

Mute Bride 91

Chapter 91 A Useless Move

Nancy felt her heart ache as she watched Rachel walking off.

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Amber was in her bedroom on a phone call with Tina later that night. "Tina, did you know how angry Justin was when he saw that mute girl earlier? If Julian hadn't stepped forward to protect and clarify her side of the story, I'm sure that she would have gotten chased out of the house the very next day," she uttered.

"What happened after that?" Tina asked.

"Justin found out that I was the one who was behind all of this in the end. However, he didn't blame me for it at all. I told you, didn't I? He never cared about that mute to start with!"

Tina let out a chuckle on the other end of the line. "I'll have to congratulate you then. It looks like you're one step closer to becoming my cousin-in-law."

"To be honest—" Amber didn't finish her words as she was shocked by the person who pushed her bedroom door open. "Dad," she muttered before hastily ending the call.

Jefferey was clutching onto the doorknob, and his face appeared rather grim. "What have you been doing the whole day today?"

Amber's expression stiffened. "N-Nothing much..."

"I heard everything that you said, and Tomas told me about it as well. That was too bold and risky of a move!" Jefferey cried.

“Dad...” Amber was so shocked that her face turned into the color of paper. “Please listen to me, Dad. I can explain—”

“You should think twice before doing such a thing in the future,” her father replied.

The fear in Amber’s expression was replaced by a look of confusion after she heard what Jefferey said. “Aren’t you... angry at me?” she asked him. Amber couldn’t believe it at all. She had expected her father to give her a huge scolding after finding out about her scheme against Rachel, and Julian’s involvement in it.

“Rachel’s practically one of those useless moves made in chess,” Jefferey uttered with the same blank expression on his face.

“What do you mean by that, Dad?” Amber asked.

“She has the guts to ignore my orders and words now that she’s in the Burton Family. I should have never allowed her to marry into that family from the very start,” he muttered.

“I told you to watch out for her since a long time ago. She’s a cunning one,” Amber replied.

“Well, that doesn’t mean that you should continue with such reckless plans on your own.” Jefferey shot Amber a glare. “Today’s incident could have taken a turn for the worse if Justin hadn’t decided to be a little more lenient and generous toward you.”

Amber beamed. “Justin does treat me pretty well, Dad. He didn’t blame me after what happened today, and he even bought me dinner after that. This shows that he doesn’t care about Rachel at all. She may as well be a decorative piece of furniture at home. I told you, Dad. It would have been much better if you had allowed me to get married into the Burton Family.”

There was a change in Jefferey’s expression as he knitted his brows a little. Hudson Pharmaceuticals had just undergone a spot check by the drug administration agency, and a good number of their medications had been confiscated. Thus, their company had no choice but to delay some of their client’s orders. On top of that, Jefferey had lost so much money after investing in property. With that thought in his mind,

he gently patted the back of Amber's hand. "I'm not against the idea of you dating Justin, but I want you to promise me one thing."

Amber was delighted. "What is it?"

"I need you to get me some private and confidential files from Justin," he uttered. Amber was stunned to hear his words.

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The next day, Rachel headed out to meet Janice. They had agreed to meet up at their usual spot, and Janice ordered a pot of tea the way she always did.

Where's Hans? Rachel asked after placing her bag aside.

"He has an important court case today, so I doubt he'll be able to rush over in time," Janice answered. Rachel nodded to show that she understood.

"You seemed really anxious to meet up with us. Was there some sort of development in the matter after what happened yesterday?" Janice asked.

Yeah. Although Rachel had fainted after getting hit in the head, she still had a distinct memory of the photo and name she had seen on the tombstone before passing out. She was surprised when she found out that the one person the Hudsons never spoke of in the family was related to her mother. After some contemplation, Rachel finally began to tell Janice about it. You told me that Lionel and Selena's death was related to Jefferey somehow, right? Is that true?

"It is true, but such things are hard to prove since so much time has passed. Lionel died after his car flew off a cliff, and Selena disappeared in the ocean. Both of these incidents occurred around the same period of time, and there were a few puzzling details about it but no solid evidence. Why? Why are you talking about them all of a sudden?"

I stalked Jefferey and followed him to the cemetery yesterday.

Janice could tell that something was wrong when she saw how Rachel seemed to hesitate with her words. "What is it? Was there an issue?"

You said that he would visit my mother's grave during Ancestor's Day, but I finally saw the grave that he visited yesterday.

"Do you know that person that he's visiting?" Janice asked.

Rachel nodded.

"Well, who is it?" Janice asked again.

A troubled look surfaced in Rachel's eyes as she carefully drew a few strokes on the table with her finger. Janice froze and stared at the other girl with a look of disbelief. "Are you sure? How could it be her?"

Rachel gave Janice a firm nod. She had written the word 'Selena' on the table, for she was certain that the picture on the tombstone was the one that her grandmother had shown her. It was also the same picture that she had seen in the darkroom—the black and white image of a young girl with a broad grin.

Rachel's hands were trembling as she held onto her cup of tea. Her thoughts were all over the place. It had been so many years, yet she had no idea that her mother was the child that the Hudsons had adopted all those years ago. Selena was her mother.

"Hold on. Let me make sense of this." Janice placed her cup on the table. "When looking at Jefferey's generation in the Hudson Family, the two eldest children are Jefferey and Lionel. Then, Old Mr. Hudson took Selena in, and Selena and Jefferey gave birth to you? But that doesn't make sense. Selena's just an adopted child, so the family would have no reason to disagree if she wished to be with Jefferey. Why would she have to leave Riverdale?"

I don't know.

“Selena... Jefferey... Lionel...” Janice repeated those three names a few times before she abruptly lifted her head. “That’s not possible. Selena disappeared out in the ocean back then, so... Rachel, could your mother possibly have been pressured by someone else in the past?”

Rachel’s expression stiffened. What do you mean by that?

“Based on what I know, Selena used to be one of the highest achievers in pharmacology. There were only a few women who even had the opportunity to study overseas at that point, so Old Mr. Hudson was very fond of her. She was in charge of half of the Hudsons’ pharmaceutical business back then.”

Was my mother the person who was managing the business?

“Yeah. We’ve investigated this for a long while, but we still don’t know why the Hudsons chased Selena out. If we look at the timing, this happened when she got pregnant with you.”

That doesn’t make sense. If she were coerced to leave, the Hudsons would have no reason to chase my mother out after she was pregnant.

Janice knitted her brows. “It’s a shame that most of the people from back then are gone. Furthermore, you don’t remember much of your childhood. This is a tough case.”

Rachel thought of something then. I think there might be someone who can give us answers.

Chapter 92 Tales of the Past

“Who is it?” Janice asked.

My grandmother. Rachel assumed that the whole picture would become clearer once she found out who her mother was, but things only seemed more complicated. Somehow, her mother was involved in the Hudson Family’s fight for their inheritance that happened all those years ago.

The sun was shining bright on top of her head when Rachel left the restaurant. She saw Hans jogging toward her from a distance away. "I'm sorry I'm late, Rachel. Are you and Janice done talking?"

Yeah. We're done. Rachel wore a rather stiff look on her face.

"What is it? Why do you look so pale?" Hans asked.

It's nothing. There are just some things that I need to clarify with my grandmother.

Hans held onto her arm. "Are you sure you're okay?"

Rachel gave him a nod, but it was clear that she wasn't paying attention to his question.

"Hey, why don't you let me send you back?" he offered.

I drove here.

"No. I'd be worried if you had to drive back now," he replied. Rachel couldn't reject his stubborn determination in the end. However, neither of them realized a moving figure that had been standing on the street just opposite the restaurant. There were a few cigarette butts lying right beside the man's feet. "Hello? The person you told me to keep an eye on is going into a car with a man. Do you need me to continue following her? You'll have to top up some cash for my car ride then," the person said.

A woman's voice came from the other end of the line. "Who did she go off with? Did you take any pictures?"

"How am I supposed to know? You didn't tell me to take pictures," he replied.

"Take them now."

"I told you that she already got into the car with someone else. They've left."

“Are you an idiot? I gave you a simple task, and this is what you managed to accomplish?” the woman cried.

The young man’s face darkened when he heard the woman shouting at him through the phone. “Are you scolding me right now? You watch out! I’m not going to entertain you anymore if you scold me again.” The young man ended the call right after finishing his words. He grumpily threw his cigarette butt onto the ground. “F*ck! What was that? How dare she shout at me!”

The young man turned to look at the car opposite the street. He studied the details for a while, even memorizing the car plate number.

