

The Marvelous Elijah's Return By Rever Chapter 51

Chapter 51

A Pent

A Rat

Running his fingers in his hair, Elijah paced slowly around the room with his phone pressed against his ear as he said, "Yeah, morning, Ryan." As he walked into the room of the hotel suite, Rookie moved his lips to speak, but he froze, staring at Ryan sitting on the edge of the bed when he heard him say, "Boss, week three report," "I am listening," Elijah answered, pausing in the middle of the room. "This week, Bryan Check met up with Mr. Adams, President of the Light world company, Mrs. D'Alencias, CEO of Caelum Technologies, and Mr. David Rossi, chairman of Rossi Industries. We investigated these three for suspicious activity in their businesses, but they are clean..." Ryan said, eyeing Rookie when he sat by him. Allowing those words to sink in his thoughts, Elijah began pacing again as he muttered under his breath, "Clean?"

Feeling

uneasy by his boss's tone and question, Ryan paused, putting the call on speaker for Rookie to hear, and said, "We have been following Bryan for three weeks boss, and most of the business-wise interaction he has had has been with honest businessmen. Nothing that would raise red flags or warrant attention..." "Though his social life is a mess... the man lives lavishly, with constant women and fancy occasions... No wonder he's so damn famous..." Rookie commented with a smirk, causing the rest of the conversation to go dead.

Eyes still focused on the carpet, Elijah let out a huff, and then faintly smiled at Rookie's statement. He shook his head and chuckled to himself, before saying, "Anything suspicious in his personal life?"

Ryan took his time thinking about it. He tapped his finger against his temple, running it through his hair, and sighed heavily, "His grandfather seems to be a hardworking businessman, but his family situation isn't exactly easy. I can't find anything about his relationship with his father and that side of his family..."

"I did some digging, and it seems he tried to bury that part of his past, but nothing came up. It's all just a mystery to me..." Rookie replied, scratching behind his ears. Suddenly a second call interfered with the conversation, and Elijah looked at his phone screen to see the name,

“Jerome” flashing on the caller ID. Taking a deep breath, Elijah accepted the call, and put the phone to his ear, letting out a heavy sigh and then said, “J, what’s up?” “I found a rat sniffing around the motel, boss. What should I do with it?” Jerome responded with a low, but deadly tone.

“Who are you guys?! Untie me now!” A manly voice screamed in the background.

Silence on the line only lasted a second before Elijah heard the sound of a slap and then Dice’s voice, “If you are not willing to tell us why the fuck you have been snooping around the motel

for two weeks now, we’ll just keep beating the shit outta your ass till you talk!”

The man screamed again, this time followed by another slap, and Elijah flinched and then listened as Jerome said, “Boss, this rat is squealing too much, and it’s annoying. What should we do with it?”

“Where are you guys?” Elijah asked while pinching the bridge of his nose. “I will text you the address of our location.” Before Elijah could drop the call, he heard the man shout, “You can’t just kidnap someone in broad daylight—”

Sighing, Elijah canceled the call and then dialed Ryan back, “Hey, thanks for the info. Keep me updated if you guys find out more.”

“Yes, boss!” Ryan uttered from the other end of the call.

The motel lobby was silent with James and Matt relaxing on the couch, and Peach reading a book on the other sofa.

When she heard the sound of footsteps, she raised her gaze, and to see Elijah, walking into the lobby, she hastily pushed the book over her eyes, covering her face.

After the last incident, they had worsened from avoiding each other to not saying more than ten words to each other a day, and Elijah had let her be because it wasn’t something he wanted to talk about either.

“Hey,” Elijah said as he walked past her. “Hi,” Peach whispered, not taking her eyes off her book as her heart pounded by the feeling of his presence.

A few steps later, Elijah stopped, causing Peach to raise her gaze back up, but then lowered it quickly, blushing slightly as she stared at the page.

“Let’s go,” Elijah said, his eyes fixed on Matt.

Although he was confused by his boss's request, Matt stood up nonetheless, grabbed his coat, and followed Elijah out of the motel.

A lot was running through his mind, but Matt kept his silence until he and Elijah were seated in the car, and Elijah turned on his car engine.

