

Mute Bride 361

Chapter 361 You Are My Fiancée

Jolly did not hold back at all. Ryan's face had a trail of blood dripping down, as Jolly's nails had cut into his face as she slapped him. Flabbergasted, Rachel stood up.

Everyone in the office had a stunned expression. Only Ryan remained calm in this situation, as if he knew that this would happen. He raised his hand to wipe his cheek that was smarting with pain, and he saw the streaks of blood on his fingers.

Ryan stared at Jolly, who was still in front of him, and said evenly, "Do you feel less angry now?"

"You don't need to speak to me in that tone and act as if you're such a magnanimous person. What I despise the most about you is this indifference of yours. Do you really think that everything and everyone will always be under your control? I don't know about other people, but Ryan Sutton..." Jolly stared straight into Ryan's eyes and said with conviction, "I am the exception."

Her words were a little heartless, but also straight to the point.

"Jolly!"

Ryan still attempted to grab her, but Leroy stopped him.

"Jolly already said that she's the exception. Mr. Sutton, please leave now."

"Get away from me. This has nothing to do with you. Jolly, you need to rein in your temper. Your parents are still back home worrying about you. Do you think you can resolve this matter properly by yourself?"

"Isn't it just Estelle's doing?" Jolly's expression did not change. "Please give her a message for me. If she wants to play this game, then I'll play it with her till the end."

Rachel knew that Jolly was a headstrong person who would not back down on her own words.

But it seemed like Ryan was also someone who was used to getting his way.

Therefore, Rachel could not refrain from speaking up. "Since we're clear about what's happened now, then no matter what, there's bound to be a way to resolve it. Mr. Sutton, I think it's best if you leave first. After all, this matter involves your ex-wife, so it is better that we handle it by ourselves."

Ryan wanted to say something, but Justin interrupted him before he could speak. "I'll see you out."

Ryan furrowed his brows, but he regained his cool and exited the office.

As Justin escorted Ryan to the elevator, he did not say anything.

On the other hand, it was Ryan who spoke up angrily. "Justin, I don't recall having any beef with you. Why must you come and mess things up for me at a time like this?"

Justin replied, "You think that I'm messing things up?"

"Are you not? Do you think that doing this will help Jolly, and Rachel would feel grateful toward you?"

"I think you better go home and cool off for a couple of days."

Justin responded evenly, as he could not be bothered to debate this further with Ryan.

But Ryan did not want to drop the topic. "Just tell me what you're talking about."

"Tell you what I'm talking about? You're a smart man, so can't you see things clearly for such a tiny matter? Do you think that everything would be fine if you just resolved the issue without letting Jolly know who did it? Don't you know that the truth will come to light sooner or later?"

It was understandable if Ryan wanted to shield the mastermind, since it was his ex-wife. But he could not be as gullible as to believe that if he did not say who it was, then Jolly would never know.

“Don’t you think I know that? But how would Jolly react once she finds out that it’s Estelle who is behind it? She’ll blow up like she did just now, and everything goes back to square one.”

Justin took a look at the wound on Ryan’s face and felt rather conflicted inside.

Just then, a ‘ding’ sounded and the elevator doors slowly slid open.

“If anything happens, let me know at once. I’ll go now,” Ryan said.

“Okay.”

After seeing Ryan off, Justin was caught up in his own thoughts.

It was unlikely that this matter could be easily resolved.

Back in the office, Rachel quickly gave an excuse and left Jolly and Leroy to themselves.

Jolly was still fuming, and she downed another glass of cold water.

“You shouldn’t keep drinking cold water.” Leroy had a frown on his face. “It won’t be good for your stomach.”

“I’m already exploding from anger inside, so who cares about my stomach!”

“What are you angry about? Estelle?”

The name still felt a little awkward coming out of Leroy's mouth.

Jolly went still.

She never met Leroy throughout her entire university life. She only knew that he was Estelle's boyfriend, and would frequently fetch Estelle to and from university.

At the time, she was still sharing a dorm with Estelle, and they were on good terms. Jolly had not met Ryan yet, and Estelle had not married Ryan.

After hesitating for a moment, Jolly turned to Leroy. "Don't you have anything that you want to ask me?"

"What are you referring to?" Leroy calmly replied.

"I know that you know Ryan."

"And?"

"I also know that Estelle is your ex-girlfriend. She was my roommate when we were at university."

"Anything else?" Leroy asked plainly.

Jolly did not feel the need to elaborate further. "Don't look at me like that. I did approach you in the beginning in order to understand what happened back then, but I swear, everything else was really just for the sake of the endorsement deal."

"So that means you did approach me with ulterior motives?"

"Of course not," Jolly quickly refuted.

Leroy seemed unbothered by the situation, and he even had a pleasant smile on his face. This made Jolly even more unsettled.

“Shall I just make my apologies to you?” Jolly felt very disturbed by Leroy’s lack of reaction toward this. It felt like he was scheming to get back at her in some way.

“I’ve seen you before,” Leroy stated.

“Huh?” Leroy’s abrupt statement took Jolly by surprise. “What do you mean you’ve seen me before?”

“At the university back then. I’ve seen you before.”

“When? Are you joking?”

“Do I look like I’m joking? Back then, you and Ryan were probably still hiding your relationship. You weren’t with your other friends, and he was the one who sent you back to the dormitory.”

What the hell!

So he really did see me!

Jolly felt speechless. “This is what you meant by seeing me? This is spying!”

“If you want to put it that way, then sure. I was just curious to know what my girlfriend’s roommate was like!”

“Wait a minute. So what you’re saying is that you’ve spied on every girl in our dorm?”

“That’s not what I meant!” Leroy hurried to defend himself. “I’ve only spied on you that one time. Once I found out about your secret, I didn’t dare spy on anyone else again. I was afraid that it would backfire on me someday.”

Backfire was truly the best description.

Leroy was not someone who cared for other people’s gossip, and it was best for him to not know about anyone else’s secret. However, he personally witnessed the secret relationship between Jolly and Ryan, so how could it not scare him off the idea of spying on people?

Jolly was still a little shocked, and she mumbled, “So when did you recognize me?”

“The first time we met.”

“At the Grand Maple Restaurant?”

“No, on the Golden Cruise.”

Jolly was taken aback by Leroy’s answer. “You already knew who I was back then?”

If she recalled correctly, that was the first time that they had properly met in person.

At the time, Leroy had been taking a shower when Jolly suddenly barged her way in. He had jumped in fright, but once he saw her face, he was secretly rather pleased.

She was not the only one who wanted to get to know him, and his goal was never just to be her friend.

Leroy declared, “You know what, I have the perfect solution for this situation now.”

“What’s the solution?”

“We’ll announce our relationship to the public.”

“What?” Jolly’s eyes turned round with surprise, as she could not believe what she just heard. “You want me to pretend to be your girlfriend?”

“No, I will organize a press conference and announce that you are my fiancée.”

Chapter 362 How Bad Could Her Intentions Be

When Leroy said that, Rachel just got back. She halted in her footsteps upon hearing the word ‘fiancée.’

At the same time, Justin returned. Noticing Rachel was stunned and standing at the door, he stopped the secretary, who was sending some light refreshments, saying, “Leave it with me.”

Nodding, the secretary passed the tray to Justin.

When Rachel returned to her senses, she turned around to look at Justin, asking, “Did you hear that too?”

Justin nodded in response.

Rachel inquired after some hesitation, “Do you think it’s feasible?”

“Do you mean the approach Leroy just suggested?”

“Yeah.”

“If the person involved isn’t against the idea, I actually think it’s a feasible plan. At least, it’s beneficial to Jolly.”

There was a reason why Justin intentionally emphasized that the plan was beneficial to Jolly.

Since fame meant everything in this era, Leroy, being an idol, was sure to experience a loss of fans and suffer irreparable damage once he announced his relationship.

At noon the next day, Leroy's agency held a press conference.

The press conference was held in the conference room of a hotel under Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

The moment Leroy announced that he and Jolly were in a relationship, the topic immediately trended on several online platforms. Since the press conference was done on a Saturday, the response was even more overwhelming due to netizens having more free time, so it quickly gained interest over the internet.

In the comments, there were quite a number of people who started criticizing Jolly, but most of them were discussions on whether to leave the fandom, nothing too serious. The matter regarding the "casting couch deal" was then being brushed off just like that.

In the evening.

"Where are you going? It's the weekend! Don't you wanna stay at home with me?"

Jolly was lying on the sofa lazily in the house as she asked Rachel.

Rachel got up early in the morning to tidy the house and was now ready to leave.

"You want me to stay at home with you? But you already have a fiancé, though!" teased Rachel.

"Can we not talk about this? It gives me a headache."

While they were talking, Jolly's phone rang again.

After the press conference that Leroy's agency held in the morning, news of their relationship spread like wildfire on the internet. That was the reason why Jolly had been receiving phone calls nonstop ever since then.

Adding to the fact that she had many indecent friends in Riverdale, plus Leroy was also a popular artist, anyone would be curious as to whether they were really dating, and how they started dating.

"Damn it!"

After spitting a curse word, Jolly shut off her phone. "Ugh. This is so annoying."

Seeing Jolly in that state, Rachel poured a glass of water and handed it to her. "Here, calm yourself down. By the way, didn't Leroy give you a call?"

"He's having it worse. Way worse than me."

"What about... Ryan?"

