

Mute Bride 81

Chapter 81 The Lie Becomes the Truth

“Grandpa actually asked her to sign it?” Tina turned back to look at her assistant.

“Yes. He offered her ten million for that. I saw the agreement. It’s true.”

“So she’s moving out, I presume?”

“In a couple of days, if nothing else happens.”

Tina sneered. “What are you waiting for, then? Now that she’s no longer a part of the family, nobody’s gonna be there for her, not even if she’s dead.”

Riverdale’s skies were getting overcast. According to the weather forecast, a storm was inbound. It was already dark when Rachel came back to the villa. “What happened, madam? You don’t look so good.”

I’m fine. I just need some rest.

Rachel felt distraught, as if she had no strength. The two-hour trip back had exhausted the last of her strength, so she fell asleep the moment she came back to her room. She didn’t even have time to change. The nightmares came as usual. The man in her dream felt more powerful and abusive than he was in real life. Rachel tried to break free of his grasp, but to no avail.

The night engulfed the villa bit by bit.

“Young Master Justin.” The servant took Justin’s suit from him. “You’re early today. Have you had dinner?”

Justin nodded. “Where’s the madam? Is she home?”

“She came back a while ago, but she didn’t look too good. Skipped out on dinner, too.”

Hearing that, Justin frowned.

The room was dead silent. Rachel was on the bed, covered by a blanket. But when she heard someone coming in, she shot up. The moment Justin came in, he was met with Rachel’s fearful gaze, and a pregnant silence came between them.

“You need to eat.” He came in with Rachel’s dinner.

I’m not hungry.

“You’ll have to eat even if you’re not hungry.” Justin brought the spoon close to her mouth, insisting that she needed to eat.

Rachel was still traumatized from what happened earlier, so she had a bite without resisting.

“Is it too hot?”

Rachel shook her head, scared.

“Have some more.”

Justin kept feeding her, as if what he did earlier didn’t affect him. Rachel couldn’t understand him no matter how much she tried. It was like he thought everything could be forgiven after a fair punishment was meted out.

After she was done eating, Justin said, “I’m taking you back to the city tomorrow.”

Did your grandfather say you can do that?

"I don't need anyone's permission when it comes to you."

Rachel gripped the blanket tightly, and she felt her heart getting squeezed by something.

Justin knew he shouldn't have said that, not after what happened that afternoon, so he tried to comfort her. However, Rachel instinctively avoided him. His hand froze for a moment, but still he pushed a lock of her hair back and held the back of her head. "I know you hate what happened earlier, but that's on you. You should have known the line you cannot cross." He gazed at her.

Rachel froze up.

"Do you understand me?" Justin tightened his grip around her neck.

Yes.

"I have work tonight, so you'll have to sleep alone." Justin left right after that.

A short while later, Riverdale was graced by rainfall. Rachel pulled back the curtains just in time to see Justin driving away into the dark. After he was out of sight, she texted Hans. 'Two in the afternoon. Tomorrow.' That was the only thing she told him.

The rain was getting heavier. Eventually, a flash of lightning arced across the sky. Unbeknownst to anyone, two men in black raincoats were secretly approaching the white car in the villa's car park.

The rain still didn't let up the next day, but that didn't change Rachel's plans. She packed her things and left the villa, while Arthur was standing beside the window to see her off. However, he looked upset.

"Sir, I know you're upset about Young Master Justin's decision, but you don't have to worry about it. He's still young, so he doesn't know you're doing it for his own good. Besides, the madam lost her family's support, and she seems to be a nice person."

“Being nice won’t cut it in our circle. Even if she doesn’t get herself in trouble, trouble will come to her.”

“What are you worried about, sir?”

Arthur remembered something, so he didn’t explain. “You’ll see.”

Rachel was driving down the hill, just going past a sign that told the drivers to be careful. With her hands on the wheel, she glanced at the GPS and realized she was nearing her destination.

There was a corner up ahead, so she stepped on the brakes, but the car didn’t slow down. What? She quickly turned the steering wheel, and the tires screeched, but she managed to turn the corner, albeit barely. The car’s wipers were clearing the rain away from the windscreen, while Rachel was drenched in cold sweat. The brakes malfunctioned.

At the same time, Justin was in the middle of a negotiation in the club.

“Very well then. Another two percent. For the sake of the collaboration.”

“I know you’ll make the right choice, Mr. Leoric.”

“I’ll be counting on you, then.”

“Likewise.”

After he sent Mr. Leoric off, Justin got up and buttoned his suit.

Finally getting his chance, Frankie went up to him in a hurry. “Sir, the madam’s in trouble.”

The news surprised Justin.

“Our sources told us Tina sabotaged the madam’s car this morning, and the madam left the villa half an hour ago.”

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?” Justin growled.

Frankie panicked. “You were negotiating, so...”

Justin’s face fell. “Give me the car key.” Right after Frankie handed him the key, he snatched it and stormed off.

The rain was pouring then, as unbelievable as it was. Because of the downpour, multiple landslides were occurring throughout the city, congesting the traffic. Due to the severity of the situation, even the news was livestreaming the government’s efforts to solve the situation.

At the same time, Rachel was still stepping on the brakes desperately to stop her car from tumbling down the hill, but to no avail. The car wouldn’t go slower than eighty kilometers per hour, and given the weather condition, she was seriously over the speed limit. Her phone started ringing incessantly halfway through, and after much difficulty, she managed to take the call, though she thought it was just Hans.

“Where are you right now? Stop the car!” Justin growled.

His voice alone made Rachel shiver in fear, and she almost crashed into the guardrail. The tires started screeching again, and Justin heard it as well.

“Did something happen to the car? Rachel? Dammit!” Justin yelled furiously, but he couldn’t do anything, since Rachel couldn’t give him any response.

Justin ended the call, and Rachel felt like her last hope was gone. All that was left was despair. She thought she’d play out her fake death plan after she departed the villa, but she never thought she would really die. But just when she thought all hope was lost, her phone rang again. When she saw Justin on the screen, she realized he was video calling her.

“Alright, just nod or shake your head depending on your situation. Are the brakes malfunctioning? Including the handbrake? I got it. Now listen to me. Calm down and head to the East Coast highway.”

East Coast highway? That’s not in my plan, she thought. Rachel had arrived at her destination as they spoke. The rain and the wipers were making it hard for her to see, but she noticed a familiar person on the roadside when she took a glance. Hans!

Chapter 82 No Mercy

Rachel’s car wouldn’t stop speeding and swerving through the road. The rain was making it difficult for Hans to see as well, but the moment he saw through the wipers, he could see Rachel in the car. However, instead of stopping for him, she kept driving ahead. He knew something was wrong, so he chased after her.

The East Coast highway was the one with the least traffic in the city, especially on rainy days. Even so, that didn’t make Rachel relax one bit, not after she had sped past three cars. At that point, she was drenched with sweat.

“You’re on the highway now, aren’t you? The cops are clearing the path right now. Turn on cruise control and brace yourself for a crash.”

A crash? All the color drained from her face, and she started imagining every horrific way to die in a car crash.

“You’ll be fine, so don’t worry. You should see a container in the middle of the road in a couple of minutes. Crash into it, and the airbags will shield you. That’s the only thing you can do now.” He looked at her calmly.

Rachel gritted her teeth. Not like I have any other choice.

A while later, Rachel realized there were barely any cars on the road. The rain was still crashing down, but Rachel had no time to care about that. She was still driving, but her hands were already sweaty, and she almost lost her grip on the steering wheel. Eventually, she saw a blue container standing in the middle of the road. Remembering Justin’s advice, she crashed into the container’s side.

Bam!

A moment later, smoke billowed from the engine, and flames roared.

That was what Hans saw when he got to the scene. At the same time, a black car sped past him before screeching to a halt in the middle of the highway. Justin then sprinted toward Rachel's car and smashed the window.

