

## **Runaway 451**

### **Chapter 451**

James was puzzled.

"The security footage of the auction? Why?"

Isaac turned to look at him.

Though he said nothing, the pressure he projected was almost palpable.

James quickly lowered his head, afraid to ask more questions right then.

" I'll go right now."

While Isaac did manage to pull himself together after Irene's death, he was constantly overworking and suffered from chronic insomnia.

Every night, he needed medication just to sleep.

And if one were to say that he was cold as a person before, he was now even worse.

In fact, he only saved his harshness for his rivals, and was more or less ' kind to his own people.

Now, even Stan had resigned as an assistant in favor of a desk job.

It was not as if he was scared, but it was very difficult to work alongside Isaac these days.

The air around him seemed to turn cold from his very presence, and the people with him constantly felt a suffocating pressure.

Working with him had undoubtedly become a torment.

And now, James did not even have any idea what Isaac was up to, but quickly did as he was told.

When he returned at the auction hall, however, he was already too late- Mick had just left through the back door, having remembered to cover Irene's tracks.

He told the host to inform anyone asking for the night's security footage that the cameras had a malfunction.

It was an easy task for him, since he was a frequent guest and was well- acquainted with the host.

As such, James had to leave empty-handed. He was left grimacing and pouting, considerably afraid to face Isaac since he had failed his task.

But there was no running away either, so he simply braced himself and returned to the hotel.

Isaac had changed into a white bathrobe and was lounging on the couch, his collar wide open. The mere sight of his long neck and his chiseled collarbone was picturesque and reminiscent of the male leads of young adult novels.

His daily medication remained on the table next to him, untouched.

Walking up to him, James called out, "Mr. Jefferson?"

Isaac did not even look at him as he growled, "Show it to me."

James made a face and said, "I don't have it. The cameras had a malfunction."

Isaac raised a brow, and he leveled his gaze at James with an indiscernible emotion, giving him the creeps.

"Sir..."

"Do you really think the host would allow cameras to malfunction at an auction attended by major players from across the globe?"

Isaac was certainly upset with James-his insight seemed to have dulled, and his overall competence dropped with it.

However, it was because James had been constantly under pressure that he could not stay as composed as he used to-Isaac had to tell him exactly what was wrong for him to realize something was out of place.

After all, every item being auctioned just now was worth a fortune. The hosts would naturally be far more prudent, and would not allow for any security oversights at all—if the cameras were malfunctioning at all, they would have fixed them immediately.

Otherwise, if something unexpected were to happen and one of the auctioned items was lost, it is the host who would suffer the most damage.

James said, "I'll go talk to them again-"

Isaac suddenly raised a hand to stop him. "Forget it. You need your rest too."

"Thank you, sir," James said.

He quickly left, not willing to linger in the room for another second.

The room was silent for a while after James closed the door behind himself, and Isaac turned to look outside the glass wall.

The city lights were bright and dazzling, its interweaved glow piercing the glass to illuminate him, shrouding him with a blurred radiance that kept his expression inscrutable. He raised his thumb to rub between his brows.

He missed her so much that he somehow thought that the woman Harvey called ugly was her, and he outrageously sent James to get the security footage of her. He must be losing his mind thinking about her.

Even so, the days without her were certainly grilling, and her face keeps appearing in his mind.

Bzzt...

Suddenly the phone on his table began to vibrate.

He glanced at the screen nonchalantly and saw the text.

[Irene Spencer is alive...]

## **Chapter 452**

The text was so shocking that Isaac was left staring blankly at it.

Still, the screen soon dimmed, and Isaac picked up the phone, tapping the screen to light it up.

When he tried to open the text, however, his fingers were shaking. He took deep breaths to calm himself, but he was not calming down at all. He tapped on the text with a shaking finger, and it just read: [Irene Spencer is alive. ]

His brow furrowed and his expression darkened, just as the phone vibrated again. It was another text.

[Come to Room 709 if you want to find out what happened to her.]

Isaac could tell right then that someone was luring him to Room 709. He frowned, but headed there despite knowing that it was a trap. He could never stay calm with anything that involved Irene—it would not even be a far cry to say that he fell apart.

She was clearly dead, but he would still foolishly believe a text from someone he did not know.

Room 709 was on the same floor, so he easily found it, and...

Harvey was laughing out loud. "You really fell for it, Isaac Jefferson?!"

The Isaac he knew was shrewd and would never fall for something like this, but this Isaac was dumb enough to come!

Harvey actually felt his belly hurting from laughing. "I didn't think that you could be this stupid!"

Isaac leveled him an icy look and warned, "Joke about her again and I'll make your death a horrible one."

With that, he turned and started to leave.

Harvey leaned against the doorway just then and folded his arms across his chest. "I really don't think you will remain abstinent for her for the rest of your life."

