down on Rachel's tube as soon as she woke up, nearly suffocating her. I can't even begin to imagine what would happen to her under your care."

"I've told you it was an accident! You've been on about this for three days. When are you going to stop?"

"Until the day I step into my grave!"

"Knock on wood!" Jolly hit the roof. "Can't you watch your mouth?!"

Jolly wasn't superstitious, but after Rachel was hospitalized, everyone in the gang did whatever they thought could help Rachel regain consciousness. If possible, they'd pray to every godly being in this world and do anything that would bring good luck.

Likewise, Gloria uttered the phrase 'knock on wood' at once and even tapped on the bedside table.

Rachel chuckled amusedly, leading her pallid face to be laced with a tinge of redness as she coughed.

Jolly hurriedly brought a glass of water to Rachel at that. "Have some water."

"Thanks."

"Don't waste your voice on useless words like this when your throat's uncomfortable."

After taking a sip of water, Rachel asked with a raspy voice. "How's Justin?"

"Who?" Gloria and Jolly exchanged a glance.

"Oh, he's recovering pretty well. He can even walk now. You should do your best too."

"In that case, why hasn't he come to see me?"

"Huh?" Stumped, Jolly started mumbling, "He, uh, he... The doctor advised him against walking too much. He still needs to recuperate, after all."

Being a shrewd one and knowing Jolly like the back of her hand, Rachel instantly knew the former was lying upon seeing her behavior.

"How exactly is he doing?"

Overwhelmed by Rachel's questioning, Jolly looked to Gloria for help.

However, Gloria was a terrible liar as well, not to mention when it was about Justin. Her eyes were already red-rimmed when she heard his name, and she even failed to hold back her tears, letting them roll down her cheeks like beads of a broken string. “He’s still in a coma.”

Rachel’s expression turned awful the second she heard Gloria’s sobs. “Take me to him.”

Jolly stopped her at once. “The doctor said you need to recuperate. You can’t run around just yet.”

“I said, take me to him—”

Having gotten worked up, Rachel started coughing violently.

“Don’t get agitated. Take a deep breath. Fine, we’ll take you to him.”

Jolly knew there was no stopping Rachel anymore and pushed a wheelchair over. With Gloria’s help, they helped Rachel out of bed and into the wheelchair, taking her to the ICU.

The second Rachel saw the man lying behind the window, her eyes turned red-rimmed with oncoming tears.

Like when she had just woken up, Justin needed the support of a ventilator too. Unlike her, he had a lot more tubes attached to him, and it was so complicated that she couldn’t even tell just how many there were.

“How is his condition?”

“The doctor said he inhaled too much smoke, and the carbon monoxide level in his blood was so high that it damaged his brain, triggering his old affliction from the car accident. H-He might never wake up.”

“That’s not possible.” Rachel was rendered stupefied. “Didn’t you guys tell me he ran out himself? Why is his condition more severe than mine? He was in much better health than I was! He could’ve certainly left.”

“He didn’t. He held you in his arms without moving an inch like he was ready to face death.” Jolly sighed at the mention of this. “When your dad rushed into the fire to save you guys, Justin probably thought you were on your last legs, and he wouldn’t let go of you no matter what. It was like he was ready to go with you.”

Jolly’s every word shot a sharp pang to Rachel’s heart, and she reflexively pressed her hand against the window, latching her eyes on the man in the bed as her body trembled.

Why were you so foolish? You could've escaped.

"Chris, there might still be hope. Don't be too upset."

Rachel sniffled at that, fighting back her tears. "He'll definitely wake up."

However, Gloria wasn't as optimistic. "The doctor said his chances of waking up are low. Many cases like his almost always end up in a vegetative state." She choked on her sobs.

"Can't you be a little more optimistic?! He was the one who raised you!" Jolly snapped.

"It's exactly because he raised me that I'm prepared for the worst. Even if he ends up being in a coma forever, I'll take care of him until the end of time."

"You don't need to," Rachel said weakly. "I'll take care of him."

Her words stumped Gloria.

"You guys can go back. I want to stay here with him for a little while longer."

Rachel pressed her hand against the glass as though doing so could bring her closer to the man inside.

Jolly wanted to dissuade her, but Gloria shot glances at the former and dragged her away.

"What are you pulling me for? Chris is in such bad shape that she can't stay out here for long. She has to go back to her ward."

"Don't you know being depressed is also lethal to recovery?" retorted Gloria. "Do you think she'll be able to rest like this? Let her stay for a while."

Jolly sighed at that. "Say, why do you think they can never come to a parallel line? It's always a chasing game between the two; I love you, but you don't love me, or you love me, but I don't love you anymore. They can never seem to match each other's pace. I'm even getting anxious for them."

Gloria nodded in agreement. In fact, she was shocked when Rachel called out to Justin earlier.

One should know Rachel had never called Justin so sweetly before.

While the two were speaking, a figure approached their direction.

"Mr. Hudson."

The person who had come was Lionel. He was in simple, casual clothing, and upon seeing the two, he smiled while acting gentlemanly. “Miss Carter, Miss Hochmann.”

“Are you doing better now, Mr. Hudson?” Gloria asked with concern.

“Much better. How’s Rachel doing today?”

“She’s doing pretty well too. She’s off the ventilator and can breathe on her own now. It’s just that...”

“What is it?”

“She found out that Justin is still in a coma and might never wake up again. She’s alone in the ICU right now. Do you want to go and take a look?”

With that, Lionel took a gander toward the ICU. “I’ll do that. Thank you, ladies.”

“No worries.”

“Chris’ luck comes later in her life, huh?” Jolly commented as she looked at Lionel’s back. “How is it that her birth father can be so suave? Mr. Hudson’s temperament is absolutely remarkable. No wonder the countess of Yatruinai forced him to stay.”

“How is it that you’re still in the mood to talk about him at this time?!”

“What else am I supposed to say, then? If Mr. Hudson hadn’t led the rescue and even went into the fire himself, there wouldn’t be anything left of Chris and Justin by now.”

As soon as Lionel learned that Rachel and Justin were stranded up in the mountain, he sent all his men to search the area and even gathered the locals to put out the fire. Before it had been put out, he already charged into the fire alone.

He was the one who carried Rachel out.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 566

Through the glass partition of the ICU, Rachel gazed at the man lying on the sick bed.

He seemed especially unfamiliar with all the tubes sticking out of his body. In Rachel's memories, Justin had always been tall and strong with little emotion on his face. He seemed to be greatly distanced from people, and others also dared not approach him casually.

No matter what happened, he seemed to solve every problem with ease. Even after leaving Burton Group, as long as he wished to, he could still retrieve everything that belonged to him with ease.

But now, he lay there, so weak that he could only depend on machines for survival.

"Rae."

A thick, male voice sounded from behind her.

Rachel wiped the corners of her eyes, then turned around to see that it was Lionel. In an instant, she was overwhelmed.

It had been about a week since she regained consciousness, and everyone had come over to visit her. Even Hernandez, who couldn't come to Riverdale for the time being, gave her a video call and kept reminding her to take care of herself. However, she never once saw Lionel.

Rachel heard from Gloria that she had bumped into Lionel at the hospital, but since there were too many people in the ward, he just stood outside and took a glance before leaving. He never even went in and talked to the rest.

"He will wake up." Lionel's voice brought Rachel back to reality. "Don't get too upset—this is not yet the time for sorrow."

Rachel returned to her senses. "I know."

"You just recovered, so take good care of yourself. You don't want to collapse after he wakes up, after all."

"Okay. I'll stick around for a bit before leaving."

"Good. By the way, Regina got someone to make you some soup. She insisted on delivering this to you. I was worried that she might disturb your rest, so I agreed to deliver this in her stead. I'll put it in your ward, so remember to have some."

Seeing Lionel treat her so cautiously, Rachel couldn't hold it in any longer. "Dad."

He froze, and it seemed as if he couldn't believe his ears.

"What did you call me?"

“Dad, please take me back to the ward. I’m feeling a little tired.”

Rachel’s expression was gentle, and she was no longer the ferocious person she had been toward him as tears glistened in her eyes.

Lionel finally came to his senses. He was more than fifty years old now, but he could barely control his emotions as he choked on them. “Okay, I’ll take you back to the ward.”

When they returned, Lionel opened the container of soup and fed Rachel in spoonfuls.

“I can do it myself.”

“It’s okay, I’ll do it.”

Lionel’s eyes were red. “Rae, I’m so sorry. You had to experience those sufferings you didn’t deserve because of me.”

Rachel shook her head. “It’s not your fault. Someone wants to hurt us. Even if we survive the fire, they still have other tricks up their sleeves.”

“I’ve already asked someone to investigate this. I want to see which scoundrel actually dared to harm my daughter.”

When he came to the part where he got too worked up, he began to cough.

She immediately straightened up and took the bowl of soup from him, setting it aside. “Dad, are you alright?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” he said while coughing.

“You should be resting well.”

“I healed the moment I saw you.”

Lionel smiled and gazed at Rachel. He couldn’t help but reach out and smoothen her hair. “Selena passed away too soon. Do you still remember what your mother looked like?”

“I do.” Rachel nodded. “I look a lot like my mother.”

“Did your grandma tell you that?”

“Yes. I don’t remember much because it happened when I was young, so Grandma showed me some photos. However, I’m not as pretty as my mother.”

"You two are different. Your mother was a lively person, and you're much calmer than her."

"What was my mother like? I want to know more about her."

"You do?"

"Yes."

Lionel took a deep breath, then exhaled slowly. To him, Selena existed in his memories. He thought that he could no longer talk about her to anyone else, but their daughter was right in front of him.

When Rachel was born, Selena had already taken her away to hide in the mountains. In Rachel's memories, her mother was gentle, but in Lionel's memories, it was another story.

"She was different from other girls from a young age. She was naughty, but she could convince people easily. She didn't mince her words, and people both loved and hated her. She didn't like studying, but she loved researching pharmacology. She would go to the pharmacy and hang out with the pharmacists."

He continued, "My mother was still alive then, and when she forced Selena to learn embroidery, Selena reacted like it cost her her life. She was punished for it a few times, then Father pitied her so much that he decided to just stop sending her to embroidery classes altogether."

At that, Lionel smiled. "My mother was so mad that it gave her headaches, and she wanted to chase Selena out multiple times. She'd be appeased by Selena's desserts, and the next day, she would be hugging her as always. My mother only scolded her two sons, saying that daughters were much better than sons."

"Was my mom pampered at home?"

"Very much. We weren't as convincing as she was, and everyone loved to see her. If not, why did you think your grandma would agree to leave with her?"

Rachel nodded.

It was true. If her mother hadn't treated everyone around her well enough, she wouldn't be able to escape when the Hudsons fell to ruin. Other than Nancy, many people must have helped her as well.

"After that, your Uncle Jefferey and I went abroad to study. She could've come with us, and we thought she definitely wanted to see the world with a personality like that."

Unexpectedly, she didn't go. Your grandmother just passed away then, and I know she wanted to stay behind to take care of Father."

At that, Lionel sighed. "She was the adopted daughter of the Hudsons, but she cared about the elderly more than we did. She was the most considerate one out of all of us."

"Grandma told me that Grandpa loved my mom to bits."

"Yes, and your mother was truly talented. That was why your grandpa wanted to pass on the special Hudson prescription to her. Back in the day, the prescription was only passed on to males, but I wasn't interested in medicine, and your Uncle Jefferey wasn't trustworthy enough. Who knew that something would happen later?"

A large family's downfall would start from the inside, and Jefferey was an example of that.

No one thought that the usually silent second son of the Hudson Family would get so twisted that he would destroy his own family to satisfy his selfishness and greed. He worked so hard to be acknowledged, but from a young age, he had been overshadowed by Lionel and Selena.

"As for the incidents that followed, I also sent some people to investigate them. When the incidents befell the Hudson Family, I was no longer in Riverdale."

"Regina told me that Natasha took you to Yatruinia, where you were unconscious for years."

"Natasha was a good woman. Even though she hid those things from me, I'm still grateful to her for everything she's done."

"I know." Rachel nodded.

Even though she wasn't generous enough to forgive Natasha in her mother's stead, she couldn't blame Natasha either. After all, that woman's patience and persistence had saved her father's life.

"Two years ago, Natasha passed away due to cancer. Before she left, she told me that she regretted one thing in her life. She wanted me to find you and make it up to you. According to her, she initially thought that since your Uncle Jefferey took you away, he would treat you well."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 567

At the mention of Natasha, a pained look appeared in Lionel's eyes.

Rachel held his hand. "Dad, let's not talk about that. I don't blame her at all."

A dying person's words were always kinder, after all.

Also, Natasha was just a foolish woman who wanted her beloved to stay with her.

"By the way, Dad, why haven't I seen Regina recently?"

"I'm worried that she might disturb your rest. There's always a bunch of people following her whenever she goes out, so it attracts attention," said Lionel. "Ever since she was young, Regina envied others for having siblings. When she knew that she had an elder sister, she was happier than anyone else, and she even kept pestering me to bring her along. I hope you won't hate her."

"I don't hate her; I just can't accept this fact yet."

"It's okay, she's been outside long enough, so it's about time she heads back."

"Is Regina going back?"

"Yes."

Rachel felt a thousand emotions rushing through her mind, slightly stunned.

She couldn't accept this sudden addition of a sister at first. There was almost nothing about Regina that resembled her, be it looks or personality. They were completely different people.

She couldn't find common ground between them, and she didn't feel particularly attached to Regina either. Also, their different living circumstances caused them to have different tastes in food.

However, blood relations were a peculiar phenomenon. Perhaps it really was because they were related by blood, and it was the only reason Rachel could find; they had only been together for a few days, but she already treated Regina like her own sister.

After Lionel left, Rachel's mind was still preoccupied with thoughts. She didn't even realize when Jolly talked to her.

"Chris."

“Hm?” Rachel came to her senses.

Jolly waved a hand in front of her, then showed two fingers. “What’s this number?”

“Two. What’s the matter with you?”

“I thought you were suffering from some complications and lost your soul or something.” Jolly stared at her. “How come you’re so dazed after your dad left? What did he talk to you about?”

“Nothing. It’s just that Regina will be leaving soon.”

“That girl? Well, just let her leave. She’s so noisy.”

“Look who’s talking.”

Jolly immediately widened her eyes and glared at Rachel. “Are you getting tired of me? Why? You don’t want your godsister now that you have a real one? What a jerk!”

As she said that, she even put a hand to her chest and twisted her face in exaggerated pain.

“Did Leroy teach you how to do that?”

Rachel rolled her eyes at Jolly.

Jolly pouted, then turned to the topic at hand. “Even though that girl talks in an annoying way, her persistence is quite admirable.”

Rachel thought for a bit. “Jolly, can you help me out? Please help me see her off when she leaves, and give her something while you’re at it.”

Jolly didn’t answer.

Three days later, Regina left Riverdale.

Her identity was rather unique. After her mother passed away, the crown would automatically belong to her. If she hadn’t pestered Lionel about it, the man was reluctant to bring her out.

At the airport, the private plane was already waiting at the gate. Regina would be leaving through the special passageway, and she was protected by bodyguards all around her.

“Wait!”

They had only reached the airport when Regina and the others were halted by this shout.

Jolly ran over to them, but she was blocked by the ignorant bodyguards. If Regina hadn't reacted in time, something terrible might have happened.

"She's my friend. Let go of her."

It was only then Jolly was allowed passage.

Still, Regina wasn't too friendly when she looked at Jolly. "Why are you here? To laugh at me?"

"I'm not that bored. Why would I come all the way to the airport just to laugh at you?" Jolly was exhausted from all the running, and she panted as she said, "Is your leg all right now? You don't have to use the wheelchair anymore, right?"

"I recovered a long time ago."

"Take care when you go back. Your leg is more prone to getting hurt after injuring it once."

"Is that all you've come to say?" Regina looked behind Jolly, and it seemed as though she was looking for something.

Jolly snapped her fingers, drawing Regina's attention back to her. "What are you looking for? Do you still think your sister can come and see you off?"

"I don't mean it like that!"

"You're quite stubborn, aren't you? But only around me, it seems."

Furious, Regina still suppressed her temper as she gritted her teeth and said, "I'm leaving soon. My sister... is yours now. You win."

Seeing that Regina was so mad that she was about to cry, Jolly finally stopped teasing her.

"Here. This is for you."

A bunch of keys emerged from her sleeve, and a pink ribbon keychain held them together. They shivered and clattered in the air, producing a beautiful sound.

"What's this?"

“House keys. It’s that apartment you went to before. Your sister wanted me to give you this.”

Regina was stunned in an instant. “My sister asked you to give me this?”

“Yes. Why else would I give you the keys? Let me tell you this—there are only three keys to the house. One is with your sister, another one is with me, and this one’s for you. What are you zoning out for? Do you not want it? If so, I’m going to keep it.”

“Who said I don’t want them!” Regina snatched the keys from Jolly. “My sister gave it to me, not you.”

Her angered behavior paired with her curly brown hair made her look like an angry little lion.

Jolly smiled and caressed her head. “Do drop by often. I won’t be following you further in, so goodbye.”

With that, she turned around and left.

There was a short silence behind her until it was broken by Regina’s sobbing voice. “You have to be good to my sister, or I’ll come back and take her away! By then, you will never see my sister again!”

Jolly thought it funny, but she was also deeply moved as well. Her eyes began to turn red.

Once in the car, Jolly glanced toward the passenger seat. “Your eyes are going to bulge out of the window. You’re so fond of her; are you sure you don’t want to get out and see her off?”

“If I get out, she probably wouldn’t want to leave anymore.” In the passenger seat, Rachel wiped tears from her reddened eyes. “Let’s not cause more trouble.”

Jolly sighed. “You’re still kind of lucky. Your biological father came back, and you even have a sister who loves you so much right now.”

“What? Are you jealous?”

“Pfft! Why would I be jealous? She won’t be able to see you that often, and being a noble isn’t much good either, for she has so many limitations just to leave the country. I like being me.”

Rachel laughed. “That’s self-promotion.”

Outside the car window, Regina was led inside the plane by the butler who followed her. Even from her silhouette, it was clear that she didn't want to leave. After all, she hadn't heard Rachel's acknowledgment herself. However, she couldn't stay. Everyone had their own responsibilities to fulfill, and she was no exception.

Meanwhile, in the car, Jolly started the engine and got ready to leave the airport, heading back to the hospital.

Suddenly, Rachel's phone rang in the car.

It was a call from Gloria.

"Hello?"

As soon as it went through, Gloria's trembling voice sounded. "Rachel, my brother is awake!"

Rachel's hand shook, then she came to her senses after a bit. "Quick, Jolly—get back to the hospital."

Joy bubbled within her blood. Even though she knew that Justin's condition was getting better recently and that he would be waking up without any problems, she was still pleasantly surprised that he would wake up so soon.

He was awake; he was finally awake.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 568

When Rachel rushed to the hospital, there was a group of people at the entrance of the ward.

Gloria had put off all her work to stay at the hospital. It happened to be a holiday, so Victor was also with her at the hospital. That was why Rachel was assured enough to leave and see Regina off.

"Rachel."

Victor spotted Rachel first, and Gloria turned around as well.

Rachel walked over to them from the corridor. When she saw the crowd at the entrance from a distance away, her heart began pounding wildly. She was terrified that a tragedy would happen after all this good news. No one could foresee the future, after all.

“How is he?” Jolly was the one who asked about the situation first.

Gloria said, “The doctor is still doing a check-up inside. We’ve been asked to wait outside.”

Victor comforted Rachel, saying, “Rachel, he’s awake now, so he should be fine. Don’t worry.”

Rachel nodded, but she couldn’t help worrying in her mind.

Just then, the door to the ward opened, and the doctor walked out.

Rachel’s feet seemed to be planted firmly on the ground, and she couldn’t move as she watched Jolly and the others ask the doctor about the situation. She remained behind them, listening in.

“He’s alright now. We’ll observe him for a few more days, and if everything is fine, he can get discharged and rest at home.”

Everyone sighed in relief.

Gloria hastily said, “Thank you for the hard work, doctor.”

“You’re welcome. This is our duty, after all.”

“In that case, can we go in now?”

“Try not to go in all at once. He still hasn’t completely woken up. One of you can go in and talk to him, but please don’t cause a ruckus.”

“Thank you, doctor.”

After the doctor left, everyone turned their gazes simultaneously on Rachel.

They all knew that none of them were more worthy of seeing Justin than Rachel herself.

In the ward, the afternoon sunlight shone through the curtains into the room. It wasn’t too brilliant, and it was at the perfect intensity. It was just like the temperature in the ward; everything was just right.

Rachel sat down next to the bed. She didn’t move rashly, and she was even a little careful as if she feared that she might wake him. Nonetheless, this was contradictory to

her wishes. She hoped that he would wake up and that he would look at her and talk to her.

“Weren’t you awake? Why are you sleeping again?”

Rachel carefully took Justin’s hand, her voice small as she spoke. “Why did you wake up today, of all days, when I’m not at the hospital? If I knew you’d be waking up, I wouldn’t have left no matter what.”

Justin’s fingers moved a little, and he began to frown.

