

Right Person Wrong Time Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Lost Child

As Colton hit the gas, his car vroomed and roared, speeding away toward their destination. What was supposed to be a one-hour-long trip was shortened to only forty minutes.

Having reached their destination, Nicole lifted the skirt of her gown and picked up her pace. Ignoring the fact that she still had her heels on, she stormed up the stairs, only to discover that the door to her house was wide open. Traces of the door being pried open were apparent. The house was in a complete mess. All of the wardrobes in the rooms were opened, and even the fruit platter on the living room table was swept onto the floor. Evidently, the situation that took place earlier was rather extreme.

Feeling a tingle in her nose, she scoured the room as she yelled, "Hayden! Hayden!" Nonetheless, the house was silent, and not a single movement was heard.

Accordingly, Colton, who just parked his car, arrived at the scene, realizing that burglars must have barged in with the mess in the house.

Nicole then searched in every room without missing even one corner. Sadly, her son was nowhere to be found. All at once, she broke down in tears. Her son meant everything to her, and there was no point in living without him.

Staring at the devastated woman, Colton, for some reason, felt a sting in his heart. He subtly frowned, remembering how he was never a nosy person. However, perhaps it was because the woman in front of him could prove beneficial to Gardner Corporation, for he came up with a virtuous excuse. "I've got some connections. Send me some photos of your boy, and I'll have them look for him." Once Nicole accepted his help, she would be in his debt, and it would be nothing but advantageous were Nicole, as the Chief Designer of F&M Apparel, to repay her debt.

The woman sniffled with her eyes absolutely reddened. Regardless, she managed to remain rational. At that moment, crying wouldn't be of any use as the most crucial thing to do was to look for her son. She didn't even dare to imagine what would happen if she failed that.

Swiftly, she pulled out her phone and opened the photo gallery to search for her son's photographs. Pulling up the images, she realized that she only had Colton's number before turning to him and said, "Can you add me on Facebook? I'll send the photos to you."

"Okay." Colton nodded and befriended her on Facebook.

At once, Nicole sent the photos to the man. Squinting her eyes, she attempted to hold up her collapsing mind. As she had been living overseas for many years, she basically had no close acquaintance in the country. Thus, she had no one to turn to for help. As she was hesitating, she received a call from Zachary. She then sniffled before answering the call and spoke with her shaking voice. "Hello?"

Having heard from the waiter that Nicole and Colton left the hotel in a rush with displeased faces, Zachary knew something was up. Nevertheless, now that he heard Nicole's tone, he immediately knew the graveness of the matter. After pausing for a bit, he inquired, "Nicole, did something happen?"

"Hayden was abducted." She held in the urge to wail.

Zachary was dazed to hear that and quickly comforted, "I'm coming right away, Nicole."

Hanging up the call, Nicole crouched down. The weather was rather chilly in February. Despite donning only a gown, she stiffly squatted as if she couldn't feel the wafting coldness.

With that, Colton took off his coat and draped it around her. As he gazed at the woman before him, an inexplicable pain flashed across his eyes. "I've instructed some men to look for your son. In the meantime, I need you to think whether you've offended anyone in the country," he calmly suggested, thinking only a grudgeful nemesis would kidnap her child.

Feeling the warmth on her back, she sensed a smell on the coat that exclusively belonged to the man, in which she found comfort in. She raised her hand to brush away the tears at the corner of her eyes and shook her head. "Not that I know of. I've been living overseas for the past few years. I didn't return here during that period either." As she stammered, an idea popped up in her mind. If there were any people that held resentment against her, it could only be the Andersons.

Are the Andersons behind this? But why would they do so? Hayden is Joseph's son, so even if they take him in, it won't give them any benefits. Perhaps, there's some convenience that they discovered in abducting Hayden?

Regardless, she couldn't forgo any clue she could think of. "I got it. I'm going to pay the Andersons a visit."

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Chapter 22 Andersons' Interrogation

Before she could walk away, she was stopped by Colton's grab, to which she, halting her steps, turned to look at him as she tried to shake him off. With a frown, she asked, "What are you doing?"

Colton swept his gaze across the woman's figure. At that moment, the once-delicate makeup of the woman before him was smeared by her tears as tiny red veins surged in her eyes. She was nothing but miserable. Due to her hastiness, the bottom part of her gown was all crumpled and stained by dirt. Unlike the graceful Lisa she was one hour ago, she now resembled a pitiful stray puppy. As he withdrew the odd look in his eyes, with his raspy voice, he uttered, "Go get changed. I'll send you there."

Nicole lowered her head and took a look at herself, only to find that she, indeed, seemed pathetic. She then nodded and went back into her house. Followingly, she changed into a rather casual outfit, but she didn't have time to remove her makeup. As she exited her room, she gathered her messy hair and tied it behind her head with a black rubber band. Regardless, her appearance wasn't anywhere atrocious. Having changed into casual wear from her gown, she appeared notably younger.

