

Runaway 561

Chapter 561

One of the bodyguards gestured for the street thug to speak, and he stammered over the phone, 'T-The person you asked me to tail... Just entered her apartment block...'

"Irene... Oh?!"

Sheryl just happened to step outside the apartment block with Tommy, and she yelped when she saw them.

The person on the other end seemed to have heard them and quickly hung up.

Irene took the street thug's phone and called the same number again, but no one answered this time.

They dropped the ball.

One of the bodyguards snarled then, "You have a place to meet, don't you?!"

The street thug nodded. "Yeah."

The bodyguard turned toward Irene. "We will head over right now-we might reach them in time."

Irene nodded. "Yeah."

With that, the bodyguards shoved the street thug into the car and drove off.

Sheryl walked up to Irene then, having seen them.

'Who were those people?' she asked.

Irene smiled. "The protection detail Isaac arranged."

"Are there bad people after US?" Sheryl asked.

"No," Irene replied-it was not the truth, but she did not want Sheryl to worry.

Moreover, she had no idea who sent that street thug or why they wanted her followed.

She held out her arms to Tommy, who held out his arms at her in return. Perhaps blood does run thicker than water.

Irene was certainly very happy and carried Tommy back to their apartment.

Sheryl then told her, "We have a dog now, but I don't think Tommy likes it very much."

Irene was puzzled. "Is it that ugly?"

'I'm not sure, but he just isn't warming up to it. Maybe it's the breed or even the size-the ones he likes tend to be the bigger ones.'

Irene returned home and saw the dog.

Its fur was curled and brown, and its eyes were perfectly circular. It was an adorable sight as it lay there tamely, and it was the right size to raise at home.

They certainly could not rear a big dog here, since it was not a mansion with a garden.

While their apartment was not small, it did not have a garden.

Still, they could not throw it away right after they bought it.

"Let's keep it for now," Irene said-perhaps Tommy would warm up to it.

There was a knock on their door in the evening, and Mrs. Watson answered it.

It was the bodyguards from earlier, here to give Irene a report.

Mrs. Watson had to wake Irene up since she went to bed early. Once Mrs. Watson told her about the bodyguards, she quickly said, "Let them in."

As she put on a cardigan and stepped outside, the bodyguards were already waiting in the living room.

"Did you find the mysterious person?" Irene asked.

"No, ma'am," one of the bodyguards replied. "They bolted before we arrived. a=

Irene was not surprised, since the call earlier had tipped them off.

"It's late. You should get some rest," she told them.

The bodyguards did not ask her if they should continue investigating either, since their top priority was to keep Irene safe.

Detective work was not their forte either.

Once they left, however, Irene stayed on the couch and did not return to her room.

She suddenly could not sleep. As she tugged on her cardigan, Mrs. Watson came and said, "Ma'am, you really should get some sleep."

Irene finally got up and when she returned inside the room, she saw the screen of her phone flashing.

She picked it up and saw that it was a text from Issac.

[Sleeping?]

Chapter 562

Irene replied: [Not yet. Any developments with Kim Sherwood?]

Isaac had not texted her or called because he was worried she would ask about that.

While a private detective had since taken the job, Isaac had yet to hear from him.

Irene knew that she was being impatient, and so, she took a moment to calm down.

[Is work going smoothly over there?]

[Yeah. I'll be back in two days.]

The dispute of who will inherit the Raideen estate would be over tomorrow, with Sammy Raideen set to be the new head of the family.

[Yeah.]

Irene replied, stared at the screen for another moment before typing: [Be safe.]

[Yeah.]

Silence ensued for a while, when Isaac texted back: [You should sleep.]

Irene sat by the bed and put down the phone, but found herself staring out of the window blankly for some time...

Meanwhile, Zachary seemed to have matured overnight.

He did not try to fight his mother again or demand a divorce-he had now understood that without absolute power, no amount of arguing would work.

If he did keep arguing, he would never get a divorce, let alone find out how Lulu was killed.

