

## Chapter 41 Lifesaver

The call was from Ryan. Oh my god, why did he call at this time? Catherine hurriedly stretched out her arm to grab her phone, but Jasmine caught her nervous look.

"Who is it?" Jasmine teased and grabbed the phone before Catherine could.

They had never used to keep secrets from each other. They had even helped each other answer the phone all the time back then, especially when there were childish young boys who called them, then they would help each other dismiss those boys off.

Therefore, Jasmine still had the habit of teasing her.

Catherine's face instantly went rigid due to nervousness. What if she picked up the phone and heard Ryan's voice? What if he said, "Wait for me in bed right now!" That would be the end of her friendship with Jasmine.

She couldn't allow that to happen, but she couldn't show how anxious she was either.

"Give it to me," she forced a relaxed smile and reached out her hand to grab the phone.

However, Catherine missed it because Jasmine dodged.

"Let me see who it is..." Jasmine shifted against the window and looked at the phone screen. When she saw the caller ID, her expression instantly dropped.

Did she realize that it was Ryan?

Catherine was so nervous that her face turned pale. Rushing to snatch her phone, she exclaimed, "Come on, give it to me. The phone's gonna stop ringing if I don't pick it up!"

"Whose call is it? Why are you so nervous? I'll answer it for you." Jasmine's serious expression was quickly replaced with a teasing one. She pulled a serious look earlier just to poke fun at Catherine. Chuckling, she swiped to answer the phone.

It was over. It was going to be over this time! Once Ryan spoke, everything was going to be over.

Catherine's heart was in her throat. She only reacted after staring at her friend blankly for a few seconds. She had to find a way to stop her! Holding on to the trace of hope in her heart, she shouted, "Jas, stop messing around. I don't know this person well!"

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Soon after, she heard the beeping sound of the call.

Finally, Catherine could breathe a sigh of relief after a roller coaster ride of emotions.

It was exactly like how they had used to be. After Jasmine returned the phone to her, she bombarded her with questions just like how she always did.

"Tell me, who is it that made you so nervous? You even put his name as 'lifesaver'. How did he save your life?"

The reason why Jasmine made such a fuss today was to reminisce about their past. They've been too unenthusiastic with each other recently.

Once she was sure that Jasmine didn't seem to be suspicious of her, Catherine finally felt at ease. Taking a sip of tea to calm her mood, she began to

make up stories.

"There was once when I went shopping, and my wallet got stolen, so I couldn't go home..."

"Did he volunteer to drop you home? Is he cute? Did you fall in love at first sight?" Jasmine interrupted with an infatuated look on her face. That was rare.

"Oh, please! He's an old man! Do you think an old man will be cute? You should ask if his son is cute. I just borrowed his phone to call home and ask my dad to send me some money."

"Oh, dear!" Jasmine sighed exaggeratedly, then pursed her lips, saying, "I thought it's a romantic love story! It's boring."

Catherine was amused by her reaction. While they chuckled, her phone rang again. It was Ryan again!

This damned b\*st\*rd! Why was he calling when he knew she was with Jas? Was he out of his mind?

"Answer it!" Jasmine urged.

"This old man is pretty annoying. I don't wanna answer it. He probably wants me to talk to my father to see if we can arrange a job for his son again." As she spoke, Catherine pretended to be impatient and hung up the phone.

"Huh? He's pestering you just because he helped you once by lending his phone to you? What kind of person is he... Wait a minute, my husband's looking for me." Jasmine fished out the phone from her bag because it suddenly rang in the middle of their conversation, yet she was completely oblivious to how nervous Catherine became.

"Hubby!" Jasmine answered the call and greeted sweetly.

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"Me? Catherine and I are in Paragon. Do you wanna join us?"

"Oh? Do you have something to tell her? You want me to pass her the phone?" Jasmine frowned at that. She couldn't figure out what Ryan wanted to tell Catherine.

When Catherine heard what Jasmine said in the call, she was instantly petrified

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He must have been annoyed because she hung up on him just now, but that wasn't a valid reason for him to request to talk to her so openly! What reason did she have to talk to Jas' husband? Just as Catherine was thinking, Jasmine had already handed the phone to her.

Should she take the call, or not? Could she refuse to take the call?

Anticipating the worst, Catherine took the phone and put it beside her ear then spoke softly, "Hello!"

She could feel her heart clenching tightly as she didn't know what to expect from Ryan. If he was going to say something rude, Jasmine might hear it. She wanted to speak to him privately, away from Jasmine, but she couldn't find a good



excuse.

"Hello!" Ryan's politeness exuded a coldness that made her panic.

Fortunately, he didn't say something like, "Wait for me in bed!"

Secretly heaving a sigh of relief, Catherine dared not let her guard down. In a polite tone, she inquired, "May I know why you're looking for me?"

