

Runaway 711

Chapter 711

If they were not meant to be together, would they have ever met and become sweethearts at university? Zachary thought then that his mother was being ridiculous, saying that he and Lulu were not meant to be together! It annoyed him considerably, and he got out of bed.

Mrs.Slate began, 'You're hurt'

"I'll live," Zachary growled impatiently.

"You're so annoying."

Mrs. Slate became silent, while he drove straight home.

Naturally, Lulu was not there, and he expected that. He hung his head as he sat alone on the couch, thinking.

Lulu was staying at the house Ricky rented for her, but she was feeling dispirited for some reason.

She was curled up as she sat on the edge of the couch, unable to stop himself remembering the sight of Zachary stabbing himself in the chest.

Maybe...

Just maybe, his feelings for her were real? She quickly shook her head as soon as the idea took hold, and got out of the couch to leave.

Still, she paused at the doorway after putting on her shoes, hesitating.

Where could she go? Who could she go to? She suddenly felt lonely and she returned inside the house.

Irene's image suddenly came to mind, but she had a bad impression of the woman and would rather be alone than go to her.

Irene was having trouble at work—not because of her competence, but because she was airdropped as the next director of Hotmesh Research without ever working there.

Naturally, most of the employees were at odds with her and would deliberately mess with her, such as by hiding apparatus she needed or just lying outright that they did not have it.

In cases of advanced equipment, they would hog it for themselves without ever allowing her turn.

Some would go as far as to add so much salt in her food that it was inedible. She simply threw away her lunch in response and left the cafeteria after having just a glass of water.

Dennis Turner was arriving for his lunch, and seeing her leaving, he asked, "Have you eaten already?"

Irene nodded.

"Why don't we have a chat?"

"Of course."

Dennis led the way.

"Let's have a stroll in the garden since you just ate. It's good for your digestion."

As Irene followed him, he asked, "Are you getting accustomed to working here?"

"I am."

"But I haven't seen you smile since you've been here," Dennis said, clasping his hand behind his back.

"It's not as if I'm ignorant of what goes around here, or that everyone is harassing you and it's affecting your work. So, I'm going to call for a meeting and speak to everyone—"

"Mr. Turner, you're just going to make it worse if you do."

Irene stopped him. She understood everyone's concern, but proving herself was much better than relying on words alone. She would only establish herself solidly if she had their earnest

acknowledgement, and she would not be staying for long if she banked on Dennis for everything.

Moreover, she was not smiling because Isaac had not been home for a couple days, leaving her a little confused. It certainly had nothing to do with work, and she would not allow her personal affairs to mess with her career.

"Are you sure?" Dennis asked.

"Yes," Irene replied.

"Good. And I can see that you are capable."

After that, Irene returned to her work, but found a lunchbox at her seat. She looked around, but there was no one there—everyone was still eating at the cafeteria.

Who could have put it there? She had only spoken with a handful of people since she arrived, let alone made friends.

Still, she sat down, but her gaze darkened when she opened the lunchbox.

Chapter 712

The lunchbox was not from the cafeteria, and while the sliced fruits inside were not rare, it was not exactly common either.

Not even Sheryl knew that she liked it because of its sickly sweet taste, even compared to other fruits.

She loved it as a child, and since not many knew that, she soon had a hunch.

To no surprise, Seth appeared at the door and he entered with a smile.

Irene's expression was ice-cold, however.

"What are you doing here?"

"Just checking in on you, or is that not allowed?"

"Nope," Irene said shortly.

Seth was not discouraged, however.

Even if he wanted to know what happened between Irene and Harvey badly, he was smart enough to not mention it.

"I remembered that you liked this fruit as a kid, so I bought it for you as dessert after your lunch."

Irene lowered her gaze.

She did like to eat sweet food as a child, but that was because life has been tough for her as a child.

Now that she was an adult, she no longer relied on that stuff, and she did not hesitate to throw the lunchbox into the trash can.

"What are you doing?!"

Seth gaped.

