

Runaway 871

Chapter 871

Irene remained in Mrs. Watson's ward, waiting for the latter to wake up.

Mrs. Watson slowly stirred after an hour.

Her condition was not serious, but it certainly hit out of the blue.

The surgery she had to take was not major, but it would leave her drained.

Irene got up and pulled her blanket over her shoulder just then, asking, "Are you feeling uncomfortable in any way?"

Mrs. Watson checked and soon decided that she felt fine aside from feeling lethargic.

"I'm alright."

Irene smiled. "Good. As long as you're fine."

Looking at her just then, Mrs. Watson said, "Your mother won't be able to manage the whole mansion alone..."

As she spoke, she tried to get up, but Irene held her back, keeping her blanket in place. "Don't worry, and just rest. I can help out at home too, and I can get more help if I can't. Either way, you don't have to worry about home—just take your time to rest for now."

Mrs. Watson sighed. "How could I not worry? I can't stay here for so long..."

"You have to anyway," Irene told her. "You have to get better before you can help."

As such, Mrs. Watson had no choice but to lie down. "Oh... I'm really getting old, getting sick out of the blue."

"I've looked through your CT scans—you're fine," Irene assured her. "Just have to take your medicine. You have nothing to be afraid about."

"I'm not." Mrs. Watson smiled. "You should go home—someone has to stay there. I don't need anyone with me anyway."

However, there was no way Irene would not worry, not to mention that it was very late and she could not get a suitable care worker..

After much consideration, she called Finn Crowe, who quickly answered.

He somehow got the news of what was happening and asked as soon as he answered her call, "Director Spencer? The police are investigating New Suns Pharma at the moment. Does that mean you're in the clear?"

"Yeah," Irene replied. "Right now, I need a favor—"

"Sure. What is it?" Finn asked, cutting her short.

"It's personal," Irene explained. "I'm not sure if you're alright with this..."

"Well, you have to tell me for me to decide, director."

Irene knows that it was inappropriate, but she was in a bind and there was no one else she could ask. "Someone close to me has fallen ill and she just had a minor surgery at the hospital. I can't leave her alone now, so could you come take care of her? I'll be back in the morning."

"Sure," Finn answered without hesitation.

"Thanks!"

—

Irene headed home only after Finn arrived at the hospital, and when Sheryl saw her, she asked, "Is Mrs. Watson alright?"

Irene nodded. "Yeah, she just needs a little rest for now."

Sheryl was also holding a towel and she was making Tommy's bed after bathing the boy.

Irene's baby then started crying and Sheryl hurried to his room while Irene headed to the kitchen.

It was still a mess, so she dropped to a crouch, picking up the shattered plates and throwing them into the trash can.

Everything else was put in the basin, and anything that did not fit was placed next to it.

After wiping the dining table and the floor, Irene put on an apron and did the dishes.

It was midnight when Isaac returned.

He headed over to the kitchen since the lights were still on, where he found Irene washing a plate.

Stacks of bowls and plates still stood beside the basin.

As he entered, he asked, "Why are you doing the dishes? And it's already this late."

Irene turned toward him and said, "Mrs. Watson was sick and I sent her to the hospital. My mom had to take care of the children, and I'm almost done here anyway. You can go to bed now."

"I'll help," Isaac said as he rolled up his sleeves, revealing his muscular arms.

"You're no help," Irene laughed. "Anyway, how's Zachary doing?"

Isaac was silent for a while. "He's quite tough. He's finally giving up this time."

Irene was slightly relieved at that.

Isaac started to reach for a plate just then and she nudged him with her elbow. "I'm going to be done soon—you'd just make things worse. Just take a shower and go to bed. I'm coming upstairs soon."

"I'll have Stan hire two good maids to help around the house tomorrow," Isaac told her.

"Sure," Irene replied—there was too much to do without Mrs. Watson around.

Just as Isaac was about to step out of the kitchen, he remembered something and turned to ask, "Erin's not back yet, is she?"

Chapter 872

Irene never saw Erin after she came back from the hospital.

She would notice her if she returned—Erin was not the type who would shut herself in her room.

"Probably not," she told Isaac.

Isaac nodded.

—

After Erin drove James home and gestured for her to get down, he said, "I think I'm sick. Must have drank too much."

As such, Erin parked the car and helped him back to his home.

“Lie down on the couch. I’ll get you something for your hangover.”

James caught her wrist. “Just stay with me.”

He was not drunk at all—that bit of alcohol would not leave him intoxicated and he could hold his liquor.

Erin saw through him then and exposed him too. “You tricked me?”

James chuckled, his lips curling into a smile as he pulled Erin toward him, holding her firmly by her waist.

