

Runaway 471

Chapter 471

Irene's body and thoughts froze.H-He was awake?

What should she do?

How was she going to explain herself?

Could she say that he was too good looking, and that she could not help it?

What should she do?

The instant she felt him hold her, she came up with so many excuses...

But Isaac never opened his eyes, even though he was actually pushing his tongue up against hers now and was kissing her so hard that he was almost devouring her.

She felt her breath leaving her lungs.

Was he really awake...?

"I missed you, Irene..." he murmured, almost unintelligibly.

But she clearly heard it.She froze.

He just said... He missed her?

A crystalline drop of tear slid and trickled off the corner of her eye, dripping on his cheek.

Isaac did not wake up-he was actually dreaming.

Irene slowly got up.So, it was all just sleep-talking.

"But I'm happy to hear you say you miss me."

She wiped the lipstick from his lips, pulled his blanket over him, and left the hotel room, gently closing the door behind her.

James was already waiting outside as she stepped out-watching the door, sticking to his post dutifully as always.

When he saw her, he quickly asked, "Did he fall asleep?"

Irene nodded, but James also noticed that her lipstick was smudged all over.

He frowned-was she messing around with Isaac?He quickly reached for the door, but Irene stopped him. "Mr. Jefferson just fell asleep. You shouldn't disturb him."

James blinked. "What did you do to him?"

Irene then remembered that her lipstick must have been smudged, and quickly feigned composure. "I was sweating. I'm going now."

With that, she strode toward the elevator.

The walls inside were reflective enough for her to see her smeared lipstick and she wiped it off while putting on her face mask.

James was left standing outside Isaac's door.

Should he go in to check?

Eventually, he gave up on the idea-if Isaac really was molested, he would have stormed out of his room.

He was an adult who could take care of himself, and James decided that he did not have to worry.

In fact, he felt a little insomniac now that Isaac had fallen asleep, and headed out to a bar to get a drink.

It was lively inside-the night was still young.

Men and women were hanging out together and getting frisky, and the air was rife with hormones.

James was sitting at the bar when the bartender suddenly came to him with a cocktail called Blue Tears. "Sir, a treat from the lady over there,"

James turned toward where the bartender was looking, and saw a charming lady dressed in a tank top and hotpants.

He nodded, accepting the gesture and chugging it.

The lady approached him then. "Hey, handsome."

James asked for two more glasses, and pushed one to her. "This one's for you."

She smiled. "Want to have some fun?"

James suddenly chugged his drink and said, "Not interested."

He then placed some notes on the bar counter and left.

The lady pursed her lips. "Didn't take him for the serious type."

Erin stepped out from a corner just then, saying, "I'm surprised he didn't mess around too."

Clapping the lady on the shoulder and then glancing at the bartender," Thank you, both of you."

With that, she left the bar.

Outside, James was shaking his head.

Why was he feeling so dizzy?

He had always been able to hold his liquor. Just two glasses would never leave him this drunk.

What was going on?

"Feeling dizzy?" A crisp voice spoke from behind, and James turned to find Erin standing there.

His face fell. "You were following me?"

Erin smiled charmingly even as she walked up to him.

"I am," she admitted. "I spiked your drink, too."

As she spoke, she wagged her finger as if drawing hieroglyphs in the air.

James was left at a loss for words.

"What... are you doing...?" He tried to shout, but his vision was blurring.

Erin simply moved closed enough to breathe into his ear.

"Advanced interrogation," she said smugly, her warm breath sprinkling directly over his skin and leaving him shuddering.

"S-Stay away from me..." James blurted, and dropped to the floor.

Erin pursed her lips. "I would, but you're unconscious now."

Beckoning at her chauffeur, she said, "Get him in the car."

James woke up with a muddled head and found himself in an unfamiliar room!

Where was he?!

As his head slowly clears, he saw his clothes left strewn on the bed beside him, and quickly turned to look down at himself!

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James's eyes widened, and his face soon contorted and flushed in anger.

"Erin Gooding! What do you think you're doing?!"

Erin was sitting on a chair nearby, leisurely eating some Shine Muscat while glancing at him sideways.

"What's all the fuss for?"

It's just your clothes. You still have your underwear on, but don't expect it to stay that way if you don't cooperate."

James was speechless.

What was she playing at?!

"Let me go right now!" he snapped.

Erin, however, was not afraid at all, and allowed him to fume as much as he wanted, even blinking her eyes innocently at him.

"You're all tied up. I can leave you here to starve you to death, but you're still ordering me around? Are you really sober?"

James could not say anything against that.

