

Mute Bride 281

Chapter 281 Final Request

“Dad!” Rachel didn’t even need to spare an iota of brainpower to figure out who it was. The hurried clacking of high heels sounded through the mortuary. Then, Amber stood by the door of the mortuary, still unable to accept reality even after she had caught her breath. “Dad...”

Rachel couldn’t recall a time when Amber was this panicked. Regardless of how cruel Amber was, she was still Jefferey’s daughter who he had raised since she was a young girl. Jefferey was her greatest pillar. Now that he was gone, the blow to her was significant.

Amber stumbled inside. Her fingers touched the white cloth draped over the corpse before they were shakily retracted. All of a sudden, she yelled at the head jailer. “This isn’t my father! You’ve got it all wrong!”

“You’re grieving, miss.”

“Grieving? I told you, this isn’t my father! Where are you hiding my dad? Where is he?” At that, Amber’s hand moved toward the head jailer. Her fingers were a stark pale compared to the brightness of her red nails. In the darkness of the room, they were an eerie sight.

The head jailer didn’t manage to back away in time and was caught by the collar.

“Calm yourself, miss.”

“Where on earth are you hiding my father? He’s a healthy man. How can he just be dead?”

“Amber!” Rachel couldn’t stop herself from rebuking Amber. “This isn’t a place for you to show your temper. He passed away due to a sudden heart attack. You’re a doctor; if you don’t believe them, you can examine him.”

“Rachel?” Amber whipped her head around at the sound of Rachel’s voice, seemingly only having just noticed her presence. At that moment, her red eyes made her look very much like a devil from hell.

“How dare you come here? What right do you have to be here? You’re the one behind his imprisonment!”

Amber lunged at Rachel. Rachel backed away as she already anticipated this and grabbed her arm. “Have you gone mad? Death is already a kindness for him. The greatest punishment would have been rotting away in jail until old age. Even if I had the nerve to do it, I wouldn’t.”

With that, Rachel shoved Amber away roughly.

As a result, Amber stumbled backward and fell over. Fortunately for her, a large figure had entered the room, and he reflexively caught her.

Rachel stiffened at the sight of the newcomer.

Amber teared up when she saw the person who helped her up. “Justin!”

It was Justin, indeed.

A few hours ago, Rachel ended up getting into a huge fight with him because she and Janice went to visit Hans’ grave. He had then stormed out of the house. To suddenly see him here felt like a slap in the face.

Justin released Amber. His gaze lingered on Rachel for a moment before it landed on the corpse behind her. No one had lifted up the white cloth covering the body until now.

Jefferey sacrificed his life for Hudson Pharmaceuticals, yet he died like this.

After they left Riverdale Penitentiary, Amber glued herself beside Justin, sobbing ceaselessly.

“I’ll get someone to arrange his funeral. You... You two don’t have to worry about that,” he said.

Those words were meant for Rachel, but he couldn't stop himself from being petty when he recalled the incident with Hans, opting to say 'you two' instead of 'you'.

Rachel forced herself to smile. "Thank you." Having said that, she glanced at Amber, who trailed behind Justin like a wad of chewing gum that just wouldn't come off. A look of disgust turned up on her face as she continued, "I'll be going now."

With that, Rachel headed straight for the parking lot.

Justin wanted to follow her, but Amber tried to grab his arm. "Justin."

He instinctively drew his arm back. At the same time, his handsome features schooled in their usual chilly expression as he pulled some distance between Amber and himself.

With that, Amber's hand hung awkwardly in mid-air. A few moments later, she retracted it. "Can you stay with me for a little?"

Justin looked at his watch. "It's getting late. You should go back. There will be plenty of things that you'll be handling."

Amber couldn't stop herself from clenching her fists when she compared how different Justin's treatment was to her and Rachel. Her nails dug into her palms and pain surged through her nerves.

"Justin, do you think that you'll be able to get back together with that mute if you distance yourself from me? Look at her—she isn't at all interested in you! She's constantly using you! Can't you tell?"

"Enough. I didn't come here to listen to you ramble. You should calm down and go home."

"I'm being very calm here!" Amber took a step closer. "I've been with you for so many years. Regardless of how I treated others, I've always been sincere with you. Don't tell me that you can't see that?"

Judging from the frown on Justin's eyebrows, he was already impatient with her.

Amber knew that it would be futile to keep talking, so she gritted her teeth. “I know that it’s no use telling you all this. I just have one final request—if you agree, I’ll consider it repayment for the last six years of my youth.”

“What is it?”

“Help me manage Hudson Pharmaceuticals.”

Meanwhile, Rachel drove back alone after leaving Riverdale Penitentiary.

“I’ve confirmed it—he did have a heart attack.” Jolly’s voice sounded through Rachel’s bluetooth earphones. “So, this isn’t something premeditated? He ended up getting his own comeuppance?”

“He wouldn’t have suddenly passed away even if the heart attack was an actual thing. They didn’t even perform proper first aid on him.”

“What do you mean?”

Rachel’s brows remained furrowed as her hands gripped the steering wheel. “There were six people of various ages inside the cell. The prisoners sharing a cell with Jefferey have committed major crimes. They are very alert even when asleep.”

“What are you trying to get at?”

“Wouldn’t someone in the middle of a heart attack make some noise at least? His death was about three hours ago. It was lights-out time at the prison, yes, but who would be so deeply asleep at such an early hour? There’s got to be something fishy about the situation.”

“You’re saying that Jefferey was murdered?”

“I just think that it’s something to be considered.”

“He was already locked up. Who would want to kill him?”

Rachel’s eyes darkened a little, but her tone was still languid. “Plenty of people, actually.”

Jefferey had been a key figure in Hudson Pharmaceutical’s smuggling business. He had plenty of resources at his fingertips. Hudson Pharmaceuticals wouldn’t be the only company involved in this shady business in Riverdale; Janice had mentioned beforehand that the ledger recovered from the Hudson residence had implicated Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

The one who killed Jefferey to shut him up had to be tied to that ledger.

The next afternoon, Rachel took Samuel and Charlotte to the community pool for a weekend treat. Charlotte couldn’t swim, so she paddled around in the shallow section, looking like a little duckling with her inner tube.

“Chris!” a man’s voice rang out across the pool, drawing plenty of attention.

Rachel and the children looked in the direction of the voice to see Hernandez stride out from the changing room in swimming shorts. His muscled frame and the eight-pack he sported made the eyes of every woman by the pool light up.

“Charlotte, Samuel, have fun by yourselves,” Rachel told them. Then, she swam over to the edge of the pool.

Chapter 282 He’s Mentally Unwell

Charlotte was the only one out of the trio who didn’t know how to swim. After a few paddles, she stopped trying to move around. “Why is the Curly Weirdo here too?” she said angrily as she splashed around.

Samuel ducked his head underwater without answering her. Charlotte wised up to the situation when she saw him do that, and she promptly got angry enough to whack him. “Traitor!”

Naturally, Hernandez handed Rachel a towel when she got out of the pool. "How did you know I'm here?"

"That's a secret." Hernandez glanced at the children in the distance and grinned. "Jolly told me that your father passed away."

"Yeah." With a dull gaze, Rachel lowered her head. "It happened last night. The funeral is supposed to be held next Wednesday. You don't need to console me; I feel nothing for the Hudsons." Rachel immediately stopped Hernandez before he could try and comfort her.

Hernandez waved his hands helplessly. "I haven't even said anything."

"Jolly asked you to come, didn't she?"

"Of course not." Hernandez's brows furrowed. "I came to tell you that I just picked up a new piece of evidence while also coming up with a new plan. Once you've settled your own business, you can leave for overseas with your daughter in tow."

"What kind of plan?"

"Justin's seeing a psychologist. He's mentally unwell."

Rachel's went rigid. At once, a startled look came over her.

"He thought he was being sneaky about it, but unfortunately for him, my dream prior to becoming a lawyer and the chief legal officer at SG was to become a detective," Hernandez announced smugly. "A parent with mental illness is unfit to take care of their child. When the time comes, all we need to do is whip out this piece of evidence, and his custody rights will be pulled out right under his nose. And as Charlotte's biological mother, you will have full custody rights over her."

As she watched the two children playing in the distance, Rachel felt a myriad of complicated emotions.

“Hernandez, I’ll follow your plan for Charlotte, but now is not the time. Please help me with something else first.”

“What is it?”

“Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ next heir.”

Jefferey had been arrested because he was personally involved in smuggling. All assets under his name had also been seized and frozen, but a large portion of the company’s stocks was still in Amber’s and the other investors’ hands. Although Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ reputation was in the gutter and the company was on the brink of bankruptcy, it was still a listed company. A listed company was still better off than one that had completely collapsed and vanished.

Logically speaking, Amber was supposed to inherit Hudson Pharmaceuticals after Jefferey’s death. All of Jefferey’s old guards supported her. But now, Jefferey’s personal assets as well as his stocks had been confiscated. Whatever Amber had now barely made a blip in the grand scheme of things.

