

Chapter 190 Richard? Richie?

"I-I'm fine," Isabel murmured.

As she sat there, the ache began to subside.

"Let me help you sit," the man said, his voice gentle and caring.

Isabel could tell he meant well, so she didn't resist his offer.

Once she was seated, he poured her a cup of warm water and handed it to her with a quiet, thoughtful gesture.

"Thank you."

Looking up at him, she noticed his presence. He wasn't the sort of man who would immediately grab your attention, but the more Isabel observed him, the more his features seemed to stand out.

His eyes, in particular, were striking—dark, deep-set, with long lashes that cast a shadow on his gaze, as if they hid untold stories.

Isabel felt an odd flutter in her chest, a sensation she couldn't quite explain. There was something about him ... he seemed strangely familiar.

"Are you feeling better now?" he asked, his tone laced with concern.

She rubbed her stomach, still feeling a dull ache. "I'm much better, thank you."

"You don't need to thank me. If you're still feeling unwell, it might be best to see a doctor," he advised.

"Okay, I will." Isabel nodded. Before she could say more, a voice from behind interrupted her.

"Richie Nelson! What are you doing here? Hurry up. Let's go!" A man appeared beside Richie, and upon seeing Isabel sitting on the bench, he paused.

"Well, well! Richie, leaving me all alone, and now you're here flirting with this stunning lady?" Stan Fletcher teased, giving Richie a playful nudge.

Richie rolled his eyes and shot Stan a look. "Cut it out. I don't even know her. I just saw her looking unwell and stopped to check on her."

Stan looked back and forth between Richie and Isabel, noticing they didn't seem familiar with each other.

"Ah, my mistake," he said, now addressing Isabel. "I thought you two knew each other."

"It's fine, I don't mind," Isabel said casually, brushing it off.

As soon as she spoke, Isabel couldn't help but glance back at Richie.

What's going on? Why do I have this strange feeling of familiarity?

"Miss, if you're really okay, I'm gonna go, okay?" Richie asked, though what happened surprised even him. Usually, he wasn't one to get involved in other people's problems, but something about this girl made it impossible to just walk away.

"I'm just having some stomach cramps. It'll pass soon, and I'll be fine," Isabel said, trying to sound casual. But inside, she felt uncertain. This wasn't just a typical stomach ache, and the discomfort wasn't even in her stomach to begin with.

She'd have to check herself thoroughly later to make sure it wasn't something worse. Plus, her period was overdue, and it hadn't come yet.

Just as Isabel was lost in her thoughts, Stan's booming voice broke through her focus.

"Alright, time to go! We've been here for hours, getting your asthma checked. Seriously, I'm starving! Let's go eat!" Stan threw his arm around Richie's shoulders and started walking toward the exit.

Isabel's eyes followed Richie as he walked away, trying to figure out where she had seen him before.

Normally, if she couldn't place someone, she'd move on without a second thought. But today, there was a strange sadness tugging at her chest, a feeling that she needed to remember where she knew him from.

The harder she tried to focus, the emptier her mind felt.

"What are you staring at?" A deep voice interrupted her thoughts. Isabel turned and met the eyes of Xander, who had appeared beside her.

Before she could respond, Xander followed her gaze to Richie's retreating form.

"Do you think that guy's handsome?" he asked.

"He's not the type to catch your eye right away, but he's definitely the kind of guy who grows on you," Isabel answered without thinking, then her eyes widened. She quickly covered her mouth, but the words had already escaped.

A brief silence followed, and Isabel blinked, turning her head to meet Xander's gaze.

His eyes were fixed on her with an intensity that sent a shiver down her spine, as though he could see straight through her.

Isabel had already learned that Xander had a tendency to get jealous—something that had caused both their previous arguments.

Seeing him in this state, she could tell that jealousy was stirring again.

She had let her thoughts wander earlier and spoke without thinking much. After it was all too late, she now found herself in trouble.

But Isabel wasn't one to back down easily. Quickly, she formulated a way to smooth things over.

"He's definitely easy on the eyes, but you're the one who's really handsome. Not just easy on the eyes, but someone who makes an immediate impact," she said, meeting his eyes with sincerity.

Xander could see the honesty in her words. The way her bright eyes held no hint of deceit lightened his mood, despite the jealousy that still lingered. His expression softened.

"You—" Xander began, but was cut off as Leo, who had just approached, spoke up.

"Boss," Leo greeted, glancing at Isabel before frowning slightly.

"It's fine. Go ahead," Xander said, clearly unfazed by Isabel's presence.

Leo's brow tightened even further. "Boss, but this is about ... "

Isabel quickly recognized the tension and reacted accordingly.

"I'll wait outside," she offered.

However, as she turned to walk away, Xander's hand shot out, catching her wrist.

"I'm asking you to stay," he insisted, his voice firm.

Isabel looked down at his grip on her hand, her brow slightly furrowing, surprised by the sudden action.

He truly doesn't consider me an outsider, does he?

Noticing her reaction, Leo no longer hesitated and continued where he had left off. "It's about the Nelsons."

As soon as the name was mentioned, Isabel's eyes widened slightly, her focus sharpening instantly.

Xander, meanwhile, shifted his gaze toward Isabel, his eyes scanning her face with an almost imperceptible trace of curiosity.

Isabel kept her gaze downward, lost in her thoughts.

"What about the Nelsons?"

"After you had us restore their burned mansion, we stationed people nearby for security. Last night, someone broke in."

"Who?!" Isabel blurted, her curiosity and concern overtaking her.

Both Xander and Leo turned to look at her, surprised by her sudden outburst.

Realizing she had spoken too forcefully, Isabel didn't try to explain herself. She only wanted one thing—who had broken into the Nelsons' mansion?

Was it their enemies?

Or their friend?

Xander, keeping his usual calm, spoke in a low voice. "She asked you, Leo. Keep going."

Leo's frown deepened. "We didn't see who it was clearly. The person moved quickly and skillfully. By the time our people tried to catch up, they were gone."

"What about the surveillance footage?" Xander asked.

"The cameras were destroyed," Leo replied. "However, we did get a blurry shot of the figure—just their silhouette as they ran by."

Leo pulled out his phone and showed it to Xander.

Isabel leaned forward, narrowing her eyes as she studied the screen. In the dim image, a shadowy figure was running, nearly blending into the darkness.

As she stared at the picture, Isabel felt a cold shiver pass over her. The figure ... it looked so familiar.

Then, like a bolt of lightning, it clicked.