

The Unshackled Queen: Never Say Never

Online Free - Chapter: 561

“No, thanks. The mere sight of you later might make me nauseous,”

Lydia replied.

Ignoring them, she took Hannah’s hand and directed, “Let’s go check in.”

Grace, dragging Bryson, strolled beside Hannah.

“Grace!”

Ruby intercepted Grace and elegantly handed her a small, round container.

“The mosquitoes here are fierce. This repellent works wonders.”

“Thanks, Ruby,” Grace responded, handing it back.

“But we’ve got that covered. You keep it.”

Hannah had arranged for two presidential suites. One was for Bryson, and another was for the three of them.

Once inside, they set down their bags. Staring at the limitless ocean and open-air pool beyond their room, Grace exclaimed, “Wow, an outdoor pool! My brother has never let me stay somewhere Like this!”

“Why not?” Lydia inquired, glancing out the window at the bright sky.

She then stretched, adding, “This place is truly amazing.”

Kneeling to unpack, Hannah clarified, “It’s because Grace’s health used to be fragile. An outdoor pool could make her sick, so Bryson never allowed it Teasingly, Lydia said to Grace, “So now that you’re here, why don’t you put on your swimsuit and let’s take a dip?”

“No way! I’m just here to watch...”

They both chuckled by the window for a bit.

Revisiting their earlier encounter, Lydia said, “I find it hard to believe Eliana and Ruby just happened to be at the Skyline Hotel.”

“Coincidence or not, who cares? We’re here to relax, not to worry about other people.”

“Not necessarily!”

Grace abruptly turned toward Hannah, whispering, “It’s obvious Ruby has feelings for my brother. He was smitten with her once, too.

Don’t give her an opening!”

“She shattered his heart once. Now, he’s yours and clearly fond of you. I can’t bear to see her ruin what you two have.”

Pausing her packing, Hannah met Grace’s earnest gaze. She gently pinched Grace’s cheek.

“The tighter you try to hold onto sand, the faster it slips through your fingers. Get it?”

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“I don’t get it.” Grace shook her head and glanced at Lydia.

“Lydia, do you get what she’s saying?”

Lydia, clearly grasping Hannah’s point, offered a knowing smile.

“Understood. If you’re aware of how to handle it, I’ll say no more.”

“What ?”

Confused, Grace blinked at them.

“What just happened? Lydia, clarify for me!”

A N G E L A ' s L I B R A R Y

Outside, the sun shone brightly.

Eliana and Ruby lounged beneath a parasol.

“Don’t be so eager. Rushing to greet them only showed that we planned to wait for them here,” Eliana chided.

Chewing her lip, Ruby looked at Eliana.

“Why are you helping me?”

Eliana arched an eyebrow and said, “Simple. Misery loves company. We both lost our boyfriends when we went overseas. Now, I’m with the one I want. What about you?”

Seeing Ruby fall silent, Eliana grinned.

“Men often yearn for what used to be. Just follow my Lead.”

As the sun dipped low, evening arrived.

Hannah led Grace and Lydia for a walk along the shoreline.

Their feet sank into the soft sand, the ocean breeze caressing them.

Grace was eager to snap pictures, with Lydia capturing her from multiple angles.

“Hannah, join us. Let’s get a group photo!”

“Alright.”

Hannah was about to step forward, her face softening into a subtle smile, when she heard Declan calling her name.

“Hannah!”

She turned around, her demeanor shifting as she spotted Declan.

C 563

“What is it?”

Faced with Hannah’s aloof expression, Declan found himself at a loss for words.

“It’s been a while…”

“Indeed.”

As Hannah moved to go, Declan promptly halted her.

Angela’s Library

“Hold on!”

Growing increasingly irritated, Hannah snapped, “What now, Declan?”

“Listen, it’s been ages since all that drama. Can’t we ease the tension between us?”

“We’re not connected anymore, Declan. You’re engaged, and I don’t want to create any misunderstandings.”

A hint of disappointment clouded Declan’s face.

“I’m considering expanding my business to Hoijery.”

Hannah squinted, puzzled by his words.

Declan had evolved, his gaze softening as he looked at her.

“Valmere’s economy is struggling. I’m thinking of relocating to a more promising city like Hoijery.”