He did not want to admit it, but it was harsh reality.

As such, he restrained himself and flashed a fawning smile, "Erin, darling? Seeing that I'm a good friend of your brother, could you show your magnanimity and let me go?"

"Sure." Erin somehow agreed to it easily.

James was naturally delighted. "Alright, then untie me, please?"

Erin walked up to his bed, but suddenly stopped at the edge, watching him as she asked, "Where was my mother buried?"

James paused for a moment, but said, "I don't know."

"Nope," Erin doubted that. "You're Isaac Jefferson's lapdog-there's no way you wouldn't know. And don't think you can trick me either."

James did not know what to say just then, and wondered how that little brat grew to be so smart.

"Ask your brother if you like, but I don't know," James insisted-he knew that he should not admit it even if he knew, or she would bother him to no end.

"In that case, I can't help you." Erin shrugged and clapped her hands.

The door then swung open, and three burly tattooed men entered.

They were all Minervans, and appeared thuggish too.

Despite sensing danger right then, James tried to stay calm as he asked, 'What are you doing, Erin?"

"These are my friends. They have acquired a taste for good-looking men, especially Zidonians. So I'm offering you to them-don't worry, they will give you some proper lovin'."

She deliberately emphasized on that last part to highlight the importance.

James was speechless.She looked young, even harmless and innocent... And yet!

He inhaled deeply to repress his rage, and said, "Tell them to leave us, and I'll tell you."

Seeing that she was getting what she wanted, she gave the men a look, and they left the room.

"Now release me. I'll take you there myself," James continued.

Erin grinned. "You just have to tell me where it is—I'll go there on my own. And we didn't have to go through all this if you told me sooner, y'know?"

She was certainly naive to believe him so easily.

James restrained himself even as she moved to release him.

"Fine. It's in Cloud City, and it's near-"

That was when he felt his shackle loosen, and he quickly leaped to his feet and freed himself.

Erin was still blinking innocently. "There. You're free. Now tell me."

"Dream on!" James was almost blowing up.

Erin finally realized then. "You tricked me!"

"Of course! You're as dumb as a pig!" James said as he put on his clothes, while rebuking her, "You're a girl, so stop hanging out with the wrong crowd. I mean, just look at those goons-what on earth is their deal?"

Erin's cheeks were puffed from frustration, her eyes bulging. "I'll kill you, James Cross!"

With that, she lunged at him, but he was prepared and simply sidestepped her.

Erin tripped on the bed and dropped on top of it.

Her fingers clenched over the bed sheets, and she growled in frustration. 'Grr..."

James pulled up his pants and gave her a look. "You're still too young to play with me, kiddo."

He opened the door smugly while Erin was left gritting her teeth, only to see the men standing outside and taking one step back in reflex.

He gulped.

"S-Stay back!"

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James had barely finished when one of the three burly men pushed him back inside the room.

Erin was huffing and she promptly snapped when she saw that. "Fuck him up!"

The three of them charged forward, and one of them landed a heavy jab on his left eye, flooring him.

Luckily, James had seen action, and quickly grabbed a chair, swinging it at the man nearest to him, knocking him out!

While another man tried to grab him from behind, he leaped aside and kicked him squarely on the back before making a dash outside and making his escape!

Harvey went looking for Irene right after he landed in Minerva. However, he had been knocking on her door for quite a while, but nobody answered.

Still, he was going to call her when he noticed some sort of lifeform walking toward him.

He flinched in shock-how could someone so ugly exist?

When Irene saw him, she asked, "What are you doing here? It's so late already."

Harvey appeared incredulous. "W-Wait, you're Irene?"

"Yeah," she replied casually as she opened the door.

Following her inside, Harvey said, "What's with that look? You scared me, y'know-1 thought I was seeing some sort of monster.'

"I was worried Isaac would recognize me," Irene replied.

The instant Harvey heard Isaac's name, he asked, "You were meeting him?'

"Yep," she said, plucking off her cap and mask and heading into her washroom to clear her makeup.

Since it took her time to put on so much makeup, it took time to clear it away too.

Harvey stood outside the washroom, watching her as he asked, "You talked to him?"

Irene was focused on her own reflection on the mirror and wiping off her makeup as she continued, "I'm now his doctor."

"He's sick? Is it terminal?" Harvey felt schadenfreude the instant he heard that.

Irene shot him a glare. "What good is Isaac's death to you?"

"I won't have a rival to win you over," Harvey said plainly.

"I won't fall for you even if he's gone," Irene retorted.

Harvey grabbed her wrist. "Why?"