Furrowing her brows, Jolly retorted, "What does this have to do with him? Why are you even mentioning him? What a buzz kill."

Alright, then. Ryan didn't deserve to be mentioned anymore.

Turning around to take a look at the bedroom, Rachel lowered her voice, saying, "Jolly, I have to remind you. You should be mentally prepared for what's going to happen to Samuel."

"Why?"

"If Estelle could use Leroy to slander you, I'm afraid she has more plans up her sleeves."

There were people who were aware of Samuel's background. Even if Jolly didn't admit it, Samuel looked exactly like Ryan. It might not seem so if they weren't put side by side, but if they did stand beside each other, the resemblance would be uncanny.

"If she dares to try anything on Samuel, I'm never going to let her go."

"That's enough tough talk. You should control your emotions a little. Now, I'm going to quote your words. In life, we will always have to move on."

Watching Rachel, Jolly could feel her furrowed brows loosen a little. With a serious expression, she nodded. "Okay."

"Enough of this topic. Look, it's dark outside already. Where are you going?"

"I'm going to bring Charlotte out for dinner to meet Justin."

Jolly scanned her before questioning, "Are you two..."

Rachel immediately shook her head, defending herself, "You're overthinking it. I'm just going to send Charlotte over since I have something to settle in the office. I'll fetch her home after they're done with dinner."

Though Rachel managed to obtain her daughter's custody, Justin still had the right to meet Charlotte.

Hearing that, Jolly raised her eyebrow and tsk-tsked.

"Stop being weird. I'm leaving." After saying that, Rachel went to the bedroom to look for Charlotte and Samuel.

As Jolly watched Rachel's back, she shook her head meaningfully. It's not me who's overthinking it. It's you who don't think about things in detail. Then again, what indecent thoughts can come from an artless lady like her?

Initially, they thought that the custody lawsuit would be the final step to cutting all ties with Justin. However, it seemed that Rachel and Justin had been contacting each other even more often after that.

On the other hand, Rachel drove the two children out.

Once they arrived at the restaurant's parking lot, Rachel tidied Charlotte's shirt before uttering, "Charlotte, I'll send you to the restaurant later. Have a nice meal with Daddy and I'll come with Samuel

to pick you up after that."

Upon hearing that, Charlotte was taken aback. "Mommy, aren't you and Samuel coming with me?"

"You haven't been spending time with Daddy lately, and he misses you. I'll come back later to fetch you."

"No!"

Suddenly, Charlotte started throwing tantrums. Turning around, she crawled into the car. "Mommy, I don't want to go anymore. Let's go home."

"Why are you like this, Charlotte? Didn't you promise me?"

Charlotte's face was cold now, and she fell silent.

Just as Rachel tried to persuade her, her phone rang.

"Hello? Are you here?"

Justin's voice sounded over the other end.

Furrowing her brows, Rachel replied, "I'm at the parking lot. Give us some time. We're coming."

"What happened?" From Rachel's tone of voice, Justin could immediately tell that there was something off.

"Nothing."

"Is Charlotte throwing a tantrum again?"

"It's not that. Just give me a while."

Justin was not in his best condition recently, so Rachel didn't want to increase his burden.

After hanging up the phone, Rachel persuaded Charlotte once again. "Daddy loves you very much, and didn't I already explain the matter of the photos to you before? It's all a misunderstanding. Daddy doesn't even know who that woman is. You shouldn't hurt Daddy like this."

"But Daddy hurt you."

Rachel was taken aback by her statement.

Pulling Rachel's arms, Charlotte begged, "Mommy, I don't want to eat with Daddy alone. Can you and Samuel come with me?"

Charlotte's pretty eyes were tainted with the color of red now, and she looked so pitiful.

The look on her face instantly made Rachel give in.

“Okay. I’ll come with you.”

“Can you carry me?” Charlotte spread her arms wide as she asked.

Five minutes later, Rachel carried Charlotte in her arms while Samuel walked beside her. The trio arrived together at the restaurant.

On the other hand, Justin was already seated at the table beside the window, clearly having been waiting for a long time.

“Did you wait for long? Sorry, we were caught up in a traffic jam on the road.”

“It’s okay. I’m not that busy.”

Rachel felt uncomfortable hearing him mention that he wasn’t busy.

Not wanting to venture into that topic since it hurt, Rachel put Charlotte down and said, “Go and sit beside Daddy.”

After glancing at her sideways, Charlotte climbed onto the seat opposite Justin and sat beside Samuel.

Seeing that, Rachel couldn’t help but frown. “What did you promise me, Charlotte?”

Only then did Charlotte mutter reluctantly, “Hi, Daddy.”

Chapter 363 A Thirty-Year-Old Old Man

“Daddy, it’s fine for Mommy to join us for dinner, right?” Charlotte stared at Justin with a cold face as she folded her arms in front of her chest, trying to look intimidating.

Throughout the 30 or so years of his life, no one had ever dared to talk to him like his daughter just did. Finding her amusing, he looked at Rachel, uttering, "I already ordered the food. It won't take you long. You can just treat it as spending time with our children."

Since Rachel had already promised Charlotte, she didn't refuse his offer.

"Are you sure you two want to sit together? Can you eat by yourself, Charlotte?" Rachel questioned the two kids in front of her.

Samuel didn't have a problem eating by himself, but Charlotte was a spoiled child, who was used to being spoon fed. Rachel did try to get her to change that habit, but eventually, she would give in to Charlotte once the girl threw a temper.

She didn't know why her little brat became so independent all of a sudden. Tilting her head up in an arrogant way, Charlotte uttered, "I can eat by myself!"

With that, she shoved the spoon into her mouth.

Samuel, on the other hand, was happily chewing on his chicken wings.

The waiter then placed a glass of juice in front of Rachel.

"Thanks." Rachel thanked the waiter.

Seeing that, Justin urged, "Don't just feed them. You should eat."

Rachel couldn't stop moving her hands. All the prawns she peeled were put onto the kids' plates.

"I'll eat after peeling this last one."

After placing the last piece on Charlotte's plate, Rachel looked around but didn't find any tissue.

Just then, Justin handed her a wet towel.

"Thank you," said Rachel after being stunned for a while.

"You're welcome."

"How's the news going? Is everything alright?" inquired Justin.

"Now that the attention has been shifted to the two of them, no one has been declaring a war anymore at Hudson Pharmaceuticals. It's all in the past now to them. The one thing that got affected would probably be the endorsements for the health beverages not doing so well."

Justin nodded at that. "It's the consequence of the artist's influence. Is Hudson Pharmaceuticals considering changing the ambassador?"

Leroy was a popular idol, so the announcement of his relationship was bound to have an effect on his career. All his endorsements were the first to be affected. Sales dropped greatly, and Hudson Pharmaceuticals happened to be one of them.

In response, Rachel shook her head. "No. I plan to sign a long-term contract with him."

"Why?"

"There are plenty of popular idols in the entertainment industry, and every year, more and more artists will debut. It's extremely rare to find an artist with good manners and personality. I have a hunch that

even though someone like Leroy announced his relationship and screened out some fans, his real market value will stand out."

“You’re taking a risk right there. Have you thought it through?”

“I’ve already instructed my assistant to draft the contract.”

Seeing that she had her own opinions, Justin didn’t utter another word.

While they were eating, Rachel’s phone suddenly rang.

She knitted her brows together upon seeing the caller ID. After setting it into silent mode, she left the phone aside.

“Why don’t you pick up the call?” inquired Justin.

“It’s Ryan,” answered Rachel.

Before she could explain further, a childish voice sounded from the opposite. “Mr. Ryan calls us so many times a day! He even calls our landline sometimes! Godmother is so annoyed. She calls him a pervert!”

“You can’t call him that, Charlotte,” reminded Rachel.

“But it’s the truth!” Charlotte pouted with a look of dismay. “Leroy is way more handsome than he is! Now that Godmother is dating Leroy, she wouldn’t bother about that old man.”

Charlotte was Leroy’s top fan, and when she knew about Leroy being in a relationship with Jolly, she was all for it.

Meanwhile, she called Ryan an old man...

Clearing his throat, Justin uttered, “I don’t think Mr. Ryan is that old right, Charlotte?”

“He is! He’s already over 30 years old.”

Justin was rendered speechless in an instant, the corners of his lips twitching.

Though Ryan was a few years younger than him, Charlotte thought of him as an old man. If it weren’t for the fact that he was her father, she would have probably called him an old man too.

That was because Charlotte was attracted to Leroy, who had the charisma of an idol.

However, Rachel was more concerned about Samuel’s preference.

“Samuel, who do you think is more suitable for Godmother? Mr. Ryan or Leroy?”

Samuel was too busy chewing on his drumstick that when he raised his head, Rachel could see the oil smearing all over his lips. With a muffled voice, he asked, “Huh?”

Rachel was speechless at that.

“Do you really not care about Godmother at all?”

Wiping his mouth clean, Samuel retorted, “She has too many boyfriends! I can’t care that much!”

“What if she got scammed?”

“By whom? Mr. Leroy?” Samuel sighed. “I’m more worried that he would be scammed by Godmother.”

Just as Rachel wanted to say something to defend Jolly, Justin laughed.

“Don’t children always know their mothers best?”

Reaching out his arm over the table, he wiped off the sauce on Samuel's lips.

"Godmother is going to be so furious if she heard what you just said. She adored you for nothing," said Rachel.

Blinking his eyes innocently, Samuel stated, "She won't. I actually prefer Godmother to be with Leroy."

