

Rewritten 17

Chapter 17

Jasmine strutted in, her high heels clicking rhythmically on the floor. Long, curly locks cascaded over her shoulders, sashaying with every step she took.

“Why are you standing there all dazed, Madelyn? Are you going to tell me what happened?” she asked, reaching out.

Madelyn shrank back, a slight frown crossing her face. Picking up her lunchbox from the floor without uttering a word, she turned and walked away.

As Madelyn made her way down the silent corridor, her face wore an expression of unnatural calm. Yet, inside, she felt a suffocating sensation like never before. Upon reflection, she realized that everyone around her had ulterior motives. Not a single soul had been genuine with her. First, it was Zach, who had manipulated her love for him, conned her out of her will, and unceremoniously discarded her once he had achieved his goal. Then came Jasmine, who had showered her with unwarranted attention at school, heard her woes, provided counseling, and wormed her way into Hayson’s attention, eventually gaining entry to the Jent family, only to conspire with Zach and quietly kill Hayson. Cecilia, the third, whom she had once considered her best friend, was no different.

‘Everything is fake. Everything around me is a lie,’ Madelyn realized.

In another building, she opened the lunchbox and washed it thoroughly, the metallic, blood-like smell assaulting her nostrils—a smell that would etch itself permanently in her memory. As the tap water gushed forth, soaking her injured wrist, she felt a sharp, piercing pain. Madelyn remained impassive, as if she did not feel the pain at all. By the time she finished cleaning up, her wound had turned a sickly white, and fresh blood was seeping out. It was a gruesome sight.

Just as she was about to leave, her vision turned black. A black plastic bag had been thrust over her head, followed by a tremendous force that pushed her against the tiled wall. A surge of pain coursed through her. She felt kicks at her back and punches on her face, one after another, each leaving her writhing in pain. She could not see anything or determine how many people were involved. When they had finally had their fill, they left her semi-conscious and dragged her into the bathroom, removing the plastic bag from her head. Her consciousness was fading, her spirit feeling completely drained.

Her ears were filled with the sound of laughter from several individuals. The wound on her wrist had split open again during the struggle, staining the floor with blood—an awful sight. Summoning her survival instincts, she managed to dial the one contact stored in her phone—Zach.

Beep. Beep. Beep

Her call was met with the sound of the dial tone. Zach stopped in his tracks, pulling out his phone. Upon seeing the caller ID, his eyes narrowed slightly in irritation. He hit the mute button and tucked his phone back into his pocket.

“Zach, who was that?” Jadie asked with a glimmer in her eyes. “If you’re busy, you can ignore me. I can manage alone.”

“It’s a sales call, nothing important.” Zach dismissed her concern. He suspected Madelyn had lost her patience and was resorting to her usual tactics of bothering him.

“Okay,” Jadie replied with a sweet smile, offering one of the two ice creams she held in her hand. “Here, Zach. I got this for you. Try it.”

Although Zach did not particularly care for sweets, he accepted the treat. Jadie took a bite of her own, the creamy ice cream melting instantly in her mouth.

“You should be careful with cold food.” Zach warned, a hint of concern creasing his forehead. “You don’t want a stomachache.”

Jadie responded with a playful stick of her tongue. “Zach, I really appreciate you taking me to the movies. But are you sure it won’t interfere with your work? You don’t have to accompany me every day; I can manage on my own.”

She was surprised that Zach, despite being so busy, would wait for her outside school and even take her to the cinema.

Zach glanced at his watch, noting the time. "Work isn't too hectic lately, and nothing's more important than spending time with you. Come on, the movie's about to start."

Upon spotting the two movie tickets in Zach's hand, Jadie pursed her lips. "Zach, isn't Madelyn coming along?"

"Madelyn has some after-school extra-curricular activities. She won't be joining us," Zach answered.

"Alright! Let's go then." Jadie smoothly linked her arm with Zach's naturally.

The film they watched was a romantic one, albeit with a bitter ending. The male protagonist died, leaving the female protagonist alone in the world. In the end, she chose to grow old alone. Seeing Jadie's pained expression, still engrossed in the aftermath of the movie, Zach took her on a shopping spree. They bought a plethora of clothes, all the latest trendy styles, till their hands could not hold anymore. The remainder was sent back home by the store's delivery service.

By the time they had finished shopping, it was eight in the evening. Night had settled, the road was alight with lamplights, the streets were bustling with traffic, and the view was beautiful.

Jadie, thrilled, settled into the passenger seat. "Zach, that arcade was so much fun. Let's go again next time."

Zach did not refuse, his soft laughter in agreement. "Sure, whenever you feel like going, I'll try my best to accompany you."

As Zach leaned in to fasten Jadie's seatbelt, he caught a whiff of her unique scent, a contrast to Madelyn's. Jadie smelled sweet. Suddenly, Zach found himself recalling Madelyn's slender, enticing figure.

Despite having grown up with Zach, Jadie still felt a surge of nervousness when he got close to her. She held her breath, her heartbeat quickening. Zach, noticing this, withdrew himself and checked his phone, discovering dozens of missed calls from the Jent residence's landline. All calls went unnoticed due to his phone being on silent. As he was about to return the call, another one came through.

Picking up the call, Rosario's anxious voice came from the other end. "Mr. Jardin, is Miss Jent with you?"

"No. What happened?" Zach's voice was calm yet filled with concern.

"Ah? Miss Jent isn't with you? Where could she be?"

"What? Madelyn's missing?" Zach's expression turned grave in an instant.