Irene met his gaze without flinching. "The human heart is actually very small, so it doesn't have much space for too much stuff- especially lovers. The slot in mine is taken, and I can't spare any space for you."

She had no idea if Harvey was kidding or serious, but thought that she should make such things clear early on.

"If you're joking, pretend I never said a thing. But if you're serious, I'm serious too."

Harvey slowly released her hand. "You really love him that much, huh?"

Irene washed her face in silence, but it could well be an admission.

Naturally, Harvey was despondent. "Why would you leave him, then? If it's a disfigurement, you can get reconstructive surgery after giving birth. It's not permanent..."

"I left... because he doesn't love me," she said, holding Harvey's gaze.

Harvey's brow furrowed. "What?"

Did he mishear her?

Isaac did not love Irene?

That was impossible-how could he not? He had to be the person who suffered the most because of her death!

'He only kept me around because I gave him Tommy. I love him, but I don't like compromised relationships, or to force myself on others. That's why if he doesn't love me, I won't try to tie him down with our child.'

She put away her towel and turned to Harvey again. "It's late. I'm taking a shower before I sleep."

She was ordering her to leave, but Harvey was left staring at her.

Why on earth was she convinced that Isaac did not love her?

Was there some misunderstanding between them?

It had to be.

'Hello? You should be going,' Irene said, because he was not moving.

Coming to his senses, he gave Irene a solemn look.

"Sleep tight," he said, and turned to leave.

Since there was a misunderstanding between them, he could let it persist.

This might be his last chance, and he would seize it even if it was selfish of him.

He returned to Olston Hotel-he usually stayed there whenever he visited Minerva.

In the morning, he was going to buy breakfast for Irene when he ran into someone at the entrance and almost laughed himself

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James furrowed his brow. 'What are you laughing at? Did you lose your mind?'

Harvey was staring at his left eye, however. "Are you trying to turn into a panda, with one black eye?"

James raised his hand to hide his bruised eye while glaring at Harvey with the other. "Seeing that you helped me before, I won't hold this against you. But you should know that I have a temper, and don't complain that I never warned you when you mock me again."

"I helped you?" Harvey was a little confused.

When did he help James, and with what? How did it manage to slip his mind?

'Are you sure about that...?'

"Don't bother. I won't remember it even if it was a huge favor-you laughed at me, so we're even. Now buzz off."

With that, James headed toward Isaac's room, leaving Harvey speechless.

He doubted that he would help James out of the kindness of his heart.

Still, he glanced at the time. "Oh, it's almost seven."

He still had to head to Irene's apartment-he did not have anytime to waste here.

He also bought Zidonian breakfast this time, since he could tell that Irene did not enjoy the last breakfast he brought her-she probably did not like the local food.

When he rushed to Irene's apartment, however, she was just about to leave.

"Have you eaten breakfast?" he asked.

Irene stared at him, and then at the food he brought.

"I did," she lied, but she had not actually eaten and was going to have some on the way to the hospital.

And the reason she lied was because she did not want Harvey to do so much for her.

Harvey was more or less disappointed. "Actually, I ran into James Cross earlier. He must have been messing around and he got a black eye for it too, so I ended up wasting my time chatting with him. I'll come earlier tomorrow-

"Harvey, I've told you-you don't have to do this." She tried to turn him down again.

Harvey, however, told her, "It's up to you whether you accept me, but whether I want to keep wooing you is my business."

Irene ignored that. "I'm going to work, or I'm going to be late."

"I'm coming with you," Harvey said.

However, just as he was going to throw the food into a bin, Irene stopped him. "Don't."

It was such a waste!

"Why would I keep it for? You've already eaten," Harvey argued.

Irene snapped, "It isn't good to waste food. I've already eaten, but wasting is still terrible. Just give it to me."

Harvey happily did so. "I'll drive you to the hospital. You can eat along the way."

Irene nodded.

In the car, Irene opened the box to find her favorite Zidonian delicacies inside.

'Where did you get this?' she asked, even as she stuffed a pie in her mouth.

Harvey said, "My hotel's breakfast menu includes Zidonian delicacies."

"Oh, I see."

As Harvey drove, he asked casually just to kill time, "Did you know that Spencer Holdings went bankrupt?"

"What?!" Irene looked up right then-she certainly was not aware. "What happened?!"

"I don't know, but what I heard was that your mom moved to Isaac's home after you 'died' to take care of your son. As for Ricky, I don't even know how he got his company bankrupt."

Irene suddenly found the pie in her mouth tasteless.