"Let's go. To Anderson Residence." She dragged Colton, who she, in that instant, perceived as her life savior, as if she was comforted by the man's existence.

Colton peered at the aggressive woman in front of him and how she intuitively grasped his wrist as she thoughtlessly dragged him forward. In the past, he would have confidently considered such behavior as a woman's flirtation tricks.

Having descended the stairs, Nicole got into the car and finally calmed herself down. That was when she realized the car Colton was driving was a full black Rolls-Royce Phantom, and she felt embarrassed by the fact that she charged into the passenger seat.

As Colton was starting the engine, he caught Nicole's awkward look and beamed. "You're the first person to sit in my car's passenger seat."

"Uh..." Why'd he say that out of nowhere?! Nevertheless, thinking how the man drove her out of F&M Apparel's annual dinner just to look for her son, she eventually blurted, "Thanks for your help."

His deep eyes darkened. Without making a response, he concentrated on driving. Fortunately, Colton was somewhat familiar with Anderson Residence. Although he'd only been there once, he remembered the way there, thanks to his superb memory.

As they arrived at Anderson Residence, Nicole turned to the man in a suit at the steering wheel. Due to the fact that he traveled all over the city for her, his hair visibly grew unkempt. To be fair, the man, as long as he kept his mouth shut and refrained from uttering any sort of infuriating words, was actually a sight for sore eyes.

The sky was engulfed by darkness in the middle of the night, and if she didn't have a ride, she would have to walk her way home. Looking at him, she said, "Please wait for me, President Gardner. I'll be back shortly."

“Okay, go ahead.” Colton nodded, willing to be a gentleman in her eyes. Regardless of the result, the partnership between Gardner Corporation and F&M Apparel was considered secured. None could blame him for his heartlessness as he was only fulfilling his role as an opportunistic businessman.

At Anderson Residence, where the lights were still on and flickering, Nicole decidedly barged into the building. The sound of the door being pushed open was loud and clear, and it had William and Lydia, who were resting in the living room, turning their heads to her.

Nicole gazed at the two of them. Without wasting a breath, she questioned, “Is my son here?”

Lydia was taken aback for a moment before recalling Nicole’s previous words. Swiftly, she concealed the nervousness in her eyes as she scowled at her. “Why’d your son be here, psycho?!”

As Nicole was in no mood to beat around the bush with the couple, she stared at them with her eyes so resolute and repeated her question. She coldly interrogated, “Did you kidnap my son?!”

Since the Andersons had always wanted to establish a connection with the Manns, their intention back when they asked Nicole to return to the family instantly became obvious, and in no way would she allow them to use her son as a leverage against her.

“Have you gone insane, Nicole? Go be a psycho out there instead of charging into someone else’s home! Who in the world would want to kidnap that abomination you gave birth to?” Lydia dauntingly replied. In her wide-open eyes were a hint of condescension.

Forcing herself to cool down as her lips quivered, Nicole calmly added, “Just state your demand and release my son.”

“You have a son?” William, who had been remaining silent on the couch, suddenly inquired.

Nicole saw his expression, and it seemed rather genuine, as if he was actually clueless that she had a son. Is Hayden really not here?

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Chapter 23 Malicious Woman

“Hayden! Hayden!” Nicole yelled in the villa, but to no avail.

Lydia, out of patience, eventually rebuked, “Hey, you psychotic tramp! First, you shamelessly got pregnant before getting married, and now you’re here looking for your son. You must be absolutely sick in the head!”

Nevertheless, Nicole, focusing on her son’s search, didn’t bother to indulge in the argument before turning around and leaving after she made sure her son wasn’t in the residence.

It wasn’t until Nicole finally left that Queenie ambled down the staircase. “Mom.” She walked to the couch and sat down with a face full of joy.

Lydia glanced at her. Recalling Nicole’s behavior, she figured that Queenie had succeeded in her plan and revealed a relieved grin. “I thought you were attending F&M Apparel’s annual dinner. Why are you home this early?”

Queenie, who went upstairs to get changed upon her return, coincidentally missed Nicole’s visit. At the mention of the dinner, a trace of vexation flashed across her eyes as she clenched her fists. She reluctantly said, “Mom, it turns out that b*tch Nicole was F&M Apparel’s Chief Designer, Lisa.” She had never anticipated Nicole to undergo such a massive change in mere five years, nor did they know what blatant tricks she’d used to achieve such a high position.

“What?!” Lydia dazedly exclaimed as she opened her eyes in dismay. Nicole has been F&M Apparel’s Lisa all along?!

Remembering the embarrassing incident back at F&M Apparel’s annual dinner, Queenie couldn’t help but feel resentful, thinking it was all Nicole’s fault that she had now become a joke in the country’s upper society.