“I want the rights to Hudson Pharmaceuticals,” Rachel stated.

Meanwhile, Charlotte was play-fighting with Samuel in the pool.

“You traitor! You said that you would help Daddy, but you’re helping the Curly Weirdo!”

Samuel darted around in the water since he knew how to swim. On the other hand, Charlotte ended up getting a face full of water from all the waves and splashes he made while he escaped from her wrath.

“I don’t want to talk to you anymore.”

Seeing how Charlotte was actually angry, Samuel finally popped up from the water and grabbed her inner tube. “I’m not a traitor. I just think that Justin will be more motivated with Hernandez around. Men like competition.”

“What did you just say?”

“Look, Hernandez was out of the country for a long time because of what I did. And what did Justin do? All he did was make Mommy angry. So, I think it’s better that Hernandez is back,” Samuel said with a straight face. “Do you know what the catfish effect is?”

Charlotte’s eyes widened. “Hernandez is the catfish.”

“Yep!”

Charlotte cheered up immensely after getting Samuel’s validation. She turned to look for Rachel, only to find no one by the edge of the pool. “Where’s Mommy?”

Samuel turned around as well. Upon seeing the familiar figure, he immediately yelled, “Godmother!”

Jolly had shown up at the pool without them noticing earlier, soaking her feet by the edge of the pool in her patterned swimsuit.

Samuel swam over to her side, popping his head out of the water to talk to her. “Why are you here, Godmother?”

“I came with Hernandez, of course. I’ve been sitting here for a while now. It’s been a long time since I last saw you. Don’t you miss me?”

Samuel was all smiles as he pressed himself close to Jolly. “Of course, I miss you.”

Charlotte paddled her way over as well. “Godmother, where’s Mommy?”

“She has something to discuss with Hernandez, so she left first. Now, you’ll be under my care tonight.”

“What?” Charlotte’s eyes immediately bugged out. “Why did they leave?”

In just a blink of an eye, they had left. What other reason could there be for a man and woman to leave together?

Jolly reached out and flicked Charlotte’s head. Charlotte doubled over in pain and grabbed her head.

“What were you thinking? Grown-ups naturally have grown-up things to talk about. You two better start thinking about what you want for dinner tonight; I’m bringing you both out for dinner,” Jolly said. “How about fried chicken? Oh, and beer. But kids can’t have beer. You’ll have to settle for a Coke.”

Jolly rambled to herself about tonight’s dinner, but Charlotte seemed distracted.

Nothing good could come out of Rachel following the Curly Weirdo.

Not long after, the night crept up on everyone. Meanwhile, Rachel was sitting next to Hernandez inside a restaurant.

“You were pretty fond of Asian cuisine when you were abroad. Jolly’s the one who recommended this place. It’s not half-bad.”

“I prefer your cooking. The dumplings, especially.”

Hernandez’s words amused Rachel enough to let out a giggle. “Fine, we can head back and make some dumplings once we’re done.”

Rachel went to the bathroom alone before their food arrived. After she washed her hands by the sink, her phone buzzed in her pocket. “Hello?”

“Mommy, are you having dinner with Mr. Curly Weirdo?” Charlotte’s angry question came blasting over the speakers the moment Rachel answered the call. “How could you just leave me behind and go on a date with him?”

Rachel was exasperated. "It's not a date. I'm just discussing some serious things with Hernandez. Isn't Jolly looking after you and Samuel?"

"You can't date Mr. Curly Weirdo, Mommy. Anyone can tell that he's a bad guy. Samuel said that he's a womanizer!" Charlotte reminded Rachel solemnly. Rachel laughed as she walked out of the bathroom.

"Don't worry about that. Have fun with Jolly. I'll be back later to pick you up."

"Okay. Keep in touch, Mommy. Don't ignore my calls."

"Sure," Rachel said helplessly.

Just after she hung up, two familiar figures cut past the hall and approached her. Immediately, Rachel's eyes glazed over a little.

When did Justin get here together with Amber?

Justin was stunned as well. Evidently, he hadn't thought that he would run into Rachel here.

Chapter 283 I'm a Dysfunctional Person

"What are you doing here?" Amber's expression changed as soon as she saw Rachel, and the former stared at the latter guardedly. Just then, Rachel came to her senses. "I should be the one asking you this question, right?" "Rachel, what do you mean by that?!"

"The engagement is already called off, yet the two of you seem to be joined at the hip. Are you guys trying to create further topics for the press and contribute some tabloid news on behalf of both the Burton Group and Hudson Pharmaceuticals?" Rachel spoke in a cold voice and she sounded angry. Her reaction caused Justin to feel slightly joyful as he explained himself, "You've misunderstood the situation. Amber and I—"

“Chris!” Hernandez’s voice rang out from behind Rachel and he cut off Justin’s words. “Oh—this is such a coincidence. You’ve bumped into someone we know,” Hernandez greeted Justin quite naturally and calmly upon seeing him. “It’s been quite a while since we last met, Mr. Burton.”

Meanwhile, Justin frowned. “Why are you here?”

“I’m here for lunch with Chris. Aren’t the two of you here for lunch as well?”

Just then, Hernandez shot a suggestive look at Justin and Amber, and then he spoke up meaningfully. “Mr. Burton, it looks like you’ve got a different target, huh? Should I express my gratitude then?”

Justin’s expression darkened significantly when he heard that.

Meanwhile, Amber was her usual pretentious self and she put on a world-class act as she pretended to explain the situation, “You guys have misunderstood us. Justin and I have something to discuss, so we met up here.”

“There’s no need to explain things.” As soon as Justin said that, he walked past Rachel and he clearly exuded a cold, domineering demeanor.

Just then, Amber shot a smug look at Rachel before quickly joining him. “Justin, wait up.”

As for Rachel, she was quite composed and she merely mentioned, “Let’s go to another restaurant.”

At that moment, Justin paused in his tracks and he turned around to find that Rachel and Hernandez had gone back to their seats to gather their belongings. Subsequently, they left immediately without any intention of staying on any longer than necessary.

Just then, Amber tried to fuel the flames as she spitefully mentioned, “Justin, what are they discussing anyway? Why are they intentionally avoiding you?”

Instantly, Justin furrowed his brows, and all of a sudden, there was a frosty look on his face.

Truth was, Amber was partially correct. Rachel and Hernandez did want to have their discussion privately, but they were trying to avoid Amber instead of Justin.

After they had ended the discussion, night had also descended.

Just then, Rachel received a phone call from Jolly, and the latter mentioned that the two kids were exhausted after a fun-filled day so they had fallen asleep at her house.

"I'll go and pick them up tomorrow, then."

"Sure. Anyway, you can leave them with me. There's no need to worry about them."

After Rachel had hung up the phone, she directly made her way back to the Burton Residence.

She got back home, but the servants weren't there and the house was eerily silent without any lights on.

Just then, she flicked on the light switch and noticed that there was a figure on the couch. Startled, she yelled out, "You're home? Why didn't you switch on the lights?"

There was only a single lamp in the room, so it was quite dim inside. The lights illuminated Justin, but his figure looked quite scary sitting there.

"You're back quite late. Where's Charlotte?"

Rachel finally recollected herself and she changed into the bedroom slippers as she explained, "She's at Jolly's place. The two kids were too exhausted after their fun-filled day, so she fell asleep there. I'll pick her up tomorrow."

"So is this a proper behavior of a mother?"

His sudden interrogative words caused her to halt in her steps. "What do you mean by that?"

"You cast your own child aside and hand her over to someone else to take care of. Then, you go on a date with another man and come back late at night without even picking your child up. Is this what responsibility means to you?"

"Jolly isn't a stranger and you know very well that she's related to Samuel."

"How is she related to Charlotte, then?"

"She..."

"Besides, she's someone who abandoned her child right after giving birth, and even refused to acknowledge him. How can you trust someone like that with your child?"

Just then, Rachel found Justin's random outburst of anger quite illogical.

She took a deep breath before exhaling slowly as she tried her best to remain calm and communicate in a nice manner, "Can you calm down first?"

"I need to calm down?!" At that point, Justin clenched his fists tightly and strode in her direction. However, he didn't even bother to cast his eyes on her; he only changed his shoes and left the place.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to pick Charlotte up."

"Justin Burton!" Rachel stopped him immediately. "It's very late now and they're fast asleep. Do you really have to go over and wake them up? Why are you losing your temper all of a sudden?"

Meanwhile, Justin was insistent on leaving and his actions rendered Rachel completely speechless.

“Are you really insisting on going over there right now? Tell me—how do you plan on getting there? You can’t catch a cab at this time of the night. Do you dare to drive?”

At that moment, Justin tightened his grip on the doorknob that he had his hand wrapped around.

His fear of driving was ultimately an obstacle that bothered him very much. He had thought that he had overcome this fear when Samuel had been kidnapped but unfortunately, after that incident, he still experienced a severe headache as soon as he touched the steering wheel.

“Are you mocking me?”