Her eyes welled with tears-she had been so selfish she never thought about her mother or brother.

"Didn't Isaac try to help Ricky?" Irene asked.

Ricky was still young, and it was almost natural for him to mess up.

Even so, Isaac could have helped Ricky since he was more or less family. Since Sheryl was taking care of Tommy, he could at least offer some assistance to honor Irene's departed soul, or to repay Sheryl's favor in taking care of Tommy.

Naturally, Harvey would not miss another chance to badmouth Isaac and to offer a favor. "He doesn't consider them his family now that you're gone, and he's too busy to get involved with your brother's business anyway..."

That said, I can help you find out what happened with Spencer Holdings."

Irene was certainly eager to find out. "Thank you."

"It's fine." Harvey smiled.

While Mead Clinic was close to Irene's apartment, the research center was in a separate building that was quite far away. All researchers worked different shifts between the hospital and the research center as well.

As Irene aligned and got in the hospital, the chief summoned her to his office the instant she entered.

"Someone is asking for you," he told her. silly!

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Irene asked, "Who is it?" "One of your patients," the hospital chief said, before adding seriously, "He's now a shareholder of our hospital, so try not to get on the wrong side of him. It might complicate your career."

She had a patient who was also a shareholder of Mead Clinic?

Who?

She quickly realized that it might be Isaac.

He acquired Mead Clinic shares? Already?

Still, it was only Isaac who had such ability among all his patients, especially when it came to tussling with the likes of the Raideens.

"He's in the same ward as last time. Go on."

Irene became even surer then. "Okay."

Once she stepped out, she headed straight for the washroom to quickly put on makeup. She had presumed that she would see him in the evening again, so she forgot to put on her exaggerated makeup in the morning.

Fortunately, she had everything prepared in her bag.

Ten minutes later, she headed to the ward.

To no surprise, Isaac was standing near the window and turned around when he heard the door open.

"You were asking for me, Mr. Jefferson? Do you have questions?" she asked as she stood calmly by the door.

Isaac stayed silent, because he was actually surprised that an ugly woman like her did not incur his spite.

'What did you do to me last night?'

Did she really help him sleep just by giving him a massage? He even dreamed of Irene so vividly too...

Her scent, her warmth...

Irene was puzzled-he was just dreaming, was he not?He was not supposed to know that she kissed him...

She calmed herself then and said, "I gave a massage to help you fall asleep. IV

"Really?" Isaac appeared skeptical and tried to test her. "I know what you did."

"And I did it because it is necessary for your treatment. You can believe in our professionalism," Irene replied with composure. She was not flustered at all-she more or less understood him after being with him for so long.

He would have gone on a rampage already if he knew that she kissed him, and not just ask questions.

Isaac narrowed his eyes in turn-she was smart despite her hideous looks.

"You're good," he said. "Tonight, same time, same room."

"I'll be there," Irene replied.

Isaac gave her a look and said, "You may go."

As Irene stepped out, James-who was waiting outside-quickly went in after she left.

"Mr. Jefferson? Do you suspect something?" He asked.

Isaac certainly had the feeling that there was something unusual about Irene, but could not begin to wonder why he would suspect such a hideous- looking woman like her.

He had nothing specific to go on, too... aside from this weird feeling he had.

'Set up a camera in my room." He was interested in seeing what massage she would give him tonight.

"Sir, what..." James's voice trailed off as he came to a realization. "Alright, I'll get it done."

Irene just happened to double back outside.

She had brought some ointment for James for his black eye and overheard Isaac telling James to put a camera in his room.

To keep an eye on her, presumably...She certainly had to concede that Isaac was very wary. She left, then pretended to be walking to Isaac's ward again as James opened the door.

He frowned when he saw her, but she flashed a calm smile and said, "I noticed that bruise on your eye when I stepped out-here, I brought you an ointment for it."

James kept staring at her, worried that she overheard his conversation with Isaac. "Did you just come back?"

'Yeah, why?' She kept smiling.

James took the ointment. "It's nothing-was just asking. Thanks."

"It's fine. The ointment is charged to Mr. Jefferson's bill anyway," she said and turned to leave.

James was left speechless. He thought that she was showing him concern, and yet...

Whatever. Being showered with concern from an ugly woman anyway was nothing to be pleased about anyway.

In the evening, Irene arrived at Olston Hotel as agreed.

After taking the elevator up to Room 907, she heard a familiar voice and walked over to find a door hanging ajar.

She pushed it open a little and peeked in through the gap when she saw them...

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James was on top of a woman.

Irene could not see who it was-only her fair, thin legs. She blinked. James got himself a girlfriend and even brought her to Minerva?