Rachel didn’t notice that as she lowered her head and took a deep breath. “It’s okay, though. The doctor said that you can be discharged after some observation for a few more days. I’m glad enough that you can get discharged. This time, I feel as if we both died once and came back to life.”

Rachel spoke to herself, not realizing that Justin had already opened his eyes. He gazed at her for a long time, the look in his eyes gradually turning gentle.

“Rae.”

When Rachel heard his voice, she thought she was hearing things. She was stunned for a while before she slowly raised her head.

As their gazes met, Rachel saw that there were hints of exhaustion in Justin’s eyes. However, the gentleness was unmistakable underneath the fatigue. He looked at her quietly as if he were looking at a treasure he lost and found again.

Rachel gripped his hand tightly, instantly at a loss for words. Her tears began streaming down her face.

Justin tried to lift his hand to wipe the tears away for her. Sadly, his body was terribly heavy, and his other hand had a needle in it, so he couldn’t quite raise his hand.

When he saw Rachel choking on her sobs, Justin said helplessly, “Don’t cry, Rae.”

“I’m not crying.” Rae turned around and wiped her tears away. However, no matter how much she wiped, her tears kept coming.

Just when Justin was wondering what he should do, she suddenly turned around and hugged him.

Her weak body was light, and it felt like a small cloud had covered his chest. The cloud shivered slightly along with the sound of sobbing, and countless words were conveyed in silence.

Outside the ward, Victor scratched his head while comforting the two other women.

“Why are you crying? He’s awake, isn’t he? What are you so sad about?”

“Sad?” Gloria glared at him. “We’re moved to tears!”

Similarly, Jolly was also crying. “Yes, we’re moved to tears! What would you know about that?”

The two always fought with each other, but they stood on the same side today while facing a common enemy. In an instant, Victor turned into the fool who couldn’t read the room.

Victor was exasperated.

By evening, Justin could sit up and eat normally.

Gloria and the others just stood and watched from the entrance before going home to rest.

For the past few days, these people had been going to and from the hospital and their homes, so none of them had had proper rest. Now, they could finally sleep restfully.

During their meal, Justin asked Rachel about the fire, and the woman told him truthfully.

“Mr. Hudson was the one who saved us?”

“Yes.”

“In that case, is he alright?”

“He sustained minor injuries, but he’s more or less all healed now. He just saw Regina off this morning, but he will be staying in Riverdale for a while. He said he has some matters to attend to.”

“I take it that your relationship with him improved significantly, then?”

“Yes.”

“It should’ve happened sooner.”

Justin looked at Rachel, feeling sincerely happy for her.

“How are Charlotte and Samuel doing?”

“They’re all lively and well. In fact, they can eat and drink just fine. They seem to be quite relaxed as if they were never worried about us. They’re so plump that their faces are getting rounder.”

“That’s a good thing.”

“As long as you think it is.”

Rachel didn’t say more as she urged him to drink more soup.

“Right, did you find out what happened with the fire?”

At the mention of that, Rachel frowned slightly. “After the fire brigade put out the fire, they found that the fire was caused by some residents offering sacrifices in the mountain.”

Justin frowned. “That’s impossible.”

“True, it would be a stretch to say that. We were knocked out and tied up there. If it weren’t for this, people might even believe it was an accident. However, such coincidences don’t exist.”

Was it truly a coincidence for them to be tied up when the fire happened on the mountain?

That was absolutely impossible.

“Someone was trying to set fire to the mountain to burn us to death.” Rachel’s voice was firm. “Not many people would seek our lives, and you don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure out who it was.”

Hints of coldness tinted Justin’s eyes.

He had already warned Julian to stop acting rashly, and he could overlook everything that happened in the past. However, with this fire, it was obvious that Julian was trying to kill Justin and Rachel. As such, Justin could no longer ignore this.

“Rachel, don’t get involved in this matter. I will handle it.”

Rachel looked at Justin and hesitated for a bit before nodding slightly.

Now that things had come to this, no matter what their relationship was like before, Julian was already trying to commit murder, so what other excuses could they possibly make for him?

Night silently crept up.

It had been almost half a month since the widely reported Somerset Mountain fire. Since no one had died in the incident, it didn't garner too much attention in public before other news took its place.

The French windows in the hotel reflected a certain man's cold and exquisite face.

Behind him, his assistant's voice rang out. "President Peters, Miss Porter is here."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 569

"I thought you left Riverdale." Seeing Sabrina, Julian glanced at her mildly.

Sabrina replied with a question, asking, "How can I leave before avenging my brother?"

"You're bold, Miss Sabrina. Aren't you afraid you won't be able to leave if you don't leave now?"

"You don't need to worry about this. I naturally have a legitimate reason to stay here."

"Since you can do that, why do you still look for me?"

"For cooperation, of course."

Julian put down his cup heavily with a darkened face. "Miss Sabrina, why do you think that I'll cooperate with you after you went behind my back and started a fire that nearly killed Rachel? I'm already being lenient toward you by not reporting your matter."

Without a change in expression, Sabrina replied, "She didn't die, right? She's a lucky woman."

Julian clenched his fists hard at that.

He had never thought of taking Rachel's life. However, it was hard to control what was happening once he made a deal with the devil. Sabrina was a lunatic who killed without flinching, and she could start a fire to burn down the entire mountain when it came to it.

"Our cooperation is over. I won't help you anymore. This is Riverdale, so you can't threaten me here."

“Those who work with me have never yet ended the cooperation by themselves.” Sabrina’s voice was not loud, but it was firm. She glanced behind her, and her subordinate quickly brought over a safety box. Opening it, everyone saw the gold bars lying inside. “That is the balance of payment for the previous goods, while this is what I need this time.”

Sabrina handed some papers to Julian and continued, “I wish for us to continue working together happily like before.”

However, Julian didn’t take the papers. To him, Sabrina was the one who didn’t keep her word. She had injured Rachel and crossed his line, so they could no longer work together.

“You may take some time to consider. There’s no rush.”

Sabrina placed the papers on top of the box of gold bars and stood up. “I’ll be in Riverdale for a long time. If all goes well, we can meet up openly soon.”

Julian’s eyes constricted at that.

After Sabrina left, his subordinate closed the door.

“President Peters, do we still continue working with her?”

“Keep this away.” Julian only ordered the subordinate to take the box away while he held the papers and pondered over what she had said.

Sabrina was cautious and would never dare to come to Riverdale if she weren’t confident. What is her background like?

Three days later, Justin’s health recovered more, so he was allowed to return home to recuperate.

Gloria brought over Rachel’s old wheelchair, but Justin rejected it vehemently.

“You’re overreacting. Justin’s lungs are damaged, not his legs. Why does he need a wheelchair?”

“What do you know? This is the highest form of treatment.”

“Ask your brother if he wants to be treated like this.” Jolly wrapped her arms around herself and leaned against the door, shaking her head. She’s worrying too much.

As expected, Gloria looked over at Justin expectantly. Justin had just changed his clothes and was coming out of the sick room. Hesitating, he said gently to Gloria, “Glo, I think we can donate this wheelchair to the hospital.”

Jolly laughed aloud. “Hahaha! What did I say?”

Gloria was annoyed and glared at her. “Stop laughing!”

As they bickered, Rachel had finished tidying up things, and she said to them, “Okay, stop arguing. All of you come and help me take these back home.”

Soon, they left, chatting happily on the way to the summer villa.

They had just arrived when they saw two rows of neatly dressed people standing in front from a distance. There were old and young people, and while it looked strange, the entire scene was very heartwarming to see.

With a bang, colorful confetti was released into the air, which rained down on them.

Charlotte failed to release her confetti and stomped her feet in anxiety. “I can’t release this!”

Lionel, who was at the side, immediately knelt down and held her hands. “Twist it like this.”

As expected, the confetti was released with a bang.

The car drove past the gates before stopping. Then, everyone got off.

Leroy was also in charge of the kids at the summer villa. He began patting down Rachel and Justin with some strange leaves, saying that it was to ward off bad luck.

Rachel was surprised. “When have you started believing in such things?”

Leroy smiled. “Just in case.”

Lionel also spoke up. “People don’t believe in things for nothing. Maybe there really is some truth to it.”

“Dad, why are you joining in too?” Rachel was helpless.

On the other hand, Richard and Marilyn also came over from the summer villa.

“Why are you guys still outside? Food is ready, so come in and eat.”

“Sure!” Jolly was hungry and rushed ahead. “There’s a lot of good food that my mom cooked today! First come, first serve!”

“Oh, I must have some!” Leroy quickly hurried along. He also called Carmen, who was squatting by the side. “Carmen, stop playing and come! If you don’t hurry, Jolly will finish everything.”

Hearing this, Carmen dropped the confetti and ran too.

Gloria, Victor, and Samuel joined in the chase as well.

Charlotte could not run fast, so she opened her arms and begged Lionel to carry her. “Grandpa, carry me!”

During this time, Rachel and Justin were at the hospital and did not have time to take care of the kids. So, the kids were taken care of by the elders, and Charlotte was especially close to Lionel.

For the good food, everyone ran off into the house, leaving the two patients at the door.

Rachel and Justin glanced at each other, feeling helpless at the same time.

She spoke first. “It seems that we can’t get any good food today.”

He stretched out his hand and said, “Since that’s the case, then we don’t need to hurry. Let’s walk over slowly.”

Rachel smiled gently and put her hand on Justin. As their fingers interlocked, they walked toward the house slowly together.

It was already spring, and the cold was slowly diminishing. Grass and flowers grew rapidly at an alarming pace.

The two of them held hands while chatting as they walked.

“Why is the grass so tall now? How long has it been since a gardener has tended to it?”

“It’s been a while. After the New Year, I went to the northern division of Riverdale, so I had Frankie fire all the gardeners.”

“Why did you do that? Did you think you wouldn’t come back anymore?”

“I was thinking that it would be fine to stay at a hotel for the few times I would be here.”

“What about now?”

“Even though a hotel is convenient, it’s not as good as home.”

“Good that you realize that. Hurry up and have Frankie hire a few gardeners. It’s a shame to let such a big garden go to waste like this. Spring is coming too.”

“Okay, we’ll have your favorite flowers here too.”

“White roses?” Rachel raised her head, sunlight glittering in her eyes.

They were indeed taking their sweet time, talking and strolling. Losing her patience, Jolly yelled from the door while holding a bowl, “Hey, what are you guys doing? Hurry up, or you’ll be left with scraps!”

“Coming.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 570

Being the favored goddaughter of Richard and Marilyn, Rachel received special treatment from them. Even though Rachel was late to dinner, Marilyn purposely reserved a big bowl of meatballs for her which made Jolly jealous.

“Mom! I’m your biological daughter!”

“I thought you prefer takeaway food over my cooking?” Marilyn rolled her eyes at Jolly. She then looked over at Rachel with a smile on her face and said, “Rachel, have more of this.”

“Marilyn, don’t be too worried about me since I just choked on smoke. I’m fine now.” Rachel chuckled as she chewed on the food.

“I’m not worried about it since it has all passed. In the future, I hope everything will be smooth sailing for you .”

“You’re not worried about it? When you found out that something happened to Chris, you dragged dad and both children over to the hospital at Somerset Mountain and refused to let Rachel get her treatment there while insisting on bringing her back to Riverdale so that you could be more at ease. Mom, what if her condition got worse on the way here? Have you thought of that?” Jolly complained.

“Hey! You shouldn’t make such an ominous remark!” Marilyn glared at Jolly and hit her hand.

Seeing that, Richard explained in Marilyn’s stead. “We have taken into consideration the lengthy journey back, but considering that the cause of the wildfire is unknown, it might be unsafe to leave Rachel and Justin there.” Richard clearly reasoned why both of them went through the hassle of transferring Rachel and Justin, who were unconscious at that time, back to Riverdale.

Everyone’s expression was serious while they were on the topic.

“The police haven’t given a definite result on this matter. If everything goes well, I am afraid that the case will be closed, with the reason being the villagers burning incense for their rituals. What do you think?” Richard added.

Hearing that, both Rachel and Justin turned to look at each other. Actually, she had already discussed the matter with him. However, he refused to reveal to her how he would take care of it, so she decided not to question his arrangements.

“Let me take care of this matter.” Someone said before Justin could say anything.

When Rachel looked up, her eyes met Lionel’s deep gaze. “Dad.”

“Rachel, you don’t have to worry about this. I will take care of it. I understand that it might be inconvenient for Justin to deal with since it involved his family, but I won’t let this matter slide.”

“You already knew about it?” Rachel was surprised because only Justin knew that Julian was behind the wildfire since she only discussed it with Justin. But when she recalled how she and Justin were abducted by Julian’s men when they were back from Enistan, she realized that Lionel already knew who was behind it. Thus, he could easily infer that Julian was behind the wildfire incident too.

“I will not let anyone hurt my daughter right in front of my eyes. A domestic and foreign business convention will be held this weekend, and I will be meeting him there,” Lionel uttered firmly.

Rachel was worried about it, but as she was about to say something, Justin stopped her. He grabbed her hand under the dining table.

“Mr. Hudson, you have a say in this.”

The atmosphere in the dining room was rather tense as they discussed such weighty topics.

Jolly, who was quietly savoring the meatballs in Rachel's bowl, suddenly asked, "You're still calling him Mr. Hudson? Shouldn't you address him in another way?"

Upon hearing that, Rachel blushed.

"That's right. You should be addressing him in another way. Since both of you had gone through a few near-death experiences together, I think you should get married again so that we don't have to keep worrying about the both of you."

"There's no rush for this." Lionel coughed a few times out of awkwardness.

Hearing that, Marilyn was about to say something but was interrupted by Richard. He shook his head slightly, signaling her not to get involved in it. Everyone who wanted Justin and Rachel to get back together was seeing it from an outsider's perspective. They saw the changes that Justin had made for Rachel and felt that he had changed for the better.

However, Lionel, being Rachel's father, wouldn't have wished for her daughter, whom he loved to marry a man who had wilfully hurt her countless times.

"Oh my, the dishes are getting cold. Let's dig in." Marilyn immediately ended the awkward topic.

Everyone then started eating, except for Rachel, who looked over at Justin worriedly. Instead, he held onto her hand tightly, trying to comfort her. When he looked into her eyes, it was as if he was telling her that no matter the obstacles they'd face, he would never let her go.

To him, loving someone meant that he would constantly worry about her if she wasn't at his side, and he should be confident that he was the only one that could give her happiness.

After dinner, everyone went on to do their own thing. Richard and Lionel clicked well since they had common interests in fishing and playing chess. As they chatted about it, they decided spontaneously to go fishing. There was a huge lake with pebbles on the shore near the summer villa, which was a great fishing spot. It was also a perfect spot for an outdoor barbeque meal.

Since Rachel and the others were bored at home, they decided to go over for a barbeque, seeing it had been a while since everyone had gathered together. They started preparing for it and ended up bringing a big pile of ingredients and equipment over.

"Jolly, please be quiet. You're scaring all the fishes away." Richard chided.

“Your fishing skills are poor, but you blame me for it.” Jolly grumbled as she arranged the items with her lips pursed.

“Initially, I almost caught the fish, but they swam away because of the clunking sounds.”

“Fine, I’ll be quieter and not disturb you and your fishes.”

“I think my dad’s andropause is getting more serious. Should I get him a doctor and prescribe some medicine for him?” Jolly then looked at Rachel and whispered.

“Are you sure that he’s going through andropause? Or he just couldn’t stand you?” Rachel laughed.

“Couldn’t stand me?”

“Look over there if you don’t believe me.”

Jolly then looked over in the direction that Rachel was looking at skeptically. She noticed that Charlotte and Samuel were throwing rocks into the lake, which had created big splashes. However, Richard and Lionel, sitting by the lake with fishing rods in their hands, looked at the children lovingly and weren’t angry about it.

“Charlotte, be careful. Don’t fall into the lake.” Richard reminded the little girl.

Jolly couldn’t believe that Richard could tolerate the big splashes but couldn’t stand the clunking sounds that she made which barely disturbed him fishing. “That’s unacceptable! How could a father throw his daughter aside after having grandchildren?” Jolly was fuming with anger.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 571

Rachel sighed and asked, “Jolly, aren’t you afraid that you’ll be laughed upon when the others find out that you’re jealous of your goddaughter?”

“But I’m his daughter.”

“Alright. But are Richard and Marilyn still mad at you?” Rachel stopped teasing her and asked Jolly about her and Leroy while they were setting up the barbeque station.

“Although the marriage between the Bennett Family and Frazier Family wasn’t announced to the public, your parents knew what was going on. Moreover, you guys even bought Carmen back. Do you think that they would be happy about it?”

“Then what can I do? We can’t just ditch her.”

“That’s not the issue. It’s about your relationship with Leroy,” Rachel said as she looked into the distance.

Carmen was seen standing in the lake barefooted as she played with two of the children. Although she was already in her 20s, she always had a childlike smile on his face.

“At Enistan, even if the couple doesn’t register for marriage, they would be considered legally married as long as the wedding is held and witnessed by relatives and friends on both sides.”

“Why do you care about this?”

“I’m not particular about it. To be frank, none of us care about it except your parents.” Rachel tried to explain.

“Then do you think I can go back in time to call off the wedding? What’s done is done. Since it is a rule from Enistan, it doesn’t apply here in Riverdale.”

“Jolly, I think you should go visit a neurologist.” Rachel stared at Jolly.

“Huh?”

“I agree.” Gloria, who was standing next to them, rolled her eyes. “Miss Rachel had already made it clear, but you still can’t get it?”

“What is it?”

“You yourself said that the rules in Enistan don’t apply here, then you and Leroy should follow the rules in Riverdale!”

Worried that the slow-witted Jolly couldn’t understand what they meant, she asked Jolly more specifically, “When are both of you planning to get registered for marriage?”

Hearing that, Jolly was surprised as getting married had never crossed her mind.

“Rachel, I’ve told you that she’d never have thought about it. All she could think of was eating and having fun.”

Seeing that, Rachel shook her head helplessly.

Even though Jolly had finally realized the problem, there was something that she couldn't figure out. "If my parents wanted me and Leroy to get married, why didn't they tell me directly?"

"Since they were initially against both of you being together, do you think that they would suddenly urge the both of you to get married? The elders would find it embarrassing to have to eat their words. How would they be able to mention it if you don't come up with an opportunity for them to do so?"

Jolly finally made sense of the situation.

"And you were blaming it on the andropause. Even if your dad had a bad temper as he went through andropause, it was all because of you."

"Alright. Stop nagging at me."

"And you thought that you were smart. If not for our help, do you think you would have gotten married that easily? I bet you'd be single all your life." Jolly shot a glare at Gloria.

"Hmph. I see you're the type that gets jealous easily."

"I'm not jealous of you."

Rachel's head hurt as Jolly and Gloria started bantering. Given the circumstances, it seemed like there was no hope for Richard to recover from his 'andropause' in the short term.

Meanwhile, Justin and Leroy were starting a fire on the side. "I haven't thanked you for helping me and Jolly escape from the wedding earlier."

"Don't mention it. We are friends, after all."

"Yeah, we are friends. Those willing to sacrifice their lives for their friends are true friends. Let me know if you need my help in the future, and I'll be there for you." Leroy smiled.

As Justin was placing the charcoal into the barbeque pit, he was attracted by laughter in the distance. He couldn't help but raise his gaze and saw Rachel and Jolly laughing out loud while chatting. The sunlight of the spring afternoon peeked through the gaps of the foliage and cast upon their faces. It was a beautiful sight. Justin's gaze softened after he saw the sight in front of him.

"I might not have to thank you for your help after all, as it seems like you have gotten what you've always wanted after the trip to Enistan." Leroy noticed Justin's expression and understood the situation.

“That’s why I should be thanking you,” Justin admitted without hiding anything.

“Then we are even.”

While they were speaking, Carmen came running over with some wildflowers. “Leroy, this is for you.”

“Why are you giving me these?”

“So that you can give it to Jolly.” There was a naive expression on her face. “It’s for the proposal! Earlier on, I overheard Jolly and the others mention something about a proposal. If you were to propose to her, you’d need to prepare some flowers!”

A proposal? Leroy was surprised. “What else did they say?”

“Rachel said there should be a wedding, but Gloria said there should be a proposal before the wedding. If not, there won’t be a wedding, but Jolly was quiet during the conversation.” Carmen scratched her head as she tried to recall the conversation.

Right after, Carmen stuffed the flowers into Leroy without asking whether he wanted them or not. “Hold on to these first. I’ll go get more.”

Leroy was deep in thought as he stared at the flowers after Carmen left. to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

“Have you thought about it before?” Justin asked.

“Of course.” Leroy lifted his head before he answered firmly, but he became dubious after that. “But I keep feeling that things haven’t fallen into place yet, and I want to wait till everything stabilizes before getting married.”

“There’ll always be something that will come up, so it is impossible to wait till everything is resolved. Even if you’ve gotten married, you’ll be faced with different issues. Don’t tell me that you want to get a divorce because of that?”

“Of course not.”

“Based on my personal experience, it’s more important to cherish what is in front of you than anything else,” Justin told him nonchalantly before looking into the distance.

