

# The Joy of Revenge #Chapter 71 - Read The Joy of Revenge Chapter 71

Chapter 71

CHAPTER 71 Rifle

Liam

We were at New Salem Park with a team of deputies and K-9 dogs searching for whoever took our cargo. | was with Dan who couldn't hide the rage he felt.

"This is your fault, Liam," Dan snarled at me. "If you hadn't-"

"You were at the lab, several feet underground, playing mobster in that cute office of yours when this happened, Dan," | argued. "| was doing one of my duties as mayor of this town when this happened. If there is anyone who should take the blame, it's you. I'm not a Soldier for the Angels of Darkness, you are."

"No one's to blame, boys," the Sheriff said. "Just figure out a way to earn back your losses." Dan laughed, a high shrill laugh... like it was a bad joke.

"Two crates on four boats... That's two million dollars unaccounted for. Do you think we run this little operation on fairy dust? | have people to pay and that includes you, Sheriff!" Dan exclaimed angrily.

Sheriff Combs' eyes narrowed darkly and | noticed his hand reaching for his gun. As much as | wanted him to shoot Dan, this would create a bigger problem. | got in between the both of them and raised my hands to calm them down.

"Stop it... the both of you. Right now, we need to find whoever has that money. Eight crates just don't disappear. This was a well-planned heist which means a team of people did this," | said. Dan backed off while the Sheriff lowered his hand.novelbin

The lights around us, including the lights near the lake, suddenly turned off. | groaned, taking my phone out of my pocket to use as a flashlight.

As we fumbled through the darkness, the Sheriffs phone rang. | saw it was Jack.

“Jack, release Bo Xavier from custody. He was just at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Even the coroner’s initial findings support this,” Sheriff Combs said. He paused to listen to

Jack. “Sure, take his statement and release him. He’s a witness, not our primary suspect.

When you're done, get your ass to New Salem Park. We have an ongoing manhunt.“

“Sheriff, we found Tanner and his boys,” a deputy yelled near the deep side of the lake. “They're out cold.”

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“Get the EMT’s on it,” the Sheriff yelled back while walking towards them. “When they come. to, get their statement. And will someone please get these lights on! They were on just a moment ago!”

Another one of the Sheriff’s men waved his flashlight, gesturing for us to come over. He was crouched near the ground, shining his flashlight on the ground.

“Sheriff, I found motorcycle tracks headed towards Arnold County,” he said, pointing north. The Sheriff pursed his lips angrily. He and the neighboring sheriff had issues.

“Get everyone at the boundary between New Salem and Arnold County. See if we can get CCTV footage in that area,” the Sheriff ordered. Once the suspects enter Arnold County, we have a problem!”

I scratched my head, wondering who would be mad enough to steal cargo from the Angels of Darkness. They knew the schedule, they knew how we were delivering the crates, and judging by the motorcycle tracks, there were many of them. This had to be done by one of the organizations under the Angels of Darkness because the East and West Coast mafia never

interfered with our affairs.

This was an inside job.

\*Sheriff! | found something!" An officer yelled, holding his K-9 back by its leash near the shore of the deep end of the lake. The Sheriff rushed over, almost slipping on the wet ground. | followed him, hoping it was something which could lead us to the thieves.

"What is it, son?" The Sheriff said, panting as he cautiously walked near the murky water. The officer pointed at something on the ground.

The lights finally turned on giving us a clear view of the object. Sheriff Combs crouched down, taking his phone out to take pictures.

"It's the sniper rifle," the Sheriff mumbled. He pocketed his phone and put on a pair of latex gloves.

He picked up the weapon which appeared to have been disposed by the sniper, however the sniper missed the lake by a few feet.

"| need the rest of you to head to Arnold County, the Sheriff said, walking back to the entrance of the park. "I'm sending this to the lab for fingerprints and DNA."

Before Dan could turn around and follow the Sheriff, | grabbed his arm to stop him.

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"Don't say a word of this to Capo Bastone. I'll fix this," | said. Dan scoffed.

o

million dollars?" Dan asked, yanking his arm away.

sn't know how many crates were being delivered tonight. Usually we bring

all we need to do is lie. Second, | can funnel some of the campaign money over up the heist. Everyone will be receiving their usual pay. Next delivery, | will be picking up the money at Bismarck myself," | said. "Dan, come on, can | count on you to do this for me?" He looked at me, then nodded his head.

“Fine, my lips are sealed. Just give me enough to continue operations and pay who we need to pay off,” he said. “I don’t like this, but we have bigger problems. Cynthia McDowell is dead and someone will have to pay in blood.”

I sighed. I had more than enough money to cover this, but I had plans... sadly, those plans

had to wait.

Now, my main problem was finding whoever killed Cynthia McDowell.

Sebastian

I parked my car in front of Marla Lawrence’s house in Jack Emery’s rundown neighborhood. On the driveway was a old red pick- up truck that I believed had seen better days.

Marla’s hand was on my thigh, rubbing and squeezing it, while she nibbled on my ear and kissed my neck. Honestly, I felt like I was cheating on Joy, but when Marla left me to gather her things in the dressing room, Joy gave me her consent.

“I saw the exchange between you and Marla earlier,” Joy mumbled while we stood next to each other drinking.

“She carries around a black sling bag,” I whispered in her ear. Joy nodded her head in

understanding.

“If we need her, then do it,” she quickly uttered, then grinned at someone behind me. It was Marla carrying a backpack. “Congratulations, sweetheart. Do come by the boutique so I can dress you, okay? Dom, make sure our Miss Honey Bee gets home safely.” She winked at me, then sashayed towards Noah who was openly staring at her breasts. I glanced at Cristos who placed a bottle of vodka on top of the bar. I told Marla to wait for me at the entrance while I gave last minute instructions.

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be going to the rendezvous point. If anyone asks, I'm with Marla," | said, grabbing the

on my crutch, brushing against my cock. | grabbed her by the shoulders. back, making her sit properly in the passenger's seat. e giggled, thinking | was playing hard to get. | pointed at the front windows of her house where a thin middle-aged woman with a cigarette in her mouth was standing, openly staring at the car. Marla let out a groan.

"Usually my mother is passed out drunk by this time, but | guess she didn't have enough money for gas so she could buy herself some booze, Marla said embarrassed. She was about to say more, but | covered her lips with my finger.

"Will she be okay with you having a boyfriend?" asked her. Marla looked at me surprised.

"But we just met each other-"

| feel something for you, Marla," | said, cutting her off. "I promise to take care of you and your mother. Pay for tuition... help you financially. All you have to do is be a good little student and take care of your mother."

"That's all, Dom?"

"That's all," | answered, brushing her hair away from her face. At first, her eyes sparkled happily, but suddenly her expression changed to panic.

"| don't know if you can be my boyfriend, Dom. 1, uhm, 1-"

| kissed her forehead. "I'll protect you. | promise Here, give this to your mother," | said, giving her the bottle of vodka, "and I'll see you tomorrow. That reminds me... give me your number."

"I, uhm, I, ah, don't have a smartphone. If anyone has to get in touch with me, they usually just call our landline."

How can she deal drugs without a cellphone?

"Okay. Put your home number then. I'll pick you up later around lunch and we'll get you a phone and maybe a car."

"What?!" She squealed. | took her hand and kissed it.

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“I care about you and your girl deserves the best,” I assured her. “Now go inside and get some

comfort. If you need anything between now and later, call this number.” I handed her

J. She gave me a kiss on my cheek before exiting the car. She looked happy, but there was a slight

uneasiness in her eyes.

She must be one of Pete’s girls. This will be interesting.

After Marla entered her house, I drove off heading towards Mandan. From Arnold County, both trucks were instructed to drive to a warehouse in Mandan. One loaded with the crates

while the other had our men.

I stopped at a gas station along the highway and parked beside a tinted van. I quickly put on a hat and dark glasses, got out and headed towards the restroom while the driver of the tinted van followed me. Inside the restroom, I handed my suit jacket, hat, dark glasses and my keys to the driver of the van while he gave me his keys and a leather jacket.

“Drive my car to my store, De Luca,” I said. “No one should think I left New Salem. Do you have the information I want?” He nodded his head.

“Veronica Ortiz is in Houston, Domenico, and I heard she has been complaining about a certain underboss and his New Salem capo for not giving her her desired cut,” De Luca said. “There are whispers that before the McDowells set foot in New Salem, there was a capo under Cadena who took refuge here before the FBI could arrest him. Goes by the surname of Duncan.”

“I can’t recall a family with the surname Duncan living in New Salem. They might have changed names just like the McDowells. When did this capo move to New Salem?”

“I don’t have that information, Domenico. I’m still digging.”

“Dig faster, De Luca,” I said. “The Spring Formal is near and with Cynthia McDowell’s death, Capo B astone Pete McDowell will want blood. We can’t risk dealing with an unknown.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” De Luca said, putting on the jacket, dark glasses and hat.

“Keep your head low and talk to no one. Make yourself comfortable in my office.”

Acapo with his family moved to New Salem before the McDowells came.

I’ll have Cristos look into that.

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Jack

At the door of the Sheriff’s station, I watched Bo sob while Virtue consoled him.

Oh, how I wished I had Virtue’s arms around me, instead of all this crazy shit I had to deal

with.

Money was gone and Cynthia McDowell was dead. Who would have thought that tonight would end up like this?

After Bo, Chip and Virtue left, I prepared my thermos and filled it with coffee. I had a manhunt to join which meant no sleep. After grabbing some sandwiches at the diner, I reluctantly climbed into my truck to head towards New Salem Park. My CB radio suddenly went off alerting everyone to proceed towards the boundary of New Salem and Arnold County instead. Great.

As I backed out of the parking lot, I noticed Dom’s SUV pass by and turn towards his store. After seeing him with Marla earlier, I bet he dropped her home.

Marla with Dom? Knowing her, I believed Dom deserved better, but that’s just me.

| stopped at the intersection and watched Dom come out of his car and enter the side

entrance to his store. He was wearing a hat with dark glasses and he fumbled with his keys.

He must have taken a few swigs with Marla's mom.

A car honking beside mine grabbed my attention. Fuck! It was the Sheriff. | rolled down my window.

"What the fuck are you doing sitting in the middle of the intersection?!" The Sheriff yelled. "Get to Arnold County and find whatever you can to piece this puzzle together!"

| groaned. It was going to be a long night.

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POST COMMENT

hse chapter

ok but | think I'm going to stop reading until the book is finished. Only

ing one chapter a week is ruining the story for me. | find it quite frustrating, sure!...

EW ALL 3 COMMENTS.

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## Chapter 72

### CHAPTER 72 Gossip

#### Joy

| groaned, waking up to the sound of my alarm. | needed more sleep, but | wanted to be where the people were, so | could get the latest news..

| dressed into my favorite pair of ripped jeans, a button-down blue and white striped blouse, hid my long hair in a white cap and paired everything with white sneakers. After putting all my things in a white tote bag, | exited my home and drove off to Bo's. The folks of New Salem woke up to a dreary Sunday as the news of the death of the beloved owner of the town's pharmacy spread. When | walked into Bo's, | was shocked to find Xavier surrounded by a group of middle-aged women who | assumed were friends of the deceased. They were consoling him, telling him he wasn't to blame.

| walked over to an aisle, pretending to mind my own business while | did some eavesdropping.

