

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1001

After thinking about it for a long while, Tommy eventually said, "I want to learn how to shoot."

Irene was speechless while Tommy continued, miming firing a gun. "I saw it on TV. They were like—whoosh!—and hit the bull's eye. That's so cool!"

His little round eyes lit up as he

spoke. Boys would always be boys!

Still, Irene asked, "Don't you think you're too young? Maybe wait another

year?" Tommy shook his little head. "I can use something small."

"Alright, I'll ask around," Irene said. "Let's see if there's anything children like you can

learn." Then, her tone changed as she said, "Alright, let's start today's lesson!"

"Aren't we going to learn how to shoot?" Tommy asked.

"I don't know how to do it, so I can't teach you. I'll ask some people later, to see where you can learn," Irene explained patiently, watching him. "You have to learn what I teach even after you learn how to shoot. You'd have less time to play."

Tommy's little eyes widened. "I'm just a kid. This is so stressful."

Irene smiled. "You have a little brother, and that makes you a big boy, so you should act like one!"

"But I'm only this tall," he said and compared his height with Irene.

Irene patted his little head and picked him up to let him sit on her lap. "You'll grow up to become a big man, and you'll have to protect me later. Or do you not want to grow up?"

Tommy quickly replied, "Yes."

Irene sighed and gave him a bear hug.

Children do yearn to grow up quickly, but when they are adults, they would miss the carefree life of their younger days and the bliss of ignorance.

It was as if troubles came with adulthood.

"Are you sad, Mommy?" Tommy asked, looking up at her just then.

"Nope," Irene replied, kissing his little cheek.

"I'm sleepy, Mommy," Tommy suddenly murmured, rubbing his

eyes. Irene stared at him for a moment.

Already? He was just brimming with energy just now.

Why did she feel skeptical?

"No slacking off, Tommy. I played every trick you played before—can't fool me," Irene said, putting him in his seat at the table. "No going to be until you're done with today's lessons."

Irene certainly knew that he was pretending. Was he trying to trick her now?

Tommy simply did not understand that adults were children once and would have done what they were doing now.

Naturally, they would see through them immediately!

Unable to say anything, Tommy turned and asked, "When is Daddy coming home?"

Who knew? Maybe Mommy would not keep her eyes on him 24/7 if Daddy was around.

Irene stiffened for a moment and sighed ever so subtly—she had no idea how Isaac was doing, after

all. Tommy then said, "Mommy, you should call Daddy! I miss him."

Irene stared at the boy. "Did you think you wouldn't have to study if I did?"

Tommy was speechless. What gave him away?

He reluctantly opened the book Irene made for him, and she taught him the words he did not

recognize. Bzzt...

Her phone suddenly rang just then, and she took it out to see that it was

Stan. Since Isaac could not see, they were basically keeping contact

through Stan. "Is it Daddy?" Tommy asked.

Irene had no idea, and she certainly hoped it

was. Answering the call, she asked, "Hello?"

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1002

Stan said, "It's me, Mrs. Jefferson."

Irene's eyes lowered slightly and said flatly, "Yeah."

"The crisis is over for now," Stan continued. "You can move back to the castle."

The mastermind, Hector, had been deported back to Zidonia and would be sentenced to death in no time at all since he was responsible for a handful of deaths.

"Okay," Irene replied and quickly asked about Isaac. "Did the doctors say when he'll be better?" Stan

was silent for a while before answering, "The doctor said soon."

Irene did not even need to guess—while Stan paused, he was actually asking Isaac what to say. "Stan,

is he hiding something from me?" she asked then with a threatening edge in her voice.

Stan was speechless.

He felt so awkward being caught in the middle!

He certainly would not dare to speak out of turn where Isaac was concerned, but that meant he had trouble answering Irene too. If he said something wrong, he would have to suffer Isaac's abuse.

He then thought to himself that it would be nice if James were there to take over this for him.

However, he knew that that was impossible, since it would take James a long while to recover from the injuries he sustained. And while he did, he would be working alone for Isaac.

The very thought left him feeling stressed.

Nonetheless, he chuckled. "I'd never lie to you. Don't worry—Mr. Jefferson is really getting better."

"Then where is he?" Irene asked.

"He's having an eye examination," he replied, and he was not lying—the doctors had just come to take him away for a test. "Take good care of him," Irene told him.

Stan was the only one around Isaac, and she knew Stan was hardly as competent as James—she would be relieved if James was there with Isaac.