"Is something wrong?" Matt asked, breaking the silence between them. "No," Elijah stated calmly, backing the car out of the parking lot. "Well, I'm not sure." After Elijah drove away, leaving their motel complex behind, Matt spoke quietly, "So where are we going?"

"Well, Jerome called," Elijah replied, not looking at him, his hand rubbing against the steering wheel

"He finally used your number after the hospital. But why?"

"He found a rat,"

"Huh?"

Those words left Matt in a state of confusion. He watched Elijah drive for a moment before asking out loud, "A what?"

"Someone was snooping at the motel..." Elijah said, glancing at Matt briefly before looking back at the road again. "What?! Who?"

"I don't know,"

The car was silent for a moment longer as they entered traffic. But Matt finally broke it, "Wait... How did Jerome manage to sniff out and catch a rat? Did you order him to watch the motel?"

The lights turned red, and Elijah immediately slammed on the break, turning to glare at Matt and saying, "Honestly, I don't know. I took Jerome and Dice's numbers, guessing that I would be the first to make the call if I needed them. But I never expected to hear from him instead, claiming to have a captive that I don't know!" Hearing the agitation in Elijah's words, Matt nodded in understanding. After a short moment of silence, Matt spoke, breaking the tension, "So where are we going?"

"An abandoned warehouse on Route 66," Elijah said as the light turned green, driving forward

They didn't say anything after that as both of them fell into another uneasy silence. But Matt couldn't help looking at Elijah as he thought, 'So let me get this straight ... you get a call from Jerome, after total silence for days, telling you that he got a suspi

cious person as a prisoner, and we are just driving to the territory of a bunch of robbers without thinking this through. Right ... We are fucked!

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Chapter 52

Chapter 52

Annan livea toilip Alter an daoin plus drive, klijali pulled into a small dearing. *Getting out of his car*, Elijah and Mali sacert at holl warehouse in front of them, and how *deserted* th is *area was*,

6, N's not too late to get back into the car," Mall *whispered, gesturing to the car* behind h arus "don't think it's sale to walk to the warehouse..."

Parung Matt on the back, Elijah smiled and teased, "*Grow some backbone, man*"

't have a backbone. I'm just worried about your safety. Your father *will not* be happy *with my performance* if a bullet or knife strikes through your heart. *Matt thought to himself*, k eeping quint about his concerns. 'I don't want this to go South, boss,

Waking his head lightly, Elijah pulled out his phone, *scrolled through his contact*, and No pped at Jerome's number, dialing it without hesitation,

The phone rang twice before there was a click and Jerome *answered*, "Hey, boss."

SEN

"I'm outside. Come out," Elijah ordered calmly, his eyes scanning the surrounding area.

The lime went quiet for a time that felt too long to Elijah, and he eyed Matt, feeling conte mpleted because of his man's warning and his own desire to figure out what was going

Finally, a sound from the phone speaker made Elijah look back at the warehouse door, seeing tie door lift

"Poss," Matt *whispered*, standing his ground to stay alert, knowing that they were in foreign frrritory and that whoever had opened the door was either a friend or foe.

Finally, when the door was up and Jerome abruptly ended the call, Elijah saw men, robu st, tall, short, and muscular guys, walking out of the door one step at a time.

And when the last guy stepped out, Elijah could guess that they were close to sixty men, and when he eyed Matt, he could see the look of composure on his face and yet stress in his eyes as he clenched his fists, "Boss, this will be the best time to get into the car, now!" Matt whispered, yet his voice was firm, but his eyes showed his fear.

Studying the faces of these men and how their hands were positioned in their front, Elijah's brows snapped in concentration, and then said, "No, wait..."

Suddenly, Dice made his way ahead of all the men and approached Elijah, his expression unreadable and serious,

When he stopped in front of Elijah, two steps away, both men looked into each other's eyes, holding intense eye contact, and even though their eyes seemed like they were screaming at each other, there seemed to be a calmness in between them, and neither one moved.

At first, Elijah simply kept staring at Dice, not blinking an eyelash, until eventually, Dice spoke, "You came to a remote area with no sense of danger and trusted my son's words blindly... I thought you were smart,"

A smirk appeared on Elijah's lips upon hearing those words, and as soon as the smile grew larger, he chuckled softly and then said, "It seemed like I was right."

