

The Silent Wife Chapter 46

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Chapter 46

The name 'Somerset Mountain' echoed within the office.

Justin's expression visibly darkened as the ugly scar on his face trembled vigorously, as if the protruding vein from his forehead was suppressing his sudden surge of emotions.

"She was born in Somerset Mountain?"

Frankie returned to his senses and he quickly nodded his head. "Yes, Miss Hudson was eight years old when she was sent to the Hudson Family with her granny."

"They were brought from Somerset Mountain?"

"That... I'm not sure." He nervously looked at Justin.

After all, 20 years had already passed and the servants of the Hudson Family had changed many times, so it wasn't easy for Frankie to find out that Rachel was brought over with her granny, let alone discovering their origins.

Upon listening to Frankie's answers, Justin was instantly filled with mixed emotions. All of a sudden, he closed the document in his hands and said, "I want you to find out more about it. Let someone else head to Somerset Mountain to investigate."

For a moment, Frankie was startled. "President Burton, why are you suddenly so interested in investigating this?"

However, Justin didn't answer as he coldly uttered, "Go and look for the survivors of that forest fire back then. No matter how big or small, I want to learn everything about Rachel, her granny and the Hudson Family. Hurry up and go."

Upon facing Justin's cold gaze, Frankie quickly nodded his head. "I'll ask someone to look into it immediately."

Justin nodded slightly.

"By the way, there is one more thing I need to tell you, President Burton."

"What is it?"

"About Miss Hudson renting a house outside, the intermediary couldn't get into contact with her, but he has Dr. Peters' number. When I called him today, he told me that Dr. Peters had already rented the house."

“He rented it? Where is the house?”

Frankie stuttered, “Glendale.”

Justin tightly furrowed his brows in that instant. *A house in Glendale?*

In the night, the particularly clear sound of an engine was heard in the courtyard of the Burton Residence.

Rachel had already taken a shower and she was now reading a book on the side of her bed. As soon as she heard the engine sound, she immediately closed the book and put it aside before wearing her sandals.

She had been waiting for Justin to return.

When she went downstairs to the living room, he had just removed his jacket and handed it over to the maid. The moment he saw her coming down, he immediately furrowed his thick brows. “Why aren’t you asleep yet?”

Rachel shook her head and pointed at the kitchen. *I’ll go and make some tea for you.*

When she was done making the tea, she brought it over to Justin’s study room, but he wasn’t there. However, the bedroom next to his study wasn’t closed shut, so she could hear the sound of water splashing on the floor.

Therefore, she simply waited for him in the study room, but a frayed newspaper on his desk quickly caught her attention.

Even though the paper looked ancient, the masthead ‘Riverdale Times’ was still clear to the naked eye. Below, the front page headline had an eye-catching title-‘Justin Burtin, the eldest grandson of the Burton Family was successfully rescued from a group of human traffickers in Somerset Mountain before their den was burned to crisp by a forest fire.

It’s a newspaper from 20 years ago.

Rachel was stunned upon that sight.

It wasn’t difficult for her to discover that Justin was abducted years ago, but she was curious as to why he had retained the newspaper until now.

“What are you doing?” A gloomy voice was suddenly heard behind her, which gave her a fright. Immediately, the newspaper fell onto the floor mat.

I’m sorry. Rachel quickly leaned over to pick it up.

However, Justin was much faster than her. Before she even had the chance to touch the newspaper, his huge hand had already taken it away.

With a dissatisfied tone, he asked, "Who allowed you to simply touch my stuff?"

Rachel felt her heart racing as she revealed an apologetic expression. *I'm sorry.*

After he impatiently glared at her, he placed the newspaper back in the drawer of his desk.

Before he closed the drawer, he saw the black and white photo of 'the burning Somerset Mountain' in the newspaper. All of a sudden, he tightened his fingers as if he wanted to tear off the edge of the newspaper.

Out of the corner of his eye, Justin glanced at Rachel and remembered what Frankie said to him earlier in the evening. Suddenly, he had a suspicion in his heart. "When did the Hudson Family bring you back?"

For a moment, Rachel was left startled, but she carefully answered him. *When I was about eight or nine years old.*

"Don't you know how old you were when they took you back?" Justin glanced at her sideways and questioned, "Where did you live before coming back to the Hudson Family?"

