

The Joy of Revenge #Chapter 131 - Read The Joy of Revenge Chapter 131

Chapter 131

CHAPTER 131 There's a Reason

Joy

The sun was about to rise when we boarded one of Xavier's trucks bound for New Salem, leaving a shaken Emma to care for Sebastian. I wanted to stay and look after Sebastian myself, but I had to go back before Liam noticed I was missing.

After Delgado, Xavier didn't want to lose any more members of the organization and the mere possibility of someone else dying ate at him. He decided it was best if we were prepared. So he ordered all his men stationed at Mandan to move to New Salem. Despite the risks, Xavier's sister... she was coming whether we liked it or not.

When Kiki was formally inducted into the organization, she assumed Xavier would tap her to become a part of his group. But Xavier, who only wanted to protect his sister, had Cristos her instead. Although adept in hacking, Kiki, like her brother, loved combat and warfare.

I remember her induction... She was the first soldier to ever refuse a tap from an underboss.

"Katarina Xandra Beaufort," her father yelled from the podium. "You are privileged to have been tapped by a wise underboss. Know your place in this organization or I will strip you of your membership."

"But Father," Kiki reasoned, "I deserve to be under Capo Bastone Beau-"

"You will address me as Don, soldier," her father reprimanded her.

"Understand our traditions. You will follow and serve Underboss Primo... until your dying breath."

Kiki muttered a curse before bowing to Cristos. It was obvious she wasn't too thrilled to be under him, but Cristos was definitely happy to acquire Kiki. She had the Beaufort skillset he needed for his dirty work.

Eventually, Ki ki warmed up to Cristos especially since she did all of his field work for him. However, as time went by, Xavier and his men oversaw all armed-related operations. So, just like Dina and Lou, K iki ended up being in charge of a large team of hackers working for Cristos... something she utterly detested.

She was one slick cookie though. She waited for the perfect opportunity to get what she wanted. And even though Xavier screamed obscenities at her earlier, she wouldn't back down. Cristos had promised anything to the one person who could decode Cris' messages

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"X, you aren't the underboss | work for," she said while on speaker phone. "Primo, you said | could ask for ar

anything and this is what | want. | arrive in Bismarck later in the day. Please have Lou or Dina pick me up."

"I'll pick you up," | offered. "You can play my bestfriend from Nevada who will be helping met with my wedding."

"Oh, this is just fantastic," Xavier exclaimed. "The two of you together? Not only do | have to worry about just one woman, now | have two!"

"You will never have to worry about me, dear brother. As Joy's bestfriend, | can and will keep her safe," K iki promised.

"That's what I'm afraid of," Xavier said. "You are just as reckless as Sebastian. And K iki, it's Virtue Sullivan, not Joy Taylor. If you're going to play her bestfriend, you better not slip. Chip and Virtue will pick you up at the airport. And Ki ki, | need you to be a girly girl."

"Aw... people in New Salem aren't into goth?" K iki asked, chuckling. "No problem, Bo. |

gotcha.

Before we boarded the truck, we quickly went through Cris' messages, but despite being in word form, most of the messages didn't make any sense, except for the last one which had

the words Ol' Barn and Friday.

While heading back to New Salem, Xavier got an unexpected call from Link. It was a

to discover Norma Martin was broke.

"I should've looked into Norma's finances," Cristos mumbled, angry at himself. "I was a to, but Dan called and we had the Chicago trip and the proposal. It slipped my mind."

'Itsa

good thing then that Jake took a look at her finances for us," Xavier said, placing a hand on his shoulder. "Cristos, we need to find out who truly owns the pharmacy. Unfortunately, we are a man short, so it's up to us."

"I'll have Lou get us that information and I'll instruct my team to listen in on all of Liam's conversations. Something big is going to happen tomorrow and the Ol' Barn is where it's going to happen."

Xavier jumped out as soon as the truck stopped and immediately turned towards his office. But after a few steps, he abruptly stopped. I was about to ask him what was wrong when he gestured for all of us to keep quiet.

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"Link, cough once for yes. Is this Tomas Martin Hispanic?" He asked through his communication device. I noticed the excitement on his face as he listened intently.

"Who is Tomas Martin?" I mouthed to Cristos. He answered me with a shrug of his shoulders.

"The Angels of Darkness is primarily the Mexican Mafia," Xavier suddenly said. "I want you to get on Tomas' good side. Get Ford out. Do whatever it takes."

"Get Ford out? Are you insane? What about Emma?" Cristos asked incredulously. "And who is this T

Martin anyway?"

"Chip, I'll make sure Emma has back up. As to who this Tomas Martin is, he is Ford's father and Norma's ex-husband," Xavier answered. | gasped. Was he Luis Villegas in disguise? "I overheard Norma and Tomas fighting over the pharmacy. Tomas said, and | quote, "The pharmacy stays in the organization.' End quote. Xavier grinned at Cristos. "I think we have finally found Pete's capo. | can't believe it. Everything does happen for a reason."

"I need to h ook up my laptop," Cristos said, quickly walking towards Xavier's office which was still partly boarded up except for a small opening. "I'll use facial recognition and see if he fits the description we found on Luis Villegas."

| followed Cristos into Xavier's office where he quickly set up his laptop and began typing. It took him about five minutes to hack into the CCTV footage at the Sheriff's station and. obtain an image of Tomas Martin.

He uploaded the image he got from De Luca and sought a facial match.

"Sixty-six percent," Cristos announced, grimacing. "It's not good, but it's high enough considering this photo was taken years ago. Height is a problem though. He's an inch shorter than this Luis Villegas, but we do become shorter as we age so this could be him-"

"Jake has something for you," Xavier suddenly interrupted, entering with Jake. He handed Cristos a USB. "Files from Hartman's laptop. Link told me earlier Norma wired Hartman five hundred thousand to help Ford. You go through that while | check her phone." Xavier sat down on his sofa and began swiping through Hartman's phone.

"Hartman was planning to s kip town... she even wrote a letter confessing to the murder of Theodore Cohen..." Jake began, but stopped. "Has Autumn

you, Primo? Otten in touch with I'm sure she can provide us with more information than what I could get off Hartman's laptop." "No. I told her to lay low Cristas said grabbing his phone and dialing. "Autumn, can you -

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speak freely?

You're at home? Good. What do you have for me?" He put her on speaker phone so we all could hear what she had to say. "Well, Hartman first tried to pin Theodore's death on his cardiologist, but it didn't work. After the Sheriff went through all the CCTV footages and smartphones they confiscated, he announced all the evidence pointed to Ford. Hartman called Norma to inform her of her son's arrest and told her she couldn't stand idly by and watch Ford be crucified for something he didn't do, so she offered to take the fall for Theodore's death. However, she went on to explain to Norma that it came with a price, considering her retirement benefits. would be revoked once she s kips town. Norma agreed to pay her all the money she had left in her bank account just as long as all charges against Ford are dropped. Unfortunately, Hartman wasn't too pleased with the amount Norma offered her and was about to back out, but Norma promised her once Ford is released, she would ask Ford for a loan and pay her more. They negotiated for a while... with Hartman finally settling for two million dollars," Autumn narrated.

"After writing her confession letter and leaving it inside her desk drawer, she pulled out a -long brown folder from under her desk. I thought she was going to go home, but she headed to the hospital director's office instead. Apparently, they both originally conspired to take Ford's trust fund money in exchange for his appointment as nurse administrator. However, due to the unforeseen circumstances, taking Ford's money was no longer a viable option, so Hartman proceeded in blackmailing the hospital director, showing him all the evidence she had collected in that folder she had brought with her. The hospital director laughed and quickly turned the tables on her, informing her he had evidence of her embezzling money from the department budget. It seems Hartman has a gambling addiction and travels to Fargo frequently," Autumn explained.

"What evidence did she have against the hospital director?" Cristos asked.

“Drugs. The hospital director supplies the meth the nurses buy from Junior Nurse Administrator Rodney Marshall, one of two friends Emma has. Don’t get me wrong... I like Emma, I do, but she can be a real snob. Everyone at the hospital sees her as this big priss, so no one ever really warmed up to her. Ford, that idiot, had thought Emma was doing drugs since she was on speaking terms with Pam, this nurse who helps Rodney with his drug dealing. That’s the reason why Ford targeted Emma in the first place. I didn’t say anything because I needed her to act naturally.”

“Does Ford know about this Rodney?” Xavier asked.

“He only knows about Pam. Rodney is like a hero at the hospital. He even created a petition for the termination of Ford’s employment.”

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60%

“Wait, I’m confused. Rodney is openly trying to have Ford fired when the drugs he sells come from the organization Ford’s mother is tied up with?” Xavier asked

“Based on what I heard from the hospital director, Norma Martin has no stake in the

business whatsoever while Ford... well, he was becoming a hindrance to the business. The

only reason why most of the sexual harassment complaints against Ford were withdrawn was because many of the female nurses who filed a complaint were involved with drugs. As for Hartman, the hospital director reminded her that all he needed to do was say the word

and she, Ford and Norma would cease to exist. He reminded her of a security guard and a

janitor that went missing and told her, ‘McDowell doesn’t like liabilities. He prefers them buried in the ground.’”

| gasped again. The one place we didn't care to look... the hospital.

"What happened after their meeting?" Cristos asked, shaking his head in disbelief.

"While | was providing care for Nicole Davis and everyone else was at the vigil, Hartman went to the nurses' locker room and raided Emma's locker, then quickly left the hospital right after. | have to apologize for my negligence, Primo, because it was already two in the morning when | was able to check the footage," Autumn apologized.

"Do you know what she saw in Emma's locker?"

"She saw Emma's ring, Primo" Autumn said, her voice laced with concern.
"After watching th

recorded feed, | went out for a smoke to calm my nerves and that's when | noticed Hartman car parked at the gift shop fronting the hospital. | decided to see if she was inside and she was, with a gun in her hands. That's when | decided to steal the note. | was on my way to warn Emma, but she had already left. | immediately linked into the CCTVs and found Emma standing in the parking lot with her hands raised above her head. | hurriedly alerted Link, knowing he could take care of Hartman."

"Do you think she told Norma about Emma?" Xavier asked.

"| don't think so. | don't even think she understood the inscription on the ring. But from the footage, it was clear Hartman marveled at the red diamond of Emma's family heirloom," Autumn answered. The red diamond ring was only owned by the founding fathers of the Blood Disciples. Emma inherited hers from her father and it was worth millions. "What | can definitely say though was Hartman wanted money and she was desperate. Desperate people often don't want to share."

"| have to say you did well, Autumn, but next time keep Emma updated... including me," Cristos instructed her. "We can't risk anyone's life. For today. Emma's calling in sick, so you'

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60%

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need to keep an eye on Nicole. | also need you to hack into the hospital director's files and look into

every patient and every employee who is currently in that hospital and send that

information to me. It's possible Pete may be hiding there."

"Of course, Primo," Autumn replied and hung up.

"I'm convinced. There's a reason for everything," Xavier said, standing up. "There aren't any messages on this phone. Here, Chip. See if you can find anything else on it." He handed

Cristos Hartman's phone, then turned to speak to Jake. "Jake, did Link leave you with

instructions?"

"He needs me to assist him for the day, Bo," Jake answered.

"For now, your mission is Tomas Martin. | want to know where he lives. Tell Link to call me

later. | need the both of you to ambush one of Sheriff's deputies, Xavier instructed. Jake nodded his head and quickly left. "I'll call Sam and have him meet with the hospital director

while Lou and my men put up CCTV cameras around the Ol' Barn."

"Why do you need Sam to meet with the hospital director?" | asked, surprised.

"I'm going to make a deal with Pete."

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CHAPTER 132 Poor Judgement

Pete McDowell

60%IE

| was in Bismarck, seated on a tattered sofa in a warehouse, seething with rage. Not only was | recovering from injuries, a number of the mercenaries | employed have wound up dead.