The grin still lingered on his face, but his eyes told Dice that it wasn't sarcasm, and he watched that smile softly fade as Elijah said, "I am willing to risk myself by giving you guys the benefits of the doubt and come here, but if I go missing or let say dead, I bet it wouldn't be fun for you guys to have the chief of police on your asses..." His words left everyone speechless, including Matt, who did not know where his boss was going with this bluff, and yet still kept his expression passive as he watched the scene unfold before him.

Dice, however, was surprised as well, but he did not show it in the slightest. But before he could utter a word, Elijah continued, "You don't know how much hell I can rain on all of your asses from beyond the grave or tied in some dark, smelling room. It wouldn't be pretty for all of you, truth be told."

"You sound like death doesn't scare you... because you are staring right in the eyes of it and not the slightest bit concerned that your soul can get snatched anytime with just one word... actually two words, 'Kill him.'" Dice uttered firmly, staring hard at Elijah, who smirked once again as he lifted his chin slightly. "A man lives to die. That is the only

thing that is fixed in his life. So why fear death when you are going to die someday, anyway?"

"Hmm, make sense."

Suddenly, one of the men snapped his brows and said, "See! I told you guys this guy can't be trusted... He has a connection with the police!!"

"Shut up, Rick!" Jerome said angrily, glaring at Rick who sealed his lips together instantly.

Sighing, Dice looked back at his men, seeing a sense of worry and concern painted across each of their faces. He then glanced back over at Elijah, his eyebrows raising slightly. "Why are you getting involved with a bunch of robbers, if you have the police at your back?" Dice inquired, sounding suspicious as he studied Elijah's facial expressions. "To have the best of both worlds... I mean the police can not kidnap someone for me, can they?" Elijah questioned nonchalantly,

The men's expressions softened after those words and Larry looked at Rick and said, "This guy is dangerous and clever. I see why the boss and young boss are so into working with him, and I approve of him... I like his boldness."

"Well, I do see what they see in him... Plus, the boss said that he made a good offer of one hundred thousand dollars to us... so I don't mind working for him."

Watching the faces of the men whispering, Elijah then focused back on Dice and said, "So what now... Are you guys going to kill me, kidnap me, beat the shit out of me, or tell me about

this rat you guys caught?" His words made all the men snap their heads back to Elijah, eyes wide open and jaws hanging loose, shocked by his statement.

enter

"Which one of those is going to happen?!" Elijah asked after a long moment of silence. Suddenly, Dice smirked and said in a loud voice, "Well, I wanted you to meet the entire crew and for them to see their new leader... the man that their boss and his son would boldly bow to because of his dignity and honor... The man that they are proud to be a part of... And most of all, the man who is also part of our family now." At last, Matt could finally breathe, feeling

relieved that they weren't going to hurt Elijah, though he still stood in his place, watching everything unfold. "Men, Elijah... Elijah, the men!" Dice yelled, catching everyone's attention. "We are at your service, Boss Elijah!" All the men said almost in unison, bowing their heads to Elijah in respect. When Dice extended his hands to shake Elijah's hand, Elijah grabbed his wrist and pulled him into a hug, tapping him three times on the back before releasing him. "So, what do you have for me, concerning the rat?" Elijah asked, folding his arms against his chest as he observed the men. "Well. The guy confessed after a little bit of conversation with him," Dice said with a pleased smile, causing Elijah to look down at his bruised knuckles, 2

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Chapter 53

A death wish

There was a long pause as Dice stared calmly at Elijah, his expression blank and emotionless, not breaking eye contact with him.

"You got some powerful people on your ass," Dice remarked, crossing his arms against his chest, waiting for Elijah's reaction. "Why?"

Elijah didn't budge as he stared back at Dice, not saying a word, and he didn't give anything away, nor gave any hint to Dice as to what he was feeling by those words. "The Hayes... the rat works for the Hayes family, mainly Dean Hayes." Dice paused again for another second, making sure his words were completely understood.

Silently, Elijah eyed Matt, seeing the look of concern and worry etched on his features, and he then shifted his gaze over at Dice.

A faint frown surfaced on Rick's lips as he looked at Larry and mumbled, "Didn't the news say that Melina's ex-husband is a worthless stay-at-home husband with nothing to his name except his desire to leech off her wealth, so how is this guy before us the same man on the news."

