

## **The Epic BD 531**

### Chapter 531 Carter Group's Complexities

Claudia and Josie departed Sousturham together.

As they reached a crossroad, a black car awaited them. The driver stepped out, giving Josie an extra glance, and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Hadey,"

Claudia looked at Josie, silently asking if she wanted a ride in her car.

Josie smiled and shook her head. "I have a friend coming to pick me up. See you next time, Auntie."

Claudia nodded understanding, got into the car with the driver, and soon drove off.

The driver couldn't help but be curious, "Mrs. Hadey, that woman..."

Claudia's smile faded, and she pursed her lips as she settled into the car. She exuded an imposing aura and replied, "Just a visitor to the church who happened to be on the way."

The driver understood and refrained from asking further questions.

Meanwhile, Josie stood in place, contemplating the recent events. Something was intriguing about Claudia's family—they seemed well-off.

Lost in her thoughts, a black SUV swiftly approached her, stopping by her side.

The window rolled, revealing a woman wearing sunglasses who playfully whistled at her. "Hey, beautiful! Need a ride?"

Josie chuckled and settled into the passenger seat. "Do you pick up men like this all the time?"

Laura removed her sunglasses and raised an eyebrow. "Back in my prime, I could easily have ten male escorts eating out of the palm of my hand in a single night. And none of them could escape my charm. and fell head over heels with me."

Josie couldn't help but burst into laughter. Only Laura would make such daring and unapologetic claims.

After the laughter subsided, Laura drove toward the city center, her demeanor becoming solemn. She glanced at Josie with reservation, "Why didn't you tell me earlier that you were in Sousturham? I thought you had left the city."

Confused, Josie furrowed her brow. "Why would I leave the city?"

Laura's tone grew more cautious. "Well... when they couldn't find you with Dexter, the information they received was that you had gone to Rivodia."

There seemed to be a misunderstanding in the information. Josie fell into reflective silence.

Laura continued, her voice tinged with a hint of sheepishness, "He was actually about to board a plane to Rivodia to find you, but I managed to stop him. I got so worked up on your behalf and spilled everything to him. But he did look genuinely remorseful, though."

Josie finally showed a flicker of reaction, though her composure remained intact.

She didn't let Laura's accidental blunder bother her. Josie knew that Laura had spilled the beans about the actual events- her being in a car accident and her encounter with Mark.

"Aren't you mad, Josie!" Laura noticed her seemingly indifferent demeanor, which appeared even more detached than before.

"No, he was bound to find out anyway. It's better to know sooner than later, Josie smiled. "Why the rush for me to come back? Is something urgent happening at the studio?"

"We've made some initial progress on the project Dexter handed over to us. We need to plan our next steps. I heard that Carter Group has taken on a project from the city and is looking to assemble a design team. I think we should give it a shot," Laura said as she drove.

Josie furrowed her brow. She wasn't keen on getting involved with Arnold's project.

"Let's forget about it and explore other options. Carter Group is known for their complex dealings, and we don't want to get in over our heads."

Laura glanced at her in the rearview mirror. "Josie, is it Dexter that you're concerned about?"

Josie couldn't deny that she had considered that aspect. Still, her reservations were more about her lack of trust in Carter Group. She pondered momentarily, unsure how to explain the complexities involved.

"Alright. How about I make contact first? If I detect any risks or red flags on those projects, we'll back out, okay?"

Laura was determined not to give up without even trying. She was known for her ambition and fearlessness.

Josie considered Laura's suggestion, appreciating her support and willingness to take the lead. Ultimately, she didn't refuse and decided to go along with it.

Laura inquired, "Where are you headed?"

Josie understood the underlying meaning behind the question. She paused momentarily before responding. "I'm visiting my father. I bet he must be worried sick about me."

Dexter is also very worried about you.

Laura had the inclination to say it to Josie but ultimately refrained. She chose to keep quiet about the incidents in which Dexter had been relentlessly trying to locate where Josie had been.

## Chapter 532 Birthday Banquet

Today was significant for Summer as it marked her birthday, symbolizing her rise within the Olsen family.

Since taking the reins, more and more people began to grasp the true importance of this young lady.

To honor her, a special feature titled 'From Researcher to Heiress- The Summer Olsen's Journey' was created, lavishing her with commends, as society loves witnessing capable socialites in action.

The Olsen family's unconventional decision to place their daughter in charge of family affairs rather than the eldest son stirred up a whirlwind of gossip and fascination. This public appearance was Summer's first since returning to the country. Mark spared no effort in organizing a grand celebration.

Guests had been streaming in since the afternoon, and the room was filled with gifts from high-ranking officials and dignitaries.