Hans was in his car, watching the scenario unfold in the rain.

"Rachel!" Justin was roaring and yelling at everyone to disassemble the car to save Rachel.

The airbags sprung into action the moment Rachel crashed into the container. She could feel her whole body getting squashed by a soft, airy thing, and she felt suffocated by the airbag. The car stopped quickly after the initial crash, but she couldn't get her ears to stop buzzing. A long while later, the sound of something smashing her car's window made her snap out of it. She tried to see who it was, but all she could make out was a familiar face. The rain made everything blurry, after all.

The scene of the accident was cordoned off by the police a short while later, while the sirens of firetrucks and ambulances kept blaring around her.

Rachel was sent to the emergency room, while Justin waited for her in the corridor. His fists were clenched, and the veins on his forehead popped. Obviously, he was furious.

"She's fine. Just had a minor concussion. She'll be alright once she rests up," the doctor said, and Justin's fury was assuaged, albeit only slightly.

After the doctor was gone, Justin asked Frankie, "Where's Tina?"

"Winston just called me. Said she went to a yacht banquet with some friends."

Justin's eyes glinted mercilessly. "Ah, so she has chosen death."

“President Burton, she is your cousin. Don’t you think it’s—” Before he could finish, Justin gave him a look that chilled him to his bone.

That night, Rachel wouldn’t stop vomiting, and the nurse kept going in and out with a basin in hand.

Justin’s mood took a turn for the worse. “I thought she’s fine. Why is this happening?”

The nurse looked fearful. “It’s a side effect from the concussion. Vomiting is normal.”

I’m fine. Rachel was on the bed, looking frail. However, she felt lucky that she got out of that alive. Compared to that, vomiting a few times wasn’t that bad.

“Are you alright?”

Rachel shook her head. She didn’t even have the strength to reply after vomiting so much. I’m tired. I want to sleep.

“Alright. Sleep tight.” Justin tucked her in and patted her through the blanket.

His concern felt so unreal for Rachel, but she was too tired to care, so she slept almost immediately.

When she woke up the next morning, she felt some of her strength returning.

Frankie came in with a lot of stuff in hand. “President Burton, madam, breakfast is here.”

Rachel sat up against the bed, staring at the table that was filled with food in disbelief. Why’d you buy so much?

“President Burton told me to. Said he doesn’t know what you like, so I should buy everything first. But I’ll buy your favorite next time.”

“Ahem.” At the side, Justin coughed.

Just when Rachel was still in a trance, Frankie was already pushing the overbed table toward her.

“What would you like, madam? We have English breakfast, sandwich and coffee, mochi, red velvet cake, and...” As Frankie was listing out the things he bought, he was reminded of something, and he smiled. “Um, President Burton can help you with this. I still have work to do, so see you later.”

Subsequently, Justin cleared his throat. “What would you like?”

Rachel was surprised, but only for a moment. She then pointed at one of the items on the table. That one. Mushroom soup and garlic bread. A local specialty, and a great one at that too. You should eat too.

Justin nodded, and he took a cup of coffee. “I thought I told you to wait for me yesterday. Why’d you go off on your own?”

I have a car there. I can’t just leave it in the villa.

“It’s just a car. Just leave it behind. Not like it’ll go missing anyway. You can still get into an accident even without the brakes malfunctioning in that kind of weather, you know that?” Justin suddenly raised his voice, scaring Rachel. “Don’t do that ever again.” He frowned.

Rachel nodded. When she recalled how panicked he looked in the video call the day before, she felt confused.

Justin was a man of few words, and nobody could guess what he was thinking. However, throughout the terrifying drive the day before, all she could hear was his voice, panicked and worried. She could feel that he was worried, but he kept it in check and calmed her down.

Knock, knock. Someone knocked on the door. "Hello." It was a familiar voice, and Rachel looked up in shock.

The visitor was none other than Janice. She nodded at Rachel first before turning to Justin. "I'm Rachel's friend. Heard she's in the hospital, so I came for a visit."

Justin, however, froze up when he saw Janice. He saw Janice before back at the old district. She was one of the two people standing beside Rachel after all.

"Mr. Burton, I presume?"

"Yes. Hello."

"Janice Hawkins."

"You girls have fun." Justin stood up without asking further.

However, Janice shrugged calmly. "I'm not here for her. I'm here for you, Mr. Burton."

Rachel's heart skipped a beat, and she looked at Janice curiously. Justin shared her sentiments.

In the corridor, Janice whipped her ID out. "Sorry for disturbing you, but I need to confirm a few things. I got to know Rachel because of that case as well." At a closer look, Janice's ID read 'Investigation Bureau Deputy Chief.'

"What case?"

"Hudson Pharmaceuticals' contraband."

Upon hearing that, Justin's face fell.

Chapter 83 I Cannot Do That

Rachel rested her head against the pillow, looking at Janice curiously. What did you guys talk about?

Janice was sitting beside the bed, peeling an orange. "Hudson Pharmaceuticals' contraband. Wanted to know if he's looking into it. Makes it easier to see you using that excuse." She gave half the orange to Rachel.

He admitted it?

"Of course not. He's not stupid. Businessmen hate getting involved with us. If he admits to it, he's gonna have to help us, and that means we'll be going to his company a lot. You think he'll let us do that?"

So are they really looking into Hudson Pharmaceuticals?

"I have no idea."

Rachel was obviously surprised.

"Hey, don't give me that look. Everyone knows the Burtons have been antagonizing the Hudsons for a while now. And from what you told me, I can see what he thinks about the Hudsons. I don't know much about business, but it's important to know everything about your competitor. That's why they must have been looking into the Hudsons. As for what they're investigating, it doesn't really matter."

You're trying to wheedle something out of him?

"And I failed, obviously." Janice looked at her. "Hans is right. Justin is more complex than he lets on. You're right to leave him."

Rachel paused for a moment. If it weren't for him, I would have been gone forever.

Worried that Justin might get suspicious, Janice didn't stay for too long. After all, there were people guarding Rachel 24/7 now, and Janice knew they'd report everything back to their boss—Justin.

Back at Burton Group, Frankie came into Justin's office with a bag. "The repair shop's mechanic sent this over, President Burton. Probably the madam's personal belongings. She must have left it in the car."

The dirty canvas bag made Justin frown. She doesn't even have a decent bag. This is the same one she's been using since I met her. "Put it here."

"Yes."

"How's the investigation going?"

"Janice visited the madam the last time the madam was in the hospital. The staff told me she got into a fight with Amber then. Apparently, that's the first time she met the madam. They have never seen each other before."

"What's her relationship with Hudson Pharmaceuticals?"

"The Investigation Bureau is very secretive, but they usually only take on big cases. She didn't do anything after she got into their company, though I suspect that she's related to Hudson Pharmaceuticals's agent's death."

Justin thought about what Frankie just said. He knew that case too, so he wanted to see if the connection was there.

"Should we look into this, President Burton?"

"No." Justin looked at his desk. "And get everyone back. I want them to stop looking into this. Cease the R&D's activities on Hudson Pharmaceuticals's meds. Delete all the data as well."

Frankie was shocked. "But we spent a lot of time getting those. There's even Hudson Pharmaceuticals's sleeping pill's recipe in there. If we delete everything, everything we did would have been for nothing."

"Do you really think the bureau's deputy chief would personally look into a regular agent's death?"

Frankie stopped talking.

"There must be something off with them. Something we don't know." Justin's eyes twinkled. Ever since Janice brought up Hudson Pharmaceuticals that morning, he knew his plans had to be changed.

After the doctor was done checking up on Rachel the next morning, a guest came uninvitingly. When she saw who it was, she couldn't believe it. Jefferey?

"Why didn't you tell me you're in the hospital, Rachel? I wouldn't have found out if Amber hadn't told me. You shouldn't keep quiet about everything, you know." He put the fruit basket down. "I got your favorite fruits here."