"Oh? Why is that?"

"Because Leroy looks like a fool. He doesn't seem to be all that smart. Godmother definitely won't suffer if she dates him."

Rachel winced at that, not knowing what to respond.

That meant Ryan must seem clever to him!

While they were talking about Jolly's love life, the atmosphere around the table seemingly lightened. Charlotte was even willing to talk to Justin now. When Rachel saw that Charlotte ate whatever Justin put on her plate, she heaved a sigh of relief.

After an hour, they were still not done with the meal yet.

Samuel caressed his belly and leaned back against the chair.

"What's wrong?" Rachel asked. "Are you full already?"

Just as Samuel wanted to nod, someone pinched him under the table. He then quickly forced a grin and replied, "No, I want some more."

“You want more?”

Rachel widened her eyes at the table of food.

He was surely going to get a stomachache if he ate some more! “That’s enough for you today. You ate half of the chicken and a whole glass of juice. It’s also getting late. We should get going soon,” urged Rachel.

Hearing that, Charlotte became anxious. “I’m not full yet! I want a cake!”

While saying that, she raised her hand to signal a waiter.

“Excuse me!”

Just as she had called out to the waiter, she burped.

“Burp—”

Rachel was puzzled. “Are you sure you’re not full yet?”

Charlotte forced herself to nod in response.

“I know what you’re up to.” Rachel finally realized what was going on. “Do you not want to go home so soon?”

Charlotte felt guilty, but she insisted, “I just want to eat another cake.”

Glancing down at her watch, Rachel suggested, “What about this? I’ll give you two options. First, you eat another piece of cake, and then we go home. Second, I’ll bring you and Samuel out for a walk to digest the food, and then we go home. Which one do you want?”

Charlotte's eyes lit up instantly. "The second one!"

To be frank, she couldn't stuff any more food into her mouth!

"What about you, Samuel? Do you want to eat some more?"

Samuel grimaced. "I'm going to explode if I eat some more!"

Chapter 364 You Haven't Changed at All

After Justin paid for the food, he walked out of the restaurant with Rachel and the two children. "Alright. I guess I will leave now," he said.

"Wait a second," Rachel called out to him as he was walking away. "Let's go together." Justin halted and turned his head to her, looking confused.

Rachel let out a brief sigh and explained, "Didn't you get the hint earlier? Charlotte wants to spend a bit more time with you."

Just then, Charlotte took a few steps forward and held her mother's hand. "Daddy, you are such an idiot," she mocked. Then, she rolled her eyes at Justin as she pouted her lips.

When the family walked out of the shopping mall, they saw a commercial plaza that was ablaze with colorful lights in front of them. At this time of day, the plaza was flooded with people, with many young couples in particular.

"Mommy, I want to ride that one!" Charlotte pointed to the distant carousel, and her face was full of excitement. "I want to ride the pumpkin wagon!" she added.

"Okay, but please run slowly. You just finished eating." Rachel stumbled as she was pulled toward the carousel by Charlotte with force.

As they reached in front of the carousel, Samuel and Charlotte were having a dispute. Samuel crossed his arms around himself and said, "I don't want to ride on this childish thing."

Charlotte pouted and argued, "No, you have to ride it with me!"

"Nope. I am not doing it." Samuel snorted.

The two of them had reached a deadlock. Neither of them was backing off. At this point, Rachel stepped in and tried to reconcile the conflict between the two. "Sweetie, Mommy will join you on the ride. Samuel might get dizzy from riding on the carousel. Let's not force it on him," Rachel coaxed Charlotte with a soft tone.

After hearing what her mother said, Charlotte finally eased down her angry face and reluctantly agreed. "Okay then. You and Daddy will wait for us here," she said to Samuel.

Then, she tilted her head to Justin and asked with a cheerful look, "Daddy, can you take some pictures of the two of us riding the carousel?"

Justin nodded as he smiled at her. "Sure."

When Rachel and Charlotte sat tight on the carousel, the joyful music started to play in the background. Following the music rhythm, their carousel and the pumpkin wagon swayed up and down at a low speed.

At the same time, Justin stood outside of the railing and started to take pictures of the two with his cell phone. In the frame, Charlotte was nestled in Rachel's arms. She was bursting with joy, and her little bunny teeth showed up in her wide smile.

"Mommy, let's change our pose. Shall we make a heart shape together with our fingers?" Charlotte chirped.

"Sure, sweetheart." Looking at her happy face, Rachel felt a glimmer of happiness.

“How about this pose? Maybe we should raise our hands like this?” Charlotte continued changing their poses, and Rachel cooperated with all her requests. Likewise, Justin was enthusiastically taking pictures of them from different angles.

After they rode on the carousel for two rounds, a swarm of people walked past and suddenly crowded at the fore of the carousel. Justin’s view was blocked and he could not include Rachel and Charlotte in the frame.

“Ehh?” Charlotte was a little startled by the unexpected crowd. “Oh no, the view is blocked!” she complained.

“Don’t worry. It’ll be over soon,” Rachel soothed her.

They rode for another round on the carousel, and when they finally saw Justin again, he was facing away from them, turning his head around anxiously, as if he was searching for something. When Rachel saw that, she was a little stunned.

“What is Daddy doing?” Charlotte asked. She looked confused, and so did Rachel. As soon as the carousel stopped, she immediately got Charlotte down from it and searched for Justin. He was standing beside a flower bed that was not far away from them. Strangely, he wasn’t waiting for them. He was pulling a stranger next to him and asking something with a panicky look on his face.

He is alone. Just him. Rachel thought. Her heart skipped a beat.

What about Samuel? Where is he?

“Where’s Samuel?” she asked as she walked up to Justin briskly.

Justin spun around and looked at them. He was in a complete state of panic. “Just now, there was a group of people passing by. By the time they were gone, I turned around and Samuel was missing,” he explained with a quavering voice. “I’m searching for him. Don’t worry.” He tried to assure Rachel.

At that moment, Rachel's face went blank. She forcibly suppressed the emotions that were surging within her. Then, she turned around and left without a word.

"Rachel!" Justin chased behind her and shouted.

"Don't come with me! Just wait here with Charlotte," she instructed and left in a rush.

Samuel is more mature than any child of his age. It is not like him to run away. When she thought about the crowd that had suddenly appeared previously, she felt a chill running down her spine.

Meanwhile, at the plaza's broadcasting office, Rachel was asking the security guard to review the CCTV footage of the incident.

"Here, where the carousel is at. Can you play it back to about fifteen minutes ago?" she asked.

"Here?" The guard confirmed it with her while moving the cursor on the screen.

"Yes," she replied curtly.

Rachel fixed her gaze on the screen, searching for Samuel. All of a sudden, she pointed at a spot on the screen, and said, "Did you see this child right here? He's my son. Can you please replay it at a slower speed?"

"Okay." The security guard slowed down the playback speed, and then pressed the play button. On the screen, it showed that when the crowd was passing by, Samuel was first pulled over to the side by a man. Then, this man used the large balloon bunch as a cover, carried Samuel in his arms, and quickly ran away.

"He was taken away by this strange man," the guard stated.

"Can you see his face?" Rachel asked.

“I’ll rewind the video to an earlier time frame and see if we can find him,” he replied.

The surveillance screen shifted, and this time, they had a closer shot. They were able to tell that it was the same man earlier from his clothes and his body figure. However, the face mask and the hat that he wore made it impossible for them to identify his face. It seemed like he had come prepared.

“How’s it going?”

A familiar voice came from outside the monitoring room. It was Justin. He rushed into the room with Charlotte. “Did you find him?” he asked nervously.

Rachel’s pale face turned red as the anger grew within her body. “I told you to wait there, didn’t I?” she snapped. “If you aren’t there waiting for him, how can Samuel find us? He is still a child, and he will be terrified!” She raised her voice and her anger exploded. Her voice was ear-piercing as it echoed in the monitoring room.

At once, Justin’s feet were cemented to the floor, and his face stiffened.

“Rachel, I’m just trying to…” After he caught his breath, he tried to explain to her, but she wouldn’t let him finish.

“That’s enough!” she shouted back at him.

“If you were able to hold Samuel’s hand earlier like how you’re holding Charlotte now, he wouldn’t have gone missing!”

At this point, Rachel had completely lost her mind and rage flowed through her like lava. “You do not care about his safety because he is not your son! I thought you had changed, but I was wrong. You haven’t changed at all, and you are still the same selfish person that you’ve always been!” she chastised.

Justin couldn’t defend a word. His hands hanging at his sides tightened slightly as he frowned.

Charlotte was frightened by her mother's reckless behavior. "Mommy..." she murmured cautiously, with a touch of fear in her voice.

Charlotte's voice wasn't loud, but it had caught Rachel's attention. She let out a long sigh and forced herself to calm down. "Sweetheart, can you stay with your daddy tonight? Mommy has to look for Samuel," she said.

After saying that, she left the monitoring room without turning back. While she was rushing to her car, she took her phone out and dialed 911. The call operator picked up the call swiftly and she started to explain the incident to them.

"Hello? I want to make a report. My son is missing."

"Yes, about twenty minutes ago."

"In Joy Plaza where the carousel is at, and the surveillance caught a man taking him away."

It was late at night when Rachel finished making a statement at the police station and received a call from Jolly.

"Stop searching. Just go home, Rachel. I know who took Samuel away," she said.