However, truly meaningful celebrations for Summer's birthday were few and far between.

Nearly every guest at the banquet tonight was engaging in social interactions solely driven by their personal interests, and Summer was acutely aware of this fact.

"What time is it? Why hasn't Dex arrived yet?"

Summer gathered her dress and walked toward the window, hoping to spot Dexter's car pulling up outside. Much to her disappointment, it was not in view.

A vigilant servant looked up and informed her, "Ms. Olsen, Mr. Russell has left a gift for you."

The servant hesitated to finish the sentence. Mr. Russell's probably not coming.

Summer furrowed her brow, "What gift?"

The packaging was exquisite, revealing a valuable necklace, and to her, it was nothing extraordinary for a typical birthday gift.

Summer's anger surged as she examined the necklace, causing her to fling the gift onto the ground. "Why on earth would I need a necklace?"

The servant dared not utter a word. Suddenly, her eyes lit up as she spotted a potential savior, "Mrs. Olsen!"

Summer looked up and saw Claudia approaching with a glass of water. Still, she remained silent.

Claudia donned a petite Chanel-style jacket paired with an elegant skirt. She glanced at the discarded necklace and stooped down to retrieve it. "Not fancy it? Let me unwrap another one for you."

She casually unwrapped another gift, exclaiming, "Oh, check this out. It's a Picasso painting. It's totally your style. Let's see who sent it... Oh, it's from Arnold. Man, as usual, Arnold is super generous to you!"

This painting actually sold for a crazy amount at a Sotheby's auction.

Arnold insisted it was a simple gift, showcasing his incredible generosity.

Summer glanced at it briefly and said, "Not really my thing. Even if Dex handed me a leaf, I would appreciate it because it's from him. But even if Arnold gave me an entire city, I still wouldn't like it."

Her preference was crystal clear.

Claudia shook her head and placed the artwork aside. "Hey, you gotta know. Having someone like Arnold spoil you like this is not an everyday occurrence. You're lucky and blessed, Summer. And remember. Dexter is a married man now."

Hearing this, Summer instantly felt a pang of injustice. “Mom, are you also trying to give me away to Arnold, just like Dad?”

Claudia gave her shoulder a reassuring pat. “I hope you can live a life that is simple, uncomplicated, and filled with happiness. I never intended for you to become the Olsen Group’s heir and carry the Olsen family’s weight.”

Summer pursed her lips, feeling a hint of resistance. “I can handle it.”

Observing her reaction, Claudia refrained from saying anything further. She wasn’t fond of overly festive occasions, but today was a significant day for Summer, so she had to be there.

“I haven’t seen your brother and sister-in-law since my return. Do you know where they are?”

Summer’s expression turned slightly peculiar. “How would I know? I’m going downstairs now, my guests should have all arrived.”

“Eh... Claudia watched Summer walk away, and Mark’s voice reached her just then. “Alright. Enough already. Just let her be.”

She turned around. “By the way, Zach and Laura, are they not home?”

Mark’s expression appeared somewhat secretive. He took her hand and said, “Young people have their own matters to attend to. They’ll be back later. Let’s go downstairs. Don’t keep Summer and the guests waiting.”

#### Chapter 533 Deliberate Troubles

The courtyard of the Olsen Residence was abuzz with activity as guests dressed to the nines mingled, raised their glasses, and immersed themselves in delightful conversations.

Subsequently, Summer made her entrance, accompanied by Mark and Claudia.

She was clad in an elegant sea blue gown, her hair elegantly swept up and adorned with a crown, radiating a dazzling beauty befitting an actual princess. Her radiant charm and elevated status stirred both envy and adoration among the guests.

With the candles extinguished on the extravagant three-tiered cake, Summer addressed the crowd, saying, “Moving forward, I hope that each and every one of you will continue to support and be my ally in this incredible journey in Wavery. Cheers!”

The audience erupted in a wave of applause, their excitement palpable.

“Oh, and by the way,” she added, “I have an important announcement in store. Please stay tuned.”

The guests were puzzled. Mark and Claudia exchanged glances and whispered to her, “Stop messing around, Sum.”

“I’m not messing around. You’ll find out soon,” Summer flashed a peculiar smile, then looped her arm through Mark’s.

“Dad, let’s go around and toast our guests.”

Mark furrowed his brow, reluctant but eventually resolved to join her. After all, making a toast was a way to forge connections and a common practice in business settings.

Claudia remained in her spot, surveying the surroundings, and spotted a familiar figure approaching her.

"Good evening, Auntie Claudia. It's been a while since we've seen each other," Arnold said, his smile lit up his face.