After switching with an actor who resembled me, | followed him to the airport, hoping to catch whoever | suspected was following me, but to my utter shock, the person who | followed from the restroom was not the same man. | asked the man where he got his suit and he said a man in the restroom paid him a thousand dollars to switch clothes with his

friend.

| rushed-back to the restroom and found it empty.

| quickly called the actor's manager and asked for another to impersonate me. Luckily, he was able to find me another actor just as the private plane | chartered landed at the airport. | had the pilot fly him to the Bahamas where a group of my men were waiting for his arrival.

He was passed out drunk on the beach when my men took him. They dragged him to a boat, slit his throat and threw his corpse into the bottom of the sea. | told my men to stay put, just in case anyone came looking for me.

The following day, my men notified me a small group of male tourists arrived on board a private plane who seemed to be moving from one hotel to the next.

| ordered them to kill the male tourists, but after that call, | didn't hear from my men again.

As for the missing actor from the airport, | received no word of his whereabouts. No doubt whoever took him must have killed him. Anyway, he was the least of my concerns.

After speaking to my capos and leaving traces of myself in each state of the WNCS, | made my way to Texas under the name Luis Villegas, my father's most trusted capo. Once | arrived, | bought several prepaid phones and made a phone call to Cris. "Hello Cris. Miss me?" | greeted him when he answered.

"Why the f uck are you calling me? If Liam finds out, he'll kill me," Cris growled. He was still angry at me for betraying him.

"I need you to go to Huff Hills and clean the place... oh, and free those two b itches you left in the basement," | instructed.

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"Why the f uck would | want to go there? | killed a girl there, remember?"

60%

"Stop being such a pu ssy and clean the place up. Call the cleaners, if you don't want to do it yourself. There shouldn't be a speck of my cu m on any of the-

"Where are you anyway?" Cris asked, interrupting me unexpectedly.

I'm out of reach," | answered candidly. "Cris, just do what | say. I'm expecting company and | need the mansion spotless. While you're there, destroy all the videos. There shouldn't be any evidence. No one should know about our little side hustle, especially Ortiz."

Fine. But this is the last time | do any favors for you," Cris said dryly. "I mean it. | need to

in get myself together and concentrate on the election."

s, Cris, you and I both know you don't have the willpower to silence that voice in your head...

kovou know... the one that's egging you on to-

Shut the fuck up! Don't you say another word," He exclaimed harshly. I laughed at Cris

ticeaction. He was so... sensitive.

ould you don't want me to say another word, then do as I say. Marla must have told whoever heraber about the mansion. By the way, I've hired some mercenaries to keep a look out for

one rope suspicious. Don't worry, they won't hurt you. They know you're coming to do some ining. hing. I gotta go. Right now, I have business to attend to. I'll message you

ing up befopbefore he could protest. For someone who liked it rough, he was su

er my phone the call with Cris, I called the man I needed to see, however he sai et with me becae because Ortiz was watching him like a hawk.

condolences, Pedro Pedro, Lorenzo greeted me. "The news of your mother's death br h great sorrow. ConCynthia was a great woman."

enzo was the considersgifdre of Dona Ortiz as well as the creator of our cyber-entertainme erprise. After watching thing the video of the brutal rape of Joy Taylor, he sold her video to chos on the dark web todo and earned quite a bit of money.

lizing the earning potential otsal of such videos, he bought a small building in Houston which ved as his headquarters for thiot that kind of raunchy entertainment. Just like our fellow mafia Mexico who specialized in humanand and sex trafficking, he began abducting woman and had rh brutally raped by his men while while recording them live. The money poured in like he hit jackpot.in

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58%

But, much to his dismay, someone snitched to Ortiz. He was given the choice to stop or die.

He chose to stop.

When Cris and I graduated college, he called me to help him continue the business. I had my mother buy Huff Hills mansion and there, Cris and I started making money off of our favorite pastime.

“Thank you. Hearing your kind words warms my heart,” I replied. “But let's get down to business. On the top of our agenda, I would like to inform you the BDSM video production is currently suspended until further notice. I have already sent you the earnings for this month, however, because of the circumstances, next month's earnings may be considerably

smaller unless Liam Cohen delivers on his promise,” I told him.

“Pedro, speak freely please. What's going on? Why do you need to suspend production?” He

asked.

“De Vega has taken a girl who has information of my safehouse. I suspect he will be making

a house call any day now,” I answered.

“De Vega? I think you are mistaken. De Vega swears it isn't him,” he said, pausing. I heard novelbin

voices in the background. “Ortiz is calling for me.” Shit! “I took the liberty of booking you a connecting flight to Chicago. Fly to Chicago, Pedro. There, you will find the answers you

seek.”

“Fly to Chicago? I don't want to die-”

"I have a small team already in place in Chicago, I assure you, De Vega will not understand you are under my protection." "But, Lorenzo-

"Ep," he silenced me. "I promise you will thank me for this. Now go."

It was night time when I arrived at O'Hare International Airport where a black Cadillac was waiting for me outside. Aside from the driver, a young man in a suit was also with us, seated in the passenger's seat.

I tried to make small talk, asking them certain questions, but they kept quiet which I found disturbing.

I wanted to get out of the car, but decided against it. I had to trust Lorenzo. After all the money I gave him, I knew he wouldn't put me in harm's way.

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I was dropped off at The Waldorf Hotel and was asked to change into the tuxedo hanging in a suite on one of the top floors. That's where I bumped into Nicole.

She appeared to have gone shopping although her face was an utter mess. Her make-up was all over the place, making her look grotesque.

"Is Liam with you?" I asked her. I had a feeling he wasn't because she was so annoying.

"No," she answered in her high pitched voice. "But I can call him. I heard he's been looking for you."

"Is that how you treat the person who pays you all that money you spend for your shopping sprees?" I asked, unzipping the small carry-on I had with me. I took out a bundle of hundred dollar bills and placed it inside one of her shopping bags. "There. To keep your mouth shut. Buy yourself some pretty jewelry to go with all those clothes you bought." I turned to open the door of

my suite, but paused before entering. “On second thought, give Liam a message for me, will you? Tell him... | expect him to honor our deal.”

After changing into a tuxedo and messaging Cris, | went back downstairs and rode the Cadillac to an undisclosed location. After about twenty minutes, the car entered a car park of an unfamiliar tall commercial building.

“Capo B astone Cadena, right this way please,” the young man said after ushering me out of the car.

“Where are we?” | asked, feeling quite unnerved.

“| was instructed to bring you here. You will be dining with Capo Ba stone De Vega 0 floor,” the man replied without even answering my question.

| was frisked by one the guards before | was allowed to enter the building. It was quiet a totally empty... There was no one else inside roaming the lobby and there was no furnitur

We took the elevator to the top floor where its doors opened to reveal a dark and empty commercial space except for a small dining table lit with candles where a middle-aged man in a tuxedo was seated... waiting for me.

“| hope your flight was comfortable,” De Vega said, his voice low and rich, as he stood up to welcome me. The gray streaks in his dark hair were noticeable while his face was smooth and clean-s haven. He was muscular for a man his age and stood an inch taller than I..

While | quietly stood in front of him, he stared at me, studying my face. After a moment, h

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murmured, “You don’t look like your father.”

“You knew my father?” | asked.

“Oh yes,” he answered. “He and | were friends once upon a time. Your father was a man of authority... he believed he was a league entirely of his own. Unfortunately, that’s what put a target on his back. Sit and have some tequila with me.”

"Before | sit, | would like to apologize for taking your niece. It was poor judgment on my part, | apologized, hoping he'd accept my apology.

"Poor judgement, you say? | can't call it that. | believe it was idiocy and conceit," he said, clearly insulting me. | wanted to head back to the elevator and leave, but | still had several unanswered questions. So, | nodded my head and pretended to accept his harsh words. "Since that has been taken care of... Please, take a seat, Capo Ba stone Cadena." He gestured to the empty chair beside him.

| sat down, turning my head to see if the young man who accompanied me was still behind.

me. To my dismay, he was nowhere to be found.

| was all alone with De Vega.

mya

My palms and began to sweat. | rubbed my palms against my thighs, trying to relax, but the movement made me feel more uncomfortable.

| was so stupid to walk into a trap.

| was so stupid to listen to Lorenzo when | was fully aware that he was a backstabbing, greedy son of a bitch.

| was so stupid to think | was going to come out of this alive.

"Cadena, hijo, wipe the sweat off your forehead, De Vega chided. "Lorenzo has given me strict instructions. | am only to do what he has asked me to do. | have prepared your father's favorite. Tequila Patron and enchiladas."

He quickly poured me and himself a shot glass of Tequila and clapped his hands. From the darkness, a man in a chef cap set down a plate of warm enchiladas in front of me. A wave of nostalgia hit me... it was as if my father was with us.

"Eat. If you are afraid it is poisoned, | assure you poison is not my weapon of choice. | am not a pussy. | like looking into the eyes of the man | kill. Plus, | made a promise to your

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father. | swore | would not kill his wife nor child. | am a man of my word,” he said, downing the tequila. He sighed and poured himself another shot. “Your father always had good taste.”

| relaxed, drank my tequila and began eating my enchiladas while he did the same, scrutinizing my every bite and my every sip. He was a gracious host, quickly filling my glass after every shot.

However, halfway through my second enchilada, he suddenly clapped his hands. A group of men wearing nicely tailored suits suddenly appeared, surrounding us.

| couldn't believe it... | had the rug pulled out from under me.

F uck... Why did | have to listen to Lorenzo?

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CHAPTER 133 Lorenzo and Nestor

Joy

| stared at Xavier, bewildered.

“What do you mean you're going to make a deal?” | asked Xavier.

*I'm going to ask Sam to tell Pete that Cris Murdock hired us to bring you to him. All he has to do is give us a time and a place," Xavier said casually.

"Simple, easy and none of us has to get shot at. Then, after we're done with him, you can kill the other three, so we can all go home. Well, all of you can go home. I still have to make a pit stop in Texas and visit Veronica

Ortiz."

"Hold that thought, Bo," Cristos, who was still typing on his laptop, said. "I'm looking through the wire transfers and the initials of the recipient don't match."

"What do you mean the initials don't match? There's a V, isn't there?" Xavier argued like a

smartass.

"Yes, but the initials are a V.L. Ortiz and not a V.A. Ortiz. Dofia Ortiz's full name is Veronica

Aldana Ortiz. This can't be her-"

"V.L. Ortiz stands for Vicente Lorenzo Ortiz, Dona Ortiz's cousin," a familiar male voice at the entrance of Xavier's office. We all turned our heads to find De Luca standing in the doorway.

"De Luca, what are you doing here?" Xavier asked, annoyed. "How did you get here anyway

"On the delivery truck with Chef," De Luca said. "He's going to take a look at that house at the Ol' Taylor cul-de-sac."

"So, this means

0 was prof

from the girls Cris and Pete kidnapped and raped.

Who is this Vicente anyway?" Cristos asked.

"Dofia Ortiz's consigliere. He's known more commonly as Lorenzo in the Angels of Darkness," De Luca answered smugly. "By the way, I sent my contact in Texas the information my FBI asset gave me and he finally sent me some information which makes sense." He sat down on Xavier's couch,

making himself comfortable. "Luis Villegas was an illegal, a product of a prostitute mother and one of her gringo clients. He adopted the name Louis Duncan after he was smuggled into Texas by the Cadenas. Rafael and Louis grew up together, were

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his capo and reverted back to his real name Luis Villegas, although people still used

Duncan."

"So why did he flee Texas?" | asked curiously.

"Cadena, being the hothead that he was, killed someone from the Scottish Crime Syndicate,

the group

Cynthia McDowell's father led. Villegas, being loyal to Cadena, took the fall and fled with his Scottish wife, a woman named Laura. At that time, they were childless. The couple first moved to Alabama, using his adopted surname Duncan, but were easily found. They, then, traveled up north to North Dakota, changing their names. No one has seen or heard of Luis Villegas ever since. Such a pity being betrayed by your own family. The Angels of Darkness turned their backs on him without even making an investigation of their own."

"But if they turned their backs on him, why is he Pete's capo?" | asked.

"He's not, but the son is. There was an induction of a Nestor Villegas about nine or eight years ago after he completed a task Dofia Ortiz sanctioned, De Luca explained.

"And what task was that?" Xavier asked.