“Wait, you mean Nicole’s the Lisa from F&M Apparel?” William squinted his greedy eyes, almost to the point where his pupil couldn’t be seen.

“That’s right, Dad,” Queenie grittingly replied as she turned to her father. “Hell, she even used her identity to accuse and insult me on purpose! I can’t be any more embarrassed at the annual dinner!”

At that moment, Lydia lowered her head, contemplating, as if she remembered something before swiftly raising her head and turning to Queenie. “Queenie, have you done the thing?”

Seeing as William was still present, Queenie pursed her lips without uttering a word, but Lydia, who couldn’t be bothered by such a minor inconvenience, grasped her daughter and said, “Tell me! Did you do it or not, Queenie?”

Weirded out by his wife and daughter, William frowned at them. “What are you on about?”

Since Queenie couldn't hide it any longer, she came clean about everything. "It was me who abducted Nicole's son, and we're going to toss him into the ocean, so they won't be able to find him even if they looked everywhere!" Malice flashed across her eyes when she said that.

Enraged, William sprung up from his seat and gave Queenie a slap, to which her blanched face immediately swelled and the smirk on her face turned upside down. She peered at her father in disbelief. William had never beaten her ever since she was a child, but the smack he just landed was drawn with unrepressed strength, leaving a scorching throb on her cheek.

"Imbecile!" William bellowed as he glared at his daughter's pitiable face.

Having been humiliated during F&M Apparel's annual dinner, she was now served with a ferocious smack by her own father. Naturally, her voice started to grow tremulous. "Dad?"

"Nicole is now the Chief Designer of F&M Apparel, and she has the full support of the company. Do you think they will just stand idly by and watch as her son goes missing?" William rebuked with immense rage on his face. He grew so exasperated that his body trembled just by looking at his incompetent daughter before him.

Of course, Queenie hadn't considered that far into the matter. Pressing her tingling cheek, she stared at her father with her reddened eyes. "But the child belongs to Colton, Dad! If he were to know about what happened five years ago and realize the woman was Nicole, we'd all be dead!" She frustratingly vented with her eyes thoroughly reddened. "Remember how you treated Nicole five years ago? Even if she's now the Chief Designer of F&M Apparel, there's no way she would ever help our family!"

Upon hearing that, William calmed down and regained his composure. Indeed, with how he'd treated Nicole and her mother five years ago, Nicole would surely hold that grudge forever. "Get the child home. I'll handle the rest," he wearily instructed. Having been affiliated with the business field for so many years, he was nothing but experienced.

Meanwhile, Queenie was still unable to comprehend why William would want the child back given that she could easily marry into the Gardner Family once the child was out of the picture.

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Chapter 24 Holding Him

"But why?" Queenie questioned, baffled.

"The connections over at F&M Apparel are rather complicated, so that trick of yours will eventually be seen through," William replied.

“No way! The men I recruited were all insignificant thugs!” A hint of malice flashed across Queenie’s eyes. She abhorred Nicole and her righteous look. She couldn’t work out how she could turn from a miserable nobody to a mighty figure, and she was annoyed by that.

“Now that F&M Apparel is working with Gardner Corporation, she won’t just receive help from her company, but also from Gardner Corporation. Do you think your lowly lackeys can hide it for long? It’s only a matter of time until Nicole traces it back to you, and by then, not only you, but the entire Andersons will be doomed!” With his perturbed eyes, he stared forward, and looking at his incompetent daughter just made him even angrier. If he had known how talented Nicole was, he wouldn’t have driven her away. Chief Designer of F&M Apparel, huh? It would be life-changing if we get to work with her.

As Queenie listened to her father, she grew slightly nervous. Biting her lips, she timidly inquired, “Then, what can we do now?”

“Have your men send the child over at once, and I’ll handle the rest. Just pretend as if you know nothing.” William extended his hand and massaged his forehead.

Hearing his words, Lydia hesitantly uttered, “But if President Gardner were to know what Queenie did...”

“Another fool, aren’t you? Nicole’s the Chief Designer of F&M Apparel. As long as we please her, we wouldn’t even need the Gardners to turn our lives around,” he sternly claimed. He was thoroughly aware of the benefits his family could use.

At her father’s words, Queenie clenched her fists even tighter and panted as she was boiling with fury. What gives?! Dad’s idea is to please Nicole?!

Nicole had been gone for five years, and during those five years, Queenie had shamelessly gratified Colton for the sake of getting her family’s life back on the right track. But right now, William was highly astonished, not by “Lisa,” but by Nicole, and he even hit her for Nicole’s sake.

Watching as Queenie was still standing idly, he loudly shouted, “Well, what are you waiting for? Go bring my grandson back!” After getting to know that Nicole was, in fact, Lisa, William’s attitude had undergone a drastic change, and he even referred to Hayden as his grandson.