Xavier's eyes were bleak and bloodshot. His face appeared mournful and grief-stricken while he narrated the events leading up to Cynthia's death.

"I-L called 911, but the ambulance didn't get there in time to save her. | told her to hang on, but she lost so much blood," he said, before blowing his nose into his handkerchief. "It feels like it's my fault. | should have done more to save her."

"Bo, it's not your fault," a woman wearing a fitted black blouse and skinny jeans said, rubbing her hand along Xavier's back. "The Sheriff made a statement there's an ongoing manhunt. He believes someone may have entered New Salem while tracking a coyote or a fox, shot at it, but missed, hitting the McDowell residence instead."

"Sweetie, you shouldn't be working after what happened last night, another woman said. "You should at least take the day off." "| can't. | met Cynthia here," Xavier murmured, a tear falling from the corner of his eye. We both took acting lessons in California and his performance would have earned him an A from our instructor. "I'd like to remember her smiling face as she walked through these aisles." The group of women sighed, feeling very sympathetic to the grief Bo was experiencing.

“We understand, Bo,” the woman in the black blouse said, while she rubbed her hand continuously on Xavier’s back. “There’s a viewing later tonight at the funeral home while a

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## CHAPTER 72 Gossip

funeral service will be held tomorrow at ten in the morning. Then, she'll be laid to rest at

New Salem Memorial.”

“I'll have Chip or Dom come with me later tonight,” Xavier said, fighting back tears. “If you'll excuse me, I need to splash some cold water on my face.” He quickly left the group of

women... to their utter dismay.

Their friend just died and now they were competing against each other for Bo’s attention. Judging from the small smiles on their faces, they didn’t feel any grief for their friend. They actually looked quite relieved now their supposed queen was dead.

I was looking for chips and dip when someone tapped me on my shoulder. I turned around to find Lisa. She was wearing a simple gray t-shirt and denim shorts while she hid her eyes

behind a pair of large sunglasses.

“Hey, Virtue! I knew that was you. There is no one in this town that looks that good in baggy jeans and a cap,” she said, smiling. “I want to apologize about last night. I suddenly felt sick and drove myself home.”

“You poor thing,” I said, knowing she was lying to me. “You should have asked me to drive you. What if something happened to you along the way?”

“Well, my house isn’t far from the pub and I obviously got home in one piece,” she said. “Anyway, did you hear about Cynthia McDowell?”

I nodded my head. “Noah called to tell me Pete is going to take some time off.”

“Are you going to the wake later tonight?” Lisa asked.

“Where will the viewing be held?” | asked playing dumb..

“At Chimes Funeral Homes at eight,” Lisa answered.

“I’ll try to come and pay my respects... For Pete, | said. “But if | can’t make it later tonight, I’ll definitely go to the funeral. Do you know when the funeral service will be?”

“Tomorrow morning at ten. | keep forgetting you’re new here. Did you ever meet Pete’s mom?” She asked.

“Not formally. | saw her with Bo last night, before, you know...,” | tried to explain. “Well, if not for Pete, go for Bo,” she suggested. | saw him earlier. He looks really distraught. 2/6

## CHAPTER 72 Gossip

| guess they might have had a deeper relationship than we all thought. I’ve already heard someone say Bo and Cynthia have been seeing each other secretly before their official date as a couple last night, and that Bo was even going to propose before the, uhm, unfortunate incident. Now this could play to our advantage.

| lowered my head in sorrow, averting my eyes from hers. “It’s really heartbreaking for him, Lisa. He broke down last night when we picked him up from the Sheriff’s station. He really cared for her.” | heard Lisa sigh.

“Instead of a wedding, we’re going to a funeral. Things like these rarely happen in New Salem, so you know why people are talking about it. Anyway, | have some grocery shopping to do. If | don’t see you later, I’ll just see you tomorrow then.” She was about to push her cart away when | stopped her.

“By the way, did you ever get hold of Cris?” | asked, appearing concerned.novelbin

“Yeah. He attended a bachelor’s party of one of his college buds. His phone ran out of battery and he forgot to bring his charger. Right now, he’s nursing a really nasty hangover at home,” Lisa quickly mumbled, then waved goodbye, practically running away from me.

After grocery shopping and listening to all the gossip, | went to check on the progress of my boutique. | was surprised to find Noah inside doing some measurements. He was wearing a fresh shirt and appeared to have showered. My eyes quickly surveyed the parking area.

His pick-up truck wasn't parked anywhere nor was Nicole's Volvo..

Who did you drive with today, Noah?

"Noah! Fancy seeing you here on a Sunday," | greeted him.

"I'm just doing last minute measurements for the clothes racks, shelves and cabinets. I'll have them installed on Tuesday, since my crew and | will be attending the funeral tomorrow. Will you be going?" Noah asked casually while he fixed the stand for the window display.

"Yes, | will. Poor Pete, he must be really heartbroken."

"He is. He put in a request for leave and | approved it," he answered, looking at the painted walls and light fixtures. "We're almost done here."

"After the shelves, racks and cabinets are installed, will everything be done?" | asked excitedly.

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## CHAPTER 72 Gossip

"Yes. | just need to install the refrigerator in the small dining area in the back and we're

done with construction. Then, I'll have my crew clean up everything and put in the furniture, then you can start unpacking and displaying your merchandise. By the way, | was wondering, if you would-

Suddenly, my phone rang.

"Great," | mumbled while rummaging through my tote bag to find my phone. It was Liam. "Excuse me for a sec," | told Noah and answered, "Hi Liam! What can | do for you?"

“Hi Virtue! | know this is out of the ordinary, but | wanted to ask you if you would like to come with me to Cynthia McDowell's funeral tomorrow?” Liam asked. “I'll come pick you up around nine- thirty.”

“Sure, Liam. I'd like that,” | answered. Being with him wouldn't make me look like a sore thumb. “Will you be going to the viewing later tonight?”

“No. | have some business to attend to,” he answered. “Why? Are you thinking of going? You don't have to, Virtue. Attending the funeral is enough for you to pay your last respects to Cynthia and offer your condolences to Pete.”

| heard a tinge of anxiousness in his voice. Was he afraid of the possibility of something happening to me... ata wake?

“Okay, if you say so,” | said. “I'll see you tomorrow then, Liam. Take care.”

“You too,” he replied. “Call me if you need me. See you, Virtue.”

“What did Liam want?” Noah asked once | hung up. My brow furrowed, not expecting the harsh tone in his voice.

“Oh, he asked me to go with him to the funeral tomorrow,” | answered. “So, what were you saying before we were interrupted?” “Ah, | was going to-”

The door of my boutique swung open and a woman with long jet black hair and luminous

een eyes walked in. Her face was very f

I've seen her on many posters announcing

her candidacy for mayor.

Sarah Hughes.

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Sarah Hughes,” she introduced herself and extended her hand. | quickly took her in mine and shook it. “I, uhm, | came to check if Noah was done, so he could come with me to give me an estimate for an office I'm having renovated.”

She seemed warm and inviting, but since | grew up with her, | knew she was a snob. Her mother and father were both physicians who both came from a family of physicians. They always had money and were one of the first families to ever live in Highland Oaks.

She was of average height, slim and pale. She had beautiful green eyes, but a beaky nose which earned her the nickname “Beaky Sassy” when we were growing up.

Her lips were long and thin and she had perfect white teeth. However, just like Theodore Cohen, her bright smile didn’t quite reach her eyes.

“Sarah Hughes? The same Sarah Hughes running for mayor? Oh wow, it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance,” | said, pretending to fawn. I’m Virtue. Virtue Sullivan.”

“Nice to meet you, Virtue. | can see what the people say about you is true,” she said, releasing my hand.

“And what's that?”

“That you look like a celebrity,” she smirked. “People say you’re really pretty. Now that I’ve

met you, I can say it’s true.”

She didn’t like me. Why am | not surprised? She must have a thing for Noah.

“I’m done here,” Noah announced harshly, grabbing Sarah’s arm and pulling her towards the door. “Virtue, I’ll see you tomorrow. Come on, Sarah. | need to speak to Dom before we go see that office.” He opened the door and ushered Beaky Sassy outside. “You better hurry up then,” Sarah said, exiting the boutique. “He’s about to leave. Something about a date.”

Sebastian had a date with Marla. Xavier had to go to Cynthia’s viewing. And Cristos, he said. he would be with Dan to attend church.

| closed the blinds of my store, locked the door and took out the device Big Man Lou gave

to check for bugs and spy cams.

Pete was busy mourning the loss of his mother. Jack and Sheriff Combs were conducting a manhunt. Theodore and Liam Cohen were probably discussing the missing money.

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CHAPTER 72 Gossip

No one was watching me.

Time to clean my boutique of bugs.

Chapter Comments

Luna-Mom

brilliant chapter

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Chapter 73

CHAPTER 73 Screwed Up

was seated in her at my father, Isoning minutes Luckily we were in his stalk where

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What a way to spend a Sundry Rain, | will att Down! pay the men and worn on our parol News! bad to iscen to my father scold medal on Merkull

Tad things like this happen there are open we stool on rival org ans, 1 argued. And yes. | have called the do?e past them to kost the other hand, is content with the money e het hom the promises to keys que aist to

ve ger continue like nothing As des stomat assures that class Raxion woulx tot

body

of an attempt to steal our cargo. | have made sure no one talks including Short combs and his deputies.” | noticed his had relax. | guess mas meities Caps Rastone would find ou about the heist and punish us for it.

And how about the men whose bodies are at the bottom of the lake the asked, without raising his voice.

“None of them work for Capo Ba stone. They were all employed by me, | answered 1 promise to eam back our losses and double up security. For now, Ell be unneling some of the campaign funding into our account.”



“That’s another issue that I have to discuss with you, my father said, shunning his fingers on his wooden desk. Aside from losing two million dollars and giving over a million dollars away to keep everything quiet, your popularity is dwindling. Sarah Hughes seems to be creating a name for herself. She has been seen speaking at Jack Emery’s neighborhood, promising them better amenities. May I remind you one third of the voting population live in that area, Liam.” I rolled my eyes at him. CHAPTER 73 Screwed Up

“Dad, I already have that covered. Just like last election, I’ll be buying their votes. As for their neighborhood, I’ve already signed off to fix the potholes in their streets as well as increase the number of streetlights. It’s a band-aid solution, but it will keep them from voting for Hughes.”

“Pretty up their playground too,” my father suggested. “Get it repainted and plant some bushes or flowers in that place they call a park. By the way, where is Cris Murdock? He needs to work for the money we pay him. I haven’t heard from him since last week.”

“He didn’t show up last night and Lisa said he’s been gone since Friday. I assume he has been with Capo Bastone,” I answered. My father shook his head disapprovingly.

“May Cynthia McDowell’s death serve as a lesson for Capo Bastone,” he said which puzzled the hell out of me. He acted like he didn’t care.

“But with Cynthia McDowell dead, won’t there be a disruption in the delivery of cold medicine?” I asked.