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Hans stopped his car in the alleyway and stayed there even after Rachel left. He glanced up to look at the light turning on in one of the units. Nancy was both surprised and glad to see Rachel showing up at her front door. “What brings you here today?” she asked.

I have a few questions for you, Grandma.

It was rare for Rachel to be so serious, and Nancy seemed rather taken aback by this. “What is it? Come in and have a seat before we talk.” There was a faint scent of lavender that lingered on the couch. No dilly-dallying was involved—Rachel got straight to her point once she sat down.

I’d like to ask you about my mother, Grandma.

The smile on Nancy’s face faded a little as she looked away to avoid Rachel’s gaze. “Why would you ask about your mother all of a sudden?”

Is she my mother? Rachel typed out Selena’s name and handed her phone over to her grandmother.

Nancy's entire body jolted with shock when she first saw the name, and her expression changed within seconds. There was no more explanation needed. "How did you find out about this, Rachel? Did Jefferey tell you about this?"

No. I did some of my own research.

"Your research? What have you found so far?"

I've found quite a lot of things. I found out about my mother's actual identity and her cause of death. Rachel told Nancy about everything that she saw at the Hudson Vineyard. Nancy was trembling with anger by the time she heard about what Jefferey had done in the darkroom. "Jefferey, that disgusting rat! He was already desperate for her when she was alive, and he's still not letting go of her right now. He's inhumane! He's going to hell!"

What do you know about this, Grandma? What is the truth?

The anger remained on Nancy's face, and she sighed and groaned a few more times before she spoke. "I never intended to tell you about this, Rachel. However, I guess I can't hide it from you now that you've found out about this. I'm not actually your biological grandmother." Rachel froze on her spot. She couldn't believe Nancy's words.

"Your birth mother is Miss Selena, whom Old Mr. Hudson adopted as his daughter all those years ago. When I was still with the Hudsons, Miss Selena helped me out a lot. That's why I left along with her

once she got into trouble and was chased out of the Hudsons," Nancy explained. Rachel was starting to see how complicated things were back then.

Selena was an orphan adopted by Old Mr. Hudson, and she had grown up with two brothers—Jefferey and Lionel. Old Mr. Hudson was a kind and loving man, and he had always treated Selena as his own child. He sent her overseas for her studies and let her take over half of the pharmaceutical business after she returned to the country.

"After that, the Hudsons somehow provoked some other people, and they then found themselves being attacked. Lionel had been doing a lot to help, but he suffered a sudden death during then. All of the

pharmacies were shut down for investigation after that, and Old Mr. Hudson's health only deteriorated more every day. At the same time, the eldest son from Circa Pharmacy in Jacksonville showed up to propose to Selena," Nancy continued.

Rachel froze. What happened after that?

Nancy shook her head. "I don't know what Old Mr. Hudson was thinking. I recall how it was raining heavily that day. Miss Selena knelt outside the house for the whole night, but Old Mr. Hudson ordered the maids to pack her items before he kicked her out of the Hudson Family the next morning. The Hudsons no longer had a daughter after Selena was chased out, so Circa Pharmacy naturally couldn't continue to ask for a marriage. After that, I left with Miss Selena, but we were kidnapped by some people and thrown into some sort of ferry."

Was it someone from Circa Pharmacy who kidnapped you guys?

"No," Nancy said with a stern expression. "You probably wouldn't have guessed it if I don't tell you now—it was Jefferey, that horrible, evil man. He made a deal with Circa Pharmacy just for the sake of inheriting the family business. He knew that Old Mr. Hudson had given all of the medicinal recipes to Miss Selena, which was why he chose to kidnap her."

Rachel felt like her mind was spinning in circles. She was too confused by everything she had just heard. Technically, her mother and Jefferey were siblings based on their titles. Yet, Jefferey went against Selena for the sake of some medicinal recipes. But how could that explain Rachel's existence? How was she brought into the world?

How did my mother give birth to me? Did Jefferey do something to her—

"Pfft. That b*stard doesn't deserve a woman like her," Nancy mumbled. "If Lionel hadn't passed away so abruptly, the Hudsons had already planned to host a wedding. Miss Selena and Lionel had agreed to explain everything to Old Mr. Hudson once things were over, but they hadn't expected a sudden accident to occur."

Are you saying that my father is Lionel?

“That’s right. You are the only inheritor that descended from the eldest child of the family. Who does Jefferey think he is? He’s nothing more than a crazed psychopath and a b*stard who plots and schemes to benefit himself!” Nancy was tearing up as she got emotional. “After Miss Selena and I managed to escape from the boat, we stayed in my old house in the mountains. But a few years later, Jefferey managed to find us. There was a huge fire after that—the fire practically engulfed my whole village,” Nancy said.

Rachel had vague memories of such an incident. She couldn’t recall much from her past, but she often had a dream in which there was a large fire that wouldn’t end. She remembered how she couldn’t seem to run out of the fire no matter how much she tried. The dreams made sense to her now since it was actually what happened.

“Your guess was right, Rachel. Jefferey was the one who murdered your mother, and they thought that they could get all the details for the medicinal recipes after that. Unfortunately, there were no quantities or measurements in the recipes.”

Right then, Rachel jumped up in surprise once more. She thought about the prescription that Jefferey had shown her in the Hudson Vineyard. The tiny handwriting she saw then belonged to her mother.

Chapter 93 Acquiring Hudson Pharmaceuticals

“After your mother passed away, you lost your voice during the huge fire. For the sake of your safety, I told Jefferey that you were the only one who knew about the medicinal recipes. That was why he agreed to bring you back into the Hudson Family. That was also how the public recognized you as an illegitimate daughter of the Hudsons,” Nancy said.

But I don’t remember any of the medicinal recipes.

“Your memories are engraved within you, Rachel. I’m sure you remember everything that your mother had ever told you—you simply lost your memories temporarily. You’ll recall all of it someday.” Nancy pulled out a picture of Selena—the same black and white picture that was on the tombstone.

Rachel felt her heart aching when she saw the picture, and tears trickled down her cheeks without any warning. Nancy teared up as she pulled the young girl in for a hug. “My darling, if Selena is watching from above, she’d be pleased to see what a beautiful and kind woman you’ve turned into.”

Rachel cried for a long while after that. Whatever she had just heard was simply too much to process. No matter how harsh Jefferey had been toward her in the past, she had always treated him as her father. She had always believed that a parent would care for their child regardless of how harsh they might be. However, it turned out that he wasn't her father at all—that explained why he was so heartless toward her. She brushed her tears off as she recalled what Janice had told her. Grandma, do you remember what the person who killed my mother looks like?

Nancy clenched her fists. "I'd recognize that person even if he turned into ashes. He was a vicious killer; he set the whole mountain on fire to destroy all evidence. He nearly killed all of the villagers there." Rachel hastily unlocked her phone to look for an image of a wanted man before showing it to Nancy.

"He's the one. I recall how he had a large mole on his face." Nancy's voice was trembling, and her face was pale as she recalled the terrifying memories of her past. Rachel tightened her grip on her phone as she tried to calm herself down. She wanted to avenge her mother's death, and she wanted these people to pay for what they had done.

The skies were turning dark, and Hans stepped out of the car when he saw Rachel coming out of the building. "Are you okay?"

Rachel shook her head. Grandma told me the whole story. I'll tell you about it when we get into the car.

"Okay." Hans pulled the car door open. "Let's talk in the car." They were talking when a shrill siren interrupted their conversation. Rachel looked up to see a black MPV on the street opposite them. Her face turned pale immediately.

"What is it?" Hans could sense that something was wrong with Rachel.

She didn't have the chance to respond to him as her phone kept ringing in her pocket. Her hands were trembling when she pulled her phone out to look at the caller ID. "I'll give you one minute to walk over and get into the car." The man's voice on the other end of the phone was deep and stern.

"Rachel," Hans said when he noticed the car opposite them. He held onto her arm. "Is that him?"

She gritted her teeth as she pushed Hans aside. You should leave now. I'll text you later. Rachel hurried toward the opposite side of the street after that. Justin was a man who didn't take no for an answer—Hans might be in danger if she made Justin wait for a while more.

The man in the black MPV wore an icy, forbidding expression on his face. His still, dark eyes were so terrifying that anyone who looked into it would feel their hearts pounding with fear. Justin stared out the car window to look at the man in front of the white car parked opposite the street.

Rachel got in from the other side of the car. "Let's go," Justin ordered coldly. The MPV left the alleyway right after that. Justin didn't utter a single word on the way back, and the silence only made Rachel more fearful. She felt as if her heart was about to leap out of her throat. The driver didn't head in the direction of the Burton Residence. Rachel felt herself getting more terrified as the roads outside looked increasingly unfamiliar to her.