Just then, Rachel, chatting with the girls, raised her gaze, and their eyes met. Both of them looked at each other and smiled.

Soon, they had finished setting up the barbeque station. They spent the whole afternoon soaking in the lake while sunbathing. It was a relaxing day as they had a

barbeque and played with the children. However, Jolly and Gloria were bantering over something.

“The formality isn’t that important, so why would you care so much about it?”

“If you really think that it’s unimportant, you wouldn’t have helped Victor to plan a proposal. But, since you thought of it, it meant that you hoped to have one too.”

“Nah, that’s not it.”

“You’re just unwilling to admit to it.”

“If both of you have the time to argue over here, why not go over and look after the children? They were playing in the lake with Carmen, and their socks were soaking wet. Please hurry over to the car to bring over some spare socks and shoes.” Rachel walked over with some meat skewers.

“I’ll go get it.” Gloria immediately stood up. “I don’t want them to be down with the flu again since today’s weather is rather cold. Why would they play in the water in such weather?”

“Hey.” Rachel grabbed onto Gloria’s arm and passed her the meat skewers. “Please help me to take these over there. Jolly, please get the shoes and socks from the car.”

Gloria was confused, but when she noticed Rachel winking at her, she suddenly got the message. “Oh, alright. She can go get the shoes and socks.”

Jolly, troubled about getting married, got up reluctantly and walked toward the car. “Who said that there should be a proposal before you get married? I don’t care about that,” she muttered to herself. Even so, it was actually what she hoped for.

The moment she pressed the trunk button, pastel blue and white balloons floated out from the car boot and floated up into the air. The evening light cast through the car windows and into the car, which made the fairy lights look even brighter. Jolly was stunned by what she saw.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 572

As soon as the car trunk opened up, pastel blue and white balloons slowly floated into the air. The next moment, Jolly noticed the pink roses-filled car trunk that was decorated

with twinkling fairy lights. Her gaze fell onto the only red rose among the pink roses, which was adorned with a sparkling diamond ring in the middle. Suddenly, Leroy, dressed casually in beige, walked out from the side. Because of his youthful disposition, his smile felt like a breath of spring.

“Jolly.”

“What is this?” She started whimpering while covering her face with her hands and took a step back. She pretended to sound like she disliked it, but her reactions gave her off as tears started welling up in her eyes, and her voice quivered.

Soon, everyone gathered around them. As Jolly looked around, she instantly realized why Rachel wanted her to get the children’s socks and shoes. Turned out that it was all planned out. She was so surprised that she didn’t know how to react.

“You guys! Since when did you prepare these?”

“Just now.” Rachel raised her hand and continued, “But I swear I’m not the one who asked Leroy to do this. He was the one who came to me and asked for my help. I never forced him to ask for your hand in marriage.”

“Really?”

“Of course,” Leroy chimed in. “I’d have planned a better one if I had more time, but since everyone is present today, I feel like this is the best time for it.”

The next moment, he retrieved the diamond ring on the rose and got down on one knee in front of everyone. Noticing that, Jolly covered her face with her hands and tried to calm herself down but to no avail. Her face was blushed red even before Leroy started proposing, which was unlike her since she had a brazen personality.

“Oh! Leroy is proposing!” Charlotte clapped her hands and exclaimed.

“Shh.” Rachel put her finger on her lips and signaled Charlotte to be quiet. Gloria immediately pulled Charlotte to her side, and everyone was quiet.

After that, Leroy lifted his head and looked at her with flickering eyes. “Jolly, the first time we met was by mistake, but I found out later on that we had actually met before that. However, in my memory, that particular meeting shook me.”

Everyone tried to hold their laughter upon hearing that. Only Rachel and Justin clearly knew that both of them officially first met for the first time on the yacht. Although events that happened there had left unpleasant memories for Rachel and the others, their acquaintance had made the unhappiness go away.

“At that time, I thought, how could there be such a reckless girl who’s domineering and adorable at the same time?”

“I doubt that you think I’m adorable at that time.” Jolly sniffed and refuted as she pursed her lips.

“Please don’t interrupt me. I’m very nervous right now.” Leroy looked at her earnestly.

Hearing that, Jolly bit her lip and kept quiet. From Rachel’s angle, she noticeably saw how Jolly’s clenched fists were trembling slightly. Being her long-time friend, Rachel knew very well that she was probably more nervous than Leroy at this moment.

Leroy then continued, “After that, we got to hang out more because of work, and we eventually ended up together. In the beginning, we hid things from each other unintentionally, but after going through so much with you, your determination has made me even more convinced that we are right for each other, and I will never let go again.”

“Baby, let’s get married.”

Jolly’s eyes welled up when she heard his proposal. Just as she was about to stretch her hand out, she suddenly turned over and looked at her parents, as if asking for their opinion. Seeing that, Rachel held on tight to Justin’s hand.

She knew Jolly the best. In the past, Jolly acted willfully and recklessly by choosing to be with Ryan. She even decided on her own to run away before their wedding. In the end, she was scarred by the episode because of her refusal to listen to her parents’ advice. Although now that she had put the unpleasant past behind her and had met the right person, she was very concerned about whether her parents would bless their marriage. Only with their blessing would she be confident enough to trust him and marry him.

Marilyn had always been stubborn, especially toward her daughter, who had been brazen since she was a child. “You’re the one who’s getting married, so why are you looking at us?”

Jolly was relieved after hearing Marilyn’s words. Leroy then held onto her hand and put on the ring on her ring finger. She plunged into Leroy’s arms immediately after that and cried as she couldn’t hold her tears any longer. Everyone showered them with good wishes as they witnessed the heartwarming proposal at dusk.

After that, they had some delicious barbeque lamb skewers that were seasoned with cajun seasoning and chili flakes. The smoky aroma filled the air as everyone gathered to savor the lamb skewers.

“We are not planning to have a wedding since Leroy has been receiving a lot of attention, and it would be troublesome to have one.”

“For real? You’re willing to not have a wedding?”

“Why not? Initially, you were reluctant to have one too.”

“Although I refused a wedding, my siblings insisted on having one and even planned it for me. Well, I’m unlike you, stubborn like a mule. If no one planned the wedding for you, I bet you’ll be nagging us about it for the rest of our lives.” Gloria teased her.

“Jolly only said this because she was still all giddy from the proposal. If you believe her words, you’ll regret it in the future.” Gloria purposely told Leroy.

“Hey! I’m not that unreasonable.”

“I’m not too sure about that. I’ll have to ask Leroy about it.”

Jolly was speechless after hearing Gloria’s reply.

Meanwhile, Rachel and Justin were watching over the children by the lake.

“It must have been troublesome for Victor since he had to look after the kids whenever we were out.”

“We have confidence in him since he’s a teacher.”

“It seems like he and Ria don’t plan to have children.”

“He had to face so many children in school while she herself is like a playful child. That might be why they don’t plan on having children.”

“Sounds about right. Just go with the flow then.”

The conversation ended there and then.

Jolly and Leroy meant it when they decided not to have a wedding. Although Rachel couldn’t believe it at first, she had to when she saw Jolly persuading her parents about her decision.

“Trust me, it’s really troublesome. Even before we are married, many travel photography brands have looked for him, and if we get married, he will be bombarded with endorsements. On top of that, the troublesome reporters will be swarming us too.”

Jolly, who was wearing an oversized pajama, lounged on the couch as she complained about how troublesome it was to get married to a celebrity while she had her ice cream.

“You have a point, but you don’t plan to go to church at all?” Rachel, who had a sheet mask on, asked as she lay on the bed.

“Nah, we will just get registered for my parents to be at ease. I actually find it troublesome to have to get registered for marriage too.”

“Your thinking is so advanced that we can’t keep up with you.”

“What about you? When are you getting married?”

“Who told you I plan to get married?”

“Oh? Haven’t you thought of that?” Jolly turned around and looked at her intently. “Don’t tell me that you and Justin are still just friends?”

“Of course not. I’m comfortable with where we are now,” Rachel replied calmly.

“It would be a different story if someone intervened in your relationship,” Jolly blurted.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 573

“What do you mean?”

“Justin is going to the business convention today, isn’t he? Don’t you think he’s hiding something from you since he’s not bringing you along?” Jolly was trying to provoke Rachel.

After Leroy proposed to Jolly, he left for the film set, and both of them couldn’t get in touch with each other as often anymore. Thus, the idle Jolly started focusing her thoughts on Rachel and Justin’s relationship.

“Why would you think that he’s up to something when he’s attending with my dad?” Rachel was unfazed by her provocation.

“Then it’s worth giving some thought to it. We know that your dad doesn’t like him very much, so he might take the opportunity to introduce Justin to someone else.”

“So you’re saying that my dad is a pimp?”

“Nah, I’m joking. I’m just really curious why they didn’t bring you along.”

“There’s nothing to be curious about. It’s because Julian will be there too.” Rachel’s gaze darkened.

After listening to Rachel’s reply, Jolly seemed to have made sense of the situation. Everyone knew that the wildfire incident was linked to Julian. However, they didn’t have the evidence, or else they would have reported it to the investigation bureau, and by then, Julian would definitely be charged. Since Lionel finally managed to reunite with his daughter, he would never let anyone hurt her. On top of that, Justin, who loved Rachel, would never let Julian get away with it as well.

Meanwhile, in Hotel Platinum, the business cocktail party was attended by numerous elites from various industries within Riverdale.

“Mr. Hudson, Julian’s resources in Riverdale isn’t as significant as he only manages half of the Burton Group’s assets. However, most of the management personnel on his side are leeches who rely on their existing resources to make ends meet so it won’t last long.”

Lionel nodded after hearing Justin’s words.

“I heard that you relocated half of the Burton Group’s assets to the northern division of Riverdale, hoping to set up a company there since the existing Burton Group in Riverdale is corrupted.”

“That’s my intention.”

“Justin’s intention to attend today’s event was to seek new business partners, and I will not let him have his way for the sake of Rachel.”

Hearing that, Justin didn’t try to stop Lionel since he had warned Julian earlier on that he shouldn’t hurt Rachel. However, because Julian had crossed the line multiple times by hurting her, Justin had decided to act on it.

“President Burton, Julian is here.” Assistant Beckham reminded them as they were in the middle of their conversation.

Everyone at the event turned to look at the entrance. Julian was seen entering the hall with a woman who was formally dressed in a suit. Justin furrowed his brows as he noticed that the woman was someone that he’d never met before.

“Justin, long time no see,” Julian greeted when he saw him. “I was planning to visit you at the hospital when I heard that you were hurt. Unfortunately, I have been busy on a business trip, and I’m only free these two days.”

“There’s no need for you to do so,” Justin replied coldly before introducing Lionel. “This is Mr. Brook.” Even though Justin guessed that Julian might be aware of Lionel’s true identity, Justin didn’t reveal it since Lionel didn’t comment on it.

“I’ve heard so much about you.” Julian stretched his hand out for a handshake humbly.

However, Lionel didn’t reciprocate. “I’m just a nobody. Instead, I admire you, President Peters, the newly appointed President of Burton Group in Riverdale.”

“Mr. Brook, you’re flattering me.” Julian retracted his hand awkwardly.

“There’s no need to be humble about it. I’ve heard about how flexible you are in your business dealings. No wonder you managed to win every business deal shortly after you took over Burton Group.”

It sounded like a compliment, but Lionel was implicitly mocking Julian. As a businessman himself, Lionel was aware of the different means that they would employ, but he despised the nasty secret deeds that Julian did. Although he was unwilling to give his daughter away to Justin, he’d never ever allow her to be with someone like Julian. Julian was embarrassed when he noticed Lionel giving him a contemptuous look.

“The winner takes it all. It’s a phrase that’s been used since the olden days and is applicable worldwide. I’m sure you know the reasoning behind the phrase.”

A woman’s voice was heard coming from behind Julian, attracting Lionel and Justin’s attention. Justin had been observing her since she walked in with Julian because he had never seen her with Julian before or heard anyone mention her. They were surprised by her presence.

“This is Miss Porter from Yatruinia. She’s in charge of the Department of Commerce.” Julian introduced.

Justin was surprised when he heard that.

“Yatruinia?” Lionel asked surprisedly.

“That’s right,” the woman answered calmly and with a smile. “Mr. Brook, you might not remember me, but we met a few years back at the state banquet when Lady Natasha was still with us.”

Lionel was skeptical about it since he didn’t remember seeing her. However, he was aware that a lot of people attended the state banquet, so he might not have recognized her even if they’d met.

“The secretary of the Department of Commerce?” Lionel looked at his man to seek clarification and was given a nod as a reply. Since there were a lot of scammers who were imposters, they had to do background checks on individuals who seemed suspicious.

“Please excuse me. I’ll be joining my friend over there.” Genevieve smiled and left with Julian.

“Mr. Hudson, have you met her before?” Justin asked after they left.

Lionel shook his head in reply.

“The Burton Group had never worked together with Yatruinia before.” Justin frowned.

“They might not really be working together. I never expected that person to be related to the royalty in Yatruinia.” Lionel’s gaze darkened as he clenched his fists.

Upon hearing that, Justin frowned as he wasn’t sure whether that person that Lionel mentioned was Julian or Miss Porter. The only thing that he was certain of was that Julian had the support of overseas political and business circles. Because of that, it wouldn’t be as easy as they’d thought to stop Julian’s business dealings.

On the other hand, Rachel was still lying in bed with her sheet mask on while Leroy’s new movie was being played on television. Jolly snacked on some potato chips as she watched the movie.

Suddenly, Rachel sat up and removed her sheet mask when she received a text notification.

“What is it?”

“I need to make a trip.”

“Huh? Why?”

“Janice wants to meet me.”

After Dillon’s death, Rachel’s identity as an undercover agent was exposed. Thus, she no longer had to hide her relationship with Janice anymore, and they were able to contact each other freely now.

“Did something happen?” Jolly sat up and asked worriedly.

“I have no idea, but I think that it’s related to ‘S’.”

“Let me go with you.”

“There’s no need. The fewer people who know about this, the better. Please pretend that you don’t know about anything and stay alert at home.” Rachel rushed straight to the bedroom to change her clothes and left Jolly outside of her bedroom.

The reason Janice looked for Rachel was most probably she had news about ‘S’. Sabrina would hold Rachel accountable for Dillion’s death and also the heavy losses that were incurred in the smuggling case, which happened half a year ago. Rachel knew that she had to pay for it sooner or later.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 574

Rachel went out alone and drove to a suburban cemetery.

Jolly was actually worried about Rachel going out on her own, but it was better to have fewer people involved in what Rachel was doing. She knew very well that it would only make things difficult if she insisted on following.

When Rachel arrived at the cemetery, Janice was already there waiting for her for quite some time.

The cemetery was probably the quietest place in Riverdale. It was always silent, no matter whether day or night. Other than the groups of people coming here during All Souls Day to honor the departed, not even a shadow could be seen here during ordinary days.

In fact, since Rachel’s spy identity was already exposed and ‘S’ was coming after her, it was actually unnecessary to meet at such a secluded place. Yet, Janice asked to meet here, and Rachel felt that it was natural to meet here too since Hans was buried here; the reason for her accepting the spy mission was buried here.

“Janice.”

“Oh, you’re here.” Janice turned around and smiled at Rachel. Behind her was Hans’ tomb, with a small bouquet of fresh daisies on top of it.

Seeing that, Rachel asked, “You bought flowers? Today’s not any special day, though.”

With a faint smile, Janice answered, "I didn't buy it. I just picked them up by the road. Since there are no flowers in the cemetery other than the evergreen trees, I wanted to bring him some flowers to let him know that winter has passed."

"Right. It's already spring," Rachel said melancholically. Then, she looked at Janice and wore a smile. "You weren't this sentimental previously. Why are you acting so differently today?"

"Does this count as sentimental?"

"Does it not?"

"If you say it is, it is then." Janice always had a straightforward personality, so she didn't mind details like these. "Mr. Egerton called me two days ago, telling me Jessica is doing well in school. She even applied to volunteer during the holidays."

"She has grown up already, slowly maturing."

"Mr. Egerton also asked me to thank you."

Rachel was stunned when she heard that. Since Hans' death, she was ashamed to face anyone from the Egerton Family. This was also probably the reason why the Egertons didn't contact her for such a long time. Even when Jessica landed into trouble in Riverdale, Hans' father looked for Janice right away.

"What for? I didn't do anything."

"Thank you for getting things off Jessica's chest. Only the one who caused the trouble could fix it. If it wasn't for you, Jessica wouldn't have given up on finding her foe. She would've lived with the grudge and wouldn't have enjoyed her life."

"That's the least I could do." Rachel was still feeling the guilt for Hans' death.

Janice patted her shoulder and told her, "Don't overthink it. Hans would want you to live a good life too. You should move on."

"By the way, let's talk business. I asked you here to show you something." She then took out an envelope from the pocket of her coat. The opening of the envelope was folded, but it was not sealed. She gave it to Rachel right away.

After accepting the envelope, Rachel opened it and took out a stack of photos from it. "What are these?"

"Have you seen this woman before?"

Startled, Rachel looked closely at the person in the photos. The woman in the photos was wearing a traditional women's suit. She had short hair and handsome features, but she didn't give off a righteous aura like Janice. Instead, there was something sinister about her.

"She looks quite familiar, but I don't think I've seen her before." Rachel's tone was hesitant.

If she had seen the woman before, it was impossible for her to forget the woman. Her face was quite outstanding, and her aura was extraordinary too, so she believed she might not have seen her. However, her features, especially her eyes, looked very familiar, but she couldn't tell where she had seen those eyes before.

"Who's this?"

"The secretary of Yatruinia's Department of Commerce. She has some connections with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although she's under a non-governmental commerce chamber, she has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' support from the back, so she has a close connection with the royalty."

"Yatruinia?" This little country appeared too many times in Rachel's life, forcing her to pay attention to it. Since Janice mentioned it, it should be something really important.

"What are you suspecting?" she continued asking.

"This woman's last name is Porter, Genevieve Porter."

"Porter? Is she under 'S'?"

"I'm not sure about that yet since Porter is a very common last name in Yatruinia. I'm just guessing, so I took the photos here to ask you and see if you have any ideas. After all, other than Coraline, you're the only spy who has had in-depth contact with their group."

"I've never seen her before." Rachel shook her head.

"It's okay. It's even better if you didn't, or else..."

"Or else?"

"Yatruinia's Department of Commerce is reaching out to Riverdale. If everything goes well, they will work with Riverdale's Merchants Bureau and some local corporations to develop a free trade port."

"They're developing a free trade port in Riverdale?"

“There’s a port in Riverdale that’s quite near to Yatruinia. Our government always had the intention of developing that area, so it’s a good opportunity now. I’m just worried that since the smuggling problem is not solved yet, developing a trading port will only let those people exploit it.”

“So, you’re looking into the people in the Department of Commerce?”

“Yup, but it looks like I was just overthinking.” Janice heaved a sigh of relief. “I’m really tense these days. Maybe I’m affected by what happened to you and Justin. So, I’m quite worried about Coraline.”

“There’s still no news from her?”

“It’s quite normal to have no news from her for a year or so. Maybe I’m just overthinking.”

Rachel placed the photos back into the envelope and handed them back to Janice. “Don’t always be so tense. You need to take some time to relax too. After all, you need to have your own life, right?”

“I know. Sorry for holding you for so long. You should go back.”

“Are you not leaving?”

“I’m staying a little longer.”

Looking at Janice’s figure, Rachel still didn’t ask her the question that she had had at the back of her mind for a long time.

Janice had been single throughout these years. She said her life was dedicated to working, and everyone had seen it too. But other than work, Rachel always felt that there should be some other reason why she found it hard to tell others.

There might be someone she can’t forget until today. Those who can’t move forward are those with baggage.

Before she left, she couldn’t help but take another glance at Hans’ tomb. How nice it would be if he’s still alive.

On the other hand, Julian appeared with the support of Yatruinia’s Department of Commerce at the business cocktail party. At once, he became the focus of the meeting. Almost everyone there was sure that when this meeting ended, Riverdale’s Burton Group would definitely be the one to sign the contract.

The leader of the Merchants Bureau was also shaking hands with Julian and Genevieve. The atmosphere was very harmonious.

Meanwhile, Justin and Lionel were standing far from the center of focus.

“Mr. Hudson, it’ll be too late if you still don’t shoot your shot,” said Justin.

Hearing that, Lionel looked at him and put on a surprised look. “Why are you so sure that I still have a hole card?”

“You wouldn’t be here in the first place if you didn’t have an ace up your sleeves.”

Lionel isn’t merely going against Julian alone, but he’s facing the whole of Riverdale’s Burton Group and all of Julian’s support. How could he get revenge for his daughter with just words?

“Are you still not going to show your hole card?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 575

Justin’s voice wasn’t loud; it was just enough for the two of them to hear him.

Lionel looked in the distance and saw the leader of the Merchants Bureau talking happily with Julian and his people. There were many people around them, buttering them up, hoping to get a share of the project.

Then, he said, “There’s no need to rush. He doesn’t need to be there in person.”

As Lionel said that, Justin saw the assistant of the Merchants Bureaus’ leader rushing to the leader. No one knew what the assistant said, but there was a change in the leader’s expression at once.