Just then, the woman cried out furiously, "Let go of me, James Cross, or I'll scream for help!"

Irene was left speechless-that did not seem to be your typical make out session. She quickly turned away, even closing the door for them.

Whatever the relationship they had, she should not be looking anyway.

Then, she looked up and saw Isaac standing in the walkway, staring at herself.

Irene wondered if he caught her spying on James, even though she did not mean to-she was just curious at the time.

"I saw nothing," she said.

Isaac said nothing to that and simply headed to his own room, leaving Irene speechless and unsure what Isaac was thinking. Did he believe her or not?

She nervously followed him, and tried to act calm before asking, "Did you sleep well last night, Mr. Jefferson?"

Isaac had entered his own room by then, but still did not respond.

Worried that she would slip up if she spoke too much, she told him that she would prepare his medicinal bath and headed inside the bathroom.

That was when James stormed into the room, dragging the woman with him.

Erin was almost driving him crazy-it was as if she had become his shadow, bugging him with every waking moment.

However, he was afraid to get rough with Erin given who she was, making him desperate.

"Mr. Jefferson, she's really driving me crazy."

"Hardly," Erin retorted. "You'd tell me where my mother was buried if you were."

Erin certainly was not afraid of Isaac-they shared the same mother, and he would not resort to hurting her no matter how much he disliked her.

That was why she was doing everything she wanted without a care, driving James so mad that he could strangle her. But he could not.

Having no choice, he pinned his hopes on Isaac to get rid of her. "Mr. Jefferson, please."

Isaac glanced at James's cuts and bruises then, and finally did something.

"Tell your father to see me tomorrow."

Erin's eyes lit up. "Are you going to tell him?"

"Am I obligated to tell you what we're going to talk about?"

Isaac's retort was cold and distant, and he seemed to have no intention of acknowledging Erin as a half-sibling.

On the other hand, Erin presumed that things were negotiable since Isaac was willing to see her father, and he might even finally tell them where her mother was buried.

"I'll head home and tell him right now," she said happily.

After she was gone, James heaved a sigh of relief.

Genuinely reluctant to have Erin bother him again, he asked, "Don't you think you should acknowledge her as your sister, Mr. Jefferson?"

Isaac leveled a cold stare at him right then.

He was already helping James get rid of Erin by meeting Mick, and James was asking him to acknowledge her...?

As he loosened his collar and unbuttoned his shirt, he growled, "You can go now-more rubbish from you, and you won't have my help anymore."

James promptly turned silent, just as Irene stepped out of the bathroom.

"The bath is ready," she said.

As Isaac headed inside, James glanced at the corner where he set the camera and left.

Irene noticed where he was looking and knew that was the position of the camera.

She simply stayed composed and took a seat on the couch, repeating what she said last night, "Relax, and clear your mind."

That was when her phone started ringing in her pocket, and she took it out to see that she got a call from Harvey.

Remembering that he might have found out why Spencer Holdings went bankrupt, she answered it but spoke in Minervese,

"Yeah."

"It's me," Harvey replied, not knowing that she was being watched and left wondering why she was not speaking in Zidonian.

"I know," Irene replied, still sticking to Minervese.

Realizing that she might be inconvenienced, she said, "My contact just gave me the details... Anyway, it's complicated. We should talk face-to- face."

Irene checked the time, but the bathroom door opened just as she was about to speak. She turned toward him...

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Irene froze.

Isaac had a towel around his waist, but his entire body was still wet, and... there was a scarlet rash over every inch of his skin.

Surprised, she asked, "What happened?"

"That's my question. What did you put in my bath?" Isaac was frowning- the rash itched so badly!

Irene quickly spoke into her phone. "Something just came up. I'll talk to you later."

With that, she hung up and hurried into the bathroom and checked the bath, and somehow fished out a substance that could cause oversensitive skin.

But she never put it in... How did it get in there?

"Don't scratch," Irene told Isaac when she stepped out. "Just wait here. I'll get you an ointment-"

However, Isaac grabbed her by the neck before she could leave, a menacing air spilling out of him as he growled, "You did this, didn't you?"

Irene was suffocating and instinctively shielded her belly. "I have no reason to hurt you, Mr. Jefferson," she gasped. "It does me no good-there's a misunderstanding here, believe me."

Isaac, however, was unmoved, and his fingers continued to clench over her neck.

Even as her cheeks flushed a crimson, she gasped, "Please... give me a chance to prove it..."

Knock, knock-

Someone was suddenly knocking on Isaac's door.