“I don’t expect you to visit,” he said. He was certainly surprised to see her.

Erin lowered her gaze and whispered, “Love goes both ways. I shouldn’t make you do all the work alone.”

James rested his chin on her shoulder in turn. “I’ll talk to Mr. Jefferson tomorrow and apply for leave.”

“No, you shouldn’t,” Erin turned to look at him with a serious look. “You have to help my dear brother.”

James pouted. ““Dear brother?””

Erin looked up to meet his gaze. “Of course. Even if we’re not related by blood, he acknowledges our siblinghood.”

“You only realize that now?” he teased.

James made a serious look then. “Stan Hill is back, so he has people to help him. On the other hand, it’s been a long while since I took leave, and everything’s more or less done on hand. Stan can take over anything I might have to do as well, so I could free up my schedule.”

Erin certainly knew that he wanted to spend more time with her, since she used to complain about how he was always too busy to keep her company.

Nonetheless, she held his hand and said, “It’s alright, really. You’d be bored hanging out with me instead of working. I have a job too, so we just have to keep in touch from time to time, and you can visit me when you actually have free time. I’ll do the same too, and that’s just fine, isn’t it?”

James was silent for a while before saying, “Yeah.”

“Aren’t you going to sleep?” Erin asked him then.

James leaned in, his lips hovering beside her ear, sprinkling his warm breath all over as he said tenderly, “I don’t think I can sleep. I’d rather you stay the night with me...”

“No,” Erin said, getting away from his embrace just then.

There was panic in her eyes, her knuckles were clenched, and there was sweat under her palm.

James realized in surprise that she was getting paranoid, and he whispered, “I won’t do anything, Erin.”

He certainly understood that Erin had yet to recover from her trauma before, but he was not about to make her uncomfortable.

“I’m sorry,” she said and started to run, but James caught her from behind and kept his arms around her.

“You did nothing wrong,” he assured her with a mild voice. “Sorry, I misspoke and caused a misunderstanding. I just missed you so much and I’m happy to see you, okay?”

Erin swallowed her bitterness and turned to look at him, and he leaned in to kiss her cheek.

Neither of them spoke for a while.

Eventually, they ended up on the couch in each other’s embrace as they both seemed to find refuge in each other that way.

“I should go,” Erin eventually said.

“It’s still early,” James replied.

“It’s midnight.”

“Then it’s too late. You don’t have to go.”

“No, I have to,” Erin insisted. “I promised to go back, and it’d be bad if I don’t...”

“Don’t worry,” James told her. “No one would badmouth you, especially since your brother and his wife have been there and can understand. It’s perfectly normal if you stay the night since we’ve been engaged before. They won’t talk.”

“That won’t do,” Erin said, believing that distance made the heart fonder.

Meeting once in a long while was more blissful, as they would appreciate each other’s presence more.

Having no choice, James said, “I’ll walk you out.”

“It’s fine,” Erin told him. “You’re drunk.”

Still, James walked her to the ground floor and waved her goodbye wistfully while she drove back to the hilltop mansion.

Erin was planning to sneak back to her room, but the lights were still on.

Isaac had already taken a shower and was sitting on the living room couch in his silk pajamas, reading a finance magazine.

Meanwhile, Irene was still busy cleaning up in the kitchen.

“You’re still up?” Erin asked.

Chapter 873

Isaac looked up. Slowly closing his magazine, he told Erin, “It’s late. You should go to bed!”

With that, he headed to the kitchen, where Irene was still sorting the plates into the drawer.

“You’re not done yet?” he asked.

“I am now,” she replied, sorting the last stack into the drawer and stretching her arms—her back was actually starting to get sore.

Isaac walked up behind her.

“Good work,” he said, putting his arms around her waist. “I’ll give you a massage.”

It felt ticklish to Irene instead, and she smiled as she pushed him away. “Buzz off. You don’t have to.”

“Buzz off to where?” Isaac asked.

Irene was too tired to fool around with him. “I’m sleepy.”

“Let’s go to bed then,” Isaac said, giving her a peck on the lips. “You look pale.”

Irene's heart seemed to clench, but she feigned calmness as she rubbed her face. "Really?"

"Yeah," Isaac replied.

"I think I've been tired recently," she explained, pursing her lips and pushing him out of the kitchen.

"Now, go already."

"Irene," Erin called out to her just then—she had yet to go back to her room.

Irene thought that Erin was unsure which room she was staying in, so Irene pointed it out for Erin. "The one to the right—over there."

"I know. I'm just not sure why you guys are still up. It's almost 2 AM now."

"I was cleaning the kitchen," Irene replied.

"You were? Where's Mrs. Watson?"

"At the hospital," Irene replied simply.