No. It’s business as usual...now that Norma Martin will be purchasing the pharmacy.”

I leaned back in my chair. My father had an answer to everything.

My only problem now was Capo Bastone McDowell.

Pete McDowell

The staff of the funeral home was setting up for the viewing. Flowers adorned the area, chairs were aligned in rows for the guests, and coffee and snacks were set up in the corner. I sat alone, waiting for the casket which held my mother.

God, | screwed up.

The sniper rifle used was traced to the East North Central States division of the Angels of Darkness. Sure, | did have a disagreement with the underboss of the ENCS regarding one of their women, but to kill my mother and attempt to steal my money was a low blow. That | believed.

Before | left for the funeral home, | spoke with my capo, hoping he would agree to a retaliation.

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## CHAPTER 73 Screwed Up

“You aren’t thinking straight, Pete. You’ll ignite a war, if you go into their territory with guns blazing,” my capo said. He was always calm and rational, always playing by the rules.

He never wanted to color outside the lines.

Well, that was after Joy Taylor.

“But they killed my mother! If | don’t retaliate, they will see it as a sign of weakness,” | argued.

“First of all, we aren’t sure it’s them. Yes, the gun found by the Sheriff is a gun they smuggle, but it doesn’t necessarily mean they pulled the trigger,” he rationalized.

“So you’re saying that a gun... that fell off a truck somewhere... just happened to be the same gun that killed my mother? Do you see how stupid that sounds? They sent someone to kill her to get to me. Plain and simple.”

“Or maybe they

they sent someone to kill you, but killed her instead. There, plain and simple,” he pointed out, turning the tables on me. “Anyway, why would they want to kill you or your mother? What the fuck did you do?”

“Cris and I, uhm, we may have kidnapped a niece of the underboss. | did let her go found out about our mistake,” | admitted. “Did Cris or you touch this girl?” His voice was harsh, warning me not to lie.

“Maybe...”

when |

“Go dda mmit, Pete! You raped a niece of the underboss?! What is wrong with you?! You f u cking deserve to be hung by your balls!” He yelled through the phone, unable to contain his anger. He paused for several moments, breathing heavily, forcing himself to calm down.

| waited quietly, knowing | f u cked up. But still...

“| suggest you take the death of your mother like a man. You raped a niece of an underboss. This is your punishment.” He spoke in a hushed tone like | was child who was crying over a piece of candy.

“So you expect me to do nothing?!” | asked incredulously, not wanting to let it go.

“Yes, you little tw at!” | grimaced. | hated being called that. “Now tell me, where is Cris? That cu nt is causing too many problems.”

3/5

## CHAPTER 73 Screwed Up

“He’s at home, recovering, 1 answered. “He, ah, accidentally killed a girl. | usually have my men dispose of the girls, but-”

“| usually have my men dispose of the girls,” he said, mimicking me. “You’re pathetic.”

“F u ck you! Remember, I’m still your boss! | can have you killed!” | yelled at him, aware it was useless to threaten him. He scoffed at me, knowing that was all | could do... pull rank.

My capo never respected me. But | didn’t care. | was still his boss whether he liked it or not.

“| swear on your mother’s grave, Pete McDowell, one morning, when you wake up, the first thing you’ll see is your severed dic k in my hand, he growled, replying to my empty threat. My eyes narrowed... | didn’t like the sound of that, not one bit. “Boy, you have gone too far this time. My advice?

Play the grieving son, forget about avenging your mother's death, be grateful they didn't steal the money and keep your dick in your pants."

"How about Cris? You aren't going to hurt him, are you?" Cris was my bestfriend and he and I understood each other. I didn't want anything to happen to him.

"What about Cris? Don't tell me you're in love with him? You guys fuck each other too while

sharing a girl?"

"No!" I denied angrily.

"If you say so," he said, amused. "If I don't get to Cris, the underboss of the ENCS will. Your mother is dead. Unfortunately, Lisa may be next.

That wouldn't be a bad idea. Lisa only tied Cris down.

"I know what you're thinking, Pete. Without Lisa in the way, you and Cris can do whatever you want. I'm warning you. If you don't start thinking of what's best for the WNCS, don't be

surprised if you find Veronica's men on your doorstep. Your mother isn't here anymore to protect you and I'm sick and tired of babysitting. Your father may have been ruthless and petty, but he had the respect of the organization because he contributed to its rise. Get that through your thick skull, you twat!"

I already had the Cohens doing the work for me and they were paid graciously for their time. Even my capo, who also handled some of my affairs, was paid graciously for his work.

As I sat alone in the empty viewing room, I thought hard, wondering how all of this could have happened. I came up with one possibility.

4/5

CHAPTER 73 Screwed Up

The Cohens...

Liam was in charge of the delivery. It's possible he was contacted by Alejandro, the underboss of the ENCS. Liam never liked working for me. He was a racist pig who couldn't stand having me order him around.

Working with Alejandro could have been his way of removing me from the picture.

Tsk... tsk... tsk...

Liam has to be taught a lesson. Since I lost my mother, he will have to lose something or someone precious to him too.

There is one person. Someone who will probably give me the high I crave.

It was an obsession, an addiction that was hard to control. Yes, I paid for sex, but it wasn't the same. I needed to be in control. I loved the feeling of being in control. I lived for that feeling.

An image of her pleading and crying flashed in my mind. I felt my heart race and my spine tingle.

I want to hear her scream.

I pulled out my phone and dialed.

"Liam, I need to speak to you. I want to know where your loyalties lie."

Chapter Comments

Luna-Mom

Really love reading this story

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B25

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Chapter 74

## CHAPTER 74 Loyalty

Liam “Liam, I need to speak to you,” Pete said over the phone. His voice was harsh and unrelenting.

“What about?” I asked.

“I want to know where your loyalties lie,” he answered. It was such a vague response, I knew

I had to be cautious. His mother just tragically died, pushing him over the edge. I couldn't

afford to make a mistake.

My life was hanging in the balance... one wrong move could mean life or death.

“Sure,” I replied politely. “Where and what time?”

“Meet me here at the funeral home. Anytime would do.”

I was with Dan paying off the people on our payroll. After hanging up, I grabbed Dan's dark

silk shirt and pulled him aside.

“Did you say anything?” I asked Dan, peering into his eyes. He looked at me confused, wondering what I was talking about. After a few moments, his expression changed, realizing who and what I was talking about.

“No, Liam. You held up your end of the bargain. Why would I betray you? Betraying you would mean my death too,” he answered. “Now, please let go of my silk shirt. I had this delivered from Nordstrom.” I scoffed at him and let go..

“Capo Bas tone wants me to meet with him at Chimes. He said something about loyalty. Do you know what he's talking about?” I asked. He shook his head and took out his phone.

“No, but we know somebody who might. I'll call Cris and ask,” he said, dialing. “Hey Lisa, can I speak with Cris please? He's asleep? Well, wake him up.” He rolled his eyes and pursed his lips. Cris was definitely starting to get on our nerves.

While we waited for Lisa to wake Cris, I sent a message to two of my guards, Leo and Benny,

asking them to meet me at the funeral home. I couldn't meet Pete alone. I had to come

prepared. They sent me a reply telling me they were on their way.

We waited patiently for Cris to get on the phone. Five minutes passed, but still no Cris.

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## CHAPTER 74 Loyalty

anything? I mouthed to Dan. He shook his head, but suddenly raised his finger.

Cris?” Dan said expectantly, but suddenly pouted. “Fine. Good night, Lisa. He hung up, turned to me and shrugged his shoulders. “He won't wake up.”

“We'll wake him up then,” I said, gesturing for him to follow me in his car. Before I drove off, I took out my gun from the glove compartment and holstered it onto my belt. We were going to wake up that asshole.

At the Murdocks, I forcibly pushed Lisa aside after she opened the door and walked inside their home with Dan following closely behind me.

I looked around, but the living room and kitchen were empty. Lisa, on the other hand, looked agitated and troubled. Her eyes were puffy, her nose was red and strands of her hair were out of place.

“Liam, he's not in a good place right now,” Lisa cried out. “Please, just give him some time.”

Dan, keep her here. I'll speak with Cris,” I instructed. “Where is he?” Lisa shook her head, not wanting to answer me. “I'm not going to ask again. Lisa, where is he?”

“Upstairs, Lisa answered, looking defeated. She suddenly turned to Dan and began sobbing on his silk shirt. I saw him grimace knowing his shirt was totally ruined, but after a moment, he shrugged his shoulders and wrapped his arms around Lisa.

“Give her a drink to steady her nerves. I'll take care of this.” Dan nodded his head.

I ran upstairs and found Cris seated on his bed, mumbling to himself like a madman. He looked like he'd been hit and smelled like he'd been hit too.

What the hell happened to him?

I snapped my fingers in front of him, trying to grab his attention. “Cris, it's me Liam. I need to speak to you about something.”

His

eyes moved to focus on my face, but he suddenly began to cry. He looked really awful. His face was all red, there was sweat everywhere, and his mouth was wide open wailing like an ambulance. I grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him, hoping he'd calm down a bit, but he just kept crying.

“L-Liam, it-it was an accident. I swear, Liam, I didn't mean to kill her,” Cris cried out. What the hell did you get yourself into this time, Cris?

2/5

## CHAPTER 74 Loyalty

“Kill who?” When he didn't answer, I shook him some more. “Cris, answer me. Who did you

kill?”

“Lily. Her name was Lily,” he said, sobbing again, while he grabbed his head with both his hands and squeezed. I stared at him aghast, horrified he had lost it... again.

I took out my gun and slapped him across his face. “Get yourself together, man. We have bigger problems!” I slapped him again, hoping the cold metal of my gun would wake him up from his trance. “Cris, you have got to wake up!



This happened before when he found out Joy Taylor was still alive. He was scared shitless. That Sheriff Combs would come knocking on his door and arrest him.

We hid him at Jack's house, hoping he would snap out of it on his own. After several days, it looked as if there was no hope of him ever getting better, so I punched him in the face as a last resort. I figured Cris was like a piece of machinery who needed a quick jump-start to turn on. Luckily, I was right or else we would have had to ship him to the nearest psychiatric

ward.

He instantly stopped crying and stared at me, surprised I was standing in his bedroom.. "Liam, what the fuck are you doing here?"

I heaved a sigh of relief. Cris was all better.

Yet, he still had the audacity to act like an entitled little schmuck.

"You killed a girl and went into shock, you cunt!" I yelled at him. "While you were having a mental breakdown, Cynthia McDowell was shot and killed. Now Pete just called me talking about loyalties. I want to know what you know. And don't lie to me."

"Wait. What? Pete's mom is dead?" Cris asked, bewildered. "Oh, shit!" His finally digesting the information I had just given him. "Oh, shit, shit, shit, shit!"

eyes

widened,

"You know something. Talk!" I screamed. "I need to know everything... now!"

"Alright, alright! Remember that, uhm, convention in Illinois I attended last month?" He asked. I nodded my head and gestured for him to continue. "Pete and I saw this really hot girl at this club in Chicago, so Pete bought her a drink, hoping she'd talk to us. She took one look at Pete and sent the drink back, saying she didn't accept drinks from losers."