"I'm not sure. Our new leader does not have the appearance of a loser... In fact, I think he's playing us all, and there is more to him... What secrets do you think he's hiding?" Larry whispered, not moving his eyes off Elijah.

A brief silence followed his words and when he eyed Rick, his partner finally mumbled, "I don't know. But what troubles me is why he's putting himself at risk by choosing such enemies like the Hayes family,"

"Maybe he got a death wish." Barron teased from the back, listening in on the two conversations

"Or maybe he's a worthy opponent for such a powerful family," Dickson said, and all three men looked sideways at him with an expression that clearly asked, "Are you okay?!" "How long has Jerome been watching the motel?" Elijah wondered, trying to read Dice carefully. "Why was he doing so?" "Since he got out of the hospital. We didn't get a call from you, so he decided to check up on you, but when he got to the motel a few days ago, that's when he noticed Vlad, snooping around the front of the building."

"And you didn't mention this until now... Why?" Elijah raised one of his eyebrows and asked Dice, not wanting to trust a word he was being told.

Dice sighed deeply, and looked down, hesitating, unable to look directly at Elijah without flinching, and then he said, "We wanted to make sure that he was a threat... Well, we know that he is dangerous generally... but we wanted to know how much of a threat he was to you."

"He's dangerous..." Elijah stated bluntly, looking at Matt as he did so. Raising his gaze, Dice met Elijah's eyes with a dead – serious expression and said, "I guess you

don't know about the underground world of Syldavia. I know Vlad, and he's not just a simple watchdog. He is also an underdog that will do whatever is requested for the right price... including a kill order."

Silence followed those words, and after a while, Elijah slowly lowered his head and closed his eyes, thinking things through. Then, opening them again, he said, "What was his order from Dean?"

"To investigate you. He said Dean is suspicious of you, and he wants to find out more about just who you are. your every move at the motel was reported back to Dean by Vlad," Dice explained calmly

His Index finger subconsciously stroked his lips as Elijah took in those words, thinking about them silently, and eventually, he nodded his head and murmured, "Okay. Thanks for letting me know. I appreciate you guys helping me out so far." "No problem, boss! Anytime you need backup, don't hesitate to ask," Dice replied with a warm smile, flashing Elijah his teeth.

After nodding faintly, Elijah turned towards his car but stopped when Dice asked, "You are leaving?"

"Is there more?" Elijah questioned, glancing toward Matt, and then returned his gaze to Dice.

"What do we do with Vlad? Do you want to see him?"

"No... Release him and keep an eye on him. Report back to me about his movement."

There was a brief pause, and then Elijah met Dice's gaze and asked, "Does he know who you guys work for?"

"No, we blindfolded him and never mentioned your name during our little conversation." Dice replied honestly

With a slight nod, he gave a faint smile and said, "Good. I will wire some cash into your account today for this new assignment. Put an eagle over Vlad's head and don't let anything slip by you guys. I want to know Dean's next move."

When Dice nodded, Elijah turn back to his car, eyed Matt, and said, "Let's go,"

Quietly, Matt watched Dice, Jerome, and the men with a stiff expression for an intense second before he opened the door and climbed into his vehicle, following behind Elijah, who had already gotten in his car

The ride back to the motel was quiet for a moment as Matt pondered over what just happened, looking out the window with his expression unreadable.

It was at that point that the atmosphere in the car seemed to become tense, and Matt finally spoke up, saying, "Boss, how about next time you don't take such a risk like that again."

Eyeing Matt for a second with confusion and a slight look of annoyance, Elijah smiled sarcastically and replied simply, "Life is about taking risks. It's either take chances or live with regrets... Take it or leave it."

"Well, your life is way important to me!" Matt exclaimed, clenching his fists tightly as he stared at Elijah. "I will take a bullet for you helore you do in un

but two."

Turning his head towards Matt, Elijah remained silent for a moment before he responded in a cold tone, "I know my father is paying you to keep me safe, but-" "I never said that I will take a bullet because of your money and power or your father.... I said that I will take a bullet for you, boss!" Matt interrupted angrily as he glared at Elijah. Letting those words sink in, Elijah kept silent, realizing what Matt meant and knowing that his words were sincere even if he wasn't saying it explicitly. Trust was not something Elijah easily liked to feel for anyone, but at that moment, he saw the truth in

Matt's words and realized that he trusted Matt with his life, which in itself was unusual. "Maybe next time, I would think things through with you befo – jumping into trouble," Elijah commented, staring straight ahead as he drove.