Hanging up and putting away her phone, Tommy stared at her. "Mommy."

"Yeah?" Irene asked, looking up.

"Let's go visit Daddy, okay?" he said, blinking his large, innocent eyes. Irene held his gaze for a while. "You just don't want to study, do you?" Tommy was speechless, realizing that he was exposed again.

Irene said sternly, "Don't even think about it."

Moreover, she would not go because Isaac told her not to.

She knew that he must be stressed with this condition, and she would wait quietly for him to return after making a full recovery. On the other hand, since Tommy could not say anything, he was forced to study like a good boy.

-

During dinner, Irene asked Mrs. Watson as she did not see Zachary at the dining table.

Mrs. Watson told Irene she did not see him, and Irene whipped out her phone to call him. Though the call got through, no one was answering.

She frowned coolly and put away her phone.

Finishing her soup, she picked up her baby from Sheryl and played with him in the living room, intending on waiting for him to come back and tell him that they could move back to the castle.

After all, staying here for too long was inconvenient since they had too many people around. However, as Zachary had yet to return even past 9 PM, she called him again.

Still, no one answered, and she frowned.

Where did he go? It was already very late, but she's not returning at all... Did something happen to him? She could not be blamed for worrying, since too much had happened lately.

Unable to stop herself from getting paranoid, she decided that she was worried and called Zachary again.

After a while, her call was finally answered, and Irene immediately asked, "Where were you Zachary? Why aren't my calls getting through?"

"Who are you?"

Irene froze—it was a woman's voice!

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1003

A woman's voice? Who was it?

Irene asked tentatively, "I'm looking for Zachary Slate."

"Oh, he's having a shower," the woman on the other end replied.

Irene was speechless for a moment. "Okay. Just tell him to call me back when he's done—" The woman cut her short before she could finish. "Actually, I think he'll be busy..."

Irene frowned so hard her brows almost knitted together.

Did that woman think she was in a relationship with Zachary and was trying to assert dominance?

"Look, I'm not his girlfriend—we're just friends, and there's something we need to talk about, that's all," Irene explained. "Tell him to call me back."

With that, she hung up and dropped on the couch, feeling bemused.

Was that how he was going to get over being dumped? By messing around with women?

Her baby pulled her hair just then, and Irene patted him in return, returning her focus to playing with her baby. He had been walking steadily these days, although he had often tripped on his first steps.

"You're the best, baby," she said, carrying him and giving him a peck on the cheek.

Tommy entered the living room after dinner, and he blinked as he saw Irene shower his baby brother with affection. He thought to himself that although the kid was leading a life of bliss at the moment, he would not escape the fate of having to study as well.

He dropped on the couch, and Irene eyed him. "Are you actually getting tired from dinner?" "From studying," Tommy replied.

"And? Did you remember what you studied?" Irene asked.

Tommy snorted a little proudly. "Why not? It's not that hard." Tut, tut... That tone!

Irene then asked, "Roses are...?"

"Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet, and so are you," Tommy promptly replied.

Irene continued. "Snow."

"There's a patch of old snow in a corner, that I should have guessed, as a blow-away paper the rain had brought to rest," Tommy recited smoothly and with perfect pronunciation.

Irene nodded in stratification—the poems she had Tommy memorize were ordered according to difficulty.

"Let's hope you keep doing your best," she said. "Since you did well today, you have no homework tonight." "Yippee!" Tommy skipped around happily, and Irene smiled in turn at his happiness.

It was late, so Irene started to coax her baby to sleep, while Tommy basically could do everything himself these days—he would even insist on washing up himself before climbing into bed although he was just a child.

Irene patted his little head. "Do you think Mommy is too strict?"

"I like being with you, Mommy." Tommy threw himself into her arms—even if it was hard work, he was happy having her around. Irene lay down with him in her arms. "That was how I learned so much when I was a kid too."

Tommy nodded. "Okay."

"If you don't have knowledge or culture, you would be empty," Irene continued. "I hope you'll be better than your daddy and me when you're older."

Tommy nodded again, though there was no telling if he got it.

Irene gently patted his bed to coax him to sleep while he lay on her chest, reveling in her warmth.

After he fell asleep in such comfort, Irene gently put him down and made sure he was not waking up before tucking him in and tiptoeing out of the room.

She returned to her room and applied scar removal cream over the bullet wound on her shoulder, since it would look ugly if she did not use it.