Instead, he asked to meet Peter Lindt, who was glowering the instant they set eyes on each other.

"Are you trying to talk me into supporting your divorce?"

Zachary simply poured him a glass of wine and said, "Actually, I came to apologize-I'm very sorry to have mentioned that at all."

'Weren't you insisting that Ember was having an affair?'

I jumped to conclusions," Zachary said.

Peter snorted. "Who does things like that? You already leapfrogged through the ranks when Ember married you, or perhaps you believe that she's lacking as a wife?"

Zachary hung his head to hide his expression. "She's perfect. I'm the one who's lacking."

The way he slumped his shoulders seemed to convince Zachary that he had understood his mistake.

Since Zachary had already apologized, he had no reason to keep making life hard for Zachary-after all, his daughter really loved Zachary.

I don't want anything like this to happen ever again," Peter growled.

"Never ever," Zachary assured him.

Peter drank the glass of wine Zachary poured him just then, as a gesture that Zachary was forgiven.

Zachary knew how much Peter liked to drink, and he kept pouring it for him. 'I understand that you like this brand, so I bought it for you.'

Peter gave him a look. "You really are generous... this stuff costs fifteen grand a bottle!"

"And it is worth every penny, sir," Zachary said, pouring himself a glass and toasting Peter. "Thank you for forgiving me and offering me a second chance."

Peter clinked his glass with Zachary's and chuckled. "Hey now-we weren't the ones who picked you. It's Ember who's dead set on you, and we're just playing along. Look,

Zachary, she's our only daughter, and everything our family owns would eventually be passed on to you. I ask for nothing... only that you would treat her well."

"Then you have nothing to worry about."

Both of them chugged their glasses, and Zachary quickly poured Peter another glass soon after. "Thank you for giving me the apple of your eye."

Peter laughed. "That's a good line... and the truth. Ember really is the apple of our eyes."

Now in a good mood, he did not refuse anything as Zachary kept pouring more into his glass.

And once they finished one bottle, Zachary opened another. "We haven't really drunk together, so we really should get drunk today,"

"Of course. Good wine should never be wasted." Peter giggled.

He was already tipsy-he could not hold his liquor despite his love for it.

Moreover, not only did the wine have a high alcohol content, but Zachary had spiked it to get him intoxicated quicker.

Soon, Peter's gaze was unfocused and Zachary put his phone nearby on recorder mode while continuing to pour more wine for him.

Then, Zachary seemingly asked casually, "My mom claimed that she murdered Lulu Adams. Do you know anything about that?"

Chapter 563

Peter gloated smugly. 'Of course I do. I was the one who planned it all out!'

Although the conspiracy to murder Lulu was his, it was Zachary's mother who pulled the trigger.

The cops would never trace it back to him since he covered his tracks well, too.

On the other hand, Zachary felt like he could crush the bottle in his hand as he listened, but he restrained his temper with every ounce of control he had.

"I see. What was the plan?" he asked, having done his best to hide the rage from his voice to stay as calm as possible.

'We've looked into it, but Lulu Adams has no connections at all... Her mother is dead, while her father remarried and doesn't care about her, so I told your mom that no one

would ever notice if someone like her disappeared... and we did just that."

Though Peter's gaze seemed to turn turbid, he was getting increasingly elated the more he spoke. I told her that no one would ever find a body if we fed Lulu to the fishes, and your mom really listened! After I bankrupted the company that Lulu's friend owned, she asked to see your mom, not knowing that your mom had every intention to kill her. Once she showed up, your mom had the men who were lying in wait grab her, tie her up, put her in a gunny sack, and dump her in the sea.

Zachary was shaking with regret and regret, but mostly self-blame.

After all, he did not know certain matters until Peter mentioned it- including Lulu's father remarrying and abandoning her.

How could he have not known?

"You were that eager to make her disappear, huh?" Zachary asked, no longer able to hide the dark, terrifying growl in his voice.