Here we go again!

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## CHAPTER 74 Loyalty

kidnapped her and raped her, didn't you?" It was more of a rhetorical question. I knew the answer. "Did you have her disposed of after?"

"Uhm, no. We, uh, let her go," Cris answered. I closed my eyes, knowing the girl was important to someone very important. "Who was she?"

"Her name is Ariana De Vega, niece of Alejandro De Vega, who is the current underboss of the East North Central States," he answered, his voice shaking. God, I wanted to shoot him in

the face!

"So everything that happened last night was your fault!" I yelled at Cris. "Now that asshole wants to pin it all on me. Loyalty? He probably thinks I made a deal with Alejandro De Vega." I pointed my gun at him.

Cris and Pete... they both deserved to die!

I'll talk to him, Liam. I'll tell him it wasn't you," Cris pleaded with me. "He'll listen to me. I promise you."

"Cris, I've had it with the both of you," I said, aiming my gun at his chest. "You fuck with my reelection, then you fuck with my operations. Honestly, I'm better off with you dead. I should just kill you and ask Sarah Hughes to run with me. She'd probably do a better job as councilman and do my work for me too."

"Liam, I'm begging you, man. I'll do whatever to make it up to you," he pleaded.

"Fine." I lowered my gun and sat down on an armchair near the bedroom window. I looked outside to check if anyone was watching the house.

"Call Lisa and have her pack some clothes for the both of you. Then, I want the both of you

to

get dressed for Cynthia McDowell's viewing. You will accompany me when I meet with. Capo Bas tone later and you will vouch for me. If you betray me, I will kill you."

"I can't go

go out looking like this, Liam. I look horrible

I raised my gun, aiming for his chest. "No? Then, I'll just kill you right now, Cris."

and

Cris quickly stood up from his bed, finally grasping I no longer wanted to play games, called his wife to come upstairs. I was sick and tired of all the shit they did, including blaming me when things didn't go according to plan. They were entitled little prick who

4/5

## CHAPTER 74 Loyalty

thought playing mobster was a passport to do whatever they wanted.

Sure, they were my friends, but I didn't deserve to be treated this way. I didn't deserve to

take the fall.

"Hey, Liam, I'm going to get ready," Cris said, interrupting my thoughts. "Can I have a little privacy?"

"No. You will get dressed in front of me," I said. I want to make sure you don't try anything

funny."

"Come on, Liam. I won't betray you. I promise."

"I know you won't, Cris. Because from now on, your balls are mine."

Chapter Comments.

Luna-Mom

so the tw at thinks going after virtue is an answer

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Chapter 75

CHAPTER 75 Chimes

Joy

After ridding my boutique of bugs and miniature spy cams, | made a brief stop at the hospital to check up on Abigail. Unfortunately, her condition hadn't improve although her parents still had hope.

Abigail's mother gave me a warm hug when | came into the hospital room with some flowers. and a box of eclairs.

"It's so nice to see you, dear. Since the accident, sadly, her friends haven't come to visit her. I'm happy you remembered her and dropped by, Mrs. Reynolds said as she tenderly brushed the hair away from Abigail's face. Some of her bandages were gone and there was some color in her cheeks. "Sweetie, your friend Virtue has come to say hi." Abigail's mother waited for some kind of response, but the only response came from the incessant beeping from her vital signs monitor.

| took Abigail's hand in mine and squeezed it, silently thanking her for helping me after 1 was raped. | noticed her hands were warm and | prayed it was a sign she might wake up

soon.

| bought take-out from the diner, then headed home to unload my groceries. Since | had nothing better to do, | went over to Noah's house to read to Mrs. Jensen and wait for Noah.

The

e sun had already begun to set when | realized Noah wasn't coming home. After politely declining an invitation for dinner at the Jensen's, | went home, debating whether or not | should go to Cynthia McDowell's viewing.

Apart of me wanted to go. Aside from the information | could get, it was also a way t everyone in my sights.

As they say, keep your friends close and your enemies closer.

to keep

Earlier, Cristos had messaged me to put in my earpiece, so we can all decide on our next course of action in case we ran into a snag. I've been listening in on their conversations noticing Cynthia's death was a main topic.

No doubt emotions were running high. A large number of people were upset and furious

while there were certain people looking for someone to blame.

Since Liam was in the middle of everything, he was the one holding the short end of the

1/5

## CHAPTER 75 Chimes

ick. We knew Pete would meet with him, the only question was where and when. Although ristos was listening in on every bug we had strategically placed, we couldn't find answers. | argued Pete was still busy at the funeral home making arrangements for his mother. Business would come after.

| believed Pete would meet with Liam after the funeral, but the boys had a hunch it would be tonight. They said Pete was like his old man, a hot head.

| was placing my dirty dishes in the dishwasher when | finally heard Cristos' voice through my earpiece. | listened eagerly, hoping it was the news we were all waiting for.

"Heads up, everyone. Liam is causing mayhem at the Murdock residence," Cristos said. "From what | gathered from all the yelling and shouting, he'll be meeting with Pete at the funeral home later and he's bringing Cris with him. | have also received word from Leo and Benny. Liam has instructed them to go to the funeral home."

"Liam is going prepared," Xavier said, sounding impressed. "Have Leo and Benny place a bug so we can listen in. Since Noah isn't moving from the Hughes' residence and Nicole is at home, Ill have Sam put a tracker on Pete's car."

"What is Noah doing at Sarah Hughes' house?" Cristos asked, surprised.

"Renovations," Sebastian answered softly. He was probably still with Marla. "They were at Dom's earlier. And get this, Noah is also in charge of fixing up her headquarters for the election. | think he's doing it to sabotage."

"Of course," Cristos said, agreeing with Sebastian. "I did hear Liam mention something like that when he was on the phone at his office." He paused for a bit before speaking again. "Seems Cris is better. He's talking in coherent sentences again and from what | can hear, he's constantly apologizing to Liam for the Chicago incident."

"Chicago incident?" It was my turn to ask. "What happened in Chicago?"

"Cris and Pete made the grave mistake of kidnapping Capo B astone Alejandro De Vega's niece in Chicago, Xavier answered. "De Vega, in turn, put up a closed contract for the assassinations of Cynthia McDowell and Cris Murdock without the approval of their boss. Since either death will be deemed as an unsanctioned hit, none of the assassins of the Angels of Darkness had the guts to deliver. So, we used that knowledge to our advantage."

"What do you mean?" | asked, puzzled. Xavier chuckled.

"Sam and | made it look like either De Vega did it himself or someone close to him killed

CHAPTER 75 Chimes.

Cynthia for him. No one can deny the weapon used is a sniper rifle De Vega specifically out of the country,” Xavier explained. Unfortunately for Liam, Pete is already

De Vega got his intel. | bet Pete thinks there was someone on the inside who that kind of sensitive information. Of course, both parties will deny the he truth remains, Cynthia McDowell is dead.”

n't that cause a war between the two divisions?” | asked, knowing it will be a never- ending cycle of revenge until both Pete and this De Vega were dead.

| highly doubt it. Pete doesn't have the balls nor does he have a private army of loyal soldiers. He could speak to their boss though and ask for a mediation. But there is no doubt in my mind, Liam will bear the brunt of Pete's anger.”

Xavier had a point. If there was someone who needed to pay for all of this in Pete's twisted. little mind, it was Liam.

I rushed upstairs deciding it was in my best interest to go to the viewing. Something was going to happen at the funeral home and | wanted to be there when it did.

Since tomorrow was reserved for my little black dress, | opted to wear a dark gray sleeveless. dress paired with a black sweater and bla

kitten heel pumps. | styled my hair in a neat bun and accessorized it with my favorite bladed hair comb. | kept my make-up light and placed everything | needed in a small black purse.

| arrived at Chimes Funeral Home around nine and noticed the parking area was at capacity. Apparently, a lot of people had come to pay their last respects to Cynthia and give their condolences to Pete. | parked my car across the street, hoping the owners of the flower shop wouldn't mind.

| kept my head low as | walked through the parking area, slowing down as | passed Liam's BMW and Pete's silver Audi. Both cars were empty. Meeting was definitely inside.

Before entering, I signed the visitor's log while scanning through all the names listed down. I noticed Bo Xavier, Chad Hendrix Palmer and Dominic Samuels had already signed the logbook, including Liam Cohen and Cris Murdock.

As expected, the viewing room was full of people. Some were sitting, quietly sipping their coffee, while others stood in groups and mingled with each other, speaking in hushed voices, but pointing with their eyes. One group, I noticed, was the group of middle-aged women at the grocery earlier, all dressed in black cocktail dresses, sipping on champagne while glancing at Xavier every now and then in the hopes of grabbing his attention. Unfortunately for them, Xavier, Sebastian and Cristos were standing together at a corner, talking amongst

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## CHAPTER 75 Chimes

themselves

sof all the people around them.

yed the room looking for Liam and Pete while I walked to the snack

ere.

in one of the empty rooms.

greeted the server, smiling brightly. "Would you happen to know where the ladies' nis?"

When you

back at me.

exit this room, turn right. It's at the end of the hall," the young man said smiling

"Thank you," I replied. I lowered my head and ducked outside, covering my face from the people who were in line to sign the logbook. If anyone would ask where I was, at least they knew I went to the ladies' room.

Since the left side of the hallway of the funeral home led to the coffin shop, I immediately turned right and walked into the dark hallway towards the restroom, crossing my fingers they were here somewhere. I doubted they



were at the back in the embalming area, but there are stranger places to hold a meeting.

Honestly, whoever owned Chimes Funeral Home had a sick sense of humor. As I walked through the dark hallway, I felt as if I was in a scene of a horror movie. My heels sunk into the thick carpet with each step, the air was surprisingly cold, and only a few of the antique wall sconces were working... nope, flickering. I pulled out my hair comb from my bun, arming myself, and slowly made my way to the doorway of the next viewing room.

The door was slightly ajar, so I took a peek. All the lights were off. After checking if someone was behind me, I squinted my eyes looking for lights shining through any of the doors. I

smiled. There was a light coming from the door at the corner, nearest the restroom.

I quickly went to the corner, lying flat against the wall, and tried the doorknob. It opened just a bit giving me a view of the inside. Seated at a small wooden table in the room were Pete, Liam and Cris. I didn't see any sign of Leo or Benny. S hit!

If they were able to plant a bug in the room, I could just wait for Cristos to tell me what they talked about.

But what if Leo and Benny were unsuccessful? There would be no way for us to know what

4/5

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Chapter 76

CHAPTER 76 Underestimated

Liam

After Cris and I signed the visitor's logbook, I messaged Pete we were outside of the viewing room waiting for him. I had just sent the message when the double doors suddenly opened and Pete walked out. I quickly surveyed the ceiling above my head and noticed several CCTV cameras, one in particular was looking straight at me.

"Follow me, gentleman," he instructed, gesturing for us to follow him to the dark hallway. I hesitated. The corridor's ceiling lights weren't even on and the wall light fixtures were constantly flickering, reminding me of a scary movie I watched when I was a kid. "Scared?" Pete asked, amused. I scoffed at him.