Justin turned around gradually and his expression was thunderous. “In your eyes, I’m just a dysfunctional person who doesn’t even dare to drive and has incomplete memories, right?”

“I didn’t say that.”

“But your actions clearly indicated that.”

“What did I do?”

Suddenly, there was a flash of anger in Justin’s eyes and he could no longer contain his anger as he grabbed Rachel forcefully by her arms. “How many times have you met up in secret with Hernandez under the pretext of bringing the kids out?!”

His forceful move caused Rachel’s back to bang against the shoe rack in the foyer, and the intense pain rendered her speechless.

“Today, I coincidentally bumped into you, but what about those other times when I never did?”

“Justin Burton, are you out of your mind?” Rachel struggled to get out of his arms. “In your mind, can a man and a woman only be involved in a sexual relationship? Other than that, there’s nothing else that they could do?! Then, did I mention anything about you and Amber?”

“Well, I would rather you interrogated me about that!” Suddenly, a loud male voice reverberated in the room.

Upon hearing that, Rachel was significantly stunned and she looked at him with a shocked expression.

Meanwhile, Justin kept both hands tightly pressed against her shoulders to stop her from even moving a single inch. His reddened eyes were full of displeased resentment as he growled, “Why didn’t you question me for the reason I met up for lunch with Amber? Actually, you don’t even care that I met up with another woman, right? I’m asking you a question, so answer me!”

At that point, Rachel tried to push him aside. “I have nothing to say to you.”

Instantly, Justin’s anger flared up and there was practically fire coming out of his ears.

Suddenly, he tightened his grip on her struggling body and leaned forward.

“Mmph—”

Rachel’s eyes widened in shock and unexpectedly, her words were cut off as her lips were sealed all of a sudden.

Justin’s kiss, filled with the scent of tobacco, was dominating and raging. It felt as if he was in a race to conquer better ground as he went on without any hint of tenderness. He forced open her lips and invaded forcefully.

Meanwhile, Rachel was fully conscious, so she somehow mustered up her inner strength and shoved him aside abruptly.

Thwack! Suddenly, the sound of a loud slap rang out and it reverberated for quite a while in the living room.

Instantly, Justin's face turned red and swollen, and there was an evident handprint on the right side of his face. Meanwhile, he stared back at her in shock.

At that moment, Rachel panted as she countered, "Did I force you to go and have lunch with Amber? What do you mean by all this? Is this a preemptive move?"

Chapter 284 The Funeral

"I'll say this once—Hernandez and I are innocent. As for you, have you forgotten about Amber's relationship with you? Or me for that matter? Have you forgotten that the smuggling case related to Hudson Pharmaceuticals is still under investigation?"

I wouldn't be able to imagine why else would you have to see her other than because you're still in love with her." As soon as Justin heard that, he was at a loss for words. "Rachel, I—"

"Don't touch me!" Rachel pushed his hand aside once again and left by slamming the door after her. Just then, there was a sound of ignition that echoed over.

Instantly, Justin took a few steps forward to chase after her, but he suddenly stopped by the doorway and watched as her car disappeared at the junction of their estate. He tightened his grip on the door frame and there was a flash of frustration that crossed his eyes.

Why has things gotten to this state? But then I really can't tolerate her being with another man, no matter who it is! Meanwhile, Rachel directly drove off and headed to Jolly's house.

Jolly was, in fact, fast asleep when Rachel arrived. However, the former came out of the bedroom upon hearing the sound of the door opening, and she saw Rachel walk in with a furious look on her face.

Just then, Jolly rubbed her eyes and she even thought that she was seeing things. "I thought you said that you wouldn't be picking them up today?"

"I want to stay with you for a couple of days."

Rachel placed down her car keys. "I'll go and take a shower first."

After she had said that, she immediately headed off into the bathroom without even bothering to say another word.

The water gushed out from the showerhead and Rachel lifted her head to immerse her whole face under the spray. She then scrubbed furiously at her face. Not only that, she grabbed her toothbrush and brushed her teeth with all of her might. It was as if by doing so, she could then rid herself of that kiss from earlier.

She truly loathed Justin using such a rough manner to force himself on her just like he did earlier. Each time he did that, she would be reminded of the frightening marriage they had five to six years ago. His domineering and barbaric behavior was embedded deep in her mind.

After her shower, Rachel got out of the bathroom, only to find Jolly waiting for her.

With a thunk, Jolly opened a can of beer and lifted it in Rachel's direction. "Let's have a drink?"

Meanwhile, Rachel wrapped the towel she was using to dry her hair on her shoulders and she subsequently took the can of beer from Jolly. After downing half the can of the beer, she then sat down next to Jolly. At the same time, the television was on and there was a variety show playing, which was annoyingly noisy.

Just then, Jolly asked, "Do you feel better now?"

In response, Rachel nodded her head.

"Did Justin do something to you again?"

“No.”

“Stop lying to me. Each time you end up looking like this, it is always because of that guy. He’s such a troublemaker! He’s completely forgotten about the past and he gets to restart his life afresh, but how

dare he be so wishful as to turn up innocently and ask to restart a life with you?”

Jolly was straight to the point but Rachel remained nonchalant. “There’s no way we can restart our life together. Everything has ended between us.”

“Is that true?”

“Are you doubting me?”

“I’m not doubting you.” Just then, Jolly took a sip of beer and leaned back on the couch as she wriggled her feet on the coffee table. “After all, he has forgotten about the past, so I was worried that he has indeed fallen in love with you right now and is deeply infatuated with you. Are you sure that you can withstand his romantic pursuits?”

“The moment I see him, I always recall the moment back in the hospital when he instructed his men to break Hans’ leg. Not to mention the time when I begged him to save Grandma, but he refused to.”

Just then, Rachel lowered her head and finished off the entire can of beer. Subsequently, she easily crushed the can and her action resulted in a loud ‘clacking’ noise. Soon after that, she lifted her arm and threw the can into the bin.

“Your worries are unfounded.”

Meanwhile, Jolly lifted her brows, “Okay. You can ignore my words then. How long do you plan on staying here?”

“I’ll stay here for the time being. I find the sight of him quite disgusting.”

At that point, Jolly was quite shocked by Rachel's words.

Although Jolly realized that she shouldn't, inexplicably though, she sympathized with Justin the b*stard.

In the end, Rachel stayed with Jolly for a few days until Wednesday, which was the day of Jefferey's funeral.

Because of the smuggling case, those who had close ties with Jefferey avoided him like the plague so naturally, his funeral was quite deserted. It was only attended by the Hudson Family members and some of the old shareholders from Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Hudson Pharmaceuticals was on the brink of bankruptcy, and the only solution right now was to sell it and find someone to take over the business.

The burial place was located in the countryside and it was the Hudsons' private family cemetery.

Getting out of the car, Rachel was dressed in black and she had a white flower pinned to her chest.

Amber stopped Rachel in her tracks with a darkened expression upon seeing the latter walk in. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm part of the Hudson Family, after all, so why aren't I allowed here?"

"You're part of the Hudson Family? If you had actually considered yourself to be a Hudson, would you have caused my dad's death? The entire Riverdale knows that it was Rachel Hudson who sacrificed her own family for the sake of justice and reported her own father to the authorities!"

"You do realize too that I did that to uphold justice. He did make a mistake and should be punished for it."

"Do not talk to me about all these! He's my dad! Despite what he's done, he is still my father after all."

“Amber,” Suddenly, a cold male voice rang out from behind Amber. “Stop making a scene at the funeral. There’s a lot of people around.”

It was Justin who spoke.

After their fight the last time, Rachel hadn’t seen him at all in the last three days, so it was quite clear why he suddenly appeared at the scene right now.

On the surface, Hudson Pharmaceuticals was a mess right now but in fact, the company had a good foundation so there were plenty of people who were keen to take over the business. Justin was one of them.

“Justin, my dad won’t be able to rest in peace with her around.”

Just then, Rachel came to her senses and she coldly shot a look at Amber. “Don’t worry. I’m just taking the opportunity to speak to the elders present today, then I’ll leave immediately. I won’t hold you up any further.”

Suddenly, Amber panicked. “What are you trying to do?”

Meanwhile, Rachel remained indifferent. “I would like to purchase the shares each one of you possess. I’m willing to pay ten percent higher than the market rate.”

Just then, there was an uproar.

As soon as Rachel finished her sentence, every single shareholder of Hudson Pharmaceuticals, who was here for the funeral, exchanged shocked looks with each other.

Amber’s expression changed in the blink of an eye. “Are you trying to take over Hudson Pharmaceuticals? How dare you?!”

“How dare I attempt this?” Rachel maintained a neutral expression. “Do you still think that Hudson Pharmaceuticals is well sought after? It’s either the company files for bankruptcy or some other company takes over the business, and Hudson Pharmaceuticals will cease to exist in the

pharmaceutical industry. However, if they sell their shares to me, then I’ll definitely be able to restore Hudson Pharmaceuticals back to its former glory.”