"I went out of my way to buy that for you—"

"I've had plenty, so leave!"

Irene rarely thought about the mess with Harvey while she was at work, but the scene from that moment immediately flooded her mind once she saw Seth.

Seth pursed his lips.

"Aren't we friends...?"

"Don't even say that!"

Irene snapped sharply.

"Don't ever bother me while I'm at work, and don't ever show up in my sight ever again! We will never be friends!"

"But we were! I even thought of you as my younger sister—"

"That was before."

Irene cut him short.

"Are you going to leave, or do I have to call for security?"

Seth refused to leave, however.

"Look, I'm just here to apologize..."

Irene called for security right then, and several security personnel quickly arrived. She pointed at Seth, saying, "Don't let him in ever again."

"Yes, ma'am."

Still, they did not get physical with Seth immediately, instead telling him calmly, "Sir, I'm afraid it's time for you to leave."

"we're friends," Seth quickly tried to explain.

"You have to leave, sir," the security personnel repeated, clearly not as kind this time—even appearing a little overbearing.

Seth scowled.

"Look, I told you: we're friends—"

Two of them strode forward right then, seizing his arms and holding them behind his back as they began to drag him outside.

"Irene! How could you do this to me?! Even if you're upset, just tell me what happened..."

Seth's voice soon faded from the doorway, but Irene became restless and she could not calm down whatever she did.

She was in no mood to continue her work and she headed to a lab, locking herself inside and poured all her attention into it.

She slowly calmed down and her restlessness vaporized since she would forget about everything else once she gets focused.

Since she had a feeling that Isaac was not going home tonight either, she worked late into the night.

However, her stomach was hurting after skipping two meals, and she was leaning against her desk, arching her back as she sweated profusely from her forehead.

Still, she turned off her equipment before stepping outside.

When she opened the door and saw the man standing outside, she took her hand off her stomach as she felt at once excited and evasive.

Lowering her head, she asked, "What are you doing here?"

Chapter 713

Isaac did not answer right away, and instead asked, "Are you sick?"

Irene took her hand off her stomach and denied it.

"No...it's just my hip. It's sore from standing all day."

Aside from the first glance, she had not been looking at Isaac since, and said even as she kept her gaze lowered, "It's late. We should go home."

She started to leave, and tried to keep herself standing straight as much as possible, reluctant to let Isaac see that she was ill. Isaac remained where he was.

Suddenly, he asked, "How long do you need?"

Irene's back stiffened for a moment, and she began to stride off. She did not want to talk about it, and with him at that.

Isaac quickly caught up, and took her hand despite his reluctance.

She struggled a little, but she allowed herself to be pulled along since she could not free herself. He had parked his car outside, and the lights flickered as he whipped out his key and pressed a button.

While he opened the door, Irene held the car door in place.

"Isaac," she said, looking up at him then.

"I'm tired. I don't want to talk about it today."

Isaac pursed his lips, but he quietly muttered, "Yeah."

She shook her wrist then.

"Now let me go."

Isaac did not, and instead leveled her a pensive look.

Uncomfortable from being stared at, let alone meeting his gaze, she quickly entered the car, saying, "Let's go home!"

While Isaac entered the car from the other end and turned on the ignition, Irene closed her eyes and leaned into her seat, since doing that felt comfortable with her aching belly.

Still, the car was quiet since neither of them spoke, and there were not many cars on the road that late in the night.

Irene opened her eyes when she felt the car stopping, only to find that they were not outside a hospital —not the hilltop mansion.

She frowned.

"Why did you bring me here?"

Isaac alighted without a word and walked around the car to open her door for her.

"Out."

"Why the hospital?"

Irene did not move.

"Why, you ask?" Isaac said, arching his back to undo her seatbelt.

"Because your face is pale."

Irene slapped his hand off.

"I'm fine, and I'm a doctor myself—I'd know if I'm sick, so don't force your opinions on me." Isaac stared at her for a couple heartbeats.

"What are you so upset about?"