"Oh! I would have come back sooner if I knew," Erin said.

"I'm fine on my own," Irene replied. "I'm going to bed now. You should too."

Erin nodded.

—

As she stepped out of the shower, Irene saw the glass of cranberry juice on top of the bedside drawer.

Walking up to the bed, her eyes were fixed on the man lying on it as she asked, "You made that?"

"Yeah," Isaac replied. "Drink it while it's warm."

Irene sat on the bed and picked up the glass, but kept it in her hand as she asked, "Isaac, do you find it unfortunate that you can't have a daughter?"

"I have two sons already," Isaac said as he looked up. "Why would you ask that?"

Irene simply chugged the cranberry juice and got into bed, wrapping her arms tightly around him.

"You've been a little passionate lately," Isaac said lightly.

Irene did not answer and she simply buried her head in his chest.

It was very late, so they soon fell asleep.

—

Irene woke up at six in the morning.

Mrs. Watson was not around and Sheryl had to take care of the children, so it was up to Irene herself to prepare breakfast.

Isaac quickly wrapped his arms around her waist. "You can sleep in."

"You do that," Irene said, giving him a peck on the cheek. "I'm making breakfast, and I still have to see off Lulu at the train station before heading to the hospital. Erin is still staying with us and no one is getting any breakfast if I don't cook."

"I'll order takeout..."

"Just let me cook," Irene said, getting out of bed and tucking him under the blanket. "You sleep."

She got changed and headed downstairs when she noticed that Erin was up too.

"You're early," Irene said.

"I was thinking about helping out with making breakfast since no one's around," Erin said.

As such, both women went to work together, and breakfast was ready soon enough.

After that, Irene helped Tommy get changed, while Sheryl was already holding Irene's baby, who woke up early too.

Erin cleared the table after breakfast.

Irene thought it was not ideal since Erin was supposed to be a guest, but Irene did not have the time. As such, she left everything to Erin while she rushed to Lulu's hotel.

After sending Lulu and Martin to the train station, Irene bought breakfast and rushed to the hospital, telling Finn the instant she arrived, "Thank you."

“You’re welcome,” Finn replied.

“Here, I bought you breakfast,” Irene said as she placed the box on the table. “Eat something before you leave.”

Finn naturally accepted it while Irene checked on Mrs. Watson.

“She’s fine,” Finn told her. “She was quite spirited and she slept after taking her meds.”

As Irene nodded, Finn added, “Call me anytime if you’re too busy, director.”

Irene naturally felt awkward bothering him all the time, and she said, “I’ll get a nurse today.”

—

Later, Finn left, only to rush back to Mrs. Watson’s ward after a while.

He must have been running since he was panting heavily.

Irene poured him a glass of water while asking, “What happened? Catch your breath.”

“It’s big. It’s really big...” Finn gasped.

Chapter 874

Irene asked, “What’s big?”

Finn kept gasping, “Someone... approached us... asking for the artificial heart.”

Irene was taken aback, but asked, “Who?”

“A patient with a congenital heart condition. He heard that our former director used our artificial heart before and he’s willing to give it a try,” Finn said, staring at her with an urgent look. “This is an opportunity.”

Irene knew that too, but she said, “Find out if he’s really sick.”

She had to be cautious after what happened with Dennis Turner, and the artificial heart was not yet certified as well.

“Okay, I’ll go right now,” Finn said, rushing out of the room as quickly as he did when he arrived.

At the same time, Irene asked for care workers from the hospital.

She wanted the right people and cost was no issue. She also screened through the candidates before picking one.

Mrs. Watson felt embarrassed that Irene got people to take care of her. She said, "I've really caused you so much trouble just because I fell sick. You even had to get me a care worker. I..."

"Oh, Mrs. Watson." Irene smiled as she took Mrs. Watson's hand. "You've helped me so much more. I wouldn't even have time to go to work without you around. It's only right that I take care of you when

you're sick, and I already feel guilty that I have to hire a care worker for you since I have to get back to work. Please just accept this favor."

"But I heard they charge over two hundred per day. Isn't that too expensive? I thought the usual fee is around a hundred..."

"They're more reliable," Irene assured her.

Mrs. Watson had no words just then, and she could only feel grateful.

Irene was being sincerely nice, and she hired a more expensive care worker in fear that the care workers would get upset with Mrs. Watson.

"Now get some rest. I'm going to work now—I'm coming back to check on you later."

"Okay," Mrs. Watson said, waving Irene off. "Just go already. You have nothing to worry about with the care worker here."

Irene told the care worker to call her anytime something came up, giving them her number.

—

When Irene arrived at Hotmesh Research, everyone was debating if they should use the artificial heart again.