A frown creased Rachel's forehead. Why are you here? After everything that happened, she had stopped seeing Jefferey as her father.

"You've been getting along well with Justin recently, haven't you? I heard Arthur has allowed you to stay in the villa. That's the Burtons' most important estate. Only those who Arthur acknowledges get to stay there."

Rachel looked at him calmly, but that only made Jefferey nervous. A while later, he cracked a smile. "But that's not important. I know you've never been one to chase after something like fame or fortune.

As long as you're happy, I'm fine with it."

Rachel forced a smile and kept peeling the orange. Always holier than thou. No matter the case, he can justify his actions, just like the time he married me off to Justin. After she finished peeling the orange, she put it on the table, telling Jefferey to eat it.

That delighted Jefferey. "Rachel, I know Amber's wronged you, but she's still your sister after all. Just let it slide this time. She'll need your help."

Rachel's face fell. Why? So she can sleep with Justin? So she can keep urging Tina to kill me?

Jefferey froze up.

Dad, I know I'm a mute, so I've never asked for much. But that doesn't mean I'm an idiot. I know more than I let on. Amber tried to kill her on multiple occasions. That was just pure evil.

"Rachel."

Why are you here? Get to the point.

Jefferey stopped acting loving and resumed his cold, indifferent self. But Rachel was used to it. A moment later, he put something metallic on the table. It was the size of a nail, so it was inconspicuous.

"Put this in Justin's car."

What is this?

"A listening device." He looked at her darkly. "The company's running into some trouble. I suspect that Justin's getting in touch with our supplier."

The listening device glinted menacingly under the light.

Rachel frowned. I can't do this.

"You have to. The family's survival rides on this. You're a part of us. Don't forget about that."

If that's true, then why didn't you come visit me the last time I was in the hospital? Rachel brought up the last time she was hospitalized.

Jefferey froze up.

Do you know why I was hospitalized last time? Rachel stared at Jefferey coldly. If you really think of me as family, you wouldn't have tried to kill me. That poison almost killed me. You think you can still get me to help you after that?

Jefferey was fuming, but he couldn't say anything to that. A while later, he gritted his teeth and asked, "Can't you help me this time, Rachel?"

Rachel frowned, but her silence was the answer. Now that her grandmother was no longer held hostage, Jefferey couldn't control her anymore. It would be pure stupidity if she kept sabotaging Justin for him.

Slam! Jefferey slammed open the door and stormed off, but his voice rattled across the corridor. "You ungrateful cur! All the money spent on you, gone to the dogs!" Arriving at the elevators, Jefferey angrily tossed the listening device into the trash can.

With a ding, the elevator arrived. Jefferey went inside the moment the doors opened, but right after he left, a person in white came out from the corner and rummaged through the trash can. When they found the listening device, they looked at it for a while before holding it tightly.

Chapter 84 The Business He Negotiated

Rachel stayed in the hospital for just three days, since she didn't suffer any injuries aside from a minor concussion. On the day of her discharge, it was Frankie who came to deal with the paperwork, and she reflexively looked behind him.

"President Burton isn't here," Frankie answered. "He's been busy over the last couple of days. In some business talk with his partner. That's why he wanted me to take you home first."

Rachel nodded, though she felt slightly crestfallen.

In the car, Rachel took the back seat, while Frankie took the passenger seat. “Madam, the guys from the repair shop sent your bag back. You left it in your car. It’s in the back seat. Why don’t you check and see if anything’s missing?”

Looking at the canvas bag beside her, Rachel rummaged through it for a moment, and she frowned. Weird...

“What’s wrong, madam?” Frankie asked.

Rachel snapped out of it and shook her head. It’s not anything valuable anyway, so I guess it’s fine, she thought.

Right after she came back to the Burtons’ villa, a servant came to help her with her stuff.

They kept asking her if she needed anything, and even Mrs. Duncan—who never smiled at her—was beaming. She even asked what Rachel wanted for dinner.

Anything’s fine. You don’t have to go that far.

“No can do. Young Master Justin said the whole family is having dinner together tonight. He’s going to throw you a little welcome party.”

Rachel was touched. Nobody had been so kind to her ever since she was little. Even though Justin wasn’t nice to her, at least he had taken care of her well lately. He even saved her life a few days earlier. But that made her hesitate about the plan.

Rachel came downstairs to help even before it was dark, starting with Justin’s favorite tea.

That of course irked Sue, and she clicked her tongue. “That b*tch. She’s nothing more than a lowly servant, but she’s acting like she owns the place.”

Mrs. Duncan sighed. "Don't let anyone hear you. Everyone's saying that Young Master Justin is paying a lot of attention to her now, and Master Arthur wanted her to live in the summer villa. She's already established her spot here."

Sue's face was red with anger, but before she could say anything else, they heard the sound of a car coming in.

Rachel quickly turned around, then the servant greeted, "Young Master Justin, welcome home. Hm? Miss Hudson?"

Amber and Justin came in side by side, chatting happily. When Rachel saw this, her hand trembled, and the tea fell.

"Madam! Are you alright? Let's clear this up."

Sue beamed the moment she saw Amber. "Justin, you should have told me you're bringing Amber back. I would have asked them to make her favorite food."

Amber held Sue's arm affectionately. "Oh, you know me, Mrs. Parham. I'm not a picky eater, so I'm fine with anything. Besides, I'm on a diet, so I can't eat that much."

"You are still slim though. It's fine."

After Justin took his suit off, he noticed Rachel coming out from the kitchen.

Do you want some tea?

"No. Let's have dinner."

Rachel looked at Amber. Why'd the two of you come home together?

“Do I need to report everything to you?”

Rachel froze up.

Amber answered, “We went for a golf session and had lunch. Don’t you know that, Rachel?”

Golf? But Frankie told me he’s busy meeting business clients. Is this his business? Playing golf with Amber?

“Can you stop with the questions? He’s a man. He doesn’t have to report every little detail to you.” Sue rolled her eyes. “Besides, Amber’s your sister. Now run along and prepare for dinner.”

“Justin, I started on a new book two days ago, but some parts confused me. Can you help me with it?”
Amber took Justin to the living room, leaving Rachel alone.

Watching their leaving figures, Rachel looked forlorn.

After Justin had taken his seat, Rachel was about to sit beside him, but Sue stopped her. “Hold it. Go check on the soup and take it here.”

Rachel obliged, but when she came back, Amber had taken her spot.

“Here, Justin.” Amber fed Justin a fishball right in front of Rachel, and he ate it without any hesitation.
“How is it?”

“Not bad.”

“Told you so. You’ve been exhausting yourself lately. Have some more.”

Rachel wanted to join the conversation as well, but there was no opening, so she left alone after she was done with her soup. Everyone went on happily, as if nobody cared that she left.

After dinner was over, Justin asked the driver to send Amber home.

Rachel had been waiting in the bedroom after she showered. The moment the door was opened, she sat up.

Is she on her way home?

“Yes,” Justin answered curtly. He opened the cabinet, took his pajamas, and went outside.

Where are you going?

“The study.”

Aren’t you going to sleep here?

Justin gazed at her. “Do you want me to sleep here?”

Rachel froze up. That’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that this is your room, so... All at once, she blushed, at a loss for words.

“Just go to sleep, and you don’t have to do anything around here. That’s the servant’s job. Remember, you’re my wife.” With a click, he closed the door behind him, leaving nothing but silence for her. His footsteps gradually faded into the distance.

Rachel remained on the bed, stunned. She wondered what went wrong, and what caused him to give her the cold shoulder again.

It was already late at night, but Justin was still going through his emails. “A master’s degree from California State University, a famous lawyer, and a top partner at a law firm.” He was looking through the résumé of an elite. The photo on that résumé showed a handsome, summery young man. In contrast, Justin was looking cold. Eventually, he closed his laptop.