"Why would I be?" I asked. He chuckled, shaking his head at my arrogance.

"Because you're walking into the lion's den," he answered, entering the dark hallway.

Pete looked like he was enjoying himself immensely. He had this strange smile plastered on his face as if he had the upper hand. I had this gut feeling there was something wrong.

Where the f uck was Leo and Benny?

I roughly nudged Cris to walk ahead of me, so I could message my men while we walked through the dark corridor. I purposely hung back, so Leo and Benny could catch up to us.

"If you're looking for your goons, Liam, you'll be happy to know they're already here," Pete said as he led us to the end of the hallway. "You'll also be happy to know I've taken the liberty in keeping them comfortable while we waited for you. Now put your phone away, before I take it away from you and destroy it."

I quickly pocketed my phone and ran my fingers through my hair, mad at myself for not having anticipated the possibility of this happening. I should have called in for more men as back up.

F uck! F uck! F uck!

"You're awfully quiet, Liam," Pete said, snickering. He stopped at a door and opened it. "You have always underestimated me. This time is no different. While you were providing Cris with the necessary attention to wake him from his crazed state, I used the time to prepare for our little get-together. Now get inside, before my generous persona fades."

## CHAPTER 76 Underestimated

Cris entered, his head hung low. For a tall man who loved to beat up girls and rape them, he was a coward. | could never rely on him for help.

A small wooden table with a bottle of scotch and several glasses stood at one side of the room while four empty chairs circled around it. While we followed him to the table, Pete gestured to us to take a seat. This surprised me because he rarely offers me a seat. Usually he makes me stand in front of him while he sits... like a slave to his master.

When the door closed behind us, that's when | noticed Leo and Benny kneeling on the floor at the other end of the viewing room. Their hands were bound and their mouths duct taped. Two huge men, who | have never seen before, were holding guns at the back of their heads.

Go d da mmit!novelbin

"Sit down," Pete instructed, pointing to two of the chairs, as he took his seat. "Have a drink. with me." He opened the bottle and poured some scotch in three glasses. "I said, sit down!"

| glanced at Cris and moved my head, urging him to sit down. We both sat down opposite Pete with our backs to the door. Pete raised his glass for a toast, waving with his other hand for us to do the same. "Let us make a toast to new beginnings. Without my mother, | now have full control over the West North Central States. To new beginnings." He clicked his glass against ours and downed his drink. Cris, following his lead, did the same. | hesitated, not wanting to give in to his machinations. Usually he looked like a retard, but tonight he looked sharp in his black suit with his hair slicked back. He even wore his large gold ring encrusted with ruby and several small diamonds on his pinky finger, a ring bestowed upon him by the boss of the Angels of Darkness when he was given the rank of underboss. His father once owned it, now it was

his... Thanks to his mother.

"Drink, Liam. I've gone to great lengths to get this particular brand for you. Plus, it's disrespectful to your host," he sneered.

| lifted my glass to my lips and downed its contents, then leaned back on my chair, placing

hand on my gun. | was a good shot and could quickly shoot the two men behind Leo and Benny before aiming my gun at Pete. | just needed to time it perfectly.

my

“What is this all about?” | asked lazily. “And why are my men hostages?”

“Liam, you are clearly mistaken. No, they aren’t hostages. They’re my guests,” Pete answered

2/5

APTER 76 Underestimated

An annoying tone.

“Usually guests don’t have guns behind their heads, Pete,” | replied sarcastically.

“My guests do. Right Cris? You, of all people, know how | treat my guests,” he quipped, ending the subject. “And as a sign of respect, you will address me as Capo B astone. So, let’s get down to business, shall we? We need to do this quickly as | have other pressing matters at the moment. | just need some clarity before | bury my mother.”

“| had nothing to do with the death of your mother, if this is what all of this is about. | only found out about what you did in Chicago from Cris earlier this evening,” | clarified, hoping he would believe me.

“It true, Pete. He didn’t know- Cris tried to explain, but he was interrupted.

“Silence,” Pete said angrily, his face contorted with rage. “You honestly think I’d believe you?

a casket in You’re a f ucking politician, Liam. All you ever do is lie. My dead mother is lying ina

fuck the other room and here you are lying to me about your involvement! Tell me, how the did the assassin know where my mother would be at that exact moment? It was timed to perfection!”

“Why are you pointing the finger at me? | didn’t even know about your conflict with the ENCS. Have you ever thought maybe it was someone close to you? For all we know, it could have been Cris!” | argued, hoping he’d realize | wasn’t the traitor.

“Woah! Why are you pinning all this on me, Liam?!” Cris yelled.

“Because you’re a f u c k i n g coward!” | yelled back furiously. “Maybe, just maybe, to save your own skin, you gave out pertinent information including my delivery of crates! Then, so no one will suspect it was you, you create the perfect alibi. While the rest of us were working,

you

were out killing a girl, pretending to have a me n t a l breakdown after you did it!” | roared, asserting my key points as fact.

| know | was putting Cris in a tough spot, but whatever he had with Pete had to stop. They

were causing more problems together.

It was Pete’s turn to go quiet, his playful mood had quickly turned grim. | knew | had caught

his attention.

He sat quietly, deep in thought, his face slightly moving as he debated with himself. | inhaled and exhaled deeply, slowly reaching for my gun. | glanced at Leo and Benny who

were hunched forward giving me a clear view of Pete’s men behind them.

3/5

CHAPTER 76 Underestimated

It was now or-

"You make a valid point," Pete said, realizing what I had just said could be true. I pursed my lips, frustrated I had just missed my opportunity to kill this motherfucker.

"You can't honestly believe him, Pete? I swear, I would never ever betray your trust. We're bestfriends, remember?" Cris reasoned.

I grimaced. He and Pete were bestfriends? The utter stupidity.

"I spoke with my capo about this and he too believes you're a liability, Cris," Pete said, shaking his head regrettably. "After listening to Liam make his case, I'm starting to think the same. Sure, we're bestfriends, but one, I agree with Liam... you are a fucking coward, and two, you, Liam, Dan and Jack are childhood buddies. Whatever trust we have isn't as strong as the bond you have with your three other friends," Pete said, his face serious. "However, all of this can be fixed, including the matter of my dead mother. I just want what is owed me."

"What do you want?" I asked impatiently. I just wanted this over and done with. Pete's smile

was pure evil.

"Aman after my own heart," he said, taking out his phone and dialing. "Bring him in."

The back door of the room suddenly opened. To my utter shock, in came my father, his

hands bound in front of him and his mouth duct taped. Following closely behind him was a man who had a gun aimed at his back. Pete gestured to the man to lead my father to the empty chair beside him..

"What the fuck are you doing with my father?" I yelled, standing up. Pete raised his hand, cautioning me to stay in my chair. I slowly sat back down, keeping an eye on the man whose trigger finger was on a gun aimed at my father.

"Sit down, Theodore," Pete instructed my father. I saw him hesitate, not wanting to give in to Pete's request. "I said, sit down!" The man, who held a gun in his hand, kicked my father into the empty seat beside Pete. My father

howled in pain as he fell back into the chair. Cris quickly stood up to help my father, but Pete waved his finger from side to side, telling him

that wasn't a good idea.

"Now that everyone is here, let the negotiations begin."

4/5

CHAPTER 76 Underestimated

Chapter Comments.

Luna-Mom

hope Leo and Benny show up soon

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The Joy of Revenge

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Chapter 77

APTER 77 Deal

was bowing in the middle of a stage amidst a crowd who was giving me a ang ovation, cheering and applauding me for my unprecedented magic trick.

After telling Liam to come see me, I called his father telling him my mother had wanted to give him something before she died and instructed him to meet me at the funeral director's

Office.

He was such an arrogant man. When we grabbed him and the two men following him, he kept shouting we would pay for placing our dirty little hands on him. It took a gun to his head to keep his mouth shut.

Since there weren't enough dead people in New Salem to keep the funeral home afloat, Linda Jacobs, one of my mother's friends, helped smuggle product out of New Salem using their coffins. We helped her open branches in Bismarck, Mandan and Lincoln while keeping coffin production here. Only a few knew Chimes Funeral Home was like my playground.

"Why is my father here?" Liam snarled angrily, his hand reaching for his gun. He was such an idiot. He was outnumbered four to one. Cris didn't count. He was one of those freakishly big

dudes who would scream at the sight of a cockroach.

"Calm down, Liam," I urged him using a hushed tone. "Let's not do anything rash here. If not, you and your father will be the next two influential people New Salem will be mourning for."

"Enough of the vile threats. Answer me, why is my father here?" Liam asked again, but this time, he spoke calmly, although his face looked like it was about to explode.

"I thought I had made it simple for you to understand," I said. "Someone has to pay for the death of my mother and that someone is you, Liam, and your little group of friends." Liam glared at me with a murderous expression on his face.

ENCS

"I'm sorry, has the world gone completely insane? Was I the person who kidnapped the underboss' niece in the first place?" Liam asked. "Must I remind you, our actions have consequences. If there is someone who should be blamed for your mother's death, it's you, Capo Bastone. Face it, you killed your own mother, you worthless piece of-"



| drew out my gun and aimed it at his chest. “And must | remind you, | am the underboss of the WNCS. You work for me, thus it is also your job to protect me and everyone around me.

1/6

## CHAPTER 77 Deal

the job of the Cohens ever since you first came to this town. Protect those throne without thought or complaint. Since you failed me, | will exact you or | can get it from those you call your friends.”

piece of work, you know that?” Liam exclaimed shaking his head in disbelief. He aned back in his chair and gestured to me. “Fine. What is it that you want? Hmm?” | owered my gun, hoping we could come to an agreement.

“Someone very important to me was taken from me. In return, | want to take someone important from you. | know for a fact Theodore Cohen is important to you and your friends, unless there is someone else you can give me to take his place,” | said, bargaining with him.

“Your choice.”

He stared at me with a bewildered look on his face. Sure, | was talking like people were just

pawns on a chessboard, but what were people to me anyway?

People were expendable.

It was a sick game | was playing, but | wanted to prove my point. | was boss, not Liam. | could twist anything to my advantage, including having him pay for the death of

my mother.

| glanced at his father and noticed the scared look in his eyes. He had a nasty bump on his

forehead and his face was pale. | wanted to laugh. High and mighty Theodore Cohen has finally realized that in this town, | reigned supreme.

Hurry, Liam..... Time is ticking.

“Unless there is someone who can take his place, Liam murmured, clearly infuriated with the ambiguity. “Tell me, Capo Bastone. Who can I exchange for my father? Do you want me to give you Alejandro De Vega’s head on a plate? Do you want me to track the assassin? Do you want me to abduct De Vega’s niece for you? Or maybe you want a group of young girls to keep you satisfied every week?”

I smiled. Liam enumerated from the top of his head hoping one suggestion would tickle my fancy. However, he misunderstood me.

“Liam, let me make this clear because you are apparently confused. I want someone

important to you, unless you have feelings for De Vega,” I said, smiling mischievously. “As for his niece, been there, done that. I even have a video of it.”

“You want someone important to me in exchange for my father-”

2/6

## CHAPTER 77 Deal

He closed his eyes, finally realizing who I really wanted in exchange for his father.

