

The Secret 121

Chapter 121 What Went Wrong

Roxanne walked in that direction and saw Estella huddled in a corner with her knees bent and her eyes seemed as empty as a soulless doll.

Remembering how Estella used to greet her with a bright, sweet smile, Roxanne's heart tore with pain, choking her.

This morning, Estella grabbed her skirt with a pair of bright eyes, but she descended into such a pitiful state so unexpectedly.

Roxanne tiptoed into the room and crouched down beside her. In a soft, gentle voice, she called out to her, "Essie, I'm here."

Estella, however, had no answer.

Roxanne was surprised by Estella's state.

Behind Roxanne, James gently reminded her, "Mrs. Jarvis, Estella is now completely cut off from the outside world. You have to keep talking to her to lure her back to reality. Patience is needed to achieve that."

Roxanne calmed down and nodded.

She spoke to Estella again: "Essie, look who's here too! Archie and Benny are here! They're all here!

Archie and Benny came over to join Roxanne and Estella. Benny started making faces at Estella. I'm here to visit you! Do not Cry!"

Archie frowned and stared into Estella's eyes. "You can tune out for a while, okay? We are waiting for you to play together. Would you like to join us?"

Before, when they said this, Estella would laugh.

However, this time, Estella did not respond. She sat motionless in the same spot and didn't even move a finger.

The smile on Benny's face slowly faded and quickly turned into a frown. "Hey, we're talking to you. Are you sad because you go to school? Archie and I will join you soon. We can take him anywhere he wants, and we can do everything together! It doesn't sound good?"

With a sullen expression, Archie threatened, "If you don't talk to us, we don't want to play with you anymore!"

Be that as it may, Estella still did not respond.

Archie and Benny took a deep breath and changed methods. Instead of anticipating a response, they began babbling incessantly about all sorts of topics, even bringing up what happened at Universe Park. They also promised to take her there once she recovered.

Despite her tireless attempts to make her talk, Estella didn't even blink once.

Her eyes began to fill with tears and they used Roxanne's sleeves to wipe away the tears. "Mommy, Essie can't seem to hear us. What should we do?"

Chapter 122 He Finally Recovered

Throughout the day, Roxanne was there with Estella.

Despite that, Estella never responded.

When darkness fell, Roxanne had to leave, albeit reluctantly.

"I will visit you again tomorrow. You have to get better, okay? Roxanne hugged Estella tight.

Archie and Benny also hugged her.

As the three of them were about to leave, Roxanne felt a force tugging at the corner of her skirt.

Stunned, she turned around. Estella's gaze was still fixed elsewhere, without any emotion, but her hand was still clinging tightly to Roxanne's skirt.

At the door, Lucian and James exchanged glances, surprised.

They thought that Estella closed herself off completely and would not respond to any external stimuli.

To her surprise, Estella could feel Roxanne's presence. On top of that, she didn't want Roxanne to leave her.

Roxanne nearly loses her breath. She stood there for a few seconds before gradually walking back to Estella. She crouched down and met his eyes warmly. "Essie, you know I'm here, right?"

Estella's eyes were still blank, but her hands remained clinging to Roxanne's skirt.

Archie and Benny quickly asked, "Mommy, can we bring Essie with us?"

Bring Essie back with us!

Roxanne felt slightly tempted and looked apprehensively at the duo at the door.

If Estella was willing to accompany her, Roxanne did not hesitate to take Estella under her protection.

However, Roxanne feared that Estella was not willing to leave her father.

James's expression stiffened. "I think it's okay. It's a huge improvement to even see Essie respond to something. Perhaps her chances of recovery are significantly higher if she stays with you for a while.

Finishing his sentence, James turned to Lucian.

Lucian stared at Estella's hands, and her heart felt as if she had been hit by a huge truck. A numbing pain soon consumed him.

Soon after, he came to and said in a deep voice, "I'll send you back. But give me a second, I'll ask Catalina to pack up some of Essie's daily essentials."

Roxanne, Archie, and Benny were surprised and pleased at the same time.

Archie and Benny ran up to Estella, their faces full of joy, and hugged her. "We will take very good care of you!"

Later that day, Lucian sent the four of them back.

Estella snuggled into Roxanne's arms like a doll. Even when they got into the car, she clung tightly to Roxanne, and her hands unconsciously grabbed Roxanne's skirt.