They arrived at a villa on the outskirts of town. Justin removed his coat and threw it on the couch the moment he stepped into the house. Rachel, on the other hand, hesitated when she arrived at the doorstep. She glanced around to see that the interior of the house was modern and brand-new. In fact, the insides still had the smell of a newly-renovated house. There wasn't a single soul in the large building.

Justin loosened his tie before he abruptly turned to face Rachel. "Ah!" She screamed as she felt as if her scalp was about to be torn apart. Justin had grabbed onto a handful of her hair before he shoved her against the wall. "You disappeared for two whole days because you went to meet that guy, right?"

She was close to fainting because of the pain. Her face was filled with terror as she looked up at him. "Hans Egerton, a Master of Laws graduate from California State University and a relatively well-known young lawyer... Why are you meeting a lawyer behind my back? What are you trying to do? Are you going to get a divorce?"

She shook her head frantically as she tried to push him away.

"What sort of reason are you planning to give, then? Domestic abuse? Or something else? Huh?" Justin tugged onto her hair and flung her aside.

With a loud cry, she stumbled and fell onto the couch. When she next looked up, Justin had already stepped closer to her. “Tell me, what are you trying to do?”

Rachel edged away from him fearfully. Both her legs were shaking uncontrollably. No. I’ve never thought of getting a divorce.

“Why are you meeting a lawyer, then?”

I... I just wanted to ask him about some other things.

“What other things?”

She gritted her teeth as she hastily came up with a random excuse. It has to do with my inheritance in the Hudson Family.

“Oh? Is that all?”

That’s all.

“Really? Are you sure you’re not hiding anything from me?” Justin’s gaze was stony and grave—even the last hint of humanity had disappeared. “Doesn’t he have any other relationship with you apart from meeting you as a lawyer?”

Rachel jolted with surprise.

“I heard that a woman’s first love is the hardest one to let go of, isn’t that right?” The man’s eyes were filled with jealousy. Rachel felt as if she was falling into an endless pit. Her face turned pale as she realized something—Justin knew about this all along!

The very next moment, she let out another cry as Justin tugged her up from the couch by grabbing onto her hair. When she fell back onto the couch, he pressed his fingers against both sides of her cheeks as he

hissed at her. "You used Julian as a shield so that I wouldn't find out about this first love of yours. You sure put in a lot of work just to achieve this!"

She couldn't provide him with any other response apart from wailing in agony. The searing pain in her scalp made her feel as if she was about to pass out, but Justin didn't show a hint of pity toward her as he tore the collar of her shirt open.

"Which part of you has he laid his hands on? Here? Or here?" Rachel's figure trembled with fear that seemed to fill all of the bones in her body. Her face was the color of paper as she glared at Justin with her bloodshot eyes. She couldn't make a sound at all.

All of a sudden, she felt a surge of energy coming from within her, and she used it to shove the man off of her. Bang! He fell back against the coffee table, and he let out a painful groan as he tried to sit himself upright. His hand was covered in blood when he reached and felt the back of his head.

For some reason, Justin seemed to calm down as he sat on the ground and stared at his bloody hand. "That's impressive. What is this? Are you trying to protect your own body for the sake of that man?"

Don't you dare come any closer to me. Rachel was shaking, and her hands were trembling as she signed the words that she wanted to say to him. You only got married to me because you want to control the Hudson Family, and I can help you with that.

"What help can you provide?" Justin scoffed. "Did you forget that you're just an illegitimate daughter? The only purpose you serve is to keep me entertained in bed—you aren't of any other value to me."

I can help you to acquire Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Chapter 94

Justin felt his heart skipping a beat before he darkened his gaze. Both of them weren't far apart from each other-the couch and the coffee table were the only pieces of furniture between them. A standing lamp was placed right next to the couch, and the dim light shone upon Rachel's face as she moved. It was the first time Justin had ever seen Rachel that way-her bloodshot eyes were filled with hatred and resentment. It didn't seem like her anger was directed toward him-it looked more like she was angry at the Hudsons.

He was dazed for a moment, but he quickly calmed himself down before he sneered. "Are you daydreaming or something?"

There's something wrong with the Hudson Pharmaceuticals' medication. They've provided a number of fake drugs to a few suppliers.

Justin froze. Even Amber didn't know anything about this, so how could an illegitimate daughter like Rachel hear about such news?

As long as you can help me to get a job at Hudson Pharmaceuticals, I will be able to get proof of them manufacturing fake medication. Rachel's thoughts were clearer once she managed to calm down. She realized that both she and Justin could exchange information and benefit from one another when they couldn't achieve certain things independently. Jefferey was an enemy to both of them, and she figured that she could temporarily become friends with her enemy's enemy.

Justin was quiet for a long while before he abruptly leaned his weight against the coffee table to get onto his feet. Rachel's face turned pale as she grabbed onto a vase beside her.

"What are you doing?" he said as he shot her a glare. "Didn't we just agree to partner up? Are you going to work with a dead body if I die from losing too much blood? Go find me a first-aid kit."

She was stunned for a long while, but she finally heaved a sigh of relief when she realized that Justin looked a lot calmer than before. A few minutes later, she came back with a first-aid kit to help Justin clean his wound. He let out a hiss, and she felt her hands shaking as she tried to clean the blood. She was a lot gentler the next time she touched him.

"Why are you suddenly going against the Hudsons?" he asked.

I've thought about it. He's bad to me, and he has never treated me like his biological daughter. / want to make sure I have a Plan B for myself. Rachel didn't mention anything about her mother as she recalled how Janice had told her to keep it a secret.

"Did you find out about something?" Justin asked out of nowhere.

Rachel was rather surprised at first. Is there something I should know about?

He frowned. He felt troubled whenever he thought about the information that Frankie had gathered for him. "It's nothing," he mumbled.

Rachel stepped aside to tidy the first-aid kit after she was done cleaning Justin's wound. He no longer seemed as threatening and powerful with a bandage wrapped around his head, and he even looked rather amusing because of the ribbon knotted on the back of his head. "You haven't explained the whole thing with your lawyer to me yet."

Rachel's actions of tidying the first-aid kit came to a halt before she turned around. Her eyes were calm but firm as she stared at him. You're not allowed to lay hands on him.

His eyes turned cold, and he felt his chest tightening when he looked into Rachel's steady gaze. "Are you giving me a warning right now?"

Since you've made a deal with me, I deserve to benefit from this deal as well.

"Benefits? So, the benefit you want is for me to not mess with this man?"

I'll help you acquire Hudson Pharmaceuticals, but you cannot touch the people around me. I don't want you to act all suspicious all the time. This is a pretty good deal for you, don't you think? Rachel was a little nervous-she had no idea how Justin would respond to her words.

He stared at her silently as his gaze grew dimmer. "Fine, I promise."

In the past, Rachel had always been someone who compromised and gave in to him, so it was a shock for him to hear her making such a request. He wondered if Rachel was genuinely looking for a Plan B or if she just created such lies to protect that guy. Regardless, he was pretty eager to see what sort of impact an illegitimate daughter might be able to generate in the company.

A conversation was happening late at night in the Burton Residence. "Are both of them not home? Did you call and ask Frankie?" Sue asked.

"Yeah. Frankie said that Young Master Justin wouldn't be coming home because he has other matters to handle," the maid replied.

"What about the mute?"

"Frankie didn't say anything about that. But considering how distant they seem recently, my guess is that they aren't together now."

Sue was visibly pleased as she sipped on her tea. "Things will be over once he's past that initial stage of excitement. Justin has met so many other girls, anyway; what's the big deal about this mute lady? She's not even obedient. He'll get bored of her after a while."

*But I heard that Young Master Justin brought another woman back from his business trip, Madam Parham," Mrs. Duncan uttered.

Sue's expression grew alert upon hearing the other person's words. "A woman?"

"He even arranged for her to stay in a condominium. I heard she's a university student who got into one of the universities in Riverdale."

"Who is she? Did you run a thorough investigation on her background?" Sue asked.

Mrs. Duncan shook her head. She had gotten the news from Justin's driver. The driver was puzzled to see a woman beside Justin when he picked Justin up from the airport.

Sue knitted her brows. "Get someone to investigate her background. I don't want her to take advantage of Justin."

"Alright."

Three days later, Rachel was called to help out with the logistics at the City Council Library. There was a groundbreaking ceremony for the renovation, and Rachel bumped into Tina while they were in the washroom. "It's been a while, Rachel." Tina shot Rachel a side glance while she fixed her makeup in front of the mirror. "You look like you're doing fine. I thought you'd have to rest for at least a year after that car accident."