He released her then, while the menacing air around him faded. "You'd better not have messed with me, or I'll destroy you!"

Irene was wheezing, but she calmly answered, "If I meant to harm you, you'd be dead instead of getting just a rash."

There was such confidence in her voice that Isaac narrowed his eyes.

Knock, knock-

Whoever was outside knocked on the door again, more urgently this time. Isaac walked over to get the door, and opened it to see that it was Harvey. He had heard Isaac's voice over the phone, and knew right then that they were together.

That was why he knocked on Isaac's door, and the instant it was opened, he looked inside to find Irene standing in the living room.

"You really are on a self-destruction spiral, huh? Getting it on with someone as ugly as her?"

Bang!

The door was shut in his face so violently that it kicked up a storm, while the door itself almost hit Harvey squarely in the face, missing it by bare inches.

He froze for a minute before he came to his senses and banged on the door violently. "Open up, Isaac! I mean it-do it right now, or else!"

He was almost crazed because he did not want Irene to be alone with Isaac.

No matter how ugly she made herself look, Irene was still Irene-what if Isaac noticed?

Eventually, the door opened again, but this time it was Irene.

Harvey quickly smiled, but Irene shot him a glare before he could speak- they should pretend not to know each other around others.

Harvey quickly caught the cue and promptly exclaimed, "Hey, who are you?"

Irene simply shut the door and headed toward the elevator.

Before Harvey could follow, however, James stepped out of his own room and shot him a warning look. "Don't think about meddling."

Harvey smiled. "I'm not."

James simply ignored him and followed Irene into the elevator.

Soon, they returned with the ointment, but Harvey was still waiting outside.

"You can go in now, Dr. Tanner," James told Irene, while he stayed outside to keep an eye on Harvey to stop him from getting up to any mischief.

Irene glanced at Harvey but said nothing and she strode inside Isaac's room.

Isaac had already broken the skin on his neck from scratching and Irene stopped him. "I told you not to scratch it."

Isaac shot her a glare. "Try soaking in that crap. See if you can stop yourself."

Irene was speechless.

Fine.

If itching had levels and the natural maximum was ten, medication-induced itch would be twice worse.

She quickly brought out the itch medication and said, "You'll feel better with this."

Isaac leveled a silent, wary stare at her, clear distrustful.

Irene hence rubbed some on her own skin. "See? I'm just fine-like I said, there's no point in me hurting you."

Isaac's became less tense than, and Irene started to rub the ointment on him.

It was icy to the touch, and Isaac felt the itch on his skin easing the instant it was applied.

However, Irene was working so seriously she did not notice the mole on her nose slipping.

Isaac inadvertently looked up just then and saw that!

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The mole had been pasted on the tip of Irene's nose and it started flapping about as she breathed, dangling and stopping short of detaching.

Isaac was staring at her, and she was close enough for him to smell the thick scent of makeup.

Frowning so much his brows almost met, he told her, "Your mole is falling off."

Irene quickly clasped a hand over her nose-she blinked her fake eyelashes even as Isaac kept staring at her.

"Don't tell me it's a fake mole to look pretty?" he asked.

Irene racked her brains, and said, "O-Of course not. I've been applying some ointment to remove it."

Plucking the fake mole off and holding it out to show Isaac, she said, "See? It totally dried up and fell off."

Isaac growled, "Keep that away from me."

Disgusting!

Irene smiled, took out a tissue, and rolled the mole into it before throwing it into a basket, then continued to apply the ointment on Isaac to curb his itch.

When she was done, she told him, "You have to wait until it dries before you sleep."

"You're not leaving tonight," he said.

As he spoke, he entered his bedroom and shut his door behind him.

What?!

But she was going to the hospital to find out how her bath salt got mixed up with the drug that caused oversensitive skin... Something fishy was clearly going on!

"Why?" she asked, knocking on the bedroom door.

"So that I can arrest you if it turns out that you were intentionally hurting me."

Irene was speechless—she had already made herself clear! How could he still doubt her?

"I didn't mean to hurt you," she told him again, but Isaac ignored her.

Having no choice, she lay down on the couch, feeling drowsy.

Isaac somehow fell asleep without her massage, whereas Irene was left toiling all the way until the morning.

By then, most of Isaac's rash had faded and stopped itching, so he finally let her go.

Still, Irene left some medication with James and told him to make sure that Isaac applied it.

She was tired after a long night, and her face was pale.

Even so, her mind was clear—she got the medicinal bath salt from the hospital, and it had to be an insider who messed with it.