“That’s none of my concern,” Hannah retorted, icy in her detachment.

Prior to this meeting, Declan had done his homework. Hannah had taken the reins of the White family business, and his mind swirled with possibilities.

“Even if we’re not a couple, I want you to flourish. Seeing you succeed puts my mind at ease.”

Hannah wondered what he was getting at.

His earnest words struck Hannah as somewhat absurd. Could he really believe a few kind sentiments would undo their past?

"If that's all, I'll be on my way."

"Wait!" Declan blurted.

"You own a 20% stake in Edwards Group! If it tanks, you stand to lose as well!"

Hannah turned around, a sardonic smile gracing her lips.

"Ah, so this is a business proposition. If that's the case, take it to White Group. Don't take advantage of our past feelings."

C 564

As Declan opened his mouth to respond, he was cut off by Hannah's icy comeback.

"We were never in love to begin with."

Meanwhile, the elevator dinged open at the presidential suites' level.

Ruby stepped out, having recently acquired Bryson's room number from downstairs. She wanted to approach him when they were alone.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Ruby's hand fell uneasily on the door. When it swung open, she mustered a polite grin.

"Bryson, may we speak privately?"

Yet, the moment Bryson caught sight of Ruby, his expression froze.

"What do you want?"

Undeterred by Bryson's icy demeanor, Ruby aimed to enter his room.

"Can we talk inside?"

Just as she was about to step in, he blocked her way.

With a frosty glance, Bryson said, "If you've got something to say, say it here. Going inside isn't an option."

Tears cascaded down Ruby's cheeks like falling pearls.

Angela's Library

"Is it so hard for us to have an honest conversation?"

Barricading the doorway, Bryson remained unyielding.

"We can talk right here. I have a girlfriend, so it's inappropriate for you to enter."

Ruby looked up at him with pleading eyes.

"Is it Miss Moore? I realize I messed up. My conscience has been gnawing at me ever since I left you."

Swiftly, she tiptoed and wrapped her arms around him.

"I'm not trying to ruin your relationship. I just miss you terribly!"

In an instant, Bryson shoved Ruby away!

What Bryson failed to observe was a subtle flicker of light in the distance.

His face growing even darker, Bryson commanded, "I don't want to humiliate you. Leave immediately!"

C 565

Ruby was stunned by Bryson's decisive action. Pushed back and off-balance, she opened her mouth to speak, but he slammed the door shut!

Never since their initial breakup had she felt so dismissed!

She couldn't fathom that Bryson could truly erase her from his life!

Seething with resentment toward Hannah, Ruby turned, hoisted her dress, and retreated stone-faced.

"Did you get the shot?"

The man hoisted his camera, replying, "Yes, do you want this in tomorrow's paper, or would you prefer to use it as leverage against his girlfriend?"

Ruby's fists clenched at the thought of Hannah.

"Send the picture to me first. I have my plans."

"Since Eliana introduced us, I'll give you a 20% discount this time."

Without a word, Ruby transferred the funds. The man checked his phone, his eyebrows lifting.

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"If you need similar services in the future, let me know. I'll offer you a repeat customer discount."

Impatiently, she gestured for him to leave, unaware of the smug smile that crept onto his face.

That evening, Hannah and two others returned to the hotel. Bryson joined them for dinner after wrapping up his work.

“By the way, how’s your project coming along?”

As Bryson talked about the project over dinner, Hannah gave him a reassuring smile.

“Don’t worry. I’ve secured someone dependable for the task. All is well.”

Ding! Ding! Ding!

Just then, Hannah’s phone rang.

She picked it up and swiped the screen to unlock it. A multimedia message appeared, sent from an unknown number.

Who even sent MMS these days?

Driven by curiosity, Hannah tapped on the message and a picture revealed itself. She was taken aback.

The woman in the image was holding onto Bryson!

Hannah knew her. It was Ruby, the same woman who had approached Bryson earlier.

Hannah’s brow furrowed slightly.

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“Is something the matter, Hannah?”

Lydia, seated across from her, noticed the sudden shift in Hannah’s expression.

“What did you just see?”

Next to Hannah, Bryson also turned to her, inquiring, “Is everything okay?”

“Nothing to worry about.”

