

Chapter 308 Playing With The Children

It was disheartening to see how dismal the living conditions were in the orphanage.

As Patrick continued to show them around, it gradually became clear that while the environment wasn't very ideal, there were competent people holding up the backbone of the establishment.

They had a handful of teachers who guided the children through their studies. And even though the quality of education here wasn't excellent, it was good enough to make sure that the young ones wouldn't be left behind when they finally went out into the world.

"I'm sorry, Patrick, but your situation is truly..." Janessa drifted off, unsure of how to put it nicely. Especially when she didn't have the resources to solve the problems she was about to point out.

"I know," Patrick nodded. "I don't want the kids to suffer, either, but we are left with little choice. The donations that come in are either used for daily expenses or set aside for the children's treatments and cases of emergency. With so little funds, I'm afraid our hands are always tied." Patrick might be getting along in age, but he was still well-informed about every tiny detail concerning the orphanage.

"I can't fault you for that," Janessa said helplessly. "I'm sure it's been very hard on you, too."

Soon, they arrived at the yard, where the children were playing a game of throwing the handkerchief. It was an outdated and rather mundane game, but they seemed to enjoy it a lot.

"I would like to play with them and establish a connection, if that's okay. Won't you tell them, Patrick?" Seeing their laughing faces brought forth her maternal instinct, and Janessa jumped on the idea before she could stop herself.

Whenever she saw kids, she still thought about the baby she had lost.

And her heart would always melt.

"It's no problem at all. I'm sure they'll be glad to have someone new to join them in their games." Patrick walked over to the children.

"Hey there, kids. Miss Qiu here would like to play with you. Are you okay with that?" Patrick had a unique way of running things here. Although he held the highest authority, he still made a point of giving his wards the freedom of choice. Deep down, he was hoping that they would grow to learn how to decide for themselves and strive for their individual goals.

"Okay!" a tiny voice rang around the yard. "Then that brother should play with us, too!"

Rylan was pleasantly surprised to be included. All eyes were on him, now, waiting to hear his answer. Of course, he wanted to join them as well.

So he did.

When they left much later, however, a gray cloud was hanging over Janessa's head

"What's wrong? I can sense the sudden plunge in your mood just now." Rylan was very astute, especially when it came to the people he loved. With that said, he could feel even the slightest shift in Janessa's behaviors.

"I just feel humbled and a little ashamed. Compared to these children, I'm living a very privileged life. My uncle is still a bastard, but I at least I had a happy childhood. I had my parents with me as I grew up. On the other hand, these kids were abandoned at birth and had no choice but to live in very limited conditions. I just feel very sorry for them." Janessa had always harbored the thought of adopting if she never got pregnant again, and what she had just seen made her heart ache.

"They are unfortunate, as you said. They had to learn how to survive at such an early age. But I'm certain that the kids were overjoyed by our visit, and I know that they're looking forward to the Spring Festival. After all, a beautiful sister and a handsome brother are going to celebrate with them. There's no reason for them to be sad over the holidays." Rylan flashed her a cheeky grin.

As if that wasn't enough, he also struck a ridiculous pose.

"All right, stop it. Let's go grab something to eat." Janessa had enjoyed her time with the kids so much, she had completely forgotten the fact that she hadn't eaten much this morning.

Now, her hunger had finally bubbled to the surface.

Her stomach was growling even as she spoke.

"Let's find a place and have dinner, then." She immediately perked up at that, looking like a child herself who had just been given her favorite candy.

Rylan reached out and ruffled her hair affectionately. But then he realized that Janessa might get upset or offended by the gesture, so he stopped and pulled back his hand. They got into his car and drove back to the heart of the city.

Meanwhile, in the CEO's office of the Lu Group, Rayan was staring at the big box sitting on top of his desk. He carefully placed something inside, then ran a gentle hand over its surface, closing his eyes as he felt the material.

He put the lid on the box and padded over to the lounge, where he lay back wearily. There were only three days left. He couldn't afford a single mistake during this time.

"Why are you so nervous about this, Mr. Lu?" Corbin asked as he stood over Rayan.

From the moment the gift had arrived in his office, his boss had been skittish, as though he was doing something questionable and was afraid of getting caught.

Not that Corbin was complaining. He relished the opportunity to see Rayan in such a state.

"Have you ever confessed your love to someone before?" Rayan had finally begun to understand the turmoil of having to express your feelings to another person. He used to think that all the drama made no sense, but it definitely made perfect sense to him now.

He didn't even know why he was so worked up. Perhaps it was the fear of getting rejected, but it felt so much more than that.

"Of course I have. Do you see this face? This isn't something to laugh at." They were the only ones in the room, and it was way past office hours, so Corbin was casual and fearless with his words.

The two of them were boss and subordinate in the eyes of the public, but their relationship ran deeper than that. They were actually good friends, almost like brothers.

As a testament to that, only Corbin would dare to joke with Rayan like this.

"Were you also out of sorts when you did it?" The more Rayan thought about the inevitable, the greater his apprehensions grew.

It was said that everyone had their own breaking point, and once the dam of emotions was opened, there was hardly any way to turn back. This was why Rayan had been keeping himself from seeing Janessa since their return from overseas. Instead, he had absorbed himself in his work. Even when she had been admitted to the hospital, he persisted on checking in on her from a careful distance.

But as a result of his efforts, it appeared that Janessa had only grown more despondent and cold toward him.

In the few interactions that they had, she had acted like she no longer cared about him, or whatever it was between them.

"I must say, I wasn't very nervous at all. I've known that the girl liked me, so I was pretty assured. We've known each other a long time. If I felt any fear, it was probably because I was so familiar with her, I wasn't sure how to suddenly bring up my feelings like that." Corbin's eyes glazed as he recalled the exact moment.

He had been lucky, to be honest. If Janessa hadn't been here to take care of business matters with diligence and competence, he might not have any time to spare for romance.

"Huh." Rayan stared into space, pondering his friend's words.

When it really came down to it, a love confession should be a simple thing to do, especially for a man like him. But he had never done it before, so he had no clue where to even start.

"In any case, Mr. Lu, when is Miss Qiu returning to work? I'm under a lot of pressure right now, and it's only going to get more hectic as the Spring Festival approaches." Seeing that Rayan didn't think about the confession anymore, Corbin said something else casually.

"She'll be here as soon as she recovers," Rayan muttered thoughtlessly.

Then he shot to his feet and took Corbin by the arm, dragging him toward the door.

"Everything must be ready in three days. We can't make any mistake." This was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and Rayan had no intentions of ruining it for himself.

"I understand, Mr. Lu. Don't worry; everything is ready."

"All right. There's nothing else to do for the next three days but to wait." Rayan was staring out of his tall office windows again, his mind wandering off.

He could only hope that his plans turned out well.