

The Unshackled Queen: Never Say Never Online Free - Chapter: 581

“I’m acquainted with him. I introduced him to Ruby.”

Caught off guard, Ruby swiftly turned around and shot Eliana a hostile look.

“Look, like it or not, we have to clear the air. We can’t risk getting hauled off to the station. Do you understand?”

Addressing the officers, Eliana clarified, “The truth is, we do know him. He’s a private investigator. We hired him to discreetly snap photos of someone at the hotel. I have no qualms about disclosing this.”

With no alternative, Ruby then shared the details of how Eliana had introduced her to the man.

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When it was over, Ruby grumbled at Eliana, “I told you I didn’t want to come, but you kept pushing me. Now look what’s happened.”

The officers, realizing the situation didn’t directly involve them and witnessing the ongoing bickering, decided to release the two women.

As they headed back to their rooms, Eliana noted Ruby’s distraction.

“If you’re still pining for him, it’s not too late, you know”

“I don’t have the energy to discuss this with you right now.”

Concerned about the recent turn of events, Ruby tersely responded to Eliana, “Considering what’s just occurred, how can you even think about that? I’m not as calm as you!”

Ruby pushed her door open and retreated to her room. Rolling her eyes, Eliana muttered, “Who says I even care about what you think?”

Approximately thirty minutes later, the police arrived to request cooperation from Hannah and the others for their ongoing investigation.

Officers from the city's police department were also present.

Catching Bryson's nod, Hannah sensed what he meant.

Silently, Hannah trailed after Bryson, awaiting resolution of the matter.

The head of the city's police department, Alfredo Stevenson, summoned his team for the forensic expert's findings, then had Hannah and Bryson take seats outside.

Alfredo, well-acquainted with Bryson, scanned the report before turning to Hannah and remarking, "Based on what we've got, things don't look good for you. If I didn't know Bryson, I'd think you were the culprit."

"Enough with the theatrics. Just tell me what happened," Bryson retorted.

Extinguishing his cigarette, Alfredo exhaled a dense cloud of smoke.

"ALL we found on him was a receipt with your name. The SD card from his camera is missing. Someone might have wanted to erase some photos.

We've done some digging, and it seems someone hired him to snap pictures of you. So, theoretically, Miss Moore, you might have had a motive to accidentally kill him.

Bryson's brow furrowed, prompting Alfredo to lift a hand defensively.

"I'm not accusing her. I'm just speaking logically here."

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At this, Hannah interjected, "When did he die?"

"Last night, around 11 pm," Alfredo replied.

Hannah looked puzzled and turned her gaze to Bryson, who also appeared taken aback.

“That rules her out,” Bryson said, fixing an icy stare on Alfredo.

“We heard someone cry for help at that exact time. I initially thought Hannah was mistaken; we saw two figures in the water. But when we got security to check, nobody was there.”

Alfredo lit another cigarette and glanced at the report.

“Security has corroborated your account. But we can’t dismiss the possibility of her motive. We’ll do our best to solve this quickly. The crime scene will reopen in two days, and if we don’t have a suspect by then, we’re in a tight spot.”

Just then, Lydia, who was standing behind Hannah, blurted out, “Check your phone, Hannah. The top trending news is that a major shareholder of the White Group is under suspicion for murder!”

Upon checking, Hannah found that the news had indeed gone viral. Her brow creased in concern.

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This situation remained under investigation, and given that word had spread, it appears the White Group’s PR department could have mishandled it or been derelict in their duty!

She showed her phone to Alfredo, saying, “The premature release of the resort murder case is damaging the White Group’s reputation. I trust the police will issue a public statement to clarify things.”

Lighting another cigarette, Alfredo responded, “Issuing a statement is simple, but it’s evident someone is trying to tarnish your image.

Any clarification we offer will likely be met with skepticism from the public. We’ll only be able to clear your name once we crack this case.”

Feeling drained, Hannah rubbed her temples. Bryson gave her a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

“I’ll handle the PR fallout, don’t worry about it.”

Just then, a policewoman sprinted towards them.