"You took me to a hospital when I'm just doing fine. Are you trying to jinx me?" she snapped, clearly on edge.

Isaac smiled despite himself—the vigor she showed while she was upset was far better than her despondent state.

Irene frowned.

"Why are you smiling? Is that so funny to you?"

"Trene," he said softly.

"Do you trust me?"

Irene became silent for a few moments.

"Nope. I'm superstitious."

"And I feel like it's as if fate itself arranged for us to come together," Isaac said, his expression turning serious.

"I sometimes wonder how much good karma I've garnered in my past life that I would meet you twice, and both times while I'm desperate." Irene understood.

"Why mention that now?"

"Because I'll remember it for the rest of my life," he told her, taking her hands in his.

"I said I don't mind, and I mean it. You gave me two lives, y'know?"

Irene almost smiled—her grim expression eased considerably anyway.

"I bore two sons for you."

"Got the better end of the bargain, huh?" he chuckled, brushing his thumb on the back of her hand.

"You've gotten skinnier. Didn't sleep or eat well the last few days, have we? You look so worn out, and I did see you clutching your belly. Does it hurt?"

Irene pulled her hands out from his.

"Where have you been the last few days?"

"I was busy with work—"

Irene cut him short before he could finish.

"Fine, I get it, I understand. You're a busy man—I'm fine, I'm very fine. Now, let's go home!"

With that, she shut the door in his face, leaving him frowning! Anyone could tell that she was upset, and very much so! Still, he opened the door again...

Chapter 714

The only thing Isaac could come up with was that he had upset Irene.

But when he thought about it, he did not do anything that would make her unhappy, did he? "Did I upset you?"

Irene had calmed down in turn, and realized that she made a mistake—she should not have taken it out on Isaac.

"I'm sorry," she apologized.

"It's alright," he replied.

Irene was quiet for a moment, before she murmured while her lips quivered, "Shouldn't you be saying that we don't have to apologize to each other?"

Isaac chuckled.

"We should always apologize when we're at fault, or we'd start tantrums on a whim."

He actually did not want to be cagey or too polite, because it meant that they were distant —that their feelings for each other were getting bland.

And he did not want that! Even so, Irene was feeling miserable after what happened, and right now, he should be doing his best to ease her mind.

He was certainly not that magnanimous, but he simply understood that what happened was not her fault, but because Harvey was heinous! If he wanted things to change back to before with Irene, she needed time, and he had to be stern with her as well.

It was precisely in such a situation that he should not pamper her too much, because it would just remind her of what happened.

Irene clenched her hand just then.

"I have a question for you, Isaac, and you must be honest...Were you away from home because you didn't want to see me—"

"What are you talking about?"

Isaac cut her short before she could finish, and his tone was serious.

"Were you upset over that?"

Irene lowered her eyes in silence—a quiet admission.

Isaac had to clear her concerns, and was therefore honest.

"I was in Sunny City."

That alone was enough for Irene to understand.

If he was there, it must have something to do with Harvey. He just did not mention Harvey outright in consideration of her feelings.

Irene suddenly felt guilty that she would think harshly of him before.

In fact, when he proved that he did not leave because he grew averse to her, it just went to show that she was the petty one! Isaac's words had always made his stance clear, just as it made clear how he felt about her now.

"Come on. Let's get you checked,"

Isaac said just then without any sort of coercion in his tone.

Now that they cleared the air, Irene knew that she was the unreasonable one if she kept throwing a fit.

As such, she alighted on her own, pursing her lips because she was embarrassed by her own behavior.

Isaac was going to help hold her up, but she pulled out her arm.

"I'm fine on my own."

Even if they cleared the air, she was unable to get intimate with Isaac like before—she was inwardly averse, even holding disdain toward herself.

If Isaac touched her, she would feel as if she would pass her filth to him.

She hence came clean.

"I shouldn't have fought you, and I get it— it is perfectly reasonable even if you didn't go to Sunny City, and needed time away to gather your thoughts."

She pursed her lips bitterly.