Word spread like wildfire that Irene might soon be fired, and everyone was left in an uproar as they speculated the reason.

"But, why? Everyone acknowledges that she's a great doctor..."

"True. Maybe she offended someone important?"

"Probably. Why else would something like this happen out of the blue?"

Irene was pretending to be dismayed as well—it was an act, to trick the people who set her up into believing that she really was going to be fired.

After all, people tended to expose themselves when they let down their guard.

She had her eyes on two of her rivals-Bob and Daisy-since the rest were attending physicians.

If anything happened to her at this juncture of their research, both of them stand to gain much.

As such, she decided to tail Bob.

He headed down to the basement parking lot, but did not leave immediately. Instead, he stood beside his car, looking like he was waiting for someone.

Irene kept an eye on him from afar, and that was when she saw someone else arriving.

It was Daisy!

Irene was left gaping. Both of them were working together to set her up?

As they got in the car and left, Irene got into Jeff Cartman's car which was waiting in the basement parking lot as well, saying, "Follow them."

"I know," Jeff replied-Irene had asked him for help before, and they tracked her rivals' car all the way to a large house, where they both alighted and got inside.

They appeared intimate, and Jeff mused, "Are they a couple?"

Irene was curious too, and the possibility could not be discounted.

Bob and Daisy were in the same age group and were said to have graduated from the same medical school as well.

Still, they were rarely in touch at the hospital.

Irene whispered, "Let's get to a window-see if we can get a closer look."

Jeff nodded-most houses in Minerva stood alone, and they circled around to a window at the backyard, and peered into the living room.

Bob was sitting on the couch with Daisy in his arms. "Jane Tanner is dead meat. Guess the next promotion is either you or me."

"Oh, you can take it-just make sure I get the next one. But if I get it, I'll make sure you get the next one too... Let's get married when we're both promoted to attending physicians," Daisy cooed as she leaned into Bob's arms.

"Yeah," Bob murmured as he brushed his fingers through her hair. 'We're lucky you caught wind that the Zidonian patient had acquired Mead Clinic shares-and from the Raideen family, no less. Now that Jane upsetted him, it's all over for her."

Chapter 479

Daisy said smugly, "She's a Zidonian, but she's stealing everyone's thunder.

Our chief even recommended her for the next promotion, and she'd definitely be the next attending physician if we didn't do a thing about it. Well, now that I've slipped that drug into the bath salt she prepared for that Zidonian patient, rumor is already spreading that she'll be fired soon.

The patient must consider her incompetent now."

"That's enough, dear. We should be celebrating-why don't we jump into the bath together?" Bob suggested.

"Oh, you dirty boy," Daisy purred.

On the way back, Irene did not say a word in the car.

'We just have to show Admin the video we recorded of them, and it's over for them both," Jeff said. "So why the long face?"

Irene said, "I hate intrigue. I really didn't expect them to do something like that."

"There's a promotion at stake, after all. Moreover, an attending physician in Mead Clinic is a department chief in any other hospital. Of course things would get competitive."

Irene made a face. "They're definitely fired once we show the video, though. What do you think about that?"

'They don't deserve to stay in Mead anyway."

"Yeah," Irene said with a serious face. "They have my sympathy, but more so my wrath."

"Yes, ma'am," Jeff replied.

She alighted once they reached her apartment, and she shut the door and told him, "Drive safe."

"Okay!" Jeff said.

Irene was about to head home straight away when Harvey intercepted her.

'Who was that man?" he asked.

"A colleague," Irene replied, feeling exhausted and needing the rest, and told Harvey as much.

"Wait, you don't want to know about your brother and Spencer Holdings?" Harvey asked.

Irene smacked herself on the forehead right then. How did she manage to forget about that?!

"Come in, then."

Harvey scowled. "Are you going to dump me like a tool once I no longer serve any purpose?"

"You're a person, not a tool." Irene assured him, nestling on her couch once she was inside the house.

"So, tell me."

Harvey pulled out a chair to sit in front of her. "Alright. Anyway, Spencer Holdings went bankrupt because your brother Ricky got a little too close to Lulu Adams."

Irene frowned. "What does that have to do with Lulu?"

"It has more to do with her ex, Zachary Slate. His wife suffered a miscarriage, so Zachary's mother took it out on Lulu, and worked together with the Lindts to destroy Spencer Holdings."

Irene lost her composure right then. "No way! Lulu would never sink that low!"

"Well, that's the information I received from a close associate. It won't be wrong," Harvey assured her.

