

# The Unshackled Queen: Never Say Never Online Free

## Chapter: 196

The previous night's harrowing ordeal remained an unspoken presence between the two, a tacit understanding that they skirted around.

It wasn't until some time had elapsed that the door inched open, and a fetching head peered inside.

"Hannah, may I enter?"

Grace's presence brought a smile to Hannah's face and she warmly replied, "Please, come in. No need to linger at the threshold."

"Hannah, what happened to you? I discovered you were missing from the hotel today, and my brother was unreachable by phone. I was absolutely terrified!"

With teary eyes, Grace sidled up to Hannah's bedside, clutching her hand. Her gaze fell upon the injury on Hannah's arm, and she dissolved into tears.

"Hannah, your hand is so badly hurt!"

“My dear, please don’t cry.”

In a feeble voice, Hannah consoled Grace, “If you fall ill because of me, I’ll be overcome with guilt.”

Amidst her sobs, Grace turned to Bryson, seeking answers.

“Bryson, what transpired last night? How did Hannah get injured?”

“It happened like this,” Hannah said with a grin.

“When you went back to the hotel last night, Mr. Mitchell invited me to a dinner event. A server mishandled the wine, causing a bottle to tumble and break near me. I got a minor cut on my arm, but it’s no big deal.”

Hannah looked somewhat delicate as she spoke to Grace, a soft smile gracing her lips.

“The cut isn’t severe. No need to fuss over me.”

Grace bought into the slightly awkward fib without question. She shot Bryson a disapproving look.

“Bryson, you asked Hannah to the dinner.

How could you let this happen to her?”

She understood that Hannah was downplaying the situation to keep her from worrying.

Bryson's voice was soft yet filled with warmth.

"I apologize for the oversight. It won't happen again."

Grace averted her eyes and grinned, puffing her cheeks as she moved toward Hannah.

"Can we consider my brother's apology and move on, Hannah?"

"I wasn't blaming him to begin with." Touched by Grace's naive charm, Hannah smiled and gently pinched her cheek.

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On the way, Hannah glanced at the passing streetlights and said, "You really don't need to escort me to the hospital, Mr. Mitchell. I'm a physician, you know, and this wound is minor."

Bryson remained silent, not uttering a single syllable.

Hannah turned and caught sight of Bryson's somewhat icy expression, belatedly grasping that he appeared annoyed.

Why was he irritated?

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She found herself confused. In Muvrand, he'd been perfectly amiable, but now he seemed detached and chilly.

Since Bryson appeared uninterested in conversation, Hannah chose to remain silent too, tilting her head to one side and drifting off to sleep.

By the time Bryson pulled up beneath Hannah's apartment, she was already lost in slumber, her head resting against the car window.

Turning his head, he saw her sleeping form and his previously frigid expression seemed to falter.

His eyes lingered on Hannah's tranquil face, and he found himself compelled to gently sweep a stray lock of hair from her forehead.

Even his tender touch was enough to rouse Hannah, her eyelashes fluttering as she awoke.

Blearily, she noticed Bryson pulling his hand back.

Hannah peered out the car window at the familiar setting of her home.

Realizing that he had indeed paid heed to her words, a gentle smile spread across her lips.

Hearing her soft laughter, Bryson turned his head to look at her.

Lifting her gaze, Hannah's eyes met Bryson's, a faint smile dancing in her eyes.

"Ahem."

Slightly embarrassed, Hannah cleared her throat, opened the car door, and got off.

"I appreciate the ride, Mr. Mitchell. I'll head inside now."

Watching Hannah almost dash away, Bryson felt his spirits oddly lifting.

The earlier frustration he'd felt about her injury seemed to vanish, brightening his heart.

The next morning, before Hannah was fully awake, her phone buzzed with an urgent call from Lydia.

"Hannah, have we even remained friends? You returned home and didn't bother to notify me! You got injured and kept me in the dark. Have you decided you don't need your only friend anymore?"

In the early morning, Hannah was nearly bowled over by Lydia's booming voice through the phone.

