

## Runaway 511

### Chapter 511

Ricky asked, "What's wrong?"

"Lulu would never run away, and the fact that she's missing might be proof enough that she's being held against her will...or hurt!"

Irene suspected that Lulu's disappearance was connected to the Slates and the Lindts, especially since Ember was no angel! Lulu was alone.

If she really was captured or hurt...

Irene did not even want to think about it, even as her chest felt stuffy from worry.

What should they do? Isaac agreed with Irene—an adult would not go missing for no reason.

It could only mean that she was hurt or held against her will.

Still, he patted Irene gently on the back "Calm down. I'll help you look."

When Irene looked up at him, her eyes were basically saying, "Why did you not get involved earlier?"

However, she could not fault him because he had no obligation to do so, but she felt flustered at the thought that Lulu might be in danger.

As she lost her cool, Ricky could see the question in her eyes and complained right away, "I tried to consult Mr. Jefferson here, but he refused to see me."

To him, Isaac was no longer his brother-in-law—just 'Mr. Jefferson'.

It just showed what he thought of Isaac now.

Left speechless for a while, Isaac finally began.

"Irene..."

"I know."

Irene beat him to it.

"This isn't your fault."

She only had herself to blame for leaving over a misunderstanding in her relationship.

If she had still been around, Lulu could have asked her, and things would not be this mad. Her thoughts were a mess and she needed time to calm down.

Still, she had to start somewhere.

"Ricky, no more drinking."

"Pull yourself together now—I might need your help soon."

"Sure."

Ricky nodded.

Irene still could not calm down on the way home.

She told Isaac, "Did you know that Ember Lindt was the one behind those slanderous banners at her own wedding?"

She paused for a moment as her tone soon turned into one of contempt.

"No one would ever suspect her when she's the bride, but the same can't be said of Lulu.

She'd be prime suspect as Zachary's ex—even without evidence, everyone can easily be convinced that she got jealous and tried to sabotage their wedding.

"You don't have to dwell on it."

Isaac reached out a hand to hold hers, his thumb brushing over her skin.

"Ember is the key."

His words jolted her, as if waking her from a dream!

"It must be her!"

Irene exclaimed, seemingly coming to an understanding right then.

"Ember must've been jealous of Lulu and Zachary, and framed Lulu so that she appeared to be the culprit for her miscarriage. That way, Zachary would misunderstand Lulu, and then she would have no trouble hurrying Lulu!"

It was not as if Irene wanted to think the worst of Ember, but seeing one of her vile deeds was enough for her to lump Ember with every villain she knew.

And the more she thought about it, the more she realized that it must be true.

Isaac, however, only found the whole thing a pain and asked earnestly, "Irene, you're pregnant. Could you not get so obsessed over this?"

Tren's eyes welled with tears.

"But Lulu is my best friend."

How could she not care?

"This isn't as difficult as it looks. Just leave it to me," Isaac told her.

Irene looked at him then and pursed her lips.

"Thank you."

Isaac was once again speechless and heaved a sigh, though he did not insist that she did not have to thank him.

It seems that she had trouble getting into the role of his wife, and it was perhaps time to give her a sense of belonging.

While the thought crossed Isaac's mind, the baby in Irene's belly kicked, perhaps sensing their mother's restlessness.

She leaned against her seat and spread her palms over her belly.

Thinking that she was feeling uncomfortable, Isaac asked worriedly, "What's wrong?"

Irene took his hand and put it on her belly too.

Seemingly sensing their father, the baby kicked as hard as it could, hitting Isaac squarely on the palm.

He stiffened—this was not the first time he was going to be a dad, but it was the first time he felt a baby kick.

Excited, he moved the car to the curb, intending on stopping to get a proper feel...

when the car behind cut across his and blocked him right then! Isaac had to jam his foot on the brakes, and Irene's head almost hit the windshield from inertia.

"Are you alright?"

Isaac checked on her immediately.

Irene was startled, but recovered soon enough and said, "I'm alright."

Someone got out of the other car just then and when Isaac looked up to see who it was, his face darkened!

## **Chapter 512**

Isaac did not even have time to flip out when Harvey Gooding came bounding at them, yelling, "Irene Spencer!"