"I feel conflicted, and we both need time to get our mind straight about this. But you really didn't need time away from me...whereas I was upset with you in this little corner of my heart, that you felt disdain for me when I thought you were staying away to gather your thoughts."

Isaac stopped in his tracks, intent on telling her that he did not feel any disdain.

However, he could not deny that he was traumatized.

Bzzt...

Irene's phone was suddenly vibrating, and she whipped out her phone, her fingers inadvertently brushing her phone screen and answering the call.

It was an unfamiliar voice.

Chapter 715

"Let's meet up, Irene!"

Isaac looked up, as if to ask who it was.

Irene shook her head— she did not recognize the number or the voice.

Isaac pressed the button for the speaker and asked, "Who are you?"

Beep, beep...

The caller hung up right then, seemingly because they could not hear Irene's voice.

Irene frowned.

"Who could it be?"

Isaac shook his head.

"I have no idea."

In truth, he had a hunch that it was Harvey, who was on the run, calling with a voice-changing application.

Noting the number, he sent it to James and had him look into it.

"It's just the emergency room available at this hour, right?" he then asked.

"Yeah," Irene replied, nodding —she was actually fine, and a little hot soup would be enough for her to feel better.

Still, she got checked anyway.

Afterwards, her doctor told her that he could prescribe her painkillers if she could not stand the pain.

Knowing the serious side effects, and that it cured the symptom but not the cause, she refused, and left the clinic. It was always up to oneself to take care of their own stomach, after all.

"What did the doctor say?" Isaac asked.

"Just some food would do me good," she replied.

Isaac wondered if there would be any restaurants open this late, but Irene said, "I can just make some stew."

"I'll call Mrs. Watson and have her cook you something. You would be able to eat once you reach home,"

he said, and called home.

While he was calling Mrs. Watson, Irene stopped in her tracks.

Turning around, he asked, "What's wrong?"

Irene gestured for him to look ahead, and he did, to see Moneypenny standing there, holding a large bag of medication.

Money Penny paused for a moment when he saw them as well, perhaps not expecting to see them at this hour. He greeted them first.

"Master Ian, Madam Irene."

Isaac ignored him, and did not ask what medication he was carrying.

It was obvious that Henry Jefferson was sick, and Money Penny showed up there because of him.

And Isaac did not want to ask!

"Let's go," he said, taking Irene's hand, walking so quickly just then it was obvious they were avoiding Money Penny.

That was when Money Penny called out from behind.

"Master Isaac, Master Jefferson's condition is really serious. Are you really not going to visit at all?"

Even so, Isaac did not stop at all, but Irene glanced sideways to see the twitch in his cheek. He must feel conflicted! Even if he refused to admit it, there was no changing the fact that Henry was his family, and the Jeffersons' blood flowed in his veins.

Still, Irene simply watched him silently —silence must be preferable for him right now.

Mrs. Watson's soup was not actually ready when they returned home, and Irene checked on the children while she waited.

Both were sleeping soundly.

It was 3 AM by the time she finished her soup and went upstairs.

Isaac was standing out at the balcony, his thoughts unfathomable.

She walked up to his side.

The moon was bright that night, with stars filling the skies.

Isaac turned around.

"Time to sleep."

Irene nodded.

"Yeah. It's late."

She was still sleeping on the couch, not sharing the bed with Isaac.

Knowing her intention, Isaac did not force her, and simply said, "I'll take the couch next time."

"It's too small for you, but just right for me," Irene replied.

"You'd just make yourself uncomfortable."

They soon lay down on their sides, staring into each other's eyes from a distance.

Irene did not sleep well, and appeared tired in the morning before work.

As she tried her best to muster her spirit, a voice called out to her from behind before she could enter through the front entrance of Hotmesh Research.

Chapter 716

Irene found the voice familiar, as if she had just heard it last night. She turned around and found Moneypenny standing behind her. She could not help taking one step backward while asking warily, "What do you want?"