She then heard the door open.

It must be Zachary at this hour, right?

She straightened her clothes before opening the door...

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1004

Once Irene opened the door, she found Zachary tiptoeing back to her room. She called out to him, "Where have you been?"

Zachary turned around and smiled. "Nowhere."

"Did anyone tell you that I called you?" Irene asked him.

An unnatural reaction appeared on Zachary's face, and he somehow looked awkward. "You called me?"

"Yes I did," Irene told him with no uncertainty, "and it was a woman who answered, saying you were taking a shower. I told her to tell you to call me back when you're done. She didn't tell you, did she?"

Zachary chuckled. "Nope, she didn't."

"Are you serious about her?" Irene asked her.

Zachary walked over and sat on the couch. "What do you mean?" "The woman who answered my call," Irene said.

Zachary appeared nonchalant. "She's just a woman. What's with the seriousness? Just need to satisfy my physical needs." Irene frowned, speechless. "Giving up on yourself, are you?"

"No, but I'm no saint who's above worldly needs," Zachary said seriously. "Is it really so terrible, sleeping with one?" He was sleeping around?! Irene certainly found it unacceptable!

"Are all men like you?" she asked.

"More or less!" Zachary shrugged, before adding, "Isaac doesn't because he's not like most men. He has restraint." Irene snorted. "You're either covering up for him or covering up for yourself with the last part."

"Well, it's been a while since you've been with him," Zachary said. "Don't you know what he's like?" Despite her complaint, Irene had faith in Isaac. "Just do what you will!"

She got up, ready to go back to her room. It was late, and she needed to sleep.

Zachary stopped her. "Why did you call me?"

Irene smacked herself on the forehead. How could she have forgotten?

Turning back toward Zachary, she said, "We're moving back to the castle. Help make the arrangements." "Is it safe there?" he asked.

"Stan called me, saying that the crisis is over." "Alright, I'll make the arrangements."

-

The next day, Zachary worked on helping Irene and the others move.

They did not bring much over when they came and therefore did not have much to carry back, aside from personal items and clothing.

Since there was no furniture at all, they just had to load everything they had into their car and head back to the castle. Things were even easier there since Pierre would help with everything.

Once they returned, Tommy was running around happily in the courtyard, since he really preferred it here—it was so huge, and he had plenty of places to play.

He also had Eagle teach him how to shoot, since he had seen Eagle hit a leaf with a pebble before and was really impressed— maybe even worshipful.

"Interested?" Eagle asked, leveling his black eyes on him—things had certainly been cordial between them after they pranked Zachary together.

Tommy nodded.

Eagle said, "We'll need to get some training gear."

"Why not just a pebble?" Tommy asked, rearing his little head. "No—you're too

young." Eagle patted his little head.

His fingers did not have the strength, and he could not throw with enough strength. Tommy pouted, until

Eagle said, "But you can learn marksmanship first."

Tommy was puzzled. "What is that?"

"To aim at your target and hit it." He remembered seeing darts among Tommy's toys. Tommy pouted again—that was no fun.

"I'll teach you how to shoot when you hit the bull's eye," Eagle said. Tommy was immediately interested. "That's a promise."

"Of course," Eagle replied.

-

Irene was busy unpacking earlier and did not see them.

When she finally stepped out, she found Tommy fully focused as he launched his darts. He thought it would be simple, but hitting the bull's eye was really difficult.

Eagle then saw Irene approach and was just about to speak when Irene shook her head, gesturing at him to not bother Tommy. She wanted to see if her son had the gift for it.

Eventually, she asked softly, "Do you think he can shoot, Eagle?" Eagle looked up but soon lowered his gaze again.

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1005

Keeping his gaze lowered, Eagle said, "Tommy's still young. Let him try first before deciding if he has the gift for it. We can't tell for sure immediately, but I can see that he's interested."

He appeared afraid to meet Irene's eyes, but she smiled as she watched Tommy. "Actually, you can teach him hand-to-hand combat."

Not so that he could win fights, but so that he could defend himself when he grew up. After all, she was sure that Isaac would pass his legacy to Tommy.

And having seen Isaac almost getting killed over a disagreement in business recently and with Tommy having to tread the same path like him, she would like Tommy to have the ability to protect himself.

"I will," Eagle said.

Irene smiled and returned inside.

She was about to take her baby off Sheryl's hands when her phone rang—it was a call from Lulu. She answered it, and Lulu rasped from the other end, "Irene."