Rachel shook her head. *I don't remember.*

After seeing her reaction, the anger on his face grew as he sneered, "You don't remember or you don't

want to talk about it?"

Even though he was certain that it was Jefferey who set that fire in Somerset Mountain 20 years ago, he never found any evidence to prove the man's guilt.

When Justin realized that Rachel was brought back to the Hudson Family not long after the fire, he couldn't help but suspect whether these two situations were connected.

However, she just couldn't remember what happened to her back then as she revealed a bitter expression. *I fell really ill after they brought me back to the Hudson Family, so I can't remember anything before I was eight.*

She couldn't even remember what her mother looked like, but Nancy had luckily kept a photo of her so that Rachel wouldn't forget.

Upon seeing that Rachel couldn't remember anything, Justin began to lose his patience. "Since you don't know anything, what are you standing here for?"

After gritting her teeth, she decided to tell him. *You told me before that you want to make a deal. Now, I would like to renegotiate the terms with you.*

His expression immediately darkened as he scanned her face with his cold gaze.

"You want to leave the Burton Family?" Justin's narrow eyes focused slightly on her.

Rachel pressed her lips and explained, *since I wasn't the one you planned to marry in the first place, you can go to the Hudson Family and ask for compensation after my departure. If you really want to, I'm sure Amber will still be willing to marry you.*

In the meantime, Justin's face became gloomy. "What happens afterward?"

Afterward? She was confused. *What do you mean by afterward?*

Then, he stepped forward toward her. As she was engulfed by his imposing shadow, she could hear his cold voice sweeping across her ears. "You can finally be together with whoever you like afterward. For example, Julian. Am I right?"

A startled Rachel took a step back, but Justin grabbed her at that moment.

"Are you starting to think that I've been too tolerant with you lately?"

She shook her head and tried to calm herself down. *There's nothing between the two of us.*

"I've known Julian for many years, but I've never seen him this concerned about a woman. He would drive you to the hospital, buy you breakfast, take care of your family, and even..." Justin's eyes suddenly grew colder. "He even took you and your family in to live with him."

Rachel's expression immediately changed. *What are you talking about?*

She was confused because she did not agree to live with Julian at all.

"Are you now denying what I'm saying?" He tightened his fingers around her hand to the point where it almost shattered her delicate wrist. "Don't tell me that you didn't know that the house in Glendale was registered under Julian's name. Also, don't tell me that you are only renting his house. This kind of

childish trickery won't work on me."

Her face paled as she never agreed to rent Julian's house at all. *I really don't know anything about it.*

Justin coldly stared at Rachel with his knife-like eyes as if he was slicing her body bit by bit. "If you want to negotiate, you must first have a bargaining chip. What is yours? Is it your body?"

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The sky was already bright when Rachel regained consciousness. She didn't know when the man next to her left, but the residual warmth of his body was still on the bed. When she tried to move, she could feel the soreness and pain all over her body as if she was crushed last night.

Rachel tried her best to sit up while she held her blanket. After a moment of dizziness, she stared at the light shining through the curtains and thought about what Justin had said to her last night.

"I want you to remember this. Once you've joined the Burton Family, only I can decide when you can leave."

Rachel then tightly held the blanket. *Am I destined to be under the control of someone for the rest of my life? No. For Grandma's sake, I must change my current situation. I can't let it continue.*

As she thought about it, her phone suddenly rang. On the other side, Jefferey's cold voice was heard. "I want you to come home immediately as I need to talk to you."

As she looked at her phone, Rachel furrowed her brows. *He's definitely calling me over to ask about what happened that day at the banquet. It just so happens that I have something to ask him too.*

When she arrived at the Hudson Residence, the housekeeper informed her that Jefferey was waiting for her in the backyard.

"I've told you before that I'm only having her by my side for a purpose other than placing someone near Justin."

"What purpose does she have? That mute whom you raised for many years is always bullying Amber."

When Rachel came to the entrance of the backyard, she could hear the voices of two men through a screen. One of whom was Amber's uncle-Josh Steward.

Since Josh had doted on his niece, Amber, he was now infuriated with Jefferey's decision. "Jefferey! Don't forget that Amber's mother suffered from depression then because of that mute! Do you want to see Amber going down the same path?"