"We need to talk,"

Moneypenny said, and quickly explained, "Master Jefferson doesn't know that I'm here. In fact, he's too sick to order me around. Coming to see you was my own decision." "We have nothing to talk about."

Irene refused him right away, and started toward the building again.

Still, Moneypenny jogged up and stood in front of her.

"Master Jefferson has made errors in judgements, but having you marry Master Isaac was definitely the best thing he had ever done."

Irene knows that Moneypenny was appealing to her emotion, just as she never forgot everything Henry did—be it good or bad.

She had decided to see past it since it was in the past, but she would still hold Henry's treatment of Isaac against him.

He was clearly treating Isaac unfairly, when he was the one who hurt Isaac first.

As for her, the only thing she must do now is to sever all contact with Henry, and let them live their own lives.

"I'm begging you. I know that you are a doctor with honors and influence. Maybe you can help Master Jefferson—"

"I'm afraid I can't help you—he has brain cancer, while my speciality is cardiovascular diseases!"

With that, Irene turned away and strode off, leaving Moneypenny standing there helplessly. He turned in

dejection and returned to the hospital, where Henry was laying in his sickbed. His life was only sustained by medication, including a monthly injection that cost 150,000 per month. Still, the cost was nothing to Henry, since the Jefferson estate was still loaded—their lifestyles were hardly affected even after the fall of Light Group.

"She's not coming?" Henry asked just then.

Moneypenny did not dare to answer him directly in fear that it would shock him, and instead turned his crosshairs on a nurse.

"What are you doing? Don't you know how to do your job, or you can't see that Master Jefferson's lips are parched?! Get him some water!"

The nurse quickly went toward the water dispenser, only for Moneypenny to snap, "Save it. Get out of here."

He poured a glass of water for Henry himself, but Henry refused it.

"Answer my question already."

Moneypenny sighed.

"It seems that she's taking after Master Isaac now, after being with him for so long."

In other words, he was telling Henry that Irene's stance was exactly like Isaac's.

"Fine. I'll see her myself."

"Your body can't take it,"

Moneypenny reasoned.

"I just need to make a few more trips."

Henry shook his head.

"That's not going to work."

He understood Isaac, and that the only way to reach him was Irene, since she just might prove reasonable.

"I'll call the doctor to check on you. I'll prepare a wheelchair if he allows you to leave," Moneypenny said, and Henry nodded.

Lulu Adams was working as a clerk.

Zachary Slate has not found her since, and she was going to look for Ricky Spencer after work today, to tell him to send Barbara and her husband home.

She did not have to hide now that Zachary was not stalking her, and they still had much to live for. She was going to leave when her doorbell rang. She stiffened, wondering if Zachary was here again.

Was he really not giving up? But this time, she was not averse—she actually looked forward to it ever so slightly.

Still, as she opened the door, the person lunged at her, knocking her to the floor before she saw who it was!

Chapter 717

Lulu's back struck the floor the instant she fell and there was a dull thud! Her head was left ringing and she started to black out.

Ricky quickly scrambled to his feet.

"I'm so sorry! I just wanted to hug you, but my foot slipped. Did you hit your head?"

Lulu narrowed her eyes, her sight of Ricky blurred as her consciousness started to fade!

"Lulu? Lulu?"

Ricky called out to her, even smacking her face. But she did not respond.

Panicking, Ricky whipped out his phone, but he fumbled and dropped it on the floor.

Still, Lulu stirred as he quickly reached for it.

"Urgh..." she murmured, feeling like her head was splitting.

Ricky heard her and he quickly turned back to her, calling her name.

"Lulu?"

She was frowning as she said, "Help me up."

Ricky helped her to the couch, asking in concern, "Did you hit your head? Do you want to get checked?"

Lulu looked at him and shook her head.

"No."

"But you—"

"You can send Barbara and Tobias home now, Ricky," she said, cutting him short.

"why?"

Ricky was actually confused.

"Zachary is definitely going to abduct them and threaten you again if I did. We should keep them hidden."

"No, he won't," Lulu said.

"And they need to go about their normal lives instead of staying in hiding constantly."