A sense of relief washed over Matt as he heard Elijah's words, and he let out a soft breath as he stared out of the window, feeling satisfied. "That's good to know, boss... I have this feeling that this Dean guy is someone that seemed sketchy, and we might have to be careful with him... He might try to pull something again," Matt continued, turning his head slightly and looking at Elijah.

"When I was with his daughter, he hated the very ground that I walk on, so yeah, I know that his sudden interest in me isn't something good, trust me," Elijah admitted, keeping his eyes on the road as he drove. After a long pause, Elijah's face darkened and his jaw clenched as he mumbled, "A man like Dean is nothing but bad news..."

The calm atmosphere in the motel lobby was interrupted by the sound of the front door, and Peach along with James and Miss Grace's expressions immediately stiffened at the sight of Madam Jewel and Dean, walking into the place.

Closing her book, Peach's heartbeat started to

quicken upon seeing Dean's appearance, the man that inherited most of what her father once owned when her grandfather was alive. The man that her father called, "Brother," turned his back on him during his sick days and refused to help him. Tears settled in Peach's eyes, but she blinked them back, knowing that it was no time to show signs of weakness because if there was one person she didn't trust as much as Madam Jewel, it was her uncle Dean. "Peach, can we talk somewhere private," Dean asked, eyeing James' cold expression towards him and madam Jewel before looking back at the bitter look in his step niece's eyes.

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Chapter 54

Her plans would get ruined

The last time Madam Jewel was here, things quickly escalated, and Peach didn't want to experience it again, and somewhat, she was thankful that Elijah wasn't here since she knew the hostility madam Jewel had toward him.

"Sure, but my mom gets to come." Peach said, calmly staring between Madam Jewel and Dean,

The thought of being alone with these two made her alert, and she didn't want to face them on her own, knowing their temperaments.

"Of course. We came to talk to both you and Grace." *Madam Jewel* with a sweet smile that made Peach more uneasy.

Suddenly, the front door of the motel opened, and Peach felt her heart leap into her throat as she watched Elijah and Matt, walking into the lobby.

His gaze resting on Dean, Elijah's brows snapped as he blurted out of curiosity, "What's going on here?"

A sense of raw animosity and anger filled Dean's features, keeping steady eye contact with Elijah as he let out, "It's none of your business. Get lost."

"The question was not meant for you," Elijah said, narrowing his eyes slightly and raising an eyebrow. "Peach?"

His voice startled her, making Peach glance sideways to look at *Madam Jewel* and Dean before focusing on Elijah and saying, "Umm, they want to talk with my mother and me."

Silently, Dean read the tension between the two, and then he snorted as his nose flared, and his eyes glared at Elijah as he declared coldly, "What's your deal here, boy, huh?!"

"Uncle Dean," Peach said softly, knowing that things were about to get messy from the way Dean addressed Elijah, and she wanted to defuse the situation somehow.

Turning his cold eyes on his niece, Dean's fist tightened as he said, "Shut up and stay out of this! It doesn't concern you!"

The rise in his voice made the atmosphere in the room tense, and he added intensely with malice, "You should know your manners and not interfere with matters that do not concern

you."

Since her father and grandfather died, Dean was like the head of the Hayes family, and even though she hated Dean for everything he did to them all, she knew how much authority his voice had.

Pouting, Peach glanced away, not wanting to say another word to intensify the situation while *Madam Jewel* just stood there with a cold expression. As Dean turned his focus

back on Elijah, he took a step towards him, looking him dead in the eyes, and said, "Just because my brother is dead, you think you can walk into his wife and daughter's life and use them as you used my daughter?! Why can't you stay away from the Hayes family? Huh? What is your problem, hm?!"

Forcing himself not to show any emotion, Elijah stared silently at Dean for several seconds before responding calmly, "I am a free man, ain't I? What I do and don't do does not concern you,"

"That is some smart mouth you have there..." Dean commented with obvious disdain and disgust in his tone. "Look at me... Do you think that I have the patience to tolerate such an obnoxious piece of shit like you!? How about you disappear before you get yourself hurt, huh?"