Peter waved him off as if not noticing what was weird with Zachary at all— the liquor had gotten to him and he was basically running rampant. 'Oh, it's all Ember... she kept saying that Lulu was an eyesore, and that her marriage with you would never be peaceful with her around. That's why she talked me into this, so that I'd charm your mom into doing the deed. Well, it's good that your mom was being so agreeable and agreed to it so easily...'

There was a chilling look on Zachary's face and he rose to his feet, picking up his phone and turning off the recorder.

He glowered sinisterly at Peter for a long while, feeling an impulse to kill him right then and there.

But he restrained himself-after going through so much, he finally understood that being impulsive never worked.

Isaac was right-he must destroy everyone who stood in his way, or devour them if needed.

And now, he shall claim the Lindt family estate for himself.

He kept it together no matter how much spite was gnawing at him, and sent Peter home safely.

Before he headed home after that, Shirley Lindt must have called ahead of him-Ember was waiting when he reached home.

'Why were you meeting my dad?' she demanded, glaring at him.

Zachary looked at her face, which looked so innocent and harmless.

He could not help feeling contempt for himself right then, that he ever thought of her as harmless.

She was as cunning as she was heinous-almost a reflection of how dark the human heart could be.

He hated how blind he had been, and for not seeing her true colors earlier.

Restraining the impulse to slap her, he loosened his collar and growled, ' I'm tired. Ask him yourself."

With that, he strode outside, while Ember stared after him.

She had the feeling that there was something different about him today, but could not quite put her finger on what it was.

Following him inside, she said, 'I'll never agree to a divorce, Zachary.'

Zachary simply ignored her and headed in the bathroom for a shower, then quickly went to bed soon after.

Ember was naturally speechless, because she could not get a read on him.

Was he giving up?

As she gingerly got in bed, she murmured, "Zachary..."

'I'm tired.' Zachary kept his back to her—he would not be able to stop himself from gutting her if he saw her now.

Even so, Ember continued to slide closer to him, and seeing that he was not pushing her away like before, she murmured again, "Zachary?"

She then heard his breathing turning rhythmic and she placed a hand on his hip.

To her delight, he did not move.

Wanting more, she pushed herself against Zachary's back.

The next morning, Ember woke up to find Zachary standing in front of the window.

He usually would never stay in the same room with her, and he rarely came home just to avoid her.

Chapter 564

Ember could not get a read on Zachary at all right then.

Did her father manage to persuade him? Did he have a change of heart?

Ember got out of bed, walking up to him and wanting to wrap her arms around him... when he suddenly turned around and put his phone in his pocket after sending a text.

'Time for breakfast,' he said, and strode out of the room.

Ember quickly got changed, washed up, and headed downstairs to find that Zachary was still there.

She joined him at the dining table, asking gingerly, "Are you going to be busy today?"

They did not have anything in common, so she had to speak whatever came to mind.

"Yeah..."

Zachary replied, looking up at her as he added pointedly, "I'm going to be busy."

"But could you try to come home earlier?" Ember asked, not letting up so soon.

"Yeah," Zachary replied.

Bzzt-

Zachary's phone, which he placed on the table, buzzed.

A voice asked urgently, "What happened last night, Zachary?"

Were you sent a recording?" Zachary asked.

"It was you?!" Peter demanded.

"No. I received it this morning myself," Zachary replied calmly.

"Of course," he replied nonchalantly, rose to his feet, and told Ember, "Let's go."

"What? Where? And what's that about a recording?"

"You're home-you'll understand when we get there," Zachary said flatly with an impassive look.

For some reason, Ember felt her heart racing as Zachary drove her to the Lindts' residence.

Peter and Shirley were scowling as they waited for him.

The instant they stepped in past the front door, Peter beckoned, "Come with me, Zachary."

Zachary did so and followed Peter, who glared at Zachary sharply, into his office. "You set me up, didn't you?"