He was barely finished with the damage control of Isaac's staged scandal and was going to look for Irene when he found out that she reconciled with Isaac.

Were they working together to mess with him? Irene even insisted that Isaac no longer loved her, so why did they kiss and make up?! "You'd better explain yourself, Irene!"

Harvey cried out in grief as if he was betrayed.

Irene was actually confused why Harvey was losing his temper at her, and asked tentatively, "What do I have to explain? Do I owe you something?"

Harvey did a double take, because she did not.

"You asked me to hide your identity from Isaac and I did it. Why are you with him now? Or does what you said not count?"

Harvey had wanted to win Irene over while she had that misunderstanding with Isaac, so that he could steal Isaac's woman and child.

And yet...

How could he not be upset when his perfect plan had fallen to pieces? "T found her, or do you have something to say about that?"

Isaac alighted just then and leveled a sharp look at Harvey.

If he had known that Harvey helped hide Irene's identity in Minerva from him, he would have simply castrated the latter instead of arranging for his well-publicized tryst with an ugly woman.

However, Harvey was not about to be cowed in front of Irene.

Rearing his chin, he shot back, "I protest! She's not yours, and I can talk to her if I want!"

Isaac laughed beside himself.

"If she's not mine, whose is she? Yours?"

His voice was cold and sharp.

"Sure, she's had children with you, but how many really know that she's your wife?"

Harvey demanded.

"Do you have a proper marriage certificate? Was there a wedding? Wedding photos? Or wedding photos on the cert? Did you even take oaths at the altar?"

His questions left Isaac's face darkening, as if a storm was building up over his sharp visage.

But Harvey's words struck him where it hurt and he had no way to retort.

How could he not be furious, even though most of his rage was aimed at himself? He was the one who failed to give Irene a legitimate position and Harvey almost could not be blamed for being snide, just as it was the reason why Harvey dared to provoke him so openly.

In fact, the way Irene thanked him made him painfully aware that their relationship was opaque.

Would married couples be so polite with each other? It was obvious that Irene was uncertain about their relationship and he had a pressing need to tell everyone that she was his wife.

On the other hand, Harvey realized that he managed to get one over Isaac for once.

Seeing that he was not retorting, he became even more smug.

"Yes, I'm wooing Irene, but I'm breaking no laws! Isn't that so?"

Isaac did owe Irene, but he was not without tempers. He laughed coolly.

"Irene prefers men who don't mess around with women, though."

"That's a cheap shot!"

Harvey bristled like a furious beast! Not only did Isaac destroy his dignity, but there were still many compromising photos of him on the internet! The thought that he was now everyone's laughing stock left him incensed and he really wanted to break Isaac's face right then! He rolled up his sleeves, ready to fight Isaac—he doubted that he would only ever lose to Isaac! They had yet to exchange physical blows, after all! However, a man appeared behind Isaac just then.

"Are you sure you want to do this?"

### **Chapter 513**

Harvey took one step back when he saw the other man, not because he was superior, but because Harvey himself had no backup. He was also confused.

Why did James Cross show up out of the blue? They were in the middle of a highway! Just as he wondered, however, he noticed Irene, who was still in Isaac's car, but with a phone in her hand.

Did she call James? He asked her as much, actually a little doubtful that it was her.

Irene did not deny it, however. She was worried when she saw Harvey—and actually felt concerned for him instead of Isaac.

After all, Harvey had never come out on top in every bout he faced Isaac.

It naturally left her worried, so she called James with Isaac's phone, which Isaac had left in his car.

However, she called James not so that he would help Isaac beat up Harvey, but to discourage him from actual fisticuffs.

Looking Harvey in the eye, she said, "I'm doing this for your own good."

Harvey was speechless for a while, his brow creasing.

"Why do I feel otherwise? Like you're conspiring with Isaac to do me dirty?"

Irene stared at him for heartbeats and decided to give up.

"Then fight all you want."

She was doing it out of goodwill, but she had no obligation to waste her breath if he did not see it that way.

Harvey was left speechless again.

Was she telling him to fight two other men at once? Did he stand a chance? Certainly not! It was a trap, after all! He had always believed that he was good to her, treating her as a friend while wooing him.

But it seemed that she did not care!

"Fine. I won't forget this."