"To kill Luis Villegas, his own father. It seems someone had alerted the FBI of his location. But before the FBI could arrest him, he was already buried."

"And how did he die? Does your contact know?" | asked.

Car accident, De Luca answered.

“And the wife of Luis?” | asked.

| asked the same thing. My contact has no information on the wife,” De Luca replied

must be dead as well.”

Do you have a picture of Nestor Villegas?” Cristos asked. De Luca shook his head. “How at that possible?”

its possible when you have your induction at a secret venue with only a handful of people aunattendance. The only person who can actually point us to this Nestor Villegas is Pedro adeCadena himself. The only other person, Cynthia, unfortunately, is dead.” hit?avianvier exclaimed, shaking his head.

nedd said ran to take a look at this person named Tomas Martin. Does he resemble Luis

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Villegas? I’m thinking maybe he changed his name and took on another persona to make people think he’s dead,” Cristos said, showing De Luca the image of Norma’s ex-husband. “We got a sixty percent match.”

“Although we all look alike in some way, no, that isn’t him. Luis was light-skinned. According to my contact, he dyed his hair dark just to fit in, because the Angels pride themselves with purity. Back then, Luis wouldn’t have been inducted if it weren’t for Rafael,” De Luca said.

“So, we’re back to square one,” | said. “Tomas must be a soldier then. Maybe, just maybe, he’s one of the handful of people who knows Nestor Villegas.”

“No,” De Luca said. “Only the high ranking members know who he is.”

a

“Is he here in New Salem then?” Cristos asked. “Because if he is, that narrows the search. It’s probable you even went to school with him, Virtue.”

“Yes, he is here,” De Luca replied. “He has never left according to my contact. How he remains hidden is a mystery. According to my contact, he was awarded money for killing Luis Villegas... and let’s not forget the profits he earns from their drug business.” “He must have an offshore account,” Xavier mumbled, utterly frustrated. “We have another problem. | just overheard Norma say she heard Lisa tell Jack that Joy Taylor is back.”

“Pete must have heard about the contract and told Lisa,” Cristos pointed out.

“That’s good right? He’ll be looking for a scrawny, brown-haired, long nosed woman,” | said.

“That means... no eyes on us.”

Xavier smiled, waving his finger at me. “I like how you think, Virtue. Let’s give Pete what he wants then, shall we? And when we corner him, we’ll ask him who this Nestor Villegas is.”

Sheriff

| was in my office waiting for Liam.

Silly me. | assumed the brand new Jaguar parked up front was owned by the Martin’s new

attorney.

| arrived at the station past eight in the morning and saw Randy coming out of his car, all

fresh and showered

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| scowled as | watched him fix his hair. While we were up all night, he was able to go home.novelbin

and get some rest...

And he wondered why | didn’t want to give him more money.

| wondered what | needed to do to keep Randy at bay. My other men did more work and were satisfied with the extra pay while Randy was prissy and often complained about all the heavy

lifting.

If he wanted more money, then he would have to do something worth my while.

After parking my car at my usual spot, | raised each arm above my head and sniffed my armpits. Since | had to wait to take a shower, | decided I'd change into a spare shirt | had in

the office.

| got out of my patrol car, walked towards Randy, who was busy admiring himself through his car window, and grabbed him by his shoulders.

"Why didn't you tell me about Riley?" | asked calmly. For a fraction of a second, | saw the surprise in his eyes, but he quickly composed himself.

"Why won't you give me more money?" He asked, answering my question with his.

"You know why | won't give you more money. Instead of doing what | ask you to do, you ask too many questions," | growled at him. "Now... Bismarck Police is wondering why | never heard about Riley being in the hospital."

"I'd do more if you'd pay me more, Sheriff," he said, hoping I'd finally agree to the request. "I'm not asking much." | thought he would see it my way, but he made it all about the

money.

"You don't get it, do you? You made a mess of things, now | want you to clean it up. For your trouble, I'll pay you a hundred grand. How does that sound?" His face immediately lit up with dollar signs in his eyes.

"What do you need me to do exactly?" He asked, like an idiot. | grabbed him by the neck and pulled him towards me so | could whisper to him.

"If Riley wakes up, he'll talk and you know what will happen next. I don't mind spending the remainder of my life in jail, but what will Christine do while you sit rotting away in prison?" I asked quietly.

4/6

CHAPTER 133 Lorenzo and Nestor

"You don't think he'll open his mouth, do you?" He asked, sounding skeptical.

"You can't be this naive, Randy. You'll know he'll talk to save his own skin. If you had told me. when Detective Matthews called, then this problem would have been dealt with sooner. Now, we are faced with the dilemma of Riley waking up with the Bismarck PD right beside him. You put us in this situation." I pointed at him, tapping my finger on his chest. "I need you to silence him and when I say silence, I mean I want him dead," I mumbled, looking at him straight in the eyes.

"Make it two hundred fifty thousand and I'll do it," Randy negotiated. My eyes narrowed as I fought the urge to shoot him where he stood.

"Fine," I answered reluctantly, agreeing to what he wanted.

"That's not all, Sheriff. I want a hundred thousand as a down-payment and I want an extra five grand a month on top of what you're giving me now. For the next ten years," he added. slyly before extending his hand for a handshake,

Ten years? I wanted to laugh. After Christine gives birth, I'm going to kill you.

"You got yourself a deal. But, Randy, I need to stress the importance of the matter. I want this taken care of by tomorrow," I said while I shook his hand.

"B-but t-that isn't enough time-"

He tried pulling his hand out of my grasp, but I tightened my hand around his until a tiny yelp came out from his mouth.

"Twenty-four hours is good enough as any for the money you're asking," I said, cu off. "Just do what I'm asking you to do like a good little boy and I'll take care of the suddenly let go of his hand and he stumbled back, wincing in pain.

“Sheriff, may I ask someone from the station to assist me?” He asked.

it

“No. You have to do this alone. More people, more noticeable,” I answered. “Take the day off, so you can come up with a plan. My suggestion, do it at night. I’ll have someone swing by your house with that down-payment you want and once I get the call confirming Riley’s death, you’ll get the rest. Now go. Beat it.”

I watched him drive off before I entered the station.

“Where’s Jack?” I asked as I walked in.

5/6

CHAPTER 133 Lorenzo and Nestor

He’s in the interrogation room with the district attorney and the Martins, Sheriff, waiting tofor you,” a deputy answered. I entered my office to change into a fresh shirt and grab Ford’s case file sitting on my desk.

With the folder tucked under my arm, I walked to the interrogation room and peeked inside.

That’s when I saw him. Thomas Martin in the flesh! He was one person who lived a life of seclusion. Whenever he was in New Salem, he only went to the diner or, when needed, the Couch Mansion.

I quickly messaged Liam.

It was is rarely nine in the morning and the problems kept piling up.

I heard a knock on my door and in came Liam, freshly showered and wearing a dark suit. He appeared to be in good spirits, considering his father just died.

“Let’s do this. Si sheriff.

gray

Chapter Caromerests

Elizabet: Jonson

POST COMMENT

| have no idea who lo is who anymore. So many people with so many names, | think | will have to do a spreadsheet will still keep reading though. Probably reread it...

Kerryn Day-Francis

okay... now I'm thinking is is noah

I

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6/6

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Chapter 134

HAPTER 134 Final Favor

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e McDowell

as supposed to be celebrating the death of Theodore Cohen...

luding Liam's engagement to Virtue...

cause now it would make it even more painful for Liam once he loses her.

I was suffering. My swollen face was being held together by a temporary external fixator while one of my eyes had a bandage over it. I needed a straw to eat and drink and when I did to speak, I could barely move my jaw, making me sound as if I was eating my words.

I sucked on my straw, finishing the whisky in my glass, hoping to numb the pain of my chest, the cuts and bruises on my face as well as my perforated anus and hopefully forget. However, everything was just so raw, so recent, that even if I drank myself to a stupor, the memory of what had happened to me kept flooding my psyche like relentless torture.

Vega's men immediately came out from their hiding places and surrounded us. I repetitiously glanced behind me and saw two of his brawniest men sneering down at me. One of them was wearing shiny knuckle rings, the brass metal seemingly winking sinisterly at me at each flicker of the yellow-orange light of the candles.

This is what you had planned all along, De Vega. Use Lorenzo to get me to come to kill me," I said, sobering a bit. "You had me convinced that you are an honorable man and wanted to take out my phone and call Lorenzo, but the two goons behind me made me think otherwise.

Vega drank the remaining tequila in his shot glass before he answered. "How dare you talk about honor when you have none," he scoffed. "You take my niece, stick your filthy penis in her then show your face, drink my tequila and eat my old mother's specialty... as if you've done no wrong. You are so unlike your father. He would have kissed my feet and begged for my forgiveness before he sat down and ate with me. Do you honestly think a logy will make up for violating my niece? My niece, you hijo de puta!" He rubbed his forehead with his fingers, easing the tension he was feeling. "It's a shame actually... you with the fruit falling far from the tree."

He extended our shot glasses and gestured for me to drink. "Despite what you think, I was told I'd get you drunk, so you wouldn't feel a thing. Now, Cadena, drink." He grabbed his shot glass and declined on mine repeatedly until I picked it up, giving me no choice. I raised my

CHAPTER 134 Final Favor

I pressed the glass to my lips and drank, my hands slightly quivering. I was afraid. Afraid of what the ire had in store for me.

Vega drank slowly, gazing at me with such malcontent. After he placed his glass on the table, he threw his napkin on top of his plate, signaling the end of our soiree. "I'm sorry if I have to cut our little get-together short, but, but I think it's time I follow through with Lorenzo's ructions before you insult me further. And I take my gun and shoot you in the head." He popped his fingers, then pointed at me. Men, Men, you know what to do." He stood from his seat

buttoned his jacket, preparing to leave. leave.

pay you. Whatever Lorenzo has promised you. I'll double it!" I shouted, trying to stand, the two men behind me placed their hands on my shoulders, preventing me from going.

ent from tipsy to sober in an instant. tit.

heart was racing, my breathing shallow. Beads of sweat began to drip along the sides of my face. The fear I was feeling was so overwhelming that I couldn't fight... I just sat in my chair, frozen like a statue.

I finally prayed he would accept my proposal and just let me go. But the ominous expression on his face made my heart sink. There is no amount of money you can offer to dissuade me. For you are only following orders. As I had said earlier, I am a man of my word, Wed De Vega black bow tie. "You see, I am not the person who killed your mother. Yes, I admitted to kill you for what you had done to my favorite niece, but I made a mistake. I would like to uphold that oath. However, before we part ways, I have something to tell you..." He squatted on his haunches, placing his mouth next to my ear. "The assassination was made by a Joy Taylor to the amount of two million dollars. Do you know who has sanctioned it. Whoever this Joy Taylor is, Pedro, she is coming to visit you. It's such a pity that I won't be able to watch her mutilate your fat body, but at least the idea of her death brings a warmth to my heart."

Joy Taylor?" I asked, stunned at hearing that name again. I turned my head to peer into his eyes. "You lie. Joy Taylor is dead." His lips curved into a menacing smile, his eyes twinkling with amusement.

The beads of sweat dripping down your face say otherwise. Dios mio, Cadena! You look absolutely terrified, hijo." He took the napkin I had laying on my lap and began to wipe my forehead, smirking as he dabbed the cloth to my skin. When I heard about the contract, I

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CHAPTER 134 Final Favor

wondered what could you have possibly done to this woman for her to pay Ortiz that much money for her to kill you. | did some digging and found a video of her brutal rape on the

close, dark web.” He threw the napkin on the table and stood up. “Now that I’ve seen you up I’ve come to the conclusion you weren’t one of her rapists, but I’m guessing you were behind. everything. | mean, why would there be a video if it wasn’t orchestrated in a way, right? But why? Why orchestrate something as horrible as that, huh, Cadena?” He waited for me to answer, but | kept my mouth shut hoping my silence would serve as a denial to the allegations. “No answer? I’ll answer for you then.” He stood back up and fixed his jacket. “I did more digging and found the answer. Land. Your mother bought land from the Taylors after Joy was raped. You see, Cadena? It’s not so hard to figure out who really killed your

mother.”