Irene frowned, noticing that something was wrong immediately from Lulu's voice. "What's wrong? Were you crying? Were you in a fight with Martin?"

"No," Lulu replied.

"Then..." Irene was going to press her, when she noticed Zachary nearby, so she returned to her room.

Zachary frowned slightly as she did—what had gotten into her? Why was she acting all mysterious? "Mrs.

Spencer, do you know what's wrong with Irene?" he asked Sheryl.

"No, she looks just fine to me," she replied, not seeing anything wrong with Irene.

Zachary, however, clearly sensed that Irene was avoiding him, though he realized soon enough. Who else would that call from, if she had to hide from him?

Lulu.

Still, Zachary thought it was unnecessary since he completely gave up after seeing the hickey on Martin's neck.

He decided that it was never going to happen for him and Lulu, and he would not take Lulu's hand again even if she turned around one day.

-

On the other hand, Irene was feeling nervous in her room, sensing something bad over on Lulu's end. "Are you alright, Lulu? You sound like you're in trouble."

"I have a favor to ask," Lulu said.

"You don't have to be so formal," Irene replied. "Whatever it is, you need just ask—I'll help if it's within my power to help. "I'd like you to raise my daughter, Jean. You could pass her to Zachary afterward, too..."

Lulu made that choice because she knew that Jean would be happy growing up in Zachary's custody, since she was his daughter.

Irene frowned. "Did you have a fight with Martin because of the child?"

"No... But something happened to him, and I don't think I can raise her now..." She was stuttering, and Irene could clearly hear Lulu restraining her voice.

Even so, her voice was hoarse and choking with tears. Irene felt as if her heart leapt up her throat.

What could be so serious that Lulu could not raise her own child?

"Lulu..."

"Can you promise me?" Lulu cut her short. Irene did not hesitate at all. "Of course." "I'll send her over now."

"I'm not in Zidonia," Irene said. "I'll travel over there to get her, alright?" Lulu was silent for a while. "Okay."

Irene then asked, "Is Martin's trouble... serious?"

There was more silence until Lulu murmured, "...Yeah."

"Alright, I understand," Irene said.

"You have to hurry."

"Okay," Irene replied, but she felt worried even after she hung up. She

could tell from Lulu's voice that Martin's situation was serious!

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1006

Irene's heart was seized with anxiety even as she put down her phone.

She had to go back as soon as she could to find out what happened to Lulu—or more specifically, Martin, that Lulu could not raise her child.

However, when she opened the door, she saw Zachary standing outside, his hand raised and ready to knock.

He was caught by surprise when the door suddenly opened, though he soon came to his senses.

"Were you talking to Lulu?" he asked, and shrugged before Irene could answer. "You don't have to hide from me if you were—I'm over it, and she isn't the only woman in the world."

Irene pursed her lips, and asked, "Is that why any woman would get to bed you? Because you're over it?"

Zachary was speechless—he knew what Irene was referring to but did not deny it.

He even said, "I think this is just fine. I mean, what's the issue? With no strings attached to my relationships, I don't have to get upset."

"You really should clean up your act. You're a father now," Irene told him. "If your daughter—"

"Could you not talk about that?" Zachary cut her short before she could finish.

Irene frowned. "The baby—"

"Lulu's baby," he interrupted her again.

Irene glared at him like she could bite him just then. "Could you please let me finish?"

Zachary said "If it's about Lulu, you don't have to tell me."

"Alright, you said that yourself! Don't you regret it later!" Irene snapped. She then started to stride outside, calling out to Eagle.

Zachary gave chase. "Fine, I'll keep my mouth shut. What is it? Tell me!"

Irene did not turn toward him or stop in his tracks. "Lulu told me that something happened to Martin, and she asked me to bring her child over or leave her in your care."

Zachary froze.

Wary that he might have misheard, he strode up and caught her arm. "Are you for real, Irene?"

"Of course," Irene replied, nodding. "There's no reason for me to lie."

Zachary's breathing turned rushed, and he asked, "Am I getting this right? That I'm raising Jean from now on?"

"You're getting it right," Irene nodded.

"Okay. Let's go," Zachary said, suddenly walking faster than Irene.

"We're still in Franconia," Irene reminded him. "You have to book a flight to the nearest airport to New Kent."

Zachary seemed to only realize that then.

"Right, right. I need to book a ticket to fly over," he said, whipping out a phone and adding excitedly, "I have a daughter now..."