He turned and strode toward his car, feeling spite toward Irene for being so callous toward himself. No matter what he did for her, she somehow could act as if it never happened.

Irene never sensed the oddness with Harvey—she did not have the time to, not when she was overwhelmed with worry for Lulu.

Being pregnant kept her from sparing much attention to anything else either, but this was the one negligence that turned Harvey to hate her...and to eventually do what he did in relation! Irene was standing by the door, a myriad of emotions jumping in her.

"I'll go in with you," Isaac said.

"Yeah," she replied softly and a little hoarsely.

She could not bear to face her own mother and child.

The door opened.

In the living room, Sheryl Harris was trying to feed Tommy, but the toddler kept plucking the little spoon from her to eat on her own.

Naturally, Sheryl was coaxing him, saying, "Be a good boy, Tommy.I'll—"

"Papa."

Tommy spotted the door opening just then, and he ran toward Isaac with his little feet.

His pronunciation of 'papa' was now clear too, unlike the babble of 'pah-pah' from before.

Sheryl was still holding Tommy's bowl when she turned toward them, and froze when she saw the person standing with Isaac.

The bowl slipped off her grapes and shattered with a loud clang, quickly pulling her back to her senses.

"I-Irene? Is it really you?"

Her voice was quivering with disbelief, and yet she was hopeful that what she was seeing was real...

Irene walked over and hugged her.

"Mom."

Being called 'mom' left Sheryl's eyes welling with tears, and she smacked Irene on the back.

"What is this?! I thought you were..."

"I'm sorry."

## **Chapter 514**

After learning that her daughter had faked her death, Sheryl was absolutely apoplectic and scolded her endlessly.

"How could you do this? Not everything is about you—it's fine if you left me, but you abandoned your own son and you ran off while pregnant?! Isaac and I had been mourning you every day! But I guess this is what to be expected of you now, huh?!"

Irene naturally did not dare to retort, while Isaac listened on nearby with Tommy in his arms.

There were things he would never say, but he agreed with the notion nonetheless.

Having Sheryl say it might also make Irene remember, preventing her from being too willful in the future.

Even if she had her reasons, faking her own death was not the way.

"You're pregnant! How would you explain to Isaac if something happened? You're an adult now, and soon, the mother of the two children. You should know better instead of just doing whatever you like!"

Sheryl] then gestured at Tommy.

"See? Your own son doesn't even recognize you now. Don't you think you've failed as a mother?"

Tommy naturally had no idea what was going on.

His round eyes were like little black grapes, twirling and twinkling spiritedly.

At the moment, he had imprinted on Isaac, even though Sheryl babysitted him the most.

Meanwhile, Sheryl was asking, "So? Do you understand what you've done?"

Irene certainly understood her mistake and was contrite as she listened to everything Sheryl said.

That being said, the look of schadenfreude on Isaac's face left her annoyed—he was the reason for the entire mess, but he was now watching gleefully as she suffered!

"I know. What I did was wrong," she admitted, eager to have Sheryl stop rebuking her soon.

However, Sheryl was not stopping because of her admission, but she was actually 'escalating' instead.

"Look, Irene—you really have to think things through before going through with it next time. Try to consider if it's right, and whether it's worth it. Don't you constantly play along according to your own whims—"

Bzzt...

That was when Irene's phone rang.

Feeling like she was saved by the bell, she quickly answered it.

It was Dr. Pitt, her head of department.

"Dr. Tanner? We need you back at the hotel right now."

"Okay," Irene replied before she hung up and turned toward her mother.

"Sorry, Mom. I have something to attend to."

"Leaving as soon as you come back, huh?"

Sheryl snorted.

"Even your own son treats you like a stranger now—do you feel a sense of accomplishment yet?"

Irene was speechless. She had been feeling miserable already, but Sheryl struck her where it hurt again. Her eyes welled with tears.

Realizing that she was going overboard just then, Sheryl took Tommy off Isaac's arms, saying, "It's bath time for Tommy. Just go do what you have to do—I'll take proper care of him."

The last part was naturally meant for Irene, and Irene understood that her rebuke came from a place of affection.

Regardless, Irene was relieved to have Sheryl look after Tommy, and Isaac drove Irene back to her hotel.