Archie obediently sat in the passenger seat.

Throughout the trip, Lucian explained in detail the things he would pay attention to when caring for Estella.

Although Catalina was there, Lucian was the one who personally attended to Estella. Therefore, he was well aware of her peculiarities and needs.

Chapter 123 I Should Have Killed Her

Aubree tensed when she heard Lucian's tone, and any hope she had earlier was dashed in an instant.

Under normal circumstances, she would dress herself before meeting Lucian. Since he had asked her to be there in thirty minutes, she only had time to grab her bag before rushing off.

Since her house was quite a distance from the restaurant, the taxi driver had to put his foot down on the accelerator to get her there on time.

Lucian was already waiting for her when she entered the restaurant.

She looked up from her window seat when she heard the door open, the look in her eyes colder than the night outside.

What's up Luciano? Aubree asked with a guilty look on her face as she sat down across from him.

Lucian exuded a terrifying aura as he stared at her in silence.

Aubree clenched her fists in nervousness, but she made sure to keep a calm smile on her face.

Did you leave Essie this morning? Lucian asked suddenly.

Aubree nodded profusely. "Yeah. Mrs. Farwell asked me to help her, and I did."

Lucian let out a cold snort at that. "My mother also asked you to go to the head of the kindergarten and expel the two children on behalf of the Farwell Group?"

Aubree instantly turned pale because she hadn't expected him to find out so soon. After brainstorming for a few seconds, she came up with an excuse, and she said, "I saw those two kids bullying Essie when I dropped her off, so I got mad and confronted the kindergarten principal..."

She then looked at Lucian nervously as she continued, "I just couldn't bear to see them bully Essie, Lucian! I'm sure you understand, right?"

Lucian arched an eyebrow in response. "Yes, but I would also like to know where that alleged harassment took place."

"A-At the entrance of the kindergarten," Aubree replied with a shaky voice.

The look in Lucian's eyes grew colder. "Okay, I'll have someone check the surveillance camera footage. I'll let this slide if it's proven to be true. However-"

"I-I was wrong!" Aubree interrupted him anxiously when she heard him mention the surveillance camera footage. "N-It didn't take place in kindergarten! It was in... mmm..."

She kept stuttering and stuttering as she tried to think of something, but nothing came to mind.

Lucian looked at her coldly until she finally ran out of patience. "I will not question how many more times you have abused the Farwell Group name for your own gain. However, your actions today have triggered Essie's autism! I won't show you mercy if something happens to her!"

Chapter 124 Who Could Have Done This

Roxanne went to prepare dinner after instructing her two children to take care of Estella.

She had written down all the important points that Lucian mentioned earlier, and she also made sure to prepare the food according to Estella's preferences.

When dinner was ready, Roxanne had Archie and Benny take Estella downstairs.

Like princes and princesses in fairy tales, the two children held each other's hands as they walked down the stairs at her pace.

Seeing the three of them like this filled Roxanne's heart with warmth, but the thought of Estella's current condition made her frown sympathetically.

Archie and Benny then let Estella sit next to Roxanne at the table while they sat next to her.

Roxanne patted their heads before taking a seat and feeding Estella.

Perhaps because the food was prepared according to her preferences, Estella was able to finish everything without a problem.

After dinner, Roxanne made Archie and Benny go back to her bedroom before taking Estella to hers to bathe.

Estella showed no response when Roxanne helped her undress herself.

When she took off her pants, Roxanne received horrible bruises and welts on Estella's buttocks.

"It must have been very painful, huh?" Roxanne asked as she caressed the little girl's cheeks, feeling sorry for her.

Estella simply stared at her in response.

"Don't worry. I'll make sure to be nice and we'll call Dad once we're done with your bath," Roxanne continued with a heavy heart after a brief moment of silence.

After giving Estella a quick bath and a change of clothes, Roxanne made her wait on the bed while she called for Lucian.

The call came in a matter of seconds. "What happen? Did Essie give you any trouble?"

"Was Essie's autism really triggered by Archie and Benny's expulsion?" Roxanne asked solemnly.

Luciano frowned. "What do you mean by that?"

Roxanne felt her heart ache as she realized that he probably wasn't aware of what happened, but the idea of him being an irresponsible parent of her bothered her as well.