Rachel clenched her fists. She couldn't stop herself from shuddering at the mention of the car crash it was something that troubled her even after so long. You were the one who caused that accident!

"So what if I was the one who did it? Does my brother look like he's about to hold me responsible for it?" Tina gave Rachel a cocky stare. "The whole Burton Family knows that I was the one who did it, but what are you going to do about that? I've told you this before-no one cares about you, even if you're part of the Burton Family. You'll have to pay for Henry's death eventually."

Her chilly voice echoed in the washroom, and Rachel felt a chill running down her spine. Tina was a complete psychopath.

"By the way, there's something else that I wanted to remind you about." Tina raised an eyebrow. The slight smirk on her lips made her look especially sinister. "I'm afraid you won't own the title of 'Mrs. Burton' for much longer. Who would've expected another woman to appear in the picture out of nowhere, right?"

Rachel had no idea what Tina was talking about, but Tina simply let out a cold scoff before she took her handbag and walked off. The groundbreaking ceremony was hosted on an empty piece of land. Justin showed up at the ceremony as he was one of the investors. Rachel, on the other hand, stood with a team of girls that were on duty for the ceremony. She held a tray that had a pair of scissors on it

-the scissors would be used to cut the ribbon later.

Although Rachel was a distance away from Justin, she could see him with an unfamiliar woman. The woman seemed to have replaced Frankie's role as his secretary. "I've never cut a ribbon for a ceremony. Isn't this fun?" The woman's high-pitched voice didn't seem to fit in with the rest of the crowd.

However, a rare loving expression surfaced on Justin's face when he turned to the woman. "Would you like to try it?"

"Can I do that?" she asked.

"Of course. It's just cutting a ribbon," he replied.

Rachel heard him speaking while she brought the tray over to them, and she looked up to meet Justin's eyes. His gaze seemed unfamiliar to her.

Without even a slight change in expression, Justin reached for the scissors on the tray before he handed it to the girl beside him.

"Thank you." The girl gave Rachel a warm smile. "You're really pretty, Miss," she commented on Rachel.

Rachel froze.

Tina, who had already gotten her own pair of scissors, made a sharp comment when she heard their conversation. "Gloria, I'm afraid she doesn't want you to call her 'Miss.'" She sniggered.

The young girl didn't understand the meaning behind Tina's comment.

Chapter 95

"No one would think you're mute if you just kept your mouth shut for once, you know." Justin glared at Tina from the corner of his eye.

"I'm not mute," Tina said with a smirk. She rolled her eyes at Rachel before she lifted her scissors and cut the red silk ribbon into two. Snip! After the ribbon-cutting ceremony was over, Rachel brought the ribbons off the stage. She felt a sour feeling in her chest while she watched Justin and the other girl standing close to each other. She had never seen Justin being protective of anyone else in such a bold

and open manner. Even if he did that to Amber, Rachel knew that he only played along for the sake of the Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

The rest of the celebration was hosted in a hotel. Rachel felt bored out of her mind as she watched all the guests clinking glasses and socializing with one another, so she decided to head out for a walk.

“What are you doing here on your own?” A man’s voice sounded from behind. Rachel jumped a little before she turned to see Justin dressed in a full black suit. He looked especially handsome under the dimly-lit night sky. It was a little hot in there, so I came out for a stroll, she replied.

Ever since they established the deal between them three days ago, Justin had been treating her in a cold and distant manner. He no longer asked about her schedule or whoever she met up with. Why are you out here? Rachel stole a glance behind him before she continued with the rest of her sentence. Your new secretary looks really young.

“If you have the free time to check out my new secretary, why don’t you use some of it to think about the partnership between us?” Justin held a document out to her.

Rachel froze for a second. Is this a letter of appointment?

It was a contract for the role as the deputy director of the finance department in Burton Group. Justin had already signed his name and stamped the company’s stamp on the document. “You’re an

illegitimate daughter-it would be hard to get Jefferey to allow you to be a part of Hudson Pharmaceuticals as he wouldn’t want you to be involved in their internal affairs. It’d probably take you years to come up with a plan that could work,” Justin commented.

How does hiring me as a staff in the Burton Group help with anything?

“I’m an efficient and effective person. Doesn’t Jefferey wish to learn some details about the Burton Group’s partners? He’ll certainly get closer to you once he learns that you’re a part of the company.”

Justin explained.

She immediately understood the situation. I'll draft my letter of resignation tomorrow.

Justin gave her a faint nod.

"I've been looking everywhere for you, Justin. What are you doing here?" A young girl exaggerated her movements to push the heavy glass door open before she stuck her head out the balcony. Her hair was tied up in a ponytail, and her petite face was glowing with youth. Rachel tightened her grip around the documents she was holding.

The iciness on Justin's face faded significantly as he turned to look at the young girl. "What brings you here?"

"I was too bored, and there were a lot of people surrounding me and asking me questions. I had to find a way to escape them." The girl's eyes lit up when she saw Rachel. "I've seen you before! I saw you during the ribbon-cutting ceremony! Hello, my name's Gloria. I'm Justin's, Oops." The girl stuck her

tongue out and giggled. "I mean, I'm President Burton's secretary. I'm still on probation."

After a moment of silence, Gloria continued talking. "You... can't talk?" She eyed Rachel puzzledly.

Rachel subconsciously stared at Justin, but Justin didn't seem interested in introducing the two women to each other at all. Instead, he glanced at his watch. "Let's go, Gloria. It's late now."

"Huh? Where are we going?" she asked.

"Didn't you say that this place was boring? I'll bring you somewhere else for food," Justin offered. "Right now? But there are a lot of people waiting out there for you" Gloria protested.

"You don't need to care about those people," he muttered. Gloria looked like she wanted to talk to Rachel for a while more, but the younger girl had no choice but to keep up behind Justin as he began to walk off.

For some reason, the breeze seemed chillier as Rachel watched the two people walking away from her. She couldn't help but shudder a little. Justin had a new love interest, and he no longer cared about Rachel-but wasn't this what Rachel had always longed for? If that was the case, why did she feel so hurt deep down?

As the night went on, Justin sent Gloria home after they had a meal. As he was on the way home, Frankie glanced at the rearview mirror for a while before he hesitatingly parted his lips to speak. "President Burton, there's been some gossip going on in the company recently."

"What are they talking about?" Justin asked.

"It's about you and Miss Hochmann. They said that you chose a young lady to be your secretary and that both of you-" Frankie was interrupted before he could finish his words.

"Do you need to tell me this? Do you need me to teach you what to do?" Justin uttered.

Frankie's face turned pale. "That's not what I meant. I know that you would like to protect Miss Hochmann, but these rumors can be hurtful, and she's still a young girl. If someone tries to use this

against you guys... The board of directors-Jason and the rest of them-have been waiting to find fault in you."

"It's no big deal. Gloria's starting school next month, so she won't be at the company a lot," Justin replied with a calm look on his face. Frankie looked as if he was about to say something else, but he held his words back in the end. He couldn't understand what his boss was trying to do at all.

On the other hand, Jefferey was quick to learn about the news of Rachel quitting her job and joining the Burton Group. Things went just as Justin had expected it to-Rachel received a call from Jefferey right after she started working at her new company. Jefferey asked her to meet up with him.

The breeze was strong, and the sun was blinding at the Hudson Pharmaceuticals' production factory. Rachel squinted to get used to the sunlight when she first got out of the car, and she soon saw a figure

waving at her from a distance away. "You've been here when you were just a child, Rachel. Do you remember this place?"

Jefferey brought her for a walk in the factory's workshop, and Rachel tagged along with mixed

Riverdale. The rest of the factories were built in further locations to save costs on the workforce salary and rental. "In the past, our ancestors had insisted that everyone who inherited Hudson Pharmaceuticals had to get a degree in medicine. You know that, right?"

Yeah.

"Well, things are different now-we have a research team, and we're a listed company, so it's more important for the person who takes over to have some management skills. In other words, I have the power to decide who I wish to hand the company to," Jefferey explained.

Why are you telling me all this? Rachel asked.

"Do you know why I've never allowed Amber to get involved with the company, Rachel?" Jefferey didn't answer her question. Rachel shook her head as she didn't understand why.

"Amber is bad at managing a business, so I don't think it's a good fit for her to take over the company. In comparison to her, you're much more mature and stable. You've been outstanding ever since you were a child," Jefferey said.