“But the sni per rifle, it was one of yours,” | argued.

“| knew you would say that,” he said, taking a sheet of paper out from his inner jacket pocket. It was a docket. “One of my shipments was compromised. A crate went missing as you can see here last-” He suddenly stopped, looking towards the elevator. | tried to turn around to take a look, but the two thugs behind me wouldn’t let me.

“Nestor, so good to see you. You look quite dashing, De Vega greeted the newcomer.

My capo? He’s here?

| waited for him to approach the table, but he didn't... the as shole.

Capo B astone De Vega, good evening," Nestor said, his voice coming from beh received your message. Sorry, I'm late. | had dinner with a few friends."

"Understandable. | hope you don't mind waiting, We aren't finish yet," De Vega sai

"Not at all. | have received my instructions from the Consigliere. | am to bring him ba New Salem with me. The private plane is on standby waiting to transport us."

"NESTOR, HELP ME, YOU SON OFABI TC H! YOU WORK FOR ME!" | yelled.

| heard his footsteps as he approached the table. | looked up at him and | was shocked to see

him dressed in an Armani suit.

"Capo Ba stone Cadena," he murmured calmly, "I do work for you, however | have my instructions to return you to New Salem after you have been disfigured. As a final favor to your dead father, we will help you with your new disguise."

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CHAPTER 134 Final Favor

"DISFIGURED?! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MINDS?!"

"No, Capo B astone," Nestor replied, shaking his head. "We have no say in this matter. The Consigliere, with, of course, the blessing of Dofia Ortiz, was the one who ordered this. So no one will recognize you."

"You a sshole, you're the one who suggested this to him, didn't you?" | asked angrily.

"I mere ly

planned gested it would be better if you were unrecognizable. He was the one who

planned all this. Not me,” Nestor answered slyly

“Cadena, this would have all been avoided if you worked with us and not against us,” De Vega interjected. “Your capos in each state of the WNCS have voiced out their concerns against you, especially your capo from South Dakota. Two of his men have gone missing. So for you to stay in New Salem, we need to give you a new face and a new identity... Whilst | and my niece, Ariana, receive some justice.

As soon as De Vega uttered the name of his niece, a female voice came from the darkness.

“Tio, is he ready?”

| reached for the bottle of Patron and drank.

| was f ucked.

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Chapter 135

CHAPTER 135 Phallus

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Pete McDowell

"Tio, is he ready?" A familiar woman's voice asked. Out from the shadows, Ariana came out. with a long thick phallus-shaped steel rod in her small gloved hands.

Because Cris and I had cut off her long thick locks, she was sporting a pixie cut with blonde highlights. She was wearing dark blue coveralls, latex gloves and black boots while a pair of goggles lay on top of her head. I noticed the cut we made on her cheek had healed nicely, giving her a much edgier look.

As she stared at me, a wicked smile played on her red lips while her light brown eyes twinkled with unmistakable delight and anticipation under her dark eyeshadow.

She reminded me of an image of an evil witch sans the black outfit.

"Yes, hija. But you heard Lorenzo. We need to dye his hair and we can only mess up his face... so he won't be recognized when he goes back to New Salem, De Vega instructed. "Nestor, my. niece, Ariana De Vega. Ariana, Capo Nestor Villegas."

Nestor bowed his head at her while she bowed hers in greeting.

"I wish every man in the organization had your good looks Capo Villegas, but then have to look like this sick fuck right here. Tio, is it too much to ask if I get a taste of what he did to me?" Ariana asked, walking up to me and forcefully grab my hair while inserting the phallus-shaped steel rod into my mouth. I gagged as rod pushed against the back of my throat.

"Do whatever you want, just don't kill him and don't break any of his limbs. He will be needing his arms and legs. It won't be fair to Joy Taylor, if we leave him... useless," De said.

f

"Understood, Ariana said, hitting me on the head with the steel rod. I winced, but I wasn't afraid anymore. They weren't going to kill me.

"Adios, Cadena. Sadly, this will be the last time I see you," De Vega said, placing an arm

around Nestor's shoulders to guide him out. "Let's smoke some cigars and have a bit of cognac while you wait. I must say... I'm quite impressed. I can't believe Luis has such a handsome son."

title

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CHAPTER 135 Phallus

you. Are you still in touch with some of my father's friends in Houston?" Nestor asked as they walked to the elevator.

"Yes, I am," De Vega answered. "What do you need? Don't tell me you need a girlfriend?"

I heard the both of them laugh loudly as they walked into the elevator leaving me at the mercy of a woman I had violated. My heart was still beating rapidly in my chest, but I pushed my fears aside knowing I could withstand whatever they threw my way.

"You and I are going to have lots of fun together. Arinana whispered in my ear.

My blood ran cold. It was the same line I had said to her when we took her.

"Take off all his clothes, lay him on the floor and raise his legs above his head," Ariana instructed the men while stroking the steel rod. You'll be screaming uncontrollably for a week once I'm done with you."

Wait, please I tried to beg, but Ariana placed a moist rag inside my mouth to silence me while the men ripped my tuxedo apart. When the steel rod pierced my asshole for the first time, I screamed. It was like the skin around my sphincter was being torn apart and it burned... it burned so much.

"Shut him up, will you!" She instructed one of the men with brass knuckles to take away from his fist, but he grabbed my hair to still my head and punched me. I fainted from the excruciating pain, but the burning sensation from the steel penetrating my anus kept me conscious.

I heard her laughter as she inserted the steel rod inside me again and again, until I felt all of my shame flood my nostrils.

au

u are one icsick b astard!" | heard Ariana scream taking the steel rod out of my butt hole. Iaved a sigh of ofrelief, thinking she was done, but | was wrong. "Hose this ass shole downh nks!!

my

thought | was going into drown. They hosed me down with cold water using a fire hose nozzle. The water went went up my nose, into my eyes, ears and mouth. | was shivering when they finally shut off the waterater.

They chained my wrists together and her and hung me up on an iron rod. Ariana inserted the steel d'into

my anus, then sat down and watched me as the men took turns punching me like a punching bag. | don't know what happened after blacked out after the third punch.

2/5

CHAPTER 135 Phallus

| slammed my fist angrily on the coffee table in front of me... | was so angry at myself for forgetting my training and for allowing this to happen. | wish | could go back to my fifteen year-old self when | was at the top of my game.

| leaned back on the tattered sofa, the sound of plastic rustling with my movement. Ugh! | was wearing diapers because of that b itch!

When | woke up after the savagery | experienced, | was surprised to find myself in a hospital room with a male nurse sitting beside my bed waiting for me to wake up. He told me I was in New Salem and the injuries to my face were extensive.

Since | needed to pee, the male nurse assisted me to the bathroom and for the first time, |

saw myself in the mirror. | couldn't recognize myself.

My hair was now dyed an ash gray and my face... my face...

It was so bad, | actually wanted to.

cry.

| lifted my hospital gown and quickly removed the tape of the adult diapers | was wearing to check my penis. | heaved a huge sigh of relief discovering my penis was intact, however, my

as shole was sore and | was sh itting all over myself.

| silently vowed once | was through with Virtue Sullivan and Joy Taylor, I'd finish what Cris and | had started with Ariana De Vega and deliver her to her uncle in a box.

But before the women, | had to take care of a little problem happening at the Ol news of the meet happening on Friday at midnight was the last message | received

Cris.

Because of what happened to me in Chicago, | wasn't able to meet with him. All | got w his messages. Luckily, my phone including all of my belongings that | had brought with were there in the hospital room when | woke up

| was replying to Cris when chaos erupted. The male nurse who was at my bedside when | awoke, barged into my room, took my carry-on and my phone telling me Theodore Cohen. was dead and that the Sheriff was probably already on his way. He told me to act catatonic since | was in the psychiatric ward. The previous occupant of my room was a drug addict

who they transferred to accommodate me.

While everyone was busy at the vigil, | was escorted out of the hospital through a secret. passageway and ushered into a car driven by one of the mercenaries | hired. He handed me my phone and told me we had a problem at Huff Hills.

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| messaged Cris that | was on my way to Bismarck, but he didn't reply. | called, but he didn't pick up. | suspected he was at the vigil and made a mental note to track him down later.

After the mess at Huff Hills, | found Cris' car at Elk Cliff from a tracker | placed under the hood of his car... a place | knew no one would look.

He was missing and there was no one else | knew who would take him except for one. | called Lisa and told her what | knew. | told her about Joy Taylor... with the hope she could give me information knowing once upon a time she and Joy were good friends.

| stood up from the sofa, propping myself up with a cane, and gingerly walked towards the leader of the group of mercenaries | hired. They were expensive, but at least | had my army.

"Make sure your men are ready. Before midnight, | want your men in position at the Ol' Barn in New Salem," | instructed. The leader nodded his head.

My phone suddenly rang. It was Lorenzo. | had been trying to get in touch with him ever since | woke up in the hospital, but my calls went straight to voice mail.

"Pedro, how are you feeling? | believe all went well in Chicago?" He asked once | answered

the phone.

"It hurts to even talk, Lorenzo," | said, my rage bubbling up anew." How could you even

think of doing this to me?"

*Pedro, you need to own up to the consequences of your actions. De Vega needed his revenge while you needed to go incognito. | just killed two birds in one stone. The injuries you sustained will give you a new face and will help get rid of your extra fat. | will be sending someone to train you as you recuperate. Nestor believes you have forgotten your training," he explained. "Nestor... he's another one I'm angry at," | mumbled, waddling towards the makeshift minibar the men put up. | took the bottle of whisky and walked back to the sofa, wincing as | fell back on it with the half empty bottle in my hands.

"Your capo was just following orders and looking out for you," Lorenzo pointed out in a calm voice. "He brought you home and had you fixed up at the hospital. There is no need to be angry at him. Honestly, you should be grateful. When you are fully healed, you can assume a new name and follow in the footsteps of Nestor, as an anonymous member of the Angels of Darkness. No one, not even Joy Taylor, will be able to find you. You, yourself, can stop her and once she's gone, you can continue to live to be an old man, right there in New Salem. I assure you, that pain you're feeling now is only temporary. You'll soon forget about this and5

CHAPTER 135 Phallus

thank me for making this happen."

"Easy for you to say, you aren't the one drinking through a straw," I argued like a child.

"It was the only way to get you a new face and give the vengeance De Vega wanted. He and his niece now both feel vindicated and they promise to never touch you again. Lighten up. There are worse things. And Pedro, please lie low. I know what has happened at Huff Hills. Do not, at under any circumstances, make this worse than it already is."

"I don't know what you're talking-

I wasn't able to finish my sentence. He had hung up on me. It was quite obvious none of them respected me.

I was never going to forgive and forget. I would eventually get my revenge.

While I was listening to the plans the mercenaries were discussing for later tonight, my phone suddenly rang again. I looked at the screen thinking it was Lorenzo.

It was the hospital director of St. Elizabeth's. He was the one who patched me up at the

request of my capo.

"There's someone here who wants to talk to you

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Chapter 136

CHAPTER 136 Conspiracy

Liam

| woke up alone, but hopeful. After reading the Sheriff's messages, | got out of bed, quickly. took a shower and got dressed.

My father was dead, but | was engaged. A Cohen was gone, but soon, there would be a new addition bearing the Cohen name. | called Dan and told him it would be better if we moved the wedding up. | didn't want to continue to live alone.

After | gave him instructions to organize a small engagement party after my father's funeral and a rush wedding, he went straight to business.

"Have you spoken to Jack?" Dan asked.

"Not yet. Why? What's up?" | asked curiously.

"He called me earlier this morning and said Cris has gone missing," Dan answered.

"That | know. Lisa went looking for him last night. So she wasn't able to track him down?" |

asked.

“Nope. She went to see Jack to file a missing person’s report. She also told him she received a call from an anonymous person... she said the person sounded like Pete.”

| smiled. Finally, he’s gotten in touch with someone.

“And what did this Pete-sounding anonymous person tell her?”