“Mr. Stevenson! We’ve got a new lead. Our team pulled a cellphone from the water near where the body was discovered!”

Alfredo extinguished his cigarette and suggested, “Let’s go take a look.”

“The dead man’s phone has been waterlogged for over a day. It’s basically useless now. We’ll need our tech team to salvage anything from it.”

An officer laid the damaged phone on the table, remarking, “Saltwater’s corroded it. Several components are damaged. I doubt we’ll extract any clues from this.”

Hannah glanced at the ruined phone and suddenly offered, “Give me a chance, and some time. I might be able to restore it.”

Upon hearing Hannah’s proposition, the police reacted as if she’d spoken of magic.

“No. Outsiders can’t interfere with an ongoing investigation. Besides, you’re a suspect.”

Interrupting, Alfredo turned to Hannah, inquiring, “You’re confident you can repair this?”

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“I can’t promise anything,” Hannah responded, lifting the phone for closer examination.

“But if you give me some time, there’s a chance it can be fixed.

In a subdued tone, an officer cautioned Alfredo, “Mr. Stevenson, she’s a suspect and that’s evidence. Allowing her to touch it is a breach of protocol.”

“Time’s of the essence, and nobody else can fix it. Keep our tech people here to supervise her. She can’t tamper with evidence under our watchful eyes,” Alfredo declared, signaling for them to proceed.

“Bryson, step outside with me for a moment.”

Bryson cast a final glance at Hannah, who was now holding the phone.

After a fleeting eye contact, he followed Alfredo out of the room.

In the hallway, Alfredo lit another cigarette and asked, “Any progress on the matter with your mother?”

Bryson’s face was veiled in shadows, obscuring his expression as he replied, “No, not yet.”

“It’s been ages since that happened. Any evidence that might have existed is probably long gone,” Alfredo noted, taking a drag on his cigarette. He then looked at Bryson with a puzzled expression.

“So, you’re settling down with her? I was starting to think you’d remain a single forever.”

A chilly look from Bryson was his reply. Alfredo shrugged it off, saying, “Just joking. But be careful. You can’t leverage our relationship to navigate this situation.”

“I have no intention of doing so,” Bryson stated softly.

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“She was with me when it happened. She couldn’t possibly be the murderer.”

Alfredo shrugged and went on, “I’ll keep digging. Your girlfriend won’t be wrongly accused.”

Meanwhile, back in the room, Hannah had disassembled the phone, cleaned its components, tested them, and methodically put it all back together.

The observing officers were flabbergasted. Even their tech experts were dumbfounded.

Hannah then connected a USB cable from the repaired phone to a laptop.

A collective breath was held. If this worked, it would be miraculous!

After an agonizing wait, the phone's screen flickered to life!

Someone couldn't help but shout, "It's a miracle! Absolutely incredible!"

Hannah leisurely transferred all the phone's data to the laptop.

Setting the phone down, she used the mouse to open the photo gallery.

In it were countless pictures, some covertly taken and others taken openly. Among them were also recent photos of Bryson.

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As Hannah browsed through the images, the officers behind her scrutinized them as well.

"Stop right there!" a policewoman suddenly exclaimed.

"Scroll upwards a bit!"

Hannah scrolled the photo upwards using the mouse.

Pointing at the laptop screen, the policewoman said, "Notice the timestamp. This is a moonlit beach photo taken around 10 PM the night before last."

Upon closer inspection, Hannah found the policewoman was correct. The man had been alive at that point, confirming that she'd heard his call for help afterward.

Finding no further significant clues in the photos, Hannah clicked open his WhatsApp.

To everyone's dismay, there were no relevant messages. Just as disappointment filled the room, Hannah lifted a finger.

"I can attempt to recover the WhatsApp chat history. Just give me a moment."

Minutes passed as Hannah focused intently on the Laptop, her fingers dancing across the keyboard, yet the chat history remained elusive.

"Having trouble?"

"Recovery might not be possible when phone apps are being managed via computer, right?"