Isaac did not pause at all, which left Harvey frowning. "How about a bet, Isaac Jefferson? You'll have someone else in a year—believe it!"

Silence was his response.

"Hey—"

Bang!

The door was shut very loudly, leaving Harvey speechless.

"I don't mind losing a year from my lifespan if he could fall for someone else in a year," James said.

He had overheard Harvey and came out of his room without Harvey noticing.

Harvey pursed his lips. "Oh, he'll get over Irene. Don't worry."

James was not that optimistic. "I really don't think so."

And he knew Isaac much better than Harvey did.

"Tch. You men are all the same." Harvey snorted and turned to return into his room.

James raised a brow. "Wait, do you mean you're not a man, Harvey?"

"You men?"

"Binary, perhaps?" James added, and quickly shut the door.

Harvey was speechless.

"I just meant that I'm different from the likes of you men, who always mess around with women..."

However, he was already left talking to himself in the walkway.

Feeling like a fool, he ran up to James' room and barked, "You bitch!"

After finishing what he wanted to do in Minerva, Isaac returned to the country.

Tommy was now able to walk very steadily, and once Isaac got home, the baby ran up to him and wrapped his little arms around his leg. 'Mah-mah...'

He still could not say papa, but Isaac was not teaching him. He actually liked him saying that.

"Mah-mah..."

As the baby buried his face on his trousers, he arched his back and scooped him up in his arms.

Tommy smiled happily, seemingly missing him. He wrapped his little arms around his neck and gave him a peck on the cheek, though a trail of drool was left dangling on his lips.

Isaac frowned in disdain, and took out a tissue to wipe Tommy's little lips and his own face.

The landline rang just then, and Mrs. Watson answered it.

After speaking to whoever was on the other end, she turned toward Isaac. ' Mr. Jefferson, Ian Jefferson escaped again.'

She put emphasis on the word 'again', as if she was already used to it.

In fact, Ian must have escaped a hundred times by now, but he was always recaptured without fail.

"Okay," Isaac replied flatly.

Isaac never delivered Ian to the police, and instead kept him at Blue Hill Mental Asylum as if he was an actual lunatic.

Though security was lax and Ian could escape anytime he wanted-and he certainly gave his best-he had always been recaptured whenever he thought he made it out.

Again and again...

It was a never-ending loop that left Ian questioning his sanity-he even began to wonder if he ever managed to escape, because it felt like it happened as much as it did not.

His mind was a mess.

Hammering on the steel door of his cell maniacally, he cried, "Get Isaac Jefferson here! Tell him to kill me if he has the balls to!"

As the steel door rattled and clanged, the director of the mental asylum was opening the door elsewhere for Isaac.

Ian was still hammering on it and when the door suddenly swung away from his reach, he lost his balance and dropped flat on his face.

He looked up, and his hands clenched into fists when he saw Isaac.

His eyes turned ablaze with unending hate as he breathed through his teeth, "Isaac!!!"

### **Chapter 453**

Isaac stood loftily as he looked down upon Ian as if he were an ant.

"I told you-you would wish you were dead."

Ian stayed lying sprawled haggardly on the floor, his spite almost consuming himself.

His hands were shaking endlessly and his veins were bulging over the back of his hand!

They were both Jeffersons, and yet he had lost everything including his own dignity, while Isaac remained perched on his lofty branch.

Losing again was already humiliating, but he had to lose so thoroughly too!

Pushing himself up from the floor, his facial features contorted with rage even as he growled, "You're just scared, Isaac

Jefferson. You're not manly enough to kill me with your bare hands. Do it if you dare, don't give me a reason to belittle you."

He suddenly dashed toward Isaac in a last-ditch effort to kill him, but was subdued the instant he moved.

"Time for your meds, Ian," the director of the asylum said just then.

Ian struggled violently, but he was too weak to free himself.

Ever since he had been brought in, they had been injecting him with a drug every day. It would leave his muscles enfeebled and withering, denying him even the strength to kill himself.

That was exactly the case for the present. Once injected, they immediately threw him down on the floor, not afraid that he might escape.

After all, he did not have the strength, and there was a tracker implanted in his body.

He was never getting away.

Naturally, the feeling of not even being able to die... left him wishing he was dead.

Even so, he reared his head and laughed crazily.

"Isaac... You didn't really win, did you? You'll suffer for the rest of your life because Irene Spencer is dead! Hahaha... I tried everything, even slipping into Zachary Slate's wedding and having an attendant send her that note. I would've caught her if she fell for it and went upstairs alone, but she didn't.

I then turned my sights on your kid while you're gone, and it worked perfectly! My whole plan went so smoothly just because you were abroad!