“He told her we will never find Cris and that there is a sanctioned hit. She doesn’t know who the target is, but the person told her the contracting parties are Ortiz and Joy Taylor,” Dan said hurriedly, hoping if he blurted everything out, it would be easier on everyone.

| laughed. Pete was now hiding behind the ghost of Joy Taylor.

“That coward is making up stories. Don’t worry, I’ll call Ortiz to confirm,” | replied as | fixed my necktie in front of the mirror. “Since he spoke with Lisa, I’ll have her call him so we can triangulate his location. That phone call proves he’s here... watching us. | suspect he already knows about our plans at the Ol’ Barn.”

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trap. | had a strong feeling he would tell Pete.

“Anything else?” | asked.

“Nicole’s in the hospital, Liam. Apparently she flew out of the windshield of her car,” Dan replied.

“What?!” This was a bit of information that | didn’t know. “Is she okay?”

“She’s stable according to Jack. I’ll be picking her mother up later to check up on Nicole. Do

think Pete had something to do with this?”

you

"Maybe, but Pete doesn't have a beef with Nicole. My money's on Noah. I'll go speak with him after I'm done making a deal to secure the pharmacy. The Martins will have no choice to hand it over." It was one the businesses my father had always wanted and acquiring it will fulfill his wish. Plus, owning the pharmacy will increase my profits and give me leverage within the organization. "By the way, Dan, make sure you double the money we usually our dealers and have them sign," I reminded him. "If they refuse, they will not receive a single penny."

Sive

"No problem, Liam," Dan said. "I'll make sure the ones who don't sign will be inside the barn waiting for you."

"Good. We'll be able to kill two birds with one stone," I said, my voice dripping with malice. "Those loyal to Pete will be killed by Pete himself, and while he's busy killing his own men, I'll be behind him with a gun to his head. Call me if there are any problems."

After Dan, I called Virtue. I didn't want her to think I had forgotten about her. Luckily, she answered right away.

"Liam, good morning. I was about to call you. How are you?" She asked sweetly. Just hearing her voice made my day.

"Just hearing your sweet voice makes the day brighter," I answered, smiling. "I called to ask if you could have dinner with me later this evening, then accompany me at my father's wake. I would like you to be by my side during the public viewing. You see, I'll be opening Cohen Mansion to the public later, so the townsfolk can pay their respects and bid their farewells."

"Of course, Liam. I really wanted to go to the vigil last night, but you told me it was safer not to. I've been with Chip this whole time. He's been watching over me like a worried hen," she said. "What time will you be picking me up?"

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CHAPTER 136 Conspiracy

"Around five-thirty. We'll have an early dinner," I answered.

I'll be ready by then. Chip and I will be going to Bismarck Airport in a bit to pick up my bestfriend."

"Bestfriend?" I asked. "I thought Chip was your bestfriend."

"He's my bestfriend here in New Salem, silly," she said, giggling. "I'm talking about my bestfriend from Nevada. Her name is Katarina, Kiki for short. She'll be arriving to help me with the wedding including a small engagement party."

Stupid me. Of course Virtue had friends in Nevada. This would be great. With a girlfriend living with her, I wouldn't have to worry so much.

"No need to worry about the engagement party, my sweet. I have Dan organizing that as we speak. I'll have him call you if he runs into any problems. Anyway, why don't you bring Kiki along for dinner so I can meet her?" I asked.

"That will be great! We'll see you later then, Liam," she murmured. Her voice was making me go hard.

"Alright then. Bye, love."

After a couple of bites of toast and bacon and a couple of sips of my coffee, I had Henry drive me to the station. I wanted to speak to Jack before going to see the Sheriff, but he wasn't at his desk, so I went straight to the Sheriff.

I knocked on his door and walked in.

"Sheriff, let's do this."

"You seem to be in good spirits. Is there something I should know," the Sheriff asked.

"Everything is going according to our plans," I said.

"You do know Cris is missing right?" He asked. I nodded my head. "Okay. Well, I need you to sit down. We have another problem."

"What is it this time?" I asked, taking a seat in one of the empty chairs in front of his desk.

"Bismarck Police has Riley in custody. He's currently unconscious at Bismarck Gen and the police are patiently waiting for him to wake up." the Sheriff replied. "A Detective Matthews3/6

CHAPTER 136 Conspiracy

who got the call, didn't relay the message... on purpose."

"Isn't Randy the one who wants more money even though he doesn't do much?" I asked. The Sheriff called me about Randy. I was the one who told him to refuse.

"Yep. I made a deal with him. He kills Riley and I'll pay him two hundred fifty thousand," the Sheriff said, winking at me.

"You aren't going to pay him, are you?"

"Not all of it, no... but I am going to put him in a position where the Bismarck Police are going to kill him," he answered bitterly. "I've gotten sick and tired of his games."

"Alright," I said, seeing it was all taken care of. "So, let's go and get my pharmacy." I was about to stand, but the Sheriff stopped me. "There's more?"

"I'm afraid so, but this isn't a problem. You can see it as a minor adjustment," the Sheriff said. "We found Nurse Administrator Lindsay Hartman's body in front of the hospital. It's being investigated as a suicide." He swiped his phone and handed it to me. "This letter was in her pocket. In the letter, she confesses to killing Theodore Cohen."

I grabbed the phone and read the suicide note. So it wasn't Ford. But Lindsay Hartman couldn't have acted alone. Someone must have paid her to do it.

"Did you check her bank records?" I asked Sheriff Combs. He nodded his head. "And?"

"She received five hundred thousand dollars from Norma Martin," the Sheriff replied.

"That's it?" I grimaced, handing the Sheriff his phone back. My father was only worth five hundred thousand? Poor Dad. "No wonder Norma keeps saying her son is innocent."

“There’s a possibility Norma paid Hartman more money, but we can’t find her phone or her

car, but

my men have discovered that she has an offshore account,” Sheriff Combs said. Of course, there’s only one place to hide money... overseas. “This means I can get Norma Martin on conspiracy to murder. If you still want to go after Ford, he has sexual harassment complaints piled up against him. We can use the complaints to make sure he goes to jail. along with his mother. None of this has gone public yet, so we have a chance to make a deal.”

“Good. If Thomas Martin wants to negotiate to lighten both Norma and Ford’s sentences, then I’ll allow it. Anyway, Lindsay Hartman is already dead. Her conscience got to her before I did I said. “Is there anything else you would like to discuss?”

4/6

CHAPTER 1360

“That’s it for now,” the Sheriff replied. “Jack will be heading to Bismarck later to talk to Detective Matthews. Bismarck PD found Cris’ car parked at Elk Cliff.”

“Maybe it’s another suicide or maybe Pete pushed him off the cliff,” I blurted out.

“I never thought of that,” Sheriff Combs said. “Cris plunging to his death from the top of Elk Cliff is a possibility. I’ll see to it that the Bismarck Police investigates the matter. The sooner we find him, the sooner we can get answers.” He stood up and spritzed some cologne on himself. His hair was oily and his jaw was sporting a five o’clock shadow. I bet he wasn’t able to go home and take a shower.

I stood up and followed him out of his office towards the interrogation room. He opened the

door without knocking and ushered me inside.

room.

Everyone seated at the long rectangular table in the middle of the up except for

Ford, who was handcuffed and looking quite miserable.

I noticed a tall handsome young man with dark hair in a nice expensive suit with the

Martins. He had a big smile on his face despite the worried expressions on both Thomas and

Norma's faces.

He kind of reminded me of Dom and Bo. Same hair and skin color. However, unlike Dom and

Bo who dressed simply, this one screamed money. He was clean-shaven with a lithe, muscular build underneath that suit he was wearing.

Honestly, I'd feel insecure standing beside this man, but I was a Cohen while he was a

nobody in this town.

As I approached, I caught a whiff of his expensive cologne. He extended his hand, marveling at the smooth skin of his palm. took

"Attorney Lincoln Murphy, Mayor Cohen," he said as we shook hands. He had a good eye contact. He oozed confidence. "It's an honor to meet you."

"Likewise, Attorney Murphy. You're the one who bought the McDowell residence if I'm mistaken. I saw the surprise and delight in his eyes.

"I forgot this is a small town. Everyone knows everyone," he said, letting go of my hand.

"I make it my business to know everyone," I replied. "I'm guessing you will be representing Norma Martin as well? Yes?"

5/6

CHAPTER 136 Conspiracy

| thought | would get another surprised reaction, but he stared at me unfazed at the question, a small smile playing on his lips. "I'm guessing you saw everything on social media," he said unexpectedly. "I think it's time we all sat down and placed all our cards on the table."

| quickly took out my phone and saw Lindsay Hartman's suicide note with a hash tag asking for Ford's release.

| scowled. | needed to call Lisa. She was supposed to be in charge of all of this.

| glanced at Sheriff Combs. His face was dark and expressionless.

"Sure, let's place all our cards on the table," he said grimly.

Chapter Comments.

4

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Chapter 137

CHAPTER 137 Guttural

Péte McDowell

"There's someone here who wants to talk to you the hospital director said. "He says it's really important."

Only a handful of people knew the hospital director was on my payroll and of course, Cris

was one of them.

| did send Cris a message informing him | was in the hospital before that male nurse took. my phone. Could this someone be Cris?

| doubted it. He would have called me himself instead. Why go through all that trouble?

Unless he was in trouble.

| thought of what to say, but decided it was best if | kept my mouth shut.

Better let this someone do all the talking.

“Mr. M, this person says he was hired by Cris Murdock,” the hospital director said breaking the awkward silence and this time | noticed the fear in his voice. “He also wants me to tell

you

he was hired to deliver a package to you. A package with blonde hair and blue eyes.” My heart began to beat faster in anticipation.

Cris hired someone to kidnap Virtue!

| knew it. That as shole couldn’t stop the voices in his head. He wanted Virtue Sullivan so bad, he was willing to be part of the heavy lifting.

Because of Virtue, Cris began having trouble sustaining an erection with other girls. So we’ve been abducting women who looked just like her. Same hair, same build, same blue eyes. Unfortunately, the girl my men abducted last Saturday night said something that pushed him off the edge. | tried to stop him, | did. But he just kept squeezing the tiny bit ch’s neck until her eyes popped out. It wasn’t the ending | was hoping for, but we cashed in on so much money from our viewers that night..

Come to think of it, there was a time Cris kidnapped a girl from Mandan and | clearly remember him saying he had some help. This could possibly be that same guy who helped

him.

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CHAPTER 137 Guttural

It was safe to assume he freaked out when he heard the news of Theodore Cohen's death and immediately skipped town, knowing Liam would come knocking on his door looking for me.

Cris was such a pussy. But he was a pussy with a plan.

I listened intently to the background noise and heard someone whispering. Unfortunately, it didn't sound like Cris.

"Mr. M, he understands your previous drop off point has been compromised, so he is asking for another drop site. If you want him to deliver the package on your doorstep, just give him a location and he'll take care of the rest," the hospital director explained.

I was wrong thinking Joy Taylor abducted Cris. He probably ditched his car on Elk Cliff so Liam wouldn't be able to track him... and I believe he was somewhere here in Bismarck.

If only I could smile. Our operations will soon resume. The shed behind my cabin was already prepped for Virtue. Sure, Cris knows about the cabin, but he has only been there once. I doubt if he even remembers how to get there.

My lips parted to utter a reply, but I paused. I had to be sure.

I mean, why would Cris need to send his hired gun to see the hospital director?

"I need proof Cris Murdock hired him. Ask him how did Cris get in contact with him?" Cris wasn't adept in using the computer. All our equipment was professionally set up by a private contractor and if he ever needed help elsewhere he usually asked Lisa.

S\$ hit! I sent him to delete all our videos. God, I'm so stupid. He probably didn't even

"Through phone, Mr. M. The number Cris Murdock used to contact him is 374— However, for safety reasons, Mr. Murdock is no longer using that number," the hospital director answered, enumerating the numbers of the burner phone Cris uses for our extracurricular activities. Liam, Jack, and Dan didn't know about Cris' other number

there was a possibility Lisa did. I understood why Cris had to ditch his burner phone.

And why go through the hospital director?" I asked.

Mr. M, Cris Murdock believes no one else can be trusted. Good answer.