"That won't happen. Amber is my precious daughter; otherwise, I wouldn't have allowed Rachel to marry Justin. Don't you know what kind of a person Justin is?"

As she listened to their conversation, Rachel froze on the spot as she suddenly felt empty in her heart.

He's right. Everyone knows what kind of a person Justin is. He knew that sending me over would be a torture, but he still did it. It is a fact that I was never well-liked in the Hudson Family.

Then, she heard Josh's response. "Since she has married him, you should just sever your relations with her. Overall, I don't want Amber to see her ever again. Even I feel infuriated whenever I see her."

"I can't do that. Even if she isn't married to the Burton Family, I still can't afford to cut off my relations with her."

"Why?"

"Have you forgotten that she is our only clue to the formula?"

The formula? Rachel felt a thump in her heart. I'm sure that he mentioned that I'm the only clue to that formula.

However, she didn't dare to continue eavesdropping on their conversation anymore, so she went to

wait for him in the living room. At the same time, she carefully thought about their conversation and felt that something was wrong.

Not long after, Jefferey sent Josh off and saw her in the living room. "When did you return?" Jefferey's expression looked strange.

Rachel calmly explained, *I've been here for a while. Rosa told me that you are meeting a guest, so I chose to wait here.*

Now that she had explained to him, she nodded her head at Josh, who was behind Jefferey, to greet him. However, Josh let out a grunt and glanced at her with disdain before leaving without saying a word.

After Jefferey had sent the man off, he returned to sit down while the maid served them with some

tea.

Dad, what did you want to ask me about?

"Amber told me everything. You were the one who pushed her at the banquet, right?"

Jefferey had a somber expression and his eyes were staring at Rachel in a way that he wouldn't even use on strangers.

However, she remained calm. *The truth depends on who you believe in. No matter what I say, you'll always believe Amber's words. Am I right?*

It was always the same ever since she was a kid. There was one time when they went to the vineyard in the outskirts where she had been pushed by Amber into a waterless pool. It had resulted in Rachel knocking her head on the ground, but no matter how much she had accused Amber, it was all brushed off by Amber's simple reply. "It was Rachel herself who tripped."

Amber never bothered to apologize.

Upon listening to Rachel's words, he was infuriated as he bellowed, "What are you saying? You are Amber's older sister, so you should always tolerate her"

So, if she commits murder in the future, are you going to frame me for her crime as well if you have the chance to do so?

It was what Jefferey had done when he forced her to marry into the Burton Family.

Rachel was usually calm and she had hardly ever been this aggressive, so Jefferey was taken aback for a moment. After a while, he was enraged and slammed the table in front of him. "Do you really think you can say anything you want now that you have the Burton Family's backing? Don't forget that you are still a member of the Hudson Family."

While she looked at his angry face, she became calmer instead. *Dad, I have dreamed of Mom for the past two days.*

He was stunned for a moment as the rage faded from his expression, but no one knew whether it was from guilt or something else. "Your mom passed away many years ago. Didn't you forget everything after a bout with that serious illness?"

She wore a gentle expression. *My memory has become better recently.*

Jefferey was stunned as he looked at her in shock. "Do you remember anything?"

Rachel tentatively explained, *I keep having the same dream of Mom bringing me up to the mountains to collect the herbs. At the same time, she kept telling me to memorize the*

"What?"

The formula

He immediately jumped from the couch and looked at her in joy. "The formula? Have you remembered it?"

As Rachel looked at him, she was stunned as her eyes were filled with mixed emotions. Before she arrived, she had already prepared what she was going to tell him so that she could find out the cause of her mother's death from him. Actually, she wasn't sure whether the formula had anything to do with her

mother's death, but she gambled with her chance. By the looks of it, her suspicions were correct.

The car drove all the way to the Hudson Vineyard in the outskirts.

While he sat on the back seat, Jefferey continued to comfort Rachel. "It's fine if you can't remember it. I'll take you to see something that'll definitely spark your memory."

She gently nodded her head and thoughtfully looked outside the window. *What is this formula? What does it have anything to do with me? Why would Jefferey, who loves her daughter a lot, stop interrogating me to hurriedly bring me to this vineyard as soon as I mentioned the formula?*

While they were on the road, those words echoed in her mind. *She is the only clue to the formula. I'm the only clue? Does this mean that Jefferey raised me up in the Hudson Family all these years because of this?*

The moment they arrived at the vineyard, Jefferey immediately brought Rachel to the same study room as their previous trip. As she looked at the direction of the bookcases, she suddenly became gloomy while resisting the urge to question him about the tablet and geomancy located behind the bookcase.