"Come take a look for yourself!" she said in disgust and hung up immediately after.

The look on Lucian's face turned grim after hearing that, and she quickly ran towards Roxanne's house.

Chapter 125 Confronting Aubree

Realizing that she was the most suspicious person due to her unresolved conflict with Lucian, Roxanne was quick to explain, "Just so you know, I didn't do this! I have always believed that children are innocent! Also, Archie and Benny really like Essie, so she would never hit her!"

Also, since she had spent some time alone with Estella, she would have no way of explaining herself if Lucian decided to suspect her.

Her anxiety became so intense that it even began to show on her face.

Lucian gave her a confused look at what she said. "I'm not suspecting you or anything. In fact, I think I know who did this."

Roxanne breathed a sigh of relief before asking worriedly, "Who could it be?"

The temperature in the room seemed to drop as Lucian fell into deep thought.

Mom and Dad took Essie out of the house yesterday without explaining why. Although her behavior seems a bit strange, I know for a fact that they love Essie very much and would never lay a finger on her. The only other person who has been in contact with Essie since last night is Aubree! I know Essie has always disliked her, but I didn't think she would hurt Essie like this!

"Good? Who is she?" Roxanne asked anxiously when she saw the grim expression on her face.

Lucian did his best to suppress her anger when he said, "I'll leave Essie in your care for a while. There's something I need to take care of."

He then turned and walked out of the house as Roxanne watched with a frown.

As if not knowing about her daughter's injuries wasn't bad enough, is he seriously going to leave her here after finding out about her?

Aubree was so terrified by Lucian's intimidating aura that she sat in the restaurant for quite some time before returning.

Even when she got home, her mind was still a mess as she remembered Lucian's interrogation earlier.

Aubree was about to call Elias and Sonya for help when she heard her doorbell ring.

She then put her phone away and had the butler open the door.

The butler returned moments later with her visitor, and Aubree blanched when she saw who she was.

Chapter 126 She Should Just Die

She even tried to turn on the water supply system as she pleaded with him, but Lucian didn't loosen his grip on her in the slightest.

It took Aubree every ounce of energy she had to take a breath, but even so she stubbornly refused to admit what she had done.

If Lucian is being so cruel to me simply because he's suspicious of me, then there's no telling what he'd do to me if he admitted it!

Cayden was surprised when he walked in behind Lucian and saw Aubree's face turn purple. Fearing that Lucian might accidentally kill her, he quickly ran over to stop him. Let her go, Mr. Farwell! She will die if you don't!"

Instead of letting go, Lucian simply tightened his grip around her neck.

At that very moment, Aubree had no doubt that she would indeed strangle her to death.

Eventually, Cayden had no choice but to step in and forcefully yank her out of her grasp.

Having been drained of all energy from her, Aubree crumpled to the ground immediately after being released and gasped heavily.

After taking a moment to regain her composure, Lucian glared at her and said, "Fine, you can keep acting for as long as you want. I'll ask Essie about it when she gets better, and I'll come after you if you really are the one behind this!

He then left the house with Cayden following close behind, leaving Aubree on the ground with a mixture of anger and fear on her face.

Damn! Why doesn't that little bastard die? Now I have to live in fear of her giving me away!

The mere thought of what Lucian would do to her terrified her to no end.

Lucian had been completely silent after getting in the car with Cayden.

"Mister. Goodbye, would you like to go see Mrs. Estella? Cayden asked cautiously after a while.

"Take us back to the mansion," Lucian replied as he suppressed his anger.

Although Cayden didn't understand the reasoning behind his request, he took them back to the Farwell residence anyway.

"Wait here," Lucian instructed and got out of the car alone.

Moments later, he returned with a dark-colored bottle in hand.

"Take me to Roxanne's," he ordered after getting back in the car.

Cayden nodded and did as told.

Chapter 127

With that in mind, Roxanne nodded and led him up the stairs.

Since Estella had already fallen asleep, the room was only lit by a night lamp at the moment. Afraid of waking her, Roxanne made sure to be very careful and gentle.

As she stood by the door with her hands in her pockets, Lucian shifted his gaze from Estella to the room's décor.

The room not only looked exceptionally clean and tidy, but the dolls that Roxanne's children brought also gave it a warm and homey atmosphere.