Seeing that, Lionel took the cocktail glass and clinked it with Justin’s. “The battle has just started.”

As soon as the business cocktail party ended, Jolly received a call from Richard, telling her the situation at the party.

“Really? Julian is definitely enraged. I’m telling Chris this good news now.”

At this moment, Rachel had just returned home and was changing her coat to have dinner with Jolly outside. When she came out, the first thing she saw was Jolly happily dancing.

“What’s the matter with you? Did you take any pills?”

“What pills? It’s about that business cocktail party. My dad told me that the free trade port project was handed to the Burton Group. You guess which Burton Group it is.”

“Riverdale?”

Jolly shook her head.

“The northern division?” Rachel’s eyes brightened.

“Nope,” Jolly said. “It’s a joint investment of the two divisions of Burton Group. Crazy, right?”

When Rachel heard that, she was extremely surprised. “How is that possible?”

“Why not? I heard that the situation at the party was quite complicated. Julian brought a female secretary of the Department of Commerce there. Everyone thought that Riverdale’s Burton Group was going to take this project for sure, but the end result was really unexpected.”

“Did both of them agree to it?”

“Of course not. Especially Julian. How is it possible for him to collaborate with Justin?”

“So? What happened then?”

“Don’t you remember that your father is there? With his status and background, once he intervenes, how can the others get a share of the project? So, Julian could only grit his teeth and agree to it.”

Jolly was slapping her thigh and laughing loudly. “It doesn’t matter whether Julian wants this project or not, and it will still be ours in the end.”

However, Rachel was immersed in her thoughts after hearing that. She felt that Justin collaborating with Julian was not good news. Since Julian was very cunning and could do anything to achieve his goal, Justin would need a lot of eyes around him to defend Julian’s tricks.

“We must have barbeque tonight to celebrate this!” Then, Jolly studied Rachel’s attire. “You can’t wear that. We’re going for a drink tonight. No way you’re wearing that. Go and change, quick!”

Only then did Rachel snap out of her daze. “Change into what?”

“Miniskirt. The shorter, the better.”

“We’ve just entered spring. Do you want me to die from the cold?”

“You won’t die. Just wear something thick outside. Come here. I’ll choose it for you.”

As Jolly said that, she pushed Rachel into the bedroom and changed her clothes for her forcefully.

Jolly was the one who organized the gathering tonight. Her reason was to celebrate the Valentine’s that she missed previously and have a bachelorette night together. After tonight, she would be married to Leroy.

After the New Year and Valentine’s day, Gloria and Victor had just been married for a few days. Jolly was getting excited during that period, but joy begets sorrow; she broke up with Leroy not long after the wedding.

But she was going to be a married woman tomorrow. Things were just unpredictable.

At the nightclub, four women in coats were lining up at the entrance.

Since it was a bachelorette night, Jolly warned them not to bring any men. So, it was Rachel, Gloria, Carmen, and herself. The four women came out alone.

When it was their turn to enter, the bouncer at the entrance put on a strange face. “Under 18s are not allowed to enter.”

Hearing that, Rachel and Jolly turned around and looked at Gloria and Carmen.

Both of them were wearing pink down jackets with bare faces. Gloria was well-protected, so she hadn’t been to places like this before, and Carmen was zoning out, so she had a clueless face on. They looked like immature high school girls at this moment.

Jolly sighed. “They’re adults, bro.”

“I don’t believe that. Really?”

“You can check their IDs,” said Rachel.

“There’s no need for that.” Jolly stopped their actions and gave Gloria a look.

Gloria understood immediately. She took off her jacket and put it on her arm.

The second she took off her jacket, there were surprised gazes from all around.

Even Rachel was stunned. This virtuous woman looked like a size-zero from the outside, but her actual figure was astonishing. Her body in the bodycon dress was so curvy that even women would want to take a second glance.

On the other hand, Carmen was even greater. Under her jacket was a backless one-piece dress. Although it was backless, she didn't look seductive at all. Her face was so innocent that people would say she was cute and sexy at the same time.

"Okay. You guys can go in." The security finally let them in.

Excited, Jolly brought the three girls and dashed into the nightclub. "Let's go all out tonight! Don't try to go back if you're not drunk!"

The nightclub was debauchery and lush, with thunderous music from the dance floor attacking their ears as though it was going to rupture their eardrums.

Rachel and Jolly had come here a few times, so they were quite used to it. Before they came here, they were worried that Gloria and Carmen wouldn't adapt to the environment. But within seconds, both of them were already enjoying themselves on the dance floor when Rachel and Jolly turned around to find them.

"Ria!" Rachel shouted for so long, but both of them still didn't react.

At this moment, Jolly handed her a beer bottle. "Don't worry. This bar is very safe. The owner here is very close to me, so I've asked him to keep an eye on my friends. There won't be any trouble. Come, let's drink! It's been a long time since I last drank."

Rachel took the beer bottle and clinked the bottle with Jolly resignedly. "I wish you a happy last bachelorette night."

"Of course, I need to be happy. There's still a grand final  later."

Grand final ? Based on Jolly's strong personality, Rachel suddenly had a bad feeling.

Meanwhile, in a five-star hotel in Riverdale's city center, Leroy saw a video in the group chat and jumped up immediately. "They went clubbing!" In the living room, the two men who were drinking raised their heads sharply when they heard that.

Puzzled, Victor asked, "Isn't it a normal thing for Jolly to go clubbing? Can you not have double standards? Men can go clubbing, but why can't women go?"

"Agree." On the side, Justin was sitting on the floor. He clinked glasses with Victor and said, "It's understandable that she wants to relax sometimes."

Looking at both of them, Leroy said coldly, "I said 'they', not 'she'. And, of course, Gloria and Rachel are included in the 'they'."

As he said that, the two men who were just watching the fun stood up at once.

"Which club?" Justin was the one who asked the question first, with a darkened face.

Instantly, Victor snapped into fight-or-flight mode, standing up. "I'm starting the car. Send me the address."

Seeing their reaction, Leroy teased them boldly, "Didn't you guys don't care just now? Why are you flipping out now?"

"Of course! Why should I care when someone else's wife goes clubbing? Of course, I only care about my wife!" Victor then glared at Leroy. "Your wife is a bad influence. I'm gonna deal with you later when we're back."

When Leroy heard their comments, he complained, "What does this have anything to do with me?" He didn't do anything but was getting blamed for everything.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 576

Before meeting Leroy, Jolly undoubtedly was the queen of the nightclubs.

She would always be the spotlight anyplace she was at. From dancing to DJing to drinking, there was nothing that she wasn't good at. Not even a naked person running by would be able to shift people's attention from her.

It had only been a while since Rachel lowered her head, but the dance floor had already been conquered by Jolly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, tonight will be the last night I am a bachelorette. Let's play a game. Finish all the drinks in 10 minutes, and the bill is on me. Let's begin in 3, 2... 1!"

The crowd began to grow wild with the music played by the DJ and the frantic flashing of the lights. Drinks soon were served in batches to different tables. Even the dance floor was filled with men and women with beer bottles in their hands.

Looking at this lively scene, Rachel instantly felt like she had been pulled back to a year ago.

As she smilingly took a sip of alcohol while looking at a group of three dancing intimately on the dance floor from a distance, she heard a man's voice call out from behind. "Hey, beautiful! That is your friend, yeah?"

The man had to raise his voice through the deafening music for Rachel to hear him.

The other party's booth seat was back-to-back to hers across a table. Unlike Rachel's table, where she was left alone, their booth was occupied by both good-looking men and women. It was a perfect hunting ground for beautiful people.

Smiling, Rachel shouted, "Yes! She is my bestie!"

"How is she so beautiful?! Is it possible for her to not get married tomorrow?" he yelled back.

"Haha! I am afraid not, unless a typhoon strikes and they can't go out, or the Civil Affairs Bureau is closed tomorrow."

Otherwise, Jolly and Leroy were definitely getting married tomorrow.

"That was a joke. Don't mind me." The man raised his glass at her.

Rachel nodded in return, indicating that she could tell it was one.

In fact, it was easy to get along with people in nightclubs. As long as one didn't run into drunkards or perverted men with ulterior motives, making friends was, basically, a problem.

This was how life was in this era. An occasional reveling in excitement was necessary to relieve stress and worry. Visitors who come here were all looking for nothing but joy.

A wave of cheers suddenly came from the dance floor.

The trio who stuck to each other as they danced had attracted the attention of the crowd, and everyone around them was dancing to their rhythm.

Jolly then took the microphone and shouted, "Let's add another ten minutes to it. Counting down in 3, 2, 1. Everyone, we shall toast to a good time!"

Hearing that, Rachel let out a resigned yet coddling smile.

She had seen Jolly having fun in nightclubs before, but she had never seen her friend as happy as she was today.

Half of the people at the next table then came to Rachel's side.

The young man leading the group asked her, "I don't think I have seen you before. Do you not come here often?"

"Is this your first time here?"

"It is," Rachel answered frankly.

It was not her first time coming to this bar street.

Jolly and Rachel had immediately dropped by this street right after their return to Riverdale. Other than this so-called Internet-famous nightclub, which always had a line outside, they had already had their fun in other nightclubs.

“Nice meeting you.” The man took the initiative to open a bottle of wine and clink glasses with her. “Just call me Jerry.”

She raised an eyebrow at that. “You can call me Tom.”

He seemed a little surprised before he smiled. “You are not the first person to say that.”

“Is Tom such a common name?”

“Haha!”

Their conversation then continued to other topics.

As the two of them chatted, they didn’t notice the trio who had just come in after lining up and getting stamped at the entrance of the club.

With Justin walking in front, they attracted the attention of many women.

“My God, it is so noisy in here!”

Victor had been picking his ears non stop since he stepped in as he couldn’t stand the music at all. Raising his volume, he yelled at Justin, “I think there is an earthquake!”

The whole floor was shaking like crazy.

“Where are they?” Leroy’s voice came from behind.

“I found them!”

Victor pointed in the direction of the dance floor, his eyes wide as he stared. “Leroy, I told you it was your wife who started this! Ria never comes to nightclubs!”

After hearing that, Leroy turned to look, only to see three women dancing close to each other. Even though he was envious, he could heave a sigh of relief as she wasn’t dancing with another man. He only rolled his eyes at Victor as he retorted, “Seems to me your Gloria is the one who is going all out. It doesn’t look like it is her first time in a club.”

“Nonsense! Your ex-wife is dancing too. Does this mean that it isn’t her first time as well?”

Among the three dancing women, the one who was dancing most fervently was Carmen.

She danced like a kindergartener would by alternating between children's dance. It was a dance style unheard of in nightclubs, but oddly enough, it was contagious.

They often deliberately teased Leroy recently about Rachel being the ex-wife because he and Carmen were considered married at one point. They had even gotten their parents' approval in Enistan. Now that he was going to marry Jolly in Riverdale, Carmen had naturally become the ex-wife.

Leroy and Jolly were open-minded regarding this matter and Carmen, too, didn't think of it as too big of a deal. After all, for a cutie like her, she was happy no matter who was getting married.

"Where is my sister?" Victor hadn't found Rachel even after looking around the dancefloor. "Why is she not there?"

"Oh, you're right," Leroy commented as he couldn't find her as well. "Where is she?"

Crossing his arms across his chest, Justin only responded calmly with a calm expression, "Rae doesn't enjoy all this. She must have been dragged here. I am sure she is at the table on the second floor."

The seats on the second floor was a quiet viewing area, where people there didn't usually go to the dance floor to dance.

However, it was a slap in the face just as soon as he said that, as Victor and Leroy had already found Rachel in the booth in the middle of the first floor. The two of them glanced at each other for a while before turning to look at Justin at the same time. "Justin, you might have some sort of misunderstanding about Rachel."

Following their eyes, Justin saw Rachel in the middle of the crowd at a glance.

The booth was facing the dance floor, and there was a table full of alcohol bottles and glasses. There were both men and women there, but most of them were handsome men who were happily chatting with Rachel.

Justin's temper instantly flared at the sight of it.

As much as he didn't want to admit it, there were advantages of Internet-famous stores like this; one of them was that its customers were usually handsome.

The table Rachel was at was surrounded by countless men and women, all of whom only looked better than the last person.

“Can you leave me your contact information?” The man named Jerry had been staring at Rachel the whole time as he flashed his pearly whites at her. “I will write it down.”

“Sure,” Rachel readily agreed while she took out her phone.

Just as she passed the phone to him, a hand reached out from above and snatched it.

She then lifted her chin, only to see a furious face. “J-Justin?”

As she was stunned for a brief moment, she almost thought that she was seeing things after she had had too much to drink.

“Who the hell are you?” Jerry frowned and looked at the person who came. “Don’t jump the line. I was here first!”

Jump the line?

Justin felt his temples throbbing as the veins on the back of his hands appeared. Still, he pretended to be calm, and with a ‘friendly’ smile on his face, he informed, “I am her husband.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 577

Jerry visibly shook when he caught sight of the so-called kind smile.

Justin kept that terrifying smile plastered on his face. ‘Do you still want to write down her contact? Or do you want to have my contact? She usually has to take care of our child at home, so she doesn’t have time to reply to messages.’

“Ahem! Um... I don’t think I want that.

“I have something to do. Let’s have a chat. again when we have the chance.”

“You want to have a chat again?”

“Ah! N-No more chatting.”

Just like that, Jerry dashed out of there after throwing that out.

Rachel was looking at Justin before she finally came to her senses. "Why are you here?" she asked.

"Did I interrupt something?"

"You sure did." She raised her eyebrows. "More accurately, you interrupted my business talk."

"Business?"

She proceeded to raise her chin toward the figure who ran to the next booth. "He is a student at a nearby medical school, and he is studying Eastern medicine. I thought he would be a suitable candidate to work at the company after we talked, so we were going to exchange contacts."

"Isn't that too much of a coincidence?"

"Go ahead and ask him if you don't believe me. Everyone from that booth is from the same school."

"Ahem!" Justin coughed awkwardly.

He didn't think she was really talking about a collaboration? I mean, who would even talk about that in a nightclub? he thought to himself.

"What? Don't tell me you thought I would lay my hands on such a young man?"

"Of course not!" Justin coughed again to hide his embarrassment. She looked at him with scrutinizing eyes as she teased, "Then why did you tell him that?"

Justin was ferocious when he barked about how he was Rachel's husband, making the young lad scamper away with his tail between his legs in fear that he was misunderstood and would be beaten up right there and then.

Instead of answering her, he solemnly waved a waiter over and pointed at the booth behind.

"I will pay for that table. Also, send a fruit platter over."

"Yes, sir."

He couldn't possibly apologize when there was still the possibility of the young man approaching Rachel intentionally to get a job. Young men in this day and age were too smart for their own good.

However, he had no problem footing their bill. Not only could he appear to be a generous man, he could also stake his claim to Rachel. As expected, Rachel was satisfied with Justin's solution to the issue.

"Did you come here alone?"

"No."

"Where is the rest of the group, then?"

Speak of the devil.

As soon as she asked that, the dancing trio were dragged to Rachel's booth by the back of their necks from the dancefloor, while being witnessed by the crowd of clubgoers.

The only person who wasn't manhandled by the back of her neck was Carmen, who waddled behind them. She was still living in the moment, and even high-fived passers-by as she remained completely oblivious to her friends' fate.

"Geez, let go! Let go of me!"

Even though Jolly struggled throughout the journey from the dance floor to the booth, she was still thrown to the sofa at last.

After that, Leroy immediately took off his jacket. Embarrassed, she smoothed out her clothes and glared at him. "What the hell are you doing?!"

"What, you ask?" He swiftly wrapped her in the jacket. "Put it on," he demanded.

Jolly had a halter top on. Even though her outfit wasn't considered all that strange in a place like this, her body was, undeniably, too perfect. She was curvy in all the right places. She wouldn't have been the center of attention otherwise.

Victor, too, had taken off his own jacket to put on Gloria.

"Do you girls want to die or something?"

Jolly still remained firm as she rebutted, "How petty of you. This is a bachelorette party. Are we supposed to have tea instead of dance at a bachelorette party?"

Now that she said that, it did make sense. Carmen quickly shook her head while she consciously put on the jacket. "I don't like tea," she whined. "It is so bitter."

"Fine. Continue with it, then." Leroy leaned back into the sofa with his arms crossed. "I will sit here and watch."

“He is mad,” Rachel whispered, poking Jolly on her arm. “He has really gotten mad.”

“He can blow up for all I care.”

After her short complaint, she asked the group after a few beats, “How about we find a place to have tea?”

Rachel almost spurted out her mouthful of soda upon hearing that. What happened to the dignity of Miss Jolly or the queen of the nightclubs we talked about?

Not many tea houses were still open in the middle of the night. Right after the group left the nightclub, they saw numerous designated drivers in their blue uniforms standing by the side of the road. The few women didn’t feel cold at all after all the drinks they had.

However, the one type of coldness that definitely existed was when the boyfriend thought that the girlfriend felt cold.

“Pull up the zipper,” Leroy grumbled while he pulled Jolly closer and pulled the zipper all the way up to her neck.

When a few passers-by recognized him, they scurried toward him for autographs and photos, only to have all of them brutally rejected.

“Why did you tell them no? You are going to be a trending topic again later.”

“So be it. You think I can’t handle something like this with the PR teams I pay for?”

“At least wear a mask.”

“Wouldn’t I be declaring to the world that I am a celebrity by having a mask on in a nightclub?”

“Gosh, Mr. Pissy Pants. Did you swallow dynamite or something?”

“I swallowed a whole nuclear bomb.”

Rachel and the rest of them were walking behind the bickering couple, and they couldn’t help but laugh at their conversation.

The Leroy they knew was someone good-tempered who had never lost his temper nor gotten angry at anyone. This night was probably the first time they had seen him like this.

Victor, whom they all thought was the most chauvinistic one among the three men, surprisingly didn’t get angry and only quietly held Gloria’s hand. He even paid attention to Carmen beside him by asking her if she was hungry.

The entire street was bustling with noise. There were a lot of drunk men and women, and there were also many among them who were kissing right there in public.

Holding hands seemed to have become the most simple way to show he cared. As they were crossing a road, Justin suddenly grabbed Rachel by the hand and in a commanding voice, he warned, "The light has gone red."

She was taken aback by him, but she soon lifted her head to look at the tall man beside her. It felt as though she would be able to get through life even with her eyes closed as long as she had him by her side. It had always been like this throughout the years.

"Where did you park the car?"

"Green River Street."

"Oh, that is beside the river."

"Want to take a stroll?"

"Sure."

As there weren't a lot of people around at night, as soon as the traffic light turned green, Rachel's group was the only one who crossed the pedestrian crossing. Passers-by couldn't help but steal glance after glance at them because they were all extremely good-looking.

Noticing this, Rachel teased, "Seems like we will be trending topics as well along with our two celebrity friends."

"Don't worry. I have told Frankie before we came here to take care of the media," Justin reassured her.

Rachel froze when she heard that. She could feel the grip on her hand tighten. There were many stalls that sold all kinds of small items along the river.

As they walked, Carmen had her attention caught by a stand that sold sweet potato tacos.

"Pick the biggest one." Victor handed a bill to the owner of the stand before turning to ask Gloria if she wanted one.

Gloria shook her head in reply.

She had been controlling her food intake lately in preparation for the tour in two days. It would be visible on stage if she were to put on weight now.

Jolly and Leroy were leaning against the railing around the river. As their anger left as quickly as it came, they had stopped arguing at some point and were now chattering about something that made them laugh heartily.

“A flower for your wife, kind sir? They are all fresh!”

Rachel and Justin were stopped in their tracks by a young girl who sold flowers.

Rachel was going to reject her subconsciously, but she paused when she caught sight of the white bicycle the young girl had parked by the river. The basket in front of the bicycle was filled with flowers which, when caressed by the gentle river breeze and illuminated by the street light, was an ethereal sight to behold.

Rachel couldn't hold herself back from complimenting, “Your bicycle is beautiful.”

Hearing that, Justin abruptly asked, “Would you sell your bike?”

His unexpected question immediately left the young lady stunned.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 578

Spring had just come and the weather was still freezing cold, especially at night.

There weren't many people walking on Green River Street at this time. At one glance along the street, all the vendors were starting to close up their stalls. Even the wind felt oddly cold on this gradually vacant street.

After Carmen took a bite of the sweet potato taco bought by Victor she was holding in her hands, she immediately squealed about how fragrant it was. Jolly felt her tummy rumble at the sight. “Share half of it with me.”

“No!” Carmen huffed and turned around with a grin on her face. “Cheapskate. Are you like this because I am usually the one who buys you snacks?”

“Alright, alright. I will let you have some.”

Persuaded, Carmen broke a small piece off of her taco and gave it to Jolly..

That in turn earned her a disdainful look from her friend. “Give me a piece from the gap between your teeth, why don't you?” Jolly sassed.

“Do you want it or not?”

“No thanks. Enjoy” Jolly grumpily waved her off. She then turned around and asked, “Eh? Where are Chris and Justin?”

The group looked around, but still they couldn’t find the couple. However, a flower seller stood where Rachel and Justin were standing earlier, and the girl was wiping her newly acquired watch with joy.