"I would never, sir," Zachary replied, and showed him his phone. "Like I said, I received it this morning myself."

Peter saw that he received it at virtually the same instant, and from the same number.

'Who could it be?' Peter stared closely at Zachary, still skeptical just then.

He was convinced that Zachary had been responsible, but he received the same recording as well...

Maybe it was not him?

"It's all just drunk talk. You didn't take me seriously, right?"

Zachary smiled. "No, but have you considered that this is from one of your business rivals? Maybe they are trying to drive US apart?"

Peter certainly had made enemies at work, and he had even exposed a competitor's scandal recently over a certain project.

"If you trust me, sir, I will get to the bottom of this," Zachary volunteered.

Peter held his gaze for a moment, and suddenly clapped him on the shoulder. "No. You can leave this to me."

Naturally, he still had doubts about Zachary.

"Sure," Zachary replied.

"You can go now. I need to think about this."

Zachary left the room, and told Ember, "You should stay here, keep your parents company. I'm going back to my office now."

With that, he left.

His phone rang as soon as he got in his car, and he answered it.

"It's done," the voice from the other end said.

Chapter 565

Zachary's gaze darkened.

"Good," he murmured softly.

Inside the Lindts' residence, Shirley's jaw was dropping after seeing Zachary's attitude. "Did he get up on the wrong side of the bed?"

Why else would he suddenly show such a dramatic change of heart?

'Yeah, he's definitely different now," Ember replied. "I can't get a read on him."

"When did you ever?" Shirley said, giving her hand a squeeze. "You'd have won him over long ago if you did."

Ember was actually left pensive just then-maybe her mother was right, and she never knew him?

But she was convinced that she did.

Peter stepped out of his office just then and told them, "I'm going out."

Ember ran up to him, wrapping her hands around his arm as she asked, 'What did you talk to Zachary about last night, Daddy?"

Peter looked at her for a while and sighed. "He's been apologizing, saying that he shouldn't have asked for a divorce, and I could tell that he was earnest about it. Stop arguing with him already-you're not going to keep a man if you keep doing that. Try to learn how you could earn his favor..."

"He was apologizing?" Ember was actually surprised.

On the other hand, she had been constantly trying to earn his favor, but she simply never managed it.

'Okay, Daddy."

"Good. I have something to do now."

With that, he quickly left and went looking for Tim Goldman-the rival he had recently competed for a certain project.

Tim did not appear surprised by his arrival, even asking his secretary to lead her to the guest room.

He waited for a while before rising to his feet, straightening his collar, and taking his time to head over as well.

As soon as he opened the door, Peter threw his phone on the table and demanded, "You sent this, didn't you?"

Tim calmly sat opposite him, putting one right over the other nonchalantly. ' I did."

"What do you want?" Peter glowered. "This is unethical!"

"Unethical?" Tim found that word laughable, and sneered in disdain. "You're the last person I want to hear that from, or have you forgotten what happened when you built that office tower of yours? People were killed, and I know that very well even if others don't."

Peter narrowed his eyes. "I paid the damages."

'But that's not all, is it? You destroyed families just to get that plot of land, and you think it's all settled with just damages?"

"What do you want?" Peter was starting to get furious.

"What's the hurry?" Tim chuckled, and took his time before he said, "You're the one who ratted my affair out to my wife just to get that project. She's been demanding a divorce over that, and while I was too busy straightening things out with her, you stole that project..."

"It's just the truth," Peter snapped, as if he had done nothing wrong. "You were having an affair, so I was just being kind enough to tell your wife for you, or she would always be in the dark."

"Perhaps I should thank you, then?"

Tim's principle was to keep business and personal issues separate, but Peter had no such qualms-he would do anything to get what he wanted, something which Tim always held contempt for.

Smiling, Tim said, "Well, now I have evidence-including the recording- that I could send to the cops. I'm sure you wouldn't mind, right?"

Peter's face turned ashen. "Why are you doing this to me? I have no feud with you."