They mobbed her as soon as they saw her arrive, asking, "Did you hear about the request, Director Spencer? What do you think?"

"We're not given permission yet," Irene replied. "We won't use it on the patient for now."

Everyone was silent, but Dennis's survival with the artificial heart was a living example and the medical board would not drag their feet with the certification.

With that, Irene told everyone to go to work while she cleaned up her office.

Finn soon returned with the patient's medical history, and it was indeed a congenital heart defect with no other possible treatment, which was why they were eager to try the artificial heart.

After all, when there was no option, even a risky chance brought hope.

Irene, however, was staring at the patient's file in silence.

Finn then said, "The patient told us that they would sign an agreement if we provide an artificial heart—whatever happens, we will not be responsible."

Irene asked, "Do you think this would work?"

Finn was taken aback—Irene always had her opinion on things. Why was she hesitant now?

"I mean, in the case of our former director, someone was out to hurt him," Finn pointed out. "All we did is our best to save him. You shouldn't let that weigh you down."

"I'm not, but the repercussions were so severe."

It was not as if Irene did not want to help—she still could not get over the lawsuits and the guilt of Dennis's death.

That was why she had to give it further consideration.

Finn suddenly noticed that Irene was packing everything on her desk and he wrinkled his brow. "Why are you packing up your things?"

Irene looked at him then. "I won't lie to you, Finn—I'm thinking about resigning."

"Why?!" he exclaimed in confusion. "Once the medical board gives their approval, the artificial heart would be certified as medical equipment. But you're leaving at this juncture?!"

Chapter 875

Finn could not and would not understand. "Don't you understand? This is a very important moment for Hotmesh Research. Am I hearing things?"

Irene sat behind her desk and said, "You heard me right."

“Do you remember how everyone disliked you when you first arrived and constantly harassed you?” Finn huffed angrily. “Everyone now accepts you after so much has happened, seeing your abilities as they are and acknowledging them, but you’re leaving? I wouldn’t have accepted you if I knew you’d leave so quickly—I know it’s a difficult job, but everyone has been working hard. Our seniors have even been working here for over ten years, but they still stick with their positions, while you’re leaving just because of what happened with the former director? Do you really like this job?!”

Irene lowered her gaze at his barrage of questions.

She certainly wanted to keep working, but she had a family and children.

She would be too selfish if she remained engrossed in her own pursuits, especially when there was so much to do at home.

Staring at Finn, she asked, “Are you married?”

Finn stared at her blankly and shook his head, unsure as to why she would suddenly ask that question.

“Well, you won’t get it if you’re not, and I can’t explain it either.” Irene smiled. “Even so, I have to thank you for supporting me and helping me.”

Finn stared at her, speechless for a while. “Can’t you wait until the board’s approval is received before you leave?”

Irene, however, did not want to wait, so Finn instead asked, “What’s your plan for the patient? Are we giving him an artificial heart or not? I think you should decide before you leave.”

Irene remained silent and she certainly understood Finn’s intent—she should at least wait until the artificial heart’s development was announced as a success.

She would at least have a respectful departure that way.

Even so...

Irene closed her eyes.

She was just too tired.

“Or else, I’m not letting you leave,” Finn declared, moving to stand at the doorway.

Irene watched him do so in amusement.

“How could you be so childish?”

“I don’t care.” Finn shrugged nonchalantly.

“Fine, you do it, then!” Irene told him.

Finn gaped. “You’re saying yes?”

“Yes, I am.” Irene nodded.

“You should also consider who will take your place,” Finn said just then. “I’ll now inform the patient of the good news.”

Irene watched as he celebrated with a smile, but she remained silent.

She had already made up her mind—there were plenty of candidates with experience and the right attitude.

She had nothing to worry about handing over leadership.

—

Zachary Slate was drunk.

He did not drink in front of Isaac because he wanted to appear calm, so he only started drinking alone after Isaac left.

He inevitably got drunk and slept the night in his private room.

“Sir?” A waitress woke him gently just then.

Zachary slowly opened his eyes, and frowned when he felt a splitting headache.

“What time is it?” he asked.

“It’s almost 9 AM, sir,” the waitress replied.

Still on his back, Zachary heaved a long sigh as the waitress asked, “Would you like a glass of water, sir?”

Zachary looked up at her but he shook his head. “It’s fine.”

“Very well. Here’s your check, sir.”

Zachary whipped out his wallet and took a card out. Handing it to her, he said, “There’s no PIN.”

The waitress swiped it as he watched before returning it to him.

Slipping his wallet back in his pocket with the card, Zachary got to his feet, draping his suit over his shoulders as he left.

The sun was perfect today but he narrowed his eyes, finding it blinding as he looked up.

Still, he smiled.