Looking around the room made the anger Lucian was suppressing completely vanish and warm her heart.

After applying the ointment, Roxanne made sure Estella was still fast asleep before getting up. "It's done."

Her gaze met Lucian's the moment she turned around, and the two stared into each other's eyes in silence for a few seconds.

Eventually, Lucian recovered and nodded, "Thank you."

Roxanne then closed the door behind her and walked him down the stairs.

After giving her a brief summary of Estella's condition, Roxanne tried to end the conversation when she saw that it was quite late. "It's getting late, so you should go back and get some rest. Don't worry; I'll take good care of Essie."

Lucian nodded and got up from the sofa. "I have spoken with the person in charge of the kindergarten. If you don't care what happened before, you can let Archie and Benny continue studying there."

Roxanne immediately agreed. "I'm going to. Also, I think Essie should study there and hang out with the other kids too."

Returning her to an environment she is familiar with may help improve her condition.

She then eagerly awaited Lucian's response, since her permission was necessary for that to happen.

Roxanne had assumed that Lucian would at least ask her for a reason, but he simply went silent for a few seconds before saying, "Okay, just go ahead and do what you want. There is no need to inform me about it."

Since Roxanne was Estella's biological mother, she had every right to make such decisions on her behalf.

Hey? Isn't Lucian trusting me too much? On second thought, maybe it's just because he loves Essie so deeply. He knows I've taken a liking to Essie, so he's putting her completely under my care.

With that in mind, Roxanne responded with a nod, "Okay."

Lucian didn't say anything else and left after that.

The next morning, Roxanne woke the three children up early and got them ready for kindergarten.

Chapter 128 Make Sure No One Bullies Her

The kindergarten teacher felt both happy and uncomfortable when the five of them appeared together. "Millisecond. Jarvis..."

Even though it was Aubree who demanded Archie and Benny's expulsion, Pippa still felt bad about it and wanted to apologize.

"Looks like I'll be putting Archie and Benny back in your care!" Roxanne interrupted her with a smile.

Pippa nodded profusely. "Of course! They are both very obedient children, so taking care of them is a real pleasure!"

Roxanne agreed. "Also, Essie seems to be acting a bit strange lately. She doesn't really talk to people much, so please keep a close eye on her."

Fearing that Estella would be hurt if she found out about her autism, Roxanne decided not to mention it directly.

Pippa nodded and assured him that she would take good care of them.

Archie and Benny too, each holding one of Estella's hands as they said, "We'll help take care of Essie too! We won't let anyone bully her!"

Roxanne simply patted them on the head with a smile.

Pippa was getting ready to bring the kids inside for class when she saw Roxanne still standing there with Lucian right behind her.

The icy gaze of hers sent a chill down her spine. "I-Is there anything else I can help you two with?"

I'm just a little worried about them. Would it be okay if I watch you for a while while you teach?" Roxanne said with a smile.

Pippa couldn't bring herself to say no with Lucian near her, so she had no choice but to let them into the classroom as well.

Roxanne sat in a corner and felt a strange feeling deep down as Lucian sat next to her, but she decided to keep her feelings to herself.

Thus, the two of them sat in a corner and watched the children play in class.

To help improve Estella's mood, Pippa even arranged for her to be in the middle of the group. With Archie and Benny acting as examples, the other kids also took turns interacting with her.

However, Estella simply kept her head down and didn't show any response.

It wasn't long before her behavior began to affect the other children's moods as well, much to Roxanne's dismay.

She had assumed that getting Estella back into familiar surroundings would help her emotions a bit, but it didn't seem to work at all.

Although Estella still wasn't very responsive, she seemed to have warmed to Archie and Benny after a few games. Not only did she follow them all the time, but she also showed some response every time they played with her.

Roxanne was still a bit worried even after watching them for about an hour, but it was time for her to head to the research institute.

Chapter 129 Are You Injured?

Roxanne had felt the same way that morning, so hearing it filled her heart with a warm feeling. "Maybe. I'm so glad you two can take care of Essie."

Benny patted his chest confidently as he said in his boyish voice, "Don't worry, Mommy! Archie and I will continue to keep Essie safe!"

Roxanne couldn't help but laugh when she heard that.

Lucian glanced at them in the rearview mirror as he heard Benny's promise and Roxanne's laugh. A hint of tenderness formed in his eyes as he saw the touching moment they were having.