"The feeling's mutual, but you are the reason I had to go through an expensive divorce," Tim growled, his expression turning cool. "Not to mention that she gained custody of the kids and had since stopped me from seeing them-or I'm supposed suck it all up?"

The divorce even affected his business too, stalling or killing multiple projects because the lawsuits had forced him to reach into his company's coffers!

Chapter 566

Tim had lost many things.

Even if Peter was correct that he had an affair, it was just something that happened in the heat of the moment, and the woman ended up getting clingy.

He certainly did not want a divorce and quickly resolved the matter, only for Peter to expose him, destroying his family.

"What do you want?" Peter asked again-he knew what he had done, and naturally did not want things to blow out of proportion.

Then, before Tim spoke, he added, "I'll give you the project you wanted."

Tim laughed as if what Peter said was hilarious to him.

"What? Can't you be content with that?" Peter scowled.

"Of course not. Are you really trying to buy my silence with trinkets?" Tim cut to the chase. "If you want my silence, it's going to be 150 million dollars -consider it compensation for my divorce."

"Why don't you rob a bank instead?" Peter could throw a fit right then.

'Since you're in the mood to negotiate, I have no reason to force you," Tim said, rising to his feet. "I still have work to do, so please be so kind as to see yourself out."

With that, he left right away.

It was not as if Peter did not want to pay him, but Tim was asking too much.

Now that push had come to shove, he needed Zachary -it was his mother who actually murdered Lulu, after all.

Having the Slates pay up was a good idea, and once Peter made up his mind, he quickly left and went looking for Zachary, who received him politely and respectfully.

'Can I help you?" he asked, seemingly surprised to see him.

His surprise was naturally feigned-in truth, he knew Peter would come to him.

Peter did not hold back at all. "The recording incriminates your mother. If you want her to stay out of jail, you have to pay 150 million to settle this."

Zachary lowered his gaze. "Who could be so greedy? That's basically extortion."

'I think so too, but there's no helping it when a death is concerned," Peter reasoned, intent on getting Zachary to pay up.

'I think we should pay them together, sir," Zachary said. "I don't have that much money anyway."

"What do you mean?"

Looking as if he was placed in an awkward situation, Zachary said, "It's not as if I don't want to pay the money, but it's obvious that they're after you. I have no reason to pay for everything, right?"

Peter was left staring at him for a long while in silence, because he had no retort.

"How much can you pay?"

"Fifteen million at best." Zachary replied.

"That's not enough," Peter growled, stopping short of an outburst.

"But sir, even if the recording is clearly just used forextortion, they're willing to sweep it under the rug,"

Zachary held his gaze. "I mean, I would do the same for 150 million too."

Peter did not dare to say another word at that, since it was not just the recording.

Tim holds even more leverage than that, including the cases of gross negligence years ago.

It would be all over for him if it was exposed.

Naturally, he could not tell Zachary yet-he was still skeptical toward him at the moment.

"Actually, why don't you let me talk to the person blackmailing you? I could to talk to them-"

"No." Peter waved him off, knowing that it was up to himself to resolve the matter now. "Fifteen million it is! I'll be leaving now."

Zachary walked him to his car, and watched as he sped off to the distance.

That was when his gaze darkened and his lips curled up into an icy smile.

Irene was teaching Tommy how to draw when her bodyguards brought someone into the house.

"Ma'am, we found him sneaking around outside the house. We caught him since we suspected the mysterious person before had sent him."

"Take Tommy into his room," Irene quickly told Mrs. Watson, and walked up to rip the mask off the man's face.

Then, she froze!

Chapter 567

"Ricky? What are you doing here?!"

Irene was at first shocked to see Ricky, but soon snapped as she came to her senses. 'Where have you been?!"

"Irene, please tell them to let go..." Ricky groaned-his arm felt like it would be ripped off soon.

Irene quickly waved off the bodyguard. "I know him. Let him go!"