With those words, Dean stepped forward again as the corner of Elijah's lips curled into a sneer, and Matt tensed as he hesitated to act, waiting for his boss to react.

"What're you smiling about, huh," Dean scoffed, suddenly grabbing Elijah's shirt and jerking him closer and growling, "I don't like you, boy... not one bit, and if you keep making noise around here, I will cut you down to size myself!!" Looking away from Dean's eyes, Elijah looked at his clothes tightly in his grip and casually said, "You are ruining my shirt."

The calmness in his tone sent Dean's anger boiling, and he yelled at him again, "Don't get fucking sassy with me, I warned you!"

Both Matt and James' expressions immediately hardened at the sight of Dean that closed to Elijah and they prepared themselves in case Dean decides to do something irrational, but the calmness from their boss left them hesitating.

"Uncle Dean!" Peach cried out in panic, and the tension in the room grew heavier.

Worried that Dean would get physical with Elijah, Miss Grace rushed over to him and said, "Please, let him go, Dean... Please!!"

The calmness in Elijah's eyes didn't change, and his face remained indifferent as his gaze remained on Dean's crazy eyes. The fact that all Vlad had reported back to him about Elijah was that he spent most of his time in the motel and didn't interact with others outside was frustrating to Dean because he thought by now he would have an idea to take down Elijah.

But not knowing anything important about him was killing Dean inside as he thought, 'How can someone be so useless that their life has nothing to offer or to ruin. Just how worthless can he be...?'

Seeing Dean struggling to hold himself together and unable to stop his hands from shaking as he held Elijah's clothes, Madam Jewel decided to intervene and said, "Okay, Dean, you have said enough,"

Slowly, Dean's grip on Elijah loosened up and he backed off slightly as he glared at him, not too convinced that there wasn't more to Elijah than meets the eye.

Shaking her head, Madam Jewel turned to eyed Elijah with a dead stare before looking over at Miss Grace and saying, "Where can we talk that is free of prying ears?" With an apologetic expression, Peach stared at Elijah and pouted as her heart ached at his rumpled shirt.

For a moment, he locked eyes with her, and then he walked past Dean and Madam Jewel

without uttering a word as he left the lobby, heading to his room.

Soon, Matt and James followed after him, leaving the remaining people behind in silence, and after a moment, Peach looked at Dean, annoyed at him for his behavior, and said, "You didn't have to be so rude to Elijah. How you handle the situation was totally unness-"

Before the rest of her words could leave her lips, Dean raised his hand and viciously let his palm slam against her cheek, cutting the corner of her lips and knocking the breath out of her.

"Dean!" Madam Jewel gasped in shock.

Feeling blood trickle down her chin, Peach held back the tears in her eyelids and aggressively wiped her lips, knowing herself that this was the last act that destroyed the relationship that she shared with the Hayes.

This was the moment she never wanted to feel weak or helpless ever again. She wanted more than just to stay silent or stay away and hope that they leave her and her mother alone because she now knew they were never going to let her and her mother be.

"That was so uncalled for?!" Miss Grace exclaimed angrily at Dean who was breathing heavily and glaring at him with rage. "Why would you do such a thing to my daughter?!" "Children are not only for parents to train... You should know that since you step out of line too." Dean said, venom dripping from every single word that he spat out. "What is that supposed to mean, Dean!" Miss Grace cried in confusion. Not caring to explain his desire to do that to Peach since his wife told him that Miss Grace laid a hand on Melina, he simply kept his silence.

Glaring at Dean, Peach clenched her teeth, and her heart ached at the sight of him, trying so hard to control herself, not wanting to make a big deal out of the situation before her mother got hurt because of her poor health. "It's fine, mama." Peach said with a slight smile. "No, it's not, honey! You are bleeding!" Miss Grace cried, her heart-shattering at the sight of her daughter injured. Wiping the blood off her lip, Peach shook her head, ignoring the pain in her jaw, and insisted, "It'll heal. Let's not argue, it won't help anything right now." Then she looked back at Madam Jewel and asked, "What did you guys want to talk to me about?"

Her voice snapped Madam Jewel out of her trance, and she cleared her throat, glaring at Dean before she spoke quietly, "Your grandfather's death anniversary is coming two weeks from now, and there will be a party at the mansion to celebrate the life he lived..."