"Arnold," Claudia spoke gently, "glad to see you grace Sum's birthday."

"Don't mention, Auntie. I gotta admit I haven't been the best when it comes to proper etiquette recently. I didn't want to bother you during your time away in Sousturham. I hope you don't mind that I haven't visited," Arnold leaned casually against the railing, with one hand resting on it.

"Not at all. On the contrary, I want to thank you. It was because of you that Summer had the chance to be in London a few years ago, Claudia expressed her gratitude.

"It's my pleasure." Arnold slipped his hand into his pocket and glanced at the woman skillfully navigating the crowd. "Plus, it was Auntie's special request, so naturally, I obliged."

Claudia displayed a tinge of guilt and then inquired, "Have you encountered any other intriguing girls in —recent years?"

The emphasis on the word 'other' was quite pronounced.

Arnold grinned, "Auntie, my feelings for Summer haven't changed a bit."

Claudia let out a sigh, "What a shame for her. I hope she'll soon realize and reciprocate your sincerity and

love for her."

They then turned their gaze towards Summer, but suddenly, a commotion erupted.

Meanwhile, Caesar and Heather were among the guests at Summer's birthday banquet. While pouring wine for Summer, Heather accidentally spilled some on her dress. Startled, Summer flared up and accused. "Ms. Riley, I know you did that on purpose!"

Caesar and Mark exchanged glances, momentarily taken aback and didn't know how to react.

Heather promptly offered to clean it up, saying. Tm sorry, Ms. Olsen. It was an accident! I'll make it up to you.

"This dress was custom-made for me in Italy, with a month's effort put into it. Can you really afford to pay for it, Ms. Riley?" Summer's expression turned displeased.

Heather glanced at Caesar, her eyes pleading for help, and the latter intervened to diffuse the situation, "Ms. Olsen, I apologize for my assistant's reckless behavior. I will compensate you for the dress after the event concludes."

"Do you think I care about the petty money?" Summer sneered. "It seems Mr. Perkins is quite fond of your clumsy assistant."

Some guests picked up her ambiguous insinuation, and whispers began to circulate.

Heather bowed her head, her face burning with abashment.

Summer didn't yield but continued ridiculing. "And as far as I know, Mr. Perkins doesn't earn much, do you? Yet you seem unconcerned about compensating for my expensive dress on behalf of your assistant. What's the deal between you two?"

Mark's expression gradually soured. He held Summer's hand and suggested, "Let's change your dress first. We can discuss this later."

Summer visibly calmed down after Mark intervened. She approached Heather and stated, "Ms. Riley, I don't want your money. Instead, I'd like you to be a server, going around and serving drinks to my guests."

Chapter 534 Had Dexter Rushed Into His Previous Marriage?

Heather's humiliation was palpable. Her ears burned as she felt the disdainful stares of the crowd bore into

her.

Caesar's jaw tightened, muscles twitching as he tried to contain his anger. "Ms. Riley," he said, his voice tight with barely suppressed rage. "You should make up for your mistake by following Ms. Olsen's orders."

Heather bit her lip so hard that she tasted blood. "I will," she responded, her voice barely above a whisper.

Heather raised the bottle of wine and approached the crowd. "More wine?" she asked, her voice small and uncertain.

"Excuse me, sir," she called to the passersby, her voice trembling. "Would you like more wine?"

"Hello..."

An uncomfortable silence hung in the air, broken only by Summer's smirk as she watched the scene unfold.

"This is nonsense!" Claudia said, wanting to offer her help to the young lady, but Arnold held her back.

She lifted her head as a Mercedes Benz pulled up to the Olsens' house. The driver got out and opened the door for a man in a black suit. He had a calm air of confidence that stood out in the crowd.

"Dex!" Summer exclaimed excitedly, holding onto the dress as she sprinted towards him. "What happened to your dress?"

Summer stood frozen, her smirk fading as she recalled what had happened earlier.

Dexter scanned the crowd, his gaze falling on Heather, whose face was pale. His eyebrows raised at the realization of what had happened before he arrived.

“Why are you making such a big deal out of a small mistake like this?” Dexter teased, grabbing her hands and leading her into the Olsens’ residence.

Summer’s lips spread into a wide grin as she stared at their interlocked hands. Although Dexter didn’t think much of it, it made her heart swell. “Dex, it’s my birthday today,” she said sweetly. “Couldn’t you spare me the embarrassment?”

He immediately let go of her hands when they arrived before Heather. “You’ll have to face the consequences for ruining Ms. Olsen’s dress,” he announced. “Apologize to Ms. Olsen, and we’ll let you off the hook.”

Summer’s words were caught in her throat as she tried to process Dexter’s behavior. “Dex...”