“Are you looking for the couple from earlier? They left.”

“Left?” Jolly was taken aback. “When and how did they leave?”

“They bought my bicycle and rode off.”

“What?”

“I happen to be graduating in June this year, and I was going to sell the bicycle. They were willing to pay a high price to buy it, so I sold it to them. But I didn’t take advantage of them. Since it is an unused bike, I didn’t ask for money and only exchanged it with a watch from them. Look! It is pretty, isn’t it?”

The girl brought up the watch that had a neon blue glint to it, her face full of smiles. “I can have my father wear it.”

Jolly was stunned upon hearing that. It was only after the little girl skipped away that she and Leroy looked at each other and exclaimed,

“A Rolex watch for a second-hand bicycle?! What a prodigal man!”

Justin was the only one who would do something like this. Gloria, however, wasn’t as surprised as Jolly was. “That is so romantic. It is just a watch. What is the big deal?”

Jolly glanced at her. “I wouldn’t think it is a big deal if it was my father who did it because I always thought that him making money is as easy and natural as breathing is. Justin is like your dad to you.”

“What the hell are you talking about? Get out of my hair!”

“It was just an analogy.”

“Who even makes analogies like you did?”

“Geez, learn to take a joke.”

As the commotion went on here, a certain prodigal but romantic man was already on his way home with Rachel. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out as romantic as Gloria imagined it would.

"You can't ride the bike now. You drank alcohol."

"Who said I can't? Didn't you buy it for me?"

"Come on, be a good girl. You can ride tomorrow, okay?"

"I don't have time tomorrow."

"The day after tomorrow, then. I will do it with you."

"Not the day after tomorrow. I want to ride it now!"

Rachel was pulling the handlebars of the bicycle. She would have stepped up and started pedaling if Justin hadn't stopped her.

She seemed fine earlier despite the drinks she had, but it must all have just rushed up to her head now as she was hit by a wave of dizziness. Like an unreasonable child, she refused to sit in the back, and insisted on getting down and cycling herself.

There weren't many passers-by but embarrassingly enough, those who walked past them all did a double take on the couple.

Left with no choice, Justin could only concede. "Ride it if you really want to ride. Just be careful."

Rachel was finally satisfied after hearing his words.

After getting onto the bicycle, Rachel held onto the handlebars and looked ahead. However, half a minute had passed after that, yet her feet were still on the ground as she remained unmoving.

"What is the matter?" Justin asked when he noticed what was going on. The woman only turned around and looked at him with hopeless eyes. "I don't think I know how to ride a bicycle," she whined.

"What?"

He thought that he had heard her wrong or that she was babbling nonsense because she was drunk, but seeing how she didn't even know how to put her feet on the pedals and almost fell off the bicycle after she wiggled around, he finally understood the situation.

“Do you really not know how to ride a bike?”

“Mhm.”

“Has no one ever taught you before?”

“Uh-huh

It suddenly hit Justin how Rachel had no one other than her grandmother who truly cared for her after she was brought to the Hudson Residence at the age of eight. With how aged her grandmother was and how undependable the other members of the family were, there was no way Rachel could have learned to ride a bicycle.

“I will teach you.” He held the bicycle steady. “Put one foot on the pedal, step on it, and then put the other foot on the other pedal.”

“Like this?”

“Yes. Maintain the balance.”

“Don’t look down at your feet. I am holding you. Promise you won’t fall.”

Justin began to trot along while still holding onto the bicycle. First-time riders were usually not bold, but it was the carefulness that made it hard for them to maintain their balance. In fact, now was the best time for Justin to let go. However, being the worrywart that he was, he kept holding on so that Rachel wouldn’t fall.

“I can ride a bike!” The breeze from the river blew her long hair into a mess. Half-awake from her drunken stupor, Rachel cheered excitedly, ‘I can finally ride a bike!’

“That is right. You did it.”

Justin was still holding onto the bicycle, but he and the bicycle had both slowed down. He was sporting a dotting smile while he looked at her.

The street lights were all that illuminated the way home in the dark of the night. By the time Rachel woke up early the next morning, Jolly was already on her way out.

“It is so early in the morning. Is the Civil Affairs Bureau open already? Rachel glanced at the clock on the wall. “What are you doing?”

“We are going to be the first couple to register today.”

“You’re even making a competition out of this?”

“It is for good luck!” She huffed righteously. “My mother said that this is a custom from her side of the family. You will live a happy married life if you manage to be the first to register.”

“Is Mrs. Carter just messing around with you so that you won’t oversleep?”

“How is that possible? It is such an important occasion for me.”

“Think about it. When do you think monogamy was implemented? If nothing else, your parents. were the first ones to get their marriage certificate in your family. Where did this custom come from?”

Jolly was taken aback upon hearing that. “Is that so? My mom really did lie to me!”

Rachel held her waist while she leaned against the sofa to hold back her laugh. “You are awake anyway. Might as well go now.”

What other choice did she have?

Naturally, this little episode could not dampen Jolly’s enthusiasm. She still went out with a cheery expression on her face. Rachel, on the other hand, had never seen her dress in such a traditional and formal way even at work.

After Jolly left, Rachel took a quick shower. She then took her coat and car keys before she headed to the company.

As soon as she walked to her car, she looked up and was greeted by a sight that made her smile. A light green retro second-hand bicycle was parked next to her parking space, occupying a single parking space. This was a rather glamorous thing, especially in the downtown area of Riverdale, where every inch of land was worth a king’s ransom.

The rattan basket was still filled with flowers, all still fresh and beautiful even after a night.

Rachel was surprised at first, but she soon let out a giggle.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 579

The following took place at Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

“President Hudson, this is the project proposal of the resort.”

“Okay. I will take a look.” Rachel took the proposal handed over by the secretary while taking a sip of the coffee next to her. “Has there been any problems with the fire control of this reconstruction project?”

“None. We have an experienced engineering team.”

“What about the demolition issue in the surrounding area? Is it resolved?”

“It is. It is all wasteland around here. We have offered compensation to the only two self-built houses, and they have signed the contracts. Miss Carter personally overlooked it.”

Rachel nodded reassuringly when she heard that it was Jolly who supervised the confirmation.

“We will proceed as planned, then.”

“Understood.” The secretary nodded. “By the way, President Hudson, Riverdale Medical Association sent an invitation letter yesterday. They are inviting you to be a part of a charity auction they are having this Saturday.”

“Got it. Tell them I will join.”

“Alright.”

After the secretary left, Rachel closed the proposal and set it aside.

Presently, Hudson Pharmaceuticals wasn’t doing all that well financially. Even though Justin had brought many customers to them, there was still no way to alleviate the predicament. The new projects needed funds, and there were various corporate social responsibilities that also needed financing as well.

Thinking of this, Rachel rubbed her temples to massage the headache away.

“What is the matter? Why are you already drained so early in the morning? You still aren’t sober, are you?”

Jolly’s voice instantly brought her out of her reverie.

Seeing her in high spirits, Rachel asked with a smile, “You are already back from getting your certificate?”

“We were the first ones to arrive, and we went in as soon as they opened. It only took less than half an hour. I also bought breakfast on the way back to eat with you.”

With that said, she raised the bag of breakfast in her hand.

Rachel showed no intentions of holding back when she saw that, and she unhesitantly opened the sandwich's packaging after she took it. She then asked casually, "Where is Leroy?"

"He got a notice to go out of town this afternoon."

"Such an industry role model."

"He is a married person, after all. He won't be able to still be the dream man of thousands of girls. Since he has lost a large part of the market, he can only rely on his abilities now." Jolly let out a long sigh. "That is life—you win some, you lose some."

Rachel only smiled and said nothing at that.

"What is the matter with you?" Jolly could tell at a glance that Rachel wasn't in a good mood. Sprawling on the table, she asked, "Is it about the company?"

"Mhm. Same ol' problem."

"The same old problem about where the money went?"

Rachel hummed and nodded.

Shortly after she took over Hudson Pharmaceuticals, she discovered that a staggering amount of three billion had seemingly disappeared into a bottomless pit. If it were to collapse, she might have to give up the entire Hudson Pharmaceuticals to pay off the sum. She would be sucked dry by then.

At present, the company's financial report that they showed to the public looked as though everything was balanced. The company's annual profit looked plenty optimistic as well. However, Rachel had stumbled upon a problem the first time she wanted to withdraw a large amount of money from the Finance Department—the company's bank account didn't even have the amount it was said to have.

After the financial audit last year, it was revealed that a large amount of money had seemingly disappeared into thin air. The Finance Department couldn't give a plausible explanation for it, as they only said that it was the president who took it last-minute. Still, no one knew where Jefferey put the money.

"Do you think it was him who transferred the funds?"

Jolly pondered upon hearing that. "Didn't you tell me that Officer Hawkins found out that the company has an illegal offshore bank account? Do you think the money was transferred there?"

"That is impossible." Rachel shook her head. "The Investigation Bureau has been keeping an eye on the account. Also, Amber had been in charge of that account all this while. But Jefferey must not have anyone else he trusts following Amber's death after it was also disclosed on the annual report that there has never been any inflow of funds into the account."

"We have turned Hudson Pharmaceuticals inside out looking over all the company's assets since you took over, but we couldn't find where such a large sum of money went. Don't you think there is something weird about this?"

"I am only worried that he didn't manage to complete the transaction."

"Then where the hell is the money? It is 3 billion we're talking about."

After pondering for a long minute, Rachel suggested, "Let's inspect the company's capital flow again. We will trace any dodgy transactions."

This was the only thing they could do now.

"Sure. I am off to the Finance Department to get some information, then."

"Alright."

Rachel suddenly remembered something before Jolly left, and so she called out, "Jolly?"

"What is it?"

"You don't have to go for now. Come somewhere else with me."

"What?"

"I suddenly thought of a place we haven't checked yet."

"Where?"

"The Hudson Family's manor in West Magnolia."

"We have, though. Didn't we check the Hudson Family's assets for their personal use first thing?"

"There is a place we haven't checked yet." Rachel's gaze was firm, and her hands were clenched tightly by her side. "There is a study in the manor that has a secret room in it."

Jolly was slightly taken aback when she heard that. "A secret room?"

“Yes, a secret room.”

Rachel had also just recalled the existence of the room.

She and Justin had accidentally barged into the secret room six years ago, which was when they saw a photo of her mother locked up in an array in the room. Only then did she know that her mother was killed by Jefferey.

And so, Rachel and Jolly drove directly to West Magnolia.

The manor had been sealed off as per court order after Jefferey and Amber died. It was initially going to be auctioned, but their deaths had turned the place into a supposedly unlucky abode. Also, the place was too big to interest a normal person.

“Chris, there is a seal here.”

When the two of them drove to the gate of the manor, they noticed that there was a seal on the iron door, which meant that no one had paid a visit here in a long time.

“Let’s climb over the wall,” Rachel suggested.

Jolly glanced at their surroundings and commented, “Why does it feel eerie here?”

“We are under broad daylight. What are you afraid of?”

“I heard that this manor was put up for auction by the court. Even though the starting price has plummeted twice, no one has bid to buy it. Sounds like bad luck to me. Don’t tell me there is something wicked here.”

“I will borrow your luck as the bride today, then. You are soaked in good mojo today.”

“How does that even work?”

“Are you climbing or not? Wait for me here if you aren’t.”

Hearing that, Jolly grimaced and whined, “I do want to go in with you, but my shoes...”

She proceeded to bring up one foot to show her 12-centimeter heels.

“Why did I even bring you out?” Rachel sighed.

“How about I will update you if anything happens? You can contact me anytime.”

“Okay, then. Go ahead and wait for me in the car.”

After saying that, Rachel went to the side door and climbed in.

Seeing this, Jolly couldn't help thinking that she wasn't a good friend this time when she recalled the last time she climbed the wall and went to West Magnolia to find Leroy.

Still, as much as she wanted to help, her high heels were too much of a hindrance.

After thinking about it, she had a glint in her eyes and she quickly took out her phone to make a call. "Hello? What are you doing?" she blurted out of excitement.

The deep voice of a man came from the other end of the call. "Just finished a meeting. What's wrong?"

"Hurry over to West Magnolia. There is a great opportunity here for you to show your charms as a boyfriend. Don't blame me for not telling you. This may be your one and only chance."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 580

There used to be a group of servants in West Magnolia's Hudson Manor, where it was so well-maintained that they could have specially designated servants to clean up every piece of leaf. But now, the manor was dead quiet, and only the sound of birds could be heard despite it being the afternoon.

Rachel's flats stepped on a dry branch. The sound startled her, making her jump.

She laughed at herself as she looked back and saw the branch that had been stomped into three parts behind her.

Despite how people with a clear conscience were supposed to be fearless, Rachel found it ridiculous how she still felt a chill run up her spine even though she didn't do anything she felt guilty about to the Hudsons. Not to mention that it was still in the middle of the day.

Jefferey, who was executed by the firing squad, might not bother Rachel much, but the bloodied Amber did fall into the river in front of her eyes. Even now, Rachel would occasionally dream about the scene and jolt awake from her sleep.

As she reached the main entrance to the manor, she noticed how tight the seal on the door was.

She then encircled half the yard before she found a broken window in the side yard.

It was necessary for houses to be inhabited, as an unoccupied one was prone to be vandalized and have problems everywhere within the shortest time possible. This was a metaphysical belief.

Now that Rachel had entered the house smoothly, she found Jefferey's locked study with ease.

Being the upright person that she was, she hesitated for a few seconds before she took a small hairpin from her updo. It became a piece of iron wire after she stretched it out. She had seen people in movies open doors with just a piece of iron wire and she knew the general principle of it, but it was for a fact that she had never done it.

Just as she poked the wire into the keyhole, she heard a 'click' and the door was open.

She was stunned for a second as she wondered if she was naturally talented like that, but she instantly understood when she saw the mess in the study.

If nothing else, a burglar had probably gone through this place.

The court had indeed confiscated the valuable furnishings, such as the antiques in the room, but the officers who came from the court to collect the items would not have turned the place into such a mess. They would have sealed off the things that were not worth much. The room, however, looked like a bomb had hit it.

Rachel quickly walked to the whole wall bookcase, and found the switch to the secret room from her memory.

The squeak that ensued was especially clear in the quiet room. Just like six years ago, the door of the bookshelf turned halfway, revealing a dark and discreet secret room.

Even after so long, she still prepared herself for a fright, her emotions already affected. However, she stopped abruptly when she saw the inside of the room.

The candles on the enshrined 'altar' had long since gone out, and the black-and-white photo had also disappeared.

Where is it?

The court would have contacted her if they had found these things.

Did the burglar steal from here as well?

Seems impossible, though.

Right when Rachel was deep in her thoughts, her phone suddenly rang, scaring her out of her wits when the sound reverberated throughout the empty space.

Startled, she hit her arm against the side of the table, making her gasp painfully.

While she endured the pain, she took a look at the caller ID, and pressed the answer button when she saw Jolly's name flashing across her screen. "Hello? You had better have a good reason for calling me!" Rachel growled in a 'kind' voice.

"Ugh, what has gotten your panties in a knot?"

"You scared me, you butthead."

"I was only worried about your safety. Turns out it backfired." Jolly sighed.

"I probably won't find anything." While talking on the phone, Rachel groped around in the dark room but didn't find anything she was looking for. "There is nothing here. It has been visited by burglars as well."

"I told you there is a 80% possibility you won't find anything. People from the court have been here several times before. The people in charge of the confiscation would have noticed if there really was a problem."

"But my mother's photo is missing."

"What?" Jolly murmured before she suddenly let out a startled gasp.

Rachel immediately felt herself shiver when she heard that frightening sound.

"Hello? Jolly? Jolly!"

The call was cut off abruptly right after.

Rachel's heart skipped a beat, and she didn't even bother closing the door to the secret room as she sprinted out to look for Jolly.

Too much had happened recently that Rachel couldn't let her guard down even during the day.

After painstakingly climbing up the wall of the manor, a male voice rang out. "I thought only Miss Jolly knew how to climb walls."

Startled, Rachel turned her head, only to see a tall figure standing outside the wall surrounding the yard.

"You have thoroughly impressed me today, Rae," he continued.

Rachel could see the astonishment in Justin's eyes as he looked at her.

She was currently straddling the wall. The corners of her mouth fell open and a deep frown on her face. "Why are you here?"

"Jolly called me and told me to come here for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Indeed, it is just like she said. It is indeed once-in-a-lifetime."

"Jolly. Carter!" Rachel gritted her teeth and called out her name. "Where is she?"

"Are you sure you want to keep the conversation going in your current position?"

Justin raised his head slightly and looked at her straddling the wall, his tone playful.

Realizing what he meant, she awkwardly cleared her throat. "Give me a minute."

Rachel took a look around, but she was still embarrassed to climb up the tree. She had managed to climb over the wall earlier by leaning against the tree outside the wall. However, with Justin staring at her now, she felt too embarrassed to stretch her legs.

After a long while, she asked with difficulty, "Can you turn around?"

"Right," the man replied as he quietly laughed about it.

She only crawled from the wall to the tree after seeing him turn around. She was inwardly cursing Jolly the whole time.

Why would she call Justin over when I am so unsightly? She must have done it intentionally!

Rachel then decided that she had to call Leroy over to have a look if Jolly was ever caught in a similar predicament in the future. Even if he couldn't come physically, she would have the video evidence and have it sent to him on the spot to let Jolly experience what social death was like.

As Rachel quietly grumbled while she climbed up the tree, she got distracted, and suddenly lost her footing when she was climbing down the tree.

"Ah!"

Amidst her shriek, Justin, who was seemingly ready, turned around quickly and grabbed her arm with his big one, helping her land smoothly.

As Rachel gasped from the shock, she smelled the faint, musky scent of cologne drifting off his torso.

"You don't look too experienced." He unhesitantly made fun of her from the top of her head.

“Why would anyone be experienced in climbing trees and walls?” Rachel coughed and shoved him away. “Didn’t I tell you to turn around? How could you lie?”

Not knowing whether to laugh or feel upset, Justin replied, “My bad.”

“Where is Jolly?”

“She left.”

“She left?” Rachel looked to where the car was parked in disbelief. “She dumped me here by myself and just left?!”

“She drove away when she saw me coming. She also told me to wait here.”

Rachel immediately realized what had happened then.

Jolly must have intentionally screamed on the phone just now to worry Rachel, so that she would come out and look for Jolly, and then let Justin see her climbing the wall.

Jolly Carter, just you wait!

“Let me give her a call.”

Jaw clenched, Rachel took out her phone, only to be stopped by Justin.

“Ouch!” She gasped in pain.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 581

“What’s wrong? Are you hurt?” Justin immediately wiped the smile off his face and took Rachel’s hand to check. “Were you injured when you climbed the tree? Where are you hurt?”

“It’s nothing. I bumped into something when I was inside. I didn’t get hurt from climbing the tree.”

“Let me see.”

"It really is nothing. It is all Jolly's fault for startling me."

Paying no mind to her protest, Justin carefully rolled up Rachel's sleeve, where he saw a bruise on her forearm. "Don't do something so dangerous anymore," he nagged with his eyebrows pulled together.

"I didn't expect this place to feel so spooky as well. Jolly's nonsense only added to my anxiousness. I kept recalling the scene when Amber fell off the cruise ship."

Rachel began to feel upset after she brought this up.

She didn't feel sorry for Jefferey and Amber. Amber had done a lot of evil things, but since the dead would remain dead, there was no need for Rachel to continue holding a grudge against them. Besides, she didn't have much resentment toward Amber. After all, it was all in the past now.

But in the end, they were still cousins.

"Don't think too much. They were bound to get hit by karma because of their own actions." He took her hand then. "Let's go. We will go home and apply some ointment for you."

"Wait! I have to go in again."

"Hmm?"

"My mother's photo is gone, and the table used for worshiping is missing as well. I have to go in again and see what is going on." She then added with a frown, "It doesn't make sense, though. Who would move those things?"

"In that case, you don't need to check it anymore. Let's leave here."

Rachel froze for a second as she cast an odd look at him upon hearing that.

He seemed like he already knew about this.

Justin then drove her to Westhill, where the peaceful chime of the church bell could be heard as evening approached.

"Why did you bring me here?" Rachel asked.

Instead of answering her, he only asked in return, "Didn't you want to look for the photo?"

As he explained, he nodded to a priest in the church as a greeting.

Seeing him, the priest put his hands together in humility and uttered, "May God bless you, Mr. Burton. May I know who you have here with you today?"

"Rae."

"Hello, Miss Hudson."

Miss Hudson? Rachel shot Justin a surprised look. Has he mentioned me to the priest? And he seems familiar with the people here. A few of them have greeted him since he entered the gates.

As they were on blessed grounds, Rachel could only follow the priest while he guided them inside as she knew it would be inappropriate to ask too much.

They walked all the way to a hall where prayers were offered, the light from the candles giving the space a sense of solemnity.

The priest proceeded to point at a candle on the table as he held his rosary. "Amen. Miss Hudson, your mother and grandmother's candles have been lit up in this hall."

Candles?

He then continued, "Their belongings are over there."