"The CEO of Alan Ball visited our office today to seek investment. He told us that his daughter is Catherine Green and she is a good friend of my wife, Jasmine. I just want to personally confirm with you whether it's true that your father is the CEO of Alan?"

Although she knew that Ryan was deliberately finding excuses to make up a story, Catherine could only cooperate with him.

When she glanced at Jasmine, Catherine could tell that she was concerned about the topic of their conversation.

"Yes, my father's the factory manager of Alan Ball, but I have no idea about his intention to seek Walker Group's investment. He didn't tell me. I'm sorry if he troubled you in any way."

"No worries, Catherine. It's only natural for me to invest in your father's factory. You're my wife's best friend, so you're my friend too," Ryan replied in a serious tone as if everything he said was true.

Catherine knew him well to know that it was all just an act. She never doubted him to be an outstanding actor.

"I'd like to thank you on behalf of my father. Let me treat you and Jas to a meal sometime." After Catherine pretended to thank him, Ryan's soft chuckle came from the other side of the line,

following a warning that was spoken in an almost whisper.

"Call me back right now, or you'll know the consequences."

"Of course I should treat you to a meal! Jas is waiting to talk to you. I'll pass the phone back to her now, thank you once again." Catherine hurriedly stuffed the phone in Jasmine's hands after the last sentence.

"You're the best, hubby. Catherine's father's factory can be saved with Walker Group's investment." In fact, Jasmine had always wanted to bring up this matter to Ryan but hadn't found the opportunity.

"Silly girl. You're my wife. You don't have to thank me," replied Ryan affectionately. He then chatted with Jasmine for a while before hanging up.

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"Jas, please help me thank..." your husband. Catherine wanted to say it out loud, but she found it difficult to get it out of her mouth.

"What are you thanking me for? It's what we should do."

Catherine was worried that Ryan's patience was limited and that he would call her again to harass her.

"I need to go to the bathroom." Catherine stood up and said hurriedly because she was afraid that Jasmine would tag along with her.

Fortunately, Jasmine didn't say anything. Catherine walked out of the private room and went to the bathroom. The first thing she did was to switch on her phone and call Ryan.

"This is the first time, but there shall be no next time. I won't make up another excuse for you. I

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want to see you at the apartment in half an hour." Ryan hung up after spitting those words.

"Wait!" she wanted to explain.

Paragon was so far away from her apartment that even if she took a taxi back, it would take at least half an hour. She might not be able to arrive in time.

Since he was already in a bad mood, she didn't want to worsen it, so Catherine had no choice but to give Jasmine a call saying that something urgent came up and required her to leave immediately.

After hailing a taxi and rushing back home, she lowered her head and looked at the time on her watch. Two minutes left.

While she was running on the sidewalk, Catherine didn't notice that there was a man following her

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and was about to harass her.

It was a hot and sunny late morning in July.

Catherine was sweating from all the running, but the light breeze that blew while she ran cooled her down a little.

## Chapter 43 Fear and Helplessness

While Catherine ran, she felt a sudden warmth on her arm as if someone was grabbing her. She instinctively stopped and turned away.

The moment she turned around, Catherine was stunned by the face she saw. She gaped at the person in shock without knowing how to react.

The man had a dark face with protruding cheekbones, and he seemed to be out of his mind. His clothes were ragged, and his whole body exuded a rotten smell. At a glance, he looked obviously like a tramp.

"You... you're so beautiful. Beautiful!" the man grinned and tightened his grip on her slender arm, pulling her to his side.

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"Let go of me! Let go!" Catherine screamed and struggled with all her strength.

"I wanna kiss you..." he smirked and wrapped his other hand around her neck.

"Let me go! Help! Let me go!" Catherine cried for help, but there was no one on the streets except for the passing cars on such a hot day.

Cathrine was afraid and helpless, but she didn't have much strength to resist.

In a panic, she raised her foot and intended to step on the man's foot with her heels, but he cunningly dodged her.

The tramp secured his large hands on her thin shoulders and leaned forward, trying to peck her pretty red lips.



Catherine desperately struggled to avoid his lips. Fear and disgust made her forget how to breathe properly.

While trying to avoid his attack, Catherine shouted hoarsely, "Help! Somebody, help!" Who could save her? She didn't want to be molested by this man.

It seemed that the homeless man didn't just want to kiss her. She dared not imagine what would happen if he forced her to the ground.

The man was unusually strong. As expected, her worst imaginations came true as he pushed her to the ground.

With the hard push, Catherine could feel the pebbles on the walkway prickling onto her back, but now wasn't the right time to worry over whether it hurt or not. Getting out of this man's grip was the priority.

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After a bunch of non-stop punching and kicking at him, the man didn't let her go. Even when she used up all of her strength, the man only became ferocious.

He wanted to kiss her left cheek, but she turned her head to avoid him, and when he aimed for her right cheek, she shook him off.

Growing impatient, the tramp raised his hand to slap her, but his hand was suspended in the air without falling onto her face.