Just then, all of the shareholders had joyful expressions on their faces.

“Rachel, are you being serious? Do you have a solution?”

“Yeah! Are you seriously interested in buying all of our shares?”

Everyone was quite worried that their shares would end up worthless if Hudson Pharmaceuticals filed for bankruptcy. No one would be interested in buying the shares. However, they didn’t quite know what to do about it because they were mindful of their close ties with the Hudson Family. Now that Rachel was willing to take over their shares, then it was great news for them because their interest was maintained and at the same time, they didn’t have to forsake their relationship with the Hudsons too.

However, Amber’s voice rang out and took dominance over the other voices even before Rachel could respond.

“This is such a joke! We have such a long history in the pharmaceutical industry, so do you actually think that the business would just go bust suddenly?! You’re just saying that you’ll restore the business back to its former glory once you gain control of it. Everyone, please don’t be fooled by her words. She’s just being the representative for Carter Enterprise. She’ll purchase the shares under her name for now but after that, she will definitely merge Hudson Pharmaceuticals with Carter Enterprise.”

Chapter 285 Based on the Six Formulas I Have

The Carter Enterprise? Everyone looked askance at each other. They had heard that Rachel was goddaughter of the president of Carter Enterprise and his wife. Rachel also had a very good relationship with the daughter of the Carter Family. Besides, it was public knowledge that the Carter Enterprise was keen to take over Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Just then, Amber spoke. “Everyone, today’s my dad’s funeral so by right, we shouldn’t be talking about work. However, my dad has put his life into Hudson Pharmaceuticals, and that’s also why I have no choice but to step up and defend his company. I have to stop someone else from selling off our family business.

I realize that it was my dad who caused the current crisis in Hudson Pharmaceuticals, but he has also stepped up and bore the entire responsibility to uphold the reputation of our business. Everyone present here has watched me grow up, so please have faith in me. I’ll definitely be able to redevelop the business.”

Each of them present was quite smart, so they were aware that Amber’s exaggerated words had no substance at all.

“Amber, it’s not that we refuse to support you, but the expenses of the company have exceeded the income and we’ve got a serious cash flow issue. The existing contracts have all been terminated and we are currently facing a huge penalty for all of the contractual breaches, so how can you possibly continue operating the company by yourself?”

“Exactly. We’ve got a very serious cash flow issue. How can you maintain operations?”

Meanwhile, Amber grabbed Justin’s elbow as she faced everyone’s remarks. “I won’t be operating the company by myself. Justin has promised me that he will provide the cash to resolve the penalty for the

contractual breaches and help us get through this difficult stage. This will only be possible if each of you agrees to allow me to inherit Hudson Pharmaceuticals, and appoint me as the executive manager.”

“Is that true?”

“President Burton, I thought you’ve already called off the engagement with Amber?”

“Yeah. Why is he willing to help?”

Just then, Justin frowned and discreetly withdrew his hand from Amber's. Subsequently, he was about to say something when Rachel's voice rang out and interjected him.

"I'm sure President Burton must treasure their previous relationship, so he's willing to offer his help. However, I'm not too sure whether he's using the pretext of helping the company just to pave the way for his takeover of Hudson Pharmaceuticals in the future."

At that point, Amber's expression turned. "What sort of nonsense are you on about?! Justin would never do that!"

"If you're so sure that he's not going to do that, then what's this?"

At that, Rachel took out a document in front of everyone and handed it over to the main representative of the shareholders. "Mr. Raymond, take a look at this."

The first page of the document was printed with the logo of Burton Group and the words in bold were quite eye-catching—"Proposal on Hudson Pharmaceuticals Takeover".

Justin's expression changed instantly. The proposal had been in his office all this while and it was a confidential document. How did she get hold of this?

Amongst the uproar, Rachel continued to mock him with an indifferent look. "Amber, if you had no idea, then this clearly shows that you're not smart enough. You're not accomplished enough to become a professional manager. However, if you knew about this, then you've betrayed your own company and aided your enemy to infiltrate the company."

Just then, no matter which option took precedence, Amber clearly wasn't suited to inherit Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Meanwhile, she couldn't come up with the words to explain herself as the crowd shot her doubtful looks.

"Even so, I was just thinking of the future of Hudson Pharmaceuticals!"

In the end, Amber made a reckless decision. “Well, you’re also helping Carter Enterprise to take over Hudson Pharmaceuticals, so why can’t I allow Justin to help me? Besides, it’s quite logical for me to inherit the business. Meanwhile, you’re just an illegitimate daughter without any legal identity. What right do you have to inherit Hudson Pharmaceuticals?”

“Well, based on the six formulas I have in my hands, I will be eligible to inherit the business.”

Formulas? As soon as Rachel said that, everyone at the scene looked at her with incredulous expressions.

“Rachel, what are you on about? Did you discover some formulas? What sort of formulas are they?”

The person who asked this was one of the representatives of the shareholders—Evan Holt. He was the son of Old Mr. Hudson’s butler, and he had gone overseas for his studies and then returned to work for Hudson Pharmaceuticals. He had been highly valued by Jefferey and he was also one of the shareholder representatives now.

From Rachel’s investigation, she found out that he was one of the few shareholders who dared to challenge Jefferey’s decisions. He was a man of integrity and he frowned upon Amber’s behavior.

Just then, Rachel responded, “Mr. Holt, what other formula could it be? Other than those six formulas inherited from the Hudson ancestors, do you think there’s anything else that could restore Hudson Pharmaceuticals to its former glory?”

“Are the formulas in your hands?”

“Of course. My mother got me to recite it since I was young and I know it off the top of my head.”

“Your mother?”

Evan’s expression was stricken as he mumbled, “Your mother is...”

They were at the Hudson Family cemetery, and the look he shot through the corner of his eyes was in the direction of Selena's grave.

Instantly, Rachel noticed that and she knew that he was aware of her identity.

"Mr. Holt, with the six formulas I have in my hands, am I still ineligible to inherit the company? Furthermore, I'm planning to inherit the company by buying over everyone's shares, unlike someone else who wants everyone to bear the risk along with her."

"Rachel, you are obviously taking advantage of the situation! No one knows whether the formulas are legit or not. Besides, look at what era we are in now! The formulas for Eastern medicine are pretty much useless. Everyone currently uses Western medicine!"

Amber was angered beyond herself and she lashed out at Rachel furiously. "Stop your wishful thinking! You won't be able to lay your hands on Hudson Pharmaceuticals!"

"Enough!" Suddenly, Evan cut in and interrupted Amber's tirade. "Eastern medicine is useless? Who was the one that told you that?!"

Suddenly, the crowd's titters slowly dissipated in the vast cemetery and silence descended.

Evan was a man of strong integrity and he was well-respected by all of the shareholders, so even Amber didn't dare to cross him.

Just then, she realized that she had said the wrong thing, and she guiltily exclaimed, "Mr. Holt."

Meanwhile, Evan shot a look at Amber. "Hudson Pharmaceuticals is a family business, but the people present today aren't all members of the Hudson clan. Many years back, Hudson Pharmacy encountered some slight instabilities so the decision was made to introduce a shareholding system, and everyone who worked for the company, even all the workers, were eligible to purchase the shares. My father became a shareholder back then and now I've inherited that..."

“Everyone present today owns some or even plenty of shares in the company. You guys might not be aware of how the Hudsons made their fortune, as it was all in the past during the reform period. They made their fortune from the six formulas mentioned. Without the formulas, Hudson Pharmacy would not exist and subsequently, there would be no Hudson Pharmaceuticals today.”

“When Old Mr. Hudson was alive, he mentioned that the person in possession of the six formulas would be the rightful heir of Hudson Pharmaceuticals. Also, the business would not be in such a bad state if it wasn’t for the disappearance of those six formulas.”

Just then, Evan’s words caused the shareholders to stare at each other with aghast looks on their faces.

Although none of them were involved in the actual smuggling details organized by Jefferey, after considering the actual situation afterward, they could more or less figure things out. The loss of the

formulas critical for generating an income for Hudson Pharmaceuticals meant that Jefferey had to come up with another risky way to sustain the business.

“Mr. Holt, what do you mean by that?” Amber was frantic. “Are you out of your mind? She’s just an illegitimate child, so how can she inherit Hudson Pharmaceuticals?! She could just claim to own the formulas without actually having it!”

“Her birth mother is Selena Hudson, so that makes her eligible. I wouldn’t be so sure if it was anyone else, but Selena was guided personally by Old Mr. Hudson since she was a child and she was also personally guided by him in the concoction and compounding of medications.”

Evan’s words caught Rachel by surprise. He seems to be quite close with my mother.

“Rae, leave all of this to me. I’ll personally liaise with each of the shareholders and respond to you soon.” Evan ignored Amber’s thunderous expression and stood up for Rachel in front of everyone else.

Chapter 286 Betrothal Gift

In response, Rachel nodded respectfully. "Thank you." Logically speaking, as well as in consideration of their interests, it made complete sense for the group to accept her offer.