"Who is it?" Rachel asked.

"The Suttons."

"Ryan Sutton?" Rachel's face darkened when she heard what Jolly just said. "Where are you now?" she asked with concern.

"On the way to the Sutton Residence," Jolly replied. Her voice was icy cold.

Rachel was worried about Jolly going there by herself. "Send me the address. I'll come along."

"Don't come over. This matter has nothing to do with you. I'll handle it myself." Jolly had made up her mind.

After hanging up the phone, Rachel immediately drove away from the police station.

On the way, she made a phone call to Ryan, and before he could say anything, she hollered, "Ryan Sutton, there is a limit to being despicable and shameless!"

"W-What?" He sounded completely dumbfounded.

She went on and accused, "I once thought you were a man, but what kind of a man would take an innocent child away from their parents?"

"What the hell are you talking about?" He was starting to get agitated by her accusation.

"Stop pretending. Didn't you have Samuel taken away?" she questioned him furiously.

In disbelief and shock, he said, "Take him away? Wait, are you saying that Samuel is missing?"

"Jolly is now on her way to your house. What else do you need to hide?" Rachel tried to get the truth out of him.

At first, Ryan paused for a moment on the other end of the phone. Then, as if he had understood the whole situation, he explained calmly, "Look, Samuel really wasn't taken away by me, but I think I know what happened."

"I don't care who did it. Ryan Sutton, I'm warning you now. Samuel is not only Jolly's lifeblood, but also mine. If you touch one hair on his head, I will come at you at full force with the entire Hudson

Pharmaceuticals. You mark my words!” Without waiting for his response, she hung up the phone on him. Then, she stepped on the accelerator and drove away from the city.

Jolly wouldn't have reacted that strangely on the phone if Samuel was taken away by Ryan. If the person who did it is not Ryan but related to the Sutton Family, then there is only one possibility: Samuel was taken away by Ryan's mother, Old Madam Sutton.

And Estelle Dolton, her daughter-in-law, is very much adored by this old lady!

Chapter 365 Ill-Mannered Brat

It was already midnight when Rachel arrived at Sutton Manor in West Magnolia. The gate was locked, and Jolly seemed to have arrived before her for a while, but she was blocked at the gate by the security guard.

“Sorry, Old Madam Sutton is already resting and she will not be seeing any guests,” the guard said without emotion on his face.

Jolly replied to him, “I'm not a guest, and I'm not here to see the old lady. I'm here to see my son.”

“I'm sorry, but we don't have the person you are looking for here.” The guard was firm and unapproachable.

“Excuse me?” Jolly was so angry that she was about to burst off. “My friends saw the car drive into your manor with their own eyes. You are lying to me! Unfortunately, you leave me with no choice but to call the police!” If it weren't for the reputation of the Carter Family and to not aggravate the situation, Jolly would have called the police a long time ago.

At that moment, a pair of headlights lit up from behind them, and a black car stopped at the gate. Ryan got out of his car swiftly and ran straight to Jolly.

“Jolly...” Before he could finish his sentence, Jolly took a stride forward and... Slap!

She slapped him hard on the cheek. The slapping sound echoed in the quiet night. He didn't even dodge a bit, allowing the slap to land firmly on his cheek. This strike is even harder than the last time, he thought.

To avoid agitating Jolly further, he turned his head to the guard and commanded, "Open the gate!"

The guard dared not refuse and obeyed the order promptly. After all, this woman dared to slap their young master! As soon as the gate opened, Jolly sprinted through with Rachel following behind her closely.

"This estate is enormous. Do you know where Samuel is?" Rachel asked as she walked. "Why don't we ask Ryan?" she added.

"There is no need to ask. I know this place inside out, and I will not forget it even if I die." Jolly seemed very tense right now.

Obviously, she had been here before, and the memories of this place were engraved in her mind. Not a pleasant one, I guess, Rachel assumed.

Throughout Jolly's life, humiliation was not something that she experienced regularly. In fact, she had only been humiliated twice. Ryan once mistook her for a poor girl and asked her to commit herself as his lover, and the second one took place here.

Rachel followed Jolly through the pavilions, and at the first glance, she could tell that this ancient manor was worth a lot of money. When they reached a two-story courtyard, Jolly stopped in her tracks. Staring at the building in front of her, she gritted her teeth and clenched her fists. The rage was pulsing through her veins.

"No! Get it off me!" All of a sudden, they heard the wailing of a child coming through from the courtyard.

Rachel's facial expression shifted from worried to angry. Before she could react, Jolly was already ahead of her, running into the building and kicking the door open.

“Samuel!” Jolly yelled.

Jolly and Rachel were completely taken aback by the scene as soon as they rushed into the hall. A maid restricted Samuel’s movement, and a doctor in a white coat held his arm. With a syringe in his hand, the doctor sought to draw blood from Samuel’s arm.

“What the hell are you doing?” Jolly chided. Under the shocked gaze of the crowd, she dashed forward and grabbed Samuel away from them. His little face was pale and full of terror. He leaned into her arms and shivered uncontrollably.

“Samuel, are you okay?” she asked with a panicked tone.

Samuel winced in pain as he murmured, “They... They want to draw my blood.”

Jolly was always strong and optimistic, but her tears streamed down her cheeks when she heard him. Her hands trembled as she held his.

Samuel felt guilty when he saw her tears, and he stretched out his little hand to wipe them. “Godmother, it’s okay. I don’t feel the pain.”

My little boy is trembling with terror. How can it not hurt? Jolly could feel that her heart was broken into many pieces.

Having seen the plight that Samuel had been through, Rachel felt anguished. She shifted her focus and observed the surroundings, and she said, “It is a criminal offense to abduct a child and intentionally harm the child. With the witness and physical evidence available, I am going to sue you!”

Suddenly, a coughing sound sounded from the side. “Sue us? I suggest you think before you leap, Miss Hudson.” The voice had a condescending tone by its nature.

Just then, an old woman in her fifties, supported by a maid, slowly walked out of the inner room and sat down on the couch. The old woman had downturned eyes and a cunning look on her. Those sarcastic

and demeaning statements were coming from her.

Here she is, Old Madam Sutton!

“We just want to verify whether this child is the seed of our Sutton Family, lest some shameless people use a little wild seed to deceive our property!” she said haughtily.

Just when Rachel stepped forward and wanted to say something back, she was stopped by Jolly as she placed her palm on Rachel’s chest.

Then, she handed Samuel over to Rachel and said, “Wait for me.” She seemed a lot calmer and no longer panicked after ensuring that Samuel was safe. As a response, Rachel nodded briefly to Jolly.

Jolly suppressed her anger and gave the old lady a frosty stare. After that, she took a step toward the old lady and remarked, “Samuel has nothing to do with the Sutton Family!”

“Even if the Carter Family is in financial ruin in the future, I will not touch a cent of your family’s money. You still act like the snob you were back then, old witch!” she added angrily.

“What did you say?” Old Madam Sutton was irritated by Jolly’s rude comments. She pointed at Jolly and cursed, “You ill-mannered brat! Is this what your father taught you?”

“Ill-mannered? Do you even regard this as ill-mannered? You haven’t seen the worst of me yet!” Jolly retaliated.

After saying that, Jolly spun around and snatched the tube that contained Samuel’s blood from the doctor.

Just then, Ryan entered the hall. “What are you doing? Stop!” he shouted at her. Ignoring Ryan’s warning, Jolly raised her hand and hurled the tube of blood at the old lady.

“Mom!” He dashed forward and shielded his mother with his back.

Crash! The tube of blood smashed into the wall behind them and broke into fragments. The blood splashed onto the wall, forming a huge circle, flowing down the wall. The scene was disgusting and creepy.

Looking at the blood on the wall, Ryan became extremely pale. "Mom, are you okay?" He calmed himself down and tried to make sure his mother was safe. Old Madam Sutton was so frightened that she couldn't say anything but shiver. In disbelief, she stared at Jolly's face with anger and a hint of fear.

After smashing the tube, Jolly gave the mother and son a callous stare. "Old witch, I am telling you for the one last time, and you better mark my words. I'm not interested in your money, or anything to do with your family. However, if any of you touches my son one more time, I want him dead!" she warned.

Then, Jolly turned to Rachel and said, "Chris, let's go."

"Jolly!" When Ryan tried to chase after her, he was stopped by his mother as she grabbed his arm. "Do you see that? This is the true color of this woman and you want to marry her? She's going to ruin the Sutton Family!"

"Mom! You have crossed the line!" he yelled at her with anger and disappointment. Then, he stood up and attempted to leave.

"Stop right there! If you dare to take one step out of this door, I will not have you as a son!"

A resentful look appeared on his face as he heard what the old lady said. "Take good care of my mother," he instructed the maid and left without turning back.

Ryan ran at full speed and finally caught up with the three of them as they were crossing a bridge that headed toward the main gate of the manor.

"Jolly, just give me a minute," he begged as he pulled her by the hand. "I can explain. I really didn't know my mother would do this. If I had known, I would have stopped her."

“Get your hand off me!” Jolly shook away his hand. “If you hadn’t been pestering me, would the old witch have done this?”

“Can you not call her old witch? That’s my mother!” he complained.

“To me, calling her an old witch is incomparable to what she has done to me,” she sneered.

“Jolly, I know my mother is a bit old-fashioned, but can you talk to me calmly without raising your voice? Even though she is at fault for doing what she did, she had no bad intentions; she just wanted to verify Samuel’s DNA.”