It was all in the past.

From here on out, Lulu was no longer a part of his life.

He got into his car and drove off... until he was stopped at the traffic light!

Chapter 876

It was a routine stop to check for drunk drivers—the traffic police often patrolled the area since it was within the entertainment district.

And Zachary still reeked of alcohol

“Sir, would you please step out of the vehicle?” The traffic officer beckoned.

Zachary was speechless, but had no choice other than to leave his car cooperatively.

He had no idea how much he drank—it had been an entire night.

The breathalyzer inevitably detected a sufficient blood alcohol level for the traffic officer to arrest Zachary for drunk driving, and they impounded his car.

That also meant points deducted off his driving license, and he was sent to lockup pending bail.

...

At the hospital, Irene transplanted the artificial heart into the patient with a congenital heart defect.

After all, she was the only person in the country who had ever performed that surgery. No other doctor was confident enough to do it, and they were also concerned that they would bring trouble down on their own heads, since the artificial heart was still a recently developed technology.

Though Irene did not want to, the patient and their family met her through Finn's liaison and pleaded for her help.

Unable to refuse because of the Hippocratic Oath, she returned to the surgical table no thanks to Finn.

The surgery lasted five hours, and Irene was better at it now thanks to the experience she gained from the last time.

The patient was young and met all the requirements for such a major surgery.

The surgery was a success too, and things looked good for him.

As Irene left the operation room, the patient's parents quickly approached her. However, they appeared too nervous to ask, seemingly afraid that it would be bad news.

Though they were only in their forties, they already had white hair—probably from the stress of their child's condition.

Still, Irene told them, "The surgery was a success, and he's been sent to the intensive care unit. The next 24 hours can be risky, but he will most definitely be fine if nothing comes up."

"Really?" The couple grasped her hand in excitement. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," Irene replied. She then arranged for them to visit the patient, albeit from behind a glass screen.

Still, being able to see their child would grant them some extent of relief!

With that done, Irene left the hospital with Finn in tow.

"Thank you very much for this," he suddenly said. "I'm sorry I brought you so much trouble."

"It's not your fault," Irene replied. "I can't turn them down anyway."

She was a doctor, and that patient had all the right conditions to receive an artificial heart transplant. All they needed was her surgery, and they would have hope to live.

Why else would they take the risk if not for the lack of other options?

She understands why the patients' family were determined to try, and she was too—even if it might put her in an awkward position.

Finn looked at her then—she still retained her resolve to help people despite the dramatic events revolving around Dennis's death.

That alone earned his undying respect, because not everyone could hold on after such a mess.

"I'm not going back to Hotmesh," Irene told him just then.

"Yeah," Finn replied with a nod.

—

Irene went to check on Mrs. Watson, who appeared spirited, and the care worker was dutiful as well.

She then hurried home, and saw that Erin was still there.

"You're not leaving yet?" Irene asked—Erin said she would just be staying a day.

"There's lots to do, but there's no one else around the house, so I postponed my flight."

Irene smiled. "Thank you, but it's actually fine. I won't be going back to the research center."

Erin nodded. "Well, I'm leaving tomorrow anyway."

"Have you considered staying?" Irene asked.

"Not at the moment," Erin said, shaking her head. "Things are fine right now."

"Mommy." Tommy suddenly scurried toward her, holding out his stubby hands. "Hug."

Irene grinned and scooped her spoiled son up in her arms.

"You're so heavy," Erin commented, giving him a little smack on the rump. "You're fat."

"No, I'm not fat," Tommy pouted, his round, chubby cheeks puffing up right then.

Erin could not resist pinching his cheek then—his skin was fair, tender and smooth, and very soft as she squeezed it.

“That hertz,” Tommy complained, mispronouncing ‘hurts’.

Erin laughed and pinched him again.

Bzzt—

Irene’s phone rang just then, and Erin took Tommy off her arms as she took it out and answered it.

Zachary spoke from the other end. “Hey, Irene... I just got arrested.”

Chapter 877

“What?!” Irene exclaimed in shock.

“It’s just drunk-driving—it’s not that big of a deal,” Zachary quickly explained. “I’m basically fine. They’re just telling me to have my family get me, but my mom won’t come for me since it’s been a while since I’ve been home. That’s why I have to call you.”

In fact, Mrs. Slate was used to him not going home for up to half a month.

“Should I tell your mom?” Irene asked.

“Nope,” Zachary replied.

That left Irene musing. “Was it about last night?”

“Yeah.”

Irene was left frowning. “Isaac was just saying that you’d tough it out. Why would you try drinking your sorrows away?”

“It was just a few glasses.”

Irene was speechless—a few glasses, and he ended up getting arrested?

“What can I do for you?”