"You seemed so pleased when I was getting scolded," she said in the car.

Isaac kept a straight face as he drove, asking in return, "Do I?"

Still, she did not want to get too confrontational—she still needed his help with Lulu.

"I'm counting on you to find Lulu now."

"Yeah," Isaac murmured.

"Thank you."

Isaac turned to look at her with a gaze of myriad emotions, but simply stayed silent before driving off.

Arriving at the hotel, Irene got off and said, "I might be here for a while. Go find out what you can about Lulu."

"Yeah," Isaac said—she would obviously remain anxious as long as they did not resolve the situation with Lulu.

He must find Lulu soon so that she could have ease of mind, which was vital for her pregnancy.

"Call me if anything comes up," he told her.

"Okay," Irene said, then turned to head inside the hotel.

Suddenly Isaac called out to her, "Don't you run away again."

If she did, he would not be that merciful next time.

"Got it," she replied.

Returning to her room, she knocked on Dr. Pitt's door.

"Come in."

Irene did so, and found Dr. Pitt scowling inside.

The instant Irene entered, she said coolly, "Over here."

## **Chapter 515**



Irene sharply noticed that Dr.Pitt was not being exactly friendly, and she turned toward Dr.Kramer—the other Mead Clinic representative—with a quizzical look.

"Hotmesh Research just published a research paper with our research data and made it available globally," Dr.Kramer said.

"What?!" Irene exclaimed while trying to keep herself composed.

Dr.Pitt was staring sharply at her regardless.

"You didn't know?"

"I didn't," Irene calmly replied.

"Is that so?"

Dr.Pitt was clearly suspicious, and kept probing.

"Didn't you sneak off with the key portions of our research data and give it to Hotmesh?"

She stared closely at Irene's face, because if it were Irene, she would definitely turn nervous or react.

However, Irene was an excellent doctor, and naturally had the composure to keep herself together.

Looking Dr.Pitt in the eye, she said, "I didn't."

Dr.Pitt did not give up just yet.

"I remembered asking you to compile our research data, and you would have everything in your possession at the time.That is when you could extract the key parts and bring them here."

Irene remained at ease.

"I would never do that."

"You're Zidonian.You have every reason to do that,"

Dr.Pitt pointed out.

"But I'm a doctor at the Mead Clinic before that.I've said as much before—"

"Dr.Tanner, you did not follow the script at the forum today, and everything you said was clearly leaning in favor of Zidonia.There's an internal investigation being conducted as we speak, and we'll find out what happened soon enough."

Irene's hands clenched at her sides just then and Dr.Pitt noticed it.

Her gaze darkened—Irene was clearly feeling guilty.

Dr.Pitt heaved a deep sigh just then.

Though she felt sympathy, she could not afford to be lenient — even perspective mattered when it came to compassion.

It was the way of the world.

If one was unable to change it due to their own weakness, they just had to fulfill their own role.

"Dr.Pitt, I..."

Dr.Pitt's phone rang just then, and she answered it.

Her expression turned grim after she listened to the other person, and she even slid a glance at Irene before answering, "Understood.

"Yes, I'll get it done."

"Yeah."

Her tone was solemn, and when she hung up, she put away her phone in silence for a long while before turning to Irene.

"They are done with the internal investigation over there, but it seems that you are innocent.I'm sure I have been a little harsh, so please don't hold it against me."

Irene was actually confused right then.

There was no doubt that she had used Dr.Pitt's clearance to gather the research data...

How did the internal investigation come up short? Was someone helping her?

"Well, I haven't had my dinner, so you two are joining me," Dr.Pitt said, rising to her feet.

They all headed to the hotel's restaurant.

While Dr.Pitt left for the washroom, Irene asked Dr.Kramer, "When did Hotmesh publish the data?"

"Didn't you check your phone?" Dr.Kramer asked in return, but Irene certainly did not.

"We only found out after we were called about it.I mean, we are the leading research center for cardiovascular diseases, but Hotmesh somehow beat us to publish that data.What is that if not a slap on our collective faces? Can we even maintain our reputation from now on?"

Irene lowered her gaze.

"Yeah," she agreed.

She had never expected Hotmesh Research to publish the papers right away.

Instead, she was hoping that they would use the data given to further develop the fully artificial heart concept.