Ryan’s shameless attitude irritated Rachel. She couldn’t stop rolling her eyes at him because he was still defending his mother’s action. If she was not busy covering Samuel’s ears on the side, she would have kicked him into the pond under the bridge.

Jolly felt breathless as the anger brewed within her. “Oh yeah? Back then, she also tried to verify what kind of person I was, and how did that turn out? In her eyes, I am a shameless woman who seduced you. Do you need me to repeat the things that she had said to humiliate me?” she rebuked.

“Jolly, I’m so sorry,” he apologized sheepishly.

“You don’t have to apologize. After all, I am the one who doesn’t deserve you. So, please stay away from me in the future.”

Ryan realized that whatever he said was only going to worsen the situation. So, he stopped arguing and reached his arm out to her, attempting to calm her down.

“Don’t touch me!” As soon as he touched her, she snapped and pushed him away forcefully.

Splash!

In shock, Ryan’s pupils contracted as he fell backward from the bridge and into the pond.

Rachel was thunderstruck. She never thought that her wishes would come true.

Chapter 366 No Responsibilities and Obligations

Rachel was startled. "Jolly." After struggling in the water for some time, Ryan finally stood up. He was standing waist-deep in the water. At this moment, he looked highly ridiculous.

"Ryan, I've warned you to stay away from me long ago, but you ignored it. It was obvious that you caused the incident today. If you truly wish me well, you should stay away from me!"

"Jolly! This is impossible!" Although Ryan was standing in the water pathetically, his attitude was still uncompromising. "As long as our engagement is not broken, you are still my fiancée! You want to be with Leroy, right? I'll tell you, it will never happen!"

"Okay, we'll see!" After Jolly retorted, she walked away with Rachel.

This time, the old lady of the Sutton Family had definitely crossed her line.

On the way back, Rachel was driving the car.

The rearview mirror showed the back seat, so Rachel could see that Samuel had already fallen asleep.

"What are you going to do about this? Is this the end of it?"

"It's impossible for this to end just yet. The old fool lives in this godforsaken place after all. Unless someone told that old fool about Samuel, she would never pull this stunt."

"Who told the old lady?"

“Estelle Dolton,” Jolly said the name with certainty. “She never stopped causing trouble ever since she knew that I had returned to Riverdale.”

“Her again.”

“Besides her, I can’t think of anyone else who has such a huge grudge against me.”

After she spoke, Jolly turned her head around and glanced at the back seat. When she saw Samuel, she softened her frown. “Chris, you’re right. It is useless to hide. Even if you’re innocent, there’ll always be someone who will give you trouble.”

Upon hearing that, Rachel gave Jolly a comforting look. “No matter what happens, I will always be on your side.”

“Thanks.”

It was already midnight. In the dark night, the lights in the high-rise buildings in Riverdale gradually went off. The only lights that shone on the streets were from the 24-hour convenience stores. At this time, only a few people were visiting the stores.

An hour later, Rachel drove into the community area.

Distant headlights were illuminating the road ahead. It was from a car that was parked under their building. A man could be seen leaning against that car while smoking.

As soon as the man saw Rachel’s car, he immediately put out the cigarette butt and threw it into the trash can.

Soon, the car came to a stop by the road, and Rachel tightened her hands holding the steering wheel.

On any other day, Jolly would’ve immediately called Justin a scumbag when she saw him. But today, she only glanced at him and said, “Chris, I’ll take Samuel up first.”

Soon, Jolly carried the sleeping Samuel from the car and passed by Justin.

“Is Samuel alright?”

“He’s fine.”

After that, Jolly went straight into the building.

Rachel closed the car door, and the electronic sound of locking the car echoed in the night along with the sound of her heels clicking along the flagstone road. “Why are you here? Where’s Charlotte?”

It was past one in the morning.

In response, Justin said, “I’ve sent Charlotte off to Gloria’s. Did the Sutton Family kidnap Samuel?”

“You know everything?”

“Yeah.”

When Justin found out that Samuel was missing, he asked Frankie to immediately check all the traffic networks monitoring the square and the surrounding area. After an extensive data analysis, he finally found out the identity of the man who took Samuel away and that the man was related to the Sutton Family.

After that, Justin immediately contacted Ryan, who told him that Rachel had gone to Sutton Residence.

After sending Charlotte to Gloria’s side, he had been waiting here since.

“I’m sorry. I’ve neglected Samuel.”

The night only made Rachel's face all the more gloomy. "You don't have to apologize. I'm the one to be blamed."

Upon hearing that, Justin was startled.

Rachel said, "You have no blood relation with Samuel, so you have no responsibility or obligation to him. It was my mistake to hand him over to you, and I will make sure that this will never happen again."

"Rachel."

"It's getting late; you should rest."

After dropping those words, Rachel entered the building without looking back.

Subconsciously, Justin followed Rachel for a few steps, wanting to say something. But in the end, he didn't say anything.

It was late at night.

Jolly took a can of beer, opened the curtain, and glanced downward. "It's almost two o'clock, and Justin is still standing there. What did you tell him?"

"He hasn't left yet?"

"Nope."

As Jolly answered, Rachel had just come out of the shower, and her hair was still damp. Upon hearing that, she was annoyed. "Any more beer?"

“Yes, in the refrigerator.”

With a pop, the beer opening sound echoed in the room.

After that, Rachel threw her head back and gulped down half of the can.

“I didn’t blame him. I even apologized to him. Samuel is not related to him, so it’s my fault. It’s wrong to accuse him. Yet, he still insists on staying around. What exactly is he trying to do?”

“You’re definitely lying when you say you didn’t blame him.” Jolly hit the nail on the head. “Indeed, he has no obligation or responsibility to Samuel. But you’re embarrassing him by sarcastically apologizing to him. After all, no matter who they are, if they had failed to take care of the child, surely they would feel that they’re in the wrong. Chris, you’re unquestionably angry with him.”

“I’m not,” Rachel denied.

Upon hearing that, Jolly shrugged. “It’s alright if you don’t admit it.”

“I really am not.”

“Okay, you’re right. I think it will rain today; I wonder how long Justin will stand there.”

“It doesn’t matter how long he stays; it has nothing to do with me.”

No matter how much Justin suffered, Rachel would never give him her sympathy.

“Okay then, I’m sleepy. I’ll call it a day.”

Saying that, Jolly threw the beer can into the trash bin and returned to her room yawning.

Now, Rachel was left alone in the living room.

After some time, Rachel walked to the window, opened the curtain, and looked downward. Justin had already left. She frowned, and she was relieved yet disappointed at the same time.

Then, she returned to the sofa with the beer can and then raised her head to drink the rest. She was sitting alone cross-legged on the sofa while in a daze.

There was no doubt that Justin remembered what happened five years ago. Perhaps because Rachel was Charlotte's mother, he was willing to compromise and apologize for the incident.

But if he knew that the person in the incident 20 years ago was her as well, how would they face each other?

In the end, they would never be together.

At this time, a black car drove away from Rachel's community.

Justin was driving alone in the dark, with no one else on the road.

Everything that happened today showered him in guilt, and it was his fault that he didn't take good care of Samuel. Still, he knew that all the harm caused could not be washed away with a frivolous apology.

Old Madam Sutton would not give up if she knew that Samuel was Ryan's son. She would do anything to get the child back.

Although Samuel's biological mother was Jolly, the Carters did not know that. After all, his nominal mother all these years was Rachel, and Rachel also regarded him as her own son.

Justin's hands on the steering wheel tightened when he thought of that, and his eyes darkened.

Chapter 367 Villain Holding Sway

The next day at Hudson Pharmaceuticals. “What happened to the approval for the Northlane Development Project?” After the morning meeting, Rachel read the document in her hand and tapped it with the sign pen. “Why has the progress halted at this stage?”

Upon hearing that, Miss Evergreen said, “The project team said that the construction will proceed normally, but we couldn’t get the approval.” “What’s the problem?”

“The Environment Bureau didn’t give us the permit, so the construction is temporarily suspended.”

“Didn’t we acquire the permit before the construction?”

“There was a reinspection, and it was said that our environmental protection procedures were not up to standard, so it was revoked.”

“What’s the specific reason?”

Miss Evergreen was stunned, and she hesitated for a long time without saying why.

Miss Evergreen was one of Evan Holt’s people, and was apparently related to the Holt Family. Her business skill was average at best to begin with, and she didn’t do well as the president’s assistant. Therefore, her daily work was to organize documents.

All in all, Rachel would not have given her the job if it wasn’t for Jolly and Leroy’s troubles in the past two days.

Now, Miss Evergreen was painfully ignorant. Whenever she was asked some questions, she would always answer with, “Someone told me this,” or “I heard someone say that.” It was clear that she never did any research or analysis on her own, which only gave Rachel a headache.

“Understood. You may leave now.”

After all, with Evan supporting her, Rachel couldn't criticize her.

Before Miss Evergreen left, there was a knock on the door.

Knock, knock.

"Miss Carter." Miss Evergreen's voice made Rachel look upward.

Jolly was seen standing at the door in beige-colored office wear.

Upon seeing her, Rachel said in surprise, "Why did you come to the company?"

When she went out in the morning, Jolly was still sleeping in her bedroom, and it was clear that she didn't want anyone to disturb her. Since the incident between the Sutton Family and Samuel yesterday, Rachel thought that she would at least rest for a few days.