It was a Friday afternoon. Rachel was packing her things up after work when she received a call from Julian. "I'm waiting for you outside the library. Come right out after you're done with work."

Rachel saddled her bag and came out. She saw Julian's car right away, and he was waving at her from inside. Why'd you come?

"Get in. We'll talk then." A short while later, they rejoined the traffic. Since it was peak hour, it was a bit congested.

What's the hurry?

"Grandma saw the news."

Rachel was shocked, then she looked at Julian curiously. The case of her crashing into the container because of her car's malfunctioning brakes shook the city. Even though Justin managed to keep it down, lots of people still found out about it. She thought her grandmother wouldn't know about it, since she usually didn't care about current affairs.

When did she find out?

"This morning, I guess. She saw the newspaper." Julian frowned. After a while of hesitation, he continued, "It's in the entertainment section. Didn't you see it?"

Rachel's heart skipped a beat.

Chapter 85 He Won't Fall For a Mute

When she searched for the trending entertainment news that day, the first one that showed up was something related to Burton Group. 'Burton Group CEO, Justin Burton appears with Amber Hudson.'

That was the first headline she saw, and most of the other news were fake, though that didn't stop the writers from publishing them. The article that got the most shares went along the lines of 'Sisters fighting for the position of CEO wife.' At that point, it had more than ten thousand shares.

Rachel paled, losing the courage to keep on scrolling. How should I explain this to Grandma? What if this is the news she saw?

"Don't worry. I'll go with you." Julian reassured her. "It's not too serious yet, and Justin should have sent his men to keep this down by now."

We can't lie anymore.

"You want to tell her the truth?"

That's all I can do now. Rachel stared down at her phone's screen that was dark, her fingers trembling.

They arrived at Rachel's grandmother's place a short while later, but her grandmother didn't look too happy.

"I'll be off to get something. See you later." Julian excused himself after sending Rachel to her grandmother's place.

After he closed the door, Nancy sat down on the sofa, turned the TV on, and kept changing the channels.

Rachel fidgeted for a moment, but eventually, she sat down beside her and started testing the waters. Are you mad at me, Grandma?

"Why would I? You just forgot to tell me you got married, after all. You just forgot to tell me who you married. Heard he's from some kind of company. Rich man, huh? Can't even find out anything about him."

Rachel knew she was in the wrong, so she tried her best to comfort her grandmother. You were undergoing a surgery, so I didn't tell you about the marriage.

"Is that so? So you admit it eh?"

I never wanted to hide it from you. It happened too suddenly, so I didn't know how I should break it.

Nancy looked at her seriously. "Tell me the truth. Did Jefferey force you into this? What kind of man is Justin Burton? I heard he's an ugly, grumpy man." When Rachel didn't answer the question, Nancy shot up furiously. "I'm going to have to talk to Jefferey. What kind of man would force his daughter into this?"

Rachel quickly stopped her. No. He's really nice to me. I was unwilling to marry in the first place, but he isn't as bad as the media makes him out to be.

"If that's true, then why is he seeing Amber then?"

It's a misunderstanding, Grandma. Just some lie a reporter spouted. Don't believe it.

She quickly scrolled through the older news on her phone and showed it to Nancy. See? He saved my life. The picture showed Justin breaking the car's window, and Rachel could be vaguely seen in it.

The horrific scene drained the color from Nancy's face. "When did this happen?"

Rachel held Nancy and caressed her back to calm her down. It's in the past now. Don't worry about it.

"Let me have a look. Are you hurt anywhere?"

I'm fine. Really.

"I didn't even know this happened. I thought you were working." Nancy shivered just from the thought of it. "Is he really nice to you? That Justin?" she asked.

Yes. Rachel nodded. Worried that Nancy wouldn't believe her, she added something else. He's Julian's cousin. You like Julian, don't you? He's a nice guy, so his cousin's a good guy too.

Nancy only believed her when she told him that Justin was related to Julian. Rachel took that chance to massage her, then Nancy held her hand and looked at her. "Don't lie to me, Rachel. You don't have to stay married if he's abusing you. Divorce isn't a big deal now. Not like how it used to be."

Rachel nodded.

Nancy asked Julian to stay for dinner, and she asked him a lot of questions about Justin. Eventually, the dinner came to an end, and Nancy sent them off. "You should let me meet him if you have the chance. Take him to me."

Rachel agreed vaguely and left in a hurry, saying she had something to settle at home.

"Buckle up."

Thanks for helping me back there.

"No prob." Julian held the steering wheel. "We're a family now, and Justin isn't as cruel as the media makes him out to be. I was just telling the truth."

Is it true he got into a fight for you when you guys were kids?

"Yep," he answered. That surprised Rachel, since she thought he made that up.

"I was a sickly kid who grew slow, so everyone laughed at me. Called me names." He smiled gently at Rachel. "Bean sprout. That's what they called me. Then when I got into elementary school, Justin was

already a sixth-grader. One day, our seniors got in my way after school. Justin came to my defense, and guess what happened?"

Rachel shook her head.

"We were both beaten up, and they took all our money. Justin lost one shoe as well. Our families were shocked when they saw us. Almost called the cops too." Julian laughed as he recalled that day.

Rachel couldn't believe it. She couldn't believe a kind, brave boy who protected his younger cousin like that was Justin. But he doesn't seem like he's close to you.

"Because something happened to him. You should have seen the news too. Justin was abducted when he was thirteen, though he was found after a month. But he got a scar on his face, and he started closing himself off."

Now, Rachel could understand why Justin turned out the way he was.

As the night crept on, the lights around and in the villa lit up, showing the way home for the Burtons. Just as he was nearing the gates, Justin saw Rachel getting out of Julian's car from afar. Julian was chatting with her, and she was smiling at him.

When they heard the hum of his car's engine, they looked back.

"Welcome home, Justin."

Justin looked at them darkly and grunted. He then went into the villa without even looking at Rachel. Rachel froze for a second, and she tried to catch up to him so she could explain herself, but she realized he wasn't looking back, so he couldn't see her.

Justin went to the study after he came home, but then someone knocked on the door. "Come in." A moment later, Rachel came in with the tea set. She poured him a cup of tea and put it on the table.

When he realized she wasn't leaving, he looked at her. "Anything else?"

Grandma called Julian earlier, so he came to pick me up at the library. That's why we came back together.

"And why are you telling me this?"

She pursed her lips. I don't want you to take this the wrong way.

"Take what the wrong way?" He looked at her darkly. "That you might be having an affair with him? Even if he's not my cousin, Julian's still a PhD in medicine and the youngest chief in his hospital. Do you think he'd fall for a mute like you?"

Rachel froze, for the insult hit her like a truck. The shock was enough to cause a ringing in her ears. At the same time, Justin's gaze was like a sharp knife that stabbed through her heart.

Chapter 86 Nod or Shake

Rachel stared at Justin in disbelief. That's not what I meant.

"No? Then why were you explaining?"

I... Justin looked at her coldly. "You should know the real reason people actually respect you now. Don't get ahead of yourself."

Justin's insult tore her to shreds, but a part of it was her fault. She tried to be frank with him, but there was always a possibility of disaster, and knowing Justin, that possibility was high.

"If there's nothing else, you may leave now. And keep your head down."

Rachel wanted to stay, but when she met his indifferent gaze, she had no choice but to leave. Right after she left, she bumped into Julian.

“What’s the matter? You look pale.”

Indeed, she was pale. I’m fine.

“Is it about something Justin said to you?”

Rachel shook her head, but she looked crestfallen. Her forlorn look made Julian uncomfortable for some reason, and he frowned.

Early the next morning, Rachel woke up to make breakfast.

“Good morning, Master Justin.” A servant greeted Justin, then she served him a cup of coffee.

“Madam has made breakfast for you.”

