

## Chapter 227 A Leave Of Absence

By the time Janessa returned to the company, Rayan was already in the middle of his meeting. She went straight to her desk and found a note taped on her computer monitor:

"Bring the necessary documents and attend the meeting."

Janessa plucked the piece of paper and studied it for a few seconds. Judging from the handwriting, Rayan seemed to have written the note.

"He knew I wasn't in the building, yet he still instructed me to be in the meeting. That bastard; this is obviously labor exploitation." She gave her work station another glance before picking up a folder and walking out of the office.

No sooner had she stepped out into the hall than she saw Rayan storming back from the conference hall, his face thunderous.

Janessa paused and moved aside, only for him to walk directly up to her.

"Where the hell have you been?"

Rayan all but roared. Just like that, Janessa felt as though she had been dropped into an ice-cold cellar.

"I needed to deal with some personal matters." She didn't want him to know that she had been called to his parents' house. Rayan had always hated the amiable relationship between Janessa and his mother since the beginning. It would only anger him more if he learned of their earlier interaction.

Irritating him was the last thing Janessa wanted at the moment. He would only be venting out his rage on her anyway.

"I told you I'll be back for the two o'clock meeting. How come you didn't tell others about it? There should have been ten people in attendance, but only two of them showed up. Can you even call that joke a meeting?" Rayan took a step closer, his eyes burning with fury.

Janessa instinctively took a step back, but he followed suit, like a predator slowly closing in on its prey.

"L.. I did inform one of your secretaries about the meeting. I had something urgent to take care of, so I had no choice but to step out of the office for a bit." She wasn't lying. The first thing she did after getting back into the company was to relay Rayan's instructions to a secretary in the office. The woman was renowned for her diligence and competence, so how did things turn out this way?

More to the point, it had only been a little past noon when Janessa had conversed with the secretary; she should have had plenty of time to disseminate the information to the rest of the staff. Why had there only been two people in the meeting?

Janessa couldn't make sense of the situation. She would have to ask for an explanation later.

"How dare you make others do what I specifically ordered you to do?" Rayan barked, pulling her back to her senses. "She is a mere secretary, and you're supposed to be my assistant! How can you pass on such an important task to her? Did you ever think about that, Janessa?" Rayan's eyes were wild and fiery. If looks could kill, she would have dropped dead a few seconds ago.

"L.. I'm sorry!" Janessa felt the wall against her back. She had nowhere to run.

"Where have you been? Did you run off on a date with Rylan again?" The next thing Janessa knew, Rayan had already grabbed her by the neck.

His grip gradually tightened even as he pinned her against the wall. His killing intent was palpable in the air. For the first time in a long while, Janessa feared the man.

She reached out and tapped at his arm repeatedly as a sign of surrender, but his only response was to dig his fingers deeper into her neck. Janessa's face began to turn red, her breaths coming in short gasps. Her vision dimmed.

"Mr. Lu, let her go!" Corbin had been watching them since the start, thinking that they were going to have their usual, daily quarrel.

It had never occurred to him that Rayan would resort to physical violence.

It was a horrible sight to behold. Corbin wasn't sure that he could stop his boss, but he had to try.

"Fuck off!" Rayan yelled without even turning his head. His murderous glare was fixed firmly on the woman in front of him.

"Let him be, Corbin," Janessa muttered through gritted teeth. "Just let him... Kill me." She met Rayan's glare head-on. It might not be such a bad thing to just die and be done with everything. After all, she had no family left, and between the Qiu Group and her own personal affairs, she was ready to welcome any form of escape.

"No, Mr. Lu! You can't! Please let her go!" Corbin had a lot more to say about this predicament, but he couldn't very well berate his boss. He could only voice out his protests and hope for the best.

"If you want to die that easily, don't think about it for the rest of your life!" With that, Rayan finally released her and strode into his office.

Janessa crouched to the ground and gulped down lungful after lungful of air.

"Are you okay?" Corbin asked with concern as he squatted beside her.

She could only shake her head, her palm pressed against her chest. She looked up and glared at the door of the CEO's office.

Corbin followed the direction of her gaze, then looked back at her again. "It really is your fault this time," he said gently. "No matter how capable the secretary is, you shouldn't have handed your tasks over to her. Even if you really had to, you should have come to me instead. I'm much better-suited to take over the arrangements concerning the CEO."

Of course, Janessa had already known all of this. But when she had returned at noon, she couldn't find Corbin anywhere. She had been so anxious at the prospect of meeting with the Lu couple that she took the first alternative she could, and passed the instructions to the new secretary.

"I know," she now replied to Corbin. She didn't want to waste her breath on pointless explanations. It would only make her look desperate and pathetic, like a child making up paltry excuses.

Corbin was right—she was in the wrong this time.

"Don't take it to heart. He just got carried away with his temper. It's obvious that Mr. Lu holds you in high regard. Why else would he entrust so much responsibility on you? I hope you can understand his good intentions." Having worked for Rayan for many years, Corbin already knew the kind of person he was.

"It's all right. I'm okay now. You can get back to work. I just need a moment to collect myself." Janessa pushed him lightly and struggled to her feet before gingerly making her way to the bathroom.

Once inside, she locked the door and looked at herself in the mirror. There were fingerprints around her neck, and her eyes were still red and watery.

"Rayan, you bastard. You will pay double for the injuries I suffered today." She sneaked out to grab her makeup kit, then proceeded to cover the bruises on her neck with some compact powder. When she was done, it was as if nothing had happened at all.

After retouching the rest of her face, Janessa went downstairs and walked around the Secretarial Department. However, the woman she was looking for was nowhere in sight.

This branch of the company was exclusively at the disposal of the CEO's Office, but everything had to be channeled through Corbin or Janessa.

Secretary Wang was only one among the many staff members in the department, and a recent hire at that. She was decisive and capable, which was why Janessa had no qualms in handing over the tasks to her.

"Have you seen Secretary Wang?" she asked one of the girls working on the floor.

"Oh, Miss Qiu. She had a stomachache earlier this afternoon and asked for a leave of absence. I believe she went home to take care of herself."

'Home?'

Janessa tapped the edge of the cubicle wall as her mind raced. Her expression turned cold, and a sardonic look came over her eyes.

"Miss... Miss Qiu, is something wrong? Do you need me to take a message for you?" The young secretary was wide-eyed and apprehensive.

"Never mind. Get back to work. Ah, by the way, which one is her desk?"

"Over there."

The girl pointed to a desk in a corner. Janessa nodded and strode over.

Secretary Wang's desk was very clean, bare almost, like she wasn't planning on staying with the company for long.

There were no personal belongings on her table, no pictures or knickknacks. It seemed that the woman even used the company's disposable cups when she had to drink water.

"Was she planning to set me up and run away all along?" Janessa mused.

But why would she spend so much time and effort for that? What was that for her?

After mulling about it some more, Janessa couldn't come up with a plausible explanation. She couldn't find any clue in Secretary Wang's work station, either. In the end, she left the Secretarial Department, no less confused than she had been when she had entered it.

As soon as she exited the hall, a person took out the phone and quietly slipped into the bathroom.