"Rae, come here." Jefferey immediately opened the safe under the desk in front of her and removed a letter before handing it over to her. "Open it and have a look."

What is this? Rachel silently guessed something in her heart.

"This is the secret formula of the Hudson Family that has been passed down from generation to generation."

She clenched her hands. *This is the thing that Justin is trying to locate.*

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As Rachel retrieved the envelope from Jefferey's hands, she noticed that it was thin and virtually weightless

Can I look at it? she asked, looking curiously at him.

It was strange that he was handing her something that even Amber hadn't seen before.

Yet, he nodded his head in the affirmative. "You're my daughter. Whatever belongs to the Hudson Family also belongs to you. Why wouldn't you be able to open it?"

With that, Rachel carefully opened the envelope in front of him and pulled out a yellowing piece of paper with delicate rows of writing in between red lines.

Valerian, passionflower, hops...

There was nothing special about this piece of paper. Wasn't it simply the formula for the Hudson Pharmaceutical's sleeping pills? The ingredients listed on the paper were exactly the same as those listed on their medicine boxes.

Perhaps that was the only strange thing-the contents were exactly the same, with no listed dosages on this piece of paper.

As Rachel was pondering the matter, Jefferey spoke urgently, "Well, Rae, do you remember anything?"

She shook her head.

Of course she didn't remember anything. She had been lying to him from the get-go.

"Look at it carefully." He seemed a bit impatient. "Didn't you say your mother had you memorize the medicine's dosages? Try to remember it."

Upon hearing his words, she finally understood what he meant.

It was obvious that Jefferey had a list of ingredients but none of the required dosages.

Yet, the sleeping pills were Hudson Pharmaceuticals' top-selling product. Its production had never stopped all these years. How did they manage to produce it if he didn't have the precise dosages?

All of a sudden, Rachel's heart sank.

Dad, how did my mom die? she asked.

The sudden question caused his expression to stiffen. "I thought I told you she died in a car accident. Why? Did your grandmother say something?"

While looking at Jefferey's guilty expression, Rachel happened to glance at the bookcase situated at the far end of the room from the corner of her eye.

After a heartbeat, she slowly shook her head in denial.

Only then did his expression relax.

Given that she couldn't remember anything, he sank in disappointment onto the chair behind his desk.

Even when she returned the formula to him, he carelessly tossed it aside, as if absolutely unconcerned about it.

Indeed, the contents listed on the paper did not have any financial value-what was worth a lot were the required dosages. It was no wonder he previously had the paper locked up so carefully.

"Let's forget Amber for now. How's your progress on what I asked you to do?" Jefferey asked coldly from behind the desk.

As she tried her best to look calm, Rachel answered, *I'm on it.*

"It's true we can't rush it, but you need to hurry. The Hudson Family needs the support of the Burton Family, not just for me but for yourself too." While looking at her, he asked, "Do you have any more of the drug left?"

She frowned before she shook her head.

That packet of drugs had been thrown away a long time ago. After all, her room was rarely visited by anyone; so, she imagined that the drugs were still under her bed at this moment.

On the other hand, her father was thrilled, thinking she had already used them up. "I'll have someone send you another packet soon. Remember-don't use too much at one go, or you'll be discovered."

Upon having no other choice, Rachel nodded in understanding.

For now, Jefferey locked the formula for the sleeping pill inside the cabinet. With a demeanor that was completely different from how he usually treated her, he added, "Rae, you don't get to return often. You should come home with me tonight and have dinner with the family."

His change in attitude surprised her, but she surmised that it was likely because she brought up the medicine formula.

It was only when night fell that Riverdale became a bustling city.

Inside the summer villa owned by the Burton Family at the outskirts of the city, it had been a while since Tina was summoned into the study by Jason.

Clang!

The thunderous sound of porcelain being shattered rang from the study.

"Tina!" While in the living room, Lilian anxiously stood up.

"Sit down." Arthur was still holding his cane and seated unmoving on the couch with a severe expression.