“Nothing. Anyway, time’s up. I have to hang up now.”

And with that, the call was cut off.

“Haha...”

Tommy was laughing and rolling around on the couch from Erin's tickles.

Irene put down her phone then, rolled up her sleeves, and headed to the kitchen—she had to prepare dinner.

Erin came in as well, offering to help, but Irene told her to play with Tommy.

Seeing Tommy coming to the kitchen as well, Erin said, "Brats don't get to play."

Still, Tommy tugged on her hand. "Please play with me, Aunt Erin..."

"Well, are you a brat?" Erin asked.

Tommy blinked. "What's a brat?"

Irene giggled while Erin was left speechless.

"Why are you laughing, Mommy?" Tommy asked blankly then.

"I'm laughing at your aunt, not you," Irene told him.

Erin scooped Tommy up in her arms then and explained what a brat was.

Irene started cooking and opened the fridge to find it filled with food ingredients.

She did not know that many recipes, however, and just picked the handful that she could make.

—

Stan Hill was told to frame Neil Turner as soon as he returned.

Then, not two days after he was discharged from the hospital, James passed all his work to Stan.

Stan was frowning so hard his brows were touching.

"Forget Mr. Jefferson squeezing me dry, James. How could you do this to me too? Do I look so easily bullied to you?"

James clapped Stan on the shoulder. "Just take this one for me, brother. It's for the sake of my

happiness.”

Stan was speechless. “I think you’re just mocking me for not having a girlfriend.”

James leveled a sincere look at him. “Think? I’m doing exactly that.”

“Buzz off.” Stan gave James a shove.

James laughed, but he soon turned serious. “Erin’s not here for long. I have to spend some time with her—I won’t have time for this, so just pretend you’re doing it for charity.”

Stan snorted coolly. “You’re all hoes before bros.”

James did not say anything in return, while Stan stared at the stacks of documents on the table and sighed, lamenting his tragic existence!

“I’ll buy you a nice dinner someday,” James said.

“Make it a fest,” Stan pouted.

“Fine, whatever you say.”

Having someone to stand in for him at work now, James went looking for Isaac, asking when he could leave work.

Isaac’s own tasks were done, and he naturally doubted James was done with his.

As Isaac looked up, James smiled. “I was just thinking we could have dinner together with the family, so I let Stan do my work for the day.”

Isaac raised a brow—was James exploiting Stan as soon as the latter returned?

“You really like making enemies, huh?” Isaac said. “Oh, and book a room at a restaurant.”

Mrs. Watson was sick and still hospitalized, while Irene was working. Sheryl would not have the time to cook either since she had to take care of both his sons.

“Okay,” James said, whipping out of his phone to book a place.

In the meantime, Isaac finished his tasks before leaving work.

As James followed him into the elevator, Stan asked, “You’re leaving together?”

“Mr. Jefferson is buying dinner,” James said.

“What about me?” Stan pressed.

“It’s a family dinner,” James added, leaving Stan speechless.

Chapter 878

Critical hit!

Stan felt as if he had ten thousand lifepoints slashed off his existence just then!

Did they have to hurt him so much?

Meanwhile, James blinked at Stan. “Why don’t you join us? You could come back later to catch up on your work.”

“Buzz off!” Stan was no masochist—he would be the only single man at the table. It would be so awkward!

James said, “Just get yourself a woman soon and you won’t be single anymore.”

“Does it look like Mr. Jefferson has another sister?” Stan snapped.

Isaac wheeled on Stan, his aloof gaze slightly cold just then. “What was that?”

“Nothing!” Stan quickly smiled and turned to flee immediately.

The elevator doors opened just then and Isaac strode inside with James behind him.

As the elevator went down, Isaac said, “Try not to upset Stan too much from now on.”

James thought to himself that he was not really doing that, since he was just telling the truth...

That was when Isaac finished. “His brain isn’t that good. You’d drive him nuts.”

James was speechless and stared at Isaac in silence.

Stan would probably get a heart attack from that one if he heard it—that burn would leave him charred!

Soon, the elevator arrived at the basement parking lot and Isaac got into his car.

James opened the door and was about to get in, but Isaac shot him a look. "You're driving there on your own."

With that, he drove off, leaving James standing there speechlessly.

He looked around and decided that it was nothing awkward seeing that there was no one around, and so went to get his car as if nothing happened.

—

Erin was playing with Tommy in the courtyard.

Her eyes blindfolded as she tentatively reached out to feel if there were obstacles up front, calling out to the boy, "Tommy? Where are you, Tommy?"

"Over here!" he exclaimed, deliberately standing in front of her and dropping to a crouch just as she reached him.