Heather’s eyes darted up to Dexter’s, then skittered away to Summer’s. “Ms. Olsen, I’m so sorry,” she quavered. “It wasn’t intentional, I promise.”

Summer’s eyes flicked to the crowd, then back to Heather. She knew she couldn’t make a scene. “Alright, you can go now,” she concluded.

Heather shot Dexter a grateful look before disappearing into the crowd.

Summer turned her attention to Dexter. “What took you so long? I was starting to think you weren’t coming,” she continued, her voice dripping with honey.

Dexter’s jaw clenched at her kind and sweet façade, but he kept his cool. “I wouldn’t miss your birthday. I heard Aunt Claudia has come back,” Dexter said, changing the subject. “I should go find her.”

Dexter had only come to the party because he’d gotten a call from his secretary saying that Heather was in trouble.

Dexter’s face twisted into a sneer, but he knew he had to help Heather. “Fine,” he uttered. “Take me to her.”

Dexter’s conscience weighed heavily on him due to the incident in the United Kingdom. He knew he had to make it up to Heather and get it over as soon as possible.

His only reason for coming to the Olsen residence was to help Heather.

The sight of Summer and Dexter together sparked a flurry of gossip and speculation. Everyone wondered if Dexter had rushed into his previous marriage and if he was having an affair with Summer.

Dexter and Summer’s body language was very suggestive.

Claudia knew Dexter didn’t come to the party because of her daughter. He was there for someone else.

They had not seen each other in a long time. Claudia had deliberately avoided him in the past as she would be reminded of the painful past that was too hard to bear.

Chapter 535 Laura in Danger

Summer flounced off to change, leaving Dexter and Claudia alone. Claudia smiled at Dexter and said, “Thank you for taking care of Summer. She can be quite a handful.”

Dexter understood what she was implying behind her words. He knew why she had avoided him all these years.

"It's part of my responsibility," Dexter said simply.

Arnold had been listening to their conversation the whole time. He finally spoke up, his smile dripping with sarcasm. "I never knew you were so protective, Dex."

Dexter raised his eyebrows in derision. "Of course, I had to protect her," he said firmly, his voice rising. "She's my responsibility. D

Dexter smoothly changed the subject, effectively cutting Arnold off.

Arnold's lips tightened into a thin line, and he remained silent.

Dexter raised his glass in a toast to Arnold. "Congratulations on your new project," he said in a courteous manner.

Arnold's lips curled into a smirk. "You must have your sources," Arnold said as he leveled his gaze at him, "It'll only get more efficient, Dexter responded, taking a large gulp of wine.

It was ten at night, and Josie was fast asleep.

Josie had a regular sleep schedule.

Josie was jolted awake by her phone ringing. She furrowed her brow as she answered the phone. It was Laura.

With her palms plastered on her forehead, Josie pinched her eyebrows when she finally registered Laura's name on the screen of her phone. It was late at night, and Laura only called her this late if there was a problem at work. She answered the call with a worried sigh.

Her stomach churned with dread and anxiety when she heard Laura's crying on the other end of the line.

Laura was sobbing so hard that she could barely speak.

Josie sat up in bed, her eyes wide with alarm. "Laura?!"

"Josie, I'm so scared, Laura quavered, her voice breaking.

"Laura, calm down," Josie responded, her voice firm. "Where are you right now?" She swept her hair out of her face and asked in a frantic tone. "Give me the address. I'll be there as soon as I can. Don't panic"

Laura's mind was in disarray, and her clothes were stained with tear marks.

Josie's heart sank as she listened to Laura's tearful cries. She quickly got out of bed, changed her clothes, and left her house in her bedroom slippers. She was determined to find Laura and help her.



As Josie was trying to get a sense of Laura's situation, Laura said out of the blue. "Josie, you don't have to find me. I'll be fine"

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Chapter 535 Laura in Danger

Josie stopped in her tracks, her anger rising. "Where are you right now? Do you want to die?"

The air was thick with tension. All Josie could hear was Laura's panicked breathing.

"You're at the Olsen's residence, aren't you?" Josie was sure of it.

Josie took Laura's silence as a sign of agreement and darted downstairs in her slippers. "I'll be there soon,"

she announced.

"Don't come here," a faint and raspy voice said through the phone. "It's Summer's birthday today."

Josie's footsteps came to a halt. After a moment, she said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of this,"

She hung up the call and booked a taxi on her phone. Later, she browsed the web and saw several photos from Summer's birthday party that had been posted online.

"The Olsen residence?" the cab driver asked, surprised.

Josie clutched her phone tightly. "Yes," she answered.