She was actually disappointed that things had turned out like this— being the first to develop an artificial heart mattered less than actually developing it successfully to save people, so that Zidonia did not need to be dependent on another country.

She knew that Isaac had already become a shareholder of Mead Clinic, but she risked it and stole the data anyway just so that Zidonia could develop their own artificial heart with the data.

Isaac's stake might mean rebates, but that would still be limited.

And no rebate would ever trump the confidence of having the technology themselves and not being subservient to others.

Hotmesh's announcement would only serve to make every other country wary about keeping their own medical research and development to themselves—nothing good would come of it.

Irene sighed lengthily.

## **Chapter 516**

Dr.Kramer asked, "What is it, Dr.Tanner?"

Irene gathered herself and said, "It's nothing."

Dr.Pitt returned just then, and as she sat down, she asked, 'Why aren't either of you eating?"

"We were waiting for you," Dr.Kramer said.

"Eat already," Dr.Pitt said as she picked up a pair of uniquely shaped cutlery.

"You know how to use that?" Dr.Kramer asked.

"It's not that difficult," Dr.Pitt smiled.

"And as the saying goes, when in Rome, do as the Romans do."

A waitress arrived with two coffees and a glass of milk just then, leaving Dr.Kramer perplexed.

"We didn't order that."

"I did," Dr.Pitt said, and passed Irene the milk.

"You shouldn't drink coffee while pregnant, so I ordered this for you."

"Thanks, chief,"

Dr.Kramer said, and picked up his cup of coffee.

Irene took her milk and thanked Dr.Pitt too, taking a sip since she was feeling thirsty.

As they ate, Irene started to feel a little dizzy.

Noticing that, Dr.Kramer asked, "What's wrong, Dr.Tanner?"

Irene shook her head.

"I'm fine...I think I'm just tired."

Dr.Pitt said, "Then you should get some rest."

"Yeah."

Irene got to her feet.

"I think I'll return to my room."

That was when her eyes lingered on the glass of milk and she came to a realization.

"Is that milk...spiked?"

Why else would she suddenly feel enfeebled out of the blue? Dr.Pitt gave her a look then.

"You catch on quick.Yes, I spiked it—the caller just now insisted that I bring you in.The investigation concluded that you were the one who stole our data, and if I don't bring you in, my whole career would be over.This is my only option if I don't want to be fired before my retirement."

Dr.Kramer did not move an inch from surprise —Dr.Pitt's composure and cunningness certainly shocked him.

At the same time, Irene's fingers were digging into her chair while her consciousness began to blur.

"Give up already,"

Dr.Pitt said.

"I knew you're sharp, so I kept the dosage at a level where you'd never notice until you lost consciousness completely."

Irene knew that she must not fall at this stage of pregnancy, or her baby would be in danger.

As her body started to turn to jelly, she slowly crouched, reducing the impact of the fall as she eventually blacked out and dropped to the floor.

The waitress noticed and came to help, but Dr.Pitt gestured for Dr.Kramer to carry Irene while telling the waitress, "We're taking her to the hospital."

As they left the restaurant, Dr.Kramer asked, "Where are we going? "

"Anywhere but here.They have a chopper waiting for us."

Dr.Kramer nodded—they were Minervans, and naturally prioritized their own nation.

Meanwhile, Isaac had summoned Zachary Slate to his office.

He had an idea on how to find Lulu, and that means starting work on Ember Lindt —the prime suspect of Lulu's disappearance.

"Why did you call me here?"

Zachary was clearly moody after that disgruntling lunch with Isaac and Irene.

Isaac, however, was staring daggers at him too.

"Did you think I would get involved with your mess if not for Irene?"

"What do you mean, my mess?" Zachary asked, even though he clearly lacked the confidence.

"Trene asked me to find Lulu, and we both think that Ember Lindt was involved—"

"No way.She's the victim," Zachary said, cutting Isaac short before he could finish.

Isaac looked at him as if he was an idiot just then, his impatience building! Beside them, James said, "We will test her to see if that's true."

Zahcary asked, "How?"

"Just watch."

James then whipped out his phone and texted Ember!

## **Chapter 517**

James's text read: [I know you were the one who put up those slanderous banners at your own wedding venue.