"Okay, then. I won't intrude any further. I'll be on my way." With that, Rachel glanced toward a tombstone that was some distance away, and said, "Mr. Holt, if you would help me pay my respects."

After she had said that, she turned around and left. Just then, Justin frowned and raced after her. "Rachel!" "Justin!" Amber instantly grabbed his sleeve. "Justin, you should be able to clearly see this woman's true self now. She has been making use of you since the start."

"Let go!" Justin's expression was currently cold and thunderous. Upon hearing that, Amber trembled and instinctively released her grip on his sleeve.

Meanwhile, Justin flicked off the nonexistent lint on his shirt and coldly responded, "I promised to attend the funeral to stand up for you for the sake of our collaboration. Now that there won't be a collaboration, there's nothing else left between us."

He had originally intended to tackle Amber and then subsequently take control of the old fogeys from Hudson Pharmaceuticals so that by the time Rachel needed help, it would be much easier for him to transfer the shares to her. Right now, however, it seemed that Rachel didn't need his help. On the contrary, his unnecessary interference had resulted in a misunderstanding.

"Justin!"

Just then, Amber angrily stomped her feet as soon as she saw him rush off. I'm sure things aren't irrevocable just yet!

At that moment, Rachel had just entered her car, but the door to the front passenger seat was suddenly yanked open and someone rushed in.

"What are you doing here?!"

Rachel's expression changed the moment she saw Justin. "Get out of my car!"

“No,” Justin responded. “I’ve got something to tell you.”

“If this is regarding Hudson Pharmaceuticals, then I have nothing to say. You should have already known from the start about my intentions toward Hudson Pharmaceuticals, as I have never kept that a secret from you.”

“You stole the document that I was prepared to shred and get rid of, and yet you’re so indignant about the situation?! So, I’m not even allowed to mention anything about that?”

“I didn’t steal it! I merely...” Hold on! Did he just mention he was going to shred it?

Just then, Justin glanced at her intently. “You took a document that was invalid, so you should thank me for not revealing the truth in front of everyone else. I called off the plan to take over Hudson Pharmaceuticals ages ago. If you don’t believe me, then you can go and ask Frankie or the project manager. You want it, so I won’t fight you for it.”

At that moment, Rachel stared at Justin with a shell-shocked expression.

Meanwhile, as she was lost in her thoughts, Justin seemed to have seen something, so he suddenly inched closer by leaning forward. Instinctively, Rachel lifted her hand and pressed on his chest to stop him from getting closer. “What are you trying to do?”

Suddenly, there was an evident sound of a seat belt being fastened.

“What do you think I’m trying to do?”

A deep male voice rang out from above her head and there was a teasing note in his voice. “How does that feel?”

Rachel’s hand was on Justin’s chest, and the warm feeling through his black shirt was quite evident. Through her right hand, she could even feel his heart thudding in his chest.

As soon as Rachel heard his words, she suddenly came to her senses and shoved at him angrily. "You must be nuts!" He's so childish for his age! He's still imitating those romantic soap operas and making such tacky moves!

Just then, Justin was shoved aside abruptly and his head bumped against the roof of the car. He stifled his yelp of pain and immediately fell back against the passenger seat as he gasped for air.

"You deserve that!" Rachel was quite annoyed, but she couldn't help laughing upon seeing the comical turn of events.

At that point, her laugh seemed to clear the air between them and their cold war was resolved.

She released a cough and tried to remain calm. "Since you're not after Hudson Pharmaceuticals, then why did you turn up today?"

Meanwhile, Justin regained his composure and explained, "Amber promised that she would be able to convince those old fogeys to sell me their shares if I helped her. I planned to buy it under my name and then transfer it to you as a betrothal gift."

Betrothal gift? Suddenly, Rachel frowned but she couldn't be bothered to argue with him about the matter of the betrothal gift. "Aren't you afraid that you'll force Amber to the brink of desperation by doing so? After all, she's your fiancée."

Just then, Justin corrected her, "She's my ex-fiancée. Besides, the so-called engagement was just her one-sided claim when I lost my memories, so I never acknowledged that."

"Then have you regained your memories?"

"No, but I'm sure that I'll definitely be able to recall my past."

Suddenly, Rachel recalled Hernandez's words upon seeing Justin's confident look. Hernandez had mentioned that Justin had gone to see a psychiatrist in private. Is he so intent on regaining his memories?

Meanwhile, Justin kept his eyes on Rachel, and the admiring look in his eyes grew.

It was rare for him to find a woman like her, who was gentle yet full of inner strength. Earlier, at the cemetery, her heroic stance and the way she had easily stirred up trouble within the Hudson Family with a few words had everyone ended up being on her side ultimately. He enjoyed the feeling of finally meeting his match.

Meanwhile, she was quite uncomfortable with his intent stare. "Why are you staring at me?"

And so, he murmured, "I apologize for my behavior from the past few days, but I reckon that it's quite normal for lovers to get into a tiff. We should try and consider things from each other's perspectives and reflect on our behavior, and then continue to get along with each other."

"What's the outcome of your self-reflection?"

"I shouldn't have interrogated you for something that I can't remember and doubt your character. You have the right to befriend any other person and that's not something that I should interfere with. As for you paying your respects to Hans, I shouldn't have said anything about that either."

Justin's words sounded like a confession of his sins in a church.

"That's all I have to say. How about you?"

"What's wrong with me?"

Meanwhile, Justin emphasized his words, "Each of us should reflect on our behavior. I've reflected on mine, so what about you?"

“Didn’t you already reflect on your behavior? Since it’s your fault, then I did nothing wrong, right?”

“Yes, it is my fault, but I meant—”

“Besides,” Rachel directly interrupted his sentence. “Since when are we lovers?”

Rachel had never promised Justin anything, so although they had a slightly ambiguous relationship, she wanted him to know that being previously married to each other didn’t mean that they could just take a step back and become lovers.

Meanwhile, Justin was slightly snubbed as he didn’t manage to get his way. However, he suddenly realized that Rachel was quite lovable. Ultimately, he was the one who had mistreated her in the past, so he was quite willing to bear the brunt of her anger.

“Fasten your seat belt properly; otherwise, get out of the car.”

Rachel voiced out impatiently before putting her foot on the accelerator. Subsequently, she drove out of the cemetery.

...

After the funeral, Rachel officially took over Hudson Pharmaceuticals and with a total of sixty percent of shares owned, she became the Chief Executive Officer of the company.

“I’ll hand over my work at the Burton Group to Lisa to deal with, and I won’t bring with me any of the confidential customer details so you don’t have to worry.” Just then, Rachel placed her resignation letter on Justin’s work desk.

“Is it necessary for you to leave? I can reduce your workload and it won’t affect you from your work at Hudson—”

“It won’t work.” Rachel’s simple words reverberated inside the huge office.

Since she had already made up her mind to take over Hudson Pharmaceuticals, there was no way she would continue maintaining her position as the general manager of Burton Pharmaceuticals.

“Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ focus is on pharmaceuticals, and it’s the same for Burton Pharmaceuticals. There are plenty of overlapping points, including our raw material suppliers and all of our different marketing avenues. Furthermore, our target customers overseas overlap each other too. Evidently, we are in a directly competitive line of work, so I can only pick one.”

“So does that mean you’ve chosen Hudson Pharmaceuticals?”

Chapter 287 The Past

Justin purposely asked, though he already knew the answer. Nonetheless, Rachel’s expression remained neutral. “What do you think?”

From the start, she had never masked her intentions for returning to the country. After all, Hudson Pharmaceuticals originally belonged to her parents, so she was just claiming it back on their behalf.

As for Burton Pharmaceuticals, it was just a temporary stepping-stone for her. Though she regarded the company as merely a stepping-stone, she had in fact put in a lot of effort in her work for the past few months. She hadn’t slacked off at all, so she had a clear conscience.

Just then, Rachel placed the resignation letter on Justin’s desk and calmly voiced out, “You should just treat my departure from Burton Pharmaceuticals as a regular staff turnover.”

Meanwhile, Justin didn’t respond to her words, and neither did he accept the resignation letter.

“I’ll get going, then.”

As she reached the doorway, Justin suddenly yelled out, “Rachel!”

"I'll retain the position of general manager of Burton Pharmaceuticals for you. You can come back anytime you feel like it."

However, Rachel opened the door and left without saying another word. I won't come back here.

...

Three days later, after completing the handover process, Rachel officially relinquished her position at Burton Pharmaceuticals.

"Rae, the office is here."

Mr. Holt personally showed Rachel to her office at Hudson Pharmaceuticals. "I've instructed the staff to replace the work desk and office chair with a brand-new one, but if you find it not to your liking, then you can change it according to your preferences later on."

"Thank you, Mr. Holt. This is good enough for me." Rachel scanned her surroundings. "I'm not too fussed about the office environment."

"You're too easy going. If anyone refuses to heed your instructions, come and let me know and I'll take care of them."