Rachel let out a scoff in her heart as she could predict what he was about to say next. "Hudson Pharmaceuticals will fall into your hands someday." Her gaze darkened-she didn't look pleased by the news at all. "I heard that you quit your job and got into the Burton Group, is that right?" Jefferey asked.

As expected, their topic had shifted onto this matter. Yes, she replied.

"That's a good thing. You should help your husband out with some work since you've married into the Burton Family. This shows his trust toward you, and it's also a great oppo continued.

What opportunity are you referring to? she asked.

“It’s a chance for us to build a relationship between both companies. The Burton Group has always taken the lead in the property industry. Wouldn’t all parties be happy if you were able to help your old man out a little?”

Would all parties be happy? Rachel let out another scoff in her heart. Jefferey was probably the only one who’d benefit from such a suggestion. But I don’t understand much about Hudson Pharmaceuticals business, so I’m not sure I can be of any help even if I wanted to help you.

Jefferey beamed at her. “That’s no issue at all. If you’re willing to do this, I can get someone to familiarize you with our business so that you can make some comparisons to your work at the Burton Group.”

Is this the right thing to do? she asked.

“There’s nothing wrong about it. You’re my daughter, and you’re part of Hudson Pharmaceuticals as well. I trust you to do a good job,” he said while patting her on the shoulder. “Let’s not talk about the

past from now on. Family members shouldn’t hold any grudges with each other, right?”

Rachel tried her best to force a polite smile onto her face.

Chapter 96

After coming out of the factory, Rachel said goodbye to Jefferey. Then, she drove out of the area. But suddenly, she stopped by the side of the road, got out of the car at lightning speed, and retched while holding on to a tree on the roadside.

At the thought of how Jefferey had forced her mother to death, she couldn’t wait to cut him to pieces. Earlier, the feigned courtesy with him made her feel sick in the stomach and very disgusted.

At Burton Group, Frankie led Rachel through the cubicles in the finance department and said, "Miss Hudson, this is your office." Turning to everyone, he added, "Gather around, guys. Stop the work in your hands for a moment. This is our new deputy finance director. Let's get to know each other."

The staff in the finance department all got to their feet and greeted, "Hello, Miss Hudson."

Maybe it was because Frankie had already told the staff in advance, so everyone in the finance department didn't act surprised at the fact that Rachel was a mute, and they seemed friendly.

After Rachel greeted each of them, she returned to her office.

Actually, Justin merely sent her here as a pretense, and she didn't actually have to do any work. Therefore, she wouldn't really have any interactions with the staff here. Her only job was to keep an eye on the Hudsons' movements.

Suddenly, a knock came on her door, and she raised her head to see a familiar face-Gloria.

On the other hand, Gloria wasn't the least bit surprised to see her. Standing with her back straight in front of her desk, she placed a document on Rachel's desk and said with a smile, "Miss Hudson, this is the document President Burton wanted me to send here. Also, he asked me to check if there's anything else you'll need."

hipped through the document, closed it, and pushed it back to her. 'Shouldn't this be sent to the legal department? Did you come to the wrong place?'

"Maybe I sent it to the wrong place, then."

Quietly, Rachel stared at her and started writing something on the memo pad. 'Are you doing this on purpose?'

Gloria read the graceful writing on the memo pad and exclaimed, "You're very smart, Miss Rachel!" She

giggled and continued, “Justin is away at the moment, and I was very bored until I heard some secretary saying that a new deputy director has arrived in the finance department. So I came over to confirm my guess.”

‘What was your guess?’

“When I saw you speaking with him on the balcony that day, I already had a hunch that you have an extraordinary relationship with him, but I didn’t have the opportunity to ask. Looks like I’ve guessed it correctly! You’re Justin’s wife, aren’t you?”

Rachel’s heart skipped as she measured up the young girl in front of her. Below the age of twenty, she should be at the most innocent period of her life-simple and candid.

But if she was really simple and candid, she wouldn’t have appeared next to Justin. All of a sudden, Rachel became wary. “Who are you?”

“Me?” Gloria asked, blinking. With a sly expression, she said in a purposeful manner, “Miss Rachel, what you really want to ask is the relationship between Justin and me, isn’t it?”

The spot between Rachel’s brows twitched. The look in this young girl’s eyes was very intelligent, untainted and clear. With just one look, Rachel could tell that she was very well protected, which was why she could point out the things she observed so bluntly.

“Well, you can make a guess about my relationship with Justin.”

Rachel frowned. ‘I can’t guess it! And neither do I want to, she added in her mind.

“Are you angry?” Gloria asked, blinking at her suddenly. “But I heard that you have a very good temper.”

Her words caught Rachel by surprise, but just then, another knock came at her door.

“Miss Hochmann.” It was Frankie this time, and he seemed relieved at the sight of her. “President Burton is back and looking for you now. Why did you come here?”

Gloria said, “I was bored so I was just walking around. Why is he looking for me?”

Frankie’s eyes darted to Rachel hesitantly, and his voice turned into a whisper. “Well, President Burton found someone to buy some palmiers because you like it.”

“Really?” Gloria exclaimed with sparkling eyes and immediately walked toward the door. When she reached the door, something popped up in her mind suddenly, and she turned around. Waving at Rachel as she giggled, she asked, “Do you like palmiers, Miss Rachel?”

Rachel felt a wrench in her heart, and she shook her head grudgingly.

Looking as though it was unfortunate, Gloria sighed and said, “Alright, I’ll eat it by myself, then. He doesn’t really like sweets as well.”

Then, she disappeared from the door, leaving Rachel feeling suffocated, as though something was stuck in her chest. It was as if the air couldn’t reach her lungs, and it was hard to breathe.

So there exists such a woman whom Justin is willing to take care of attentively, she thought.

In the evening, Rachel asked Hans out for dinner.

“I’ve gone through the legal documents you gave me. The lawsuit with Hudson Pharmaceuticals is very difficult indeed. It can also be seen from these lawsuits that they never resolved its financial crisis from before.”

Rachel was puzzled. But when I married to the Burton Family, Jefferey had made a deal with Justin and got a rather huge sum of money.

“Maybe this hole is a bottomless pit, and that money isn’t enough at all.”

Even though Jefferey agreed to let me have access to the internal works of Hudson Pharmaceuticals, I still haven't seen the core financial status. Most of the members in the finance department are his confidants.

"Be patient. There will be a solution in the end."

Rachel nodded.

"Let's not speak about this. You don't look so good recently. It must be too stressful, isn't it?"

I'm fine.

"Since the first day I knew you, I already know that you're the kind of person who would carry all the burden by yourself. You can really be such a bore," Hans said, rolling his eyes at her. "Eat some meat to replenish your protein." Then, he cut a piece of beef and placed it onto her plate.

Initially, Rachel wanted to thank him, but for some unknown reason, her stomach felt queasy at the sight of the meat, and she quickly covered her mouth.

"What happened to you?" he asked with a concerned look in his eyes and stood up.

It's nothing. I'm going to the washroom.

Crouched in front of the toilet in a cubicle, Rachel retched, but nothing else came out except her stomach Juices.

When she stood up, she felt her eyes spinning, and could only try to recover as she held onto the wall.

Then, she heard the sound of high heels clicking on the floor from outside. "I got it, Dad. How can I forget when you've said it more than a few hundred times?"

Hearing the familiar voice, Rachel stopped her hand from opening the cubicle door. Amber? What is she doing here?

Outside, Amber directly put her call on loudspeaker mode as she placed her cell phone next to the basin. While retouching her makeup, she continued the call.

"It's the information on the internal tender, after all. So, it won't be that easy to obtain. I've only managed to ask Justin out for dinner today. I can't make it too obvious."

"Get it done as soon as possible. The deadline is drawing close. You have to get it before the day after tomorrow."

"I'll get it, for sure. You should just wait." She reapplied her lipstick delightfully in front of the mirror and continued, "Dad, you still have to rely on me at times like this. What can you expect if you rely on that mute who is siding with others? I'm hanging up now. Justin is still waiting for me at the dinner table."

The conversation ended. Finally, Amber left, and Rachel breathed a sigh of relief. Information on the internal tender?

After returning from the washroom, she appeared a little absent-minded, and Hans asked with concern, "What's up with you? Are you feeling unwell? I'll bring you for a checkup at the hospital."

Chapter 97

Rachel shook her head. My stomach feels sick. Maybe I ate something bad.

"Let's order something that goes easy on your stomach, then."

As her gaze drifted away to a spot far away, Rachel could see Amber having dinner with Justin. Because of the distance, she couldn't hear what they were saying at all, but she could clearly see him

Unknowingly, her hand was gripping the tablecloth underneath the table tightly. Although she was aware that Justin was merely putting up a show with Amber, she was still upset.