Even if I'm now your prisoner, I didn't really lose-I killed Irene Spencer!"

Every mention of Irene's name left Isaac's expression darkening.

He was the one who sent that note at Zachary's wedding?

Isaac had certainly been careless-he should have been more wary, and Irene would have been safe.

Turning around, he growled, "I don't want to hear his voice."

The director understood and had someone gag Ian before having him clobbered.

More or less satisfied, Isaac then left the room with the director in tow, saying, "There will be more donations today."

"Thank you, Mr. Jefferson!" the director quickly said. "Blue Hill Mental Asylum would not be still standing if not for you."

"Just keep him alive," Isaac said flatly.

"Of course," the director assured him. "We will be keeping a constant eye on him, and he will eventually lose his mind, mingling with the real loonies."

With that, Isaac got into his car without another word and headed to his office.

The building was actually the old Light Group headquarters, now used as an office for Remy. Light Group had also been renamed Twinrise after Isaac acquired the company in its entirety.

He was sitting behind his desk when James entered, handing him a document envelope. "Mr. Jefferson, I think this woman is looking for your mother's grave."

Isaac did not open the envelope, but he had a hunch who she might be.

Even so, he asked, "Who is it?"

"I've checked, it's Mick Gooding's daughter with..." James kept his gaze lowered as he allowed his voice to trail off.

He did not want to mention Yvaine Lynd, just as he had no idea how Isaac was going to react to the daughter she had with Mick.

"I don't want to see her in this country," Isaac growled, opening another folder instead, scanning through the contents swiftly before putting his signature on it.

"Yes, sir," James replied, but just as he turned, someone barged into the office.

Debbie the secretary was glaring at the woman but told Isaac humbly, "I'm sorry, Mr. Jefferson. She forced her way in-I couldn't stop her."

Debbie had immediately requested to be transferred back to the country after learning that Irene had died, and James agreed to it since he needed the help here.

Right now, Isaac was getting difficult to handle, and having another person would make things much easier.

That being said... What was this woman doing here?!

#### **Chapter 454**

James sneaked a glance at Isaac.

What would he do now that Erin Gooding had barged into his office?

They were step-siblings in a way, after all...

Even so, Isaac appeared unruffled, and watched as everything unfolded with coldness in his eyes.

James was speechless-was he really that cold?

He had every reason to acknowledge her as his sister, just so that he did not have to feel so lonely-that was what James believed, at least.

Meanwhile, Erin moved to stand just behind Isaac's desk. "You're Isaac Jefferson, right? I've seen your photos and looked into you. Yvaine is as much your mother as she is mine, so please tell me where she's buried. I need to pay my respects."

There was a sternness to her presence, as if she would not give up if Isaac did not tell her.

However, Isaac simply glanced at Debbie. "Call security."

Debbie was naturally thrilled. "Yes, Mr. Jefferson."

"What?!\*" Erin exclaimed, gaping. "I'm Yvaine's daughter!"

'Doesn't matter who you are. Barging in here without permission is against the rules," Debbie told her.

The security guards arrived just then, and she said unceremoniously," Throw her out of here."

Irene was dead, and Debbie did not want to suffer more rivals as she hoped to replace Irene.

Naturally, any woman that shows up around Isaac would leave her wary and she would do everything she could to make them leave!

Even as the security guards restrained Erin, she was still not giving up.

"Isaac Jefferson! You don't get to keep our mother to yourself! She's our mother!"

Debbie simply gave the security guards a look. "Make it fast."

Erin was hence swiftly dragged into the elevator and her voice was cut off once the doors closed, restoring silence to the office.

Isaac, however, was clearly unhappy about it. "How did she get up here?"

Knowing that he was in trouble again, James quickly said, "I'll strengthen security and tell them not to let unfamiliar faces in."

Isaac's expression was cool, seemingly unsatisfied with his answer.

James gulped. "I'll make her leave the country right away."

As he quickly left, Debbie was a little pleased to hear it, though her happiness did not even last for a minute...

"Out," Isaac growled coolly.

Debbie kept her head down as she left, but she was not upset with Isaac's coldness.

In fact, she already felt lucky that she could return to his side and be his secretary again, and they had all the time they needed.

She was certainly not in a hurry to get things done right away. She was also convinced that Isaac would definitely notice her the longer she stayed with him. She was much more useful than Irene since she could help him at work too.

And what could Irene do now that she was dead?

Erin was soon repatriated back to Minerva.

Mick had been living there with Yvaine, and although they had adopted Erin from an orphanage in Cloud City, she spent most of her life in Minerva too.

Still, James simply had to make an excuse with an expired visa to get her repatriated.

Erin was naturally very upset about it, and complained the instant she returned to Mick!