Just then, the secretary had just finished brewing the tea and the scent from it gradually replaced the smell of brand-new furniture in the room.

"Mr. Holt, have a seat."

"Okay, sure. You should take a seat too."

Just then, Rachel showed Evan to a chair. At the same time, he scrutinized her and couldn't help nodding his head. "You're so alike. You're indeed alike."

“Alike?”

“You resemble your mother.”

“Did you know my mother?”

At that point, Evan nodded. “I grew up together with your mother before I left for overseas to study with your uncle. Oh—you might not know it, but your dad had an elder brother. He passed away from an accident many years ago, though.”

Meanwhile, Rachel suddenly looked dazed as she nodded her head calmly.

Her true identity was too complicated and it was difficult to verify any verbal claims. Besides, it was of no help in her taking control of Hudson Pharmaceuticals, so she had merely brought up the formulas and her mother during the funeral.

“I was the closest friend of your uncle but unfortunately, I was still overseas when he met his demise. Upon my arrival back home, Old Mr. Hudson had passed away too. In the end, your father was the only one left to inherit Hudson Pharmacy and subsequently, he managed to build it up into the business of Hudson Pharmaceuticals today.”

Inherit? Rachel sneered in her mind. Perhaps usurpation would be a more appropriate word to describe that.

Despite her thoughts, she managed to maintain a neutral expression.

Just then, she spoke up. “I have never heard my mother mention a word about the past.”

At that moment, Evan heaved a sigh. “Selena was the smartest among all of us and she was very knowledgeable in pharmacology. If only misfortune hadn’t befallen the Hudsons, then she would have been the next in line to inherit Hudson Pharmacy.”

Suddenly, Rachel couldn't help but interrupt him. "Mr. Holt, although I'm not too sure about the things that occurred in the past, I know that my mother was merely the adopted daughter of the Hudson Family. Even if she had outstanding abilities, would she be eligible to inherit the pharmacy back then?"

"She was indeed an adopted child, but she was treated like flesh and blood. Furthermore, Lionel and your mother were deeply in love with each other, and Old Mr. Hudson had already made plans for the two of them. The man of the house would be in charge of the business, while the woman would be in charge of the pharmaceutical aspect."

"Lionel?" Just then, Rachel accurately pinpointed the crucial point in Evan's words.

Suddenly, Evan was quite stunned.

After quite some time, he awkwardly corrected himself, "Ah—I must be old and senile. I've gotten your father mixed up with your uncle. I meant Jefferey. It was Jefferey."

However, Rachel didn't believe his words. Grandma was right! Mom and Dad were the ones who were in love with each other, and Grandpa knew about it from the start. If only misfortune hadn't befallen the Hudson Family and resulted in Mom being forced to marry someone else, then she would not have been kicked out of the family by Grandpa! He kicked her out to protect her and the child she was carrying!

Although Rachel had not experienced the tumultuous time back then, she could still feel the joy her grandfather must have felt back then. Under such circumstances and with his eldest son dead from an accident, the sudden knowledge that he had left behind an heir to continue the bloodline was definitely great news. However, no one would have expected that there would be another catch after that. Her mother had managed to dodge the forced marriage, but she didn't manage to avoid falling into the hands of her most trusted second brother. Jefferey was a b*stard and he would resort to anything at all to get his way.

"That will be all, then. If you encounter any issues, feel free to contact me. By the way, I'll assign you a secretary and I'll make sure that the person is trustworthy."

"That's alright, Mr. Holt. I would like to get familiarized with the company first. I'll find someone suitable at a later stage."

Rachel clearly made her point clear as she rejected his suggestion. After all, she had no plans to pretend to agree and then do the opposite behind his back. Right now, she had no idea whether she

could actually trust the person introduced by him, so it was wiser to avoid having too many people around her for the time being.

Meanwhile, Evan seemed to have picked up her concerns, so he didn't pursue it any further. On the contrary, he revealed an approving look.

"If only Selena was still alive, she would be so happy to see you right now."

"Mr. Holt, the elevator's here."

"I'll head off, then."

Right before the elevator doors slid shut, Rachel seemed to have caught the slightest hint of tears in Evan's eyes. However, he purposely turned in the other direction to avoid her gaze.

At that point, she had no time to ponder over the situation. Hudson Pharmaceuticals was in a mess right now and there was a continuous stream of resignation letters handed in every day. It was a tough job trying to provide assurance to the staff left behind.

Rachel continued to deal with the paperwork for the whole afternoon and before she left work, she received a phone call on her office line.

"Hello? Who's on the line?"

"Rachel, you must be in the office right now, right?"

"Amber?" Rachel frowned. "What are you after?"

“I’m downstairs right now. Come down and see me. I’ve got something to say.”

“I’m busy.”

“It’s regarding Charlotte.”

Rachel’s heart skipped a beat when she heard that.

Meanwhile, Amber’s sullen voice rang out on the other end of the line, “Don’t you want to know what I’ve done to her while you were gone for the past five years?”

Instantly, Rachel’s expression changed and she also couldn’t help herself from tightening her grip on the phone in her hands.

“Where are you?”

“I’m in the cafe across the road from the company. It’s just directly opposite and you can see it from your office window. I’ll wait for you here.” With that, Amber hung up the phone immediately.

Without any hesitation, Rachel sped downstairs.

She had been away from Riverdale for the past few years, and Amber had stayed by Justin’s side as his fiancée the whole time. Hence, Amber had plenty of opportunities to get close to Charlotte. Besides, there were so many others from the Burton Family who disliked Rachel. Arthur and Sue were among those too, so Amber definitely had a lot of opportunities to lay her hands on Charlotte.

As soon as Rachel reached the ground floor, she was in a rush to cross the road and get to the other side.

It was still within working hours so there were not many passersby on the street. There was only Rachel, who took the zebra crossing on the wide road. As soon as she saw the lights turn green, she immediately hastened her footsteps and headed to the other end.

At that moment, a red sports car suddenly diverted from its original route while waiting at the traffic light. It was now headed right in Rachel's direction.

Amidst the loud noise from the engine, there were also hysterical screams from the surrounding people.

All of a sudden, Rachel turned her head and saw the sports car headed right toward her. Her eyes met the eyes of the woman in the driver's seat through the windscreen, and Rachel could clearly see the evil, malicious look in the driver's eyes.

It was none other than Amber.

Chapter 288 This Was Her Last Chance

As the accelerator roared, those who had yet to make it across the road dodged to either side, leaving a woman with a stroller standing in the middle of the road. Without thinking about it, Rachel sprinted forward and reached out to shove the woman and the stroller aside before turning to glance in fear at the oncoming car.

With a screech, the brakes echoed sharply through the air in between the buildings. Due to the friction with the road, the tires of the car were smoking and it left clear track marks on the ground. In the end, the car stopped in front of Rachel just in time.

By now, the surrounding people were frozen in fear and after a short moment of silence, whispers swept through the crowd like a wave.

Meanwhile, the woman who was shoved aside by Rachel had fallen on the ground, but thankfully, the stroller had been caught by someone who appeared to be the husband, and hadn't tipped over.

After the husband helped his wife up and made sure that his wife and his child were both fine, he immediately ran up to Rachel. "Are you okay, miss?"

Though physically alright, Rachel was still in a state of shock over her latest near-death experience.

After ensuring that she was all right, the father pointed in the direction of the car and shouted, “What kind of a driver are you? Are you mad? Are you trying to kill someone?”

Meanwhile, Amber was still stopped in the middle of the road, and her perfectly still figure that was holding onto the steering wheel resembled a statue.

“Did the car malfunction?”

“Malfunction? No, the car left the flow of traffic on purpose.”

“Is the driver seeking revenge on society?”

In the middle of the whispers, Amber left the car.

“It’s a woman.”

At the sight of Amber, Rachel immediately calmed down. She clenched her fists and strode up to Amber under everyone’s watchful gaze.

Slap! She decked Amber across the face.

Even the man who was yelling was shocked into silence.

“Are you crazy?” Rachel snarled. “If you wanted to kill me, you should have come for me alone. There are so many pedestrians on the road. Did you want everyone to die along with you? What the f*ck is wrong with you? Tell me—what the f*ck is wrong with you?”

With her face turned to the side from being slapped, Amber suddenly fell to her knees with a thump in front of Rachel, bemoaning, “I’m so sorry, sister.”

Sister?

The crowd paused. What on earth was going on?

Was this a family fight?

At the same time, Rachel was also confused by the reference.

After all, Amber had looked down on her their entire lives. Rachel could count on one hand the number of times Amber had acknowledged their familial bond, not to mention that it was bad news whenever

that happened.

Sure enough, in the next second, Amber burst into tears. "I know what happened in the past was my fault, but you're my only family left in Riverdale now that Dad is dead. How am I going to go through life alone if you don't care about me anymore?"

The change in attitude was so abrupt that Rachel was caught off-guard.