Lilian's face paled, but she dared not rebel against him. "Tina is still a young kid who doesn't understand things, Dad. I'm afraid she might say something that enrages Jason so much that he'll lay a hand on her."

"You can't interfere even if he does. She is indeed the one at fault here."

"She's your most beloved granddaughter, Dad—"

"Enough!" His cane slammed once on the floorboards, interrupting her words. "Did she consider the repercussions of what she did? Clearly, I must have spoiled her too much for her to turn out so bold and lawless! How are we going to explain ourselves if the Johansson Family finds out about this?"

Lilian watched Arthur in the silence as her face became pallid.

Meanwhile, Tina was still on her knees inside the study. Her knees were already slightly bruised, but she had remained stubborn. "I take responsibility for what I did, but I'm not going to explain myself."

At this moment, Jason was so angry that he was trembling. While pointing at her nose, he yelled, "No? Tell me, then-what are you going to do about your betrothal to the Johansson Family? You've disgraced me. You've even disgraced your grandfather!"

"What's the big deal? We can just call off the engagement. I don't want to get married anymore."

"Hah! And what makes you think we'll call off the engagement just because you don't want to get married anymore? This plan was set in motion a long time ago and it's not up to you to decide whether

you want to or not!"

As she turned her face away, Tina muttered, "Whatever you say."

Her recalcitrance had enraged Jason even more. "Let me tell you something, Tina Burton. I have already transferred Henry Offerman somewhere else, so don't think you'll ever see him again from today onward!"

Tina's expression immediately changed. "Where did you transfer him to?"

"That's none of your business. At any rate, it's someplace you'll never locate and if I find out that you're looking for him, I'll send him somewhere even worse and farther."

"How can you do that?"

"Because I'm your father!" Jason coldly glared at Tina. "You can continue to kneel here until you finally figure things out and willingly marry into the Johansson Family."

With that, he stormed out of the study without looking back.

The door slammed shut with a bang.

Upon hearing the door being locked, Tina gritted her teeth so hard that they nearly shattered before pulling her cell phone out of her pocket to call Henry. "Hello?"

The other end of the line was silent for a long time.

"Say something! My dad says he has transferred you. Where did he transfer you to?"

"We can't talk to each other again in the future, Tina."

"What?" she asked anxiously. "Where are you right now?"

"At the airport" Henry answered weakly. "Mr. Burton's men are right next to me, so I can't tell you where I'm going. The point is that I won't be able to see you again in the future. Keep your head down and don't enrage him. Live your life well."

"Wait, you're at the airport? Where are you going? I'm coming to find you." Tina immediately stood up and went to open the door, but it was locked from outside and couldn't be opened no matter what.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Open the door! Open the f*cking door! Are you all dead?"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

From the other end of the line came the announcement to board the flight and the call ended before Tina could say anything else.

"Hello? Hello? Henry!" While still holding onto her cell phone, she finally broke down.

Deep in her heart, she wondered who had spilled the beans. How did they know to tell what had transpired to her father and her grandfather so that she would have no way of hiding the truth?

There weren't many people who knew about this matter.

All of a sudden, Tina recalled the incident from the Hudson Family birthday feast a few days prior. *It's her. It has to be her, that mute woman!*

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A week later, Nancy was discharged from the hospital.

Ever since Rachel indicated that she was about to regain her memories, Jefferey's attitude toward her had warmed considerably. He called her multiple times in that week itself and invited her home for dinner

His behavior led her to confirm that her mother's death was connected to the medication formula.

"I can take care of myself, Rae. Why did you hire a nurse?"

Inside her bedroom, Nancy was looking out through the door and she grumbled a little at Rachel's waste of money.

As Rachel stacked a pile of clothing onto the shelves, she glanced up at Nancy with a smile. *The nurse was introduced by Dr. Peters, she signed. She'll come over every day only to help you make your meals and tidy up the place. If anything happens, she can also contact me in a timely manner.*

Although Rachel hadn't accepted Julian's offer to help her find a place, she had accepted his assistance to introduce a nurse instead.

"What can happen to me? I'm fully recovered now." After looking around for a moment, Nancy sighed. "It is true that this place is a little too large for a single person. It's such a pity that you can't come over to stay with me."

Rachel lowered her head in guilt without much explanation.