Pausing as a sense of worry overtook Madam Jewel that Peach wouldn't agree to come because of the incident that just happened and her plans would get ruined, Madam Jewel sighed and then said, "Will you pay your respect to your grandfather by coming?". The words, "Respect" and "Grandfather," were the only thing in that entire sentence that Peach cared about, and even though she knew a nest of Hayes meant trouble for her and her mother, she ignored her hate and said, "Sure. I will be there."

"Huh?!" Madam Jewel asked in shock. Then she hastily reached into her bag and took out a fancy black and gold invitation and handed it over to Peach. 1

Reluctantly, Peach read the elegant script on the invitation and felt something tighten in her stomach when she looked back at Madam Jewel and asked, "Is that all you guys came for?"

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Chapter 55

Don't hate me

Eyeing her son, Madam Jewel gave him a cold stare and then said, "No, that's all... I hope that you will honor your word and show up because your grandfather at least deserves such reverence from you."

The dull pain in Peach's cheek still pissed her off, but she ignored it as the memories of her grandfather flashed before her eyes, and her lips trembled as she tried to cage her emotions and said, "Sure. For my grandfather, I can tolerate coming."

The sight of Madam Jewel and Dean, the longer they stood in her face made Peach feel incredibly uncomfortable, and she blinked back her tears, averted her gaze, and stared down at the invitation.

“If that is all, I would like to attend to my daughter’s wound,” Miss Grace said in annoyance, her eyes fixed upon Dean as she continued speaking quietly. “You guys can see yourself out.” Unexpectedly, Madam Jewel walked over to Peach, taking her hands in her grips, startling her with the sudden contact that caused her to look at her in surprise. Madam Jewel smiled as she gently squeezed her palms and whispered, “I am so sorry for what your uncle did. please don’t hold it to heart. Right now, as such a devastating time approaches us, your grandfather would want to look from the great beyond and see as altogether, even for just one night.”

Subconsciously, the tears she had been fighting to hold back slowly slid down her cheeks, but she quickly wiped them away and forced a small smile onto her face, nodding lightly to Madam Jewel

Smiling back, Madam Jewel stepped away from Peach, fixing her eyes on Miss Grace, and said, “Forgive my son. I know how much Albert valued his daughter and how his hands were never raised against her. So I understand why her uncle’s discipline was so harsh.”

‘Masking your criticism of my upbringing and my parents with words that hides your true intentions. You’re truly despicable.’ Peach thought to herself, looking at the smile on Madam Jewel’s face.

Nodding politely, Miss Grace refused to utter a word because the emotions in her chest were causing her to choke, knowing that there was no sincerity in those vain words of hers.

“Well, Dean and I will take our leave... We don’t want to take up any more of your valuable time,” Madam Jewel said, staring at Dean for a moment before walking past him. Silently, he looked at Peach, his gaze resting on the deep cut in the corner of her lips and the dried bloodstain on her skin, and then he swallowed nervously.

“Well...” Dean said, meeting her cold and angry expression, unsure how to say goodbye.

Finally, he gave up, turned around, and stalked towards the exit, throwing one final glance over his shoulder, seeing Peaches empty, blank eyes staring back at him before he pushed the door open and walked out. When the door shut, Peach let out a shaky breath, emotions came rushing through her like an

unstoppable storm, and a few seconds later, tears started spilling from her eyes as her bottom lip quivered and she covered her mouth, muffling her crying.

“Peach... honey...” She heard Miss Grace call out worriedly, making her tearful eyes look up at her mother.

“I’m fine, mama... I think I just need space right now... Don’t come to my room, please.” Peach softly pleaded, wiping her nose with the back of her hands.

Her worried eyes studied her daughter for a second before Miss Grace nodded, giving her a comforting smile, even though her heart was hurting deeply, and she said, “Alright, sweetheart.”

After forcing a weak smile, Peach turned away from her mother and walked off, fighting to get a grip on her body.

Halfway into the corridor, she stopped at the sight of Elijah coming from the opposite direction, and immediately, Peach bowed her head, clapping her hand over her mouth as she walked toward him.

But as she was about to walk past him, he grabbed her arm, yanked it from her face, and turned her around to face him.

Her eyes widened when she saw the coldness in his eyes. He never looked this furious before, and it almost scared her to the core to see the darkness lurking behind his irises.