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Hannah quickly typed out a message in a new dialog box, sending the dead man's information to an unknown contact.

"Can you help me recover his WhatsApp conversations?"

A swift reply appeared on the screen.

"Working on it now."

In less than 20 minutes, a new message popped up on the laptop.

"The chat history is back. Take a Look."

Upon reading the message, Hannah reopened the dead man's WhatsApp.

"Something seems off about his last conversation."

Realizing the gravity of her discovery, she promptly stood up and announced, "I'll leave this in your hands."

The police tech officer quickly took a seat and began reviewing the chat logs of the dead man.

“If you fork over another 30@ grand, I’ll let the matter rest and won’t distribute the photo.”

“You snap one photo and I’ve already coughed up 100 grand! Enough is enough! You think you can gouge me like this?”

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“Ma’am, don’t get worked up. This isn’t price gouging. It’s hush money.

The chat abruptly ended there. The following day, a WhatsApp message came through in the evening.

“Available tonight? Meet me at the beach at 10 p.m. I’ll bring the check.”

The dead man responded without hesitation, “Sure, I’ll be there on time!”

Once they had access to his WhatsApp, the police quickly verified Hannah’s account. It was clear she hadn’t been the one communicating with the dead man and had no secondary WhatsApp account.

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Next, they asked everyone in the hotel to show their own WhatsApp accounts for verification.

The moment Hannah exited the restaurant, Bryson approached her.

“What’s the situation?”

“It’s under control. We’ve recovered the WhatsApp conversations and identified the account who was messaging him last night,” Hannah assured him, smiling.

“No need to worry about me.”

Alfredo chimed in jokingly, “You seem quite skilled. How about we exchange contact info? If our tech team hits a snag in the future, I’ll know who to call.”

Hannah glanced at Alfredo and retorted, “Sorry, but if you want me to fix phones, it’s going to cost you.”

Alfredo shook his head and said to Bryson, “No wonder you’re smitten with her. She’s as challenging as you are.”

“Mr. Stevenson, we think we’ve found the individual who was in contact with the dead man via WhatsApp!” A police officer called out.

Tossing his cigarette aside, Alfredo said, “Time to get to work.”

Just as he departed, Hannah’s phone buzzed. It was a call from Jalen.

As soon as she picked up, an enthusiastic voice came through.

“Hannah! Grandpa’s awake!”

Hannah was mildly stunned.

“Really? Get a medical evaluation done on him. I’ll head back as soon as I can!”

“Don’t worry. I’ve had the doctor give Grandpa a thorough examination.

He is recovering well now.”

The soft click of a closing door sounded from Jalen’s end of the line.

“Grandpa just regained consciousness but he’s still frail. He can’t talk to us right now.”

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Jalen’s voice wavered slightly as he added, “I haven’t informed Grandpa about you coming back yet. I’m concerned it might overwhelm him emotionally. I’ll let him know in a few days.”

Hannah responded, “Understood, I’ll drop by when he’s stronger.”

“By the way, how are things on your end?” Jalen asked.

“Our PR department has managed to quiet down the trending issue.”

A N G E L A ‘ s L I B R A R Y

Hannah replied, “The police have identified the suspect. We should be heading back soon.”

Initially anxious, Jalen sighed in relief after hearing Hannah’s words, “Alright, we’ll discuss further when you return.”

After ending the call, Hannah turned to Bryson and said with a sigh, “Looks like I can’t go back to Valmere anytime soon. My grandfather’s just woken up.”

“I heard it just now.”

Bryson tried to soothe her.

“I have business in Hoi Jerry for the next few days, so Grace and I will keep you company.”

Hannah laid her hand on Bryson’s shoulder and grinned.

“You’re the CEO of a major corporation. Planning on marrying into my family to keep me company?”

Bryson, who had been stressed all day, chuckled at Hannah’s light-hearted remark.

“If you want me to marry into your family, that’s fine for me. I don’t mind being a househusband.”

“In your dreams!” Hannah playfully jabbed at Bryson.

Later, they encountered the alleged culprit. Hannah was taken aback.

