

Runaway 551

Chapter 551

Irene realized immediately that Debbie must have transferred herself back in the country while she was gone.

However, she was too tired to even stand, and simply nestled against Isaac's neck while pretending to sleep, reluctant to talk to Debbie.

Once outside, Debbie opened the door for Isaac, who carried Irene inside.

They headed straight home, and Stephen returned home as well.

Sheryl Harris had cleaned the house and their rooms when she learned that Irene was returning, while Mrs. Watson cooked up a storm.

Irene felt that she was home for the first time in a while.

"Welcome home.' Sheryl was beaming, and she had cajoled Tommy to welcome her as well.

Mrs. Watson stood nearby with a cheerful smile as well. "Ma'am.'

Irene crumbled right then, and her tears were already gushing.

Sheryl walked up to her right then and wiped her tears. "No tears, or you're going to cry easily from now on."

Isaac had called ahead that Irene had delivered their child prematurely, so the child had to be kept in an incubator for now.

Naturally, he just did not want Sheryl to ask about the child when she saw Irene, avoiding the issue for the moment or Irene would start hurting again.

He certainly did not want Sheryl to find out either-there was no way Sheryl could help, and there would be another person stressing themselves out.

Irene's throat felt pouched and her nostrils watery, but could not stop her tears despite trying her best.

'Mom, I've missed you..." she choked through tears.

'You're an adult now," Sheryl's eyes welled with tears as well despite her gentle rebuke, but kept her emotions in check since it was supposed to be a good day. "Mrs. Watson and I went to work as soon as we got Isaac's call, so we cooked a lot of food now.

It's been a while since we had dinner together, so go take a bath and we can get started."

Pausing for a moment, she added. "Don't take too long, though."

"Yeah," Irene replied.

That was when Tommy suddenly said, "Mama."

Sheryl had taught him to say it when he saw Irene-he actually felt nothing toward Irene, since she was away from so long he basically forgot about her.

Sheryl naturally knew what mothers wanted.

On the other hand, Irene was working hard to subdue her emotions, but she crumbled again because of Tommy.

"Let me down," she relapsed, and Isaac gently did so.

She watched as Tommy wobbled toward herself and she abruptly dropped to a crouch, gathering his tiny frame in her arms.

Since his grandmother had told him not to push her away, he did not.

"I'm sorry... I'm so sorry..."

Her blanket sliding off her, Irene was overwhelmed.

Isaac walked over and dropped to one knee beside her, putting the blanket over her so that she would not catch a cold.

"Calm down," he said quietly. "You're making US all worried."

Irene looked up then and saw the tears in Sheryl and Mrs. Watson's eyes.

As Isaac dried her tears, she collected herself and said, "I've missed Tommy so much."

In reality, she felt sorry for their child, and knowing that, Isaac said, "Let's get you cleaned up, or the food will get cold."

"You have all the time you want to spend with Tommy now. There's no hurry," Mrs. Watson said.

Irene nodded, wiped her tears, and looked at Tommy with a forced smile. Tommy blinked and turned to Isaac to greet him.

As Isaac gave him a pinch on the cheek, he lunged toward Isaac, hugging him eagerly and giving him a peck on the cheek, probably unable to express himself otherwise.

Sensing Irene's despondence, Isaac patted Tommy's head. "Go play with your toys."

Tommy refused to let go, however, and started to nestle his little face against Isaac.

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Isaac had to coax Tommy with his toys before the boy finally let go, and Sheryl scooped him up in her arms. "Come in already."

"Yeah," Isaac replied, and headed to the bedroom with a hand around Irene's shoulder.

Once he closed the door behind himself, he swiftly gathered her in his arms, knowing that she was saddened that Tommy had grown distant to her.

"I know you love him, and how difficult it was for you to keep him back then. He loves you, but he needs time to remember since you've been gone for a while."