With a calm demeanor, Hannah shut off her phone.

“It’s just some spam. Let’s get back to our meal.”

In a dimly lit corner, Ruby sat with Eliana, her eyes fixed on Hannah, brimming with jealousy.

Eliana, elegantly slicing her steak, reassured her.

“Don’t stress. I foresaw her reaction. She may be tough to handle, but even a hint of doubt can fracture her trust in Mr. Mitchell. Plus, we have that photo. If she dismisses it, we can always leak it to the press. It will tarnish both his reputation and their relationship.”

Eliana patted Ruby’s hand comfortingly.

“Patience, my dear. If she doesn’t react by tonight, then we go to the media.”

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Ruby clenched her jealousy and furiously cut into her steak.

“Bryson will be mine, sooner or later!”

“Absolutely.” Eliana’s voice dripped with allure.

“You’re every bit as remarkable as Hannah. Mr. Mitchell won’t easily forget you.”

After the meal, everyone returned to their rooms. Lydia and Grace were already exhausted, and they called it a night after freshening up.

Following her shower, Hannah stepped out of her room to handle some business matters.

Out of the blue, she received a cooperation proposal on her laptop, coming from Bryson.

Hannah grabbed her phone and texted him.

“Still awake?”

Reading her message, Bryson grinned before typing back.

“Aren’t you up too? Get some sleep. Don’t wear yourself out.”

“Okay,” Hannah responded. After exiting WhatsApp, she opened the photo in the received multimedia message.

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Even if it was just a ploy by that woman, she couldn’t deny the twinge of emotion it stirred within her.

Gazing at the person in the image, she had full faith in Bryson.

However, Ruby was clearly trying to agitate her. If Hannah took the bait, she’d be walking right into a trap.

With this realization, she deleted the photo, shut her laptop, and retreated to her bedroom.

“Help”

A muffled cry appeared to drift in from the outside.

Without realizing it, Hannah gazed through the glass window. The clock had struck midnight, and darkness blanketed the seaside. The moon cast a shimmering glow upon the ocean.

At first, she brushed it off as noise from the next room.

Then, it dawned on her. Bryson’s room was adjacent to hers. How could such a sound emanate from there?

“Help... Help! I’m dying!”

The cries persisted, pulling her back to reality.

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Recalling the day's photo, her heart began to race. She wanted to trust Bryson, but she couldn't be sure if the voice was male or female.

Without a second thought, she stepped outside and headed toward Bryson's suite. She wanted clarity, not confrontation.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

She tapped Lightly on the door. Soon, a voice emanated from behind it, asking tersely, "Who's there?"

"I'm still up. Can you open the door?"

Noticing Bryson's hesitation, Hannah bit her lip and started to say, "If you're busy, then I'll just..."

Before she could complete her sentence, Bryson's door swung open, revealing a soft yellow glow from within.

Seeing her standing there in her pajamas, Bryson ushered her inside, asking, "Why are you out here in such light clothing? Aren't you cold?"

Bryson inquired if Hannah felt chilly, draping his coat over her shoulders.

"Is something bothering you?"

Caught between the room's warm ambiance and Bryson's kindness, Hannah hesitated, unsure if she should bring up the minor issue.

Noticing her uncertainty, Bryson gently guided her arm and led her to the sofa.

"Something on your mind?"

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“I got a multimedia message at the restaurant today,” Hannah began, retrieving the already-deleted photo on her phone.

“It was sent to me.”

Upon seeing the photo, Bryson’s brows furrowed instantly.

“Yes, she did hug me, but I pushed her away immediately.”

“I believe you.” Hannah quickly reassured him.

“That’s why I deleted the photo. But earlier, I heard cries for help coming from your room...

That’s why I felt compelled to check.”

Bryson appeared taken aback.

“You heard that too? I thought my ears were playing tricks on me. Ruby approached me today, wanting to speak privately in my room. I refused her entry, but she hugged me outside, and that’s when the photo was taken.”

Clearly exasperated, Bryson removed his gold-rimmed glasses, pinched the bridge of his nose, and confessed, “I thought you were her when you knocked tonight, which is why I initially didn’t answer the door.”

So that was what happened.

Everything fell into place, except for the mysterious voice.