The taxi Josie hailed looked out of place in the opulent villa. The sound of music and conversation wafted from within as if another world lay beyond the gates,

After paying the taxi fare, Josie felt a pang of regret as she looked down at her slippers.

At that very instant, a delivery man in uniform arrived at the villa. Josie stopped him in his tracks. "Hi, those are mine."

The delivery man handed her the items and was about to leave when she called out to him. "Hey, can you sell me your uniform?"

"I'll pay you three times the price."

Chapter 536 Sneaking Into the Olsen Residence

Josie walked in, wearing a uniform several sizes too big for her.

"Hold on there!" the guard demanded, surprised to see delivery food at such a lavish event.

"Delivery," Josie announced, her voice barely audible through her mask.

"Hand it over," the guard said, glancing at the receipt on the paper bag without looking inside.

Josie's heart was pounding so hard that she thought it would burst out of her chest. She had written Arnold's name as the buyer when she ordered the delivery food.

She knew that Arnold would definitely attend Summer's birthday party.

The guard dialed the phone number written on the receipt.

Josie's heart was in her throat as she clutched her phone. She was ready to make a break for it if the guard didn't let her in.

The guard eyed Josie suspiciously as the phone rang.

After a moment, Arnold answered the call. The guard's tone changed to one of polite deference as he said, "Mr. Carter, there's a delivery for you. I'd like to confirm with you if it is yours."

Josie squeezed her eyes shut and inhaled deeply.

"Alright, sure," the guard responded, hanging up the phone and looking at Josie.

Her hands were sweating profusely as she waited for the guard's response. "Why would I lie?" she asserted calmly.

Josie was surprised when the guard nodded at her. "He'll be here shortly. You can stay here and wait," he announced.

Sure enough, Arnold was there.

After a few moments, Arnold emerged from the crowd. He was dressed casually, in a youthful style. He wore a sweater and jeans, and he also had a chain around his neck.

Arnold walked towards Josie and circled around her, his eyes twinkling with amusement as he sized her up. Josie kept her head down, her face hidden from view.

"Delivery?" Arnold asked with a smirk. "Pass it here."

Josie handed him the paper bag and held onto his index finger with a firm grip. Her eyes grew soft as she gazed up at him.

Arnold's face broke into a wide grin, which looked especially bright under the streetlights.

Arnold told the guard, "She'll be coming in with me."

The guard nodded. "Alright, Mr. Carter."

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Josie let out a sigh of relief. She followed Arnold closely. As soon as she was out of the guard's sight, she quickly took the delivery man's

from

Arnold paused and pulled down her mask. "Ms. Delivery Lady, you sure have some impressive tricks up your sleeve," he said amusedly, raising an eyebrow at her.

As soon as she raised her head, she saw Arnold opening the paper bag and taking out the container of fruits. Without a second thought, he picked up his fork and ate the fruits.

Josie quickly stopped him. That's enough!" she exclaimed.

Arnold glanced at her, a smirk playing on his lips. "You must really trust me to put my name on the bill," he responded.

She was at her wit's end, and this was the only option left. Josie didn't bother to explain herself as she continued to pack her things. "Is Zach here today?"

Arnold stayed silent, his mouth full of mangoes. "No," he mumbled.

Josie's face clouded over. "What about Laura?" she asked.

She's not here either," Arnold said, his voice flat.

Five minutes passed, and Arnold finally understood Josie's concerns. His face turned dark as a thundercloud. "Wait here," he said. "I'll go around and find them."

Josie grabbed his hands abruptly. "Don't go by yourself," she said. "It's too dangerous. Let me go with you."

He took her around the corners of the residence and passed by the garden where everyone was gathered. Josie kept her head down the whole time to avoid attracting attention. Suddenly, they heard someone call out, "Arnold."

They stood frozen on the spot, not knowing what to do next.

Chapter 537 Why Is She Here?

The woman who approached them radiated confidence and elegance. Her lips curled into a warm smile as she inquired, "Who is she?"

Josie's eyes darted around but eventually met the woman's gaze. She froze with a hint of nervousness as she stared at Claudia. Claudia looked completely different from the two months they had spent together.

Her eyes exuded a strong charisma.

Josie's mask covered her face, so Claudia didn't seem to be able to identify her.

Arnold was quick to respond, trying to deflect attention away from Josie. "She's my assistant," he said firmly. "She's here to give me a status update."

As always, Claudia was warm and kind. She glanced at Josie and said, "It must be tiring to work until this late. You two can go ahead and finish your work."

Josie's feet shuffled together as she tried to keep her bedroom slippers hidden.