Then, seeing Isaac enter, he scurried to hide behind him and exclaimed, "Over here, Aunt Erin!"

His voice drew her toward him again and she quickly tracked the voice and headed in that direction. "You'd better not move, Ike Jefferson, or I won't play with you anymore."

It had been half an hour, but she could not seem to reach him at all, and she was so impatient she was using his name!

"Alright, I won't move," Tommy said as he poked his head out behind Isaac.

Isaac frowned. "Tommy..."

Before he could finish, however, Erin had already lunged toward him, wrapping her arms round him.

While Isaac was left speechless, Erin sensed that something was wrong and she quickly took off her blindfold.

Realizing that she just grabbed hold of Isaac, she promptly jumped backward as if she just touched magma. "I, I..."

Isaac was uncomfortable, but he cleared his throat and said, "It's fine."

"Hahah! You lose, Aunt Erin! You didn't get me!" Tommy skipped around happily and ran up to her. "You're it."

Erin, however, grumbled. "I'm not playing with you anymore."

"No! Let's play, Aunt Erin!" Tommy took her hand and shook it side to side playfully.

Nonetheless, Erin shook her head determinedly. "No, I'd get the wrong person."

"Get the wrong person?" James asked just then, having just arrived himself.

Erin's eyes lit up when she saw him, though Tommy answered before she could. "We were playing blind man's bluff. She got Daddy instead of me..."

James certainly knew that Isaac hated being touched by others, and he could not help looking in Isaac's way.

Isaac glared at James. "What are you looking at?"

James quickly lowered his head and pretended to rub his nose—there was no way he could say 'at your face'!

While Isaac headed into the mansion, Erin passed James the blindfold. "You're it."

James was speechless for a moment before asking, "Why not you?"

"No way," Erin said and quickly tied the blindfold over his eyes, leaving him speechless again.

Chapter 879

As James was forced to play with them, Tommy shouted from up front, "Uncle James, I'm over here! Come and get me!"

At the same time, Erin called from behind, "I'm here!"

James was speechless. Who was he supposed to go for?

"Don't move, both of you! I'm coming!"

"Over here, over here!" Tommy waved excitedly at him.

—

Meanwhile Isaac entered the house to find Irene washing some food ingredients.

“You left work early?” he asked.

Irene turned, and seeing that it was him, she said, “I could say the same about you.”

He took the ingredients off her hands, saying, “I’ve made a reservation at a restaurant. We’ll be eating outside—you don’t have to cook.”

“I’ve already made soup. A few more dishes and I’ll be done,” she said. “How about we eat out tomorrow instead? Just stay home for the day.”

Most of the ingredients were washed and ready to be cooked—they would go bad if left around.

“Also, you should call us ahead of time if you’re taking us out to eat,” Irene pointed out just then.

Isaac actually did not think of that, and he nodded. “I’ll remember next time.”

Hence, they were staying home for dinner, with Isaac telling James to cancel the reservation at the restaurant.

After learning that James was there as well, Irene made a couple more dishes and called everyone in around an hour later when the food was ready.

“Mrs. Watson is not around, so you would all have to bear with my cooking.”

James said, “It’s a grand feast.”

Irene shot him a look. “Lie all you want.”

Most of the dishes she made were vegetarian: eggplant risotto, chickpea crepes, omelets, escalivada, and potato and cod soup, with only a plate of steamed crayfish and rack of lamb for meat.

Erin mentioned over dinner that she booked a plane ticket for tomorrow afternoon.

Since she had not eaten well since Mrs. Watson got sick when she returned, Irene suggested lunch outside at noon.

Naturally, Isaac would make the reservation.

James was holding his fork, looking hesitant to speak.

Presuming that he was going to apply for leave, Erin shot him a glare to stop him.

James shook his head—it was just a half-day’s leave, not the whole day.

Erin’s flight was in the afternoon, so he could perhaps skip work only in the morning.

“I’ll book the restaurant tomorrow—I’m buying,” James said, clearly trying to curry Isaac’s favor. “May I take half the day off?”

Isaac looked up at James, naturally seeing through him.

“Fine,” Isaac said quietly.

—

Irene took leave from work the next day, and she was sitting on the living crouch with her baby in her arms.

Erin and James left on a date, leaving just her and Sheryl.

Tommy was sprawled on the couch, looking depressed, so Irene went to stand beside him and asked, “What’s wrong, Tommy?”

He pouted. “I want Aunt Erin to stay. I want to play with her.”

“She has to work,” Irene said.

“Does she have to?” Tommy asked.

Irene sat on the couch and reached out to pat his head. “I’ll play with you from now on.”

Tommy was skeptical. “You lie.”

“Have I ever lied?” Irene’s voice quivered as she saw the doubt in her son’s eyes, her heart skipping a beat.