I have evidence.] Zachary read it and said, "That's our wedding. Why would Ember try to mess it up?"

He was obviously doubtful.

James, however, did not explain anything and simply waited.

Over at the Slate's residence, Ember had just finished her bath and was applying some expensive makeup.

She was feeling energetic thanks to her buoyant mood, after finally succeeding in winning Zachary's sympathy and eliminating the eyesore named Lulu Adams.

Now, she just needed to wait for Zachary to completely forget about Lulu for a complete victory in this battle, with Zachary being her spoils.

From then onward, he would belong to her and her only.

Nonetheless, when her phone jingled and she picked it up, her face fell when she saw the text. She immediately thought of the man she hired for the job—no one other than him knew.

Perhaps he wanted more money? Ember panicked a little even as she stared at the text, but she had yet to lose her rationality.

Even as she worked hard to keep herself together, she decided that they would text her again if they wanted money.

Texting back now would only indicate her guilt.

On the other end, Zachary was gloating, "See? Ember is just a naive girl. She would never do it."

James stared at him.

"Fallen in love already?"

"No," Zachary quickly said.

"I owe her for soiling her before our marriage, and allowing her to miscarry after. I owe her, but I don't love her."

"And how are you going to make up for it? With love?" James said with a 'I-get-you' look.

"It's normal for anyone to fall for an adorable girl like her."

"That's a stretch. I said I'm not in love." Zachary bristled.

James naturally would not argue.

"If you say so."

As he spoke, he had typed another text.

[I will show Zachary Slate my evidence if you don't reply.] Zachary simply found him trivial just then.

"Why don't you give up already?"

"Give up?"

James replied, 'We're just getting to the good part. What's the hurry?'

Zachary simply planted himself on the couch and kept gloating, "Is that your job these days? Texting?"

James was not about to argue—they would know soon enough if Ember was really all that innocent.

Bzzt.

His phone vibrated just then and he glanced at it to see a text. He tapped on it.

[Who are you?] James replied: [Don't ask. My price is 100 grand, or Zachary shall find out what you did.]

After sending it, James threw his phone to Zachary.

"Just wait for her reply. She'd have nothing to fear if she's innocent, but she'll willingly pay if she did it. After all, 100 grand is just pocket change to your family or the Lindts."

Zachary still held faith toward Ember's character.

"She definitely didn't do it," he said, holding James's gaze.

"She won't reply."

And yet, James's phone vibrated again right after he spoke.

Zachary froze. He was suddenly so afraid he did not even look at it.

James chuckled right then and he shot James a glare.

"What are you laughing at?"

"You, for being a coward. Why don't you grow a pair and check the text?" James told him.

Zachary's fingers clenched, but he braced himself and glanced at the text...and froze again.

James asked nonchalantly, "So? What did she say?"

Zachary was scowling and ignoring him.

"How could she do this?"

James simply walked over to glance at the text, which read: [Deal, but you must destroy the evidence you have.]

On the other end, Ember was reveling in her 'victory', not mowing that she had fallen for someone's ploy.

Evidence? James certainly had none. He was just working on the presumption of what Irene told him—that Ember was the one behind the banners.

### **Chapter 518**

In fact, James did not even hear it from Irene first hand—Isaac was the one who told him and suggested the ploy.

"If she was willing to sacrifice her own wedding just to tarnish Lulu's reputation, I wonder if she would sacrifice her own baby so that you would give up on Lulu entirely..."

James mused.

Though the idea was as delicate as it was realistic, Zachary was still staring at the phone screen as if he never heard James.

While he actually caught every word, reality was as shocking as it was overwhelming.

The Ember Lindt he knew was naive, kind and understanding...but it turned out that she did not care who she hurt!

"How could a person be so vile?"

All those lies, deception, and conspiracy...

James stared at him and said, "You're no newcomer to business. Haven't you gotten used to all the ploys and stratagems employed? Are you saying that something so trivial really got to you?"

"I just don't get it...How could a young girl like her be so cunning, so heinous?"

There was no doubt that Zachary felt hurt by what Ember did. He trusted her, and yet...

"If she's the one behind those banners, there's every chance that she's the reason Lulu went missing too," James reminded him.