“I don’t have time for that,” he answered curtly. With that, Justin left without even looking at Rachel.

As Justin drove away to work, Rachel was left alone, sad and despondent. Justin’s sudden attitude change caught her by surprise.

That afternoon, Rachel went to the restaurant near the library to have lunch with Hans. Since the fake death plan was ruined, they set everything aside for now.

Janice said, “Burton Group closed their research center.”

Why?

“Not sure. Probably because I told Justin about the investigation. He’s a cautious man, so you can relax for now. He should be stopping everything related to the recipe for now.”

“That’s for the best.” Hans heaved a sigh of relief. “We’ll have some time to prepare. Faking your death is too risky. After all, you can’t just live your whole life with a different identity.”

Janice continued, “And there’s one more thing. It’s about your mother.”

Rachel was surprised. She did tell Janice about the secret room before, but Janice reacted weirdly back then. She said she wanted to look into it.

“If I’m correct, Jefferey will visit your mother’s grave on Ancestors’ Day.”

Why?

Janice dipped her finger in water and drew a complex shape on the table. “Is this the talisman you saw back in Jefferey’s secret chamber?”

Rachel took a look and nodded hesitantly. The memory was too vague, so she could only make out the rough shape.

“As long as it’s similar. According to your description, only wronged souls are targeted by the soul locking array and talisman. It’s similar to a case three years ago, so I recognize this talisman.”

“Can you speak English?” Hans was confused, so he urged, “Make it simple.”

“In other words, this array is locking an innocent soul. The guy who did this is probably scared that his murder victims would haunt him, so he made a secret chamber to make a tribute to appease their spirits.”

You’re saying Jefferey murdered my mother?

“You can say so for now. It’s not the first time I’ve seen this kind of case.”

Rachel froze. Even though she had suspected Jefferey for a long time now, Janice’s explanation served to deepen her guess more.

“Shame you don’t know who your mother was, or it would have been an easier case.”

Rachel looked pale. You said he’s going to visit her grave on Ancestors’ Day?

“Yes. Anyone who makes this array has to pay a tribute every Ancestors’ Day. Since he believes in the occult, I’m sure he’ll do the same.”

“Wait, that leaves us with...” Hans counted the days. “A few days to work with. Ancestors’ Day is next week.”

“If we’re right, the grave he’ll be visiting on that day is your mother’s.”

Rachel’s heart sank when she heard that.

A short while later, she left the restaurant. As they sent Rachel off, Hans started to worry. “You should have told only me, Janice. I can just get this matter investigated on my own. This is just going to pile up

on her. Now she won’t leave the city before she gets to the bottom of this.”

Janice looked at him calmly. “Didn’t you feel it? She’s not in a hurry to leave.”

Hans was surprised to hear that.

As dusk descended upon the city, the neon lights drowned the skies out with its blaring blaze. The traffic, as usual, was congested.

Justin had just gotten out of a dinner appointment, a stack of documents on his lap. When he was halfway through it, the car screeched to a halt, and he was thrust forward, causing his documents to fall.

"What happened?" Frankie held the back of his seat.

"A bike just ran across," the driver answered fearfully. "Are you alright, Mr. Burton?"

"I'm fine."

"Bikers are crazy." Frankie sighed before going down to pick the documents up. But suddenly, he saw something that made him freeze.

"Mr. Burton."

"What is it?"

He pulled out something black from under his seat and handed it to Justin.

It was a black metallic item the size of a nail. If it wasn't because of Frankie going down to pick the documents up, nobody would have noticed this item under the seat.

Justin's face darkened. The wind started screaming into the night, calling upon a downpour.

Back at Burton Residence, Rachel was drying her hair after her bath when she heard someone slamming the door, shocking her. Oh, you're back. Are you done with work?

Justin had just finished a cigarette, and he was in his suit, looking furious. "Do I need to report everything to you?"

That's not what I meant. Rachel snapped out of it, and she felt worried. Did you have dinner already? Do you want some tea?

"No." Justin sat down beside the bed, only twenty centimeters away from Rachel. "What have you been doing for the past two days?"

Rachel paused, then she said honestly. Work. And I went to see Grandma.

"Besides that?"

Besides that? Rachel thought of Hans and Janice, and her heart sank.

"Did you see someone you shouldn't? Or did you do anything you shouldn't do?"

Rachel was looking more panicked by the second. The moment she shook her head, she took an involuntary step back.

However, Justin caught her hand and asked coldly, "Why do you look so panicked?"

Rachel let out a hoarse moan, but she held in the pain and shook her head. She started tearing up, but that was only a façade to Justin. The very next moment, he flung her onto the bed.

Justin looked at her haughtily. "Look at this. Take a good look at it." He let the black listening device fall to the ground, and it spun for a while before stopping at the edge of the carpet.

Rachel paled.

Before she could answer, Justin leaned down and held her cheek tightly. "Don't say anything. Just nod or shake your head, you hear me?"

Rachel was already on the verge of tears from the pain.

Chapter 87 Don't Cry, Rachel

Rachel's face was starting to contort from the grip.

The pain was making her cry, but Justin showed no signs of stopping. In fact, he gripped her even tighter. "Understand?"

Rachel nodded with difficulty, and her tears streamed down her cheek, falling onto the back of Justin's hand.

"Have you seen Jefferey before you were discharged? Did he give you a listening device and asked you to install it in my car?"

Rachel nodded. The moment she did so, Justin's grip tightened even further, almost crushing her face, and it suffocated her.

"I protected your grandmother, and this is how you repay me?" If looks could kill, Rachel would have been dead by now.

Rachel shook her head fervently and struggled with all her might, trying to explain herself. By accident, she toppled the glass of water and medicine on the table, splashing the water everywhere.

The sight of those medicines drove Justin further into his fury. He was reminded of something, and he flung her onto the bed.

The back of her head crashed against the edge, and she started seeing stars, while her consciousness started to fade.

"You've been working with Jefferey ever since you married me. You've been getting information he needs and using us to control your family's company. And you plan to back out the moment you finish

the job.”

No. I didn’t.

“No? Then what’s this?” He picked up the meds and hurled it at her. “Then what’s this?!” he roared.

Rachel was shivering with fear. When she finally saw what the meds were, she froze. Wait. Those are the birth control pills I put in my bag. She didn’t find it when Frankie gave her the bag back, so she thought they were lost. Why did they show up here?

“Finally remembered it? Anything you want to say for yourself?”

I don’t know what you’re talking about.

“You don’t know? You just don’t want to admit it, right? You want to cut all ties with us, right? Been contacting a lawyer for that as well, haven’t you?”

Rachel was petrified, and she gaped at him.

“You’re not going to get away with that!” He tore his clothes apart, flying into a rage, not unlike a beast.

“Aahh!” The pain finally made Rachel cry, and she shouted hoarsely.

Justin was pulling her hair, thrusting fiercely with every pull, as if he was releasing all his anger with each movement. “You’re not the one who can decide whether you get knocked up. Don’t even think of cutting off your ties with us. Not unless I get tired of you. You’re just an object, and don’t forget about that. This isn’t some place you can come and go as you please!”

Rachel struggled at first, but her strength left her eventually. Even though Justin was still humiliating her, she was already numb to it.

The heinous and inhumane criminal activity that would go unpunished went on late into the night. When he was done, Justin, now a rapist, stormed off and slammed the door shut, the impact causing the room to shake.

Rachel was still staring up into the ceiling, but she couldn't even feel an inch of her body.

The next morning, when Julian realized Rachel wasn't here for breakfast, he asked Mrs. Duncan, "Where's Rachel?"

Mrs. Duncan was setting the table, but her expression was odd. "Maybe she's still sleeping."

Sue rolled her eyes and scoffed. "Why do you care? The whole house was shaken last night. Honestly, how did she even manage to rile Justin up that much? Couldn't even sleep well for Pete's sake. Alright, enough about them. Finish your breakfast, son."