Nancy had assumed Rachel was still living at Hudson Residence, in which Rachel saw no need to clarify the situation as she was considered a member of the Hudson Family.

"Dr. Peters is a good man, Rae. We should find an opportunity to thank him."

Yes, Dr. Peters is a good man, Rachel agreed.

"How about this? Have him come over for dinner this weekend. I'll make us all some pierogi."

The moment she heard Nancy's words, Rachel stopped stacking the clothes for a while and immediately shook her head. *He's an extremely busy man.*

“Whether he’s occupied or not is his business because we have to show our gratitude.”

Knowing that she wouldn’t be able to change her grandmother’s mind, Rachel surrendered and agreed.

When the time came, she simply needed to tell Nancy that Julian wasn’t free.

As if she saw through her granddaughter at a glance, Nancy responded, “Well, call him now and arrange a time. I want to ask him whether there is anything I should avoid eating, anyway.”

At once, Rachel lifted her head and glanced at her watch. *I have no time, Grandma. I have to be at work soon.*

“Oh, Rae...”

It was only after she slammed the door shut that she let out a sigh of relief.

She knew that her grandmother was intending to set her up with Julian, but she knew that it was impossible. As she couldn’t explain much to Nancy, she could only avoid her grandmother for now.

Moreover, she hadn’t lied, her leave had ended today and she would have to head to the City Council Library in the afternoon for work,

Meanwhile, at the Burton Group, the engineering department was holding a project summary meeting for their bid inside a conference room.

“The bidding results for the Brentwood New City project have been released. Everyone’s hard work during this period has paid off, thanks to President Burton’s great support of our engineering department too. Once the contract has been signed, we’ll be able to start implementing our overall plan...”

After Justin had listened in for a while, Frankie entered the meeting room after answering a phone call and whispered, “We’ve finished investigating your email leak, President Burton.”

“What did you find?”

“We have tracked the IP address of the sender to an address abroad and managed to pinpoint a specific location.”

Justin frowned at that.

When the meeting ended, he returned to his office,

With a solemn expression, Frankie handed the investigation report to him while saying, “Here’s the specific address.”

When Justin saw the 'SG Conglomerate' logo on the report, his gaze slightly darkened. "Are you sure it came from a computer inside SG Conglomerate?"

Frankie nodded. "According to this report, five of the floors in this SG Conglomerate building are rented out. For now, we've only managed to pinpoint the IP address to this building but not to a specific computer there. The network in this building is protected and our technology department hasn't been able to hack into it yet."

SG Conglomerate had crossed paths with Burton Group three years ago. At that time, SG Conglomerate was trying to break into the domestic energy market only to have Burton Group snatch the project right from their hands. Because of that incident, the two companies were not on good terms.

"Do you think these photographs were sent by someone within SG Conglomerate, President Burton?"

As he lifted his head from perusing the report, Justin answered coolly, "How do you think the previous two photographs have affected Burton Group?"

Now that the two photographs involving Julian and Rachel had been brought up, Frankie felt perturbed and answered hesitantly, "Maybe they're trying to do the same thing that happened before and exploit public opinions to affect Burton Group's reputation and, with that, its stock price."

"They wouldn't need to send the photographs to me if that were the case." Unerringly, Justin pointed out the flaw in Frankie's logic.

If the other party was trying to do as Frankie said, they could simply send the photographs to the media, write a news report, and hire some people to smear Burton Group's name online. There wouldn't be any need to send the photographs to Justin's email inbox at all.

A stumped Frankie stood there with mouth agape as Justin's logic was irrefutable. "So, they're -"

"It might not have anything to do with them."

After all, five floors of the building were rented out. From their previous conflict, Justin knew the people of SG Conglomerate weren't so foolish as to do something that could be discovered upon initial investigation

As such, he instructed Frankie, "Find out which companies are renting the five floors and the backgrounds of their respective person-in-charge. Also, have the overseas market research department monitor SG Conglomerate's recent movements."

In truth, Justin wasn't expecting for an incident so minor to be connected with SG Conglomerate. After all, Rachel was the intended target of the email. At first, Justin even assumed that it was a repeat of the previous rumor incident and he was nearly certain that it was the handiwork of the mindless Amber

However, judging from the current situation, things weren't as simple as he thought they were.

As the saying went, it was better to be safe than to be sorry. It was best that he investigated the incident thoroughly.