"It's easy to eliminate anyone, especially with your family's influence and hers."

Zachary suddenly wheeled on James with a deathly crimson glare.

"Are you saying that they killed Lulu?"

James actually flinched from his look and threw his hands up.

"It's just a theory. Don't look at me like that—you're scaring me, man..."

"Don't give me that crap if you have no evidence!"

Zachary yelled.

James blinked.

Did he have to yell? Did he lose it already?!

"Lulu is going to be fine,"

Zachary said, furious that James would mention the possibility that Lulu might be dead.

He would never believe that! James did not keep provoking him just then, and assured him, "Look, I misspoke. Maybe Lulu is just held against her will. The key is Ember, so—"

Before he could finish, however, Zachary had already run out of the room.

"Hey!"

James tried to stop him, but Zachary was already gone.

James turned toward Isaac just then.

"Sir?"

He was worried Zachary would do something rash and cause irreversible damage.

"Leave him be," Isaac said.

He would not have gotten involved at all if not for Irene.

"He's not thinking straight. They would see him coming from miles away, "

James pointed out.

"It might not be all bad, since he might drive his real enemies into the open. Also, don't contact me if it's unimportant," Isaac said, picking up his jacket and starting to leave.

He wanted to leave for a while now, but he would have nothing for Irene without at least doing what she asked, so he simply braced himself and waited.

He could not wait to return to Irene—why would he even waste more time here?! Arriving outside Irene's hotel room, Isaac knocked on the door but no one answered. He tried again, but it was still quiet inside.

Heading to the front desk, he asked, "Could you call Room 508 to see if the guest is in there?"

The receptionist did so, and replied, "I'm afraid they must be away. at Isaac frowned.

It was already very late—where else could Irene be? "What about Room 506 and 507?"

"Sorry, sir," the receptionist replied.

The waitress who saw Irene faint noticed them just as she was about to leave work. She asked tentatively, "Is the person you're looking for a pregnant lady?"



"Yeah," Isaac replied.

"She fainted, but the two foreigners who were with her rushed her to the hospital," the waitress told him.

Fainted? Isaac panicked right then.

"Which hospital did they go to?"

The waitress shook her head.

"I don't know."

With that, Isaac hurried outside, calling James as he did.

"Find out which hospital Irene has been admitted to!"

### **Chapter 519**

On the other end, James was caught dumbstruck.

Isaac himself had just told James not to call him if it was not important, and he was calling him already? Also, Irene was sent to the hospital? She was not due yet, was she? Nonetheless, he was too afraid to ask since Isaac sounded very anxious, and he quickly replied instead, "I'll find out what I can."

Once Isaac hung up, Isaac drove straight to the nearest hospital to start looking.

For some reason, he was exceedingly flustered, paranoid that something terrible would happen to her.

It had been a long awaited reunion, and he did not even have the time to get a good look at her, let alone sit down and have a heart to heart.

He had so much to tell her, and he did not manage to tell her that he missed her.

He wanted to tell her that he read Yvaine Lynd's letter, that he knew everything — that he was thankful for what she did.

Arriving at the nearest hospital, he quickly parked his car and headed inside.

However, there were too many people there, so he had to make calls and pull some strings to get the front desk to look for Irene.

There were no records of Irene Spencer or Jane Tanner, just as James called him.

"Sir, there's no record of her being admitted to any hospitals...not even with her alias."

Isaac finally realized that something was out of place.

After clearing the air with her, she had no reason to run off so quickly.

He quickly told James to check the hotel again and he rushed back as well.

They were going to have to find any clues there.

Isaac arrived first, so he asked security to show him the tapes—it was customary of hotels to equip cameras.

From the footage, Isaac clearly saw Irene entering Dr.Pitt's room before heading out together to dinner at the hotel restaurant.

While they ate, Irene appeared to be taken ill and soon fainted.

Dr.Kramer then carried her off.

The footage was clear, but there was no voice recording—they could not tell what they were saying.

James rushed to the scene just then, and he immediately sensed the gravity of the situation due to Isaac's anxiety.

"What happened? "She's gone," Isaac said, his eyes still on the footage.

"Find someone who can lip-read.We need to know what they are saying."

James almost wobbled when he heard that Irene went missing again.