Hannah rose and walked toward the glass window in Bryson’s room.

Suddenly, she spotted two dark figures in the ocean.

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“Bryson! Do you see that? Are there people out there in the ocean?

Are they calling for help?”

Without a second's delay, Bryson rushed to the window and joined Hannah. His eyes too caught sight of the two moving black dots in the water.

"Could they be swimming?" Bryson scrutinized the scene.

"We are at a resort. Night swimming wouldn't be unusual."

As Hannah watched the Light shimmer on the water's surface, a sinking feeling overwhelmed her.

"It looks like one person is floating, being pulled back by another!"

"Are you certain of what you're seeing?"

Bryson quickly put on his glasses and peered out the window. While the soft glow of the moon bathed the sea, it didn't appear as vivid to him as it did to Hannah.

Noting that Hannah remained silent, consumed by her anxious gaze toward the ocean, Bryson grasped her hand.

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"Let's go check it out downstairs. We should bring the hotel's security team with us."

"Okay!"

They alerted the hotel's security personnel. Upon hearing about a potential drowning, the security team promptly joined Hannah and Bryson, rushing to the shoreline.

But they found the sea empty.

Three guards, all strong swimmers, ventured far into the water before returning empty-handed.

The chief of security dashed up to Hannah, wiping his wet face.

“Mr. Moore, we found no one. We covered a great distance and saw no one in the water.”

Hannah’s brow furrowed. She wasn’t the only one who’d heard the cry for help; Bryson had heard it too. It was real.

As Hannah relayed the mysterious call for help, the security guard looked puzzled.

“Could it have been from a TV show or a movie someone was watching?”

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“No, that’s not it.” Hannah shook her head.

“We’re the only residents on that floor. No one was watching any shows or movies.”

Scratching his head, the security guard gazed out at the expansive sea.

“If someone had actually drowned, we should have spotted them during our swim... Besides, the windows upstairs would reflect light.

Could you have been mistaken, Miss Moore?”

It was a possibility, but Hannah couldn’t shake her unease.

Sensing Hannah’s discomfort, Bryson took her hand.

“Are there any surveillance cameras on the beach?”

The security guard appeared somewhat embarrassed.

“The resort is newly opened. Even the hotel’s cameras were just recently installed.

There are none on the beach. Also, no one has ever drowned here; there are no sudden waves, and non-swimmers wouldn’t venture that far out.”

In the end, their efforts yielded no answers.

Bryson led Hannah back upstairs to the hotel. Instead of escorting her to her own room, he guided her to his.

“You can stay in my room tonight. I have work to do outside. Call me if you need anything.”

C 570

After making sure Hannah was comfortable, Bryson gently touched her head.

“Get some sleep.”

Just as he was about to exit, Hannah suddenly grabbed his hand, her fingers icy cold.

“Could you stay... and keep me company?”

Noticing Hannah’s vulnerability, Bryson instantly agreed, “Alright, Lie down. I’ll be right back with my laptop.”

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“Sure.”

With the soft bedside light on, Hannah felt a sense of relief seeing Bryson settle onto the sofa beside her bed.

Gazing at the night sky through the French windows, Hannah let her eyes drift shut.

The soft sound of keystrokes lulled her into a slumber.

Engrossed in his work, Bryson glanced up now and then, smiling each time he saw Hannah’s peaceful face.

Yet, Hannah’s sleep was far from restful.

Her mind took her back to her teenage years, to a moment when she had fallen into the ocean.

The water was icy, its saltiness invading her mouth!

Frantically, she fought, but it felt like a cage closed over her, leaving her gasping for air!!

The urgency to surface overwhelmed her!

“Help! Help!”

"Hannah! Hannah!"

A forceful tug yanked her from her nightmarish dream back to reality.

Her eyes flew open, her hand clutching her throat as she coughed uncontrollably, tears welling in her eyes.

"Hannah! Are you alright? What happened?"

Seated at the edge of the bed, Bryson's composure shattered. He seized her shoulders, examining her intently.

"No... Ahem! I'm okay."

Inhaling deeply, Hannah met Bryson's gaze. The sensation of suffocation she'd felt in her dream seemed all too real.

"I dreamt I was drowning and couldn't breathe..."