Irene asked him, "Are you still going to sleep around from now on?"

Zachary pouted. "Could you not hit me where it hurts?"

Irene grinned. "You need to set an example for your daughter."

"I know," Zachary replied.

Eagle arrived just then. "Ma'am?"

"I'm leaving for a while," Irene told him. "I'm counting on you to keep an eye on the family."

"You have nothing to worry about, ma'am," Eagle replied. "I'll take good care of your children."

And Irene was certainly relieved to have him around.

"The next flight is in three hours," Zachary then said.

"Then book it," Irene told him.

Zachary naturally did.

When it was done, he heaved a deep sigh.

This piece of news certainly came out of the blue.

Hold on... Martin had told Zachary that he would take care of Jean.

How could this happen?

"Is Martin's issue serious?" Zachary asked.

Irene shook her head. "Lulu didn't tell me. We'll know after we go."

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1007

Irene and Zachary boarded the flight to the airport nearest to New Kent, while Lulu packed all of Jean's

belongings. She would be waiting for them, and they would be able to take Jean away once they arrived.

Irene and Zachary's flight lasted eleven hours, and they got a car that took them straight to Lulu's apartment

afterward. Lulu received them with Jean in her arms, and Irene could tell immediately that Lulu got skinnier.

Irene held out her hands. "I can carry her."

"You're tired—I can carry her myself," Lulu said. "Come on in."

As she turned and went inside, Irene glanced at Zachary to see him pursing his lips and staring at Lulu from the back, with a faraway look in his eyes.

"What's on your mind?" Irene whispered.

Zachary swallowed but said, "Nothing."

That was not quite the truth since he was not feeling calm at the moment. He decided to get over Lulu and earnestly wished her happiness.

Why did her happiness have to be ruined again?

"Is Martin cheating on you or did he die in the line of duty?" Zachary asked.

He was convinced that something serious had to happen to Martin for Lulu to decide on something like that. Lulu stopped in her tracks in turn, her figure wobbling a little.

However, she did not reply and kept walking into the distance.

Irene in turn put a hand on Zachary's arm, gesturing for him to stop talking. Zachary was not playing along. "If it's the former, I'm going to kill him." "You need to calm down, Zachary," Irene said, frowning.

"I'm calm," Zachary replied.

He remembered Martin promising to take care of Lulu.

How could he not get upset when Lulu was left in this state?!

Lulu never answered and instead led them to the apartment where she stayed with Martin.

The building was a little old, but it was managed well and much better than newer apartments. They entered the rather dark walkway, and Lulu opened the door for them.

"Come on in." Both Zachary and Irene did.

It was the first time they were there—it was not a large place, but Lulu managed it well, giving it a sense of homeliness.

The windows were open, and they could see the clothes being dried on the balcony, flapping gently with a gust of breeze. There were succulents blooming over several pots, and their leaves were plum and healthy.

Warm sunlight spilled in through the windows, illuminating the living room and shrouding a stroller. It was a gentle, cozy sight.

Lulu had already packed up everything for Jean and put them on the couch. As she brought them drinks, she said, "Jean's stuff is all there."

Irene was staring at her. "What happened to Martin? Is it serious?"

Lulu sat on the chair by the dining table, keeping her gaze lowered at Jean as she said, "Don't ask." Irene pursed her lips and refrained from saying anything else.

On the other hand, Zachary was less than calm since he saw Lulu. "Then why did you ask us here?"

He was not upset at Lulu, but her refusal to talk made him feel like Lulu was protecting Martin, which made him further convinced that Martin had done something wrong.

"That's the man you chose?" he huffed. "He's no better than me! You're really blind, aren't you, messing up with the men you choose not once, but twice—"

"That's enough from you," Irene said, putting a restraining hand on Zachary.

However, he was plenty upset inside and pointed at Lulu just then. "Can't you see that she's still defending that man?"

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1008

Irene was frowning, but she lowered her voice. "Lulu is not telling you because she has her reasons—"

"What reasons could she have? She chose the wrong man and refuses to admit it. She's afraid to say it, to let others know that she was blind," Zachary huffed, upset at Lulu's silence.

She just had to say that Martin messed up, and he would stand up for her and beat Martin up for her! Even if they were not lovers, they could be family—he could at least do that much for her.

On the other hand, Irene was watching Lulu, who kept her head lowered as she held Jean in her arms.