Since when did every move that man made affect her heartstrings so greatly? In addition, his contact with any woman would break her heart.

For some unknown reason, she suddenly thought of Gloria. If he could act that attentive with Amber even though it's just a pretense, then how is he treating Gloria? she wondered.

"What are you looking at?" Hans asked, twisting his head backward as he followed her gaze, but she suddenly grabbed him. "What happened?"

Let's go to another restaurant. A dark shadow hovered over her eyes.

At night, when all the Burtons had already turned in for the night, Rachel went downstairs to make herself a cup of tea. She ran into Justin who had just returned.

You're back so late.

"Yeah," Justin uttered, taking off his jacket and tossing it casually on the couch.

Seeing that he wasn't going to bother about her, Rachel felt snubbed, and she strode into the kitchen to make her tea with a gloomy look on her face.

Recently, she had spent several late nights as she was busy gathering information about Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

With only the wall lights turned on, the kitchen was a little dingy, and Rachel opened the overhead

cabinet to look for the tea leaves while waiting for the water to boil. After she finally saw the container, she realized that it was placed furthest on the inside, and it was difficult for her to reach it with her height.

A long arm stretched over her head and leaned against the cabinet door. In a nonchalant voice which carried a soft tobacco scent, he asked, "What do you want to get?"

The smell of the man's cologne traveled up her nose, and she felt a tight squeeze at her heart; even her shoulders shuddered along.

She pointed at the spot, and Justin passed her the tea container.

Thank you. She wanted to offer him a cup when she remembered that he always liked the tea she made.

But before she could, he asked, "How are things going with Hudson Pharmaceuticals?"

Rachel's fingers, which were about to sign something, turned stiff, and she tasted something bitter from her throat. I found some loopholes, but they aren't enough to hit any critical points. Jefferey and his employees still don't trust me at the moment, so maybe I still need to work on it.

"No hurry. The people from the Investigation Bureau are also investigating Hudson Pharmaceuticals. I can still wait a little."

After giving him a nod, she suddenly remembered what happened at the restaurant and couldn't help but ask. Are you still in contact with Amber recently?

Jerking his head to look at her with a thoughtful look in his eyes, he asked, "Why?"

It seems like Jefferey is planning to use her to get the information on the tender from you. So, you should be wary of her.

"How did you find out about this?"

Stunned, Rachel noticed that Justin didn't seem one bit surprised at all. She recollected herself. I heard it by chance. Forget it if you don't believe me.

The sound of water boiling echoed in the kitchen, and she hurriedly turned around, rushing over to the boiling water. As Justin watched her back while she was busy, the knot between his brows turned tighter. His profile under the lighting appeared especially deep-set with a hint of aloofness.

leaving earlier this evening popped up in his mind. "Did you hear about that this evening?"

Upon hearing the voice from behind her, Rachel stopped her hand mid-air while she was pouring herself tea.

"Where did you go this evening?"

I had dinner with a friend.

"Which friend?" Justin asked in a growl, taking a step closer to her. "Do I know him?"

With her waist against the kitchen counter, she had no other place to retreat.

Placing his broad palms on both her sides, he leaned down and warned, "Rachel, I did promise you that we're merely cooperating with each other, but this doesn't mean that you can go out on a date with another man in a public place without any care. Don't forget that you're Mrs. Burton now."

There's nothing else between us. We're just friends.

"You don't have to explain it to me, so keep those words for now. Explain it to the media when they've snapped pictures of you." His voice was incredibly icy, and there was not a shard of warmth in his eyes. Spitting each word, he added, "As long as you don't find it troublesome."

Rachel was wholly frightened.

"If there's an opportunity, remember to find out about Hudson Pharmaceuticals' situation from that friend, Officer Hawkins, of yours." With that said, he left the kitchen with his jacket in his hand.

Then, Rachel heard the sound of footsteps drawing further away in the living room as she held her clammy palms tightly. When she heard the door closing upstairs, she suddenly twirled around and started retching into the washbasin. By the time she was finished throwing up her stomach juices, she had already lost every ounce of energy left.

At the same time when she was having the bitter aftertaste in her throat, her chest was also feeling tight with bitterness. A sharp sting stung her nose and her eyes turned red, then tears started falling

into the washbasin beneath. She had no idea why she was so upset. It was as though she was being strangled and her heart was feeling wave after wave of sharp pain.

The next day, Frankie passed a document to Justin in the office and said, "President Burton, this is the information you asked for about the tender."

"Make a reservation for lunch today and find an opportunity to put this in an appropriate place," Justin instructed.

In reply, Frankie nodded, understanding what he was planning.

"Is there anything else?" Justin asked, casting Frankie a look when he saw that he didn't leave yet.

Hesitantly, Frankie said, "It's nothing else, actually. It's just that, didn't you find a mini detectaphone from your car the last time? I was thinking about it afterward and remembered that Amber was also in your car before that."

Justin lifted his head, the look in his eyes shifting.

"Mrs. Burton doesn't have many chances to contact Jefferey, and was hospitalized before that. So, I Investigated the surveillance at the hospital and saw that Jefferey had been there before, but a fight broke out between them, and this is what I discovered." Then, he took out a USB flash drive and passed it to Justin.

Justin plugged it into the computer and opened the file. It showed the surveillance footage in front of an elevator in the hospital, and the time was the day Jefferey went to look for Rachel. In the video, Jefferey clearly looked furious, and he threw something into the bin. However, when the elevator doors closed, a person wearing a white robe appeared out of the emergency staircase next to it and retrieved that thing after rummaging through the bin.

"That's Amber," Frankie said, his voice echoing in the office. He was a little uneasy because he only found out the truth after this incident had passed for quite some time.

Staring at the frozen image on the screen, Justin looked grim. "I got it. Get back to work for now."

"Okay."

After Frankie left, Justin was deep in his thoughts for a long time, looking distracted.

In the afternoon, Rachel went looking for Justin to report about her Investigations on Hudson Pharmaceuticals.

Knock knock, knock

"Come in."

His office was huge and old-fashioned. Built and designed in an outdated style, it was not only dreary but lifeless, and this was the first time she visited his office.

Chapter 98

"Sit." The finance director, Fanny Bronson, is Jefferey's number one right-hand employee, and they're guarding against me heavily. I can't access their original account book.

"Don't worry," Justin said, pouring out a cup of tea and then pushing it slowly in front of her. "Soon, you'll be able to check their accounts openly."

Why?

“Hudson Pharmaceuticals will soon fall into another round of financial crisis.”

Rachel was puzzled at his words, but the cell phone she placed on his desk suddenly vibrated at this time.

From the corner of his eyes, Justin saw Hans’ name and lowered his head to taste the tea. Suddenly, he kept away the tea he just had and the one he offered to Rachel, saying, “This tea is regular. By the

Startled, Rachel secretly held her palms into fists. Justin was clearly aware that Tina didn’t like her, not to mention she almost got her killed. Yet, he wanted her to attend Tina’s engagement party with him.

Can / skip it?

“No,” he said curtly, his eyes fixed on her. “Don’t forget your title now.”

Pursing her lips, she was at a loss for words.

“Also...” He cast a cold look at the cell phone on the desk. “Since it’s a deal, you should show some progress, but you’ve shown me nothing until now. Do you think I can continue to believe that you have what it takes to help me acquire Hudson Pharmaceuticals?”

I’m thinking of a plan.

“I’m afraid there would’ve been progress already had you spent half of the time chatting with others on coming up with a plan.”

His words caught her by surprise, and she stared at him in shock.

"I'm giving you three days. I need to see evidence which shows a concrete financial loophole within Hudson Pharmaceuticals." His words echoed in the room.

Three days? That's impossible!

While they were in a stalemate, the door swung open.

"I went out to buy a watermelon. It's really sweet, Jus,"

Rachel peered over at the person who just entered the room, and that person stopped mid-sentence.

Carrying a watermelon in her hands, Gloria was stunned for a moment when she saw Rachel, and she turned to Justin in reflex. "Uh... Am I interrupting your meeting? Should I go out for now so you guys can continue?"

"No need," Justin said. "We're done talking, anyway."

"I'm going to cut the watermelon, then!" Gloria exclaimed and looked at Rachel happily. "Miss Rachel, why don't you join us as well?"

Thanks, but no. Then, Rachel stood up and gestured to Justin. I'm leaving first.

Justin's face was stony, and when he recalled that her phone vibrated for a split second earlier, it turned even more solemn.

