

Love Slave 152

152 Timebomb

"The best way to make people believe that we did nothing wrong is to act proud as if we did nothing wrong. In reality, I don't consider us dating to be wrong to begin with, so it really doesn't bother me," Ace said while sound extremely bored.

"Right..." I murmured while I only felt half convinced.

What we did and were still doing was breaking the rules no matter how he looked at it. Despite what I thought, the employees in the company seemed to have so much faith in Ace and his words. After the press conference everything settled down quite fast in the company, and within a few days, everything was back to normal. No one gossiped about the photos of us kissing anymore. Everyone seemed to have moved on.

The key change for me was that now everyone in the company recognized me, my name, and my face. Everyone knew Ace as the CEO of the company beforehand, so nothing changed at all for him; however, very few people in the company knew me. Only those that I had the pleasure to work with in some way knew me and that has changed dramatically. Now everyone 'knew' me and even though they no longer believed that I was inappropriately involved with their CEO, it still made me very self-aware and uncomfortable.

This must be what it felt like to rise up in fame overnight. However, I didn't gain all this unwanted attention and fame from some good merit that I did and that was probably the worst part. Pushing all of that aside, the bigger problem was how Ace was going to grow this company into the size he promised his father.

"Do you have any plans in mind?" I asked in a small voice when we were alone in his office.

"Well, the first easy but important step is for us to win the Ashford competition with Project Alpha. Now that Chase Creastives is no longer in the picture, it shouldn't be hard for us to win. That doesn't mean that we can let our guard down and the reason is simple..." Ace replied.

"It doesn't matter if we win if our work is below the standard and expectation from our potential clients. They'll have their eyes on this..." I finished his sentence for him flawlessly.

"Exactly. Not just our existing and potential clients in the industry. If we want to expand our portfolio, we'll have to work hard to attract even more companies to work with us," Ace surmised.

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"You're right. It doesn't matter who our competitors are, we still need to put out our best work out there without fail," I said with determination.

"Correct. Without fail. If we get this right, the winds will really be blowing in our sails," Ace said before he reached out a hand and played with a strand of my hair.

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I sat down at the table for our regular Project Alpha meeting with the CEO's office team members. It was such a relief to finally focus on my work without any distractions in my way. Things were looking up. We got our original storyboard back and we managed to clear the rumors in the news. Everything finally felt peaceful, and I was mentally prepared to focus on delivering real results for this project.

Everyone was on time to the meeting except for Ace who told us beforehand that he would be around ten minutes late because of a previous engagement. That left me alone with my other colleagues and that was when I found out what they really thought about the gossip that was circulating in the news.

"I feel so sorry for you that those photos were leaked. They really are so misleading just like Ace said in the press conference," a colleague told me with clear sympathy.

"See? I told you that there is no way that Karina would be dating the CEO. I mean, he's Ace. The gossip is nothing but gossip," another person said.

"I feel bad for you, but you really need to be careful. Ace is a public figure, so these things are bound to happen. It's not your fault but keeping some distance between you two would be better in my opinion," another person advised sternly.

"Don't be mean to her. I'm sure everything is fine now, Karina. We can focus on pushing this project forward. We have to finalize the detailed version of the storyboards enough so that we can start on the production planning," Jeremy said with a smile.

It always seemed like Jeremy had my back all the time. He was a genius at what he does, and he was also very kind. Just like me, he worked in design, and I was such a big fan of his storyboards too.

As the people in the room chatted away about what they thought about the rumors of Ace and me dating, I began feeling a little guilty inside for lying to all of them. It wasn't my choice to keep this hidden, and as far as the chairman was concerned, we were not in a relationship. Ace's father refused to acknowledge that we were together until he proved himself by growing the company. It was going to be such a hard task and I was surprised that Ace was so willing to take it on.

When I first started working in this team, I made so many mistakes and the team doubted my ability and didn't trust me at all. However, things have changed since I've proven myself. Now they have placed their trust and belief in me; however, I wasn't being honest with them this time around. I was dating Ace and just recently, I had agreed to be his girlfriend. As I watched the people around me laugh and joke, I wondered how long we could keep our relationship a secret from everyone. One day, people will find out about us for sure.

Suddenly, it felt like I was holding a ticking time bomb in my hands. It could explode at anytime and I had no idea how devastating the effects would be this time around.