Arnold politely asked, "Aunt Claudia, I have an urgent matter to take care of. Could we borrow your study room for a short while?"

Claudia considered Arnold's request for a moment as she looked at the crowd. 'I'll have the maid take you to the study room in our guest room. There's a computer there.'

"Sure."

Arnold took Josie upstairs. Her mind was a jumble of confusion. From the way Claudia spoke, it seemed like she was practically one of the Olsen family.

She was still trying to make sense of what had transpired in such a short time. They hadn't seen each other for a day, and now they were meeting in such an unexpected way.

"Arnold, Josie called after him as they walked up the stairs. "Who was that woman?"

Arnold answered matter-of-factly, "Haven't you met her before? She's part of the Olsen family. She's Summer's mother." He then continued to explain, "She's been spending most of her time in the mountains, so she rarely meets anyone. I guess it's normal for you not to know her."

Josie's forehead creased. She would never have guessed that the woman who had gotten along so well with her was Summer's mother. She was destined to be her adversary.

Josie even said that she would be happy if she were her mother.

Now that she had reflected on her actions in the past, she felt utterly ashamed. How could she consider her as her mother?

Upon reaching the second floor, they heard a familiar voice echoing from down the hall. "What is it?"

Josie's steps faltered nervously

Arnold turned to look at her

The man in front of them was someone she hadn't seen in a long time. He had a quiet and collected air

And the woman standing before him was a lady in a cocktail dress. Her eyes were lowered, and her natural charisma was undeniable. "Mr. Russell, thank you for helping me just now," she said sincerely.

"I didn't do it for you," Dexter responded, his eyes darting away from her, his face devoid of any emotion.

Heather was no longer the timid girl she used to be. She stood with her hands behind her back and smiled at him with a playful grin. "I know you did it for me," she spoke in a delicate and sweet voice.

The man kept his cool, refusing to acknowledge her claims. "No," he said firmly.

Heather leaned in closer to him. "You must feel guilty for mistaking me for Josie, so you helped me escape Ms. Olsen's outburst."

That one sentence contained too much critical information, and Josie was left reeling in shock and confusion.

Dexter's forehead creased into a tight knot as he explained, "You're overthinking it. It's Summer's birthday today. I can't miss it."

“But isn’t it a strange coincidence that you arrived right on time? You were here the moment Summer was boiling with rage and had no intent of backing down.”

Heather’s gaze lifted to meet his eyes, her body inching closer to him.

“Can’t I interpret it such that Mr. Russell was here to save me?”

Arnold stared into Josie’s eyes, and his gaze deepened with worry.

Josie gave a strained smile as she said under her breath, “Let’s go in. We don’t have much time left.”

She should have expected Dexter to be here on such an occasion.

However, she could never have predicted meeting him under these circumstances, leaving her confused by the sudden revelation.

Arnold pushed the door open to the study and held it open for Josie to enter.

Chapter 538 Found the Hidden Basement

Dexter moved away from Heather after Josie entered the room and said, “You’re right, but that’s the extent of my gratitude.”

Heather was left stunned by his coldness.

After they entered the study, Josie took a deep breath and tried to calm herself down. “Why did you request to enter the study room?”

Arnold took off his coat and covered the security cameras. He then started to search the room. “I lived in the Olsen residence in the past and found a secret basement that sounds like the one you’re talking about. I’m not sure if it’s the same one.”

Josie raised her eyebrows in surprise and started to search around.

Arnold spoke in a hushed tone, “How long has Laura been physically abused?”

“It’s been happening for a while. I thought she was getting better after introducing her to a therapist, but I never imagined that Zach would still abuse her.”

Her fury rose as she described what had happened to Arnold.

Arnold scoffed, “You should have introduced the therapist to Zach.

He tried to move a plant in the corner, but it was too heavy.

“I never thought someone so kind could have such a violent side to him,” Arnold added. He would never hit a woman, despite his flirty personality.

Josie was feeling extremely pressed for time. She knew that Laura was in greater danger with each passing

moment.

The garden downstairs was a different world. Everyone was lost in conversation, the music providing a backdrop to their chatter.

They spent twenty minutes trying to find the way to unlock the stairway to the hidden basement, but they were unsuccessful. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door-it was Claudia. "Arnold, is everything alright? Do you need any assistance?"

Arnold exchanged glances with Josie.

After a moment, he opened the door. "Aunt Claudia, we're still working on the issue. It might take some time

Claudia paused for a moment, mulling over his words. She peered through the small opening of the door and saw Josie typing on the computer nonstop,

Oh, I was just wondering if you would like me to call your uncle over

"There's no need to get Uncle Mark involved I can handle this myself Arnold replied

Meanwhile Summer had changed into a new dress and noticed her mother speaking to Arnold She frowned and asked. "What are you doing, Mom!

ry wide with fear, as she heard Summer's voice

Found the Hidden Basement

"Nothing much. I'm just chatting with Arnold."