"Did he tell you that he won't? Can you really believe him?"

Ricky exclaimed even as he held her hand.

"Don't be fooled. He must be up to something."

"No, he's not," Lulu said.

Ricky finally realized it.

"Y-You trust him that much?"

Lulu took her hand out of his and rose to her feet, keeping her back to him while she walked to the window.

"Thanks for taking care of me all this while, Ricky. I'm sorry I got you into this."

Ricky was left staring at his own hands.

"It's no problem."

"Lulu, what..."

"I think I remember everything now." Lulu said, but she still did not turn around.

"I owe you a lot."

"I don't mind doing it for you." Ricky grinned.

"Go home, Ricky. I want to be alone."

Ricky turned silent, and he eventually said, "Alright. Contact me anytime something comes up."

"Yeah," Lulu murmured softly.

Once Ricky left, however, she headed to the table and picked up her phone to make a call.

It was soon answered, and Lulu said, "I have a favor to ask."

"Sure," the other person replied.

"Tell me." Irene felt acid in her cup when she started drinking.

It was a small amount and the taste was faint, but she sensed it immediately thanks to her intuition as a doctor.

She could understand and tolerate pranks and harassment, but if she really drank this acid, she would be half-dead if not outright dead.

While she could let it go before, she refused to do so this time! She did not even go to Dennis Turner, and she went straight to security, demanding security footage.

She noted in her mind each time she took a water break and asked for the footage during those times, which in turn made searching more efficient.

There were cameras covering every corner of the research center, and she checked through the footage on the main screen.

Although there were many people walking around that area, they could still clearly see anyone who got too close to the seat.

There was a routine meeting at 10 AM, so no one was around, but a figure suddenly popped up on screen!

Chapter 718

Irene stared closely at the person on the screen right then. He was looking left and right, ensuring that no one was around, before walking to Irene's seat.

The cameras clearly recorded him spiking her cup, and Irene's hands clenched at her sides even as she watched.

As her expressions darkened, she told the head of security, "Send me a copy."

The man said, "But we're not supposed to do it without the director's approval..."

"Just give it to me. I'll talk to the director myself."

"But..."

"He's going to retire soon, and everyone in this building knows that I'm the one who will succeed him,"

Irene snapped, her tone becoming stern just then.

"Or do I not have that much authority?"

As the man hesitated, Irene demanded again, "Send it to me."

"Okay," he replied—he had no intention of upsetting Irene since he wanted to keep his job.

If he did, Irene might harass him or just come up with some convoluted excuse to fire him once she became director.

It was difficult to get a stable job these days, and his pay was above average, not to mention that he would not be paid that well for such a simple job at any other place.

"Give me your email address. I'll send it to you."

Irene gave him her email address, and she soon received a notification from her phone, which was logged into her email account.

"Actually, I'd really like it if you spoke to the director about this, or I can't explain myself if something comes up..."

"I know."

Irene naturally would, since she was not supposed to supersede Dennis and handle the issue herself, just as that perp would have to be punished by the book.

"Don't worry. I will explain everything to Mr. Turner—you won't be dragged into this."

With that, she turned and headed out of the security room, breathing a deep sigh as she stood outside.

She was as furious as she was shocked when she sensed the acid in her drink.

Now, she just found it tragic! How rotten could a person get? And they were working at a research center, where responsibility was supposed to be a central tenet! After taking a moment to calm down, she headed toward the director's office.

Dennis had not left although work hours were over. He was in office, reading through some files—dutiful as ever despite his impending retirement.

"Perfect timing," he beckoned when Irene entered.

"Come take a look at this—"

"Director," Irene said, cutting him short.

"Could you tell me about Finn Cook?"

"Why?"

Dennis was curious.

"Was he harassing you?"

"If only," Irene said grimly.

"I'm afraid I'd have to take issue with this one."

"Huh...Is it really that serious?"

Dennis put down the papers he was holding.

After all, Irene had been tolerating all the hostility leveled at her before, but she was clearly furious this time.