The bodyguards did so and left, while Irene asked, "What happened to you? And why did you sell the mansion?"

"I thought you would help me find Lulu, but you went missing and Isaac left the country too," Ricky explained. "There's no one here to help me, and I don't have any clues where to look. It's like she's gone without a trace..."

"Anyway, I started drifting from bar to bar, when I spotted Isaac's secretary ... Debbie, was it? She was talking to a man in a corner of the bar, acting all shady-like. I then followed the man... and guess what I saw?*"

"What?" Irene urged. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"He drove a dump truck and crashed it into James Cross's car."

Irene's face fell, holding Ricky's gaze as she asked, "Are you sure about what you saw?"

"Of course. Since I have leverage against Debbie, I used her to start a fight between Ember Lindt and Zachary Slate to make Ember pay."

He appeared a little proud when he said that, but soon slumped unhappily again. "By the way, I had no choice but to sell the mansion. I had to keep an eye on Debbie's every move, so I needed help. With Spencer Holdings bankrupt and no money in my accounts, I had to sell everything I could."

Irene did not scold him, since he was hardly useless there.

At the very least, he had done well where James was concerned.

If not for him, no one would have known what Debbie did to James.

"Wait, you sent those street thugs to follow me?" Irene asked.

"Yeah... I mean, I was worried you'd get upset with me selling the mansion," Ricky scratched his head. "I didn't dare to meet you, so I had them watch you for the time being."

"All grown up, huh," Irene said, holding his gaze. "Well, why are you showing up now? Not afraid that I'd beat you up or scold you now?"

"Because you reported me as a missing person. The cops are looking for me now, so I have no choice but to come to you," Ricky said.

If he was not worried that the cops would find him and discover that he broke the law by sending street thugs to stalk people, he would not have come to Irene at all.

"Anyway, just call off the search. Tell them that I came home safely."

"I know," she said, now worried about Lulu.

And Debbie needed to be dealt with too-something would happen eventually if they kept a time bomb like her around.

"Anyway, still no clue on Lulu at all?" Irene asked.

Ricky hung his head. "No."

Needing time to calm down and think, Irene told him, "Stay here. I'm going out now."

"Where are you going?"

Irene shot him a glare. "To call off the search. Thank goodness I went to the cops when I did, or you'd be hiding forever."

Ricky promptly slouched.

Irene headed to the precinct and was on the way home when she remembered Ricky's words, and she turned around, intending to visit James.

She called Zachary since Stan Hill was not around, Isaac would definitely have entrusted James in Zachary's care.

Being a former doctor, he was the best choice to care for James.

"Hello?"

"It's me. Which hospital was James Cross admitted to?" Irene asked. "I'm thinking about visiting him."

Realizing that it was Irene, Zachary replied, "Central Hospital."

Then, he added, "Let's meet if you're free later?"

"Sure. We're staying at Rose Garden," Irene replied. "You know the place better than I do."

"Yeah. See you tonight."

"Yeah," Irene said, hung up and directed the chauffeur to head to Central Hospital.

After asking for James's ward, she arrived outside and entered...

Chapter 568

There, Irene saw Debbie and Erin Gooding.

There was a flash in Debbie's eyes when she saw Irene, and Irene noticed it.

Irene knew right then that Debbie was up to no good.

"What are you doing here?" Debbie demanded, no longer showing Irene any respect, let alone treating her as a superior.

Irene flashed Debbie a look of disdain as she strode in. "Just checking on James on Isaac's behalf."

Erin was watching her. "You know James too? Who are you to him?"

"A friend," Irene replied

"Oh," Erin murmured. "He sure has a lot of lady friends."

First, it was Debbie, and now it was another woman—even if Irene kept herself wrapped under so many layers that only her eyes were showing, Erin could still tell that she was beautiful.

Irene then saw that Erin was massaging James.

Despite still being unconscious, his complexion was good, indicating that he had been taken care of very well.