Despite his mother's reassurance, Julian was worried, and he didn't feel like eating. After breakfast was done, he went upstairs to check on Rachel while his mother and Mrs. Duncan were distracted. "Rachel..."

Nobody responded. Julian kept waiting by the door, but suddenly, he had a bad feeling about it, so he spun the doorknob. It was unlocked, so he got in with no problem, but when he saw the scene, he immediately froze. "Rachel!"

Rachel was only covered by a thin blanket, and she was curled up like a ball on the bed. She noticed Julian, but she didn't even show any reaction. Her eyes were empty, like two little voids.

Julian stood there for a while before approaching her carefully. "What happened?"

He could see her ankle, and it was bruised. Her shoulders were splattered with bruises too. When she saw Julian coming closer, Rachel suddenly curled up and moved backward.

Julian was about to hold her hand, but what he saw next stopped him. The bed was caked in blood; some were dried and black, while some were fresh. Obviously, she just bled out earlier. "Did Justin do

this?" Julian couldn't believe what he was seeing. A while later, he held Rachel. "I'll take you to the hospital."

But when she heard the word 'hospital', Rachel turned back and shook her head adamantly.

Julian teared up. "Give me a second." He rushed downstairs and came back up with his medical kit. Sue and the servants were staring at him weirdly, but he ignored them and locked the door.

Realizing this, Sue started banging the door. "What are you doing, Julian? Justin's going to take this the wrong way! Get out here right now!"

"That's right, Master Julian."

"Shut up!" Julian banged the door back, silencing everyone outside. He was furious, but he held it down and sat beside the bed with his medical kit in hand.

"Calm down, Rachel. Let me see your wounds."

Rachel stared at him, who was looking at her gently, trying to look as kind as possible so she'd feel more at ease. All of a sudden, she started tearing up, and she cried.

"Oh, don't cry, Rachel. Don't cry." Julian held her hands, but they felt cold. He wanted to comfort her, but when the blanket slipped away, he teared up after seeing the bruises on her. A moment later, he turned back to wipe his tears. Is he mad? How could he do this to her?

Sue and Mrs. Duncan were waiting outside for a while, with the former listening closely to everything that was happening inside. When she heard Rachel's cry, she started panicking. "That vixen! How far does she want to go?"

"Calm down, Madam. Something must have happened."

“Of course something’s going to happen. They’re alone in a room in broad daylight. Scandalous!” But then someone suddenly opened the door from inside, and Sue almost fell down. If it weren’t for Mrs. Duncan, she would have bumped against her son.

Julian was furious.

Initially, Sue wanted to grumble, but one look at her son silenced her. She had raised Julian for thirty years, but that was the first time she thought he felt terrifying. Most of the time, he was a mild-mannered man.

Mrs. Duncan was shocked as well. “What happened, Master Julian?”

Julian looked at her darkly. “I need someone inside.”

Chapter 88 Just Stop

“I... I’ll do it.” Mrs. Duncan volunteered herself after Sue pinched her.

“No.” Julian was blocking the room, stopping anyone from seeing what was happening inside. He then pointed at a young maid behind Mrs. Duncan. “You. Come with me.”

The young maid was surprised, so she looked at Mrs. Duncan to ask her opinion.

“Is something the matter, Master Julian? She’s a newbie, so I can—”

“No. I said I want her. Do you understand me?” Julian growled darkly, silencing everyone. After the young maid went into the room, Julian closed the door again, leaving everyone dumbfounded. When they heard the door locking up, Sue knew she couldn’t find anything out.

Sue frowned. “What happened inside?”

Mrs. Duncan shook her head. "It's dark. Can't see a thing."

When Sue recalled what happened the night before, her frown deepened further.

At the same time, Julian turned the lights on. When the maid saw the state the bed was in, she paled and gasped. Julian told her, "Take her to the bathroom and bathe her."

"Master Julian, what h—"

"Don't ask. And what happened here stays here, got it?"

The servant nodded hastily.

Steam from the hot water was filling the bathroom up. Rachel was in a bathtub, staring ahead blankly, while the maid silently was wiping her body.

In the meantime, Julian was standing outside, telling the maid to put some salve on Rachel's wound on the lower body. The moment the pain assailed her, Rachel curled up. When she recalled what happened the night before, she started shivering. "Did I hurt you, Madam?"

A drop of tear rolled down Rachel's cheek; that was her answer. The maid stopped asking, but she was more careful with Rachel after that.

Everyone said Madam's lucky she married Master Justin. Said nobody would want a mute like her otherwise. But I haven't even been here for a week, and Master Justin has already raped her. Lucky? If this is lucky, hell is heaven.

The rain persisted for a whole day in Riverdale.

When Amber came back home, she noticed her father's white car in the yard. "Oh, Dad's home?"

"Yes, Miss. He came back this morning. Mr. Grant is here too." She looked up, but the study was locked. "Did something happen?"

The servant shook her head. "I don't know, but Master doesn't look happy. He was talking about some project when I brought him tea. Something about Burton Group."

Amber's heart sank.

At the same time, it was all doom and gloom in the study. Suddenly, Jefferey pushed all the documents onto the ground. "We were so close to signing the contract! Why'd they change their partner all of a sudden? I thought the bid was public. Everyone saw our ranking!"

Mr. Grant was sweating buckets. "We don't know what happened. They just changed their minds all of a sudden."

"At least give me a reason."

"I heard President Wyatt met up with Justin this morning."

"Justin Burton?" Jefferey's face fell.

"Mr. Hudson, Burton Group has been attacking us over the last few years, and you expected that to happen this time too. If this keeps up, they'll eventually acquire the company."

"That won't happen." Even though they were going downhill, they were still a big company, so a merger wouldn't happen so easily. Jefferey pushed down on the table, his gaze dark. "I have an ace up my sleeve."

Mr. Grant said nothing.

On the other hand, Julian took a day off to take care of Rachel. He was worried the servants might botch the job, not to mention Sue and Mrs. Duncan might trigger Rachel's trauma. "Here, you should eat something. You haven't had anything for lunch." He helped her sit up. "Take it slow."

Even though she had done nothing but lie on the bed the whole day, Rachel still looked lethargic. You took a day off for me? Sorry for troubling you. She forced a smile.

"It's alright. Here, have some soup."

Rachel nodded and took small sips of the soup. It was a sweet soup, but it tasted bitter for her.

When they heard the hum of Justin's car, both of them were shocked, but Julian pretended nothing had happened. "Rest up. Text me if you need anything."

Alright.

At the same time, Justin had just come in.

"It's raining heavily. Have you had dinner, Master Justin?"

"Yes," he told Mrs. Duncan curtly and went upstairs, only to see Julian coming out of his bedroom.

After Julian had closed the door, he asked Justin, "Oh, did you just come back?"

"Yes." He looked at the plate Julian was holding. "We have servants here. You don't have to do everything yourself."

The fact that Justin didn't even mention Rachel angered Julian. "Aren't you going to ask me why I'm doing this? She can't even get out of bed. Heck, she can't even move. She..." Julian noticed Mrs. Duncan when he took a glance downstairs, so he held his anger back. "What did you do, Justin?" he growled.

"I don't need your opinion about my marriage," Justin retorted coldly before walking past him and heading toward the study.

Julian asked after him, "Aren't you going to see her?"

Justin didn't even look back. He closed the door, and the sound rattled across the corridor.

As the night went on, Rachel eventually drifted to sleep. Her pain was keeping her awake, but her exhaustion wouldn't let her wake up. In her state of semi-consciousness, she felt someone sitting beside her. Is this a dream? The moonlight shone on the bed, casting a shadow on it.

After she woke up the next morning, Julian came in with breakfast. "Oh, you're awake."

Rachel nodded and pushed herself up. Were you here last night?