"Dad! How could Mom have a son as cold as him? He even told his people to throw me out of his office! I mean, I am his half-sister, right? Even if he's not going to show some hospitality, he shouldn't humiliate me like that! He even had me repatriated-it's outrageous!"

Erin's dainty, innocent face was contorted with rage, but Mick was not actually surprised.

Pouring her a glass of water, he said, "It's fine. Now, have a drink to cool down."



Erin was still discontented. "The more he tries to stop me, the more I'll look. I\*

Mick certainly wanted to see Yvaine again while he was alive, and since Irene used to be with Isaac, she would know him best.

"Patience. You need a plan, and I can help you come up with something," Mick said.

Erin's eyes brightened. "You have an idea, Dad? What is it? Tell me already!"

## **Chapter 455**

However, Mick pushed a plate of food to her. "Not now. Eat."

He did not mention Irene since she did not want too many people to know that she was alive, and therefore hid the truth from his own daughter too.

Even so, Erin's curiosity got the better of her. "Just tell me already, Dad. I really want to know."

"Well, you've met Isaac Jefferson. What do you think about him?"

He was just changing the subject to divert her attention, but Erin fell for it anyway.

"He has the looks," she said as she searched her memory. "But his bad temper cancels it out."

Mick smiled. "And?"

'And what?' Erin was puzzled.

Mick actually thought that she might be interested in Isaac after meeting him given the ladykiller that he was, but it seemed not to be the case.

Still, he found comfort that Erin was so intent on finding Yvaine's grave as well. She was a good daughter, even if she was adopted.

Nonetheless, Erin seemed to realize what Mick was getting at and shot him a glare. "Dad, are you getting senile already? We're half siblings-I won't fall for him no matter how good-looking he is."

Erin was over two years old when she was adopted, so she naturally did not remember it at all.

Moreover, Mick and Yvaine raised her and cherished her like she was their own, and never mentioned the adoption.

That was why Erin had always believed herself to be their biological daughter.

"Yeah, I must be senile," Mick grumbled. "Had a little drink in the afternoon and I don't think I'm sober yet."

"Come on, Dad-you need a healthier lifestyle. I know you're sad after Mom is gone, but I still need you. You're my only family now," Erin cajoled.

Mick smiled. "Yeah. I'll cut down on the drinking now."

After having dinner together, Mick told Erin to head home without him, saying that he had something to do.

He headed to Irene's apartment, but had to wait outside since she had not left work.

Irene only returned around ten. She was wearing a thick trench coat over her long floral print skirt and had a scarf around her

neck, hiding her burn scars. There was a breeze, pushing her clothes tightly against her skin and accentuating her bulging belly conspicuously.

Even as she walked, she was reading a report while she chewed on a loaf of bread.

She was so focused that she did not notice Mick standing outside her door.

"Is that your dinner?" Mick asked with a frown.

Irene looked up at him and simply replied, "I'll make soup later. The bread is enough for now."

Naturally, she did not even have time for dinner.

"You're pregnant. This won't do," Mick said and took her hand. "Come, there's a restaurant down the road. You need something warm and nutritious."

Irene naturally had to follow.

Once inside and getting seated, she put down her belongings but stopped when she was about to take off her scarf, remembering her face.

She also tried to hide her burned cheek when a waiter arrived.

The food soon arrived after Mick made the order, and he told her, "Have some soup."

"Thank you," Irene said.

"You don't have to be so polite," Mick replied.

Soon, she finished her bowl of soup, warming both her body and stomach.

"Go on, eat up," Mick insisted.

Irene was certainly hungry, and started to wolf down her food, while Mick did not move.

"You're not eating?" she asked.

"Just had dinner with my daughter, actually," Mick said, deliberately mentioning Erin. "Isaac Jefferson had her repatriated."

The mere mention of the name left Irene with a bitter taste in the mouth.

Suddenly, the food was not at all delicious, and she started to chew slowly.

"She couldn't find where Yvaine was buried, but you know him and his temper. Is there a way to do this?" Mick was looking at

Irene hopefully, convinced that she would have a way.

And yet...

## Chapter 456

Irene said, 'I can't help you with that.'

In fact, even if she had any idea, she would never tell Mick-she respected Isaac's decision.

From Isaac's perspective, it was natural that he would want to keep his own mother within his own family, alongside his father.

In fact, if she were him, she would do the same.

It was as much common sense as it was selfish, though she did not consider it as selfish a thing to do either.

Moreover, Yvaine only developed feelings for Mick because they spent years together, and he did save her life. It was hardly a natural one-she might not even have fallen for Mick if he had not erased her memories and taken her abroad.

Still, Mick could not help being disappointed.

"Well..."

"And if you recall, he was convinced that I was the one who killed his mother, and he naturally did not tell me where she was buried. You know how opinionated he can be too, so if he doesn't want to tell, he's not going to."