Watching Erin then, she said, "I know you and your father. Since you were raised in Minerva and just came to Zidonia, you can come to me if you need any help."

"You know my father too?" Erin gasped in surprise.

"Yeah," Irene replied.

"What should I call you?" Erin asked.

"I'm Irene Spencer, but you can call me however you like."

On the other hand, Debbie had sneaked here to pull out James's oxygen tubes. She was unable to do it since Erin was around, and had even less of a chance now that Irene had showed up.

She left the room, ready to leave, when Irene stopped her.

"Wait," she said, holding Debbie's gaze as she told her, "Isaac said that you can leave James's care to Zachary. You don't have to come to the hospital now."

Irene was wary that Debbie was after James's life, and therefore needed to take steps.

On the other hand, Debbie was glaring at her for using Isaac's first name so nonchalantly.

What right did she have? She was just a disfigured, hideous bitch!

Despite her unease, she growled, "Mr. Jefferson would have called me personally if that was really the case."

She put emphasis on the word 'personal', as if flaunting it in Irene's face.

"You can call him if you doubt me," Irene said flatly, whipping out her phone and changing Isaac's contact name to darling before holding it out to Debbie.

"Go on, call Isaac." She deliberately repeated Isaac's name again just to show Debbie that as Isaac's 'darling', she could call him anything she wanted.

Debbie's face contorted with rage when she saw the contact name, her cheeks turning into an abnormal scarlet.

But no matter how furious she was, she could not say a thing.

Even if she was nothing!

The only reason Irene got to strut was because she had a child with Isaac!

"What, weren't you going to call Isaac?" Irene asked, but she already knew that Debbie would not do it.

After all, she had no right!

If she really did, what Isaac thought of her would change, and she still cared about that a lot.

Hence, she simply clenched her fist and turned to leave!

Behind her, Irene glowered as well

Chapter 569

Irene glared coolly at Debbie, watching as she left.

Her cool composure faded, replaced by aloofness.

Debbie was getting more daring by the day.

She must come up with something soon, or James would get killed if he was kept here.

"Debbie said that she is James's best friend," Erin asked just then. "But you don't seem to like her...?"

Not liking Debbie was putting it lightly.

"We just can't see eye to eye," Irene replied, refraining from discussing the past just then.

She must not let Debbie find out that she already knew that Debbie staged James's accident, or Debbie would resort to drastic measures.

"Have you been here every day?" she asked Erin.

"Yes," Erin replied.

Even so, Irene was convinced that James would not be safe here-they had to get him out.

Irene then watched as Irene massaged James's body, and could not help commenting, "You're very good at this."

"I've been learning from his physiotherapist for a while," Erin replied.

The physiotherapist Zachary hired was certainly the best, being paid two grand per month and specializing in everything from patient care to massages. It was not surprising that Erin would do well after learning from him.

Watching Erin for a while, Irene then asked, "You like James a lot, don't you?"

If there was no genuine affection there, no one would journey a thousand miles, putting forth heart and soul to a person's care. Erin lowered her head slightly just then, faint blushing appearing over her cheeks.

She did not know about that, only that she was so worried when she found out about James's accident and was willing to stay to take care of him.

Perhaps she did like him-why else would she go so far for him?

"I'm going now," Irene told her.

Erin nodded.

Then, stopping at the doorway, she added, "Try not to leave this room."

"I'm always here," Erin replied. "The physiotherapist would be around if I'm not."

"Good. Well, I suspect James's accident was no accident, but I don't have evidence yet. still, I'm concerned about his safety, so I'll be asking Zachary to switch hospitals-"

"Who would want to hurt him?" Erin suddenly bounded up to Irene, looking her straight in the eyes.

"Calm down-I'm still investigating the matter at the moment," Irene assured her softly. "But you shouldn't tell anyone or let it show, alright?"

Erin nodded. "I'll do anything for him."

Irene clapped Erin on the shoulder. "Very good. Anyway, I have to go-1 still have things to do."