“No! We have already discussed this. I bring in the money and you won’t lay a finger on her,” he reminded me.

“That was before my mother died lying in a pool of her blood inside our very home,” I said, casually. “No? Well, if that’s your final answer, I’ll just have Gomez here shoot your father in

the head.”

My voice held no remorse. I gestured to Gomez to do it and he took one step back and aimed

the gun at Theodore Cohen’s head.

Theodore’s eyes widened and he began mumbling incoherently through the duct tape, looking at me, begging for me to stop. Oh, now you respect me, you old coot!

“Wait!” Liam exclaimed, standing up and raising his hands to stop Gomez from shooting his father. “If I do give her to you, are we good? What I mean is... is the slate wiped clean? And

does this mean everyone here leaves without a scratch? He pointed to his two men who were kneeling at the other end of the room.

“Everything will be forgiven and forgotten, however I’m afraid I can’t let the hostages go. If I do, then I’m left without a bargaining chip, Liam,” I reasoned, not wanting to give up my hostages. “How do I know you’ll hold up your end of the bargain anyway?”

“I promise I’ll give you Virtue Sullivan, just let my dad go,” he begged. “I need some time so I can make the necessary arrangements. I don’t want it to look like another New Salem rape- slay case. It will further tarnish my image for reelection.”

I laughed. He was worried about reelection.

ame

“You are such a snob, Liam. I don’t care about your reelection! However, I do care about honoring tradition. You want time, I’ll give you time. I want Virtue Sullivan delivered to during the one event when you boys first got your hands dirty for me. Every single time. you and I meet, you look at me like I’m this disgusting perverted monster. So as a reminder that you too raped an innocent girl, what better time than the Spring Formal? Why do you think I took Joan Summers during that event? I wanted New Salem to look at you the same way they did when news of Joy Taylor’s assault spread across town. That’s how much I hate you, Liam,” I uttered with so much loathing. “Your father will come live with me as my guest until the Spring Formal. If you do not deliver, I will kill your father and throw him at the bottom of the lake. So, do we have a deal?” I raised my hand where my ruby ring was nestled on my

3/6

Wed

CHAPTER 77 Dealnovelbin

y finger, so he could kiss the ring to seal the deal.

to his face and kissed the sparkling red gemstone as a sign he was agreeing before | could pull my hand away, he yanked me towards him and whispered. "When you think you're sitting comfortably on your pedestal, look down. You'll see it coming down with an axe."

chuckled. "We'll see about that," | murmured. "Men, take those two out the back. Don't kill them. | may have a use for them. Gomez, let Theodore Cohen go." | poured scotch in another

last glass and handed it to Theodore. "Fix yourself up, Theodore. You still need to pay your respects to my mother."

"Why you little-" Gomez pushed the muzzle of his gun against Theodore's skull, reminding him he wasn't free to scream insults. He begrudgingly took the glass from my hand and downed it, wiping his mouth on his sleeve.

| buttoned my jacket and stood up. "I'll see the both of you in the viewing room. Cris, please bring the bottle of scotch with you so we can make a toast in the memory of my mother. Theodore, follow me." We exited through the back door, followed by Gomez, leaving a stunned Liam and Cris behind.

That they didn't see coming.

Liam

| watched my father follow Pete out the back door. There wasn't much | could do as of the moment, but agree to the arrangement. Later, I'll talk to the Sheriff and see what we could do to save my father.

| gestured at Cris to follow me to the front door. As | grabbed the door knob, | was surprised to find the door was slightly ajar. Was someone watching us?

| felt the cold air and shrugged my shoulders thinking it was a faulty latch. This funeral home needed a lot of repairs.

| noticed the restrooms and decided to splash some cold water on my face. | quickly turned, my eyes still adjusting to the dark as | walked, when | suddenly bumped into someone. | muttered a curse under my breath, annoyed the hallway was so dark.

## CHAPTER 77 Deal

e person stumbled on top of me and | caught a whiff of that expensive perfume who | new only one woman in this town wore. My heart skipped a beat, knowing who she was. | wrapped my arms around the small of her waist and held her body against mine. “Liam, oh my gosh! Thank God, it’s you!” Virtue said, catching her breath. “This hallway is so dark and creepy, | was beginning to imagine things.”

“You’re safe,” | whispered, smiling down at her beautiful face.

Just having her in my arms made me feel better.

My eyes narrowed as | heard Cris cough behind me, reminding me of my deal with Pete McDowell.

| still had time before the Spring Formal.

| still had time to plan Pete’s death.

Joy

| was flat against the wall, stunned at what | was witnessing in the room when | heard Cristos’ voice through my earpiece. “Where are you?! | saw you leave. Sweetie, there are CCTV cameras fronting our viewing room. They could have seen you leave too.”

Great! Think, Joy, think!

Restroom... time of the month.... | quickly went inside the restroom and tied my sweater over my waist making people believe | had a stain. It was the best I could do.

As | came out, | bumped into Liam. | stumbled on top of him, one of my hands armed with my bladed hair comb ready to strike if needed.

“Liam, oh my gosh! Thank God, it’s you!” | said, pretending to catch my breath. “This hallway is so dark and creepy, | was beginning to imagine things.”

“You’re safe,” he whispered smiling. Cris, who was standing in the hallway, coughed to grab our attention. “Are you going back to the viewing room?”

“Yes,” I answered, quickly hiding my hair comb in my purse.

5/6

CHAPTER 77 Deal

“I’ll take you, so I know you’re safe.”

He quickly wrapped my hand around his arm and let me through the dark hallway while Cris

followed us

As we approached the viewing room, I saw Xavier, Sebastian and Cristos waiting at the front

of the door.

Although they were all smiles, I saw the angry dint in their eyes,

Chapter Comments.

M

really don’t want Virtue to be caught and alerts the men what’s happening

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Chapter 78

CHAPTER 78 Extraction

istos

We were outside the viewing room waiting for Joy. Our girl had gone to do some surveillance on her own and from what we heard through her earpiece was enough to make the three of us very angry. Angry at ourselves, Liam, Pete and most especially at Joy for being careless. and ignoring her coms.

Earlier, while we mingled with guests in the viewing room, we waited for chaos to erupt. However, it wasn't the chaos we expected..

their

The three of us excused ourselves from the throng of people who were present to pay last respects to Cynthia McDowell and made our way to the farthest corner of the room so we wouldn't be disturbed. We huddled together while keeping a watchful eye.

"Has any one of you seen Pete?" Sebastian asked. He just came from a date with Marla and was casually dressed in a dark blue shirt and khaki pants.

"No, but his car is here. Maybe he's already speaking with Liam," Xavier said who looked more formal in his dark gray suit. "Did you see Liam's car when you walked in?"

"No, I didn't." Sebastian suddenly paused, looking above Xavier's head. "Guys, check it out," he whispered, nodding his head to the back of the viewing room. I raised my eyes and saw Pete McDowell in a black suit with his hair styled in product closing the back entrance of the viewing room. "Pete just came out from the back. Does he own this place?"

"No. Linda Jacobs does," Xavier mumbled. "She's the woman in the black dress."

"Can you be more specific? They're all wearing black," I pointed out.

"Five foot six, about 140 pounds. Light brown hair, blue eyes, and red nail polish. Has a mole on her left cheek, Xavier described her without even looking at her. My eyes narrowed,

scanning Cynthia McDowell's rich girlfriends. I found her giggling beside Norma Martin while sipping champagne without a care in the world. Hmm... It was time I took a look at

her finances.

Pete came in from the back and left through the front. Without even acknowledging or greeting any of his guests, he hurriedly exited the room through the front door.

“He’s really a gracious host. Most of the people have been here since eight and he didn’t even

speak to any of them,” | said.

1/6

## CHAPTER 78 Extraction

“He’s like his father. He doesn’t care about anyone, but himself,” Xavier said, raising his glass. and smiling to the group of twittering women. This is getting old.”

“Well, | heard Norma Martin is buying the McDowell pharmacy,” Sebastian said. We looked at him, impressed he got that bit of information. “Marla told me. Her boss is Norma’s ex-

husband.”

“Seems you have a new target, Bo,” | said, snickering. He rolled his eyes and sighed.

“Means | have to break up a happy couple,” Xavier said before taking a sip of his drink.

From the corner of my eye, a woman in a simple gray dress and black sweater exiting the viewing room caught my attention. She may have made herself look bland and common, but

lov was here that hair comb, | can recognize from anywhere. | was about to tell the guys Joy when Big Man Lou’s voice interrupted me.

“Primo, | have two satellite messengers pinging. Leo and Benny are sending an SOS, Man Lou said through the coms.

“Where are they?” | asked keeping calm. The SOS meant my cousins were in trouble.

Big



If anything were to happen to them, the bosses of the Blood Disciples would castrate the three of us. We were warned against encroaching on the Angels of Darkness' territory when we asked our fathers for their blessing to help Joy exact her revenge. It was a lengthy discussion, but in the end, Joy was family and we never ever turned our backs on family.

When I sent Leo and Benny to Liam to do some snooping, I hadn't anticipated that Joy was in the middle of something this twisted. We all had thought the Cohens were the ones who ran things in this town. Although they did in a way, they were still puppets on a string.

"Chimes Funeral Home. I hacked into their CCTV system. They entered the coffin shop with

Theodore Cohen, then followed him inside to some sort of room or office. That's all I have of them," Big Man Lou said.

"Pete McDowell just exited the viewing room," I said through my coms. "Who is he meeting?"

"Liam Cohen and Cris Murdock, Primo. He's led them through the hallway opposite the coffin shop," Lou said. "Unfortunately, that's where my eyes stop. However, Leo and Benny's distress signals are pinging in that area."

F uck! Pete has taken them hostage.

2/6

Wed, Mar 27

## CHAPTER 78 Extraction

"Thanks Lou," Xavier suddenly said, taking over. Keep us posted if anything happens." He switched coms, contacting Sam. "Sam, what's your status?"

Sebastian and I watched in anticipation as Xavier paused to listen to Sam. We couldn't hear what Sam was saying. He and Xavier were sharing a private line.

"Do you know what they're planning to do with Theodore?" Xavier asked, pausing again to listen to Sam's answer. "Where are you exactly?" Another pause. "Formaldehyde is flammable and the crematorium uses gas, Sam.

Alert us when you have them.” “What did he say?” | asked, hopeful. Xavier gave me a comforting smile.

“Sam is already out back, coffins are being loaded on a black truck with license plate 581- ELC, and Theodore Cohen is bound and taped, guarded by a man with a gun to his head. Unfortunately, there is no sign of Leo and Benny.”

Xavier and Sebastian both took out their phones and began messaging their men. When Xavier was done, he patted me on my shoulder. Don’t worry. | got this.” | had to hand it to Xavier. He was so calm. Him and his men loved being in the middle of conflict. They actually complained that New Salem was so boring. But now, they finally got their wish for some action.

“I’ve instructed De Luca to follow the truck,” Sebastian said. “I’ve noticed Pete doesn’t seem too concerned his mother is lying in a casket. | guess she had more control over the empire

than he did.”