However, Jolly was walking in 5-inch high heels with high spirits.

"Without me, the Northlane Development Project's progress will be halted until, at the very least, the end of the year. When that happens, the expenses incurred by schedule delays will result in problems for the Hudson Pharmaceuticals' capital chain. We will fall short if this keeps up."

"You knew everything?"

"Of course. Al sent me a message early this morning. The Environment Bureau made it clear that they are deliberately stopping us. There is no doubt that someone is behind this incident."

"Who?"

Jolly placed a document on the table. "Our old enemy, Robin Gunson."

"Him?"

Just when Rachel was about to say something, Jolly cautiously scanned around the room from the corner of her eye. Then, she said, "Miss Evergreen, please leave this room and close the door. I have something to discuss with President Hudson."

Upon hearing that, Miss Evergreen replied immediately, "Understood."

After she closed the door, Rachel glanced thoughtfully at Jolly. "It's not that simple, is it?"

"Of course, but you can guess what happened."

"Someone cooperated with Robin to prevent the construction of the development site in Northlane."

"Bingo."

"It must be Evan Holt who did this. Otherwise, you wouldn't send Miss Evergreen away."

"I suggest you stop using Miss Evergreen. Find an opportunity to fire her. It is annoying enough to see her hanging around us."

"She's just a messenger to Evan. It's easy to fire her, but can you guarantee that Evan won't send other people to spy on us? False friends are worse than bitter enemies, after all. It's better to keep her and maintain the status quo."

Rachel's plan was reasonable.

Since everyone knew that Miss Evergreen was Evan's spy, it was easier to take precautions against her.

“So be it if Robin has any grudge against us. But what does this old man Evan want from us? Does he think that Hudson Pharmaceuticals will fall into his hands if he overthrows you? He is not a Hudson.”

“Jefferey and Amber Hudson are both dead, but I’m not the only one left in the Hudson Family. We have many relatives too, and he can simply grab one of them as a puppet and act as a manipulator behind the scenes. This is the same as taking over Hudson Pharmaceuticals.”

“You think he’s planning this?”

“Not just planning, but he’s putting it into practice.” Rachel’s eyes sank slightly. “Recently, Evan is getting closer to the Hudson Family’s distant relatives.”

Hearing this, Jolly complained angrily, “Old stuff, you think you can win? Keep dreaming!”

“If the Northlane Development Project fails in my hands, he will have a reason to call for a vote of no confidence among the board of directors. By then, those people will inevitably be persuaded by him.”

Of course, Rachel was aware of her position among the board of directors.

Back then when Rachel rectified Jefferey, her methods were too drastic; she was infamous for exterminating her family for righteousness. The board members were not completely free of guilt. So, afraid of becoming the next Jefferey, they became extra wary of Rachel.

If there was a chance to switch Rachel out, many would jump at the opportunity.

Then, Jolly said, “I will visit the Environment Bureau in the afternoon to find a way.”

“Don’t bother. Just call Robin directly. If he dares to do this blatantly, surely he has the confidence. In fact, he is probably waiting for me to contact him! I’m afraid you won’t get anything out of it even if you stir a commotion at the Environment Bureau.”

Soon, Rachel took out her cell phone and dialed Robin's number.

At the same time, in the president's office of the Burton Group.

As soon as Robin received Rachel's call, he proudly put down the document in his hand and crossed his legs on the desk. Then, he pressed the answer button comfortably. "Wow, and here I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me, but it really is you, President Hudson. Why did you call me?"

On the other end of the phone, Rachel said casually, "It's been so long since you were promoted to the president of the Burton Group, but I haven't sent my congratulations yet. Congratulations to you, President Gunson."

"Don't be a stranger. After all, we used to be colleagues of the same company, so don't mention it."

"You seem to be in a good mood."

"Of course. Things have been going my way, after all."

"Since you are in a good mood, why are you putting me in a bad spot? Don't you understand the importance of the Northlane Development Project to me, President Gunson?"

Rachel had enough with the pleasantries, so she decided to cut to the chase.

Upon hearing that, Robin chuckled. "President Hudson, back then, when you made my life difficult, you should've expected that this day would come sooner or later."

In the past, Rachel had laid a trap and caused Robin to be detained. Although he was later released on bail by Jason, he had to stay in his villa for one whole month before he was free, and it was no different from being in prison.

Since then, Robin was determined to seek revenge.

“What the hell do you want to do?”

“What do I want to do? You should already know. If you are asking for help, then you should show your sincerity. I’ll be waiting for you in Golden Hill at eight o’clock tonight. See you soon.”

When Rachel heard this, she opened her eyes wide in shock. Before she could agree, Robin had already hung up the call.

After the conversation, Jolly asked eagerly, “What did that loser say to you?”

Rachel answered, “He asked me to meet him in Golden Hill Nightclub at eight o’clock tonight.”

“You mustn’t go! It must be a trap, and we wouldn’t know what tricks he has up his sleeve!” Jolly was filled with anger. “This loser is now a villain holding sway. I will slap him good the moment I see him!”

Upon pondering for a moment, Rachel said, “When the villain is holding sway, we must not confront him. After all, the villain will not let you go easily.”

Chapter 368 Have Fun Together

Meanwhile, Gloria was putting Charlotte to sleep in the apartment. She gently patted Charlotte’s chest and read aloud, “In the end, the little rabbit found its mother and the family lived happily together...”

Generally, during the storytelling, Charlotte would have fallen asleep before the end of the story. But today, her eyes were still wide open even after Gloria had finished telling the story.

“Aunt Gloria, why isn’t Mommy coming to pick me up yet?” Charlotte wondered.

“Oh sweetie, it is the weekend, so your mom might be still at work. However, tomorrow is a school day, so she will definitely pick you up after school,” Gloria assured her.

Charlotte thought about her parents, and said, "Mommy and Daddy had a fight because Samuel was lost. Daddy is an idiot."

"No, don't say that. It wasn't easy for your dad either," Gloria explained to her patiently.

Just then, Gloria heard the sound of the front door opening. Consequently, she tucked Charlotte in bed and whispered in a soft tone, "Alright sweetheart, why don't you put yourself to sleep now? Auntie still has work to do."

"Mmm." Charlotte nodded obediently and closed her eyes.

After shutting the door behind her, Gloria found Justin settling himself on the couch. "Are you here to pick Charlotte up?" she asked.

"No. Let her stay here with you for another night." Justin held his forehead with a tired look, and said wearily, "I still have some family matters to be settled. If Rachel is coming to pick her up, I will be here."

"Why don't you make things clear to Rachel? You did not lose Samuel on purpose, and no one had anticipated Old Mr. Burton to be hospitalized overnight," Gloria suggested.

Last night, Arthur was hospitalized with a sudden cerebral infarction, and it happened at that time when Samuel went missing. As a result, Justin had to attend to both matters simultaneously, and he hadn't been able to catch some sleep since then.

With the absence of the backbone of the Burton Family, a storm was brewing within the Burton Group and some people were ready to stir up some trouble. Now that Justin was no longer the president of Burton Group, people like Robin were abusing their power by firing senior workers as they pleased. In the meantime, staff from the technical department was reaching the highest turnover rate. If this turmoil went on, Burton Group might have to change its name to Gunson Group.

"Thank God we found Samuel in the end. If something had happened to him, none of my excuses would suffice," Justin sidetracked the conversation. Then, he cautioned, "Don't mention Grandpa's matter to Rachel; she has got a lot on her plate already."

“Come on, don’t you start on me. How are you holding up?” Gloria asked with a worried look on her face.

“Everything is fine,” he replied blandly.

“Yeah, right. I have heard rumors about Robin putting you in charge of the logistics, am I right? How much longer can you put up with this kind of treatment?” She sounded irritated.

“The Burton Group is the painstaking effort of the Burtons for generations, and it can’t be destroyed in Robin’s hands,” he said. So, even if he was humiliated by Robin, he just had to bite the bullet and continue to stay in the company.

Gloria looked aggrieved. “Can’t you think of something? What about Jason? He is your uncle. Why don’t you let him handle Robin? After all, what good would it do for him if the Burton Group was ruined?”

“We haven’t heard from Jason recently. The investigation bureau is still tracking him down. For this, they had already stopped by our company three times.” At the mention of Jason, Justin scowled. Ever since the drug trafficking case was busted and a huge amount of smuggled drugs were seized on the spot, the Riverdale Investigation Bureau had been looking into several pharmaceutical companies. Coincidentally, Jason was nowhere to be found. After all, guilty conscience turned men into cowards.

“Oh well, I guess you really can’t count on anyone now!” Gloria sighed.

“What’s the sighing for? Don’t worry about me. The Burton Group will return to my hands sooner or later. Let’s talk about you now. Are you still in touch with that fellow recently? Given my responsibility as an older friend of yours, let’s meet together for dinner so I can check him out.” With a sly grin, Justin remarked. Of course, it went without saying who the fellow he was referring to.

Gloria immediately shook her head and denied, “What are you talking about? We are just friends.”

Justin leaned on the couch as his lips curled up, and he tittered. “How did you even know who I was talking about?”

At that moment, Gloria was stunned, and her cheeks were burning red.

As they were talking, Justin's cell phone rang suddenly and interrupted the conversation. "Hello?" he answered, and his voice had a touch of amusement from the prior chat.