This was serious.

Irene showed him the footage she got from security, and as Dennis watched it, she told him, "He put acid in my cup.I demanded this footage from security."

Dennis looked up in shock, ignoring how she obtained the footage and going straight to the point.

"What? Acid?!"

"I didn't pour it out.It's still in my cup," Irene added.

"The footage only solidifies the evidence.He's not going to weasel his way out of this."

Still, Dennis himself had his fair share of dramas, and he soon calmed down despite his initial shock.

"I'll pursue this matter," he said.

"However, I'd have to wait until everyone comes to work tomorrow, since most of them would have left by now."

Irene hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"But you must be sure that he won't run away.Would you get someone to watch him, or should I?"

"I'll do it,"" Dennis said.

Irene nodded again, since she trusted Dennis.

"It's late now.You should leave work too."

Irene was going to leave anyway—she did not have the mood to work overtime after that mess.She went to the dressing room to change out of her coveralls, since there was a lab which required that.She

also made sure to take the backdoor to avoid running into Moneypenny, but while she did not run into him, she ran into someone else at her own front door!

Chapter 719

Irene hurried toward her, calling out, "Lulu?"

She felt that Lulu had been much colder to her ever since she lost her memory, so she was surprised that Lulu would come here on her own.

"Come in!"

Irene smiled.

Lulu was silent for a while, but she soon said, "Let's go to a restaurant. It's my treat."

"Dinner should be ready—"

"I want to speak with you alone,"

Lulu insisted, holding her gaze.

Sensing that, Irene nodded.

"Alright, let's go. We can have my chauffeur drive us."

Lulu nodded since she took a taxi here, and those would never come here, or it would take them a lot of time.

With that, Irene had her chauffeur take them to a quiet restaurant, and the one her chauffeur brought them to was a good one. It had no main lobbies and consisted of all private rooms, while the furnishing was elaborate and exquisite.

As they took their seats, Irene ordered the both of them, since she knew what Lulu liked.

Food was served quickly, and Lulu pursed her lips when she saw what the waiter brought.

"You used to love these," Irene said and put some on Lulu's plate.

Lulu did not start eating.

Instead, she said, "I was quite disappointed in you when I lost my memory."

Irene paused and looked up at Lulu then.

"What..."

"Yeah. I remember now," Lulu said, holding her gaze.

It took Irene a couple seconds for that to sink in, and she soon smiled.

"Really?"

"There's no need to lie," Lulu said, and took a moment to find her words.

"You knew Zachary's mother tried to kill me, and you still made me stay with him. I was wondering why you didn't think about my safety, as if you're not worried Mrs. Slate would try to kill me again. Everyone may insist that we're best friends, but I was really disappointed in you."

Irene realized with a start— it was not surprising that Lulu was so cold to her. Still, Irene was puzzled.

How did you find out about Mrs. Slate? Weren't you amnesiac?"

"I overheard you talking about it with Zachary," Lulu replied.

"I see," Irene murmured.

She was certainly mistaken in that matter, since she should have stopped Zachary.

The guilt would kill her if Zachary failed to protect Lulu like before, and Lulu was hurt again! "I'm sorry."

Irene realized her mistake then.

"It's fine."

Lulu smiled, though there was a dark look in her eyes now.

"I won't let them hurt me twice—I can protect myself, since loveless people like me are always stronger than those who rely on others."

"You still have me," Irene said.

"Yeah."

Lulu smiled and ate the food Irene put on her plate, chewing slowly before saying, "I still have you, bestie. It's not like I have nothing."

Irene smiled.

"So, you're accepting my apology?"

"Of course," Lulu replied right away—she was not the type to nitpick after her years of friendship with Irene.

She would not turn her back on Irene over one mistake, not to mention her discontent before was mostly because she lost her memory and did not remember her connection with Irene.

Now that she has regained her memories and understanding their iron-forged bond, she knew that Irene did not mean to force her to get along with Mrs. Slate.

"Good to have you back."