“I’ll be checking out Pete’s finances,” | said. “I’ll make all his money disappear-

“Hey, Bo! How are you? | hope you’re feeling better,” Norma Martin said from behind me.

While we were busy making plans, Norma Martin and her predator friends had walked over to check up on Bo. | grimaced as they began running their hands on Xavier’s arms. Xavier appeared delighted at the attention and began charming the pants off of Norma.

Cougarville. The predators had set their eyes on Xavier. Well, it was a means to an end.

Sebastian and | stood there watching as they competed for Xavier’s attention until we heard

a familiar voice shouting through our earpiece. It was Liam.

Sebastian grabbed my arm and pulled me away from Xavier and the group of middle-aged

women.

3/6

## CHAPTER 78 Extraction

“Dont tell me it's”

“Yes, it's her. Shush! Im listening.”

Just like Liam, we all underestimated Pete. He had taken Theodore Cohen, Leo and Benny hostage and were using them as leverage to get what he wanted from Liam. Liam, knowing he was backed into a corner, had no other option, but to yield and give in. Pete wanted Joy and although Liam reminded him of their previous deal, he said it was now null and void.

after his mother's death.

“Men, take those two out the back. Don't kill them. | may have a use for them, | heard Pete's

voice give out instructions. | felt relieved my cousins were alive, but it was time for Joy to get novelbin

out of there.

“Where are you? | saw you leave. Sweetie, there are CCTV cameras fronting our viewing room. They could have seen you leave too,” | said through the coms. | heard her mutter a curse under her breath before | heard a door open and her heels clicking against the floor.

“Wait for me outside. Pretend | have a stain on my dress,” she whispered. | was about to answer her when Xavier said something rather loudly.

“Roger that,” he exclaimed. The women around him looked at him puzzled.

“Roger what?” Norma Martin asked, amused.

“Military lingo for “received and understood”. You were just inviting me to a dinner remember? So, yes, roger that, I'll go.” Xavier looked at his watch. “As much as | want to stay, it's late and | need to wake up early for Cynthia's funeral. I'll see all of you tomorrow. Good night.”

“Do all three of you have to go?” Linda Jacobs asked, looking at Sebastian like he was a piece.

of meat.

“Unfortunately, yes, Sebastian answered. “But we'll see you again in the morning.” He took out his business card and handed it to Linda. “If you need anything, give me a call.”

Suddenly, I heard Joy's voice through my earpiece. “Liam, oh my gosh! Thank God it's you!” Joy said, catching her breath. “This hallway is so dark and creepy, I was beginning to imagine things.”

“Let's go,” I said, preparing myself to use my gun. I'd shoot Liam if it meant saving Joy. I didn't care if I'd have to go into hiding. I glanced at Xavier and I could see in his eyes that he

4/6

12.25 Wed, Mar 27

M

CHAPTER 78 Extraction

was thinking the same too.

We exited the viewing room and waited for Joy. It felt like an eternity for her to show up.

\*X, standby for extraction,” one of Xavier's men said through the coms. We needed to leave

now.

“You guys

know what to do,” Xavier mumbled, before turning around to greet Joy as she, Liam and Cris finally came out of the dark hallway. We were all smiles, but angry as hell at Joy for going off on her own.

“Hey guys. I couldn't get the stain off,” Joy whined. “I think I need to go home.”

"I'll drive you home, sweetie," I offered. "Let's go home now."

"But I brought my car—"

All of a sudden, a loud explosion rattled the entire funeral home. We all dropped to the floor, covering our heads. I glanced at Liam, noticing his arms were on Joy's head, sheltering her from the explosion.

"Get Virtue out of here, Chip!" Liam exclaimed, pushing Joy into my arms.  
"Cris come with me! I need to help my fa—"

Another explosion erupted. The doors to Cynthia McDowell's viewing room suddenly burst open. People came out screaming and running, escaping with their lives.

We noticed smoke had begun to billow out from the room. Apparently a fire had erupted

from the back of the funeral home.

Liam and Cris ran towards the crowd of panicking people, trying to enter the viewing room.

Sebastian and I placed our arms around Joy while Xavier placed his coat around her as the sprinkler system turned on. We calmly led her outside amidst the frightened people.

"Extraction a success. I repeat, extraction a success. Taking Leo and Benny home."

At the mention of those words, we turned around to check on the damage and found Chimes Funeral Home engulfed in flames. 5/6

CHAP 78 Extraction

omments

she wasn't found and it's time to tell her men what she learned

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Chapter 79

### CHAPTER 79 Hero

Sam

New Salem was such a small town, it was hard to blend in with the people. Everyone here knew each other. So, instead of blending in with the town's folk, I conceal myself, working as a ghost, a shadow. I know these people have seen me from the corner of their eyes, but before they could even turn their heads and focus their eyes on me, po of... I was gone.

After placing a tracking device on Pete McDowell's silver Audi, my mini-laptop pinged. I ducked behind the fancy cars and took cover behind the trees near the funeral home.

I quickly pulled out my laptop from my pack. Someone was in trouble and I had to answer

the call.

Satellite messengers belonging to Leo and Benny were sending a distress signal and global satellite positioning pointed to the back of the funeral home.

Well, what do you know? I'm already here.

I sent out a group message to my team who were at Old Man Eugene's property to prepare for an extraction at Chimes Funeral Home, sending them coordinates of Leo and Benny's

exact location. I told them to hustle... We had two of our own to rescue. I placed my mini-laptop back in my bag and hoofed it to the back of the funeral home.novelbin

| noticed a huge black truck making its way inside the compound, so | decided to hitch a ride. The truck slowed down as it entered, passing through the gates of a typical hexagonal wired fence without any hassle.

| jumped off the truck and hid behind the garbage bins near the docking area of the funeral home. Once the truck had parked its trailer into the docking area, | snuck inside, using the darkness to conceal myself.

The back of the funeral home was a dump. It had hazardous chemicals everywhere, boxes upon boxes of shit and coffin material lying around. It was smelly, dirty, dank and dusty, and it was terribly dark as if the owners disliked investing on light bulbs.

Plastic flap doors separated the embalming area from the outside. | quickly snuck into the embalming area and hid behind boxes of chemicals in a corner. That's when | saw Theodore Cohen come out from a door, bound and gagged, being led by some punk holding a gun to a big room which looked like the funeral home's crematorium.

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## CHAPTER 79 Hero

| looked above my head to check for CCTV cameras. Not one in sight. Good. It'll make my job a lot easier.

The truck was a good distraction. All the men were outside loading coffins into the trailer. There was a lot yelling and the fork lift was hella noisy.

While | crouched down in my hiding spot, my eyes having finally adjusted to the dark, | noticed a red gasoline container. | was planning our escape when | heard Beaufort's voice on

coms.

"Sam, what's your status?" He asked casually, knowing | had already seen the distress signal.

"I've entered the back of the funeral home. Theodore Cohen is here, his hands are bound and

his mouth taped. The back is crawling with critters. They're loading coffins into a huge black truck. License plate five eight one, echo lima charlie with 'Chimes Coffins and Funeral Homes' painted on the trailer."

"Do you know what they're planning to do with Theodore?" Beaufort asked.

"No. But he has an ugly motherfucker with a gun guarding him. I don't see Leo and Benny but their SMs are pinging near this area," I answered.

"Where are you exactly?" Xavier asked.

"Embalming area and crematorium. There's a door that leads inside the viewing area. I suspect Leo and Benny are being held captive somewhere there."

"Formaldehyde is flammable, Sam, and the crematorium uses gas," he said, indirectly telling me to use the resources I had around me to create a fire. "Alert us when you have them," Beaufort instructed.

"Copy that."

I crept towards the gasoline container, silently praying there was gasoline in it. I guess God was watching over us Blood Disciples, because it was filled with gasoline.

Now, I had to wait... patiently for an opportunity. If they were going to execute Leo and Benny, it'll probably be here where it's easy to clean the blood up and dispose of their bodies.

I peeked through the plastic flaps and noticed the men had just finished loading their cargo onto the truck. Several of the men jumped inside the truck while the others climbed into

2/5

## CHAPTER 79 Hero

tive vehicles. I guess they were all going home.

ked before it exited the compound. A shame it had to leave before the exploded. It would have been a great getaway vehicle.



| suddenly heard a phone ring. The punk guarding Theodore answered his phone, then gestured to Theodore to walk back inside.

“Let's go,” he said to Theodore. Theodore stood up and walked back inside. When the both of them disappeared, | began prepping up for the distraction to facilitate our escape.

e area

| quickly covered the in gasoline, making sure the boxes of chemicals were doused in it.

Since all the men had left for the night, | walked to the door that led to the inside and opened it, discovering it opened to a well-lit hallway with several doors across from it.

| couldn't wait in the hallway. | was a sitting duck. | had to wait out here until | saw Leo and

Benny before | could make my move..

After several minutes, the door at the far end opened and out came Leo and Benny, tied and

gagged being led by two humongous gorillas. | heaved a huge sigh of relief, seeing the both of them were still breathing.

“X, | see them. Prepare for extraction. Over,” | whispered through my coms.

“Roger that,” Beaufort answered. | switched coms to communicate with my team.

“Team, prepare for extraction.”

“Team is on standby outside your location, Sam, answered Link. He may be an attorney, but he loved the action. “X, standby for extraction.”

It was a warning to Beaufort and to whoever was with him to get the hell out of here. Escape and extraction with a corresponding distraction usually meant an explosion.

| hid behind the door and waited for the two gorillas to exit before knocking the both of them out with the butt of my gun. After cutting the nylon cables binding Leo and Benny's wrists, | handed Leo my gun and gestured for them to head outside so | could ignite the gasoline. | lit up my lighter, throwing it into the puddle of gasoline on the floor, then dashed outside so | could lead Leo and Benny to safety.

3/5

APTER 79 Hero

e and chemicals alone weren't enough to cause an explosion, | placed enough C4 lming table and on the door of the cremation machine. As we reached the gate. pound, | detonated the C4, one after the other, causing two explosions, hoping I'd se panic and enough mayhem.

Link and the rest of the team were waiting behind the trees with their motorcycles.

“Extraction a success. | repeat, extraction a success. Taking Leo and Benny home,” Link announced, handing Leo and Benny each a helmet.

I turned to look at the damage | caused and found Chimes Funeral Home engulfed in flames.

| switched my coms. “Lou, | need you to erase all CCTV footage of the Chimes Funeral

Homes.”

\*Sam, you got it. By the way, well done.”

Liam

Dark clouds of smoke circled around us. | covered my nose and mouth with a handkerchief, plowing against the frightened people who were trying to escape the fire.

| saw Pete making his way to the front, his arm covering his mouth. | was about to ask him. where my father was, but the a ss hole pushed me aside and quickly ran out.

“Dad, where are you?” | yelled out, squinting my eyes, desperate to find him..

Suddenly, a hand grabbed my leg. I crouched down and saw my father lying on the ground, underneath Cynthia McDowell's coffin.

I handed my father my handkerchief to shield him from the smoke.

"Cris, we need to push the coffin off of him," I croaked. The smoke was stinging my eyes and I couldn't breathe.