On the left side of the hall, there was a multi-grid glass cabinet which housed different things in each grid. On it were pieces of clothing, jewelry, or even a mere photo.

As Rachel looked on, she saw her mother's photo and her grandmother's silver bangle in one of the grids.

"Why are these here?" she gasped, flabbergasted.

"I went to the manor before the court sealed it off. I thought that it might be better to leave some things undiscovered, so I moved it all here on my own discretion."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I..." Justin stopped even before he started.

"Thank you," Rachel remarked. She didn't press on as she understood his intentions.

She knew Justin was afraid their relationship would turn stiff, or worse, deteriorate.

Presently, it was very quiet in the hall lit with candles. There were also no other visitors who were here to burn incense.

Justin offered to let Rachel have some alone time with her family while he went out.

After he left, she pressed her hands together and respectfully asked the priest, "Father, may I know which candle is my mother's and which one is my grandmother's?"

The priest smiled. "There are a total of 1500 candles in here, two of which are the ones you are looking for."

In Christianity, the human soul merely separated from the body at death, and would be re-embodied on the future Day of Judgment.

However, the reality of it was that humans turned into dust after death, and would return to be one with the universe. Everyone would turn into dust particles that coexist with each other in this abyss of a galaxy. With how humans would end up relying on each other at some point, there was no need to draw clear lines between who was who.

Rachel paused after hearing his words, and without asking anything else, she kowtowed toward the thousands of lights illuminating the hall.

Her grandmother was the only one in the family who was a Catholic. She would have been elated to know that she was to rest here, with Rachel's mother by her side.

"Father, does Jay come here often?"

"Mr. Burton is not very diligent compared to other worshippers, but he has been giving alms."

To put it bluntly, Justin wasn't a religious person by all means, but he had donated a lot of money.

Rachel quietly chuckled to herself at the roundabout manner religious persons spoke.

"It probably hasn't been long since my mother and grandma's candles were lit, yes?"

"Oh, it has been some time."

"Is that so?"

"It has been six years now."

Startled, Rachel repeated, "Six years?"

"I had just joined the church that time and was in charge of the affairs here. Mr. Burton came to me with a bangle then, but your mother's photo was just put in just last year."

"Has he been here in the past six years?"

“He has. I always saw Mr. Burton here before the new year every year, but he had never come in.”

Hearing that brought Rachel complicated emotions.

Surrounded by the ringing of the bell, it was already evening when she headed out.

She was greeted by the sight of Justin standing outside the door, quietly watching a priest ringing the bell on the bell tower some distance away.

He turned around when he heard the sound of her footsteps. He didn’t ask her anything that happened inside, and only gently tugged her by the hand. “Does your hand still hurt?”

Rachel quietly shook her head in response and stared at him for a long time before she suddenly threw her arms around Justin, making him freeze in place.

Even though he didn’t know the reason for her abrupt action, he still placed both hands behind her back and lightly patted. “What is wrong?” he murmured.

“Thank you.”

All Rachel cared about was drowning in her sorrow when her grandmother passed away six years ago. A lot of things then were settled with help from others; even Janice was the one who helped her arrange the funeral. It took a long time for Rachel to remember that the bangle was gone, but she was never in the mood to ask about it.

She finally realized after years had passed that she was not as meticulous and strong-willed as Justin.

Coming back to his senses, the man gently caressed her back with his big palm without uttering a word.

They soon walked downhill, hand-in-hand.

As they were still some distance away from the place the car was parked at, Rachel asked, “Didn’t you not remember anything before? How did you still remember to come here every year on the anniversary of Grandma’s death?”

“I can’t say for sure.” Justin sounded confused. “I always had a feeling I had to drop by, but I never understood why even when I was here.”

“Didn’t the Father tell you?”

“No.”

People who were religious usually believed in fate. Justin and Rachel probably were not meant to cross paths during those few years, but now it seemed that they had accumulated enough fate to be in each other's lives.

They had unconsciously reached the entrance of the hill then. As she looked at the familiar path down the hill, Rachel suddenly remembered something. "I was here for Old Mrs. Holt the last time I came here.

"How is she doing?"

"Her Alzheimer's disease is at an advanced stage so she can no longer live here. She was sent to a nursing home a few years ago, and her life there seems pretty good. I went to visit her once."

"When did you do all this? How come I don't know anything about it?"

"It is nothing. I did it when I was free."

Rachel then held Justin's hand. "Bring me along next time."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 582

The black sedan was driving down the hill as Justin and Rachel's conversation continued.

"By the way, how did you deal with those things in the secret room?" She asked about what happened after.

"I had it all buried."

"Buried? Where?"

"The Hudson Cemetery."

She was caught off-guard when she heard his words. In disbelief, she asked again, "Where?"

"The Hudson Cemetery. Or should I say, Jefferey Hudson's grave."

It took her a while to finally recover.

She had already known what a black-hearted man Jefferey was from a long time ago, but she had never expected he would take an eye for an eye with this kind of feudal superstition.

Since he thought that those things could be used to hold down one's soul, they might as well place the things he used to 'suppress' others when he was alive on his remains so that he could get a taste of his action too.

"Don't tell me that..." Something seemed to have suddenly come to Rachel's mind. "Could it be that the manor wasn't broken into by a burglar? The reason for the mess inside is because..."

Justin glanced at her with a matter-of-fact look on his face and nonchalantly admitted, "It was me."

His straightforward answer seemed to echo off the interior of the car.

"Didn't you know where the secret room was? Why did you let your men leave it in such a mess?"

"I fabricated a fake scene to eliminate suspicion."

Rachel sighed at that. "I am glad you are not a criminal, or else Janice and her subordinates would have had a hard time solving cases."

To be fair, it was completely understandable why Justin would do something like this.

The Hudson Manor had been put up for auction by the court. It was only a matter of time before it had its next owner. If the place was ever renovated in the future, the secret room in the study would inevitably be discovered. By then, the court would definitely investigate why the room was empty. It was better to make it look as if burglars had ransacked the place. It wasn't like they had lost anything of value too.

However, none of these mattered. The Hudson Family had already been ruined. Even though the current Hudson Pharmaceuticals was still in the hands of Rachel, it no longer ran on the previous 'family business' business model.

The most important thing was to quickly find the sum that Jefferey had transferred.

"You are sure there wasn't anything special in the study, right?" she asked again.

"Frankie brought some men with him to go through the place. They didn't find anything out of place there."

“Weird. Just where is the three billion Jefferey took?”

“Maybe we can investigate who Jefferey met after Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ financial audit last year, and if there were any changes to his and his family’s personal accounts.”

“That is the only thing we can do now.”

It would be like finding a needle in a haystack, but it was still better than doing nothing at all.

“Don’t worry,” Justin consoled her. “I will be by your side to get you through this hurdle no matter what. I won’t let Hudson Pharmaceuticals go bankrupt.”

At his words, Rachel turned to look at him, only to see a determined look on his chiseled features. She felt her heart ease a great deal at that instant, and she hummed in reply.

“How about we think about what is for dinner?”

“I’m not hungry.”

She subconsciously uttered those words, but her tummy chose that moment to let out a loud gurgling noise as soon as she said that. It sounded especially clear in the quiet car.

How embarrassing!

“Not hungry?” Justin smiled. “It’s okay. I am, though. Help me think of what I should have for dinner.”

Rachel would love to find a hole to burrow herself in right this moment.

She had embarrassed herself more times than she could count today.

Seeing the amused look on his face as he teased her, she finally gritted out, “Let’s have mutton noodle soup.”

She knew that Justin loathed gamy food like mutton. He usually never bothered taking even one small bite despite how delicious it might be.

As expected, he pulled a frown at her suggestion, but still he unhesitantly answered, “Sure.”

Night had already fallen by the time they reached downtown, and night market stalls were appearing one after another.

Rachel and Jolly had a stall they frequently went to near the company that sold mutton noodle soup. The stall would open until late night, and it sold the freshest mutton one

could find. However, it would only operate during the winter, and would be closed once the season had passed.

“Why, hello there, Miss Hudson!” The stall owner greeted them in a friendly and familiar voice. “Is Miss Carter not here today?”

Rachel had to come up with an excuse then. “Jolly said that she is trying to lose weight. You can just chase her away if she comes here next time, or else she will blame you for giving her too big a bowl of noodles everytime she has had your food.”

Even though the enthusiastic stall owner wouldn’t do that, it still felt nice for Rachel to vent her anger after what had happened earlier.

The stall owner then smilingly gazed at the man behind Rachel. “Who do you have here with you?”

“He is—”

“Hello. I am her husband.”

The stall owner was visibly surprised to hear the introduction. “You’re married, Miss Hudson? When did you get married? Why didn’t you say so? Your meal today is on me! Take it as my congratulations for your marriage.”

Rachel quickly waved her hand in rejection. “No, no. There’s no need for that. We are not newlyweds.”

“Oh? Is it a remarriage, then?”

The stall owner was a northerner who characteristically spoke without beating around the bush, making Rachel not know whether to laugh or feel upset about it.

The clear male voice rang out from beside her. “Madam, our children are already elementary school students.”

“You have been married for a long time, then. I always thought that Miss Hudson was a single lady. I even kept an eye out for customers that come here for her. Why have you never come here with your husband, Miss Hudson?”

Justin only cast a glance at Rachel and he waited for her to answer.

“He doesn’t like mutton,” Rachel calmly said.

She wouldn’t be the one to feel embarrassed as long as she was able to push it onto someone else.

Just like she thought, the stall owner looked dissatisfied with Rachel's answer. "How can you not like mutton? Don't you know how nice it is to have a bowl of mutton soup during winter? I have never met someone who doesn't like the mutton soup that I cook.

"Try it, sir. I won't charge you if it is not delicious."

Meanwhile, Justin didn't reject it. "Okay," he replied shortly.

"Great. Is there anything else you don't eat? Green onion or ginger, or maybe garlic? Anything?"

"Too many to count." Rachel blinked. "Madam, please don't put any of those in his portion. Exclude the chilies too. He doesn't take all that."

"A pure mutton soup with nothing else? Are you sure? Where is the fun in that?"

It was the stall owner's turn to be caught in a dilemma. As though asking for an opinion, she turned to look at Justin. "I can't guarantee it will taste good that way."

The man maintained his impassive expression and assured, "Don't worry about it. Just prepare one for me as the missus said."

"Got it! Please wait for a moment."

Rachel and Justin then found a table to sit.

As it hadn't been long since the stall was opened, there were still many seats available, given how few customers it had now.

"Jolly and I always come for the mutton noodle soup here. It is always crowded during the coldest days of winter, but the lady boss doesn't do takeouts. You will have to stand and eat if you can't find a seat here. There was once when Jolly and I were holding our bowl when we turned around and bumped into another customer. We were drenched in soup then."

Rachel continued to vividly describe to him the situation. "We were supposed to apologize, but Jolly started being unreasonable, and it ended up with them compensating us with the mutton noodle soup they lined up to get."

Justin only quietly listened as he busied himself with getting her a disposable fork.

Seeing the gauze wrapped around his hand, Rachel lost the smile in her eyes a little. Although no one mentioned it again, she felt upset every time she looked at it.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 583

As observant as Justin was, he noticed Rachel had something on her mind. “Rachel, I have something to show you.”

“Hm?” She stared at him in confusion. “What is it?”

He extended his hand to her and showed her the severed finger that had already been taken care of with gauze. On that slightly yellowed gauze, somebody had drawn a pair of eyes with noticeable eyelashes with a black pen. Below the eyes were the nose and the lips where the tongue was sticking out from.

She was surprised to see it and she burst into laughter. “You drew it?”

“Not me.” Justin wiggled his finger at her. “Charlotte did.”

“Geez.” Rachel sighed in resignation. “You’re spoiling her too much! You shouldn’t allow her to play with your injured finger. It hasn’t recovered yet.”

“It’s almost time. They’ll remove the bandage soon.” He held her hands as he said casually, “You don’t have to be sad for me. It’s not a big deal and it won’t affect my daily life too much, right? Besides, it isn’t that unsightly, is it?”

How can it not be unsightly? She was trying to retort. However, when she saw the pair of big eyes on his finger staring back at her, she changed her mind. “Well, I’m not sad anymore.”

After a while, the shop owner served them their food.

Justin stared at the clear soup before him. It had a crystal clear soup base with snow-white rice vermicelli and nothing more. The lack of ingredients had made the dish look unattractive.

“Try it! You asked me to order for you earlier. Don’t waste the food.”

He hesitated for a moment. Everyone had their own preferences for flavors and smells, they could not really control themselves in this regard.

Just like there were some people who hated parsley. For them, it was a torture to just smell it. They would never understand what parsley lovers like about it.

As for Justin, he never took a liking to mutton. Even though he said yes without any hesitation a moment ago, he couldn't find the courage to begin as the scent of the mutton soup overwhelmed his sense of smell. "Rachel, can I not eat them?"

"Nope."

"Okay then..." As Rachel rejected his request, he could only force himself to try the soup.

However, the soup tasted different compared to what he had expected from a mutton soup.

Justin was surprised. So, he took another spoonful of the soup before he raised his head to her for answers.

Sitting opposite him, Rachel rested her chin in her hands as she winked. "How does the bone broth taste?"

"This is a bone broth?"

"Of course! You'll never try it twice if it's mutton soup."

Rachel had requested the shop owner to change his order to bone broth without Justin's knowing when he left to order the drinks.

Even though she loved to see the funny look on his face when he was tasting the soup, she would never force him to eat mutton as she knew his preference.

"You're having fun kidding me, aren't you?"

"You need to pay the price because you and Jolly ganged up on laughing at me!"

"I didn't!"

"As if!"

The other party was hesitant to respond.

As night fell, the crescent moon was shining silver in the sky. The moon was a soothing sight while the persons under it were an even more admirable scene.

The next day.

Rachel initiated an investigation on Jefferey's yearly schedule after the audit of Hudson Pharmaceuticals two years ago and indeed found something that didn't add up.

“Jefferey’s schedule isn’t private to others. Most of the time he stayed in Riverdale due to his poor health, but he went to the Westhill Turf Club every month in the first half of last year,” Jolly said as she passed the copy of Jefferey’s schedule to Rachel. “The dates that were circled indicate the time he went there. Have you noticed anything?”

Rachel scowled after she perused them. “It has a pattern. He went to the turf club at the beginning of each month.”

“Our company always deals with the financial closing by the end of the month and he would go to Westhill the second day after the closing. On the same day of the month, a sum of money would be deducted from the account of our company.”

“It was deducted monthly?”

“Yes. It started not since last year but ten years ago. There’s always a sum of advance funds deducted from the company’s account at the beginning of the month, but it’ll be balanced at the end of the month. Nobody knows what it is used for.” Jolly analyzed. “If it wasn’t for the sum that was deducted recently, people would hardly notice this.” to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

A solemn expression plastered on Rachel’s face. “So the money has flowed to the turf club?”

“Most likely so.”

“But the cops are watching them. There’s no way they can transfer the money under their watch.”

“There wasn’t any news about the money being confiscated. Maybe they had transferred it somewhere?”

“It’s impossible.” Rachel shook her head. “Janice told me that the cops were monitoring the turf club. If they had transferred the money, they should have left. There’s no way they are still staying in Riverdale.”

Jefferey was in a rush to realize his assets into cash and transfer them because he was aware that the false accounting of Hudson Pharmaceuticals would be discovered one day. If the money was transferred successfully to a safe place, he would have brought Amber to flee the city instead of being arrested in the first place.

As human greed was unlimited, people like him would take any measure to realize their assets in the country before they fled the country. As for Jefferey, he must have targeted Hudson Pharmaceuticals for greater fortune.

In fact, he had succeeded. Hudson Pharmaceuticals needed the money he took to operate.

“What do we do now?”

Rachel replied with a serious face, “I’ll talk about it with Janice.”

The cops would never allow the money to flow out from the turf club, or else they could only let the suspects flee the city without solid evidence to arrest them.

“Enough of this topic. Do you want to have dinner together later?” Jolly suggested.
“Leroy is coming back once he finishes the shooting. Let’s have dinner.”

“Sure.”

“Then, I want to take a half day off later.”

“What is it for?”

“To pick up my hubby.”

Rachel regretted asking as she heard the way that Jolly addressed Leroy. “That is the point, isn’t it?”

Since Jolly was married to Leroy, she wouldn’t stop mentioning her “hubby” in their conversation, which gave Rachel goosebumps.

Meanwhile, Leroy was shooting the advertisement in Riverdale.

“Leroy, are you ready? It’s time for the shoot.”

“One minute!” The make-up artist replied as they finished the last touch on Leroy’s face.

The makeup set off Leroy’s chisel face more than ever as if everything were in its perfect place. Waiting for the artist to adjust his makeup, he stole some time to check the messages from Jolly and chuckled immediately.

“Leroy, is it from Miss Carter?”

“That’s right, so I hope the shooting can go smoothly.”

“No worries. You won’t be late for your date later tonight.”

The progress was indeed smooth due to Leroy’s professionalism. He basically just needed one take to finish each scene.

However, he couldn’t leave work as planned when an unexpected guest visited the set. He took countless times to shoot the last scene, but was never approved as if they had flaws.

Leroy found the answer when he recognized the man sitting behind the cameras.

“One more time! This take isn’t good enough.”

“There’s no need for it.” Leroy left the set as he walked toward the man. “Mr. Sutton should have told us that you’re visiting today. Anything you’re feeling unsatisfied, you can tell me directly. There’s no need to take the others down with me.”

Remaining in his seat, the so-called Mr. Sutton’s expression sank when he glared at Leroy with a cold look. “It’s new to see a spokesperson who acts against the brand owner.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 584

“You’re the brand owner?” Leroy’s brows knitted as his eyes searched for his manager. “What’s going on?”

Standing in the corner, Emmett, the man he was looking for, avoided eye contact.

Obviously, the manager knew it all the time, but chose not to tell him, which meant the manager had betrayed him.

As soon as he started the relationship with Jolly, Leroy rectified the works received by his management team by terminating all the deals that were related to Sutton Corporation and declaring he wouldn’t cooperate with them in the future.

“I went through a lot of trouble to invite an A-lister like you for the shooting.” Ryan rose to his feet behind the cameras. His stance was around 190 centimeters, which was taller than Leroy by a few inches and it gave him a strong aura.

Even though Leroy was a famous star, he was nothing compared to a capitalist like Ryan. After all, he was just a pawn on someone else’s chessboard.

The atmosphere went tense at their exchange. Even the prop masters stopped their work as they kept stealing glances at the two and whispered, “What happened?”

“Are you blind? Leroy offended President Sutton.”

“Then, why did President Sutton ask him to become the spokesperson?”

"You're too naive! President Sutton needs to stay in touch with Leroy to intimidate and manipulate him!"

Their discussion turned inaudible.

It was clear that Ryan was trying to intimidate him. Leroy wasn't a newbie to the work environment, so he had guessed Ryan's intention. "President Sutton, you should be frank. You don't need to drag the others into our business. For them, time is money."

"I see. You're always trying to be the nice guy." Ryan sneered. "That's what I hate the most about you. You always try to be considerate, but you're sugar-coating your wicked lies."

"I don't care about your opinion. You can keep them to yourself. I guess you aren't here only to be sarcastic today after you set me up, am I right?"

"I won't ask the obvious if I was you." Ryan glared at Leroy with a cold look in his eyes as he spoke his mind. "As long as you're in a relationship with Jolly, what happened today will repeat again. What do you think?"

Leroy clenched his fists at his side. No matter what he did, Ryan only finds me for one reason, which is Jolly.

Taking Burton Group and Hudson Pharmaceuticals as examples, many enterprises were caught in turmoil in the past year. Among them, Sutton Corporation seized the opportunity to expand fast and ended up having the highest market value.

It can be said that Ryan could decide whether Leroy could continue his career in the entertainment industry or get banned from it for good. In only a night, Leroy would fall from the top into the pit, along with in debt of the liquidated damages.

Leroy laughed bitterly as he began with the resignation, "In order to keep my career, I must leave Riverdale as you like, don't I?"

Before Ryan could answer, another voice from the entrance interrupted them. "Don't you dare!"

"Jolly." He addressed her before his surprised look turned into a smile as he watched her walking toward him with anger.

"It isn't the time to laugh!" Jolly sent him daggers. "You want to leave Riverdale to keep your career? What about me?"

"I didn't plan to. I'm just asking."

"You can't even try to ask! Watch out, I'll get even with you later!" As she finished her words, she dragged him to stand behind her domineeringly before she turned to Ryan.

"Jolly!" At first, he was happy to see her, but his face fell immediately when he saw the intimacy between the two.

In contrast to him. Jolly was unhappy. "Ryan, you're a well-known man in Riverdale, after all. Aren't you worried about retribution with all your dirty tricks?"

In a split second, the happiness he experienced was gone. Ryan's expression sank as he said, "I'm giving him the options. It's up to him. As for you, you should already wake up from your dream to see that your true love is unsustainable without money!"

"I had enough of your malicious speculation! Do you think everybody is the same?"

"Is that so? You believe him?"

"Who else should I trust? Probably not you!" Jolly retorted in folded arms. "You're still having doubts? Well, I'd love to tell you the consequences of your wicked games."