Mick became silent.

Isaac certainly was no pushover, and there was no way to pry any secret out of his lips if he refused to tell.

Mick sighed-he had been hoping that Irene could offer some pointers, but he was now truly out of ideas and helpless against Isaac.

"I'm already an old man, and I just wanted to pay my respects before I die... But it's just a dream now?"

Irene lowered her head but said nothing.

Mick simply waved dismissively. "Sorry. I was putting you on the spot."

"No," Irene replied.

Mick simply smiled and told her, "Go on, I'm not going to steal your food. Also, you shouldn't work such long hours already-your body won't be able to take it.

Irene smiled in return. "We're actually developing an artificial heart that could potentially save many lives if it works. We made a prototype for a semi-artificial one too, so I think this research will serve a great purpose... There are so many patients with heart conditions who die because there's nothing to keep their hearts going, so having that artificial heart will be a lifesaver for many."

Mick silently watched and listened as Irene talked about her work, and she always shone when she did so.

Career women could certainly be mesmerizing too.

"I'm sure Isaac would fall for you if he sees you as you are now," he blurted, and quickly realized what he just said.

Why talk about Isaac when things were going just fine?!

He quickly tried to hide it and pushed a bowl of mashed potatoes to her." Go on, eat. You're feeding two mouths here, so have as much as you want."

Irene smiled, knowing what he was trying to do, and therefore did not expose him.

Mick insisted on walking her home after dinner, even though she said, "My house is just down the road. I'm fine by myself."

"No, I should take care of you. First, because Stephen told me to, and second, because you're pregnant with Yvaine's grandson."

Irene naturally humored him.

Once home, she wrote another academic paper about her ideas and potential concepts for development, and uploaded it online to Mead Clinic's medical forum later.

Back at Zidonia, an excited Mark Wickers visited Isaac.

Isaac had invested in his pharmaceutical company before, and Mark was now visiting again because he had just read a certain academic paper on Mead Clinic's online medical forum.

While the concept of a fully artificial heart sounded almost too ambitious, the paper was succinct. Mark was also convinced that such advanced medical technology should not be monopolized, or Zidonia's medical field may come under the control of foreign entities.

Even if he was a businessman who was out to make a buck, he had a conscience, not to mention that he did not have the capital for such a grand project.

The foreign development centers had financiers from their respective nations, or they would not have the money to do anything.

And Isaac had the amount of capital they may require too.

Having compiled a document, he passed it to Isaac with a sycophantic smile. "It would be great if you can go through this..."

Isaac gave him a look. "Do you think my money grows on trees?"

He was not that experienced in the medical field, but Mark's story alone gave him the idea of how much money it would potentially cost, while also taking considerable time with potentially low rewards.

It was a poor investment in his book.

Mark did not give up, however. "Actually, it's the doctor whom I'm betting on. We can poach her, and we could definitely complete the development soon after."

He handed him another document he prepared beforehand, though this one was about the doctor who wrote the academic paper. "The doctor is young and actually a local. If you're interested, I'll head over to talk to her- I think we stand a fair chance."

Seeing Mark's enthusiasm, Isaac took it and started reading.

### **Chapter 457**

[Name: Jane Tanner]

[Age: 30]

[Birthplace: Zidonia]

Irene had changed her name for work reasons, though she had every reason to hide her real name too.

However, as there was not much other information, Isaac was left frowning. "Is this all you have?"

"I'm afraid that's all I've got on her," Mark admitted. "But I assure you, if you agree to this investment. I'll

personally travel to meet Dr. Tanner. If she has even the slightest conscience, I'm sure she'd agree to return to our country to continue her research."

"Not interested." Isaac refused him right away. "Debbie, get him out of here."

It was obvious that he did not want to waste his breath or time on a project he had no hopes for.

Refusing to give up, Mark blurted right then, "Mr. Jefferson, what would Ms. Spencer do if she were still here?"

Isaac's face fell immediately and he leveled a dark look at Mark. His eyes seemed placid, but he was really just a fraction away from throwing a fit.

Naturally, Mark regretted his own words right after he spoke-Irene was a sensitive topic around Isaac, and the mere mention of her would invoke his wrath.

"Pretend I never said nothing," he said, and hurried out of the office, wiping the sweat off his brow.

He wanted to mention Irene because she was a doctor, so that Isaac would agree to his proposal for her sake.

Instead, it was as if he had poked the hornet's nest.

Be that as it may, Mark had no idea that Isaac had lost his inner peace because of what he said.

He could not sleep that night, and medication did not work.

He eventually ended up taking up to six pills, and he must have developed an immunity to it-he did not even start to feel drowsy.

He simply grabbed a handful without knowing how many pills it was, and washed it down with water.