Cris nodded his head and positioned himself at one end while I grabbed the other end. Slowly, we lifted the coffin up and pushed it aside, enough for my father to crawl out from

underneath it.

Cris pulled him up on his feet, placing my father's arm around his shoulders. We were about to leave when I heard a woman's voice cry out for help.

4/5

## CHAPTER 79 Hero

Cris, go. I'll follow you," I said. It took me a few moments, but I found the woman crouched down on the ground. I lifted her up and quickly led her outside.

Once outside, the town's firemen and EMTs assisted us, providing us with first aid and

oxygen.

"Thank you, Liam," Norma Martin said while breathing through her mask. "You saved my life."

"Seems you're a hero, Liam," Sheriff Combs said, finally arriving at the scene. "You'll be headlining tomorrow's news. Actually, all this will be headline news."

I glanced at Pete who was seated on a stretcher receiving first aid.

He looked furious.

## Chapter Comments

Kuna-Mom

now that was exciting

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24

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Chapter 80

CHAPTER 80 Enigma

Joy

| woke up to a rainy Monday morning. | quickly grabbed my phone from my nightstand and checked my messages. As expected, a message from Liam was waiting for me, informing me Cynthia McDowell's funeral had been postponed to this afternoon, but he would no longer be attending. His father was in the hospital and he had to attend to his needs first.

Sh it! Pete survived the fire.

| put my phone down and stretched. No problem. If a fire couldn't kill him, | would.

Last night, before the firemen and the rest of the first responders arrived at the scene, the boys decided it was better if we left and met up with Leo and Benny instead, before they left. New Salem. It was such a huge relief to see them alive and well, laughing with a drink in their hands. After giving Leo and Benny each a hug, | gave Sam a kiss on the cheek as my way of thanking him. Xavier looked on, proud of his protégé. Sam was proving himself indispensable.

| was already up, brushing my teeth and recalling the deal Liam made with Pete last night, when the doorbell rang. Wondering who it was, quickly put on my robe and rushed downstairs.

It was Noah. He was wearing a long sleeved plaid shirt, jeans and his trusty work boots, while holding up an umbrella to shelter him from the rain. He smiled brightly at me, appearing to be in a good mood despite the bad weather.

“Good morning, Virtue! | dropped by to check up on you. | don’t know if you’ve heard, but there was a fire at the funeral home last night,” he said.

I invited him inside so he could get out of the rain and ushered him into the kitchen for

some coffee.

“Yes, | know there was a fire at Chimes last night. | was there when it happened,” | replied, filling the reservoir of my coffee machine with water. After placing some coffee grounds in the filter, | turned my coffee maker on.

“| thought you weren't going to Cynthia McDowell's viewing,” he said, taking a seat in one of my kitchen stools and leaning his elbows on the kitchen island. “Tell me, what happened?”

“Well, | changed my mind at the last minute, thinking it would be better if | did go... to show

1/6

## CHARTER

Pete during this very emotional time for them. Chip and | were about. this explosion. Smoke suddenly started coming out from the viewing people were running and screaming. Liam told Chip to get me out of there inside to look for his father. It was a frightening experience,” | said, narrating short version of last night. “Anyway, | received a message from him this morning. rently, he and his father are fine, although his father is currently in the hospital.” | gged in my toaster, then | asked him, “Do you know if there were any

any casualties?”

Yeah, several, according to reports. The police are still identifying the remains,” he answered. “After your, uhm, horrifying ordeal last night, | have some good news for you. My team and | will be finishing up your boutique

today instead of tomorrow. I, uh, I've been hired to clean up the debris at the funeral home and see what can be salvaged. Once Linda

Jacobs' insurance pays up, she wants me to start construction."

"That's really nice to hear. Thank you, Noah," I said gratefully, grinning at him. I actually waited for you to come home yesterday to ask you if you wanted to come with me to Cynthia McDowell's visitation, but I guess you were busy," I opened my refrigerator and took out a bag of bagels and some bananas.

"Aw, you should have called me. Seems like I missed a lot last night. I was over at the Hughes' residence installing new flooring, some light fixtures and putting up

up new shelves,"

Noah explained.

Sure you did, Noah. Sarah Hughes and Nicole had that same look when they looked at Noah. They were in love with him..

I glanced at him from time to time while I prepared a simple breakfast for the both of us. I had to make sure his hands were where I could see them. After finding bugs and cameras in inconspicuous places in my boutique, I didn't want him doing the same in my house.

"Are you going to the funeral later this afternoon? Liam messaged me it was postponed to this afternoon," I mentioned while placing a cup of coffee in front of him, including some cream and sugar.

"Ah, no," he answered, shaking his head while he poured some cream into his coffee. "I'll be at your boutique remember? Plus, there's some talk going around town that the McDowells are, uhm... cursed."

I stared at him with a bewildered expression on my face, but in reality, I was fighting the urge to laugh.

If you guys only knew....

2/6

CHAPTER 80 Enigma

ursed? Why do the people think that?" | asked, placing a plate of bagels, a plate of sliced ananas, a jar of creamy peanut butter and a block of cream cheese on the island counter. "Do people here still believe in witchcraft?"

"Well, North Dakota has a rich Native American history and that includes certain beliefs about spirits and curses," he explained while putting some cream cheese on his warm bagel. He took a bite and moaned in satisfaction. "As a precaution, Virtue, | think it's best if you stay away from Pete, just for the time being."

"Noah, | doubt if a curse caused the fire last night," | said, putting some peanut butter and slices of bananas on top of my bagel. "| was there. The air in that place was moldy, the lights were flickering and the hallway was so dark, | thought the boogeyman was going to jump

out

and grab me. That funeral home was in dire need of repairs. | suspect the fire was caused by something that short circuited." | took a bite of my bagel and savored its sweet taste.

"Well, they're still investigating," Noah said, looking at me. "Are you considering going to the

funeral?"

"Of course. Pete needs our support," | answered before chomping down on my bagel. | was hungry.

"Is Liam going with you?" He asked, finishing his bagel.

"Ah, no. His father's in the hospital," | said. "I'm going to call Chip and ask if we can go together."

"That's right. Theodore Cohen is in the hospital, Noah said, sipping his coffee. He sighed. and placed a hand on mine, squeezing it. "I know Liam's some sort of hero for saving Norma Martin from the fire, but he's dangerous, Virtue. | don't know if you've heard, but Liam Cohen has been in the middle of two, uhm, cases."

"Dangerous? Liam's dangerous? What do you mean, Noah?" | asked, pretending to be concerned for my safety. | finished my bagel and began

licking my fingers. | saw Noah swallow hard as he watched me place my fingers in my mouth.

Naughty... Naughty...

“We were in high school when he, Jack, Cris and Dan were accused of raping Joy Taylor, a friend of ours. S-she’s the girl | was talking about... my bestfriend. | don’t know what happened to her after. She and her family left New Salem in the middle of the night. | haven't heard from her ever since,” he said, practicing some self-restraint. Good boy.novelbin

3/6

## CHAPTER 80 Enigma

“Accused? Did Joy Taylor ever file charges?” | asked.

“No, but her father wanted to. Unfortunately, no one would talk,” Noah said candidly.

“So, there weren't any witnesses to corroborate her story. | see,” | said. “Do you suspect a cover up? | heard Theodore Cohen was mayor before Liam.”

“That’s what the town suspects,” Noah admitted,

“Poor Joy. She was raped and no one believed her. So how about the other case?”

“Im sorry?”

“You said Liam was in the middle of two. The first, he’s an alleged rapist. How about the

second?”

“Ah... The Joan Summers rape-slay case. Her body was found in the middle of the lake last spring,” Noah said.

“Yeah, | recall Sheriff Combs talking about her. How does he figure in her case?” | asked, removing my hand from his grasp and picking up the used dishes and utensils, placing them.

in the sink.



“He was seen following her, stalking her before she went missing,” Noah answered.

“Noah, if Liam killed her, don’t you think he would dispose of her body properly where no one

would find it?” | asked. “It just looks too obvious. Plus, if | remember correctly, they found the person who killed Joan Summers or was that a cover up too?”

| read the coroner’s file on Joan Summers. Liam said Joan was his friend who played chess with him at his office from time to time. Unfortunately, after Old Man Eugene found out about Joan’s after school get-togethers with him, he began telling the townsfolk Cynthia McDowell and the Cohens were land grabbers. Liam stated he had no part in her abduction or rape, but he was ordered by Peter McDowell to get rid of her. Since he couldn’t kill her himself, he instructed his men to do it for him and to bury her body. However, his men threw the body in the lake instead of burying her.

Noah leaned back on his stool with a sombre expression on his face.

“| know he’s your friend, but Virtue, you don’t know him like | do,” Noah said. | was playing the devil’s advocate and it was working.

4/6

## CHAPTER 80 Enigma

“Uhm, isn’t he your friend too? I’m not defending him. | just want the facts. You were the one who said he was dangerous. Is there more to these cases... maybe certain details you may know?” | asked.

| watched him squirm uncomfortably in his seat. He knew more than what he was letting on, but he was sworn to silence..

“| only hear what the townsfolk have to say,” he mumbled, finishing his coffee.

| just have one last question, Noah.

“You said you were bestfriends with one of his victims. Did you ever feel the need to avenge Joy Taylor? Because if she were my bestfriend, | would.”

He looked outside through the windows before answering my question. | was surprised to see the regret in his eyes.

“No. Because she left, so | moved on,” he answered, glancing at his watch. “I best be going. Thanks for breakfast.” He stood up and quickly went to the door.

No balls Noah...

“My pleasure. Since you'll be busy, | hope you'll have time to drop by when | have my grand opening,” | said, following him. “For you, | will,” he said, suddenly turning around to face me. He placed his arms on my shoulders and gazed down at me with his chocolate brown eyes. “Virtue, | care for you. | don't want to see you get hurt. So please, avoid Pete... temporarily, until | say it's okay, and when you need to be with Liam, make sure you aren't alone.”

| nodded my head. “Okay.”

“You promise?” He gazed at me with puppy dog eyes.

“| promise, after | go to the funeral.” He rolled his eyes at my answer.

“Fine. Just as long as you're with Chip,” he said, accepting my proposal. “I better get going. Take care, Virtue.” He quickly kissed me on my cheek and left.

| waved goodbye as he walked through the rain underneath his umbrella.

Noah was an enigma. From what | remembered of him in high school, he was usually easy to read. Now, | couldn't read him at all.

5/6

TER Pama

thing | was sure of, he was up to something.

glanced at Joy's shed as | walked away. The lens of the camera | had placed on the door had something blocking it. I've been meaning to come over and take a look at it, but Old Man Tucket was always watching. Plus, | had stuff to deal with it.

After climbing into my truck, | fixed my hair and checked if | had something in my teeth through my rearview mirror. | frowned as | gazed at my reflection, frustrated my boyish good looks weren't enough to charm Virtue.

She needed a respectable man with money, a nice house, a nice car...  
Someone she could be proud of.

| backed out of my driveway and drove out of the cul-de-sac, slowing down as  
| passed her

house.

Soon Virtue.

Soon.

Chapter Comments

Luna-Mom

oh well karma what goes around comes around y VIEW

T

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