That was when Irene remembered personally witnessing Ember Lindt paying off a man. He had put up several abusive banners outside the wedding hall of Ember and Zachary's wedding, but the crime was pinned on Lulu.

As for the so-called miscarriage...

Irene actually wondered if there was any truth to it.

"So? What are you going to do?" Harvey asked. "Are we homebound?"

However, this was a key moment of Irene's research project and she could not leave right now.

And it was not like she could do a thing if she rushed home now.

"Let me think about it," she said, while working hard to calm herself.

Harvey saw that her face was pale. "You're really working yourself too hard. You're pregnant, remember?"

He got to his feet. "You didn't have dinner, right? I'll get you something to eat."

Irene was deep in thought and could not hear him, but he left anyway.

He headed to a Zidonian diner and bought a nutritious set dinner, and started to head back...

Meanwhile, James had obtained Jane Tanner's address from Mead Clinic. He was going there to drive her to Olston Hotel since Isaac needed her massage to fall asleep.

Still, just as he alighted, he spotted Harvey with boxes of food.

What was he doing here?

James was puzzled and followed him into the apartment building!

Chapter 480

Harvey never noticed that he was being tailed.

When he opened the door to Irene's apartment, James gaped when he saw the house number.

That was Jane Tanner's house!

What was Harvey doing here? Were they acquainted?

He was experienced enough to smell a rat!

Deciding to find out what was going on between them, James walked up and knocked on the door.

Irene was too tired to move, so Harvey answered it, and he frowned when he saw that it was James. "What are you doing here?"

James scoffed. "That's my question."

As he spoke, his gaze darted towards 'Dr. Tanner' who was sitting on the couch.

There was a chair opposite her, clearly Harvey's.

If they were strangers, they certainly would not be sitting together over dinner.

Irene trudged toward them despite her exhaustion. "He's my patient. May I ask why you're here?"

'Yeah, I'm Dr. Tanner's patient too,' Harvey chimed. 'I'm here to consult about my condition.'

James did not accept that explanation at all.

He did not try to expose them, however, and instead made a mental note to investigate it further.

He was certainly a sharp man.

'I see.' He smiled. "Well, I'm afraid that you can't consult her right now-Mr. Jefferson needs her too."

Turning toward Irene, he said, "Let's go, Dr. Tanner."

Irene did not sleep well last night, and today had been toiling for her nerves, so she felt exhausted. "Mr. Jefferson doesn't need a medicated bath today, actually. He should wait until he recovers from his very sensitive skin before continuing his treatment."

'What about the massage, then? He still has trouble sleeping-please make the trip, Dr. Tanner.'

'Why are you being so annoying, James? She said he doesn't need treatment today, so stop forcing her!'

"No, she's a doctor and therefore has a duty to care for her patients. If she upsets Mr. Jefferson, he just needs to say the word and she'll be fired from Mead Clinic. Are you sure you can bear that consequence, Harvey?"

"Don't even start. The Raideens own Mead Clinic-"

'We're now one of the shareholders,' James said, cutting him short.

Harvey was left speechless and wheeled on Irene. "When did that happen?!"

Irene was calm, as if she had known all along.

In the end, Isaac got involved with the fully artificial heart project!

'It's none of your business,' James snorted.

Irene heaved a long sigh. Not keen on letting them continue arguing, she said, "Let's go."

"But-"

'You should leave, Mr. Gooding." Irene cut Harvey short before he could finish, so that he would not blurt out anything he should not.

'I have an obligation to care for my patients." She picked up a jacket, opting for a more normal fashion, though the funny makeup stayed on.

As James studied her, Harvey started to follow them. "I'm staying at Olston Hotel too. We can go together."

'I have no intention of giving you a ride," James said.

Harvey was left speechless.

'You petty imp!" he snapped.

James simply ignored him and told Irene to get into his car, even as Harvey snorted. "It's not like I don't have a car!"

Isaac was sitting on the couch of his hotel room as he pondered a certain mystery.

Jane did not massage him last night, but he fell asleep anyway.

He simply could not fathom why-his insomnia only ever worsened after Irene's death, but he now showed signs of recovery.

The door then opened, and James entered with Irene.

'She's here, Mr. Jefferson," James said.

Isaac got up, glancing at Irene once before heading inside his bedroom, saying, "Come with me."

James tactfully left, while Irene followed Isaac inside.

Wanting to head home sooner to sleep, she said, "Please lie down, Mr. Jefferson."

Isaac did not, but was instead studying her from head to toe without hiding it.

Irene felt uneasy from his stare.

"M-Mr. Jefferson? What-"

Suddenly, Isaac started to walk toward her...