He did not care even though it was going to hurt his health.

As he lay down again, he remembered what Mark said.

If Irene were still here, would she really hope he invested in that project? She did have a messiah complex-that was why she chose to be a doctor. There was no question that she would want him to invest in that project. Picking up his phone, he called James. "Talk to Mark Wickers-tell him to put together a viable proposal and submit it tomorrow."

"Yes, sir." James said from the other end, and Isaac hung up.

The drugs were not helping him sleep at all, so he turned to look outside the window.

The moonlight was gently sprinkling through the curtains and gently grazing his face.

His chiseled face appeared even more defined and alluring under the glow, but the pain of his longing was clear in his eyes.

After Mark got the call, he immediately did his research on the development of fully artificial arts and put together a decent proposal.

He then traveled to Minerva, so that he had everything he needed to persuade Isaac with a single stroke.

Since he was a pharmacist, he had a couple of associates who could help him arrange a meeting with Jane Tanner.

At Mead Clinic, Irene was doing her research in a lab.

Although their goal was to develop a fully artificial heart, it was not literally fully artificial, with the heart being actually

irreplaceable, and its structure and function of respective parts complex and atypical.

As such, the objective was instead to develop parts that could take the place of defective parts of a patient's heart, so that they could treat any heart condition.

At the moment, they were searching for a substitute for capillaries that suffered blockages, just over two micrometers wide. Since it was otherwise invisible to a human eye unless viewed through microscopes, it was difficult to keep the flow within a channel so narrow, making any efforts to replace it difficult.

However, they were not exactly clueless since they were using tree leaves as inspiration-the spider web-like structure of veins in leaves were just like capillaries under the microscope.

"How about dinner tonight?" Jeff Cartman said just then.

He was born in Zidonia, but was raised and educated in Minerva, and had been working at Mead Clinic for six years. He had garnered much accolades in that time as well, but he and Irene still considered fellow countrymen, and were quite close although

Irene was basically on good terms with everyone else.

"Sure." Irene nodded.

"Then, I'll book a place," Jeff said with a grin.

Later, when Irene arrived at the designated spot, Jeff was already there.

However, Irene stopped at the doorway when she saw Mark sitting next to Jeff.

## **Chapter 458**

What was Mark doing here?!

That was when Irene remembered something else: she might have been close with Jeff, but he had never bought her dinner before!

That was why she thought something was weird about this... he had a reason for inviting her.

She turned and left the diner right then, while texting Jeff: [Sorry, something came up and I couldn't make it.]

She strolled along the bustling foreign streets in her beige dress and loose jacket. She had a scarf pulled up to her face to cover her burned cheek and neck.

She folded her arms as she slowly strolled along the streets-it was a rarity for her to be idling like today, and she even had time to admire the sights.

"Alright, I got it." Harvey was on the phone even as he strode along the street, when he knocked into someone.

He turned around, about to apologize, but saw that it was the ugly woman from the auction.

This time, she only covered her burned cheek, only revealing her brows, eyes and forehead.

It reminded him so much of someone...

As he spaced out, Irene quickly hid her face, lowered her head and walked away.

Harvey came to his senses right then and dashed up to her. "Hey, where do you think you're going, ugly? I won't hurt you."

Irene kept her head down and did not respond, so Harvey caught her by the wrist. "You ruined my show last time and you never paid me. Don't think you're getting away."

As he pulled her firmly toward himself, there was a breeze and Irene's scarf slipped down to her shoulders, baring her burned cheek.

Harvey flinched-the burn scar was utterly gruesome, and beautiful was the last word to describe it.

Irene flung off her hand and quickly covered her face again, but Harvey still cut off her escape.

"Look, I mean no harm, and it's always nice to meet a fellow countryman abroad. I mean, you've seen me speaking Minerverse to everyone else around here, but I get to stick to Zidonian with you. Don't you think this is a fateful encounter?"

Irene's eyes widened-it was certainly true, they had spoken in Zidonian the instant they met at the auction hall.

She had certainly been too nervous and forgot her situation.

It seems that silence was the best policy now.

Waving him off dismissively to show that she did not want to speak with him at all, she hurried off, leaving Harvey behind, standing there as he stared after her.

He must be seeing things.

That ugly woman might well be a different being compared to Irene Spencer, and there was no way they had anything to do with each other either.

He shook his head to throw away those messy thoughts right then.

Irene arrived at Mead Clinic the next morning, and she put on her employee ID, face mask, and lab coat as she usually did.

As she stepped out of the dressing room with her hands in her pocket, Jeff called out to her.

"Can I have a word?" He seemed to have been waiting for her a while now.

As Irene walked up to him, he asked, "What kept you last night?"