Although Queenie was still irate, she could only endure it and grit her teeth as she made the call.

Meanwhile, Nicole, like a lunatic, was still searching for her son. As it hadn’t been long since her return to the country, she basically knew no one other than the Andersons as well as Joseph and Colton, so she couldn’t fathom who would want to abduct her child.

After Colton sent her home, she was all out of clues. And so, she kept on calling her son's number, hoping he would pick up, but his phone was still turned off.

"Wah..." She ultimately broke down. As she crouched down on the ground, she forcefully pressed her face against her knees, agonizingly sniffing and whimpering.

Staring at the woman crouching under the shade of a tree and listening to her sobbing, Colton strangely grew upset. He then walked to her and slightly lowered his head to look at her. He had seen many sides of the woman, be it her optimistic or lively side, but it was his first time seeing her so sorrowful and restless.

He gulped and blinked his inky eyes before squatting down to take a good look at her. "Miss Anderson, I've sent some men to look for him. We'll receive news latest by tomorrow." His thickly voice was somehow reassuring to listen to.

Sniffing, Nicole raised her head with her vision clouded by her tears. Her mind was nothing but perturbed, and she needed a shoulder to cry on more than anything else now. As she peered at the man before her, she directly threw herself into his arms.

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Chapter 25 Envious Zachary

At once, Colton was taken aback. He could feel Nicole helplessly shaking in his arms. His arms stiffened, but he eventually raised them and gently patted her, comforting her with his hoarse voice. "It'll be okay."

After crying for a while, Nicole sniffled and incidentally sensed a unique smell on the man. It was a subtle scent of tobacco, but it wasn't appalling. She then nodded and raised her head.

At that moment, Zachary came and found Nicole and Colton snuggling against each other under the tree, as well as how Colton's hand was on her back. The sight was rather intimate. Withdrawing his gaze, he hurried over and stood beside Nicole. With a sympathetic tone, he muttered, "Are you okay, Nicole?"

Flickering her sore eyes, Nicole lifted her head and revealed her damp eyes that were stained with a hint of redness. She seemed awfully pitiful. Accordingly, she pulled herself out of Colton's arms, and since she had squatted for a long time, her legs started to numb. Thereupon, when she tried to get up, she tripped herself and almost fell down, but luckily, Zachary managed to grab her. Drained, she shut her eyes. The makeup on her face was smeared by her tears and marred her appearance.

Looking at her captivating face, Zachary bitterly caressed her cheek as a trace of guilt flashed across his eyes.

Nicole had her eyes closed. Because of her tears, her long eyelashes clumped together and were clinging to her skin.

As Zachary had come, Colton stood up and blandly stared at the two as they embraced each other. He wordlessly pursed his lips.

On the other hand, while Zachary was tenderly fondling her head, he gazed at Colton as if he was looking at a stranger. "President Gardner, thank you for taking care of Nicole. We shall postpone the discussion for our partnership to a later time. It's not quite appropriate to do it now."

Colton's ebony eyes twitched. Watching Nicole, who was in his arms earlier and now in Zachary's embrace, he, for some reason, felt disturbed, but that might have been him overthinking. Regardless, he did not reveal his thoughts and simply responded with a light smile and a nod. "I've had my men look into it. I'll give Miss Lisa an answer as soon as possible."

Zachary grew relieved. "Thank you very much, President Gardner."

Beaming, Colton replied, "Don't worry about the meeting. After all, it shouldn't be hard to actualize the partnership between Gardner Corporation and F&M Apparel." Having said that, without further chatter, he came up with an excuse before getting into his car and leaving.

Seeing as he left, Zachary lowered his head to look at the woman, who stopped crying but was still hyperventilating, in his arms and dolefully wiped the tears off the corner of her eyes. "Nicole, how's Hayden?"

Nicole raised her head and looked at the man's benign smile as she blinked her irritated eyes before rubbing them and shaking her head. "I don't know either. During the annual dinner, Hayden called over and told me there were some bad people at home. But when I got home, my house was already turned into a mess. I couldn't find him and my calls wouldn't go through." She gritted her teeth, and as she was speaking, her eyes, once again, started to moisten.

Zachary had known her for about four years, but that was his first time seeing her crying and her downhearted look. That was also the first time he held her in his arms and let her depend on him. Followingly, he grasped her shoulders as he revealed determination in his eyes. "I've asked some of my friends in the country to investigate the matter on my way here. We'll definitely find him. Don't you worry, okay?"

Nicole nodded and wiped her tears off. Right now, Hayden was her only hope. Her emotional outburst earlier might have been excessive. "Yes, Hayden will be fine," she resolutely stated, as if she was also encouraging herself at the same time.