"No. Why?"

She looked at the glass on the table curiously and shook her head. Nothing. Probably just a dream.

Just when they were chatting, someone opened the door. When she saw who it was, Rachel trembled, toppling her breakfast.

Julian quickly moved the plate away. "Are you alright?"

I'm fine.

Justin's face darkened, but he went into the closet room quietly.

"Are you hurt?"

Even though he had closed the door, Justin could still hear Julian's concerned voice. He was buttoning his sleeve, but he couldn't make it even after a few tries. Frustrated, he took his tie off and tossed it on the sofa.

"I'll take a new one for you." Julian cleaned the place and was about to leave, but Rachel tugged on the hem of his shirt.

She was shaking her head nervously, glancing at the closet room. Julian knew what was happening immediately. She's terrified. What on earth happened that night? What made her so scared of him?

A moment later, the closet room's door was opened, and out came Justin in a new set of clothes. The moment he came out, he saw Rachel tugging on the hem of Julian's shirt. When she saw him, there was a suppressed fear in her eyes, but also disgust.

Chapter 89 Won't Be Able to Clear Their Names

Justin's face strode toward the door. "Shouldn't you leave for work soon, Julian? You should mind your own business," he uttered just before he stepped out of the door.

"Caring for patients is my business," Julian replied. Justin tightened his grip around the doorknob as his gaze dimmed. Bang! The whole house seemed to shake the moment he slammed the door shut.

Rachel's body jolted with shock, and she flinched as Justin shut the door. "Don't worry." Justin comforted her by patting her gently, but his gaze seemed to turn serious as he did so.

"Breakfast is ready, Young Master Justin. Would you like to drink coffee or—" The maid greeted Justin the moment he got down to the living room, but he interrupted her before she could finish her sentence. "I don't want anything." Justin shot his maid a hostile glare. "You have a lot of free time, huh? You don't need to come in for work anymore. We don't need you since we have to get our own food anyway!"

Justin didn't come back for a whole week after that. In the meantime, Rachel's injuries were recovering well, and a new batch of maids had arrived to replace the previous batch. One morning, Mrs. Duncan was preparing joss papers in the backyard; she intended to burn them at the cemetery the next day.

Rachel was standing by the window on the second floor, and she realized that Ancestors' Day was coming soon when she saw what Mrs. Duncan was doing. She tightened her fists when Janice's words rang in her mind all of a sudden.

That night, Julian placed some vegetables onto Rachel's plate while they all had dinner together. Sue happened to notice this, and she questioned Julian in a rather puzzled tone. "Your brother has been away for nearly a week now, and we haven't heard any news from him. Did you contact him in the past few days?"

"No. I've been busy in the hospital. I don't have the time to fuss over his matters," Julian replied.

"What about you?" Sue shifted her gaze toward Rachel. "Do you know where Justin went? When is he coming back?"

Rachel froze for a moment before she shook her head. Ever since Justin left home a week ago, they hadn't contacted each other at all. "You don't even know where your own husband is. How impressive! You don't even work, and all you do is stay home and laze around. I don't even know what you're doing," Sue mumbled.

"Stop talking, Mom," Julian muttered.

"I'm in my own house. Why can't I talk? I'm not the one who's mute," Sue hissed.

Rachel lowered her bowl. I'm done eating. After excusing herself from the table, Rachel walked off while Sue continued to nag and complain at the dining table.

As the night fell, a black MPV sped down the highway that led toward Riverdale's airport. The driver asked, "Where are you headed, Mr. Burton? Home, or..."

"You can send Gloria back to the hotel, and then I'll go back to the office," Justin replied in a calm voice.

"Are you still going to the office at this time of the night? Isn't your wife going to get worried if you stay out so late?" A woman's crisp voice came from beside Justin. The reflection on the car window revealed

a pretty young lady in her twenties. She didn't have the most stunning facial features, but she had the youthful and energetic look of a young girl.

"She won't," Justin replied simply.

The young girl froze for a moment when she heard that, but he simply turned to glance out the window, and neon lights illuminated his skin, leaving spots of light on his face. There seemed to be a hint of

loneliness beneath his stoic demeanor.

The next morning, Rachel drove out of the house on her own. She waited nearby the Hudson Residence, and she finally spotted Jefferey's car leaving the house during noontime. Without any hesitation, she started her engine and trailed behind his car.

Jefferey drove all the way to West Magnolia Cemetery. It began to drizzle when he arrived, and black umbrellas could be seen moving around the burial grounds. Rachel put on her raincoat before she covered her face with a mask and sunglasses. Then, she continued to follow the man into the cemetery. There used to be a piece of private land in the West Magnolia Cemetery that was used as the Hudson Family's ancestral grave. Later on, the government decided to expand the grounds and standardize the place. The Hudson's ancestral grave was supposed to be removed, but the Hudsons managed to keep a spot just for their family since they had some connections back then.

This was the first time Rachel had ever set foot in West Magnolia Cemetery. Why would my mother's grave be in the Hudson Family's private burial grounds? Rachel felt her heart sinking as she watched Jefferey halting his footsteps in front of a tombstone. "I'm here to see you," he said as he lowered his body and placed some daisies on the ground. "I brought your favorite flowers," he added.

Rachel couldn't hear everything that he said, for the sound of the rain was too distracting. However, she saw him kneeling in front of the tombstone for a long while, where he spoke to himself continuously; he even pulled out a bottle of alcohol.

"I'll come to visit you again this time next year." Jefferey poured the rest of his alcohol on the ground surrounding the tomb. "Enjoy your drink. Although you've been buried alone here, you wouldn't be as lonely that way. We'll all be reunited over here, and we'll be together even a hundred years later, alright?"

Rachel only stepped out from behind a pine tree after Jefferey had walked off into the distance. That was when she carefully made her way over to the tombstone. The cemetery looked especially gloomy due to the cloudy weather. She glanced at the fresh daisies as she arrived at the tombstone. Fear seized her as she thought about pushing the daisies aside, for she expected to see her mother's name engraved on the tombstone once she did so.

After standing around for a long while, Rachel finally reached her hand toward the flowers. Her pupils narrowed the moment she saw the name on the tombstone, and her expression faltered immediately. At that very moment, a black shadow towered over her head. Before she had the chance to respond, she felt a strong blow against the back of her head. She let out a groan before she collapsed head-first onto the ground. Just before she collapsed, she caught sight of the picture on the tombstone. It was the exact same picture as the one that she had seen in the darkroom, and it was the same one that Nancy had been secretly hiding. How could this be possible?

On the other side, the pitter-patter of the rain continued even after Julian came out from one of his surgeries. He checked his phone to find an unread message. 'I'm in a bad mood, and I had a few drinks. Can you come and pick me up?'

Julian frowned. 'Where are you now?'

'Highland Hotel, Room 2318.'

After Amber sent the text with the room number, she turned around to glance at Rachel, who was unconscious. A cruel look surfaced in Amber's eyes. Julian paid no attention to Amber regardless of how much she tried to attract him, and she felt a strong sense of hatred for Rachel whenever she thought about this. How could a mute like her get to marry Justin? How could she also get all of Julian's care and attention?

All Amber had to do was snap a photo of both man and woman once they were in the hotel room together. That way, they wouldn't be able to clear their names no matter how much they tried to. Amber was certain that Justin would no longer be able to accept Rachel once he saw such pictures of his wife.

Rachel finally woke up because of the pain she felt at the back of her head. She opened her eyes to find herself staring at the simple patterns that covered the ceiling of the room. Where am I? She held onto

the sheets as she sat herself up, and she immediately felt a chilling sensation against her skin. Then, she looked down to find herself completely naked. There wasn't a single piece of clothing on her under the sheets, and she panicked the moment she realized this.