Did she run away again? Gosh, they had just found her again less than 24 hours ago! Even so, he quickly left — regardless of what happened, he must do what Isaac told immediately, even as he hoped that this was a misunderstanding.

Who knew? Maybe Irene did not run away and had to leave because of something urgent, and would be back after one night.

He made call after call, but soon found a lip-reader and brought her to the hotel in under an hour.

While he led the lip-reader to the security room, Isaac asked the hotel to call in the waitress who had spoken to him before and questioned her about Irene.

The waitress was quaking in her boots.

She was just being helpful, but she had the feeling she got herself caught in a serious mess...

Until Isaac gestured for James to smack a stack of dollar bills on the table.

"What happened to the pregnant lady? Tell me what you saw.

Tell me everything without messing up, and this is yours."

The waitress saw that there must be five grand in that stack of bills, which was more than twice her monthly salary! Feeling thrilled, she quickly said, "They were having dinner at the restaurant in the evening, and I think the pregnant woman must have been feeling ill and was going to return to her room.However, she suddenly dropped to a crouch and soon fell on the floor, so I tried to help, but the foreigners who were eating with her carried her, saying that they would take her to the hospital.I didn't follow since I was leaving work soon enough, and that's all I know."

Her statement matched everything they saw on the security footage.

Now, they could only wait for the lip-reader to decipher Irene's conversation with her colleagues.

Later, James arrived and handed Isaac the script completed by the lip-reader.

"It's done."

## Chapter 520

[When did Hotmesh publish the data?]

[Didn't you check your phone?]

[We only found out after we were called about it. I mean, we are the leading research center for cardiovascular diseases, but Hotmesh somehow beat us to publish that data. What is that if not a slap on our collective faces? Can we even maintain our reputation from now on?] [Yeah.] [Is that milk...spiked?]

[You catch on quick. Yes, I spiked it—the caller just now insisted that I bring you in. The investigation concluded that you were the one who stole our data, and if I don't bring you in, my whole career would be over. This is my only option if I don't want to be fired before my retirement.]

[Give up already. I knew you're sharp, so I kept the dosage at a level where you'd never notice until you lost consciousness completely.]

The lip-reading script was enough for Isaac to get the picture— Irene must have stolen vital research data from Mead Clinic, and was covertly taken back to Minerva.

The world certainly knew Minervans would never suffer any challenges to their interests, causing Isaac to worry for Irene's safety given that she was pregnant.

As for James, he actually felt that something was amiss.

"Shouldn't we find out who published the papers? There's no way she had connections with Hotmesh Research after she left the country for so long."

Isaac suddenly remembered Irene insisting on meeting Stephen Carr soon after they were reunited—it must have been about the research.

"Find Stephen Carr," he growled with an undertone of rage.

"Yes, sir. I will send our men right away," James replied.

In other words, they were bringing Stephen here immediately even if they had to resort to violence.

"Also, find out how they left,"

Isaac added—there was no way the Minervans could have left without leaving a trail.

"Yes,"

James left and got started.

With that, Isaac sent everyone away, including the happy waitress with her fat stack of bills. He sat alone behind a desk, his eyes as dark as bottomless abysses.

His fingers slowly clenched.

To think that he never sensed what Irene returned to do...

To think that he believed that she was just taking part in the forum.

He actually regretted calling for the forum to be held in the country right then—he was the reason Irene would risk herself bringing the research data to Zidonia.

Stealing sensitive data meant punishment.

It would be the same even if she did it in Zidonia.

Right now, the only thing he could do was to find out the whole story before heading over to Mead Clinic to get Irene back.

Stephen was soon brought in by some goons, but James had not returned—he was heading to Hotmesh Research to find the one who had permitted the publication of the problematic academic paper.

Stephen, who still had no idea what happened, was naturally snappish to be abducted again.

"What do you want this time, Isaac Jefferson?!"

Isaac leveled him a cold stare and cut to the chase.

"Irene gave you something when she met you yesterday, didn't she?"

Stephen had no idea why Isaac was asking and did not dare to reveal anything without knowing if it was good or bad.

"I don't know what you're talking about. We were just reminiscing about the good old days."

Isaac glowered.

Irene clearly said yesterday that she wanted to meet Stephen for something urgent!