She turned to Leroy and signaled him to speak. Unspoken words were exchanged between them as they watched each other.

Leroy spoke as told, "I guess I'll be deprived of work opportunities if I don't follow President Sutton's request to leave you. However, my earnings all these years are merely enough to pay the liquidated damages. Thus, President Sutton suggested that I shouldn't dream of marrying into the Carter Family and should focus on my career instead."

At that, he raised his brows as if he found it funny. "You know what, it's a rare opportunity for a man to marry into a wealthy family. As for me, a single man without any dependents, marrying into her family is not a bad resolution."

"You!" Ryan was taken aback by the statement as he always thought that no man with dignity should become a live-in son-in-law and depend on his wife's family.

Leroy continued where he was interrupted with a calm and gentle tone, "President Sutton, if you don't mind marrying into the Carter Family, I think Jolly's parents would love to accept you. How about changing your strategy then?"

Ryan scrunched up his face in disgust.

Jolly glared at Leroy when she heard his suggestion. Wait until we're home. I'll definitely deal with you.

“If you’re willing to depend on her by marrying into her family, she and even her family one day will finally despise you. Are you still able to stay that time?”

“Isn’t it what you are hoping for?” Even though he was speaking calmly, his statements were oddly pertinent as they had always aimed straight at someone’s weak spot.

After that, he even tried to educate the other side. “I’m never a hindrance to the relationship between you and Jolly. You’re the one who failed to achieve them yourself. You had it before, but you let the chance slip. I believe that you’d still do the same even if you’re given a second chance.”

“I won’t!” Ryan never wanted to recall what happened between him and Jolly. “Jolly, he’s trying to drive a wedge between us!”

Jolly’s response was opposite to him as she replied calmly, “There’s no such idea between me and you.”

After that, she held Leroy’s hand before everyone. “Besides, Leroy and I are married.”

Her announcement caused a fuss among the onlookers as Leroy was a celebrity. Nobody knew he was married until today. If any press had dropped the bombshell on the internet, it would indeed stir up a wave.

“What did you say?” Ryan couldn’t believe what he heard.

“The two of us are legally married.”

“That’s impossible!”

Jolly didn’t bother to explain further. “Let’s go, Leroy.”

When she thought of something, she stopped and turned to Ryan. “I forgot to tell you something. Sutton Corporation isn’t dominating Riverdale. Even though I’m far from motivated, I’m still the only heir of the Carter Enterprise. What makes you think you are capable of banning my husband from the entertainment industry?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 585

Jolly and Leroy departed the studio while Ryan stood there with a scowl and observed their departure. The veins on his hands bulged as he clenched his fists hard.

The assistant who stood beside him was scared to provoke him, so he asked cautiously, "President Sutton?"

It definitely aggravated him as he angrily lashed out at the assistant. "What are you up to? How could you be that ignorant of the fact that they're married?"

The assistant became pale at hearing his accusation but was too afraid to speak.

After a moment of struggling to control his rage, Ryan was forced to calm down. "Take care of this situation. I don't want word to get out about what happened today."

After he uttered this, he left the set without his assistant. This is my fiancée. I will never let anyone know she married another man!

Ryan received a phone call as soon as he entered his car. He picked up the phone despite his bad mood, frowning impatiently at the caller ID. "Hello?"

"It's been a while, President Sutton. Are you free tomorrow?"

"What do you want?"

"I have an acquaintance who would like to meet you at Westhill Racecourse."

His eyes slowly narrowed in reaction to the conversation.

Meanwhile, Jolly and Leroy were meeting Rachel for dinner.

She sent Rachel several messages on the way to her destination, exaggerating the incident at the set a while ago. When she arrived at the restaurant, Jolly eagerly asked Rachel, "Did you see my messages?"

Rachel raised her phone to show that she was reading her messages. "I'm reading them, but I'm not sure which one I should reply to first."

Her phone screen displayed a bunch of audio messages from Jolly. As they talked, the audio messages played in the background. She hadn't had a chance to respond to Jolly, but she had a rough idea of what had happened.

Everyone had arrived and was seated at the table. Except for Carmen, everyone else was coupled. Samuel and Charlotte, the children, also appeared to be a couple, and they were quite matching.

Both children were seated on either side of Rachel, while Justin sat next to Charlotte.

Jolly patted Samuel's shoulder and said, "Sit next to Mr. Leroy. I'd like to tell your mommy something, but you're blocking us."

Even though he was unwilling to do so, Samuel still heeded her demands and rolled his eyes.

She pulled the chair up next to Rachel and sat down. She couldn't wait any longer, so she said what she thought immediately. "I find it hard to believe that a man like that could exist. Besides that, he thinks very highly of himself. Do you know that he wants Leroy to be banned from acting? Who does he think he is?"

"He is nothing compared to you, Miss Jolly," Rachel said helplessly.

"That's right! He's a nobody!"

Justin asked, "Are you both all right?"

"There's nothing to be worried about." Leroy continued, "He is resentful of me but cannot publicly attack me. At worst, he could only ruin my shooting. Jolly came before the situation escalated into a confrontation."

Gloria remarked amusedly. "Well done, Jolly. You are nurturing the tradition of rescuing a damsel in distress."

"Why don't you be the one who nurtures it?" Jolly retorted spitefully.

"Because you have too much charisma, flies are always buzzing around. I don't have that much charm or that many suitors."

"Are you being sarcastic? Don't think I don't understand what you're saying!"

"I'm not! I have no reason to be sarcastic when I'm about to leave soon."

"Leaving? Where will you go?" Jolly recalled something after the question was asked. "Are you going on another tour?"

"No, not yet. It's not about going on a tour." Gloria grinned. "It's only that Victor has finally received approval to take his marital leave, so we're planning a vacation."

"Y-You're going for your honeymoon?" Jolly now understood what Gloria was saying.

"Yes, something like that. We want to make up for the missed time because we married during the last celebrations and were busy afterward. We just want to have fun; it doesn't have to be our honeymoon."

Victor and Gloria didn't originally plan to have a traditional wedding. Instead, they would like to have a romantic getaway. However, they could not compromise on the schedule, as either he had classes to lecture or she had a performance.

But now, they could finally have time.

"So, today's dinner is perfect for wishing them both a good honeymoon trip," Rachel exclaimed with a smile.

Everyone was delighted for Victor and Gloria as even the children wished them a happy trip. Charlotte was also expecting a gift from her Aunt Gloria.

Jolly inquired further, "Where did you plan for the honeymoon?"

"Tahiti."

Rachel nodded in agreement. "I know the place. It is famous for its tropical climate all year. The scenery is mesmerizing."

"There's no winter there?" Charlotte raised her head and asked a serious question.

As he caressed her tiny ears, Justin explained. "Tahiti has a temperate climate. It has warm temperatures all year, making it an ideal holiday spot."

"Daddy, have you been there?"

"I haven't." Justin shook his head.

Although he traveled much for business, he rarely visited vacation destinations. After all, such places had little to do with his business. Furthermore, he did not enjoy spending time alone on vacation, so he never considered it.

"I want to visit the place!" Suddenly, Charlotte turned her head to Gloria. "Aunt Gloria, can I follow you?"

Before Gloria could answer, Samuel interrupted, "Only a married couple can go on a honeymoon. There's no reason to bring children!"

"Who set the rules?" Charlotte pleaded, "Aunt Gloria!"

Gloria and Victor looked at each other, and he shrugged and said, "If Rachel doesn't mind, we could bring the kids with us."

"I'm not going anywhere!" Samuel raised his hand in protest as he spoke, "I want to stay with Mommy."

Samuel disliked the idea of having to travel. To him, going places to play was like changing playing locations. Why not stay home and play comfortably if it was the same as playing games?

“Since you’re bringing Charlotte, why don’t you bring Leroy and me with you too?”

Gloria was taken aback by Jolly’s impromptu idea. “What?”

“I’ve decided.” Jolly winked. “We’ll follow you on a honeymoon.”

Rachel looked at her, surprised as well. “Both of you are going to?”

“Not just us; you and Justin ought to join too!”

Rachel dismissively shook her hands. “We’re not joining. Are you in your right mind, though?”

Leroy gave Rachel an unexpected expression and shook his head. He was puzzled by Jolly’s sudden decision.

Jolly was a lady of action, though. She was eager to get to business once she made a decision.

She rose to her feet and said, “Because none of us had ever been there before, why not take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go together?”

“Chris, Justin, do you two have any important tasks that can’t be postponed?”

Jolly continued to speak before Rachel could respond. “I don’t care if you have any important task you can’t put off. Simply set them aside first! Nothing would happen if I requested my parents to keep an eye on them.”

“We haven’t had the chance to hang out together this year!”

“It was Victor and I who didn’t get to have fun!” Gloria reminded her weakly. “Nobody told us you went to Somerset Mountain; we only found out after the incident!”

Rachel felt helpless upon hearing about this. “We did not go there for a vacation.”

Jolly remarked, “Enough with the irrelevant discussion; we will now begin voting. Whoever does not wish to go, please raise their hand.”

No one had raised their hand except Samuel. He looked around the table and noticed that not only did Charlotte not raise her hand, even his mommy did as well after much hesitation. Finally, he lowered his tiny hand.

“It’s decided then.” Jolly was overjoyed to see the result.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 586

Gloria and Victor were taking a twenty-day marriage leave for their honeymoon.

Even though Jolly persuaded Rachel to join them on their honeymoon, she couldn’t put off her work for that long. They needed to figure out where the three billion dollars were, and Justin had to finish his work for the venture for which he had just recently signed a contract. Because of the impending jobs, they could not take vacations whenever they pleased.

Gloria and Victor departed the following morning as scheduled. The only difference between their original plan and this one was that they brought the children.

“Did we really let the kids join Gloria and Victor? What about school?”

Rachel and Justin dropped them off at the airport terminal. As the four people passed the security checkpoint, she suddenly remembered the kids’ school attendance.

Justin calmed her worries by saying, “Do not worry. I’ve informed their substitute teacher that they will be absent for a few days.”

“What did you say to the teacher? Did you say they aren’t feeling well or something else?” In a flash of insight, she cautiously asked, “Did you tell her the truth?”

“What else?”

She was at a loss for words when she saw his serious expression.

Charlotte was known as a troublemaker who liked to cause mischief at school. Hence, Rachel tried to avoid every parent-teacher conference with various excuses. However, the situation was made worse by Justin’s honesty.

“Can’t you just tell a lie?”

What is the point of lying? Even their teacher sounds happy when I tell her they’re going on vacation.”

“How is that possible? Other children are in school, while ours are on vacation! Isn’t it absurd?”

Obviously, she was worrying too much.

The school would be delighted to approve their leave. Their homeroom teacher, Victor, is going on his honeymoon, so the substitute teacher was hoping they wouldn’t have to see Charlotte at school because the young mischief-maker was too difficult to discipline.

Samuel, the little genius who could easily complete a sixth-grade math Olympiad question, could take the leave for as long as he wanted, let alone the twenty days. His presence in class will only increase peer pressure on other students his age.

As they drove back to the office, Justin drove, and Rachel sat in the passenger seat, relaxing next to him as the car traveled down the highway.

He finally broke the silence. “By the way, while requesting a leave of absence for Samuel, the school reminded me to reconsider the offer.”

What kind of offer is it?

“It is Samuel’s enrollment in the Special Class for the Gifted Young.”

Rachel frowned slightly at this, but he continued, “Since you already said no the first time, I won’t try to convince you this time. But we should first ask Samuel what he thinks.”

His words didn’t help to lift the crease between her brows as she responded with mixed emotions, “I understand if the SCGY is better suited to a child like Samuel, but don’t you think he deserves a happy childhood? In fact, I’d rather he did not learn anything too advanced until he’s older.”

“Have you ever considered that Samuel is now being exposed to something far more complex than we can imagine?”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve recently discovered Samuel’s programming ability.”

Rachel’s heart skipped a beat when she heard the shocking news. “Where did he acquire such skills?”

“He learned them in school, but no child his age can create such a complex program as he did.” Justin sighed with amusement. “A prodigy normally outperforms the average person in a particular field. Samuel is indeed intelligent because he possesses the talent.”

She grasped the meaning of what he was trying to convey. "Do you think I wasted his talent?"

"No, I don't. I know you did everything for his own good."

"I'm afraid he won't be able to become the person that others expect him to be. He's finally at the age where he can learn new things rapidly, and it worries me that he may become an early bloomer. He may just be an average Joe in the future. However, the psychological gap between him and everyone else will still be very noticeable." Rachel sighed after much deliberation. "This thought has bothered me ever since."

A child prodigy should not be kept hidden. Rachel would not want Samuel's talent to go to waste.

Justin held her hand as he sensed her anxiety. "You shouldn't worry too much. It is a matter for the future."

She nodded. "You are right. I shouldn't make all the decisions for him. I'll talk to him about it after he returns from his vacation. It is entirely up to him whether or not he wishes to enroll."

"I'm afraid you might have to worry about one more thing if he finally decides to go."

"Which is?"

"Charlotte will undoubtedly throw tantrums if she knows."

Rachel's head began to ache as soon as she regained her composure following a moment of shock. Charlotte enjoys spending time with Samuel because the two are inseparable. She'll undoubtedly make a scene if she knows he's going to SCGY.

"I wonder where Charlotte got her clinginess from?" She sighed.

"Who knows?" Justin responded quickly, but his grip on Rachel's hand tightened.

Sometimes a parent's personality or habit was mirrored in their child. Being clingy, for example, could take many forms, including the type of tantrums that Charlotte experienced when she was separated from the person she loved.

Rachel was oblivious that even Justin was no longer residing with her, but they continued to see each other frequently.

Justin drove her to the company office after he exited the highway.

"I'll pick you up from work tonight."

Rochel stepped out of the car and moved to him. "There's no need for that. Later in the afternoon, I'll have to go to the Westhill Racecourse."

"The racecourse?"

"Today, they are holding a horse race, but Jolly and I must investigate something there. I'll tell you more about it later. Do not be late for work. Remember, be careful."

"All right."

Justin was going to a meeting at the company because the cooperation project he had agreed to was about to begin. He had been kept busy because many aspects of the collaboration needed to be finalized during the early stages of planning.

As he drove to the company, he became anxious, recalling Rachel's words. Isn't Westhill Racecourse popular among turf club members?

As soon as the thought occurred, he dialed his assistant's number. "Frankie, I'd like to know if our two turf club targets have been up to anything lately and if they're in Riverdale or not."

"Yes, sir."

Meanwhile, Rachel was getting ready in her office. However, the assistant's office was still dark, indicating that her executive assistant had not arrived for work.

Our Miss Jolly is the only assistant who arrives at work later than her boss, but what else can I do? She is supported by a wealthy family. She's only stepping outside her comfort zone to work as my assistant.

Jolly didn't arrive at work until 10.00AM.

Instead of organizing Rachel's daily schedule, she gave Rachel a cup of coffee when she arrived at work. "Try some of my mother's coffee. She even created foam art for it, but I suppose you can't see it from the outside."

"Mrs. Corter appears to have had a lot of free time recently. She has even found the time to learn how to make foam art."

"Well, she can finally rest easy now that Corter Enterprise has a successor."

"Oh? You finally had a conscience and decided to take over the family business?"

"No, it's not me; it's my younger brother."

Rachel was surprised by the answer. "Do you have a younger brother?"

“Who knows?” Justin responded quickly, but his grip on Rachel’s hand tightened.

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"Well, she can finally rest easy now that Carter Enterprise has a successor."

"Oh? You finally had a conscience and decided to take over the family business?"

"No, it's not me; it's my younger brother."

Rachel was surprised by the answer. "Do you have a younger brother?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 587

"Yes. I never told you this, but my father had an illegitimate child without my mother knowing," Jolly revealed with a bitter face. "I have known about it for a long time, but I kept it hidden because my dad begged me to keep it a secret. I also didn't want him to get divorced with my mother. After all, the woman has passed away, and the only one left is the child."

Seeing her exaggerated performance, Rachel couldn't help but roll her eyes at her friend. "Go on. Keep up with the act."

"You were the one who asked me about it," Jolly rebutted. After ending her performance, she let out a giggle. "It is my cousin. My youngest aunt's son."

Puzzled, Rachel probed, "Did Mr. and Mrs. Carter start finding someone in their respective families who can replace you because they have completely given up on you? They are even going for your own cousins?"

"That is possible."

"You don't look all that worried."

"What are you worried about? That my cousin will take over the Carter Enterprise and kick me out? Don't worry. It would be weirder if he can come up with tricks with that

brain of his. He has been timid since he was a child.” Rachel slightly lifted her eyebrows at that.

The Carter Family had great family values. They were one of the few families that did not have family feud over power. Rachel had been fortunate to attend their family banquets several times. It was from there that she realized how amiable her parents’ sides of the family were. None of them acted like they were better than the other.

It only made sense that children raised in such a family would turn out to be decent people.

“My cousin has been studying abroad. My parents wanted him to work in the Carter Enterprise not long after he came back, but I don’t suppose Steven would be very happy with the arrangement. Oh, right. My cousin’s name is Steven. I will introduce you both some day.”

“Sure.”

What Rachel didn’t expect was that they would meet Steven at Westhill that afternoon after Jolly casually brought him up.

It was afternoon at the Westhill Racecourse. Both the horse race and betting had actually started in the morning, but a group of racehorses had been eliminated in advance. With only three rounds remaining in the afternoon, the bets had also gotten relatively large.

Rachel and Jolly were watching the game in the regular area, which was not far from the VIP area on the second-floor terrace.

“I bet No. 4 will win the race.”

“I am thinking No. 8.”

The duo were discussing when an excited shout came from above their heads. “No. 8!”

The horse race was in full swing right then, which was why it was normal for the crowd to loudly cheer for the horses they betted on. However, it was the first time they had heard such a shout coming from the VIP area.

Jolly abruptly looked up at the sound, only to see a man behind the second-floor railing fluttering his limbs around and cheering.

“Steven?”

“Huh?” Rachel raised her chin as well, her eyes following Jolly’s before they landed on a young man that could pass as a teenager.

He was a fair and delicate man in his early twenties. Dressed in a white T-shirt and a baseball uniform jacket, he was looking back at the women with a surprised expression.

“Cuz!”

No longer caring about the horse race, Jolly stomped to the VIP area and dragged Steven out.

“What is this? Why are you here?”

He was screaming in pain at this point. “It hurts, Jolly! Don’t pull my ears! It is going to fall off!”

“Already running amok when you have just arrived in Riverdale, aren’t you? Who told you to come here?”

“I got an invitation!”

“What invitation are you talking about?”

“It is an invitation from a club.”

Jolly’s face immediately fell when she heard him say that. “What club? You better spit it out.”

Seeing how things weren’t looking too bright for him, Steven went into panic mode, and he didn’t even take a good look at who was in front of him when he grabbed Rachel’s shoulder and hid behind her while avoiding Jolly’s demonic claws that were aiming for his ears. “Why are you so angry, Jolly? I am just watching a horse race! It is not like I gamble or anything.”

“You might not be gambling now, but that doesn’t mean you won’t in the future!”

“Do you know how many people who start off by watching these horse races eventually end up in those god-awful clubs?”

“Get your butt here!”

“I won’t!”

The confident voice came from behind Rachel. Like a steering wheel, she was spun and shook around by the pair of hands that were tightly holding her shoulders, making her dizzy.

“Jolly, enough.” Rachel was afraid that she would vomit, so she had no choice but to interrupt the bickering duo. “Can you find a place to talk about this properly? I am feeling woozy.”

It was only then that the cousins remembered that Rachel was still there then.

“Fine.” Jolly gritted her teeth and reluctantly agreed while her eyes glared at Steven. “Let her go.”

“You can’t hit me if I let go.”

“You punk!”

“Huh?”

Rachel was waved around once again like a human shield. The frail woman was like a helpless chick being swung around in front of Steven.

She recalled that Steven’s area of study was in computer science, and he apparently was a natural at it. However, his physique didn’t look like that of a computer major student—he looked like he studied sports.

“Okay, okay. Just quickly let her go. I won’t hit you!” Left with no choice, Jolly could only agree to his request. “This is Rachel Hudson. Didn’t you want to get to know her a long time ago?”

“Rochel Hudson?” Steven repeated in surprise.

Rochel then felt the grip on her shoulders loosen in that instant.

As she turned around, she saw Steven looking at her with a slightly flushed and surprised face. “I am so sorry! I didn’t know you were Rochel.”

Hearing that, Jolly shot him a sharp look. “Who are you calling ‘Rochel’? Call her ‘Miss Rochel’!”

He let out a boshful chuckle then. “That is not very nice, is it? No woman likes being addressed like they are older.”

“It is fine,” Rochel chimed in. “You can call me anything you like.”

“Really? Can I call you Roe?”

Steven, who was friendly and warm, had interpersonal skills that didn’t resemble a computer student at all. However, Rochel didn’t find it strange; this was how the Corter Family was like.

"Sure. I am okay with anything.

"Let's not stand around here. How about we find a place to sit down?"

After she suggested they head to the restaurant at the racetrack, the trio swiftly went there.