As Erin nodded again, Irene left the hospital and headed home.

Back at Rose Garden, Irene found Ricky carrying the dog and playing with Tommy, who was laughing very happily, his little eyes narrowed into slits.

As she entered and took off her jacket and scarf, Mrs. Watson came to take them, saying, "You really shouldn't leave the house during your postpartum recovery, ma'am."

'I won't now.'" Irene smiled.

While Mrs. Watson put away her clothes, Irene entered and said, "Ricky, come with me."

They entered the study, and Ricky asked, "What's up? I was just having a good time with Tommy there... Also, you were heavily pregnant the last time I saw you, but your belly is flat now. Did you deliver the baby already? Is it a boy or a girl? Why didn't you bring the baby home?"

Irene felt her breath leave her lungs at the mention of the baby, while her heart clenched and her face turned pale.

'What's wrong? Are you sick?" Ricky asked.

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Irene raised a hand, gesturing at Ricky to stop talking.

She needed to calm down.

Ricky helped her to a chair, finally realizing that something was wrong. "Did something happen to the baby?"

Irene's eyelashes were already damp without her knowing it and she rasped, "Don't tell my mom."

Ricky nodded somberly. "Got it... But what happened?"

"We think that our baby has been abducted."

At least, Irene hoped so-because that meant that her child was still alive.

And as long as the child was alive, they would find the child eventually.

They would see the child again.

As Ricky stayed silent for a long while, Irene was able to calm down.

"Is there anything I can do?" Ricky asked.

Irene held his gaze. "Actually, yes."

"Alright, shoot.' Ricky's expression turned serious-no longer the half- baked kid from before.

Tell me about the driver Debbie hired. Where is he now?"

"Dead."

"What?!" Irene exclaimed, and soon realized something. "Did Debbie do that too?"

"I'm not sure. After the accident, the cops intervened and decided that it was a malfunction with the dump truck, so the driver was released soon after. I was going to catch him to have a stronger leverage against Debbie, but he suddenly died of a heart attack-no one knows if it's real either, since they buried him quickly."

"If it's Debbie again, it just goes to show how ruthless she can be. We have to watch out for her," Irene said.

Ricky shrugged. "Just tell Isaac to fire her."

However, Irene knew that it would never be that simple-if she did that, she would have nothing holding Debbie back, and Debbie would really be capable of anything!

"Do you know why Debbie wanted James dead?" Irene asked then. "Did James find out about some secret of hers?"

"I'm not sure," Ricky said and whipped out his phone. "But it's not that hard to be rid of her, right? Here-records of my conversation with her. It's evidence that she planned James's accident."

Irene thought that the text messages certainly did, but it was more ideal to keep her behind bars permanently, and that would require other evidence of her crimes.

"Could you try to get close to the driver's family? Find out if it really was a heart attack..."

"Actually, I think it would be better to keep her around," Ricky said, and explained his idea. "The Lindts and the Slates might be responsible for Lulu's disappearance. I have no evidence, but I could use Debbie to goad Zachary so that he takes revenge on Ember. After all, I messed up their marriage already, and a divorce might soon happen."

Irene was left staring at him. "You've only got leverage against her by chance. Even if you can threaten her, she's no pushover-you would know since you saw what she did to James."

Moreover, Debbie and James had been working together for so long, but she was still ready to kill him.

It just went to show how heinous she was.

"You have to be careful," Irene reminded Ricky.

"I know," Ricky said. "I guess I should step out now?"

Irene nodded, and after Ricky closed the door behind him, she sat in her chair for a long while.

Her head was buzzing and she rubbed her temples.

When she felt that she had recovered enough, she pushed herself up and noticed the notebook on the desk.

She walked over and picked it up, and noticed that it was covered in Isaac's handwriting.

He kept a diary?

Was that not a little childish, even out of character for him?

She was curious, and started reading... and found that it was not a diary, just some notes about work.

Still, she was just about to put it down when a photo slid out from it!