Irene knew that, but she just could not help feeling despondent, so Isaac had to gently pat her on the back.

After a while and her mood improved, Isaac let go and said, "I'm getting a bath ready."

He headed inside the bathroom, prepared a tub full of hot water that filled the room with vapor.

Then, he helped her undress, but Irene caught his wrist. "I can do it myself- =

"I'll help," he insisted, not because of libido, but only because he wanted to take care of her.

It had just been three days since her C-section, and she was not supposed to come into contact with water.

Isaac soaked a towel to rub her body, gently and meticulously, and when that was done, he applied ointment to her scar and helped her put on the pajamas Sheryl prepared for her.

Once that was done, Isaac took a quick shower, changed into fresh clothes, and followed her downstairs.

After a brief moment of respite, everyone had calmed down.

Sheryl had Tommy sit beside Irene, beside the table full of piping hot food.

Ladling a bowl full of steaming soup for Irene, Sheryl said, "Here. This will keep you warm."

"Yeah," Irene said, holding it with both hands and taking small sips.

She really did feel warmer.

After that, she started to put food on Tommy's little plate, He was sitting in his highchair, able to eat on his own without help.

The food Irene gave was his favorite, and he would scoop everything with his tiny spoon into his mouth, and Irene felt her heart sing even as she watched.

Once dinner was over, Sheryl urged her to return to her room, since she was still in her postpartum stage and needed to be careful.

Irene did so, returning to her room with Isaac since Sheryl and Mrs. Watson would clean up after them.

Still, she kept standing since she just ate, and asked, "Where's James Cross?"

After all, she had only seen Debbie the secretary but not James.

Isaac's expression changed slightly just then. "He... He's incapacitated."

It's rare to see him being cagey, so Irene pressed, "What happened?"

"He had an accident," Isaac admitted-he would rather not mention it since it was terrible. "He's now in a vegetative state."

What?!

Irene was at once shocked and heartbroken.

How did that happen to James?

"It's fine-don't worry about it. You should be resting." Isaac pulled up a blanket and laid her down while saying, "I'm going to check on him now."

Irene nodded, since it was the least Isaac could do. "Yeah."

Still, she suddenly remembered something as she lay down, and she called out to him. "Isaac..."

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Isaac looked up at Irene just then. "Yeah?"

She wanted to ask if Debbie was responsible, but realized that she had no proof.

"What is it?" Isaac held her gaze, sitting on the bed just then.

Irene hesitated for a moment, but eventually asked, ' Did you tell Debbie to come back after James's accident?'

"No," Isaac replied. "James had her transfer back earlier."

"Really?"

Irene thought that Debbie did that to James just to make it back, but since the case was the exact opposite, it would look as if she had no motive.

It meant Irene's hunch was wrong, and could she have been paranoid?

However, she knows that Debbie wanted Isaac, and would be only too eager to return to Isaac's side.

"What is it?" Isaac asked.

Irene shook her head. "It's nothing."

"Okay. Now get some proper rest," he said, pulling the blanket over her.

"Yeah," she said, and closed her groggy eyes.

Isaac waited until she fell asleep before leaving, closing the door behind himself.

Sheryl walked up to him, asking, "She looks so skinny. Was labor difficult for her?"

"Yeah." Isaac lowered his eyes. "That's why she needs to recover."

As Irene's mother, Sheryl naturally felt sad to see her daughter like that. "I'll take good care of her."

Isaac was naturally at ease having Sheryl keep an eye on things.

Getting in his car, he started the ignition and dialed Zachary Slate's number

It just so happened that Ember Lindt's parents were at Slate Mansion, because Zachary was demanding a divorce!

Ember naturally refused, insisting that it was Zachary's scheme, and now the two families were in the midst of a confrontation.

But truth be told, it was Zachary confronting the Lindts and his own mother.

After all, Mrs. Slate would never allow him to get a divorce, and was doing her best to reason with him, "It's just a misunderstanding. How could you demand a divorce at the drop of a hat?"