Ruby?

Everyone in the room seemed stunned, but Declan appeared most shocked of all.

He had recently taken Eliana and her so-called friend on a vacation.

But who would have thought that Eliana's friend was capable of murder?

With her hands bound in handcuffs, Ruby sat sullenly to one side, a far cry from her initial appearance of innocence.

"Damn it? Are you kidding me?" Lydia was incredulous upon seeing Ruby.

"Is it really her?"

When Ruby looked up and locked eyes with Hannah, she mocked, "Feeling satisfied?"

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Perplexed, Hannah furrowed her brows but remained silent...

Alfredo stepped in to clarify, "She confessed to the murder when we showed her the evidence."

"It seems her accomplice blackmailed her for more money, threatening to expose her to Bryson. Afraid and cash-strapped, Ruby lured him to the coast and killed him. She took his phone but couldn't crack the password. So, she tossed it into the sea, thinking she had concealed her crime."

Eliana was shocked that Ruby would go to such extremes over something so minor.

However, her concern was that she'd lost another ally against Hannah.

With the perpetrator identified, police were set to escort Ruby away.

Just then, she requested a private word with Hannah.

Blocking her path, Bryson icily declared, "Not happening."

Ruby sneered, "Oh, Mr. Mitchell, scared I'll spill your dirty little secrets? Or that I'll harm Miss Moore while handcuffed?"

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She then glared at Hannah.

“So, you don’t have the guts to speak with me one-on-one?”

Hannah lightly squeezed Bryson’s arm and reassured him.

“It’s fine.

We’re not alone, and she’s restrained. She can’t harm me.”

Outside on the sandy shore, Ruby kicked at the sand, utterly unfazed by her impending incarceration Hannah watched her, unimpressed.

“You claimed you had something to say?”

Ruby met Hannah’s eyes and grinned.

“You really believe what’s before you?”

Noticing Hannah’s silence, Ruby continued scuffing the sand.

“You think you know Bryson? Believe the Mitchell family is as straightforward as they seem? Has he opened up about his family, his mother’s passing, his sister’s incurable illness from poisoning, the whole Mitchell narrative?”

Hannah calmly responded, “He’s told me all about it.”

Abruptly, Ruby burst into deranged Laughter, tears streaming down her face.

“He’s fooled you! How could he ever tell you the truth? Even the Mitchell family’s public narrative is a lie! Why, you ask?

Because he’s too cowardly to face his own sordid history. Think he’s as innocent as he portrays? I’ll have you know, if you stay with him, you’re on a one-way trip to hell! Just Like me!” Ruby Locked eyes with Hannah.

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Hannah grinned openly.

“I’m already in one hell. What’s another to fear? Ruby Green, if you’re feigning madness to seek a pardon or commutation of your sentence, you’re going about it all wrong.”

Smirking, Ruby said, “Azalea Apartment, Room 6203. The key’s under the carpet. You’ll find something intriguing in there.”

With that, she sprinted toward the sea and leapt in.

Hannah gasped and yelled for help.

When the authorities fished Ruby out, she was unconscious and looked rather pathetic.

Bryson glanced anxiously at Hannah.

“Are you alright?”

Hannah shook her head, her mind racing back to Ruby’s cryptic words.

Alfredo ordered his men to take Ruby away and turned to Hannah.

“What made her jump?”

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Casually, Hannah lied, “She said she’d rather die than get caught, so she jumped into the sea.”

“Understood. The perimeter’s clear. You can leave now. Bryson, I’m off.”

“Sure.”

Still concerned, Bryson asked, “Are you truly okay? Should we go to the hospital?”

With a reassuring pat, Hannah said, “I’m good. No worries. Let’s head back and pack. We need to move downtown.”

“Alright.” Relieved that Hannah seemed fine, Bryson held her hand as they walked away.

Clasping Bryson’s warm hand, Hannah found herself glancing at his profile.

Sensing her silence, Bryson turned to her and asked, “What did Ruby tell you? You seem lost in thought.”

