

Chapter 372 Shameless

As the music drew to a close, Rayan and Janessa finished in a graceful pose.

The crowd burst into thunderous applause.

With Rayan's hand still on her waist, Janessa pulled herself up. Their eyes met in the intimate distance between their bodies.

Neither one had expected that they could dance so well together.

"We were a perfect match, don't you think?" Janessa asked with a broad smile, her eyes full of pride.

Rayan, on the other hand, looked as blank and aloof as ever.

"Rayan!" Gracie had been on edge as she watched and waited among the other guests. Now that the dance was over, she rushed over in a hurry and grabbed his arm. She managed to elbow Janessa aside in the process, though whether it was on purpose or not, no one could tell for sure.

Janessa was caught off-guard that she stumbled back. Fortunately, Alana was there right away, supporting her back just before she completely fell.

Gracie had used enough force to knock Janessa to the floor. She might have even gotten injured if it hadn't been for Alana.

Janessa gave her friend a grateful nod before glaring back at Gracie. She might be able to let this matter slide for now, but if she discovered that something went wrong with her pregnancy because of Gracie's attack, she would definitely demand retribution.

Janessa took a steadying breath and kept her emotions in check. In the next second, her expression became calm and distant.

"You shouldn't be so brash and imprudent in public, Miss Mo. You will embarrass Mr. Lu with your behavior." Her tone was flat and ironic, making her message clear.

Gracie had no manners to speak of. This shouldn't be surprising, since she didn't come from a distinguished family. Within these circles, she didn't amount to much, and might even be considered indecent and worthless by most.

Naturally, everyone who heard it understood what was being said. They dissolved into collective silence as they waited for the rest of the drama to unfold.

Gracie's family background—or lack thereof—had been a constant source of pain and frustration for her. She had suffered through these same mocking statements for more than two decades, haunting her no matter how far she had gotten in life.

This was also the reason why she hadn't been able to marry Rayan in the first place.

But she wasn't willing to be looked down upon anymore.

See, Janessa herself came from a prominent family, yet Gracie had still defeated her.

Since God had granted her a second chance to be with Rayan, there was no way that Gracie was going to let the chance slip past her fingers.

"I'm not sure that I know what you mean, Miss Qiu. Look at you, you can't even stand firm by yourself. Don't you think your constitution is rather too weak for this sort of event? It's no wonder you lost your chi— Ah. I forgot I shouldn't be mentioning this. I apologize, Miss Qiu. I hope you won't take my mistake to heart." It was a deliberate move, of course. Gracie poked a sore subject, and she fully expected Janessa to fold under the sorrow.

Unbeknownst to her, Janessa had changed in a lot of ways. She was no longer overcome with sadness whenever she thought of her lost child.

The heartache was still there, yes, but it wasn't as profound as it had been in the past. Even so, Janessa chose to put on a show this time and act miserable in front of Gracie.

She gripped Alana's arm tightly.

An unspoken conversation passed between the women. Alana knew what to do. She put both her arms around Janessa's shoulders and asked worriedly, "What's wrong? Don't mind the words of others!"

She stroked her friend's back in a gesture of comfort, then turned and pointed a finger at Gracie. "Why do you have to be so vicious?" Alana scolded her. "I still remember how you tried to sow discord between Janessa and Rayan back when she was pregnant. They were a married couple, and you broke them apart! Now, even though the baby is gone, you're still bringing it up and for what? Just so you can hurt Janessa? Is there no end to your cruelty?"

"What are you talking about?" Gracie retorted and rolled her eyes. "When did I ever say anything about the baby?"

She had clearly attempted to do so earlier, but she held back after remembering that Rayan was right beside her. Even if she wanted to inflict pain on Janessa, she didn't have the guts to do it in Rayan's presence.

Gracie could tell that Alana was trying to set her up.

"You did mention it, and you know it!" Alana said vehemently. "You've stolen another woman's man, and here you are pretending to be innocent. I don't think I've ever met such a shameless person in all my days!" As she said this, she turned to Rayan, partly to gauge his reaction.

"Well, are you two going to dance or not? This is not a place for some drama." With this, Alana and Janessa had effectively humiliated Rayan. He might be able to suppress the media with a single word, but the damage had already been done. He had never been so ridiculed in front of so many people before.

Rayan turned on his heel and walked out of the hall without another word, with Gracie hurrying after him.

Rylan had been watching everything from a far corner of the ballroom. He had wanted to see how Janessa would deal with the situation. Many women in the crowd pointed fingers at her, their eyes had abundant hatred for her.

Just then, an elderly man with gray hair walked forward from the ground and gave Janessa a slight bow. "I am called Aldric," he said respectfully, "and I serve as the head butler. If you are not feeling well, Miss Qiu, I suggest that you get some rest in the second-floor guest room. A wonderful show will commence later, and it would be a shame if you missed it."

Janessa considered the man's sudden appearance to be a stroke of good luck. She had been wondering how to close the scene and exit without being awkward. She was quite tired from dancing, too.

And so, she accepted Aldric's offer and followed him to the guest room.

When Rylan saw that Alana was accompanying her, he turned back to his business partners to continue discussing their affairs. He didn't have to worry about Janessa if Alana was there.

Aldric led them to a massive lounge. He opened the door and gestured for them to come in. "Please have a good rest, Miss Qiu. I will be back to inform you once the festivities resume."

"Thank you, Aldric. I'm really sorry for bothering you like this." Once the butler left, Janessa locked the door and took off her shoes. Then, she plopped on the nearest chair she could find.

It was, in fact, a luxurious chaise longue that accommodated her frame perfectly. It was plump and soft, and Janessa instantly took a liking to it.

"Who is the host of this party, anyway? We haven't even seen him yet. What a strange arrangement." Alana was just as weary. She had to remain vigilant of Janessa's state, ready at any moment in case something bad happened. Thankfully, her efforts had paid off when she had caught her from Gracie's push back then.

"Have you seen Imani?" Janessa asked. Her cousin seemed to have disappeared as soon as the party had started. It was so out of character. In the past, Imani would have done anything to catch people's attention and paint herself in a good light. Sadly, this often entailed a lot of bullying of those who were less powerful or wealthy.

As it was, neither Janessa nor Alana even knew what other activities were in store for the night. Janessa couldn't help but feel the need to be wary.

"Alana, please go and ask what activities are to follow. If Imani is really attending the party, we should be on guard against her as well." Given her cousin's nature, it was almost certain that Imani would try to do something to harm Janessa.

The problem now was the element of uncertainty. They didn't even know what to expect, let alone when it might come at them.

It wasn't just her anymore—she also had her unborn child to protect. Janessa couldn't afford to make any mistake.

"All right. You stay put in this room. Don't open the room for anyone besides me, okay? I'll call out to you when I come back." Although they didn't really think anyone would be so presumptuous in this party, it wouldn't hurt to be extra cautious.

Alana repeated her reminders once more before finally walking out of the room.

Janessa locked the door after her. When she turned around, she noticed a small alcove, almost a balcony, on the other side of the room. It was overlooking the sea.

She had almost forgotten that this place was sitting right beside the water.