Zachary held her gaze. "She cheated on me."

"I didn't! You set me up just to find out what happened to Lulu!"

Ember had already resolved herself to go the distance because she would never allow Zachary to be free from her.

As for Mrs. Slate, she was even more determined to side with Ember at the mention of Lulu, taking her words at face value.

Moreover, she had gone through great lengths to make this marriage happen-how could she let it end so easily?

"What a jinx, causing problems even from the gravel" she blurted.

Zachary turned to glare at her right then. "What? How did you know Lulu is dead?!"

The Lindts glared at Mrs. Slate too, so she hastily came up with an excuse. "It's just a rumor."

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Zachary demanded, "And how did you find out?"

He was no idiot-only Lulu's close friends knew that she had gone missing, but none of them knew if she was just hiding or dead.

Although Ember told him that his mother had a hand in Lulu's death, he never asked her because he was afraid of what she would do.

But his own mother had just said that Lulu was dead too.

What was that if not an indirect confession?

"Are you questioning me?" Mrs. Slate screamed right then. "Is this how you speak to your mother?!"

At the same time, Peter Lindt made his move.

He and his wife were naturally on their daughter's side, and they certainly were aware of Lulu's death since they had planned it, but Mrs. Slate was the one who pulled the trigger.

That gave them leverage against Mrs. Slate, not to mention that they would have Ember's back even if she was at fault.

Glaring at Zachary, Peter barked, "I thought you were the best choice of groom for Ember and could take care of her for the rest of her life. That's why I entrusted her to you, only for you to keep obsessing over a former flame, even framing Ember for her sake! Doesn't your conscience hurt?"

Pausing for a moment, he added, "I also thought you're a good son, but did you hear how you were speaking to your own mother? You know what your family is like, and even if you know you have control over Slate Industries, don't forget about your half-brother. Our support is vital, or do you think you would still retain control if you divorced Ember?"

Zachary had been obedient and catered to his mother's whims because life had been harsh on her, even going so far as to resign from his preferred career and leave the woman he loved.

Heartbroken even as he looked at her, he asked, "Why?! I left her already!"

Mrs. Slate gave up on all pretext right then, and admitted to her crime just so that Zachary would give up completely. "Yes, I killed that jinx because you were wavering. You have only yourself to blame, obsessing over her even after you're married. Since you're not going to accept your marriage with Ember, I have to get rid of her!"

Holding Zachary's gaze, she challenged him. "So? Are you going to call the cops on me?!"

She was certain that he would not, because Zachary had always been soft- if he had any determination, he would not have resigned as a doctor or broken up with Lulu.

While she believed that she knew his son, she just did not know that Zachary was only compromising because she was his mother. Moreover, her own marriage had been rocky, even in name only-his father was cold to her and even publicly kept a mistress, making her life very difficult.

That was the only reason he gave up on his own desires, but his compromise only invited more extortion and coercion, even the death of his beloved woman!

"You disappoint me."

With that, he turned and strode outside.

"Zachary!" Mrs. Slate snapped, but he did not respond or turn around.

He did not want to see her or stay in that house for another second.

Once he got in his car, he got the call from Isaac and headed straight to Central Hospital, where Isaac was waiting in James's ward.

Zachary was glowering, and Isaac asked when he saw him, "What happened to you?"

Taking a moment to compose himself, he replied, "Nothing."

Isaac quickly turned back to James, his gaze turning gloomy when he did. 'What did the doctors say?'

"The expert I arranged to diagnose him rated the chance of him waking up being twenty percent-not much, but it's something. I've also arranged for a physiotherapist to massage him every day to prevent muscle death."

Zachary's voice was raspy-not because of James, but because of the mess waiting back home.

Isaac was silent for a long while. "Keep taking care of him for me. I might have to go abroad again, and probably won't stay here for long."