Irene did not know how to answer-she surely could not say that she knew Mark, and that she did not enter that diner because she did not want him to see her?

"Actually, I was going to introduce you to another Zidonian, and since we're all fellow countrymen, I was eager to help. He expressed an interest in the fully artificial heart we're developing, and you know how important the role Mead Clinic plays in this process. Once they succeed, they might create a monopoly, and every other country would be placed at a disadvantage."

"I know." She certainly understood where he was coming from.

Naturally, Jeff frowned. "Then what were you thinking? The man also told me that if you returned to Zidonia to help him with the project, you may ask for anything you need since he has Remy's backing. I have only a rough idea, but I remember that while Remy tends to be subtle, they have investments in enterprises across the globe. You have nothing to worry about once you have their support, and everyone here knows that you're good, but if you keep working here, your accomplishments would only be attributed to Minerva."

Irene had every reason not to return to Zidonia, and the mention of Remy only strengthened her resolve.

"Then why don't you go?" she asked in return.

Jeff gave her an incredulous look. "I was born and raised here in Minerva, even though I was educated in Zidonia. We've already assimilated here and have no reason to return."

"On the other hand, you're different. You only joined Mead Clinic recently, and weren't you harassed a little when you first came?"



They only changed their opinions of you because of your ability. Sure, your Minerverse and your skills would allow you to flourish here, but they are just using you- you're ultimately Zidonian, and don't you want to save more Zidonians?"

"All lives are equal," Irene replied.

Jeff breathed a sigh in exasperation. "Yes, but can't you think about this?"

Irene's hands clenched into fists in her pockets. "No. I'm never going back."

Naturally, Jeff could not do anything about that.

While there was no doubt that his words reached Irene, she had no choice.

Needing time to calm down, she stepped out of the room when a familiar face appeared before her.

Her eyes widened in surprise and she quickly turned to leave, but she was caught!

Chapter 459

Harvey lifted the employee ID dangling over Irene's chest and read it.

"Jane Tanner? I didn't think that it'd be you," he said in surprise. "I was actually wondering where I should start searching."

He was impressed that he recognized her despite the face mask, too.

As a matter of fact, Harvey had found out that Isaac might invest in the fully artificial heart project and was going to poach a certain doctor from Mead Clinic.

Since Isaac was known not to fail, he wanted to poach the doctor before Isaac could, and then put his own money in the project.

However, he had no experience in the medical field, let alone any contacts he could speak with.

As such, he came here looking like an idiot, and was kept out of the staffs quarters.

Frustrated, he paced around outside when he saw Irene came out, and grabbed her like he was grasping at straws.

"Come with me," he told her as he pulled her along.

Irene was at a loss for words, and simply grabbed the nearest scaffolding.

Harvey had to turn around right then, and when he saw just her eyes and forehead, he blurted out what he was thinking right then.

"Irene...?"

He did not mean to say it out loud, but it left Irene terrified.

Panicking, she tried to hide, and Harvey saw the fearful look in her eyes.

Why? What did she have to hide?

"Who on earth are you?" Harvey growled, even as he reached out to pull off her face mask, and was left staring at the scars on her face and neck.

Those scars... those were burn scars, were they not?

And Irene was supposedly killed by an explosion, with her face left utterly unrecognizable...

"You..."

He almost did not want to admit it even as he was left astounded!

Those burn scars...!

"...You survived?"

Irene lowered her head while speaking in Minervese, "You have the wrong person."

She struggled as hard as she could, but that only made Harvey hold on tighter to her, preventing her from freeing herself.

"You were speaking in Zidonian to me before, and now Minervese?" Harvey pointed out as he leveled a piercing gaze at her.

"You're definitely afraid, and you wouldn't be if you had nothing to hide."

"I honestly don't know what you're talking about. Let me go." Irene kept on speaking fluent Minervese, too flustered to understand her situation.

Naturally, the harder she tried to hide, the more she was exposing herself.

By then, Harvey was staring fixedly at her. "You survived... No, you faked your death?!"

Having no choice then, Irene finally looked up to meet his gaze. "What do you want?!"

Harvey's eyes turned red and he wrapped his arms around her, holding her in fierce embrace.

"Y-You're alive..." His voice was choking with tears.

On the other hand, Irene did not expect herself to be so easily recognized, and felt at once feeble and helpless. "Let me go."

"No way," Harvey said in refusal and kept holding onto her.

Irene actually began to feel uncomfortable just then.

"You're hurting my belly," she said, and finally remembered that she was still pregnant.

Stelling at the bulge, he asked, "Sorry, I didn't mean to do that... Who's the dad?"

Irene glanced at her watch. "Not now. I'm busy-1 still have to work."

"See you tonight?" Harvey asked.

Irene wanted to refuse, but she could not because she was afraid that Harvey would talk.