Irene smiled earnestly then.

After they finished eating, Lulu took out a check from her bag and passed it to Irene, who gaped when she saw what it was. Confused, she looked up at Lulu and asked, "What are you doing?!"

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Irene quickly pushed the check back to Lulu, but Lulu caught her wrist.

"It's not for you.It's for Ricky."

It only left Irene even more confused.

"Why?"

"I owe him that much, and this won't even make up for what he lost," Lulu said.

You must have heard by now— Spencer Holdings went bankrupt because of me."

It was all her savings and the money she got from selling her house in Sunny City.

She had asked an ex-colleague to help her sell the house.

It was not supposed to be done so quickly, but her ex-colleague just happened to be looking to buy a house and bought it off her hands directly after checking it out.

The ex-colleague hence transferred the money first, and would wait until Lulu returned to finish the paperwork.

"It wasn't you.I know what happened, and it's the Slates and the Lindts—"

"Irene," Lulu said, cutting her short.

"I need a clear conscience.You and I know that they wouldn't have done it to Ricky or Spencer Holdings if he and I weren't close.Don't turn me down again—just give this to him."

Irene knew Lulu's stubbornness, so she had no choice but to accept it.

"Alright.Just come to me if you ever need money."

"Actually, there's something else I must tell you," Lulu said, pursing her lips.

"I might be leaving."

Flustered, Irene quickly asked, "Leaving? Where?"

"Somewhere no one knows, to lead a quiet life," Lulu said.

"Not even me?" Irene asked.

Lulu nodded.

"Would you be able to keep it to yourself if Ricky and Zachary harangued you?"

Irene could tell from Lulu's tone that she had thought through this, but Irene tried her best to persuade Lulu to stay.

"We would still have each other if you stay.You would really be alone if you leave."

Lulu's father may still be alive, but he was pretty much inconsequential in her life after remarrying.

"Why do you want to leave?"

"For a fresh start,"Lulu replied.

Irene held her gaze for several seconds, hesitating for a while before eventually asking, "You and Ricky..."

"He's like a brother to me." Lulu lowered her gaze.

"It's my fault for not making things clear early on."

"What about Zachary? Don't you love him anymore?" Irene asked tentatively.

"Can't you stay for him?"

Lulu held her gaze.

"Do you really think it's still possible for us to be together?"

Irene could not answer at all right then, because she would not know what to do if she were in Lulu's shoes.

Mrs.Slate tried to kill Lulu, and that was not so easily forgiven.

And if Lulu wanted to be with Zachary, she had to deal with Mrs.Slate—no one would be able to accept that.

"See? You can't even answer."

Lulu smiled.

"You know there's just so much between us that there's no way, but I've since let go of the past and my grievances.I've done a lot in retaliation while I'm amnesiac too, so we're all even now."

Irene stared at her, knowing then that Lulu had really thought things through since she was being so thorough.

Even so, she still wanted Lulu to stay.

"Can't you think about this? It's going to be lonely if you go somewhere where you have no friends or family..."

"I'm still young.I'll marry if I find the right guy."

Lulu smiled.

"I won't be a spinster—don't worry." Irene pursed her lips.

"I'm worried.You'd still be alone..."

"Don't worry.Anyway, it's late, and I still have stuff to do," Lulu said, getting to her feet just then.

Irene caught her wrist.

"Are you still upset with me?"

"What are you talking about?"

Lulu gave her hand a squeeze.

"You know me—I just want to start over, and I can't do that here."

She was right, and Irene could not argue against that.

If it made Lulu happy, she would have to support her.

"Okay, you have my support. But contact me if you ever feel lonely —I'll promise not to leak your address." Lulu joked, "I'll sneak back to see you."

Irene smiled, but there was still worry in her eyes.

Giving Lulu's hand a squeeze, Irene replied, "You have to sneak back."

"Sure." Lulu smiled.

The next day, Irene headed straight to the director's office once she arrived at Hotmesh Research.

Just as she was about to knock on the door, she heard shouting inside!