“Nothing much. She only mentioned that she had no desire to harm anyone and that I should be happy now,” Hannah said.

“Could it be that she was emotionally unstable or suffering from mental issues?

Otherwise, why would she choose to leap into the ocean?”

Bryson squeezed Hannah’s hand reassuringly.

“Don’t blame yourself.

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This isn’t your fault.”

“Don’t worry. I’m okay,” Hannah replied.

Once the police lifted the restrictions and departed, Hannah and the rest gathered their belongings and headed toward the city center.

Upon reaching their urban villa, everyone dispersed to their rooms to unpack.

Once in her room, Hannah locked the door and dialed Rocco’s number.

After a couple of rings, the call connected. A subdued voice on the other end inquired, “So you still care to call? Thought you’d forgotten about me.”

“I need to ask you for a favor,” Hannah responded.

The boy on the other side of the call scoffed, “Ah, so you remember me when you need something.”

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“Rocco, my grandfather just regained consciousness. I can’t return to Valmere right now, so I need your help.”

Swayed by Hannah’s pleading tone, Rocco softened.

“What do you need?”

“Visit this apartment and report back anything you find.” Hannah relayed the address she had obtained from Ruby.

Rocco jotted down the address and cautioned, “Be vigilant in Hoijery.

I’ll update you as soon as I find something.”

“Alright. Be careful when you go to her apartment.”

“Okay, you look after yourself first,” Rocco replied.

Descending to the dining area, Hannah noticed two people eating but saw no sign of Bryson.

“Where’s Bryson?” she questioned as she pulled out a chair to sit.

Grace, enjoying her cake, said sweetly, “My brother had urgent business at the company. He had an unexpected project come up, so he left early.”

Given his absence, Hannah turned to Grace and said, “How much do you know about Ruby?”

“What ?”

Grace looked puzzled by the question. She tilted her head and blinked.

“Why do you ask, Hannah?”

“I’m just curious about Bryson’s past. Didn’t he mention that Ruby was his first love?”

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“Well...”

Grace pondered for a moment before admitting, “You know, people around my brother have always claimed that Ruby was his first love.

But my brother himself? He’s never confirmed it.”

“What?”

Lydia’s eyes widened in astonishment.

“Wait a minute, didn’t you assure me she was Mr. Mitchell’s ex-girlfriend? And that Bryson never refuted their past relationship?”

Grace scratched her head, visibly uneasy.

“Well, there are some complexities here... Details I’m not sure how to clarify for you.”

Hannah scrutinized Grace’s expression, reminded of something Ruby had mentioned before departing.

“Look, Grace, there are questions I’d rather not put to Bryson. I don’t want to jeopardize our trust. But clarity is essential. I need to know the real story.”

Facing the earnest stares from both Hannah and Lydia, Grace finally relented.

“I’ll tell you the truth!”

Nervously clutching the hem of her shirt, Grace said, “When my brother was studying overseas, Ruby was always around him. They had an unspoken agreement about their relationship. My brother graduated, returned to Valmere, and she followed him. Her family’s reputation was pretty significant here at that time. But after coming back...”

Grace hesitated before meeting Hannah’s eyes.

“Things between them got weird. For a long time, he seemed uncomfortable around her.

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Despite that, he’d bring her along to business functions. I’d tag along too, and no one questioned that Ruby was his girlfriend. Bryson never corrected them. However, at a later point, the Green family faced an unexpected financial crisis, compelling Ruby and her family to relocate overseas.”

Grace cleared her throat and glanced apologetically at Lydia.

“So, about misleading you earlier... I’m sorry. I made it sound like she moved abroad because Bryson didn’t want to split up. The truth is, when he found out she was leaving, he didn’t even bother to say goodbye. That was their abrupt end.”

Lydia gave Grace a gentle pat on the shoulder.

“You naughty girl!

Why would you deceive us if it wasn’t a big deal to talk about?”

“Well...”

Grace tapped her nose and said hesitantly, “My brother was right in the thick of it back then. He told me to just let the rumors spread, no matter what people believed.”

Her first love had been a fake...