Summer's brow snapped together as she directed her question to Arnold. "What are you doing in the study room?"

"Work," he said curtly.

Josie sprang to her feet when the door closed. "Do you think Claudia knows about Laura being abused?"

Arnold shook his head. "She's probably not aware of it. She wasn't here for their wedding, and she's not the type who would turn a blind eye to something like that

Hearing Arnold's reassurance of her character, Josie sighed in relief.

The two of them continued searching for the hidden basement entrance. As Josie looked around the bookshelf, she noticed that one of the books wasn't an actual book. Her forehead creased as she tried to turn the book around. To her surprise, the bookshelf began to slide open, and a door appeared before them.

Arnold and Josie exchanged glances. "It's the hidden basement," he muttered in awe.

The lights in the hidden basement were dim, and the air was stale. It took them five minutes to reach the bottom, where they found a large space well-stocked with food and water. As they walked deeper into the basement, the lights became dimmer.

Arnold gripped a bat, keeping an eye out for danger.

"Laura?" Josie called out cautiously.

All of a sudden, she heard someone panting from a distance.

#### Chapter 539 Couldn't Leave

She followed the sound of the voice with urgency, and she saw a woman in the corner of the basement.

"Laura!" Josie shouted as she sped towards her.

Josie knelt down to see how she was doing.

Hopelessness etched on her face as if the world had crumbled upon her.

As soon as she saw Josie, her eyes lit up with a glimmer of hope. "Josie," she whimpered.

Josie could feel her tears welling up as she looked at Laura's back. Laura's clothes were torn, and her bare skin was covered in red marks.

The crisscross of bloody marks was a testament to the brutal beatings she had suffered.

Josie was frozen in place, and her eyes brimmed with tears. "Laura...

Arnold's forehead wrinkled in disgust at the ghastly sight. "Zach must be crazy!"

As he looked around, he saw an array of weapons used to abuse her. Arnold felt a shiver run down his spine as he saw some of them stained with blood.

Josie tried to lift Laura up. "Let's go. I'll take you out of here. We'll go see a doctor. You'll get better, Laura,"

Laura said breathlessly, "I can't leave now."

"Why not?"

"It's Summer's birthday today. Zach wouldn't let you get away with taking me out of here."

Josie looked at Arnold, her eyes filled with worry: "What do we do now?" she asked.

Arnold nodded. "There are a lot of people outside, including reporters. She can't go out now," he responded, taking out his phone. "I'll get someone here. Just wait a bit."

Josie hugged Laura tightly, but her body was still shivering. She couldn't warm her up no matter how close she held her.

After ten minutes, Arnold looked at them. "I called Andy to get a doctor in here. They'll be coming in disguise. They mustn't get caught."

Josie was surprised by his plans. "So you mean Laura can't leave this place?" she blurted, her voice cracking.

"Zach could come in here at any time. We can't take her out of here today."

Laura held onto Josie's sleeve as she nodded in assent to Arnold's suggestion. "He's right. I can't leave today," she muttered, her breath growing thin.

Arnold's plan was the only one that seemed feasible at the moment.

Andy was exceptionally efficient. He had the doctor disguise themselves as an employee of the Carter Group and arrive at the hidden basement.

However, it was difficult to ignore Arnold's atypical behavior.

"Mr. Russell, Arnold seems to be up to something," Larry said, his eyes tracking Arnold's secretary, Andy, as he rushed into the Olsen residence.

Dexter looked at him and ordered, "Have someone keep an eye on him."

"What about us?"

"We'll stay put."

In the hidden basement, the doctor carefully took the medical supplies from his bag and said, "Ms. Brandel, I can't administer anesthesia under these conditions. I'll need you to bear with the pain."

She almost passed out from the excruciating pain when he placed the gauze pad soaked in antiseptic on her skin.

Josie couldn't bear watching her in pain. She turned around and quickly wiped away her tears.

Arnold stared at her, letting out a big sigh. He lifted his hands but paused midway. Eventually, he patted her on the shoulders to comfort her.

Josie swore under her breath, "He's a f\*cking monster!"

Andy felt his pulse throbbing in his ears as he muttered, "Mr. Carter, we can't stay here any longer. We'll be in deep trouble if someone finds out about this."

Arnold lowered his head and told Josie. We must get out of here. Come with me.

"I can't leave," she said with resolve. She couldn't bear the thought of leaving Laura here to suffer alone.