Irene could sense that Lulu did not want to part with her baby, that she was compelled to leave Jean in someone else's care.

While Zachary was not exactly a stranger, Lulu was still the one who carried Jean for ten months, and they were dearest to each other.

As a mother, Irene understood that feeling.

Rising to her feet then, she said, "I'm hungry. I'm going to get some food."

Irene was sure that although Lulu had told her to raise Jean, Lulu actually wanted to give the baby to Zachary. Lulu probably did not want to say it directly and would have other things to say.

That was why Irene ought to give them some space.

As she left the apartment, she closed the door behind her.

-

Zachary used to yearn to be alone with Lulu, but the only thing that connected them was Jean.

No matter how deep a bond there had been between them, it had long since faded.

In fact, he had no idea what to say to Lulu when it was just them alone—he was quite eloquent when Irene was with them, and the room was immediately silent once she left.

Unable to stay seated, Zachary strode off to stand out at the balcony.

Both him and Lulu remained silent, and the stalemate lasted until Jean started crying.

Zachary returned inside to Lulu, lowering his gaze on the baby when Lulu said, "Hold her."

Zachary reached out to take Jean, his movement rigid but extremely careful.

Lulu left to heat up some milk, and after testing that the temperature was good, she handed Zachary the bottle.

Zachary remained stiff—feeding a baby was yet another first.

"Just put it in her mouth," Lulu told him.

Zachary did as Lulu said, and Jean quickly stopped crying.

Zachary's heart felt warm and fuzzy even as he watched her.

Eventually, he said, "Thank you for giving her to me."

Lulu said nothing, and he continued, "If you don't want to talk about it, I won't ask. I let my emotions get the better of me—I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault," Lulu said.

At the very least, this was not his fault.

"Her name is Jean," she said, pausing before adding, "We haven't registered her birth yet."

In other words, Lulu was saying that Jean could use his last name—he was Jean's father, after all.

Zachary understood and nodded.

"You can leave when Irene returns," Lulu added.

It was clear from her tone that she would like them to leave quickly.

Zachary looked up at her. "Do you really not need anything from us?"

"No, you won't be able to help," Lulu said, shaking her head. "Just take care of Jean."

Zachary lowered her head again to look at Jean. "It's all my fault. If I hadn't—"

"The past is the past, Zachary. We shouldn't keep obsessing over it," Lulu said, stroking Jean's tender cheeks just then. "Just promise me to take care of our child."

"I will," Zachary nodded.

"Having a child if you're going to marry might be inconvenient," Lulu then said. "So you could let Irene do it. We go way back, so she'll raise Jean as her own—"

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1009

Zachary looked up at Lulu right then. "I'll raise Jean myself. I'll make the call whatever happens.."

In other words, he was telling her to not talk too much, especially about things he did not want to hear. Jean was his

flesh and blood—he would never let her suffer any grievance!

Also, why was Lulu presuming that he was getting married already? The thought never crossed his mind. After all, what

was the point of love when one thought about it, when all it brought was pain?

Now, he was finally over it and able to start anew.

Would he still get himself a woman who meddled with his life? No way! Physical needs

were nothing but that—sentiment was unnecessary.

Lulu certainly understood that she had no right to meddle after she entrusted Jean to his care. She looked at

Jean then, whose little lips were wiggling.

The baby was still so small, so soft. She could not

help being sad.

It was her hope and duty as a mother to watch her baby grow up. But now...

She turned around then and said, "You should go."

-

Irene was downstairs, sitting beside a flower bed. She did not

leave to buy anything to eat.

In reality, she was ready to visit Ricky, since she could not do it last time. Now that she

had returned again, she really ought to visit him.

She glanced at her watch to see that just a dozen minutes had passed. She waited a

little longer, intending to return in around half an hour.

However, she had just entered when she saw Zachary carrying Jean in his arms, saying, "Let's go." Lulu picked

up a bag. "Jean's stuff..."

"I can buy it for her," Zachary said and left the house. Irene looked

at him for a moment and sighed.

She then entered the apartment, staring at Lulu for a moment before hugging her without asking anything. "Zachary and I will stay at a hotel and leave in a couple days. I'll visit Ricky in the meantime."

"Yeah," Lulu murmured softly.

Irene then picked up the bag and said, "I'll text you which hotel we booked. You can visit Jean if you want."

Lulu said nothing—dragging her feet would not hurt more, and she had no time to raise Jean in the future anyway. "You should

hurry back after visiting Ricky. It's not safe here," she said.