"What has Rachel been doing lately?"

Frankie paused. "I was just about to tell you that her grandmother has left the hospital today and she is staying near Newbridge. She has a nurse taking care of her and the nurse—"

"What about the nurse?"

"The nurse was introduced by Dr. Peters," Frankie answered in nervousness.

Justin snorted coldly. "I see that he's making a career change from a doctor to a housekeeping agent."

He and Julian had never gotten along as kids and as they grew up, their personalities had only drastically diverged. In his eyes, Julian was an idealistic child who never grew up whereas in Julian's eyes, Justin was nothing more than an opportunistic businessman.

"And the place that she rented is at Newbridge?" Justin continued asking.

"Yes." Frankie nodded. "It's not far from the City Council Library where she works."

Works?

If Frankie hadn't mentioned it, Justin would have forgotten that Rachel was a working adult with a job at the City Council Library.

"She must have a lot of time on her hands if she can take such a long break."

"She applied for annual leave," Frankie explained. "It was followed by another week of sick leave because of her grandmother. That's why she could take such a long break."

"Annual leave?" Justin narrowed his eyes slightly. "So, it wasn't marriage leave that she applied for?"

Frankie froze, afraid of having misspoken.

It was already in the afternoon when Rachel left her grandmother's rented residence. When she arrived at her place of work, it was still the lunch hour.

In an attempt not to disturb her coworkers resting in the office, she immediately entered the library to organize the shelves after she kept her bag aside.

Her main responsibility was to return the borrowed books to the shelves and to keep the mantelpieces and archives organized. Although it was not a well-paid nine-to-five job, the workload was steady and leisurely. More importantly, not a lot of social interaction was required.

“Excuse me, are there books about history and literature over here?”

Rachel was in the midst of moving a few returned books from a small cart onto the shelves when a man spoke up behind her all of a sudden. Her body had stiffened as a result and she froze, feeling like her feet had been cemented into the ground.

As if it carried all the brightness of her childhood with it, the man’s voice had illuminated the rare few memories of her younger days where she was kindly treated.

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“I remember that they were here.” The voice behind her was clear and powerful. “Am I correct, Rachel?”

As she slowly returned to her senses, Rachel spun around to look at Hans.

“Long time no see.” The man before her was a head taller than her. In the eight years that passed since she last saw him, his bright and handsome visage was more mature than in her memory, but his smile was as still as brilliant as ever.

In astonishment, she gaped and signed. *How... Why are you here?*

As his entire family emigrated eight years ago, she thought she would never see him again.

In her twenty-nine years of living, he was one of those rare folks who brought warmth to her life. Like a sun, he had brightened her entire youth. When she was lonely and helpless, he stood firm and unmoving by her side.

Now that they were in the cafe next to the library, where the rich smell of coffee wafted, Rachel studied the man in front of her for a long time, feeling like she was in a dream.

“I know I’m handsome, Rachel, but I’m going to blush if you keep looking at me like that” Hans teased by batting his eyelids at her.

She couldn't resist rolling her eyes at him. *I see that your narcissism has never gone away*, she retorted.

"Well, I'll treat that as a compliment," he chuckled before he looked out the window. "Things have changed a lot here, but you work in a good environment and it puts me at ease."

When did you return? she asked.

"A while ago, but I was busy with the procedures surrounding my work transfer. If I knew your grandmother was in the hospital, I would have looked for you sooner to help you out."

Work transfer?

A dumbfounded Rachel stared at Hans. *You're coming back for work?*

"Of course. Did you think I was back on vacation?"

How about your parents... Midway through her signing, Rachel stopped as she suddenly realized that

something was amiss.

Hans, who was seated opposite her, forced a smile before he admitted with a pained expression, "My mom... passed away two years ago."

Her expression froze. *I'm sorry.*

The primary reason why he had suddenly emigrated all those years ago was because of his ailing mother and she needed year-long treatment abroad. For the ease of receiving treatment, his father

chose to sell their company and move the entire family along.

"It's okay." Hans purposefully gave a breezy smile. "Two years have passed since then. My mother has suffered a lot in life and maybe death was a relief to her."

All of a sudden, Rachel felt saddened.

His mother, whom she had met before, had been an extraordinarily gentle mom and that was how she

raised a son with such a bright and warm personality.