Meanwhile, after Rachel left his office, she heard the lively voice of the girl behind her, and her footsteps gradually slowed down; even her knees and feet felt a little numb. If it wasn't for the purpose

of destroying the Hudsons, Justin would never have married a mute like herself.

She once thought that the care she received before was maybe because the scar on his face resonated with her, and that was why he felt a little pity for her.

But Gloria's appearance shattered all her fantasies, and she could now clearly see that Justin would never have any feelings for herself.

After seeing how he doted on a person he loved, she was sure that this man was only aloof and emotionless to the person he didn't love.

His warning was like a ticking bomb, and it made her very unsettled.

Rachel knew for a fact that if she didn't show any real results as soon as possible, Justin might not have the patience to continue collaborating with her.

Hence, for the next few days, she went to Hudson Pharmaceuticals very diligently.

One afternoon when she just arrived, she was invited into Jefferey's office by his assistant.

"What the hell! We're friends when he can use me, but he kicks me aside when I'm not of any use! Get out, all of you!"

A document flew out of the office and landed next to Rachel's foot, startling her. The documents and ornaments on the desk were all swept to the floor, and the secretary was crouching on the floor, clearing up the mess.

Rachel looked at the assistant in surprise. What happened?

Sighing, he knocked on the door twice and reported, "President Hudson, Miss Rachel is here."

"Come in."

The assistant gestured for Rachel to go in.

The moment she stepped into the room, she saw Jefferey clutching onto the desk with an ashen face, and the entire room was trashed.

“You’re finally here, Rachel.” Jefferey stepped out from behind the desk. Then, he grabbed her by her shoulders as though she was his last hope. “You have to help me this time. You have to get Hudson Pharmaceuticals out of this crisis.”

Rachel was puzzled. What happened?

“Pacific Inc. suddenly withdrew their funds, and our factories abroad have stopped operations. Without funding, we now have a huge problem, and if we don’t fill up this hole quickly, the board of directors

will hold someone accountable. I won’t be able to keep my position then!”

Isn’t Pacific Inc. a long-term partner of Hudson Pharmaceuticals?

At the mention of this, Jefferey turned sullen. “They’re a bunch of ingrates. I did my best to help them win the tender, but they placed all the blame on me when they didn’t win as expected. Then, they withdrew their funding just like that...”

Tender? Rachel repeated in her mind, and she suddenly figured it out.

By now, Rachel had already composed herself. Calm down. First, I have to see how much you’re lacking in funding.

“You’re willing to help?”

Of course, but the finance department doesn’t allow me to see the accounts this whole time.

“You want to check the accounts?” Jefferey asked, and a wary look flashed across his face immediately.

Putting on an awkward look, Rachel stepped away from him. I know you’re worried about me checking the accounts. I’ll try my best to convince Justin, but I’m such a klutz, and I’m afraid it won’t be easy to convince him. I can only hope for the best regarding how much he’s willing to help.

Silence loomed over the office for a long while as he pondered over it before making a call. “Let Fanny from the finance department know that Rachel is free to check the accounts as she likes in the future. Just say that I gave her the green light.” After hanging up the call, he looked at her. “Rachel, will this

do?”

In response, she nodded, and her eyes were calm and friendly. However, it made Jefferey feel inexplicably panicky.

Somehow, he felt that this submissive daughter was completely different from before.

When she came out of the office, the next thing she did was send a text to Justin. ‘I have access to the accounts now. It’s true that Hudson Pharmaceuticals is in trouble because they lost their funding. How do you plan to proceed?’

A few minutes later, she received a reply. ‘We’ll speak about it when we meet. Let’s have dinner together tonight!’

Rachel was somewhat taken aback by this.

The venue was a western restaurant. Before getting out of the car, she straightened her hair in front of the mirror. For unknown reasons, her heart was beating very fast.

This would be the first time she had dinner with Justin in a restaurant.

"Hello, miss. Do you have a reservation?" the waitress at the entrance asked.

Rachel communicated in sign language, and the waitress was at a loss of what to do. Thus, she peered into the restaurant, trying to locate Justin.

"Miss Rachel, over here!" A crisp, clear voice came from a table next to the windows, and it was Gloria waving her hand at Rachel. She was dressed in a pale yellow dress with her hair down around her

shoulders, and her smile was refreshing and warm.

Rachel felt her heart drop, and her grip on her handbag tightened without her realizing. The seat was at the table next to the window, and the view outside was the bright lights of the city.

Why are you here?

"Justin is making a call right there," Gloria explained, pointing to the outdoor dining area.

Through the French windows, Rachel saw his tall figure with his back facing the restaurant while he spoke into the phone, and a complicated look flashed in her eyes.

"What would you like to eat, Miss Rachel? We placed our orders earlier, but you should take a look as well," Gloria said, pushing the menu to her. Rachel only managed to glance at the menu when Gloria added, "Why don't you try this, Miss Rachel? I think it's not bad, and this dessert as well. I ordered one earlier. Would you like one as well?"

Rachel froze for a moment and decided to stop flipping the menu, pushing it away. You can decide.

"I hope you won't mind that I'm joining you guys for dinner."

Curling the edge of her lips, Rachel forced a smile. I don't mind. We're here to discuss work, anyway.

“Actually, it was only both of you having dinner together tonight, but I asked if I could join when we were getting off from work, and Justin agreed to let me tag along.”

Narrowing her eyes, Rachel could clearly feel a trace of pressure.

“For a business marriage like yours, actually you have no relationship to speak about besides business, right?”

“Don’t get me wrong. I’m not interested in the title of Mrs. Burton, so you don’t have to worry about me as a threat. However, I won’t leave Justin’s side in this lifetime. We’ve known each other for ten years

Instantly, Rachel dug her fingernails into her palms. Ten years... she repeated in her head. Justin already knew this girl for ten years. How old was this girl even ten years ago?

Just what is your relationship with him? Rachel asked.

Giggling, Gloria peered over Rachel’s shoulders and said, “You’re done with your call? I just finished ordering the food with Miss Rachel.”

The glass on the window reflected Justin’s figure as he walked up from behind Rachel and naturally slid into a seat next to Gloria without hesitation. In comparison, Rachel was the one who seemed like an outsider.

“What were you chatting about? You seem so excited.”

“Miss Rachel just asked me what’s our relationship, but you came back before I could answer her.”

Hearing that, Justin glanced at Rachel and said, “You didn’t seem like such a curious person to me

Rachel was startled, and Gloria quickly said, “She was just asking casually. Why are you being so fierce? It’s kinda terrifying.”

The muscles on Justin's face eased up, and he changed the topic of conversation. "How are things going with Hudson Pharmaceuticals?" Rachel cast a glance at Gloria, and he explained calmly, "It's okay. Gloria is not an outsider. Just speak your mind."

His words sent a wave of jealousy over Rachel's chest, leaving her feeling bleak. On the other hand, Gloria merely chuckled. "I'm not the least Interested in your official business. You guys can continue while I go to the washroom."

Rachel passed a document to Justin. Just as you expected, Hudson Pharmaceuticals is in a financial crisis after falling out with Pacific Inc. Now, they're in a desperate need for funding, and Jefferey wants me to ask for help from you. As part of the deal, I requested access to the original accounts, and I've already gone through a part of it.

"The financial situation of Hudson Pharmaceuticals is worse than I imagined."

What do you plan to do?

Closing the document, Justin looked up at her with a composed face. "Isn't Jefferey hoping that I'll help him out? I'll do as he wishes and help him."

Startled, the things Justin just said made Rachel's heart pump faster. She could totally imagine that Jefferey would be so furious when he heard this news, and she was afraid he might even pass out because he couldn't catch his breath from the sudden rush of anger.

Are you really doing this? What if he flips?

"Does he have the guts to?" Justin asked calmly instead. "After having an argument with Pacific Inc. and losing his only backup, where else could he retreat if people within the industry knew that he fell out with the Burton Group as well?"

From the moment Amber stole the information, he had played along with her, planning to lure her. Everything was a trap he set up for Jefferey, and he was so shrewd that it gave Rachel the chills.

Suddenly, the sound of a piano playing came from the stage in the middle of the restaurant, attracting everybody's attention. Lifting her head to the source, Rachel saw Gloria seated at a white grand piano as her fingers danced across the keyboard.

She played the piece 'Canon' very smoothly, and it was filled with robust and lively emotions. The notes chasing after each other in the melody was like she was telling a tale of longing and pursuit.

When she finished, the restaurant burst out in a round of applause.

A group of children gathered next to the stage immediately clapped. "You're amazing! Play another one!"