Jolly's voice came over the phone in a panicky tone, and she asked, "Where are you? Did you know that Rachel was asked to meet Robin at Golden Hill? I can't seem to get through to her phone right now. We had a feud with him before and he will definitely target her!"

Justin's face froze and he stood up swiftly. "Since when have you not been able to reach her phone?" he asked with a commanding tone.

"About five minutes ago," she replied.

Meanwhile, at Riverdale's largest nightspot—Golden Hill Nightclub. In a private lounge, tables were full of lowball glasses in various colors, reflecting alluring rays under the strobe light.

Surrounded by the constant barracking sound, Rachel downed a glass of whiskey one after another, yet her face remained unperturbed. "President Gunson, now that I have finished the drinks you offered me, shall we discuss the development project's approval?" she persuaded.

"What's the hurry? We shouldn't talk about business before we have our fun," Robin teased. "This is just the beginning. Have another drink, Miss Hudson."

To make a point, she blocked the drink that was handed by the waiter and responded solemnly, "President Gunson, you have to give me a clear direction. If you are not going to approve the project, give me a heads up earlier so I can consider other options."

Rachel had mentally prepared herself for this. If Robin wanted to humiliate her by insulting her or forcing her to drink some alcohol, she would have agreed to his silly request and called it even between them. However, if his purpose was only to mock her and prolong the Northlane development project, she would not bother entertaining him.

After Robin heard what she just said, his face darkened as he forcefully put down his whiskey glass. "Miss Hudson, do you think we can call it off with just a few drinks after all you have done to me in the past? You must be dreaming! At least show some sincerity if you are trying to obtain something from me," he sneered.

Annoyed, Rachel picked up her purse and attempted to leave without saying a word.

"Wait a second!" Just then, Robin laid a document on the leather couch and drummed his fingers on it slowly.

Rachel's eyes narrowed as she stared pointedly at the document. It was the approval by the Environment Bureau in black and white, with the red seal of the Environment Bureau on the back. Just when she was reaching for it, the corner of the document was pressed down by a whiskey glass.

"Miss Hudson, the deal is on the table. However, if you want to take this document home with you, you have got to show me what you got," Robin said, with a mischievous smile on his face.

Well, if Robin was willing to hand her the approval, it had certainly made things easier for her. After all, it is just a drink, right? She wasn't a light drinker, and she had drunk tons of them while negotiating deals for Hudson Pharmaceuticals back in those times. What's the harm in having a few more drinks?

Having made her mind up, she said, "Let me make some toasts for you, President Gunson!"

"The first toast, is to apologize for the reckless comments that I made earlier, and to express my gratitude for his forgivingness by letting go of our old grievances." Rachel reached for a glass of whiskey and chugged it down her throat.

"The second toast, is to thank you for greasing the wheels and getting the development project approved, President Gunson. You will surely be invited to attend the opening ceremony once it is completed."

"This third toast..." At this point, she started to sound tipsy. "...is to friends, as there are no lasting enemies in business. I hope that we will have a pleasant working relationship with you in the future, President Gunson." Rachel could feel her head getting a little dizzy.

Robin leaned on the chest of the female escort behind him and glanced at Rachel in silence. With a contemptuous and smug smile on his face, he said, "Easy, Miss Hudson. You can take it slow. There is no rush in drinking."

After the three shots of whiskey, Rachel could feel the alcohol rushing up to her head, making her light-headed. "Alright. I will have to excuse myself now. President Gunson, enjoy the party with your friends and have a good time," she said.

After saying that, she reached out her hand to pick up the document, but it was suddenly snatched away, landing back into Robin's hand.

"Excuse me, President Gunson?" she frowned and questioned him.

"Since you are already here, we should have some fun together. When I said 'show me what you got,' I didn't mean for you to drink, Miss Hudson." Right then, Robin clapped his hands twice. Following his clapping sound, a swarm of male escorts flooded the lounge.

Chapter 369 A Fight in the Club

Rachel narrowed her eyes at Robin for a long while before asking, "President Gunson, what are you doing?"

Robin's mouth curved up as his lewd eyes glanced at Rachel's body from top to bottom. "I am sure you always had good men fall for you, Miss Hudson, but I bet you had never been surrounded by a group of charming men to please you, have you? Relax, you should loosen up a little." He smirked.

Then, he made a gesture to those male escorts who stood in a line behind Rachel. At once, the escorts immediately surrounded her and said, "Miss Hudson."

"Get away from me!" she squeaked. With force, Rachel pushed one of them away from her, and her gaze was full of disgust. Then, she took a deep breath to suppress her emotions, and her voice was icy cold. "President Gunson, don't cross the line."

“Crossing the line?” Robin sneered, “Weren’t you the one who agreed to stay along? Did I force you to come? And yet, here you are.”

“As far as I am concerned, the matter between us was quite a bumpy ride, but it has long ended and we should leave it behind us now. You are now the president of the Burton Group, and the seat is barely warmed, President Gunson. I don’t think it is a wise choice to start picking on me just yet,” she asserted.

“Are you threatening me? You can’t possibly think that Justin will make a comeback now, do you?” he curiously asked.

“Who knows? At the very least, he’s a Burton.” Rachel snickered.

It seemed like Rachel’s words had hit the nail on the head. Robin despised it when people said he wasn’t a Burton. Although he had been Jason’s godson for so many years, he had never gotten the chance to change his surname to Burton. After all, the more one couldn’t get something, the more they got bothered by it.

Smash! People in the lounge started screaming as they saw Robin smash a whiskey glass against the table.

He stared at her with a flare in his eyes, and he growled, “Don’t you step over me, Rachel! I am showing courtesy to you by inviting you to come here, but who the hell do you think you are? Do you still consider yourself the honorable young lady of the Hudsons? Have you forgotten what it was like to be ‘sold’ by your father to the Burton Family?” Then, he continued in exasperation, “Back then, you were ‘sold,’ but now I’m willing to ‘buy’ you in again! You should be happy that you still had some ‘market value’!”

Rachel’s face turned pale, and she clenched her teeth so hard that her whole body was shaking.

It is better to offend a gentleman a thousand times than a villain once, she thought. Once people like Robin held power in their hands, all their previous grudges would surface and they would start to act retaliatory.

“President Gunson, take it easy. Anger hurts your body, and it’s not worth it,” the female escort who sat beside him soothed as she gently stroked him on the back.

With that, Robin’s face eased up a bit, then he pointed to the table which was full of booze. “Oh well. If you don’t want to entertain us, that’s fine. I will put this behind us, provided that you finish all the drinks on the table,” he said with a malicious smile on his face.

After Rachel heard Robin’s offer, her hands were squeezed into fists by her sides. He was absolutely up to no good, because she would be intoxicated and at the mercy of others if she drank this much

alcohol. By then, everything that followed would only be blamed on the drinks.

“It is not necessary. President Gunson, it is clear that you have no intention of forgiving me. If so, I will have to change my plans. Thank you for your time, President Gunson,” she stated as she walked toward the door.

“Hold it right there!” he exclaimed. At once, her path was blocked by two bodyguards.

“You think you can just come and go as you please? What do you take me for?” he said in anger.

“Robin Gunson, what exactly do you want from me?” she asked with frustration.

“Whether you like it or not, you will still have to finish all the drinks on the table.” Robin gestured to his bodyguards and instructed, “Get her to drink!”

Immediately, those bodyguards walked toward Rachel and attempted to grab her.

“Get your hands off me!” she squeaked. In shock, she had never expected that Robin would be so determined in seeking revenge.

“Aren’t you afraid that I will call the police?” she hollered.

“Call the police? If you have the guts to do so, be my guest. Do you think I will fall for your tricks a second time?” he replied with a teasing look.

Just then, the woman next to her snatched her purse. “I will take that for you,” she sneered at Rachel. “And this is what you get for going against Young Master Gunson!” Soon after that, she dumped Rachel’s purse into the beer bucket, which was full of icy water.

Seeing that, Robin chuckled. “Aren’t you going to call the police? Come on, finish this bucket of beer first.” At Robin’s instructions, the two bodyguards tried to drown Rachel in the bucket.

At that moment, the door of the private lounge was suddenly kicked open from the outside, along with a loud bang.

Under the astonished eyes of the crowd, the man who stormed in turned the two bodyguards around from their shoulders, pulled them away from drowning Rachel, and kicked both of them out of the way.

As a result, one of them crashed onto the lounge table, and all the drinks fell to the ground, spilling everywhere. At that moment, Robin’s expression shifted from amusement to rage, and he growled, “Justin Burton!”

Seeing that, the crowd looked at each other in awkward silence, but no one dared to look at Justin’s face.

Meanwhile, Justin gave Robin a cold glance as he helped Rachel get to her feet. “Are you okay?” he asked with a worried tone.

Rachel shook her head weakly. She was becoming inebriated and unable to gather any strength in her body. Then, she stared at Justin with her glassy eyes and thought, I must be dreaming.

After a brief pause, she opened her lips and blurted, “Why are you here?”

Justin did not answer her question. His hands trembled in anger when he saw her shivering, and how she looked too weak to stand on the ground.

With flames burning in his eyes, Justin turned his head around and glared at Robin. He could feel the rage building up in his body, and the blue veins around his temples were about to pop out. He looked like he was going to tear Robin apart.

All these years, Robin worked hard to climb up the ladder. And now, he was the president of the Burton Group. At this particular moment, he wanted to look imposing in front of his circle of friends.

“What are you doing here in my territory, Justin?” he said with a condemning tone.

