## **Chapter 253 Jewell's Scheme**

Two people slowly emerged from the opposite ends of the stage. One was Imani, who was wearing a wide smile, and the other was her fiance, Ward.

Ward had a medium build—not too thin or too muscular. However, he looked quite old. He was clearly not the type of man Imani would normally fancy.

Janessa looked at him with a helpless expression. The poor guy probably had no idea that he had been tricked. Or perhaps he knew, and thought that the deal was worth getting a beauty by her side.

The event commenced, and the couple exchanged a few sweet words with each other. Soon enough, the engagement was officially in place, and the formal part of the evening was completed.

The lights changed in the venue, and the ball began.

This kind of gathering would usually turn into a ball of sorts during the second half, with much drinking and dancing afterwards. The first ones to go on the floor were Imani and Ward themselves, who performed the first dance. Moments later, a bunch of other couples joined in. Janessa didn't like dancing, so she excused herself and found a quiet balcony to stay in.

The balcony had a rather unique design, with an alcove nestled in the far corner. It opened to stone steps that led to the rooftop, the perfect spot for people to admire the stars at night.

It was a pity that it was currently daytime, and the sun was scorching hot. Janessa had to sit on the steps and hide beneath the shade of the alcove to keep away from the summer heat.

She was sitting there for about ten minutes when she heard someone come out to the balcony. She was about to rise and give them their greetings, but the other people suddenly started talking.

"All right, there's no one else here. Let's get it over with."

It was Imani's voice. What was she up to now?

Janessa sat back and listened intently.

She didn't know who Imani's companion was, but the woman's voice sounded familiar.

"Here, this is the item you wanted. Mix it in the wine and have the person drink it. You must wait ten minutes for the effect to kick in, and then you can do whatever you want." The woman grinned at Imani as she handed her a small vial.

"Is that all? And you're absolutely sure that it can make someone faint? Like, into oblivion?" Imani was skeptic that such a simple

mixture could tame a living person and make them obedient.

She knew that drugs like this existed somewhere, of course, but she hadn't really looked into their effectiveness.

Well, it seemed like today was the day she could verify its validity for herself.

"Don't underestimate it. It may not look like much, but that small bottle is enough to hypnotize ten people."

"Really?" Imani perked up. "Well, I'll believe you for now. But if I fail because of this stupid drug, I'll be sure to teach you a lesson." Her face twisted viciously. She wanted to see if her two targets could escape her plans.

"I'll leave everything to you. Make Janessa faint first, then send Rayan to this room. You don't have to worry about anything else." Imani gave a room card to the other woman.

"How cruel you are to scheme against your sister like this!" the woman said in a mocking tone. But she and Imani were on the same side, so it didn't matter even if she taunted her like this.

In the ruthless world they lived it, no one cared if people played tricks on each other. The most important thing was to ensure one's survival until the end.

"Oh please, you're no better than me. Go, you can leave now." After the other woman left, Imani sauntered to the edge of the balcony and leaned against the railing.

"Janessa," she muttered to herself. "There's no way out for you this time. You were lucky you escaped before, but I won't be so generous toward you anymore. The Qiu family and the Lu family are mine, and so is Rayan. All of it is destined to be mine, and mine alone." She thought of the things she so desired, and how she was close to claiming them. Imani's lips curved into a hungry smile.

She took a few moments to compose herself before returning to the main hall.

Still hidden inside the alcove, Janessa couldn't help but sneer after hearing everything.

"It's no wonder that she sent three invitation cards. She wanted both me and Rayan to come so she can execute her plans. I also doubt that Hancock's attendance is merely a coincidence. Ah, Imani. You've used quite a lot of pawns just to deal with me." She scoffed and shook her head.

The familial bond she had wanted for so long was gone. All that her relatives wanted now was to ruin her reputation. The only people who truly cared about her weren't even related to her by blood.

What a shame.

"Since you are heartless, I hope you don't blame me for returning the favor. Today, I will be teaching you a lesson, Imani. For your sake, I hope you learn well." Janessa wasn't one for harming other people, but if push came to shove, she had no qualms with a justified vengeance.

She would make Imani remember this day for the rest of her life.

The first thing she had to do was find Rayan as soon as possible, and warn him of the impending danger that awaited them. Otherwise, his reputation might be dragged into the debacle as well.

Janessa hurried back to the banquet, but Rayan was nowhere in sight.

Usually, a lot of people would surround him, which made him easy to spot in the crowd. But not this time.

It really was a strange party.

Janessa meandered through the guests looking for Rayan, but she never found him. She tried calling him, too, but he wasn't answering his phone.

He had been pestering her all this time, yet when she finally needed to see him, he was just gone.

Janessa was still looking around when a woman walked over to her. As she came closer, she bumped into Janessa, presumably because of how dense the crowd was.

Janessa was knocked to the ground.

"Miss, are you okay?" the woman asked, helping Janessa up. Her tone was oddly cheerful, however.

"I'm okay. It's no big deal." Janessa peered at the woman in front of her. Judging from her voice, this was the same person Imani had conversed with back at the terrace.

It looked like their plans were already in motion.

The next thing this woman would do was probably get friendly with Janessa and entice her to some drinks.

Sure enough, the woman took Janessa's hand and began looking her up and down. "I'm relieved to see that you're fine. My name is Jewell. It's nice to meet you. I'm really sorry about what happened just now."

"Don't worry about it. I have something else to do, so I'll be taking my leave." Jewell was obviously not a simple woman. It wouldn't surprise Janessa if it was actually Jewell who was using Imani instead of the other way around.

For now, she had to get away from this woman.

"Don't leave. Are you mad at me? As an apology, I'll drink this glass of wine and toast to you." Jewell plucked a glass of wine from a passing water, and everyone watched as she downed it in one go.

She had been speaking so loudly that she had attracted the attention of the other guests, and now they were openly staring at the two women.

Though they said nothing, Janessa couldn't help feeling embarrassed under their scrutiny.

"I'm not angry. Like I said, it's just a small matter. You don't have to be so serious about it, Miss." Janessa already knew Jewell's purpose, and she wasn't about to let herself fall into the woman's trap.

But Jewell was unfazed. "If you're really not angry, then please drink a glass, too. I drank some wine, so you should do the same. You can choose any drink you like."

Jewell hailed a waiter and waved at the tray of glasses he was carrying.

Her attempt to persuade Janessa was getting blatant.

There was only one glass of water on the tray, the rest was wine. If Janessa didn't want to imbibe in alcohol, she had no choice but to choose that one glass of water.

It must be spiked with the drug.

"There's no need for that, Miss." With that, Janessa turned around to leave. In the next second, however, Jewell put out her foot and tripped her.

Janessa lost her balance and fell forward. The people around her didn't offer any help, and instead stepped back and away from her.

Just then, a man sprinted from the crowd and firmly caught Janessa in his arms.