He sure has raised those boys well. They are much more mature than the other children their age.

Lucian planned to leave after dropping them off at the house, as he had seen for himself how well Roxanne took care of Estella. On top of that, Archie and Benny were also treating Estella like her own sister, so there was no reason for him to stick around and make them feel uncomfortable.

As she got out of the car, Roxanne looked at Estella and said after a brief moment of hesitation, "How about you join us for dinner? I'm sure Essie would have a much better time with you."

Lucian gave her a strange look and paused briefly before replying, "Thank you, I'll take you up on your offer."

Roxanne kept quiet and led the children inside as Lucian followed after parking the car.

Entering the kitchen, she quickly washed her hands and began preparing dinner. Archie and Benny took Estella into the living room and played with her Lego set to kill time.

Lucian was a little hesitant at first, but he decided to stand next to them and help them when necessary.

With the two boys working closely together, the scattered Legos soon became a complete unit.

When it was time to put the final piece together, Archie looked at Lucian with a hesitant look in his eyes.

Lucian then reached out, prompting Archie to place the Lego piece in his palm. The boy pursed his lips and lowered his head wordlessly as he watched Lucian place the final piece.

Estella, who was watching Lucian put the Lego pieces together, suddenly reached out to grab a Lego piece.

Archie and Benny's eyes lit up with excitement when they saw that.

After a short pause, Estella began assembling the Lego pieces herself at a similar pace to theirs.

Thinking that Estella had remembered playing Lego with them in the past, Archie and Benny exchanged delighted glances.

Lucian froze in shock when he saw that, only to have a warm smile on his face seconds later.

Seems like Essie really likes her company, huh?

Seeing that everyone was focused on playing with the Lego set, Roxanne decided not to disturb them and proceeded to serve dinner.

She had just left the kitchen when her elbow collided with the door frame, causing her bowl of soup to fall to the floor.

Chapter 130 Estella Recovered

Archie and Benny were stunned when they saw tears running down Estella's cheeks. They didn't know if they should comfort her or not.

After all, she looked like she was crying because her mother was hurt. In a way, she was responding to the outside world. It was great news for them.

However, her hearts broke when she saw Estella's teary eyes. They then turned to seek help from her mother, but the next thing they saw was her mother, frowning in pain as she washed her wound.

At that, Archie and Benny calmed down. However, her eyes continued to flutter between her mother and Estella.

A while later, Lucian grabbed Roxanne's arm and pulled her away from the running water.

Roxanne lowered her eyes to look at the site of the wound. Although she was still red, she didn't hurt as much anymore.

When Lucian noticed her action, she frowned as concern seeped into her eyes. He asked: "What is it? Does it still hurt a lot?"

Roxanne tensed for a second but shook her head. "I feel better. I'll treat the wound, and it should be fine after that."

With that, she shook off Lucian's hand and walked towards the door.

Just as she turned around, she saw the helpless stares of her two sons.

Roxanne turned in the direction they were looking, only to see Estella sob miserably. Her small body trembled, but she made no sound.

It was the first time Roxanne had seen her cry after her autism diagnosis. Furthermore, she seemed like the girl was extremely upset, so she couldn't help but feel worried. "Why are you crying? Were you scared?"

As she spoke, she crouched down in front of Estella and raised her hand, about to wipe away the girl's tears.

However, Estella jumped into her arms as she continued to sob, her eyes fixed on Roxanne's injured arm.

Roxanne was taken aback by how the child had thrown herself into her arms, but after her shock came delight.

It was the same action as before. In the past, Estella would jump into Roxanne's arms herself whenever she saw the latter.

Although the girl was crying, at least, she was reacting to her surroundings.

At that thought, Roxanne lifted her uninjured arm and gently hugged the girl. At the same time, she tentatively asked, "Essie, have you recovered? Do you know who I am now?"

The girl nodded slightly, but she continued to sob.

At that, Archie and Benny's eyes lit up. They then walked over to Estella and pointed to themselves. "So, do you know who we are?"

However, Estella's gaze was fixed on Roxanne's injured arm; she didn't look at them at all.

The boys were disappointed.

Sensing her emotions, Roxanne raised her hand to ruffle Estella's hair and softly said, "The boys are here too. Do you see them? They've been taking care of you for the last two days."