"You're putting yourself in danger by staying here," he responded, his voice booming with anger. sees you here and starts hitting you, no one could save you!"

"If Zach

Josie was taken aback by the change in his tone. I'm worried about Laura," she quavered, her body trembling in fear.

I'll try to set an appointment with Zach tomorrow and ask Claudia to help get Laura out of here, Arnold said reassuringly, trying to put Josie at ease.

"Will it work?" she asked, her hands fidgeting nervously.

"Trust me," he said firmly, his eyes meeting hers with confidence.

He had assured her that she could always trust him.



Josie took a deep breath, trying to clear her head off the jumble of thoughts racing through it. She waited for the doctor to treat Laura's wounds, and she wouldn't leave until she knew that Laura's injuries wouldn't get infected

Before leaving, she held Laura's hand tightly and vowed, "We'll meet outside.""

Laura nodded, her lips pale and her eyes filled with tears.

#### Chapter 540 Recognized

The door of the study had been locked from the inside, which meant that no one could have entered the room. This allowed them to exit the basement safely without getting caught.

Arnold placed his hat over Josie's head as they left the room, hoping to draw attention away from her.

To their surprise, Zach arrived at the garden, dressed in a suit and tie as he mingled with the guests. He had the poise of a gentleman, but they knew this was just a façade.

"I want to thank you all for coming to Summer's birthday party today," Zach announced, raising a glass of champagne.

Arnold raised his glass to Zach, his lips curling into a smirk. "Zach."

Zach turned around to face him and greeted him with a slight nod. "Arnold."

"I thought you'd be here earlier, Arnold said, walking over to Zach and blocking his view of the villa.

Zach smiled, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "The whole of Wavery knows how much you care for Summer. I could never be as attentive to her as you are, even though I'm her brother."

Everyone in the crowd chuckled politely at Zach's remarks.

"What about Laura?" Arnold probed, taking a sip of his wine. His casual manner and tone made it seem as if he hadn't just witnessed a horrific scene before him earlier.

"Laura wasn't feeling well, so I had her stay in her room," Zach said confidently, his voice steady.

Arnold smiled, his lips curving up in a faint smile..

"Mr. Russell, he doesn't seem suspicious, Larry said to Dexter. They both kept their eyes fixed on Arnold.

The way he carried himself confidently, speaking in high spirits with the guests, left no room for suspicion.

Meanwhile, Summer was walking towards Dexter; her eyes focused on him.

"Where is his secretary?" he inquired.

Larry frowned as he looked around the garden, his eyes searching for Andy. "I don't see him anywhere," he replied.

"Find out where he is right now," Dexter ordered, his voice commanding.

Summer approached them, her eyes sparkling with innocence. "Dex, do I look beautiful today?" she asked, her singsong voice filtering through the air.

As always, Summer was breathtakingly beautiful; her eyes shone like stars in the night sky. Dexter forced a warm smile. "You're always beautiful."

Summer chuckled shyly at his answer, then turned to his secretary. "Mr. Peeple, where are you headed to?"

Dexter maintained his calm demeanor, even though he was caught off guard by Summer's question. "We have an urgent problem to attend to," he responded quickly, trying to put an end to the subject.

Summer looked down, her eyes no longer sparkling with light. "Dex, I heard you've been looking for Josie. Have you found her?"

Dexter let out a forced chuckle, his eyes darkening with an inscrutable expression. "Who told you?"

"I could help you find her. Are you searching for her in Rivonia?"

Summer didn't hold back a single word. Dexter's smile faltered as he replied, "You don't need to bother yourself with it."

"She's the one at fault, Summer commented, her eyes locked on Dexter's. "Anyone else could've understood your situation at that time."

Dexter couldn't bear to hear her anymore. "You know me too well," he responded, his lips pressed into a

thin line.

Summer returned a smile. She reached out her hands to hold him and spoke slowly and deliberately. "Of course. I know you better than anyone in this world. That's what makes me worthy of being by your side."

Andy was leading Josie and the doctor out of the side door as Summer and Dexter were engaged in conversation. Josie kept her head down, not wanting to make eye contact.

As she raised her head, she caught a glimpse of the woman standing next to Dexter from the corner of her

eye.

They were standing side by side, their arms brushing against each other's.

Larry's eyes widened in recognition when she stopped to look at them. "Mrs. Russell?" he blurted without much thought.

He lowered his voice to a whisper and darted across the hall toward her.

Andy was caught off guard by Larry's sharp eye. He couldn't get Josie to escape in time.

Larry's eyes widened in surprise and disbelief. His mouth gaped slightly as he stared at Josie. "Mrs. Russell, why are you here?"