"Lydia, calling you did cross my mind. But I touched down at 1 a.m.

Didn't want to wake you."

From the other side of the line, Lydia chuckled smugly, "Well, get to your front door. Hurry up!"

"What?"

Suddenly snapping to full awareness, Hannah carried her phone into the living room and swung open the front door. To her surprise, there stood Lydia, arms full of breakfast.

“Move aside!”

Unconcerned with appearances, Lydia bustled in, unloading milk, bread, and sandwiches onto the dining table. She then turned to face Hannah, hand outstretched.

“Show me where you’re hurt.”

“It’s nothing major, just a few scrapes really.” Touching the bandage on her arm, Hannah sat down at the dining table.

“You’re the best, Lydia. You even brought me breakfast.”

Tickled by the compliment, Lydia let out a giddy laugh. Then, holding up a slice of bread, she pointed at Hannah.

“Enough distractions.

Tell me everything! What went down in Muvrand? How’d you get those scrapes?”

Not wanting to hold back from her friend, Hannah shared the Muvrand story while munching on her breakfast.

“Are you kidding me?!”

Expecting Lydia’s outburst, Hannah reclined in her chair and Looked up at her friend.

“What’s the big deal? I’m okay, aren’t I?”

“You pulled out guns! And you say you’re fine?” Lydia’s gaze met Hannah’s, examining her intently for a few moments before hesitantly asking, “So, are those nightmares still haunting you?”

Hannah looked down, shaking her head.

“Oddly enough, no nightmares this time. Falling into the water might have something to do with it.

Lydia’s brow furrowed in puzzlement.

“So you think it wasn’t Declan who saved you, but maybe Bryson? Be cautious, Hannah. You’ve jumped to conclusions before. Could you be wrong this time too?”

The memory of plunging into the sea and being rescued by Bryson felt incredibly vivid.

Still, Hannah wasn’t fully convinced.

“I’ll find a chance to ask him.”

“Isn’t the chance staring us right in the face?” Lydia mixed her oatmeal in deep thought.

“The Mitchell family is organizing a grand dinner at the end of the month, with Valmere’s elite on the guest list. Couldn’t you get what you’re after there?”

“You mentioned ‘elite’. Why would I be on that guest list?” Hannah gave Lydia a desperate glance.

“Maybe we should brainstorm something more realistic.”

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“Why wouldn’t you be considered important? You are the…” Catching herself before slipping, Lydia clamped a hand over her mouth.

“I mean to say, you’re Miss Mitchell’s primary doctor. They’ll surely send you an invite.”

Just as Lydia finished her sentence, Hannah’s phone buzzed. It was Bryson calling.

With a gesture for Lydia to hold her tongue, Hannah picked up.

“Mr. Mitchell?”

“How’s your arm healing up?”

“It’s a minor wound, actually.”

Seated in his office, Bryson shuffled through papers and smiled slightly at the sound of Hannah’s soft voice.

“Would you do me the honor of attending the Mitchell family’s upcoming banquet?”

Hannah momentarily hesitated at the sound of Bryson’s charming tone.



"If you're extending the invitation, how could I possibly say no?"

"I'll be there at 7 to pick you up."

"Sure."

Hannah hung up the phone. Lydia couldn't contain her excitement, vigorously shaking Hannah by the shoulders.

"It was Bryson, wasn't it?"

He invited you, didn't he?"

"Yes, indeed! But if you keep jostling me like this, I'll lose my breakfast."

Grinning from ear to ear, Lydia cradled her face in her hands.

"Hannah, your rise in the Mitchell family's social circle is truly remarkable. He's even offering to pick you up for the banquet!"

Hannah caught the misinterpretation on Lydia's face and gently poked her on the forehead.

"You're reading too much into it. Mr. Mitchell and I are merely friends."

"If you're going, then so am I!" Sitting next to her, Lydia propped up her cheek thoughtfully.

“I had actually planned to turn down the invite if you weren’t going.”

“Lydia, that banquet is important for the Phillips family’s standing.