Still, she remembered a certain matter and had an idea.

"Fine, I'll see you tonight, but don't tell anyone about me..."

"I know. I'll Keep your secret." Harvey naturally read her mind-it was obvious she did not want anyone to find out that she was alive.

"Thank you," Irene told him.

"Oh, why get so polite with me?" Harvey was grinning broadly. "I'm just so surprised. I didn't even recognize you at first..."

His mind was definitely clear, too.

Irene was not dead, and that alone was great news!

"I'm going now," she curtly told him right then.

Harvey simply watched as she left.

When Irene was done with work that day, she saw Harvey at the entrance and walked toward him.

Harvey was smiling, but just as he was going to approach Irene, another man made his way toward her.

It was a familiar face, and Harvey's face fell when he saw the man!

#### **Chapter 460**

Harvey swore under his breath. There was really no escaping Isaac!

Hurrying to Irene's side to block her from view, he whispered to her, "That man is one of Isaac's people. He's here to poach talents from Mead Clinic."

Irene turned to find Mark standing nearby.

At the same time, Jeff called out to Irene. "Jane? Mr. Wickers is quite sincere in his offer. Why don't we sit down together?"

Harvey was left gaping in shock right then.

The person Isaac was trying to poach... was Irene?

What the hell?!

Still, Irene simply told Jeff, "Like I've said, I won't agree to it or even think about it."

With that, she pulled Harvey along.

Jeff naturally could not do anything about it, since he could not force Irene in this matter.

Turning to Mark, he said, "I've told her about your proposal, but she refused. IV

Mark was left feeling disappointed, but as he turned toward Jeff, his eyes lit up again. "Actually, I think you would work too..."

"Nope," Jeff quickly waved him off. "I can't do it."

"But..."

'No 'buts'!" Jeff refused him resolutely, leaving Mark despondent.

Meanwhile, as Irene dragged Harvey along and left, Harvey stared at her for a while and asked, "Did you really manage to master Minervese so fluently in six months?"

He was left astounded just listening to her!

"I've already learned it earlier," Irene answered casually.

Harvey was left speechless. "Alright, then what other languages have you learned?"

"Franconian, Eiseng, Mariachi," Irene replied.

Harvey was actually stunned. "That many?"

"I had to," Irene explained.

"You had to? What?" Harvey was perplexed.

Remembering why Lionel Spencer had forced her to learn those foreign languages left Irene remembering Isaac, and her voice became quiet. "So that I would be more appealing to a certain man."

Harvey was speechless again. "... Who?"

Irene did not answer as she pulled him along to a diner, but Harvey kept pressing, "Wait, don't tell me it's Isaac?"

Irene gave him a look, and Harvey knew right then that the answer was a yes.

He could have died from jealousy right then!

Isaac Jefferson this, Isaac Jefferson that... There was just no escaping from that man!

Harvey really wanted to duel Isaac to death just to end his own misery!

Meanwhile, he and Irene took their seats, with Irene asking, "What do you want to eat?"

Harvey was certainly not in the mood with his belly full of questions, so he said, "Anything is fine."

As such, Irene ordered for both of them, and she had quite the appetite since she was pregnant.

While they waited for dinner, Harvey finally broke down and asked, "The baby..."

"It's Isaac's," Irene admitted right away.

Isaac was the only man she had been with, and it would always stay that way-she would not fall for anyone else.

Harvey knew that and although he did not give up before, he did now.

Heaving a lengthy sigh, he murmured, "Yeah, I was asking for that."

After all, he knew the answer but asked her anyway.

Taking a moment to calm himself, he asked, "So, why did you fake your death? Why leave Isaac?"

Naturally, the last one was his greater concern-was she leaving him because she fell out of love?

Nope," Irene answered shortly and took a sip from her glass.

"Then, why?" Harvey was confused. "Could you be worried that he would get sick of you because of your disfigurement...?"

Irene could not deny that. "Well, I'd hate to let him see me as I am now."

If she was to leave any memory of herself in his heart, she would rather it be of her beauty, and not her gruesome burn scars.

"Does he know you're pregnant?" Harvey asked.

As Irene looked up at him, Harvey chuckled, "I won't push you if you don't want to tell me today..."

"Nope." Irene pursed her lips. "You have to keep that a secret."

"You don't have to worry about that," Harvey assured her.

He was just pitting himself against Isaac. There was no way Harvey would tell Isaac-not when he wanted to hide her from Isaac more than anyone else!

Let Isaac grieve her to death!

"Oh, right..."

Irene actually had something important to discuss, and took a document folder from her bag and passed it to him. "Check this out."

Harvey felt no suspicion at all and took it.

Still, he was shocked when he opened and read it.

"What the hell...'