Ding dong. Rachel's face turned pale when she heard the doorbell. Right then, her cell phone began to vibrate at the bedside table. "Hello? Rachel? It's me. Are you in there?"

Rachel froze for a moment, but she heaved a sigh of relief when she realized that the voice belonged to Julian. The only thing she had to wear in the room was a robe, so she wrapped it around her body before she rushed out to open the door.

"Are you okay?" Julian asked the moment he saw her.

Rachel's head was still spinning, and she looked dazed and drowsy as she had just woken up. Julian frowned and sniffed a few times as he looked at her. "Did you really drink alcohol?"

She was stunned by his question. Moments later, she realized the strong scent of alcohol coming from her own robe. I don't know.

"What exactly happened?" Julian asked.

Rachel shook her head. All she recalled was herself being struck in the head, and she woke up in the hotel room after that.

"Weren't you the one who sent me a text message?" Julian stared at her.

Chapter 90 Beating Her at Her Own Game

What message? Rachel asked in return.

"Oh no." Julian's face darkened, for he heard a series of hurried footsteps outside the door.

"This is the room, Justin. I saw them heading in with my own eyes. They're even doing this in the middle of the day! They don't show any respect toward you at all," the voice said. Rachel's expression grew stern the moment she realized that the voice belonged to Amber. Their visitors jabbed on the doorbell continuously, each 'ding dong' followed by the next.

"Unlock the door." Justin's ice-cold voice sounded from behind the door.

"Sure, Mr. Burton," Amber replied.

Right then, Rachel turned to see Julian looking as pale as a ghost. She couldn't imagine how things would turn out if Justin saw her dressed in a robe and sharing a room with Julian.

Beep beep. The door was opened from outside. Amber was the first to cry out at the top of her voice. "I can't believe you're actually doing such things behind Justin's back, Rachel!"

Justin strolled into the room with his long legs, and the look in his eyes made him look like he was about to murder someone. The scar on his face made him seem more sinister than ever.

Rachel felt a shudder down her spine. Amber, on the other hand, was pleased with herself. She had initially intended to snap a few pictures and let them be, but she happened to hear that Justin was back in town after a business trip. Therefore, she decided to change her plan and get Justin to drop by instead.

"It's a misunderstanding, Justin." Julian frowned.

"A misunderstanding?" Justin muttered in a hostile tone. "Give me an explanation then. What sort of misunderstanding is this?"

For some reason, Rachel felt a sense of hopelessness when she saw the look on Justin's face. You won't believe me regardless of what I say, right?

"I believe in my own eyes," Justin replied flatly. The air was silent around them for a while before Amber shifted her gaze upon Rachel. "Your acts are an embarrassment to the Hudson Family. Rachel, I can't believe you'd still do this even though Justin has been so nice to you all along."

Nice? Rachel thought bitterly. There was a tight lump forming in her throat. He hurt me one time after another, and he left injuries all over me. He even has other women outside! He has never trusted me before. Is this what others would consider as a 'nice' person?

Justin's gaze shot toward Rachel when he caught a whiff of the alcoholic scent in the air. "Were you drinking?"

No.

"No?" Justin asked again.

"Wait a second, guys." Julian spoke up to cut Justin off before looking at Amber. "You seem really certain that Rachel and I came over to get a room. I was wondering... How did you find out about this?"

Amber's expression stiffened immediately. "I... I had a friend that happened to pass by. My friend told me about this, so I immediately gave Justin a phone call."

"Your friend? Does this person look like your friend?" Julian pulled his phone out and played the footage he had obtained from the hotel lobby. An hour ago, a man in a raincoat was seen carrying

Rachel out of the car. The man brought Rachel all the way up to the hotel room, and soon enough, Amber was seen rushing up behind them.

Rachel's expression fell when she realized what had happened. She realized that Amber was the one who had knocked her out, and also the one who brought her over to the hotel, so she turned toward her. Why did you try to harm me?

"Who's harming you right now?! Stop talking nonsense," Amber replied indignantly.

"I knew something was odd even before I came here, so I obtained the CCTVs for the hotel area. It's obvious that Rachel had been forcefully kidnapped and brought over to this place. You were the one who planned this all out," Julian declared.

The look on Amber's face was no longer as bright as before. "That's not it, Julian. Rachel had a lot to drink, so I had no choice but to find her a hotel. I went downstairs to call Justin immediately after arriving here because I was hoping Justin would pick her up, but... I can't believe Julian showed up! That's right. Rachel must have called Julian to come over. Perhaps she's a little more honest after drinking. I'm sure she has feelings for Julian." Amber hastily came to that conclusion while she looked at Justin's stone-cold expression.

"Only a woman as evil as you would have her head filled with such dirty and nasty thoughts!" Julian let out a light scoff as he glared at Amber. He didn't bother to conceal the hatred he felt toward her. "There are so many loopholes in her story, Justin. Are you really going to believe her words?" Julian asked.

Amber was starting to get flustered. "It's the truth! Rachel did have a lot to drink, Justin. I don't know what is going on here." Everyone—even Rachel—shifted their gazes toward Justin. Things couldn't be any more obvious, so there didn't seem to be a need for them to say anything more.

However, Justin merely threw Rachel a glance before he addressed her in a flat tone. "You should get changed and go home since you're feeling fine now."

Rachel froze as she couldn't believe her ears; even Julian was rather taken aback. "Justin," he muttered.

"I have matters to handle in the office. You can send her home since you're here, Julian." With that, Justin took a final stare at Rachel; there wasn't a hint of warmth in his gaze. Rachel felt as if someone had poured a bucketful of cold water on her head as she watched Justin leave.

Amber was extremely pleased with that outcome at that point. "Wait up, Justin!" she cried as she went after him. Their voices gradually disappeared down the corridor.

"Are you okay, Rachel?" Julian asked.

Rachel tugged her lips into a bitter smirk. I'm fine, thanks.

Julian clenched his fists in anger. He felt extremely sorry for Rachel then.

...

Rachel didn't return home to the Burton Residence that night. Instead, she paid her grandmother a visit. The wide smile on Nancy's face refused to leave after she found out that Rachel was there to visit. "I had a feeling that you'd come back today. I only thought about it for a while earlier, and here you are now!" Nancy said with a smile. "Are you the only one here?" Nancy glanced over her shoulder. "Didn't you bring that man?"

At that moment, Rachel stuffed her head into Nancy's chest in order to conceal the tears gathering in her eyes.

"Aw, what's this? You're a grown woman. Do you still want to act all childish in front of me?" The old lady only recognized that something was odd when she noticed that Rachel's shoulders were

trembling. Nancy still had her hands stained with flour from making dumplings. "What is it, Rachel? Did someone bully you?" Nancy asked.

Rachel finally burst into tears after she heard her grandmother's concerned and loving tone. She felt sorry for herself. After getting married into the Burton Family, Rachel hadn't been concerned even when they shot her cold glares. She didn't even feel too sad when Tina slapped her in public, or when everyone gave her judgemental stares. She wasn't even troubled by the fact that Amber had tried to frame her. However, for some reason, Rachel felt as if her insides were filled with sorrow after she saw how cold and heartless Justin was toward her. That was when she lost control of her emotions.

Rachel nearly passed out after crying for a long while. Nancy had to pat the younger girl's back and wait until she was done crying before pouring a glass of water for her. "Tell me about it, Rachel. Who was the one who bullied you? Was it Justin?"

No. I'm just really stressed out at work. Rachel made a sign while letting out a sob.

“You’re still trying to lie to me at this point, huh? I watched you grow up. Don’t you think I know the sort of person you are?” Rachel had always been an obedient and thoughtful child, and she had been independent and strong-willed since she was young. So, how could her job stress get her to cry so badly?

I’m really fine, Grandma. Let me help you with those dumplings. With that, Rachel brushed her tears off before she walked toward the kitchen. It was clear that she wasn’t going to tell Nancy about anything.