"Don't worry, you can leave James to me-"

'But I'm not." Isaac cut him short before he could finish. 'Spit it out already. What happened to you?"

But Zachary did not even know where to start.

Beep!

One of the monitors attached to James suddenly rang!

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Isaac promptly turned back to James, asking, "Is he waking up?"

Zachary quickly checked the monitors, but soon said, "No, it's just a routine beep to show that it's working."

There was a look of disappointment in Isaac's eyes-it naturally hurt to see James like this.

That was when Erin Gooding suddenly entered with an empty bucket, and she did a double take when she saw them. "Oh, it's you."

Isaac cast her a cold glance and left the ward in silence.

Zachary followed, presuming that Isaac did not know Erin and said, "I never knew that James was dating her. I thought she was up to no good when she showed up."

"And?" Isaac growled.

"She's a fine woman-"

Isaac stopped right then, and turned to look Zachary in the eye. "What makes you think that?"

"I mean, she's been camping outside and slept on the bench when I denied her entry. Seeing that she was sincere, I eventually let her in, and I don't think she's left since. She's caring for him 24/7 and learning from the physiotherapist as well."

Zachary sighed emotionally. "James is lucky to have someone willing to take care of him even in that state."

"Are you blind?" Isaac mocked him without remorse.

"What, is she a terrible person or something?" Zachary asked, and gingerly added, "Wait, you know her?"

Isaac certainly did!

However, he soon realized that they never talked that much, and it was not as if she was a bad person.

He also remembered something else-they were going to fly home to Zidonta from Minerva, but the eternally punctual James arrived at the airport late.

He must have been with Erin at that time, or Erin would not have been willing to travel all the way here just to take care of him.

"Well, should I send her away?" Zachary asked, since he really did not know Erin.

"Leave her be," Isaac said flatly. "Now tell me about you."

"Me?" Zachary felt embarrassed to even start.

However, he needed an ear given the mess he was in, just as he needed a solution.

"Ember Lindt had an affair..." he said, since Isaac was the only one who would listen now. "It's true. I caught her in the act."

He had no love for Ember, but she was still his wife, and her affair left him at once repulsed and humiliated.

After all, being cuckold utterly destroys a man's dignity.

Isaac frowned, but felt no sympathy for Zachary-he had married Ember even if he did not love her.

If anything, an affair was only to be expected.

"What are you going to do?"

"I want a divorce, but the Lindts disagree. The whole thing was set up by my mother in the first place, or I would not have agreed to-"

"Stop."

Isaac did not have time for the whole story, but looked at Zachary as a parent would look at a child.

"You are your own man, Zachary Slate-you can destroy anyone who stands in your way, or devour them if need be. You've already had plenty of time to train yourself, so it's time to show your chops."

Zachary understood, but he was also a little confused.

"Now that things have come to this, you should think for yourself," Isaac finished, and left the hospital.

In the end, the Lindts were the only thing standing in Zachary's way.

He did benefit from marrying Ember thanks to his alliance with them, and his own mother had set it up in the first place because of their wealth and influence.

Was Isaac telling him that he should claim leadership over them?

It did make sense, and Zachary knew what to do right then!

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The next day, Irene woke up to the sight of a pair of tiny cheeks that resembled Isaac's, and she reached out to touch them.

Suddenly, Tommy got up and ran off, though Isaac soon entered.

She slept soundly last night. But although she did not know what time he returned, the dark circles under his eyes made it evident that he had not slept.

It had been the case over the last few days and weariness showed on his face.

Getting up, he told her, "You should sleep."

Isaac sat on the bed then and held her hand. "Stan has already hired the best private detectives for the job and I need to meet them soon. I've also arranged for a protection detail for you while I settle things over there."

Irene certainly understood that having to travel to and from Minerva was difficult, and could not help feeling sad.

She was so preoccupied with her own grief that she forgot Isaac was the father too.

He must be hurting too, right?