"Drop the package off at a small gas station along the road leading to Red River... midnight after the Honey Bee Spring Formal celebration, I instructed. Once Virtue is in chains, I'll have one of the mercenaries kill him. "I want the package unspoiled and unharmed. Once 12/6

CHAPTER 137 Guttural

see the package, I will reward you generously."

you

"I hear loud and clear," a low guttural unfamiliar male voice said, sending a chill up my spine. 'I'll deliver VS at that location... midnight. I'll be in touch."

He uttered the initials VS... That confirms it.

I heard the hospital director heave a huge sigh of relief. I suspected the mysterious man had

gone.

"He had a gun to my back! Mr. M, you owe me twice now," he mumbled angrily. "And by the way, a package with blonde hair and blue eyes? Are you into black market or gun selling too?"

"Doc, may I remind you, you're on a need to know basis and in this situation, you don't need to know. Before you hang up, I want these rods off of me by next week. I have a date with a breathtakingly beautiful woman and I don't want to scare her. I'll have someone pick you up. Once these rods are off, I'll pay you twice the amount that was promised."

I hung up feeling a bit better.

After giving my private army final instructions to burn Huff Hills Mansion to the ground and find better living quarters, I excused myself and went to my makeshift room to lie down. I needed to rest so I could heal faster.

After the Ol' Barn, I'll allow Liam to have his fun until the Honey Bee Spring celebration... that's if he survives the Ol' Barn. But knowing Liam, he won't be there. But there was Jack and the Sheriff. They may not be Liam, but the two of them dead would be icing on the cake.

I'll keep my distance and stay quiet until next week.

| closed my eyes, imagining the terror in Virtue's eyes as | f ucked her perfect pu ssy.

SHE WAS WORTH THE WAIT.

Sam

It wasn't easy tracking down the hospital director especially when the information given to you is common public information, but after sharing a cigarette with a janitor of the hospital, | discovered something not even Autumn knew.

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CHAPTER 137 Guttural

parked beside a red Toyota in front of a room.

| bought myself a cup of coffee and waited patiently in my car, knowing the doctor and his companion would be coming out soon to go to work. As expected, the door opened and a pretty young brunette wearing blue scrubs quickly exited the motel room and entered the red Toyota. She was all smiles and looked quite refreshed.

About five minutes after she drove off, the door opened again. A gray haired man in a dark blue suit came out carrying a dark brown leather briefcase in one hand with his car key in the other, unlocking the car doors of his Lexus.

Unexpectedly, he suddenly paused in front of his car like he had forgotten something and rushed back into the room.

| saw my chance. | walked out of my car, climbed into the backseat of his car right behind seat. the driver's seat and quietly waited, positioning my gun at the middle of the driver's

The dumb fuck was so distracted he didn't even notice me as he entered the car. He only saw me when he turned to place his briefcase in the backseat.

"No sudden movements, Doc," I whispered in his ear. "I have a Walther PDP aimed at your back. Hands on the steering wheel so I can see them."

"W-what do you want?" He asked. "I have money. I can give you ten grand, just... just let me

live."

"I don't need your money, but I do need you to do something for me. I need you to get on your phone and call Pete McDowell, I instructed.

"P-Pete McDowell is on vacation. No one knows where he="

"Doc, do you really want to die for Pete? Because if I can't get in touch with him then you, I'll just shoot you and find someone else who can help me. So, what is it gonna

or call?" I asked, not giving him much of a choice.

me. So,

"F-fine, I'll call him. J-just let me get my phone. It's in my pocket," the doctor said, pointing to his pants' pocket.

"Sure. Just reach in slowly and place your phone in your dashboard holder. Put it on speakerphone so I can hear what he has to say." novel bin

I whispered into the doctor's ear while he spoke to McDowell for me. Pete sounded funny. 4/6

CHAPTER 137 Guttural

like he couldn't open his mouth to talk. I suspected he had some work done to his face.

midnight

"Drop the package off at a small gas station along the road leading to Red River.... after the Honey Bee Spring Formal celebration. I want the package

unspoiled and unharmed. Once | see the package, | will reward you generously,” he said.

“| hear you loud and clear,” | said in a sinister voice. “I’ll deliver VS at that location... midnight. I’ll be in touch.”

| quickly exited the doctor’s car, walked away and hid in an alley beside the motel. | didn’t want the doctor to see my car and memorize my plate number. | liked my car... it had everything | needed tucked away in the backseat.

After he drove out of the motel’s parking lot towards the direction of New Salem, | entered my car and drove off in the opposite direction while dialing Beaufort.

“Pete has given me instructions to drop off Virtue Sullivan at a gas station along the ad

leading to Red River at midnight after the Honey Bee Spring Formal,” | informed him.

“He actually believed Cris hired you,” Beaufort said chuckling. “According to Sebastian, he has a cabin in that area. I’ll have Cristos give us a satellite image of the area so we can form a plan. Good work, Sam.”

“What else do you need me to do?” | asked, hoping he had something more exciting for me than stalking Noah Jensen. After the vigil, | followed him to Highland Oaks to the Hughes residence. According to the tracker | have on his car, Noah was still there. Last night, when Beaufort called me to take care of Cris’ car, | actually felt relieved stand sitting in my car all night, doing nothing. Honestly, | was envious of Link a Link got to shoot some old lady while he was at the hospital keeping an eye on N Max, well, he was having fun torturing someone for information.

| couldn't question Beaufort though... he thinks Noah is up to something. But from w seen, Noah just likes shuffling from one girlfriend to the next... and boy, does he have b taste in women.

Idn’t

“Get some rest, Sam. Later tonight, | need you wide-eyed and perky. You’ll be assisting me at the Ol’ Barn. Just keep an eye on Noah through that tracker you have on his car and if you hear anything out of the ordinary, call me.”

“Sure thing, Beaufort,” | said, pleased | was going to see some action tonight.

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CHAPTER 137 Guttural

| decided to head to Mandan HQ to grab some grub. There was no way | could get some sleep knowing Beaufort was awake. Chapter Comments.

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Chapter 138

CHAPTER 138 Leak

Joy

54%

Cristos and | were on our way to go see Lisa. He needed to hack into her phone to get Pete’s

number and all other information which could prove vital to our plans.

Earlier, Liam called to invite me to dinner and to tell me he was opening the Cohen Mansion to the townsfolk, giving us the opportunity to bug his place up the wazoo.

While | waited for Cristos to finish his work, | changed into a maroon pleated flared skirt, a

black short sleeved mock neck fitted top and black stiletto boots, opened the store and

restocked the shelves. Dina, who came in right after | opened the store wearing oversized black sunglasses, took the initiative to interview the long line of applicants, who were eagerly gathered in front, acting like she was nursing a hangover.

When | was done restocking, | went next door to Dom's to inform Stanley that Sebastian was

sick and that he was in charge until Sebastian was better. Before he could ask to visit his boss, | told him Sebastian was in isolation, confined to his room, as a precaution. Stanley quietly nodded his head then scurried off to inform the rest of the employees of Sebastian's

absence.

Xavier, De Luca and Lou went out to place CCTV cameras as near to the Ol' Barn as they possibly could since most of that land was owned by Liam. Xavier, who planned to be in the vicinity later at midnight just in case he needed to intervene, was also scouting for possible hiding spots while he waited for news on Pete and the Martins.

My phone suddenly pinged alerting me to the social media page of a tabloid media outlet town. Most of their posts were gossip, speculations, and myths, yet, they were also the first to post when something truly atrocious happened in New Salem, especially if a Cohen was involved. With all the campaign ads of Sarah Hughes in between their posts, it wasn't much of a surprise seeing all the black propaganda they had against Liam.

| took a look at their post and was taken aback at what | read. Apparently, Lindsay Hartman did have motive to kill Theodore Cohen.

Aside from Lindsay Hartman's suicide note, the post included a backstory on Theodore Cohen as a suspect for the death of her fiancé approximately three decades ago. The story certainly portrayed Lindsay Hartman in a different light... specifically as an unforgiving. victim of gruesome circumstances.

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CHAPTER 138 Leak

| decided to grab some coffee at Bo's before | went back to my shop. At Bo's Cafe, | noticed.

Noah standing in line. He was wearing a black track suit of a well known sports brand which wasn't his usual style,

"| didn't know you jogged in the morning," | said behind him. He turned around with a startled look on his face.

"| didn't know you came to Bo's so early in the morning," he replied. | rolled my eyes at him.

"It's past nine in the morning, Noah. Besides | work next door, remember?" | pointed out. He chuckled as he nodded his head. "Anyway, it's good that | bumped into you. I'm still waiting for your office to send me the remainder of my bill."

"| apologize, Virtue. It's been a really chaotic week," he said, after he quickly ordered two lattes. "Someone's moved into the old McDowell Residence and | still have the funeral home to deal with. Plus, | have a list of renovations | need to oversee. Why don't you come by my office later this afternoon and pick up your bill?"

"| can't this afternoon. | have to pick up a friend at the airport," | said after | finished ordering three cappuccinos. "I'll just drop by tomorrow... in the afternoon."

"Three cappuccinos?" He asked, his eyebrows raised. He was so nosy...

"One's for Chip and the other for my clerk. What about you? You ordered two lattes."

"One's for a friend," he answered vaguely. "So who's this friend you're going to pick up?"

"Just a girlfriend of mine. She's going to help me with the wedding," | answered. His face suddenly became dark. It was obvious he was against the wedding. "Speaking a girlfriend, have you heard Ni-"

"| still believe you're rushing into things with Liam, but that's just it... it seems I'm the one who thinks that way," he said, sounding frustrated as he grabbed his disposable cup. coffee. "You still have time to think things through, Virtue."

Honestly, | think you're making huge mistake marrying Liam. | just... | just want you to be happy and | know you won't be happy with him. See you, Virtue.”

Before | could speak to defend myself, Noah quickly turned around and walked away. Well, his opinion didn't matter anyway. After receiving my order, | rushed towards Bo's storefront windows and saw Noah enter the passenger's side of a silver BMW 5- Series. | couldn't see who the driver was because the

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CHAPTER 138 Leak

windshield was tinted, but | had a strong feeling it was Sarah Hughes. Nicole out, Sarah in.

It was possible that Sarah, being the jealous girlfriend, could have hired the truck driver to hit Nicole's car. Yet, Xavier had said the driver was from Houston pointing to the Angels of Darkness. Was it really Pete behind Nicole's accident? | sighed. The question of who was behind Nicole's car accident was still left unanswered.

| headed back to my office hoping Cristos was done.

He was seated at my desk, looking at the screen of his phone and chuckling to himself.

“What's so funny?” | asked Cristos, placing the cup of coffee in front of him. | took a peek at the screen of his phone and saw an image of Lindsay Hartman's note. “Are you the one who leaked Hartman's suicide note?” He shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly, but his lips were curved into a little wicked smile.

“Maybe,” he answered slyly. “I might've pressed the sent button on my laptop accidentally. You can't blame me... | haven't had any sleep.”

“Link must be happy then,” | said, sitting down on my couch. “The charges against Ford will be dropped and he and Tomas Martin can be bestfriends.”

“Leading us to Pete’s mysterious capo,” Cristos said, placing his laptop back in his bag. “I was listening to Dan’s conversation from earlier this morning and | heard someone called Lisa informing her about the contract Joy Taylor made with Ortiz. | heard Dan say, “That lunatic is here watching us.” | suspect he was referring to Pete. | need to get that number, so | can triangulate Pete’s location. Before we head to Bismarck, let’s go pay Lisa a visit.”

“No problem. We can act like you’re going house hunting,” | suggested, astonished listening device in Dan’s house. “How were you able to bug Dan?”

“Hello... | went to his house so we could go to the airport together, remember? | saw opportunity and | grabbed it,” he replied, zipping his bag up and standing up from my chair. “You know what? | think | should buy a house in Hillcrest. | can watch without eve having to leave the comfort of my home. And if | play my cards right, Dan will lead me straight to their laboratory. It's there somewhere, | just need to push Dan a little further fo him to show me.”