“No, but you never stay home,” Tommy answered seriously.

Irene certainly knew that she never spent much time with Tommy, and her heart seemed to clench at the sight of doubt from her own son’s eyes.

“I’ll make it up to you from now on,” she said mildly.

Tommy was still skeptical. "Really?"

"Of course," Irene said assuredly.

"Okay, I believe you, Mommy," Tommy said after thinking about it, and he lay over Irene's lap. "If only Aunt Erin could stay with us."

He definitely liked playing with his Aunt Erin, since he was usually under the care of Sheryl and Mrs. Watson.

And Sheryl certainly could not run around as much to play with Tommy.

Erin was lively, willing to babysit Tommy, and would play with him as much as he liked.

Naturally, it was reasonable for Tommy to like her.

Later at noon, Isaac returned.

Chapter 880

Isaac came home to take them out for lunch.

When he returned, Sheryl had already packed up the baby's necessities, along with the stroller, which was in the car trunk.

Isaac had the chauffeur put everything in the car while taking the baby off Irene's hands.

The baby's skin was healthy and fair, and his tiny figure was utterly adorable.

As Isaac gave him a peck on the cheek, he beamed, baring eight tiny white teeth that looked just like rice grains.

He was drooling too, so Isaac had to wipe it off him.

"Oh, my," Isaac said just then. "Don't you think his lips look just like yours?"

Tiny and pinkish, that was.

Irene shot Isaac a glare. "Of course, I gave birth to him."

"No, it's just the lips," Isaac said as he studied his baby. "His nose, eyes, and cheeks are all like mine."

Irene sighed—she was the one who carried the baby for ten months, and it was certainly not easy.

And both children had to resemble their father only.

“Let’s go!” Isaac said, putting a hand over her shoulder.

Sheryl led Tommy into one of the cars, where Eagle took the steering wheel.

Irene and Isaac went to the other, which the old chauffeur drove.

—

They soon arrived at Median Gate and headed to the private room on the top floor which James had booked.

The menu there was special and virtually exclusive to that restaurant.

It was especially the case for the Sunshine State Cioppino, made with fileted white fish that melted in the mouth. It was a flavor that no other restaurant could reproduce.

The aroma of their ribeye steak lingered in the mouth after a bite, and its fat was just the right amount without getting greasy.

Their paella was a traditional dish, but no other place cooked it with originality. Every clam and shrimp cooked in it was the freshest there was.

There were also caviar, quails, and the like—every bite from every dish was savory, a taste to be remembered.

Naturally, not only was eating there expensive, but it was also reserved for members only.

One of the walls of the private room was completely made of glass, and it overlooked the entire city.

Thanks to James’s arrangement beforehand, food was served soon after they arrived, sparing them from having to wait—the kitchen would start preparing just before the hour of each reservation.

Tommy insisted on sitting with Erin.

Seemingly knowing that she would leave after lunch, he kept holding her hand.

He was always adorably feisty, and his silence left Erin leaning in to ask softly, “What’s wrong? You don’t seem happy.”

Tommy simply leaned on her in silence.

Erin smiled. "You don't want me to leave, huh?"

Tommy stubbornly denied it. "No."

Irene glanced at their direction, her eyes lingering on Tommy just then.

She sighed slightly, feeling considerably bitter.

If only she had offered him more company, he probably would not become so quickly reliant on someone else—Erin had just been here for two days!

Still, Irene held out her hands at Isaac, who was still carrying their baby, saying quietly, "I'll carry him. You eat."

"No, you eat first," Isaac said.

Sheryl then said, "I can carry him."

"No, you just have to worry about eating today," Isaac told her—Sheryl was always babysitting for them, after all.

Whenever the baby woke up and started crying or threw a fuss during dinner, she would have to carry him and rock him to sleep.

Once the baby fell asleep and Sheryl returned to the table, the food would have gotten cold.

James pushed the caviar to Sheryl, and she lifted her spoon. "Alright, let's all tuck in."

She scooped a spoonful of caviar and ate it.

It was very fresh, and it was buttery rich contrary to her expectations of softness. Aside from the fishy taste, it also had a slight saltiness.

The taste of the other dishes caught her by surprise as well, and she had a hard time describing them.

Meanwhile, Irene was putting food on Isaac's plate, since he could not get anything himself while carrying their baby.

That was also when she remembered Zachary, and she asked, "Did you know? Zachary was arrested."

James turned toward them as well.

“What did he do?” James asked.

“Drunk drive,” Irene replied. “He’ll be kept in custody for fifteen days.”

James was speechless. “I’ll check on him later.”

Isaac’s face and thoughts were impassive, and he said nothing.