Never before had she seen Amber show weakness in front of her, let alone weep so tragically. If Rachel remembered correctly, Amber didn't cry like that even on the day of Jefferey's funeral.

"If you have anything to say, get up and say it properly."

"No. If you won't forgive me, I'll stay here forever," Amber choked out. "I know that everything that happened was my fault, but even if we're tenuously related, I'm still your younger sister. Are you truly intending to leave me with no one to defend me from being humiliated and trampled upon all over Riverdale?"

"Who's humiliating you?"

“The Hudson Family has fallen. I have nothing now. Who from the past wouldn’t want to trample all over me?”

“What does that have to do with me?” Rachel asked impatiently. “What are you up to, acting like this?”

“I need a job. I want to join Hudson Pharmaceuticals’ Research and Development Department.”

“Impossible,” Rachel refused concisely.

The Research and Development Department was a core department. Even the ordinary person would have to go through levels of interviews and selection to be hired, let alone someone as nefarious as

Amber.

“Please!” Letting go of decorum, Amber threw her arms around Rachel’s leg and begged, “Please, you have such a large company. Can’t you give me a job? No matter what, Dad raised you for twenty years and we were siblings for so long. Do you want to see me die?”

Since there were many passersby on the road, several people had already raised their cell phones to begin recording the fiasco.

As the whispers fell on Rachel’s ears, she realized that the scene had already become sensationalized.

“Which rich family is making a laughingstock out of us common folk by playing out their grudges in front of us like that?”

“I can’t believe she’s saying she’s poor! That luxury car must cost several million at least.”

“What do you know? To spoiled young princesses like these, several million is no different from several hundred.”

And it went on and on.

The thing was, Rachel didn't want to cause a scene. After all, she had just taken over Hudson Pharmaceuticals and if the videos surfaced on the Internet, she would have to clear things up with the public once again. That would be too troublesome.

"Get up, Amber. Don't you find this disgraceful?"

"What do I have to fear now that I have nothing? I'll stand up once you promise me a job."

"Are you threatening me?"

"I'm begging you, sister!" Amber shouted shrilly as she tightened her grip around Rachel's thigh. There was something dark in the former's eyes that were hidden beneath her fringe, but only Rachel could sense that.

All of a sudden, she scoffed internally.

To think she had underestimated Amber in the past and assumed her little sister was naïve for being pampered. Now, it was turning out that Amber was much more flexible than Rachel anticipated and knew how to play up the drama to get what she wanted.

"Fine, I promise." Rachel suddenly leaned down and, in front of everyone, laid a hand on Amber's shoulder. "I don't simply promise you a job, but I'll take you on as the director of the Research and Development Department so that you can lead the development team."

Startled, Amber paused. "Are you serious?"

"Of course. Weren't you the one who said it? We're sisters. We might not be wholly related, but we're still related in some way. Family and all that."

There was something deep in Rachel's eyes that gave Amber a sense of unease. Suddenly, the latter shivered.

Nevertheless, this was her last chance. She had to succeed or die trying.

Very soon, the news of Amber joining Hudson Pharmaceuticals' Research and Development Department spread around the organization.

Even Evan called to ask about it. "I know you and Amber have had your arguments, Rachel. I can understand your hiring her out of consideration for your sisterly relationship, but the R&D Department is a core department. If you feel embarrassed to reject her, I can speak to her on your behalf."

"It's okay. The Hudson Family has fallen. She has nowhere to go but here."

"Have you thought about why she wants to enter R&D, though?"

"Of course, Mr. Holt." Rachel dodged Evan's question casually.

There was virtually no possibility that Amber caused such a large scene to enter the Research and Development Department simply because she loved the job. Rachel didn't need to be a rocket scientist to figure out that Amber was up to no good.

However, she intended to beat Amber at her own game and see what the other woman was up to.

At the Burton Residence, Justin glanced at the old-fashioned wall clock above the fireplace. Although it was already 9 PM, Rachel had yet to return.

At this moment, Samuel was curled up on the couch, gaming happily. There was so much junk food next to him that he had practically been swallowed up by the junk food.

Since school was on break for these two days, he and Charlotte were home all day.

"Aren't you worried about the fact that your mother is back so late these few days?" Justin asked.

Unimpressed, Samuel shot him a glance. "If you miss her, you can call her or go to find her. What's the point in asking me this?"

Chapter 289 In All Probability It's the Truth

"Yes, Daddy. You can go and find Mommy," Charlotte agreed. The responses from the children irritated Justin so much that he was almost rendered speechless. "She's working late because she's very busy."

"That's not what it is!" Charlotte dug through the pile of junk food to find something she liked. As she looked, she added, "She still has time no matter how busy she is. She just doesn't want to talk to you."

"You think she doesn't want to talk to me?" "Isn't that obvious?" "Charlotte." Justin then caught hold of the girl's arm. "Stop eating. Come with me to pick up your mother from work."

"No." She pulled away mercilessly, scampering up to Samuel with some crisps as she shot Justin a disdainful look. "You're too stupid, Daddy. I don't want to talk to you."

Deep down, she thought, If I keep talking to Daddy, even Mommy will find me annoying. I don't want that to happen!

Of course, Justin was incensed.

Clearly, the little girl was spending too much time with Samuel if she was becoming as indifferent as him to the development of her parents' relationship.

Helplessly, Justin stared down at his cell phone for a long time before finally calling Rachel.

"Hello?" Rachel asked at the other end of the line. "Is something wrong?"

“Haven’t you finished work yet at this hour?” he asked.

“Well, I just took over the company, so I’ve had a lot to do lately. Are Charlotte and Samuel okay?”

“They’re fine.”

“Oh—that’s good. Thank you.”

“No problem. You—”

“I have an overseas conference call in a bit, so I’ll have to hang up now. Get some rest.”

Just like that, Justin swallowed the words he had been about to say.

The call ended and his cell phone returned to its home screen.

Nearby, Charlotte nudged Samuel’s arm, and Samuel looked up from his game to take in Justin’s lost expression before shrugging helplessly to show that he didn’t know what to do either.

After all, they had tried everything, but Justin was a fool who always dropped the ball at a crucial moment. It was no wonder Rachel was indifferent to him.

Feeling somewhat bad for him, Charlotte said, “If I’m not wrong, Aunt Gloria’s tour is about to return to the country, Daddy.”

At that, Justin hummed absent-mindedly.

Exasperatedly, she reminded him, “Mommy and Aunt Gloria have a very good relationship.”

Pausing, he looked up at his daughter. “How do you know?”

“Because Aunt Gloria always talks to me about Mommy,” Charlotte pointed out matter-of-factly. “You rarely see Aunt Gloria, so you don’t know.”

Since Justin woke up from his car crash five years ago, Gloria had gone overseas to study music and only came back during the holidays. Although she rarely saw him, she would spoil Charlotte with presents and take Charlotte out for trips.

Did she actually have a good relationship with Rachel?

Justin didn’t have the slightest idea.

Right as he was thinking about it, his cell phone rang. “Hello?”

“President Burton.” It was a call from his assistant, who only had to say a few words before Justin was heading toward the balcony with a grim look on his face.

“Are you sure?”

“I haven’t verified the news yet, but in all probability, it’s the truth.”

Through the glass door, Charlotte sprawled out on the couch and watched her father speak on the phone.

After staring at him for a moment, she sighed helplessly.

“What are you sighing about?” Samuel asked next to her.

“I think you’re right, Samuel. My Daddy is stupid.”

“I told you so. You didn’t believe me.”

“But I don’t want him to be so stupid. I want him to be with Mommy.”

“What else can we do now?”

“When Aunt Gloria comes back, she’ll know what to do.”

At the thought of Aunt Gloria, Charlotte suddenly developed a bit of confidence.

...

Half a month later, Hudson Pharmaceuticals was holding an opening ceremony in honor of the establishment of a foundation to help children who were unable to speak.

All over the scene, there were news reporters and media outlets taking photographs and conducting interviews.

“Chris.” Jolly arrived fashionably late.

On behalf of Carter Enterprise, she had donated ten million to the foundation and was thus a special guest of the opening ceremony. In addition, she was using the establishment of the foundation as an excuse to promote the friendly cooperation between Carter Enterprise and Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Pulling her over so that they could be photographed together, Rachel said in a low voice, “I thought you weren’t coming. Why are you so late?”

“I ran into something on the road.”

“What was it?”

"It's a long story."

Since Jolly was always a straightforward person, her evasiveness gave Rachel the sense that something was wrong. "You're not keeping something from me, are you?"

"Look at the camera," Jolly changed the subject, taking Rachel's hand and reminding her that they were being photographed.

Meanwhile, the ceremony hostesses went on the stage with the tray carrying the scissors for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Upon spotting a familiar figure among the five ceremony hostesses, Jolly asked in astonishment, "My eyes aren't deceiving me, are they?"

The person she was looking at was Amber, who was dressed in a red gown and wearing a welcome sash. Rachel frowned.

On the other hand, Amber nodded at the duo in greeting.