Irene nodded. "Okay."

When she stepped outside with the bag, Zachary had already gone quite far. "Wait up!" Irene

called out to him.

Zachary turned and frowned when he saw that she was carrying the bag. "I said I was going to buy those."

Irene snapped in annoyance, "I know you're rich, but Jean has to use it immediately, so how are you going to buy them right now? Do you even know which brand of formula milk is healthier? Do you have the time to buy everything she needs?"

Zachary stayed silent, while Irene hailed a cab. "We need to rest our legs in a hotel. And Jean's too young to be carried everywhere."

"Yeah," Zachary murmured.

Once they got in, Irene whipped out her phone to check for a nice hotel nearby.

Adults like them would be fine with any environment, but Jean was an infant and needed somewhere better. Soon, she

found one and showed her phone to the cabbie. "Please take us to this hotel."

"Okay." The cabbie recognized the place immediately. After a while,

he stopped his cab outside the hotel.

Irene headed inside and booked two rooms. "We'll stay the night. I'm visiting Ricky tomorrow." "Okay."

"Just leave Jean with me. You haven't learn how to raise such a young child—" "It's alright. I'll

learn," Zachary replied, reluctant to put Jean down.

Irene put down the bag then, staring at Zachary for a moment before asking, "Did Lulu tell you what happened to Martin?" Zachary paused for a moment and nodded.

"Did he get into an accident, or was he cheating on her?" Irene asked.

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1010

Zachary lowered his eyes. "It was an accident."

Irene's face fell.

She knew that Martin's work was dangerous, but to learn that he was hurt again left her in disbelief.

It was not easy for Lulu to find someone, after all.

"Is it serious?" she asked softly.

Zachary nodded. "They haven't found his body."

He knew because Lulu told him eventually after he asked.

Irene had to sit on the edge of the bed. "How could that happen?"

Zachary sighed lengthily in turn, unsure if he should be pleased or upset.

After all, Lulu would not have given Jean to him if Martin was alright.

Zachary thought he would at best watch Jean from afar and go his entire life without hearing her call him daddy.

Even if he was entrusted with Jean after Martin's accident, it also meant an end to Lulu's bliss.

Looking at Irene then, he said, "Lulu was blaming herself. That's why she gave Jean to me."

"What do you mean?" Irene asked.

"She and Martin had a fight, which was why Martin took the role of handler, but something happened and they don't know what happened to him."

Irene blinked. "Maybe he survived."

"Not really. Those are some serial criminals—there's not much hope of survival if captured. Moreover..."

His tone turned somber. "Lulu was threatened. That's why she's entrusting Jean with me—she's worried about her safety."

Irene was silent for a while.

"What about Lulu?" she asked eventually.

"She says she's rejoining the force, so she won't have time to care for Jean." Zachary heaved another long sigh. "I know her—she's working again for Martin's sake."

If Martin survived, Lulu would try her damndest to save him.

If he was dead, she would definitely avenge him.

She was sure Martin had become a handler and was therefore miserable about it.

Irene said, "I don't think we can help her with this."

Zachary knew that too. He watched Irene as he said, "Martin is a good man."

"Yeah!" Irene sighed, hoping that good people would get to live long.

"You should get some rest, Irene," Zachary said then. "It's been a long journey."

"Okay," Irene replied. "I'll be right next door. Give me a shout anytime you need me."

Zachary nodded.

Still, Irene paused at the door and turned to look at him as she left, and she saw that Zachary was carefully rocking his baby daughter.

She smiled faintly—it was the first time she saw Zachary being so gentle.

Children really are the best gifts for parents.

She stepped outside and gently closed the door after her.

-

On the next day, Zachary stayed at the hotel to take care of Jean, while Irene left alone to visit Ricky.

His hair was shaved and he was wearing blue prison overalls.

Somehow, he appeared lean instead of scrawny.

As Irene studied her from behind the glass, she said, "I didn't bring much since I came in a hurry, but I did buy some stuff you can use before I came. They will give it to you."

Ricky did not appear wilting but instead appeared cheerful. "Yeah. I'm happy you came to see me."

Irene was actually glad to see him doing well. "Are you..."

"I'm fine, don't worry," Ricky said, baring rows of white teeth as he grinned, thanks to being constantly exposed to the sun. "I'm just paying the price for my mistakes, so I have peace of mind here."