She raised a hand and placed it gently on his cheek.

It was a gesture that said both nothing and everything.

Isaac left quickly after lunch, while Irene lay over the living room couch, staring blankly at the ceiling, her thoughts an enigma.

Sheryl came and pulled a blanket over Irene.

'What's on your mind?'

Irene came to her senses right then and said, "Nothing."

She then turned to look at Tommy, who was fiddling with a toy dog on the carpet before the couch.

Spotting many other toy dogs, she asked, "Does Tommy like dogs?"

"Yes," Sheryl replied. "We happened to spot one the size of a small cow when I took him out on a stroll. The very sight of it scared me, but Tommy wasn't spooked at all. That's children for you, I guess."

Irene held out her hands at Tommy just then, "Come here, Tommy."

Tommy looked up at her, blinking his large black eyes, his thick lashes fluttering as he did.

"Go on," Sheryl coaxed, and the boy finally got up and walked over to Irene.

Gathering him in her arms and pointing at the toy dog he was holding, Irene asked, 'Should I buy you a live one?'

"Are you saying we should keep a pet?" Sheryl exclaimed as soon as she was finished. "But animals always carry bacteria and

viruses, and Tommy is just a toddler. What if he gets infected? That's not how you earn his favor, you know?"

Tommy seemed to understand, however, and pressed himself against

Irene while babbling, "Yes."

Sheryl, worried that he would rupture Irene's scar, was about to take him away.

"I'm fine," Irene said, stopping Sheryl.

It was not easy for Tommy to get close to her-she wanted more, too, and the last thing she wanted was to push him away.

As she gave him a peck on the cheek, she added before Sheryl could say a thing, 'Get a small dog, and buy it from a legal pet shop, since they always vaccinate the animals.

Pet hospitals are everywhere these days, so you can get it examined before adoption too."

Sheryl understood that Irene wanted to win over Tommy and had no choice but to agree. "Alright, but you're staying here. I'll get the chauffeur to do it."

"Okay," Irene replied, and suddenly asked, "By the way, how has Ricky been lately?"

Sheryl was stumped. She had been busy taking care of Tommy and had no idea how Ricky was doing since she had not returned to Spencer Mansion.

"... don't know."

Irene whipped out her phone to give Ricky a call, but another call came in before she could.

She answered it, and the voice on the other end barked, "I'm getting married. Come attend my wedding!"

Attend a wedding?

She did not even know who was speaking!

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Irene quickly asked, 'Who are you?'

The person on the other end was silent for a moment before laughing coolly. "Forgotten all about me already?"

Irene finally placed the voice. "Harvey Gooding?"

She was uncertain, however, because the voice somehow sounded weird.

"Are you sick?" she asked.

"It's just a minor cold."

"I'll see. So, you're getting married? I remembered you saying that you didn't have anyone..."

Irene was quite surprised that Harvey would suddenly say that he was getting married. "Anyway, congratulations-don't worry, I'll definitely send you a gift."

"No, you have to attend my wedding." There was a clear demand in Harvey's voice!

Irene became silent for a moment, but said, "Sorry, but I'm busy."

She turned toward Tommy and patted his little head.

Isaac was not around, and she was still in the middle of her postpartum care and should not leave the house.

Moreover, Harvey was in Sunny City-she might have considered it if he was holding it somewhere closer, but Sunny City was just too far.

"We're not even friends, huh?" Harvey was obviously incensed. "Fine, just pretend I never said it, since you think of me as a tool and not a friend."

Irene frowned, unsure what had got him so upset. "If you're still upset about what happened last time-"

"Save it. Just pretend I never called or invited you. Let's just stay away from each other from now on!"

With that, he hung up, leaving Irene frowning at the beeping.

"What is it?" Sheryl asked.

"Nothing," Irene replied-she certainly thought nothing of it.

One would always have many encounters in life, but not all are made to last.