Smiling brilliantly, Gloria then changed the tune beneath her fingers, playing a merry piece this time. On

Then, Rachel suddenly saw the warmth in Justin's dark eyes across her as he watched Gloria. It was a peaceful look that she had never seen before.

When Gloria was back from playing the piano, she asked, "Are you guys finished? I'm famished. Can we eat now?"

As Rachel watched Justin passing a piece of napkin to Gloria for her to clean her hands, she felt a bitter taste coming from her throat. I'm leaving first, then. You two enjoy your meal.

"What are you saying, Miss Rachel?" Gloria said, looking curiously at Justin.

Frowning, he asked, "Why are you in such a rush to leave? Do you have something on?"

Yes, I'm going back to check the accounts, and to prepare for work tomorrow. Also, I need to prepare the information on the thing you just mentioned. Enjoy your meal.

"You're so busy that you're skipping dinner?"

I'll eat when I get back. Rachel had already stood up with her handbag in hand as she waited for Justin's reply.

Justin was quiet for a couple of seconds before the words left his lips. "Go, then."

After giving him a nod, Rachel turned and left.

"Why are you leaving, Miss Rachel?" Gloria asked, standing up.

"Don't bother about her," Justin interrupted, looking a little sorrowful. Even his jet-black eyes seemed very gloomy.

Seeing how depressed he seemed, Gloria wiped the smile off her face. "Actually, you still care about her a lot, don't you?"

"How can you tell?"

"From everything."

With a knot between his brows, Justin avoided this topic and switched to another, saying, "Didn't you

say that you're not playing the piano anymore?"

Since she was young, Gloria had learned to play the piano, and she was very gifted. Originally, the best for her future would be to continue this study abroad, but she didn't want to. Instead, she went behind Justin's back and enrolled into a university in Riverdale. After throwing a round of tantrum, she vowed not to play the piano again, and more than six months had passed since she threw that fit.

"I felt like playing all of a sudden," she answered, looking at her own hands. "Playing occasionally is

good. Maybe I can be a piano teacher in Riverdale one day."

“But your talent is wasted in Riverdale.”

“I don’t think so. I think, Gloria wanted to say something else, but stopped suddenly when she realized that Justin seemed to be in a daze. She rolled her hands into fists as she told herself, Forget it.

Chapter 100

Meanwhile, at the basement carpark, after Rachel got into her car, the safety belt wouldn’t budge even after she tugged at it a few times. Drained of energy, she slowly slumped onto the steering wheel while thinking, Ten years... How many decades does a person have in his lifetime?

Earlier, when she watched how brilliantly Gloria seemed to be shining while surrounded by the children, she felt a sense of shame forming in herself for the first time in her life. That girl was so perfect, and she carried a sense of cheerfulness and brightness which was completely different from herself.

Honk! The sound of her car honk echoed through the parking garage as she accidentally leaned on it. It was so loud that it shocked her and jolted her back to her senses violently.

What am I thinking about? she asked herself. / still haven’t avenged my mother, and I’m being sorrowful for no reason over here.

After she cleared her mind, she remembered Justin’s words from dinner earlier, and she drafted a text message before sending it to Jefferey. Then, she drove out of the parking garage.

Under the late evening lights, Riverdale appeared to be especially lively. However, Jefferey had been staring at the text on his cell phone for a long time with an incredibly sullen face.

“I’m home, Dad!” Amber announced from behind him and hugged him around his neck from the back after coming into the house. “Daddy, I saw a bag I really like today. Will you please buy it for me?”

After yanking her hand away, he scolded, “What else can you do besides buying handbags?”

His cold voice boomed through the living room, startling Amber. "What's the problem?"

"Let me ask you this. Where did you get the information about the tender?"

"It's... from Justin's car."

"And he let you take it so easily?" The expression on Jefferey's face darkened. "I should have known that you won't be of much help with that intelligence of yours. Great, instead of being any real help, you've pushed me into the fire pit and someone else now has something he can use to threaten."

Never been chided so angrily by Jefferey before, Amber whimpered, "What happened exactly, Daddy?"

"What happened? It's all because of you!" he shouted. "The information on the tender is fake, and Pacific Inc. used this information I gave them to join the tender. They ended up in complete defeat and announced one sidedly that they want to end the collaboration with us. Now, our company has lost its source of funding and we need a huge sum of money. Once the board of directors gets word of this, do you have any idea what will happen?"

"What's gonna happen?"

"I'll be removed from my current position as the president and someone else will be selected to replace me."

All blood drained from Amber's face, and she heard a ringing in her head.

"Calm down, Dad. I-I'll ask Justin for help right now."

"Save it," he spat. "From now on, just stay out of the way. Rachel had already asked Justin for help."

"She's willing to help? Justin will never listen to her!"

“Of course he will since he has something to gain from it. Look at this!” he snapped, showing his cell phone screen to her.

“15%”

After she read the text, her eyes widened. “Burton Group wants to buy up 15% of our shares and even wants to put it under Rachel’s name? We can’t let this happen!”

“I’ve already decided to agree to it and to sell the shares under your name. The press conference will be held tomorrow afternoon at 2 o’clock.”

“Dad!” she cried. As she watched his back while he walked away without turning back, she was so mad that she stomped her foot. Why should I sell my shares to that mute? Dad’s crazy, and even Justin has lost his mind as well? Furious, she took out her phone and made a call. “Hello, it’s me. I can transfer fifty thousand to you today. Just get the things done early as I instructed. Tomorrow afternoon, I don’t want to see her appearing at Hudson Pharmaceuticals.”

The next day, Justin and Rachel left Burton Group together in a car to head toward Hudson Pharmaceuticals to sign the agreement.

“The fact that Jefferey is willing to cut out a slice of his cake shows that the internal financial situation of Hudson Pharmaceuticals is already very terrible. All you have to do is get a hold of their actual financial situation, and you don’t have to do anything else after that,” the man said in an aloof voice in the car.

Rachel nodded. I got it.

Suddenly, her cell phone rang, and she hung up the call without even thinking after seeing the caller ID. Since she was seated next to Justin, she didn’t dare to take any risks.

“Why aren’t you picking up the call?” he asked.

It’s not an important call. Getting business done is more important.

After she explained herself, she turned her phone on silent mode, but at that moment, she received a text message. Hans is hospitalized after getting beaten and needs a blood transfusion urgently. Where

Instantly, she straightened her back and grabbed the door handle. The text message was from Janice, and so was the call earlier.

I want to get out

With a frown, Justin asked, "Why?"

Anxiously, she gestured at him in sign language. I'm sorry, but I have to take care of an emergency now. Can you please wait for me to sign the agreement when I'm done?

"What's the emergency?"

Rachel clenched her jaw tightly.

"You can't say it?" The look in his eyes gradually darkened. "Give me your cell phone. Give it to me."

Along with his cold order, the air in the car suddenly turned heavy, and the car slowed down. Facing Justin's piercing cold stare, Rachel gritted her teeth before suddenly turning around and opened the door.

"Stop the car!" he shouted, his eyes widening.

The screeching sound of the brakes echoed at the intersection.

Justin caught hold of nothing but air as he stared at the opened car door, for Rachel had already jumped off the car and tumbled onto the street. If it weren't for the fact that the car was already reducing its speed at the intersection, she would have been half-dead even if she didn't end up completely dead after this leap.

However, she had already scrambled to her feet right now and was running away while staggering.

The driver was pale from the shock as he uttered, "President Burton."

The muscles on Justin's face were stiff while he watched Rachel from behind as she limped away into the distance. Finally, he came back to his senses and withdrew his hand, clutching it into a fist. "Drive on. Let's go to Hudson Pharmaceuticals first."

Hurriedly, Rachel took a cab to the hospital, where Janice was pacing around in front of the surgery room. Upon seeing Rachel limping over, she rushed to her and asked, "What happened to you?"

How's Hans doing? Rachel was more worried about him instead.

"I have no idea who he offended, but he was beaten up badly. He lost too much blood and needs a transfusion urgently, but the blood bank in the hospital doesn't have enough. I remember him telling me before that you have the same blood type as him. So, you're the only one I can look for."

Rachel nodded and quickly indicated that she was willing to donate her blood.

In her highschool years, when she and Hans became friends, they unexpectedly found out that they shared the same blood type.

In the surgery room, the needle pierced into her vein, and fresh blood flowed through the catheter. Only one thought was going through her mind as she gazed at Hans, who was unconscious next to her. Please let everything be okay.

After the blood transfusion, she walked out with a pale face, and Janice helped her to take a seat. "Sit down and rest for a while. The operation will take some time."

What happened? Why was Hans beaten up?