“What happened to your face?” Elijah asked, staring at her swollen lip and the dried blood.

“Nothing,” Peach responded, turning her head and trying to avoid his gaze, hoping he would stop questioning her because she didn’t have the energy nor the strength to lie.

Placing his hand under her chin, Elijah lifted her head and forced Peach to meet his furious eyes which were now staring at her in concern. “What happened to your face, Peach?... Was it Jewel or Dean?!” Elijah demanded, anger lashing inside him.

A look of hesitation flitted across Peach’s face and after a moment, she answered reluctantly, “I’m fine. Can we not talk about this anymore, Elijah?”

His brows furrowed together when he saw the obvious discomfort in her voice, and yet, he said no words, but his intense gaze told her that he wasn’t satisfied with her answer.

“Please, Elijah... Not now.” Peach begged, her eyes pleading.

"It was Dean, wasn't it?!" Elijah uttered, knowing from the bruise she sustained it had to be a manly *force*

Even though Peach didn't answer, her eyes betrayed her and the truth dawned on Elijah.

With the truth came a wave of anger that consumed every last trace of reason inside him. His eyes *narrowed* dangerously, his lips tightly pursed, and his nostrils flared slightly as he pulled Peach closer to him, wrapping his arms around her.

The *comfort* that came through his touch and the warmth of his embrace instantly calmed her *down* as she wrapped her arms around him and hugged him back while feeling safe and secure.

Grabbing his shirt tightly as she buried her face in his chest, she breathed in his familiar masculine scent and whispered, "I hate this... I hate this life... I hate the way they look down on me, I hate how much mustering up courage I have to do to live like this..."

Hugging her tighter, Elijah caressed her hair softly, and then Peach softly said, "I hate them, Elijah. I despise them with every fiber of my being. Why does their presence make me feel like I can't breathe properly?"

Without saying a word, he allowed her to vent her frustrations and not interrupt her, and instead, he kept caressing her hair softly.

Raising his gaze, he locked eyes with Miss Grace a few distances away from them, looking at her daughter with pity in her eyes and her hand clapped over her mouth. 'Remember what you said here today, and don't hate me when I start to tear apart the Hayes family and bring them down.' Elijah silently vowed in his mind, as he closed his eyes and tightened his hold around her.

The moment the silver car came to a stop in the Hayes mansion and Madam Jewel stepped down with her son, she threw Dean a cold glance before walking towards the mansion.

Knowing that she was infuriated, he sighed heavily and followed close behind. After entering the mansion, Madam Jewel stopped in the living room, waited for him to enter, and then lashed out, "What was that, Dean?!" "Mother, I... I am sorry for losing myself!" Dean admitted helplessly, feeling the urge to bow his head in shame.

She glanced sideways at him, narrowing her eyes as anger rose within her, and she blurted out, "We want Peach to trust us... Not to hate us and find a reason to go against us!" "What can she do to us with the states she's in, Mother? It's not like she knows the truth!!" Dean argued furiously.

“Just because a cub is still young doesn’t mean it is not going to grow into something dangerous, and the more we push her, the more she’ll resent us! We cannot afford that!! We are already too far!!” Madam Jewel insisted, her eyes darkening in fury.

Angered that his mother was lashing at him over Peach, Dean scoffed, mumbling, “If the cub is such a threat, then why don’t we hunt it down and end it before it grows into a lioness.”

A frown settled itself between Madam Jewel’s brows and, taking one long stride towards her son, she hissed, “You know the death of Peach could mean we lose everything... All of this will be gone! Why are you acting stupid today! Don’t you think it would have been my first choice if such a high risk wasn’t attached to it?!”

Remembering what his mother meant, Dean’s expression changed drastically from his angry one and became more sympathetic, lowering his head. “I’m sorry for letting my anger blind me.”

“Don’t let pride be your downfall, son. We have to be smart about this. Right now, Peach is helpless and weak, and the sooner we can get her under our control, the better! That goes for Quonine involved. If we let her slip by our fingers, the consequences won’t be pretty!”

As Dean moved his lips to speak, his phone suddenly rang loudly, breaking the quiet atmosphere.

Hastily pulling the phone from his pocket, he frowned at Vlad’s name and accepted the call, placing the device against his ear, saying coldly, “What is it?”