Composing herself, she called Ricky, but his phone was turned off.

He was in bad shape the last time she saw him and she wondered what happened to him after.

It was a little worrying.

"Mom, I think I'll check how things are at Spencer Mansion-"

"You're supposed to be resting after labor," Sheryl said sternly, not about to let her leave. "You didn't do so the last time, did you? You'll develop an underlying condition if you don't make a proper recovery, and you'll suffer when you're older."

Before Irene could argue, she sighed. "You just want to check on Ricky, don't you? I'll go over to take a look."

Irene leaned into her arms like a spoiled kid then. "Thanks, Mom."

"Oh, you." Sheryl snorted with a 'what-am-I-going-to-do-with-you' look.

"Oh, right. Did Lulu ever contact you?"

Sheryl's scowled right then. "Why so many questions? It's been less than a day since you came home, so just calm yourself and rest, alright?"

Seeing that Irene was now silent, Sheryl finally got to her feet. "Alright, I'm leaving now."

"Bring him here if you see him," Irene said-she had more questions about Lulu, and Ricky might have found her by now.

"Sure thing," Sheryl said, and was just about to reach the door when Debbie the secretary arrived with a bag, looking like she was going to ring the doorbell.

Seeing that it was Sheryl, Debbie quickly said, "Mr. Jefferson told me to bring these."

Sheryl smiled. "Come on in!"

Debbie entered, and when Irene saw it, her smile from playing with Tommy faded right then.

"Are you feeling better?" Debbie asked in concern, but Irene simply stared at her without responding.

"Mr. Jefferson had me transfer back since they're understaffed over here," Debbie explained.

Irene would have believed her, too-if Isaac had not told her before that James was the one who transferred Debbie back to Zidonia!

If Irene did, she might even have questioned Isaac later on why he would bring Debbie back, and perhaps cause a misunderstanding.

In that sense, Debbie was certainly cunning!

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Debbie placed everything she brought on the table, saying, "Mr. Jefferson asked me to buy these."

Irene glanced at it and said, "I see."

"Take your time and get some proper rest," Debbie said and turned to leave.

However, just as she reached the door, she stopped and turned again to look at Irene. "It seems that all you do is bother Mr. Jefferson."

"And what about it?" Irene coolly retorted.

"I'm positive that I'm so much more competent than you at work, just as I would make for a better partner in a relationship. At the very least, I won't mess up time and time again, making Mr. Jefferson worry constantly."

Irene glared at Debbie darkly-Debbie was definitely exceptional because she managed to stay with Isaac for so long.

And having made her return now, she was much more direct with Irene.

Irene thought that it was a good thing-it would at least spare the need for pretext, and she would not have to worry constantly about suddenly finding a dagger on her back.

"I'll play my role in helping Mr. Jefferson at his work. At least I would ease his stress at work."

Debbie puffed her chest and reared her head, looking a lot less like a secretary as she declared that she would no longer play second fiddle.

Irene would not have held this against her, but it was obvious now that Debbie was not going to submit this time.

Nonetheless, she calmly told Debbie. "I'll tell Isaac to give you a raise, don't worry."

Debbie was left scowling, as if her declaration was just to ask for money.

Irene was clearly mocking her!

"Mr. Jefferson only saves the best for me," she growled.

"Oh, he's quite nice."

"Of course," Debbie said proudly.

"You brought what he asked for. You can go now," Irene snapped, not willing to waste her breath with Debbie.

Debbie understood that Irene wanted her gone, and she smiled. "I won't impose for now, then, but I'll be back if Mr. Jefferson asks again."

With that, Debbie turned and headed out the door, while Irene was left scowling.

Debbie's words left her ill at ease and wary.

No longer content with her unrequited love, she had declared war on Irene herself?

"Doggy," Tommy suddenly said, tugging at Irene's hand.

Irene's gaze turned tender as she turned back to her child and she asked mildly, "You want a doggy, right?"