Snap!

Hans suddenly reached out and snapped his fingers in front of Rachel's face, which startled her.

What are you doing? she asked,

“Don’t look so sad, okay? Whenever you do that, I’ll have to comfort you instead. I remembered that when we were in high school and I broke my leg, you cried so hard that someone not in the know thought I hurt you...”

Rachel snickered.

“Alright, forget about me. How are you doing?”

Before she could finish signing, her cell phone rang, which interrupted her..

When she looked down at it, she realized that it was a call from Frankie. All of a sudden, her heart thumped with a bad sense of foreboding.

“Are you at the library right now, Mrs. Burton?” Frankie asked when she answered the call.

Rachel tapped once on the back of her phone in reply.

“Oh, that’s good. President Burton has arranged for me to send some candy to your office as wedding favors for your coworkers. The candy is on its way here and I’ll have someone drop it off for you once it arrives.”

Wedding favors? she thought in astonishment. Had she heard wrongly? Was Justin actually arranging for her coworkers to receive wedding favors?

“What’s wrong?” Hans piped up opposite her.

As she looked into his bright eyes, she felt inexplicably bitter. Nonetheless, she simply tapped on her phone once more and hung up after a moment.

“What’s wrong?” he repeated. “Why do you look so upset?”

While forcing herself to be calm, Rachel shook her head. *Nothing*, she signed. *It’s just that I’m needed back at the office and can’t accompany you anymore.*

“Oh! That’s okay, go back to work then. I don’t need you to keep me company.” With a sigh of relief, Hans slouched in his chair with a smile. “I’ll just sit here for a bit before heading home. I’ll look for you on another day.”

Okay. After she nodded, she stood up only for him to stop her.

“Haven’t you forgotten something?”

Rachel paused and looked at Hans uncomprehendingly. *What?* she asked.

He waved his cell phone at her. “Aren’t you going to leave me with a way to contact you?”

For some reason, or maybe due to the glaring afternoon sun, his smile was so brilliant that it felt like he was pulling her from the brink of hell back into the world.

A few minutes later, still seated next to the window, Hans relaxed when he saw that the WhatsApp number she gave him was valid. Then, he put his phone down in relief. He couldn't help smiling as he picked up his coffee cup and looked out of the window to see her returning to the library.

Rachel was still awkward and silly in a cute way just like all those years ago.

Meanwhile, she was surrounded by her coworkers once she returned to the office.

"I can't believe you didn't say a word, Rachel!"

"I know! So secretive."

"It must be because your husband is rich and handsome, isn't it?"

"Don't hide him! Bring him here for us to look at him sometime."

As she was bombarded by questions of all sorts, Rachel stared at her coworkers in befuddlement.

Since she couldn't speak, she rarely interacted with them. While they weren't hard to get along with, she wasn't exactly close to them either and it was truly her first time being swarmed like that by them.

"Rachel must have married well. Look at how her husband had someone send us wedding favors. How sweet!"

Immediately after her colleague had said those words, Rachel spotted favor boxes on the nearby desks. Those red and intricately carved wooden boxes were elegant and classy.

She immediately understood what was going on in an instant.

The person in charge of distributing the favors was a man in a suit. He had a straight posture and wore the look of an assistant, but it was Rachel's first time seeing him.

After he finished distributing the boxes, he asked in an extremely deferential manner, "Where do I leave the leftovers, Mrs. Burton? Assistant Beckham had me bring some extra over just in case."

All at once, her coworkers' voices lowered as they stared at her in envy.

Their eyes on her made her feel uneasy, but she forced herself to be calm and pointed to her own workstation. *Just leave it there.*

The man who had brought the wedding favors immediately nodded and he dropped the remaining boxes on her desk before saying, "If there's nothing else you need, Mrs. Burton, I'll take my leave now."

Rachel quickly thanked him, hoping he would leave sooner.

The moment he left, the atmosphere in the office minutely changed. As they stood around the office, her coworkers exchanged glances with all sorts of expressions.

From a corner, someone piped up, "Let's wish Rachel a happy marriage!"

Once the dam was broken, wishes of 'Happy marriage!' was thrown at Rachel from all four corners of the floor.

Even though she forced herself to smile in gratitude, a sense of uneasiness was brewing in her heart as she thought, *What on earth is Justin up to?*