“By the way, | just got off the phone with Liam, | quickly mentioned before | could forget. “He’s holding his father’s wake at the mansion later and opening it to the townsfolk. He

wants me and K iki to have dinner with him before heading there.”

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CHAPTER 138 Leak

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“I'll have everyone come and place bugginn all four corners of that house. Ever since the Chimes’ fire, the bug in their study ha ssh seen much action. Now we have a chance to really bug the place,” he said, winking at mee.

Suddenly, both our phones pinged. | swipeddelheck what it was and saw the notification of the social media page of the tabloid media cutitec once again. | ignored it and decided to

check it later.

"I thought the same," I replied. "I'll have Kili rosana around like a fascinated little girl. I'll even have her go upstairs."

Cristos eyes widened as he swiped

"I'll make sure she has all the bugs she needs through his phone. "There are two groups of townsfolk assembling in front of the Sheriff's station. One group thinks Ford is innocent while the other group thinks he's guilty. I better alert Link. He must be in the middle of negotiations. Lisan wants that pharmacy, but without much leverage, I doubt if Tomas Martin will cave. Well, it's in this to give anyway."

Well, Liam actually doesn't need the pharmacy. He can open up one of his own."

That'll take time, Virtue, and more capital. The easiest way is it a @gab control of the pharmacy in existence," Cristos argued. "You have to think ke alam. Why go through all that trouble when you can just take it?"

You're right," I said, agreeing with him. "If the Angels of Darkness think they can 1100 nopolize the business, they should think again. Knowing Liam, he'll probably take the

pharmacy by brute force."

I'm counting on that and I think Bo is too," Cristos replied, "so when Liam thinks it was Ortiz. Then, they will find themselves at the mercy of one Viite Cubennligst to tell you know, I heard Dan talking to Liam. Liam wants the wedding to next week. He'll be applying for your marriage license later this afternoon. It'll

be a smile.

Seems like everything is going on schedule. Bo will be happy to hear this. If you're done let's go to Lissa's office now. You know Kiki doesn't like to wait." I stood up from the couch but Cristos raised his hand to stop me from leaving.

"Hold on, I need to call Bo," Cristos said as he placed his phone to his ear. "Bo, the Sheriff is planning to have a hot deputy named Randy killed by Bismarck Police and Liam is having an open house later tonight. He paused and listened to Xavier. "Okay. That sounds simple. I'll make that anonymous call then. He paused again. "Sure, we'll call you once Kiki is in the

car.”

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CHAPTER 138 Leak

“Anonymous call?” | asked after he hung up.

“Bo wants me to alert Bismarck Police about an assassination,” he replied. “If all goes well, Riley keeps breathing while Randy ends up in police custody. Either way, someone will talk.”

As Cristos parked his car in front of Lisa’s office, | felt a bit nervous... guilty in a way.

Here | am going to talk to her as if nothing was wrong when | just killed her husband last

night.

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Chapter 139

CHAPTER 139 K iki’s Appearance

“Aw, this is so sweet of you, Virtue,” Lisa said after taking the red silk scarf out from the paper bag. “This will go great with my designer purse. Thank you.” She placed the scarf and the paper bag in one of her desk drawers.

"I missed you at the opening yesterday," I said, "but I heard you were really busy. How's Cris, by the way? I heard he was at home...sick." I needed to pretend to be the thoughtful friend or she would definitely suspect something was up if I didn't ask about him.

"Oh, Cris? He's actually doing much better. He's, uhm, still at home, though, recovering," she mumbled absentmindedly while tidying up the papers on her desk, avoiding eye contact. "Yeah..... business has been doing well despite the chaos." She pressed a key on her laptop and closed it. "But enough about me. So how can I help you? Do you already have plans to sell? I mean, after you and Liam get married, I assume you'll be moving into the Cohen Mansion, yes?"

"I guess I will be selling my house eventually, but I'm not here to put my home on the

market just yet," I said, my brow furrowed. "Why do you ask? Has someone been in

about my house?"

"Actually, yes, there is someone asking about your house," she answered to my surprise. "And

I think you know her. Her face is on every poster in town."

"Sarah Hughes? The one running against Liam? S-She asked about my house?" I asked,

acting shocked. Of course... one of Noah's lovers wanted my house. I surmised she wanted to

be closer to him. "Doesn't she live in Highland Oaks? Why would she want to buy my house

when she lives in such a nice neighborhood?"

"I'm guessing she wants to finally leave the nest Lisa said. "Both her bookstore and shop are doing well, I've heard. Anyway, she called me up yesterday asking me to once you put the house up for sale. She told me she is willing to pay whatever you want for it."

"She said that, huh? Whatever I want... I'll take that into consideration when I make my decision," I told her, glancing at Cristos who had moved forward, placing his small man pu on Lisa's desk. He was looking at his phone, tapping his foot impatiently. It was obvious he needed more time. "By the way, have you heard about Nicole? Bo told me she figured into an accident last night."

"Yes, I did," she said, her bright smile turning into a frown. "Jack told me this morning. I'm going to visit her at the hospital later after work."

"I'll probably visit her tomorrow when I'm free. Will you be going to Theodore Cohen's wak

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CHAPTER

ED 120K

Appearance

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later tonight?" I asked nonchalantly.

"I don't know," she answered, looking hesitant. "Where will it be held anyway? Chimes is still

under construction."

"At Cohen Mansion. Liam called me a while ago and said he will be opening the mansion to the public so everyone can pay their final respects to his father," I answered.

"He is?!" She asked stunned. "I've only been there twice my whole entire life. Once with my parents and the other time was when Liam and Cris won the election." She sounded excited. "Count me in. I'll be going."

"Great! I'll see you later tonight then," I replied, smiling brightly. I was about to tell her about K iki, but Cristos tapped his fingers on Lisa's desk, signaling he was done.

"Sorry, delivery problems. Bo's delivery men can't distinguish the difference between Curacao and Cointreau," Cristos finally uttered, placing his phone in

his pocket and his bag onto his Hap. He was grinning from ear to ear, looking triumphant. "Actually, Lisa, we're here because Chip wants to buy a house," I said, pointing at Chip with

my thumb.

"Chip, are you sick of sharing?" Lisa asked amused.

"I am," he rolled his eyes, getting into character. "It's hard taking care of two big babies." Lisa giggled.

"Then, why don't you wait for Virtue's house to go on the market? After she weds, have any use for it," she said, winking. "I can forget Sarah Hughes ever called me ju

you."

"The Old Taylor House is a gorgeous house, I admit, but I want to be surrounded by y people... closer to my age. Her neighborhood is for the old and sickly," Cristos scoffed.

"That's the reason why I like it. It's quiet," I pointed out.

"Too quiet," Cristos said with a click of his tongue. "And I want something new. Not

haunted." novelbin

"The Old Taylor House isn't haunted, Chip, Lisa said giggling while she opened her drawer. She took out a small pamphlet and slid it to Cristos. "So I'm guessing Hillcrest then. We have five newly constructed houses on the market. One of them is near the clubhouse along the 3/6

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CHAPTER 139 Ki ki's Appearance

lake, but because it is on the lake, the asking price is higher."

"Lisa, price isn't an issue, Cristos replied. "I would prefer being on the lake... I heard the view is breathtaking. As for your house, Virtue, I think Bo might be interested."

“Bo? I'll keep him in mind then,” | said, nodding my head.

54%

“So, when are you free for viewing, Chip?” Lisa asked, opening her laptop. “How about later this afternoon after | show Mr. Shepherd the house at the Taylor cul-de-sac.” She pointed to Chef who didn't even bother looking up from what he was reading. “| can't today. Virtue and | are going to Bismarck. How about tomorrow?” Cristos asked.

“Oh? You're going to Bismarck? What for?” Lisa asked us.

“I'm picking up a girlfriend of mine to help with the wedding,” | answered. “I'm thinking of being a June bride. What do you think?” “You'll make a lovely June bride, Virtue, Lisa said, grinning at me. “Alright then. I'll reserve the house for you, Chip, and we can go see that house tomorrow.”

“Look at the time, Virtue. Your friend will be arriving soon, Cristos said unexpectedly,

looking at his watch. “We need to go. What time should | come by tomorrow, Lisa?”

“How about two in the afternoon? There's a couple who will be viewing another house in

Hillcrest with us.”

“Sure, two will be fine,” Cristos replied. “Come on, Virtue, | still need to drop by the pub

before we drive to Bismarck.”

We stood up and said our goodbyes. Once we were inside Chip's car, he smiled at me.

“| got all her information including her offshore account. I'll check if she has ever benefitted from Cris's extracurricular activities later,” he said as he turned on the ignition. “I got a message from Bo, by the way. It seems Pete has agreed to a time and a place.”

“Oh yeah? Where and when?” | asked.

"A gasoline station near Red River. We need to deliver you at midnight after the Spring Honey Bee celebration."

"One week from today." | replied. "That'll give us enough time to make plans."

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CHAPTER 139 K iki's Appearance

"We'll change cars on our way to Bismarck so we can take a quick look at the area," Cristos. said as we drove to the pub. "I just need to get my signal jammer and grab some CCTV cameras at the pub first."

"| think it's a good thing K iki is coming," | said. "Why deliver just one girl when you can

deliver two?"

"That's a good suggestion," Cristos said, nodding his head. "Let's just hope Bo thinks so too. Were you able to place the bug?" "Of course. Right at the edge of her desk where she can't see it," | answered, winking at him.

After a quick stop at the pub, we drove to Mandan to change cars. From there, we drove to Bismarck Airport hoping K iki wasn't too pissed at us for making her wait.

"Do you see her?" | asked Cristos as we searched for her. We were both outside, leaning against a silver Mercedes-Benz.

"Let me call her," Cristos said, dialing his phone. "Maybe she took a taxi-"

"Primo, I'm here. Sorry, for the wait, but | had to make sure all of my gear was complete. Drakos, that imbecile, misplaced one of my luggages," a husky female voice said.

Cristos and | both turned our heads to the source of the voice and stood frozen to the spot.

K iki's appearance left us... speechless.

Her natural dark hair was now a dark blonde. Her black make-up and piercings were gone. She was wearing a light tan trench coat dress and black high-heeled sandals, a far cry from her usual gothic look. Kiki's make-up was also light and natural, with a neutral shade of pink, a color she utterly disliked just like her brother.

In my opinion, she looked absolutely stunning. The natural color of her eyeshadow made her light brown eyes pop out and the heels accentuated her long legs... although I always liked the goth look on her. Only a few people could pull that look off and she was one of them.

"Oh my God, Kiki," Cristos said. "You look just like-"

"Virtue? That's the point. We're supposed to be bestfriends, so I thought we should look alike," she answered, handing him her luggage. Plus, this way, no one will suspect I'm

packing underneath my dress."

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CHAPTER 139 Kiki's Appearance

"You're beautiful, Kiki," I said, smiling at her. "Now, I have a proper partner in crime." Her lips curved in a wicked smile. "Exactly. You and I are going to make the men of New Salem go down on their hands and knees and beg," Kiki said. "Of all the scum on this earth, it's the rapists I detest the most... especially the rapist who profits from it."

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Chapter 140

CHAPTER 139 K iki's Appearance

Joy

As we parked in front of Lisa's office, Cristos reminded me to keep Lisa distracted while he hacked into her phone and to place a bug on her desk.

And since he was also going to hack into her laptop using a small gadget he bought off a friend enlisted in the military, I needed to keep Lisa occupied so she wouldn't suspect.

I did some breathing exercises to calm my nerves before exiting Cristos' Range Rover. I was going to look Lisa dead in the eyes and act as if had no clue something had happened to her husband. I needed to act cool.

He Inside, we found Chef seated on one of the leather sofas, casually reading a newspaper. was wearing a white long sleeve shirt, a hideous multi-colored argyle vest, khaki slacks, and brown loafers. To complete his look, he had gold rimmed eyeglasses on and his gray hair was slicked back, neatly tied at the back of his head.

I resisted the urge to laugh. His outfit was a stark contrast to his usual angry wrestler look.

ng on her

We ignored him and went straight to Lisa who was seated in front of her desk, typing

laptop.