As Tommy nodded, Irene called out, "Mrs. Watson?"

Mrs. Watson arrived quickly, "Yes, ma'am?"

"Ask the chauffeur to buy a small-sized dog for Tommy. Make sure it's mild-natured, healthy, and suitable as a pet."

"Okay," Mrs. Watson said, and stepped out of the house.

When she found the chauffeur, she quickly said, "Jimmy, go buy a dog--"

Debbie had not left, and she overheard them.

Turning toward Mrs. Watson, she asked, "Who wants a dog?"

"It's Mrs. Jefferson," Mrs. Watson replied.

"You can leave that to me. You might get the wrong one if you don't know which breed to get."

Mrs. Watson thought that Debbie had always been efficient and diligent, and she thus agreed to it. "Thank you."

Debbie smiled and turned to leave, her smile fading as soon as she turned away, replaced by an icy demeanor.

Then, remembering something else, she turned and called out to Mrs. Watson. "Wait."

"Is there something else?" Mrs. Watson asked.

Debbie walked up to Mrs. Watson and said quietly, "Don't tell anyone that I'm the one who bought the dog."

Mrs. Watson was puzzled. "Why? Does that include Mrs. Jefferson?"

Debbie nodded. "Yes. It's no big deal-there's no need to tell anyone."

Mrs. Watson was still puzzled, but nodded regardless, and returned inside the mansion.

"Have you spoken to the chauffeur?" Irene asked when she saw Mrs.

Watson, and she turned toward her...

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Mrs. Watson replied, "I have."

Irene nodded and got off the couch, carrying Tommy back to their room.

Mrs. Watson walked up to her, saying, "I can carry Tommy, ma'am."

Irene smiled. "It's fine."

Mrs. Watson naturally did not press the issue and instead asked, "Should I start unpacking the stuff on the table?"

Irene turned to look at everything on the table, and wondered if Isaac had really asked for it, or Debbie had decided it on her own.

Whichever it was, putting it away was better just to be safe.

"Just shelve it for now."

"It's all supplements, and you really need it right now... Debbie must have brought it because Mr. Jefferson told her, and leaving it here is a little wasteful..."

"Actually, getting too many supplements would be harmful instead," Irene told Mrs. Watson mildly.

"Just shelve it for now."

"Yes, Mrs. Jefferson." Mrs. Watson did as she was told, while Irene returned to her room.

Tommy usually napped in the afternoon, and he was now getting drowsy.

He soon dozed off as Irene carried him around, patting him on the back a little.

While he was almost estranged from her, he did not reject her-he was even a little curious about her, the person who suddenly showed up in the house, and he was nice enough about it.

Irene got a little sleepy after coaxing him to sleep, and since she was frail after labor, she dozed off too.

There was no telling how long had passed when the door suddenly swung open.

Opening her eyes to find that it was Sheryl, Irene's mind cleared up a little as she sat up, asking softly, "Did you find him?"

"No." Sheryl kept her voice low as well, worried that she would wake Tommy. "The mansion was sold to someone else."

"What?!" Irene exclaimed in surprise. "But, how? I thought it was left under your name..."

"Everything your father left me was in the mansion. I only brought my clothes here," Sheryl said, appearing disappointed. "He must have stolen everything."

On the other hand, Irene was pensive.

Why would Ricky sell everything in the house for no reason?

And where was he? Why would he go missing?

As she pondered for a reason, she got to her feet. "I'm going out."

"Where do you think you're going? Everything is gone," Sheryl said as she caught her. "And you should be taking your time to rest."

Irene looked her in the eye right then. "I'm worried that something has happened to him. Did you know that Spencer Holdings went bankrupt too?"

Sheryl certainly had no idea-she basically never left this apartment ever since Isaac arranged for her to babysit Tommy here, and only stepped out to take Tommy on short strolls without going too far.