Terrified, Catherine shut her eyes, but her body didn't give up on struggling to shake him off.

All of a sudden, the grip on her body loosened. The man's weight was gone. Soon after, she heard a loud wail. Opening her eyes, Catherine saw that the man was thrown off to the ground.

"Are you okay?" She heard a voice laced with

urgency and concern, and it sounded familiar. Who else could the owner of the voice be if he wasn't Ryan?

He came, he finally came to save her!

At that moment, she had temporarily forgotten her hatred towards him and whose husband he was. She only knew that he was her lifesaver—the best person in the world.

Ryan crouched down while Catherine struggled to sit up. Without much thought, she threw herself in his arms and started sobbing.

"I was so scared! He scared me... he scared me to death..." she murmured in a trembling voice. Her arms were tightly wrapped around his neck, and her petite body was shaking fervently.

If that person had taken advantage of her, Catherine couldn't imagine having the courage to

live on.

Ryan saved her this time, so he practically became her life savior.

Hugging her life savior tightly, she felt like a drowning person who managed to grab onto driftwood in the sea. She couldn't relax her grip on him the slightest bit.

Pulling her closer to him, Ryan embraced her delicate body in his arms.

"It's okay, baby. Don't be afraid. I'm here now. It's all my fault. I shouldn't have left you alone," he comforted her softly while caressing her back with his big palms to calm her down.

"I'm scared! I'm really scared. I'm scared to death..." Catherine didn't know what was wrong, but she couldn't control herself, so she bawled in front of him.

## Chapter 44 Isn't She Just a Child?

Catherine had never cried like this in front of Ryan before. In the past, she cried silently behind him. When she bawled like a child who was wronged right then, Ryan felt his heart ache for her.

How could he forget that she was only twenty-two? Wasn't she just a child in front of his thirty-year-old self?

He always bullied her, resented her, and doubted her. Now, he suddenly realized that she was really just a little girl. She was fragile and needed someone to protect her. She needed someone to cherish her.

"I'm here, alright? Don't worry," he gently coaxed her and continued caressing her back.

When stroking her back, Ryan noticed that she seemed to be thinner now than before. Was he the one who mistreated her and left her with a bony figure?

On the other hand, Catherine never realized how broad Ryan's chest was. She only noticed it now because she had never wanted to rely on him before.

At this moment, his solid chest gave her infinite comfort. Leaning into his chest, she wailed miserably. Perhaps it wasn't just because of fear but also the grievances she suffered in the past.

When had he ever cared so much about her in the past two years?

Only now could she feel his sincere concern towards her.

Even if Jas would blame her, she didn't have the

courage to leave this embrace now. She was really frightened and had been suppressing her emotions for too long.

Catherine just wished for a short moment that allowed her to snuggle into his embrace and calm her thumping heart down.

The homeless man, who fell, struggled to get up, but once he did, he dared not get closer to the couple, so he ran in the opposite direction instead. When Luca was rushing over, Ryan gestured at the tramp with his lips. Luca understood and immediately chased after the tramp.

After that, Ryan kept on comforting Catherine. She wept miserably and vented to her heart's content. Only after a while, her crying gradually quieted down.

Holding her delicate face gently, he looked at her pitiful face that was filled with snot and tears.

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"Were you scared, little one?" he asked in a tender way.

His tone made her heart tremble. She immediately avoided his concerned gaze and answered softly, "Thanks, I'm fine now."

She was awake now. After her fear had subsided, she had to face the reality that he was her best friend's husband.

Catherine was going to keep a distance from him. This was the first time she threw herself voluntarily into his arms, but it was also going to be the last time.

"Let's go. I'll carry you home and we'll get Victoria to check on you later." He knew that she was avoiding him.

Right now, he was going to be gentle to her. Even though she was indifferent, he didn't mind it;



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instead, he carried her in his arms.

"I can walk by myself. Let me go!"

"I won't let you go! If you dare to resist, I will deal with you right here," he warned. It successfully sealed her lips. She didn't dare to refute, so he only let him carry her.

Ryan carried her all the way home, and that was when he realized how light she was. He didn't feel exhausted nor breathless after carrying her all the way up the stairs.

"You should eat more. You're too thin." He pretended to say it unintentionally.

"Put me down, Mr. Walker." Catherine deliberately distanced herself from him with a cold tone.

"Don't you feel awkward calling me Mr. Walker when you're in my arms?"

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In his arms... She didn't know what was wrong with her, but perhaps she had just gone through a frightening encounter, so whatever he said now made her heart beat faster.

Avoiding his flirtatious gaze and half-smile, she cleared her throat and replied coldly, "No, I don't."

Ryan didn't say anything else in response. He carried her to his apartment and knocked on the door.

Maria ran to open the door when she heard the knock. When she saw Ryan holding Catherine in his arms, she blurted with concern, "Oh, dear! What happened, Miss Walker? Are you hurt?"