"Chip... Virtue... What brings you two here?" Lisa greeted us enthusiastically. She was wearing a black high waist pencil cut midi skirt which accentuated her small waist and a peach-colored silk blouse. Her hair was styled in a high bun showing off her high cheekbones. She undoubtedly looked cheerful... as if a heavy burden had been lifted off her

chest.

The nervousness I had felt before entering her office quickly dissipated. I smiled brightly at her, placing a small pink paper bag on top of her desk.

“Please, have a seat.” She gestured at the two chairs in front of her desk. “I believe

congratulations are in order. I heard about your engagement on social media, Virtue... and of course, the opening of your new store.”

this

“Thank you, Lisa. By the way, is for you. A twilly scarf for your bag,” I said before sitting down in one of the two chairs while Cristos sat in the other. He waved at Lisa, then gestured to his phone, making it look like he was taking care of something important. Lisa smiled at him, nodding her head in understanding.

1/6

Wed, Apr

The Joy of Revenge

CHAPTER 140 Thirty-six Complaints

Liam

F ucking New Salem Tribune. That ugly b itch Sarah Hughes was at it again and Lisa... she was so preoccupied she didn't even pull it down.

“Sure, let's put all our cards on the table,” the Sheriff said to the Martin's at

Lincoln Murphy was awfully handsome for an attorney and looked like he had money. No doubt the crooks he represented paid a pretty penny for his services.

He was

wearing a nicely tailored suit and smelled like expensive cologne, unlike the distict attorney, who was old and smelled like worn socks.

The Sheriff extended his hand to the young attorney as he introduced himself.

“Lincoln Murphy, I’m Nathan Combs, the sheriff of New Salem. Please, take a seat.” He

gestured for all of us to sit down while he went through the folder he was carrying. “There

has been a development on the Theodore Cohen case that we would like to discuss.”

I took a seat in between Jack and the district attorney, right across the table from the Martins. I nodded my head at Thomas Martin in greeting while he did the same.

“There’s a development on the case aside from my aunt’s note? Is this about Joy Taylor?” Norma Martin asked, a hopeful sound in her voice. I looked at her with an incredulous look

on my face.

She knows about the conversation Lisa had with Pete?

“What? No. What does Joy Taylor have to do with this?” The Sheriff asked.

“My client is under the impression a woman named Joy Taylor is, uhm, responsible for the recent murders in New Salem, Sheriff,” Lincoln Murphy explained with a puzzled expression on his face. Of course. He was new in town and didn’t know anything about Joy Taylor.

“Norma, I don’t know what prescription drug you’re on, but the new development has nothing to do with Joy Taylor,” I stressed as Sheriff Combs took a seat beside Jack.

“I’m sorry, but who is this Joy Taylor and why would she want to murder people?” Lincoln Murphy asked.

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CHAPTER 140 Thirty-six Complaints.

“Joy Taylor was raped and brutally assaulted right here in New Salem almost ten years ago,” I answered. “But I assure everyone, she has nothing to do with my father’s death.”

“Alright, Lincoln Murphy said skeptically, his face scrunched up, looking utterly confused.” So let’s get down to business then. What have you discovered, Sheriff Combs?”

“We recently found the body of Lindsay Hartman at the hospital parking lot. According to the medical examiner, her cause of death is consistent with suicide.” Norma Martin gasped

as soon as she heard the news.

“Aunt Lindsay is dead? The Tribune wasn’t making that story up?” She squeaked. The Sheriff nodded his head. “That’s not possible. She was planning to sit on the beach and sip mojitos all day long.” Norma’s eyes quickly filled with tears. “It can’t be possible.”

She lowered her face, wiping her eyes with the handkerchief her ex-husband gave her.

The Sheriff, knowing Norma and her aunt were close, gave her a moment to compose herself before he continued.

“The medical examiner found a note in Lindsay Hartman’s pocket. In the note, she confesses to murdering Theodore Cohen. What I want to know is what motive could she possibly have had that would drive her to kill Theodore?” The Sheriff asked. “Have you

read the article of The New Salem Tribune, Sheriff?” Lincoln Murphy asked. The Sheriff shook his head. “To summarize everything, Lindsay Hartman believed Theodore Cohen killed her fiancé in cold blood... and that, Sheriff, is motive. According to the article, there was bad blood between Hartman’s fiancé and the Cohens regarding a piece of land. Apparently, the Cohens were using a certain property without the knowledge of the owner, certain Joseph Summers. When Joseph Summers discovered this, a witness stated Joseph went to confront the Cohens, however he never came back alive.” He opened his briefcase and slid a photograph of a man with a bullet wound right

between his eyes. "My client, Norma Martin, attests to the fact that the day before Lindsay Hartman's fiancé was found dead, then Mayor Robert Cohen was able to acquire the land." He paused and took a newspaper clipping from his briefcase, placing it beside the photograph. "Sheriff, do you remember this man? It says here in this newspaper clipping you were still a young deputy at the time and that the bullets match a Ruger P90 Series. I saw a video of your father, Mayor Cohen, doing an interview with one of the news outlets here in North Dakota and he said his most beloved gun was a Ruger P90 series."

"That's all speculation, counsel," the district attorney said, hoping to end Lincoln Murphy's narration of the past.

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CHAPTER 140 Thirty-six Complaints

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I never knew my father killed someone. I never thought he could. He always had the Sheriff and his deputies do his dirty work.

I remember the day my father found out what I did to Joy Taylor. I saw the disappointment in his eyes when he learned we left Joy breathing.

No wonder... he was a cold-blooded murderer in his youth.

"Speculation, huh? The police never found the gun and Theodore Cohen didn't have one single witness to corroborate his alibi. But of course, the Sheriff here, being under the tutelage of Robert Cohen, couldn't just bite the hand that fed him," Lincoln Murphy said, chuckling. "Norma Martin here says her aunt kept a diary of what happened thirty years ago. How about we go to Lindsay Hartman's house and find that diary. It'll probably shed more light on what really happened thirty years ago and how the OP Barn ended up in Cohen hands when that land used to be owned by a Joseph Summers." He paused dramatically, then, unexpectedly, he raised his eyes and looked straight at me. "If I'm not mistaken,

Sheriff, I read a news article about the disappearance of a young Joan Summers. They must

-be related.”

| scowled at him. He obviously did his research.

He was probably one of the people who thought Cohens were s c u m of the earth. Nah... he

was a defense attorney. He probably liked the fact | was s c u m of the earth.

“Counsel, let’s stick to the facts, please. Besides, Theodore Cohen isn’t the suspect here. Your clients are,” the Sheriff said, showing a document to Lincoln Murphy. “Your client, Norma Martin, sent five hundred thousand dollars to Lindsay Hartman the same day Theodore Cohen died. What | see is a conspiracy to commit murder.”

“What | see is a loan being repaid. These are text messages between my client and her aunt,” Lincoln Murphy said, showing the Sheriff a sheet of paper. “Let’s face it, neither Norma nor Ford had any motive to kill Theodore Cohen unlike Lindsay Hartman. You see, Sheriff Combs, revenge has no expiration date. Lindsay Hartman bided her time and when an opportunity finally presented itself, she took it. I have records showing the former mayor never had himself admitted at St. Elizabeth Hospital, until recently, and he would always go to Bismarck to have himself checked by his doctor there. It seems he was avoiding St. Elizabeth's.”

“See?” Ford Martin exclaimed, standing up from his chair. “I’m not a murderer.” He lifted his cuffed wrists and gestured at Jack to remove them while his attorney tried to get him to sit back down. “If you can kindly remove these handcuffs, I’d appreciate it. | promise not to sue

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CHAPTER 140 Thirty-six Complaints

just as long as you release me from jail... now.” When Jack didn’t move, Ford shoved his handcuffs in Jack's face. “Uncuff me!” “Now hold on, Ford,” the Sheriff said. “Sit your a s s back down. I’m not finished yet.” He rummaged through the contents of the folder and slid several photographs in front of the Martins and their attorney. “These were taken from your phone, Ford.” Then, he took a document from the folder. “I also got this from the hospital CEO

through the hospital's medical-legal officer who were both so willing to supply me with information. It says here you have thirty-six complaints regarding sexual harassment which the hospital believes Lindsay Hartman disregarded because you and her were related."

"Non-consensual pornography and sexual misconduct is a Class B misdemeanor which carries a sentence of up to one hundred eighty days jail time and a two thousand dollar fine. But Ford, you will be facing thirty-six counts," the district attorney said. "That means a maximum of eighteen years in jail. If the judge is forgiving, he'll probably bring it down to 15 years. However, you will have to serve eighty-five percent of your sentence before you become eligible for parole. That's about thirteen years."

"What is this?" Norma asked angrily. "You can't get my son on murder charges, so you're going to use this? Sexual misconduct? Ford is a handsome, rich, bright young man. Any woman would be privileged to be with him. Those women are lying."

"I'm sorry, gentlemen. I'd like to apologize for my client's outburst," Lincoln Murphy said apologetically, picking up the document with all thirty-six complaints. "It says here my client was blackmailing several of these women using the videos he took. That's a Class B Felony in the state, Ford... The maximum sentence is ten years if proven guilty."

| thought Lincoln Murphy would cave and we could start negotiating terms, but he rummaged through his briefcase, taking out another sheet of paper and sliding it to the

district attorney.

"This is a sworn statement from the hospital director given to me by the medical-legal officer. It says here all the women who filed a complaint against my client were withdrawn, including the women who said they were being blackmailed by Ford Martin. They stated the videos were taken with their consent and Ford never threatened to expose these videos," he said, smugly. "So, if there aren't any other charges, | need you to release my client."

| rubbed my forehead to help ease the anger | was feeling. | saw Thomas Martin grinning from ear to ear like he just won the jackpot.

Not so fast, Thomas. If | can't get the pharmacy through peaceful, negotiations, | will just have to

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CHAPTER 140 Thirty-six Complaints

force you to give me what I want. I'll even kill you if I have to.

Then, I'd get the pharmacy and the diner, increasing my profits. All that money would be

mine.

"May it be clear, Ford Martin, the hospital will not be retaining your services. Effective

yesterday, your employment at St. Elizabeth's has been permanently terminated," the district.

attorney explained. "Since this is still an ongoing investigation, you are not allowed to leave New Salem for the time being." Ford and Norma both smiled brightly as Jack took Ford's cuffs off. I needed to come up with a new plan and fast.

The Sheriff coughed to grab our attention.

but

"This isn't over. All I need is one... just one female nurse to come forward. There is one she hasn't filed a formal complaint yet, but mark my words, she will be. So, Ford, if anything were to happen to her, you will be the first person I arrest. Attorney Murphy, I suggest you tell your client to keep his nose clean from now on." Lincoln Murphy nodded his head and extended his hand for a handshake, but was interrupted.

The door to the interrogation room opened and a deputy popped his head inside.

"Sheriff, come quick. There's an angry mob outside. They want Ford to hang for what he's done.

done."

"I think it would be best if you sell all your assets and leave town, Mr. and Ms. Martin," the district attorney suddenly said in an angry voice. He was still seated, going through the complaints of the thirty-six women on the document the Sheriff had shown Ford and his attorney earlier. "People here aren't so forgiving and that includes me. I didn't notice my daughter is on this list." His statement gave me an idea.

While the rest of them scurried out of the room to see what was going on outside, I quickly took a photo of the document. All I needed to do was leak this bit of information to the

media.

There must be more angry fathers, brothers, boyfriends or even husbands out there. I'll leave it up to them to chase the Martins out of New Salem.

I left the interrogation room and headed straight to the men's room to make a phone call 5/6

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CHAPTER 140 Thirty-six Complaints

"Sir?" Henry answered.

54%

"I'm sending you a photo of a document," I told him. "I need you to leak the information out to the public."

"Why, Sir? What's on it?"

"Names of thirty-six women who Ford Martin sexually abused. I need you to give the information to Greyson Hunter. Tell him I'll pay him double if he leaks the information now."

"Right away, Sir."

Henry, my driver, was always reliable..

Chapter Comments

Elizabeth Johnson

Why did they go to all the trouble of framing Ford just to bail him out. | don't understand???!|

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