She did not have much in the way of human contact either, and therefore had no idea what was happening out there.

"How did that happen?"

"It's a long story," Irene did not go into detail, but it really would be horrific if Ricky really went missing just like Lulu did.

"But where are you even going to look? Isaac's not around... Maybe you should call him?"

Irene understood that Sheryl was concerned, but Isaac had even more problems on his plate-calling him now might just get him distracted.

The food that Debbie brought was a point in case-she was worried about eating it, so she had Mrs. Watson shelve it for now.

While she could call Isaac about this and ask if Debbie did it under his instructions, she just did not want him to have to worry about home too.

"I can't depend on him for everything," she said-or she would be a burden to Isaac, like Debbie had put it.

"Well, who would you go to?" Sheryl asked.

"I'll go to a precinct," Irene said.

"Alright, but I'm coming with you." Sheryl was worried.

"It's fine. Isaac has arranged a protection detail for US," Irene told her. '

They will be following US wherever we go."

"At least dress in layers."

Irene did so, wrapping herself up tightly.

Sheryl brought a cap and a scarf too, to prevent Irene from catching a cold.

'You should always keep this on or your neck would get stiff," Sheryl said as she wrapped the scarf around Irene's neck.

Irene, however, knew that Sheryl was helping her hide the scars on her face and neck.

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Sheryl told her, "Come home soon." "Yeah," Irene replied, before leaving in a taxi to the nearest precinct-she did not call for the chauffeur since she thought he had left to get a dog.

Arriving at the precinct, she spoke to an officer on duty.

"A missing person?"

"Yes." Irene replied.

"How long has it been since you noticed that he went missing?" the officer asked as he recorded the details.

"Two days," Irene replied, but she did not actually know how long Ricky had gone missing, specifically—all she knew was that 48 hours was long enough to build a case.

"Do you have any further details about the missing person?"

Irene told the officer everything she could about Ricky, and the officer told her, "Please leave a number. We will contact you immediately once we find him."

"Okay," Irene said, and did as she was told.

As she stepped out, she stood at the doorway for a moment, deciding that she had to pin her hopes on the cops for now.

This was her only option, too-she had no one to go to after James's accident.

When she stopped a taxi, however, she unwittingly turned to notice someone watching her nearby. He quickly hid behind a pine tree when she noticed him.

When Irene walked over to the tree, however, the person already left, leaving her puzzled.

Was she seeing things?

Still, a taxi had arrived, and she hailed it, heading straight home.

Soon, the taxi returned to the apartment and she aligned.

However, she heard a commotion just as she was about to head inside the apartment block, and she turned to find two burly black-clad men subduing a shady man wearing a baseball cap.

Irene walked over to them, and one of the black-clad men promptly said, ' He's been tailing you.'

Irene raised a brow. So she was not imagining things outside the precinct- someone was really tailing her?

She was certainly curious as to who would want to tail her and she said, ' Show me his face.'

The bodyguards took off the man's cap and lifted his face, but Irene did not recognize him. ' Who sent you?'

One of black-clad men punched the man in the gut right then, sending him to the floor, clutching the stomach and trembling as he curled into a ball.

"Oof.."

Irene coldly asked, "Who sent you?"

The man still would not talk. "I'm just paid to do this."

As such, the bodyguards straightened him out, and he soon spilled his guts.

"Stop! I'm just a nobody... A street thug! There's just this mysterious person who came to US one day, paying US off and telling US to work for them.

They wore a mask, SO we don't know their name, or whether they were a man or a woman-there's just a handful of us, and since the mysterious person was quite generous, we're quite happy to play along..."

"How do we reach them?" one of the bodyguards asked.

"I have his number," the street thug replied.

The bodyguard took the phone out of the street thug's pocket and held out the phone at him. "Call them."

The street thug did not want to keep getting beaten up, so he quickly scrolled through his contacts, found the number, and called it.

His call was soon answered!

