

Chapter 223 I Won't Come Again

Janessa rushed through the lobby only to find the elevator cramped with employees trying to get to their desks on time. She made the split-second decision to use the elevator exclusive to the CEO's use.

Rayan had given her permission to use it anyway, so it wasn't technically a violation of their company's policies.

As expected, the CEO's elevator moved in a flash, and when Janessa clocked in, the time that registered on her file was 58 seconds past nine o'clock.

If she had been just a single step behind, she definitely would have been late.

Fortunately, she made it just in the nick of time.

"Thank God, you're here. Mr. Lu wants you to see him as soon as possible. He's in a terrible mood, by the way, so brace yourself." Corbin appeared in front of her, seemingly out of nowhere, and handed her a stack of documents.

"What?" Janessa sputtered. "But shouldn't he be at home right now? Why is he in the company all of a sudden?" Her gaze darted to the door of Rayan's office, her face mottled with confusion.

To her dismay, Corbin left just as suddenly as he had come. There was no one to answer her questions, no matter how many times she asked.

"What a heartless senior, abandoning me like this!"

"What's going on? How could you break off in mid-sentence?" Janessa trudged over to her desk, files tucked under one arm. How was she supposed to "brace" herself when she had no clue about what to expect?

"Forget it. I'll just have to take things in stride and wing it."

She glanced down at the folders and selected those that took most priority. Then, she took a deep breath and strode in the direction of the CEO's office.

Janessa knocked on the door twice before walking into the room. Rayan was talking on the phone.

He was sporting a rare, gentle expression, and even his eyes looked to be smiling.

"He's probably speaking with the mother of his child." Then why the hell had he asked her into his office?

Janessa turned on her heel, intending to come back once Rayan's call was finished, but his cold voice stopped her in her tracks.

"Janessa. Take a seat and wait a moment."

His voice boomed into the otherwise quiet office; she was sure that the person on the other end of the line had heard him loud and clear.

"What's wrong, Rayan? Do you have work to do?" Gracie asked in a worried tone, even though she understood the situation very well. She still detested the fact that Rayan and Janessa were regularly in touch, but she had no choice.

"It's not a big deal. Anyway, I noticed that your morning sickness has gotten worse. You seemed really ill earlier. How are you feeling now?" Rayan's tone was full of concern.

Janessa remained by the door, studying him with an unreadable expression. He had never been that gentle nor caring toward her, and she had always been fine with that. But even when she had been pregnant, he had still been terribly cruel to her. Even when she had faced the grim possibility of losing their baby, he had refused to answer her call, to listen to her pleas.

Thoughts of the past only fueled the rage she harbored for Rayan and Gracie.

"What are you doing, Janessa? Are you still having second thoughts about this man? Why are you even bothering with such feelings?"

Just focus on your task so that you can get on with your own life!"

Janessa closed her eyes and took a long, steady breathing exercise. She reminded herself over and over about her purpose for staying in this place.

Finally, calm descended upon her, and the sound of Rayan's voice disappeared into the void.

He yelled her name some ten minutes later, effectively jolting her back to her senses. "Come here."

Janessa opened her eyes and squared her shoulders. Rayan was back to his cold and domineering self.

'Of course, he's only gentle toward that woman.'

Janessa walked to his large desk and passed him the documents she had brought. "These two reports are urgent, and they need your signature. You have no special appointments for today, only a dinner party in the evening, and that's it."

"Cancel the dinner party. From now on, any business trips or client calls will be handled by the General Manager and the acting CEO. And you shall bring documents in need of my attention to my house yourself. If anything goes wrong with these arrangements, you will take responsibility for it."

Rayan must have plotted a schedule around Gracie's condition. It seemed like he had planned everything so that he could be home and keep her company.

But why was he asking her, in particular, to bring work to his home?

"This should fall under Corbin's duties. I'm sorry, but I don't think it's appropriate for me to be in charge of this matter." That was to say, Janessa didn't think it appropriate for her to show up at Rayan's villa every day, what with her being his ex-wife and all. It might prove to be troublesome for the woman carrying his child.

"Are you saying that you're not qualified for this job?" Rayan raised his eyebrows and shot Janessa a sardonic look.

"It's not that I can't do it. I'm doing this out of consideration for you and your future family. Don't you know that rivals in love can get especially jealous when their paths cross? You love your child so much; I'm afraid my presence would only aggravate its mother and therefore put the baby in danger. A pregnant woman cannot afford to be angry every single day, can she?" Despite her explanation, Janessa was still convinced that Rayan must have considered everything before assigning her such a task. So why in the world was he insisting upon it?

Wasn't he at all worried that something might happen to his and Gracie's baby?

"Rivals in love? Are you even rivals? You're just a wife on paper, and a former one at that. I'm sure Gracie wouldn't mind it, so what are you afraid of?"

'Ah,' Janessa mused. 'It turns out that this is Gracie's idea all along. So she wants me to pay them a visit at the villa every day.'

Was it a way to show off, to rub it in her face that she had successfully captured Rayan's heart? That she was about to become the second Mrs. Lu?

"Well, since it's like that, then I suppose there's nothing stopping me. I do hope you can take good care of your woman and your unborn child this time."

With that, Janessa whirled around and strode out of the office.

She knew better than anyone that there was no changing Rayan's mind once he had made a decision.

And so, this daily errand was now etched in stone.

It wasn't so difficult, except for the fact that she needed to take the public commute to get anywhere. She might be able to drive now, but she still couldn't do it frequently. A lingering fear remained in her heart, thanks to her traumatic experience.

As the hours progressed, Janessa thought that Rayan would finish his day's work, at least. So she was surprised to see him leave with a bag of clothes right after his first meeting.

By the time afternoon rolled in, a lot of documents had already piled up, all needing his signature. And since she hadn't driven to work that morning, she had no choice but to take a taxi to Rayan's villa.

When she arrived at the gates, she was stopped by a woman who looked her up and down with a menacing face. "Who are you?" she demanded. "Who are you looking for?"

It had only been half a year since Janessa had left this villa, but it appeared that the staff had already forgotten her.

"I'm looking for Mr. Lu."

"Mr. Lu? Is Mr. Lu someone whom you can come and see whenever you want? Just who are you, exactly?" The woman's expression was becoming uglier by the second; she didn't look like an ordinary doorkeeper.

If Janessa didn't know better, she would think that this woman had been stationed at the gates for the express purpose of denying her entry.

'No wonder Gracie insisted that I come here, she just wants to stir up trouble again!'

Well, if Gracie had appointed some mean, old hag to stop her, then she must really be looking down on the CEO's assistant.

"I'm Mr. Lu's assistant. I have two very important documents here that need his signature immediately. If you won't let me in, then at least promise me that you will take responsibility if the Lu Group's business is affected because of the minutes we're wasting here."