Steven was still like a child, so he immediately ordered an ice cream for himself after he sat down. He even asked Rachel if she wanted some.

"Just eat it yourself. Doesn't look like you are the least bit concerned about being poisoned," Jolly mocked.

"I wasn't asking you." Steven then brought the menu in front of Rachel. "Rachel, why don't you pick one you would like? The strawberry one is delicious."

Rachel smiled, "I will have the strawberry ice cream."

"Get straight to the point. Why are you here?"

Jolly, who was starting to feel impatient, interrupted them.

She and Rachel both knew that the horse race was merely a false front to cover up what was really being offered here. Furthermore, they still didn't know what those two members of the club were trying to achieve in the name of the race.

Steven finally answered, "I really did come here after receiving an invitation. Oh yeah, I got a phone call saying that they wanted to invite me to Riverdale. The other party claimed to be Uncle Richard's friend."

"Did you ask my dad about it?"

"I didn't. After all, it is just a horse race, so I come here on my own."

"You roscoll!"

"Jolly." Rachel held Jolly down and suggested in all seriousness, "I think they would still have other ways to approach Steven even if he had told Mr. Corter about this and was prohibited from coming here."

Rachel didn't even need to dig much into it to know that it was the same situation as the time Jolly received the wedding dress on the cruise ship. The only difference was that now she didn't know what they were planning to have Steven do.

"Rachel Hudson?" Steven repeated in surprise.

Rachel then felt the grip on her shoulders loosen in that instant.

As she turned around, she saw Steven looking at her with a slightly flushed and surprised face. "I am so sorry! I didn't know you were Rachel."

Hearing that, Jolly shot him a sharp look. "Who are you calling 'Rachel'? Call her 'Miss Rachel'!"

He let out a bashful chuckle then. "That is not very nice, is it? No woman likes being addressed like they are older."

"It is fine," Rachel chimed in. "You can call me anything you like."

"Really? Can I call you Rae?"

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"Sure. I am okay with anything."

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After she suggested they head to the restaurant at the racecourse, the trio swiftly went there.

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“You rascal!”

“Jolly.” Rachel held Jolly down and suggested in all seriousness, “I think they would still have other ways to approach Steven even if he had told Mr. Carter about this and was prohibited from coming here.”

Rachel didn’t even need to dig much into it to know that it was the same situation as the time Jolly received the wedding dress on the cruise ship. The only difference was that now she didn’t know what they were planning to have Steven do.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 588

“Steven is still young. You have to teach him patiently,” Rachel calmly advised while she grabbed Jolly.

Jolly continued to complain, “Why don’t you teach him instead? Just looking at him makes me angry. How is it possible that an adult like him still does not have the ability to make proper judgment?”

Rachel quietly laughed to herself when she heard her friend’s words.

Despite how Jolly was nagging now, she, too, had unguardedly accepted the wedding dress that was gifted to her on the cruise ship. The pot is calling the kettle black, Rachel mused. She doesn’t seem like she makes good judgment either.

“Okay. I will talk to him.” She smiled helplessly before turning to Steven, who sat across from her. “Jolly isn’t angry because you came out to have fun, nor because you came here. And it is not like you can’t watch a horse race. The problem is with the invitation letter.”

“What is wrong with the invitation letter?” Steven was puzzled as he asked, “Isn’t that an invitation to an event?”

“It is fine if it is just a normal invitation to an event. There is a club here at Westhill Racecourse, which is the one who invited you. Even though the owner of the club is indeed friends with Mr. Carter, that was years ago. They are involved in dirty business now, so just try to avoid having any interaction with them if you can.”

“Not ‘try to’, you ‘have to’!” Jolly emphasized. “Listen to me, Steven—if you want to stay in Riverdale, you must stay away from everything and everything related to this club. Or else, I will tell your mom that you have been making trouble here and have her force you home as soon as possible.”

“Is it really that serious?”

“Yes!”

Steven was initially going to ignore Jolly, but upon seeing Rachel, he immediately became obedient. “Since Rae said so, I will just ignore those people from now on.

“But what are you both doing here today?”

“We are here on business.” Jolly rolled her eyes at him. “You think everyone plays around everyday like you do? If you have nothing to do, just go back to the company and play your role as the vice president.”

“Isn’t it the vice president’s job to have fun?” Steven defended himself.

Hearing that, Rachel let a laugh slip. “Is this what you told me about how Mrs. Carter said they have found a successor to your company?”

Even Jolly was ashamed because of her cousin.

However, Steven continued behaving childishly with a cheerful look on his face. “This vice president right here has promised Aunt Marilyn that I would be here for a few days, and I will be leaving after a while. I have to start my own business. All manly men have to have his own business.”

“Start my foot!” Jolly snickered. “Where are you going to get that money from?”

“As the vice president, I will be receiving an annual salary and dividends. I will have enough money eventually if I save up.”

“Save up?” Jolly looked at her cousin from head to toe. “You? You even spent tens of thousands on a set of crap earphones. Do you actually think you can save up?”

“Can you not bad-mouth me in public?!”

Steven immediately looked at Jolly with a meaningful gaze.

“Don’t pull that sh*t with me. I have already told Chris exactly the kind of person you are.”

His face immediately fell when he heard that, and he started whining, “Why did you do that?! I wanted to leave a good impression!”

Seeing how devastated and aggrieved he looked, Rachel quickly comforted him. “It is alright. I have a good impression of you. You are a programmer, aren’t you? It is normal for you to be generous about spending money on electronic equipment.”

“Right!” Steven’s eyes shone at that. “I knew that you are much more understanding than Jolly is.”

Jolly immediately rolled her eyes at him. “That is because she doesn’t know you well yet!” she sassed.

“Mind you, I do have a lot of strong points.”

“Such as?”

“I’m handsome.”

“And that is what you are planning to earn a living with?” Jolly scoffed.

“Even if I can’t make a living with my handsome face, I can still date and get married.”

“Sure. Whatever floats your boat. Your mom has been hoping you would get married early anyway.”

“What is the rush? I have my own plans.”

“Plans?” Jolly’s interest was finally piqued. “C’mon, do share it with me. What have you planned so far? Which lady do you have your eyes on? Or are you already dating someone?”

“Even though we are not dating yet, I have found someone.”

“When was this?”

“Just a while ago.” Steven suddenly turned to Rachel and, in his serious voice, implored. “I have a question for you.”

Rachel, who was having fun listening to the bickering between the cousins, was caught off-guard by the sudden statement. "What? Ask away."

"Do you mind being in a relationship where the man is younger?"

As soon as these words fell, Jolly didn't even wait for Rachel to answer before she spurted out the coffee she had just sipped on Steven's face, as he sat right across her.

"Steven..." She stood up in shock.

Subconsciously, he quickly leaned back to dodge whatever was coming. It was somewhat heartbreaking to see him being so skillful and smooth at it. Rachel could tell at a glance that he was used to being beaten up by Jolly ever since he was a child.

To their surprise, Jolly continued to stand there in shock without making a move.

Rochel then grobbed her friend. "Oh, it is oll over you. Quickly. Cleon it up."

There was coffee on Steven's heod ond foce, ond it was consistently dripping down his hoir. Only God knew how much he hoted Jolly right then, but since he was still in front of Rochel, he hod to force out o smile thot looked more like o grimoce. He sounded like he was holding himself bock when he soid, "It is okoy. Excuse me for o bit. I will go get it cleoned up."

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Steven come bock from the woshroom ofter o while.

The coffee stains on his face were gone, but the ones on his jacket were there to stay. Even though it looked like mud on his clothes, he didn't seem to mind them one bit.

Young men were always energetic and casual like Steven was. They were indifferent to the outside world.

"What are you doing later? Let me treat you both to dinner tonight."

"Are you sure you are only trying to treat me?" Jolly peered at him with suspicious eyes.

Hearing that, he raised his eyebrows and muttered, "It would be better if you don't join."

"I knew that it is impossible for you to be so sweet. Fine. I won't go. But you have to ask Chris if she wants to go."

Jolly then leaned into the chair with her arms crossed, seemingly confident that Rachel wouldn't agree to it.

As expected, Rachel politely rejected him.

"I have a movie date tonight."

"Date? With who?"

"My boyfriend."

Steven suddenly had an interesting look on his face when he heard that. "You have a boyfriend? But Jolly told me that you don't!"

Jolly looked happy at how things were going. She then commented in a haunting voice, "The last time I told you that must have been about a year ago. She didn't have a boyfriend a year ago, but now..."

Rachel then grabbed her friend. "Oh, it is all over you. Quickly. Clean it up."

There was coffee on Steven's head and face, and it was consistently dripping down his hair. Only God knew how much he hated Jolly right then, but since he was still in front of Rachel, he had to force out a smile that looked more like a grimace. He sounded like he was holding himself back when he said, "It is okay. Excuse me for a bit. I will go get it cleaned up."

After he left, the waiter came over to clean up the table and led them to a different table.

Jolly looked like she was at a loss when she took the tissue Rachel handed to her. "Didn't you hear what that punk just said? How are you so calm?"

“How else should I have reacted? Should I be surprised and happy?”

“You don’t have to be happy about it, but shouldn’t you be surprised? How are you not surprised when Cupid suddenly dropped you a visit?”

“I have heard that it is popular for kids nowadays to crack jokes like this.”

“That is true. That brat, though! Just wait till I go back and snitch on him to his mother. It was fine that he was naughty when he was a child, but now he is flirting with my bestie? I can’t just let it slide.”

Jolly looked indignant as she grumbled. Even the way she drank coffee suddenly looked as though she was libating.

Steven came back from the washroom after a while.

The coffee stains on his face were gone, but the ones on his jacket were there to stay. Even though it looked like mud on his clothes, he didn’t seem to mind them one bit.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 589

"Now what?"

"Now, someone's making a quick turn." Jolly wiggled her eyebrows at Rachel

Rachel stomped her foot under the table.

Jolly gnashed her teeth in pain. "Ouch! What are you doing?"

Rachel was smiling, but she had a murderous look in her eyes. Oh, so she's saying I'm turning back on my word and going back to the person I said I wouldn't, huh?

Steven had no idea what had happened. All he knew was Rachel had a boyfriend, and it demoralized him. "I would have returned last year if I knew this would happen."

Jolly smacked his head. "You still stand no chance even if you came back a year earlier. In your next life, maybe."

"Ow!" Steven held his head in agony and dodged her second attack.

Rachel looked at the time. "It's almost time, Jolly. We gotta go now."

Jolly stopped smacking him. "Sure."

"Where are you guys going? I wanna come too."

"You should get showered. You look like you rolled through the mud."

Steven shot back, "That's your fault! You sprayed mud at me!"

Rachel said, "We're going to a banquet for some business talk. It's not the kind of place for you. Just go back."

Steven looked a little dejected. "When are you guys coming back?"

“No idea. Maybe in a jiffy, or maybe after a few hours. Business is unpredictable that way.”

“Alright, just ignore him.” Jolly urged Rachel to leave. She didn’t want to spend her time conversing with Steven. We still have important stuff to do, and he just appears out of nowhere. What a waste of time.

Horse racing was an event held by the club. Instead of a race, it was more like a big social event, not unlike the banquet on the yacht. The difference was that the yacht banquet revealed more about human greed and desires. The guests wouldn’t do anything that brazen in this event, though.

Rachel and Jolly talked about Steven during the banquet.

“Why’d they invite him? Are they planning on getting him to work with them?”

“Probably. Most companies in Riverdale are steeped in crimes. Hudson Pharm only got out of that pit, thanks to you. Julian holds half of Burton Group, so they’re close to the club. Ryan... You know the case. They can’t do anything about the Carter Family, though.”

“So they’re trying to rope their heir into this whole scheme.”

“That’s cunning.” Jolly took in a deep breath and clenched her fists. “Who knows what might have happened if we didn’t run into him today.”

“Oh, right.” Rachel was reminded of the diamonds. “So, how’d you deal with the diamonds?”

“They’re at Ryan’s, aren’t they? I was going to tell him to let the Investigation Bureau take it. Wonder if he did that. I don’t really want to spend a single time in his presence.

Rachel frowned. Yeah, I don’t think Ryan’s going to do that. He’s not that kind of person. “I see. I’ll tell Janice to keep an eye on them.” Sutton Corporation was dabbling in crimes as well. Rachel thought she could use Ryan to find some dirt on the club.

“Miss Carter, Miss Hudson.” A waiter came over and bowed to them. “Our boss would like you to see her.”

Jolly and Rachel exchanged a look. It’s her, alright. The horse race was merely a pretext to meet up with someone of interest. They were sure the moment Jolly showed up, the club’s boss would seek her out. They had been trying to partner with Carter Enterprise. They had tried to convince them several times, but Jolly’s parents did not care for them.

The staff led the ladies to a teahouse behind a side chamber. The banquet hall was right outside. The teahouse was soundproofed to the point the ladies couldn't hear the music outside. The woman wore an azure dress and donned a cape made from sheep's wool. Her forearms were left exposed, and they could see that her arms were fair but slender. The ladies thought her jade bracelet would fall out of her arm. This woman was none other than Mrs. Bowman, the boss of the club and the one who gave Jolly that gown.

The ladies came in, and the first thing they heard was her coughing.

Rachel and Jolly stopped in their footsteps.

"Oh, hi. Please, have a seat." Mrs. Bowman covered her mouth with a handkerchief. She coughed into it and told the ladies, "Don't mind me. I'm down with a cold, but it's not contagious. Don't be afraid."

Jolly said, "You'll have to open the windows if you're down with a cold." It's the same thing with her room on the yacht. It's tightly sealed. Not even a window was in sight. It was more like a prison. What does she have in there? A national treasure or something?

Julia smiled. "You have a point. Have a seat." She still didn't get anyone to open the windows.

The ladies took their seats, and she poured them a cup of tea each. "I just made this. It's nice. I hope you'll like it."

"Thank you."

Julia regarded them closely. "My assistant told me you're here to watch the race. I thought he was merely imagining things to get my attention. Until I asked a waiter to invite you, ladies, here."

Jolly said, "I don't have much to do, so I came."

Rachel nodded. "Westhill's racecourse is famous. I've always wanted to come."

"Have you gotten a ride yet?"

"No." Rachel shook her head. "We don't know how to ride horses." Rachel had never ridden on horses before. Nobody taught her. Jolly's father kept her away from the sport for some reason, or she would have been here a long time ago.

"It's alright. We have a few docile ponies. I'll get someone to hold them, and you can ride around on them. Horseback riding is an interesting sport."

Jolly asked, “Do you like riding horses too, Mrs. Bowman?”

“No, but I like to watch the sport.” She smiled. “We have a few decent riders in today’s race, but they’re no match for your father.”

“My father?”

“Yes. Richard’s the best rider out of all of us. It’s a pity he quit horseback riding.”

“Why?”

“Because...” Mrs. Bowman started, but eventually, her voice faded into silence as she didn’t add to the topic. She smiled. “It’s nothing. Interests change. Nothing odd about that. I heard you have a boyfriend now.”

The whole world knew she had a boyfriend. He was Leroy, the big star. She had reporters following her even on a regular grocery trip. Well, it seems that the news she’s been receiving is rather outdated.

“Are you getting married soon?”

When Julia asked that question, Rachel discretely tugged on the hem of Jolly’s shirt.

Jolly answered calmly, “That’s the plan, but I need to talk to my parents. Would you like to join the banquet?”

“I’ll have to decline. My health disagrees with me. However, do please wear that gown I gave you. It’s a present.”

As she heard that last sentence, Rachel started getting on guard as something didn’t seem quite right.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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“Thank you for the gown. I’ll definitely wear it during the wedding,” Jolly continued calmly. “I should be holding the event overseas, though. Do come if you can make it.”

Julia smiled warmly, though she didn’t agree, nor did she decline the invitation. She realized Rachel had been quiet ever since she came in. All she did was sip on the tea,

so she changed the subject, “You seem to get along well with Jolly, Miss Hudson. I heard she’s your assistant?”

“I’m surprised you know so much about my company even though you never socialize.”

“My friend told me that. It seems that this is old news to everyone.”

“True. She is the daughter of Carter Enterprise’s boss. It might not look too good if she’s just an assistant.”

“Hey, your friendship comes first. She’s your best friend, isn’t she? Both of you can help each other out in the future.”

Rachel nodded. “Oh, speaking of which, I need to thank you, Mrs. Bowman.”

“Hm?” Julia cocked her eyebrow in confusion. “For what?”

“I was going through the things my dad left me and found some handwritten records. Someone saved Hudson Pharm a few times before. They even injected a lot of funds into the company too. According to the journal, it was all related to you. I bet my dad was great friends with you.”

“A handwritten journal?” Julia’s face twisted into one of shock, and it was clear that she wasn’t as calm as she was just a moment ago.

“Yeah. It was something my father wrote. He wrote tons of stuff in it, and I’m going through them. Most of them are just trivial stuff, though. It’s like a diary.”

“He mentioned me?”

“A few times. He said he needed to repay his debts. Big debts. He must have been great friends with you, or you wouldn’t have lent so much money to him.”

Mrs. Bowman gave her an appraising look. However, since she was a seasoned businesswoman, she quickly regained her composure thanks to her experience in the business world. “Are you sure he was talking about me? You might be seeing things. He has never taken any loans from me.”

“Is that so?” Rachel lowered her gaze thoughtfully. “Maybe it was a misunderstanding then.”

“I did talk to your father a few times. He was my business partner for a while, too, but no more than that. You might have misunderstood things, Miss Hudson. I know you because you’re Jolly’s best friend.”

Well, someone's in a hurry to deny everything. Rachel stopped pestering her about the matter. Therefore, she smiled politely as she replied, "Well, it looks like I have Jolly to thank, then."

"You're a capable woman. And you took over Hudson Pharm at your age too. It's impressive. Please, visit whenever you can."

"I will."

"What do you think about today's race?"

"Not bad." The ladies nodded.

They didn't get to see too much, though. Steven interrupted them almost right after the race started. They went to the banquet hall after the race came to an end, and then Julia called them to the teahouse.

They made some small talk. Julia asked Jolly about her parents and showered her with concern like some benevolent aunt. If Rachel didn't know the club had some dark business dealings, she would never believe this soft-spoken woman was a smuggler. Janice said she was going to rid Riverdale of all smugglers. Rachel clenched her fists and resolved to help her out until the end.

"It's getting late. Please, do stay for dinner."

"Maybe next time, Mrs. Bowman. We have something to settle back at the company."

"I'll get someone to give you a ride, then."

"It's alright. We have our own vehicle." Jolly was putting on an act as easily as she was breathing. She declined Julia's offer and left the club with Rachel. While they were on the way to the parking lot, Jolly asked, "She has utterly denied her connection with Jefferey. Did we do something wrong? Were we being a little too pushy? She's probably suspecting us now."

"Nah. She never believed me in the first place. It's fine that she suspects me, but I don't think she can stay that calm anymore."

"What do you mean?"

"She probably doesn't believe my bullsh*t, but she might think, 'hey, what if it's real?' What would she do then?"

Jolly put some thought into it and realized what Rachel was getting at. "She's going to transfer the funds."

They had no idea how Jefferey gave Julia so much money, but they knew the club wouldn't move the funds in one go. Perhaps they hadn't moved a single cent due to the risk. They might have stashed it away somewhere and were waiting for the danger to pass before they made any moves. Things were different now, however. Julia thought Rachel had realized Jeffery's deals with them. She might not know how they laundered the money, and she probably thought they were regular loans, but it was still a start. Julia couldn't guarantee she would be safe from being apprehended.

"I'll get a whole team to keep an eye on them." Jolly took her phone out and was about to make a call.

However, Rachel held her back and silenced her, telling her to look in the car's direction.

Someone's there! Jolly froze up for a moment.

It was almost dark, and they parked their car in the corner of the open-air parking lot. A flower bed stood beside it, and there was obviously someone hiding in it. A part of a silhouette was standing near the front tires, unmoving.

The ladies exchanged a quiet look. One took out a pepper spray, and the other palmed a taser. Oh, you want to eavesdrop, huh? We'll knock you out and drag you away for questioning. They exchanged one more look and split up. One went to the front, while the other went through the back. They were going to flank the eavesdropper.

Rachel went from the front. She hid her taser behind her back and slowly approached the car. She could see his shoes. It was obviously a man in a pair of sneakers.

At this moment, the silhouette made an aborted movement.

"Who's there?" he asked. He had just stuck his head out, and Rachel almost hit him with the taser, but he reacted quickly and took a step back.

Rachel let out a roar and swung her taser at him, but the guy held her hand quickly.

"It's me!"

Hey, that sounds familiar. She looked up. Steven?

Steven was happy to see her. "I've been waiting for you. I—"

"Look out!" Rachel warned him, but it was too late.

Jolly charged from behind. Nobody could stop her even if they tried, and to make things worse, Steven turned around. Jolly sprayed straight into his eyes, and he screamed.

Steven covered his eyes, and Jolly sent him flying into the flowers with a kick. The poor guy fell face first and faced the ladies with his backside.

“You perv! I’ll kick your *ss!”

Jolly was going to kick him again, but Rachel shouted, “Jolly, he’s on our side!”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.