It wasn't until the ribbon-cutting ceremony ended that Rachel sent her employees to entertain the guests and news reporters while she and Jolly collapsed in the hotel lounge.

Eagerly, Jolly asked her, "I heard you accepted Amber into Hudson Pharmaceuticals, but I thought that was because you felt bad for her. What's going on now? Isn't she in R&D? Since when did she become a ceremony hostess?"

"Without anyone to lean on, she would be picked on so easily," Rachel answered mildly. "Ever since that hullabaloo all the while back, everyone knows we don't get along. It's already kind enough for them to keep their distance from her and not bully her out in the open, but there are plenty of people who would step on her to climb the work ladder."

As for who came up with the idea of sucking up to her by arranging for Amber to become a ceremony hostess, Rachel had no idea.

“By the way, are you free this Saturday?” She pulled two concert tickets out of her purse.

Glancing at them, Jolly said, “A piano performance? Since when are you into this stuff? You know I have no interest in cultured stuff like this.”

“It’s Gloria’s tour.”

“Gloria?” Jolly immediately sat up and snatched a ticket over. Sure enough, Gloria’s name as the solo pianist was printed in an extremely eye-catching way on the flier. “Why has she suddenly returned?”

“She’s touring the country and happened to be reaching Riverdale.” Rachel’s expression gentled as she stared at the elegant side profile of the woman in the evening gown on the ticket. “It didn’t matter to her that I haven’t seen her in years.”

Feeling jealous, Jolly commented, “I heard from Julian that she has a fantastic relationship with Justin, and is the daughter of the person who saved Justin’s life. Justin basically raised her.”

“Yes, and she’s helped me a lot as well.” Rachel didn’t realize what the jealousy meant and only said, “But I won’t waste your time if you aren’t interested in the performance. I’ll find someone else to go with me.”

However, before she could take the ticket back, Jolly suddenly raised it above their heads to keep it out of her grip. “Who says I’m not going?”

“Are you?” Rachel questioned in surprise.

“Of course I am! I want to see how truly prodigious this Piano Prodigy is.” Jolly’s eyes suddenly gleamed with fighting spirit.

She wanted to see how great this woman whom Rachel wouldn't stop praising actually was!

Chapter 290 I'm Not Crying; My Eyes Itch

Because of how excited she was that she would soon see Gloria again, Rachel didn't realize what Jolly was thinking. After all, Gloria ranked among the rare few who were nice to her all those years ago.

Very soon, Saturday arrived. The performance was being held at the Jubilee Theater. "What's she up to? Surely she must have returned beforehand if she was going to hold a performance here. Why hasn't she gotten in contact with you before?" Jolly complained on the way there.

"Maybe she feels pressured," Rachel answered. "There are many things to get ready before a performance. Keeping calm is more important."

"And you even got her flowers," Jolly grumbled as she glanced at Rachel's hands. "I've never received any flowers from you."

"Have you lost your memory?" Rachel rolled her eyes. "Didn't I give you flowers when you graduated?"

"They weren't as pretty as this!" Jolly muttered with dissatisfaction. Upon finding her path down the row of seats blocked by two legs, she snapped, "Excuse me, can't you see that someone wants to pass? Do you think you bought the whole row?"

"Godmother!"

Taken aback to hear the familiar voice, Jolly looked up to see two small figures sitting two seats over.

Charlotte and Samuel?

Does that mean the person blocking my path is...

As she glanced out of the corner of her eye, she was met with a cold face.

At this juncture, Justin pulled his legs back. Indeed, he hadn't meant to block her path. His legs were simply too long. However, because the space between the rows of seats was too narrow, he gave up and stood. Instantly, he towered over Jolly by a head.

Unwilling to admit defeat, Jolly looked up at him. "Are you haunting Rachel? Why are you here?"

Using her own words on her, he replied, "Do you think you bought the whole place?"

The moment Justin said that, Samuel put his hand to his forehead, feeling speechless.

No matter who Justin offended, he wasn't to offend the best friend of the woman he was interested in. Best friends were only a smidgen below future mothers-in-law. Didn't Justin know that? There was truly no helping him.

Meanwhile, Jolly was about to get mad when Rachel urged from behind, "There are people behind us, Jolly. Move forward."

Only then did Jolly reluctantly squeeze past Justin to find her own seat three places away from him. When she found her seat, she sat down, only to turn and glare fiercely at Justin.

Meanwhile, Rachel sat in between Charlotte and Jolly. She was separated from Justin by the two children.

Next to her, Jolly grumbled, "I knew Gloria was up to no good. What would this be if I wasn't here? A family outing? Even if she wanted to matchmake, she didn't have to be so obvious about it, did she?"

Meanwhile, Rachel stayed silent.

After all, Gloria didn't necessarily have such an intention. She had put in quite a bit of effort to help Rachel escape Riverdale all those years ago, which meant she didn't necessarily want to see Justin and Rachel together.

Soon after that, the performance started and Jolly fell silent.

There was one unique thing about Gloria's solo performance, which was that she had no host. Right before the curtains rose, she began playing, and the crowd gradually quietened as the piano music filled the theater. Once the curtains had risen, the performance was considered officially begun.

At this moment, Gloria was dressed in a one-shoulder, floor-length evening gown of dark green fabric. From the side, her long, delicate neck happened to be exposed, and seated in front of the grand piano, she no longer looked like the boisterous young woman from all those years ago who could still laugh even when her leg was broken.

After five years, she had grown up.

At this moment, Justin turned his head to look at Rachel. When he saw her fixated on the stage, he could not help it when his gaze turned complicated.

To the best of his ability, he tried to recall the past interaction between Gloria and Rachel. From his own speculation, he would have guessed that they had the relationship of sisters-in-law, because Rachel married him and Gloria could be considered his sister, but such speculation had been confirmed false by Frankie.

"Miss Hochmann and President Hudson have a good relationship, but it is not because of you," Frankie said. "In private, they've always had a good relationship. When President Burton's grandmother was still around, Miss Hochmann would even visit her."

"Did she go with me?"

"You only met President Hudson's grandmother once."

Seemingly finding it awkward, Frankie didn't elaborate much until he was pressed. Only then did he reluctantly admit that Gloria had a good relationship not just with people like Janice, but even people like the schoolteacher, Victor.

Yet, Gloria never once brought Rachel up to him during the past five years.

By now, Justin was confused. Perhaps Julian never brought Rachel up to him because they were both interested in Rachel, but what reason could Gloria have?

At this moment, the piece ended and applause thundered.

Picking up the microphone in front of her, Gloria said, "The last piece is dedicated to someone in the audience who came to see me perform today. I hope she likes it, and I hope everyone else does, too."

During the performance, Gloria rarely spoke, and this was one of the rare times when she did.

Offstage, the reporters went crazy with their photography.

Once the piano piece began, Rachel teared up.

Although she wasn't very well-learned at music, some things were universal. There were some melodies that, when paired with the right instrument, could touch the soul and leave the listener unable to resist.

Just like that, Gloria's piece transported Rachel back to the summer five years ago. Despite the difficulties the latter had endured, the rare moments of sunlight that had made their way through were even more worth cherishing now.

"Mommy, are you crying?" Charlotte asked timidly as she clutched her seat.

"No. My eyes itch, that's all." Rachel evaded Charlotte's calculating stare and turned toward Jolly instead.

Handing her a tissue paper, Jolly sneered internally, How capable this Gloria is!

Once the performance ended, Rachel went backstage with the flowers.

At this moment, Gloria was accepting an interview.

“We heard you lived in Riverdale for a period of time, Miss Hochmann. Did you suggest to the organizers to come back here for the tour?”

“Yes, I wanted to see what it looked like now.”

“Everyone was moved by the new piece you played during the performance. Does it have any meaning?”

“It’s a gift for someone very close to me. I hope she has a new life now.”

And it went on and on.

Just then, Gloria glanced at a spot over the reporter’s shoulder. “My apologies.”

Immediately, her agent interposed between her and the reporter. “Alright, today’s interview has ended. If you have any other questions, we can set up a later date.”

Lifting the hem of her dress, Gloria strode toward the exit. Through the length of the corridor, she could see Rachel walking toward her with a particularly bright and eye-catching bouquet.

“Miss Rachel.”

Handing her the flowers, Rachel said, “This is for you. Your performance was outstanding.”

Taking measure of Rachel, Gloria continued, "How are you now?"

"Can't you tell? I'm great."

"Miss Rachel..." Suddenly, Gloria couldn't resist throwing her arms around Rachel and telling her in a choked voice, "I've wanted to contact you all these years, but I've never quite dared to."

Apart from Justin, Rachel was the best friend she had in this world.

"What's the matter?" Rachel patted her back. "Why are you crying?"

"I've missed you, Miss Rachel."

"I've missed you as well."

Instantly, Gloria's eyes filled with tears.

Nearby, a woman said mockingly from behind them both, "I say, aren't you a pianist? Maybe they should just give you the Oscar for Best Actress."