“Your territory?” Justin stared at him coldly, and he retaliated, “Don’t you know that Golden Hill is owned by the Burton Family?”

“What Burton Family? The Burton Group is now entirely mine. Even as a Burton, you have to address me as President Gunson. In the past, this woman used to brush you off when you were the president. However, I am the one in charge now and she has to oblige with whatever I demand, and that includes drinking whenever I tell her to!” Under the influence of alcohol, Robin was getting even more arrogant.

Accompanying the sound of broken glass, the crowd was startled and their screams reverberated within the lounge. Within a blink of an eye, Justin waved his hand and hurled a broken beer bottle in Robin’s direction. The bottle slid past Robin’s cheek before slamming into the wall behind him.

Trembling in fear, Robin turned his head to look behind him. There was a dented spot on the wall, and there were shattered glass shards on the floor. Recalling how the glass almost cut his cheek, it scared the living daylights out of him. Instinctively, he swallowed back all the words that he was going to spit out.

“Robin, this isn’t over,” Justin said in a low-pitched but dangerous tone. After he said that, he swept Rachel up into his arms and left the lounge.

Right after Justin left, Robin’s legs felt like jelly and he slumped onto the couch.

“It’s okay, Young Master Gunson.” The woman next to him tried to console him.

“Get lost!” Robin yelled at the woman. Then, he flipped the table around, and everything on it fell to the ground. “All of you, get out!” he exploded, and his roaring voice echoed throughout the lounge.

He was the president of the Burton Group, and Justin had just humiliated him in front of so many people by doing what he did. We are not done yet! No, not yet!

In the meantime, Justin carried Rachel and walked out of the nightclub. Rachel was still conscious, but her body didn't feel like hers anymore. Powerlessly, she mumbled, “I'm fine. Put me down.” Ignoring her request, Justin continued carrying her until they reached the car, and gently settled her into the passenger seat.

“Where are you taking me?” she asked.

“Home,” he replied as he held the steering wheel and stepped on the accelerator, leaving the ‘Golden Hill’ signboard far behind.

During the trip, Justin was not driving fast, and Rachel leaned against the back of the seat, her eyes closed. All of a sudden, she bent forward and covered her mouth with a look of pain, and Justin immediately pulled over to the side of the road.

Rachel pushed open the car door, stepped out, and stumbled toward a tree on the roadside. Her hands leaned against the tree and she vomited.

While she was throwing up, Justin looked around, went to the convenience store, and bought a bottle of water for her. “Here, drink some water,” he said.

However, Rachel suddenly shook his hand off. “Don't touch me!”

Chapter 370 Future Plans

Alcohol made a person quicker to anger. Rachel pushed Justin away, knocking over the bottle of water in his hands and sending it rolling across the floor.

This frightened a couple walking past them. Hurriedly, Justin apologized to them, "Sorry for that." Thankfully, the guy was easily pacified and soon walked away with his girlfriend.

Once Rachel was done puking, she then walked away from Justin.

"Rae!" Justin ran after her and tried to stop her.

When Justin was near her, she abruptly turned to stare at him with an extremely sober gaze. "Just how long do you plan on following me? Do you think I'm grateful you made it in time? Who do you think you are?"

"I was just worried about you," Justin replied. "Robin isn't a good guy."

"Do you think I don't know that? But I had to go today because Hudson Pharmaceuticals' matter must be resolved. It doesn't matter whether today is a success or not. Once he has a target for his anger, this feud could be over!"

The more Rachel spoke, the angrier she got. "But then you had to come. Now, everything has been for nothing! His hate for me will only grow!"

Hearing this made Justin furious. "Wake up! Someone like him won't have mercy on you just because he has vented out his anger. You didn't even need to lower yourself by going to that kind of place. What do you take yourself for?"

"Well, that's none of your business, Justin Burton, great President Burton, Young Master Justin!"

The more names Rachel threw at him, the louder she spoke. "Do you think everyone was born with a silver spoon in their mouth, like you? Do you think everyone has a protector helping them in everything? I can only rely on myself in whatever I do! I don't need a hero to save me, and you can't save me! So, stop following me!"

After leaving those ruthless words, Rachel turned and left.

Justin was left standing alone in the frosty night air. The people walking around him threw him sympathetic glances as he kept standing there.

Meanwhile, Rachel kept stumbling and walking. When she grew tired, she took off her heels and continued walking on bare feet.

The rocks beneath her pierced into the soles of her feet, and the pain eventually woke her up from her anger.

There were still about five miles left to go before she reached home. If she kept walking, the soles of her feet would bleed.

After a while, she sat down on the side of the road.

As the evening breeze blew across her face, she slowly sobered up.

Just then, a car pulled to a stop near her, and the driver stepped out of the car. "Julian?" Rachel asked, surprised.

Twenty minutes later, in an office in the hospital.

"That was so thoughtless of you. What were you thinking? Why did you walk on the road with bare feet? What if there was a nail or something on the road? Do you not care about your feet?"

Although Julian kept grumbling and nagging, his hands kept cleaning and dressing her wounds.

"All done. Don't let your feet get wet for the next two days and remember to reapply the cream when it's time to do so."

Julian then took a pair of brand new slippers from the drawers and said, "Wear these."

After grabbing the slippers, Rachel leaned back against the couch with her arms around a cushion.
“When did you get back?”

After all, Julian had been studying overseas for quite a while now, and no one had ever said anything about when he’d be back.

“Yesterday afternoon. I had to hand in a report as soon as I arrived, so I didn’t have time to tell anyone yet,” he answered.

“How did you know I was there, then?” Rachel asked.

Julian frowned slightly in response and turned to clean up the room in order to hide the conflicted emotions in his eyes. “My meeting just so happened to end late, and I was driving by the area.”

“What a coincidence,” Rachel mused.

“Yeah,” he grunted in response.

“Rest here for now. I’ll throw these out first,” he said.

“Okay.”

Julian then left the room with the trash and walked over to the trash bin in the hallway. After throwing out the trash, he dialed a number on his phone.

“Where are you?” Julian asked when the call went through.

“In the parking lot outside,” replied the cold voice of a man over the phone.

At that, Julian hung up and walked out of the hospital.

Due to how late it was, almost nobody was hanging around the parking lot. Justin leaned against the side of his car as he held a cigarette between his slender fingers.

When Justin noticed Julian walking over, he swiftly pulled out a big bag from the back of the car. "You haven't eaten yet, right? I've bought you some food from a convenience store."

"Are these just for me?" Julian asked as he shot Justin a glance. "Why don't you give her these yourself?"

"She doesn't want to see me. I wouldn't have called you otherwise."

When Julian heard that, he frowned. Still, he accepted the bag from Justin.

His meeting had just ended when Justin called him. What he heard shocked him.

After all, Justin used to object a lot every time Julian and Rachel met each other. Hence, when Justin asked Julian to pick up Rachel, Julian had thought Justin had either called the wrong number, or this was an impersonator of Justin.

"How is she?" Justin asked.

"Merely blisters on the soles of her feet. She's sober and resting in my office. She's fine," Julian answered.

"Glad to hear that," Justin said.

Justin then continued with a wave of his hand, "Head back in. I'm going now."

Julian opened his mouth to say something, but hesitated.

However, after taking a few steps toward the hospital doors, Julian turned back to say to Justin, "Don't smoke so much."

Justin's fingers around his cigarette trembled, sending smoke spiraling into the air.

Meanwhile, in the office, Rachel was about to fall asleep when she was jolted awake by the sound of the door opening.

"What took you so long?" She rubbed her eyes and blearily looked at Julian.

"I went to buy a few things," Julian replied, placing the bag from the convenience store on the table. "I haven't had my dinner yet. Let's eat together."

"Thanks," she said.

"No need to be so polite. Here."

She accepted the sandwich held out to her, took a bite of it, and had a sip of warm milk. It was only then that her stomach felt slightly better.

"How come your business trip took so long? You didn't even tell us about it."

"A secret experiment," he answered with a glint in his eyes. "You know how it is. We can't risk a leak."

Rachel nodded to show her understanding.

There were a few moments of silence, then Julian suddenly asked, "Rachel, do you ever plan on going back to Montenegro?"

Rachel froze. She even stopped eating. “Why are you asking that all of a sudden?”

“Before you returned to Riverdale, you told me you would leave Riverdale, never to return, as soon as you’ve settled your business here and found out what happened to Hans,” he stated.

“Yes, I did say that. However, Hudson Pharmaceuticals has caused a change in plans. I’m in charge of it now. This company was built through the blood, sweat, and tears of several generations of Hudsons. My parents died for this company, so I want to help the company get through this crisis first,” she explained.

“You don’t plan on ever leaving then?”

“No, that’s not it. I just need some time.”

Without saying a word, Julian placed down the food he had been working his way through, took off his glasses, and began wiping them.

“Are you mad?” Rachel cautiously asked, observing his reaction.

He placed his glasses to the side, looked up at her, and said, “My thesis has been completely processed. I’ve also received an invitation to go back to Montenegro. They would like me to keep working in the lab, focus on clinical trial research, and work as a university lecturer...”

“That’s good news! It’s a fantastic opportunity that many would love!”

Her eyes shimmered as she continued, “You must say yes. Being back there is better for your career, whether it’s due to the standard of their medical industry or the research environment.”

“And you?” he asked, his eyes looking steadily into hers. “What are your future plans?”