

Love Slave 236

236 Fruit of Our Efforts

"We don't have much time. Let's not be late and let's make the most out of the time that Julianna got for us," Ace said as he clapped his hands together to help the members of his team focus.

That definitely worked for me. I snapped out of my thoughts and focused on the task at hand which was to ensure that the commercial would pass the committee's review. Unlike the last time that we were here, Jeremy wouldn't be the one presenting.

"Are you ready, Rina?" Ace asked as he came to stand right at my side.

"Yes, I have to be..." I replied while I tried my best to sound calm.

"Relax. Don't tense up and just do what you always do..." Ace advised before he winked at me.

Ace had asked me to present the final commercial to the committee members. After that Julianna and some other team members will help to present their marketing plans. For that to happen, I had to successfully present the commercial and get a passing grade from the committee members first. My hand instinctively reached for the pendant that I had around my neck. After receiving it from Ace as a present, I always wore it, and just touching it seemed to give me some inner strength.

Although Ace had promised to help me if anything were to happen, it still made me nervous. Standing up there on that large stage wasn't going to be easy for me. I spent time rehearsing for this and I prayed that my nerves would not get in the way now that the time had finally arrived to unveil our commercial to the judges on the committee.

"Let's get started right away," Julianna told me when we arrived in the large auditorium.

We only had a few minutes to finish all the preparations and set up. The committee members all arrived on time and took their seats. Ace stood next to me on the side of the stage before I felt a slight warmth and pressure on my shoulder.

.....

"You'll do great. Just relax and have some fun," he whispered close to my ear.

"I'll try my best," I replied before letting out a sigh.

"Don't worry. Even if you faint, I'll be there to catch you," Ace replied reassuringly before he chuckled at his own little joke.

I hoped that I don't make it a new habit for myself to faint during important presentations. Julianna urged us to get onto the stage and I knew that the time had finally arrived for real. Ace walked onto the stage in front of me and I followed carefully after him. The light that shone on me was almost blinding and it took a short moment for my eyes to adjust. The light actually helped because I could barely see the judges although I could feel their eyes on me.

“Good afternoon. I’m Ace and this is my fabulous team member, Rina. Since we don’t have much time, I’d like to get started right away. Rina will take you through the final version of our commercial...” Ace said professionally before handing over the stage to me.

“Good afternoon. My name is Rina, and I am extremely proud to present to you our commercial that centers around raising awareness surrounding the dog meat trade. We hope that by emphasizing on the changes in cultural norms and the role of dogs as man’s best friend, we can help propel the gradual change for people to support the end of the dog meat trade,” I said while managing to sound quite professional and calm.

On my signal, the commercial started to play on the large screen behind us. I could feel the attention of the judges shift from me to the large screen where they could now view the commercial. The entire auditorium darkened as the lights dimmed to better showcase the content on the screen. At that moment, I felt something tug lightly on my hand and realized that Ace had taken my hand casually into his. I glanced up into his face, but he wasn’t looking at me. It was just so like Ace to do something like this so smoothly yet secretly while no one else was paying attention. Regardless, the warmth of his hand as he held mine made me feel certain that everything was going to turn out just fine.

Although the commercial wasn’t long at all, it felt like forever had passed by the time the commercial came to an end. There was a pause of pure silence before one of the judges began clapping his hands. After that, the rest of the judges joined in and started to clap their hands to applaud the commercial. I found myself smiling brightly at their reaction. It was clear without any words needed to be exchanged that the judges were at least impressed by the commercial.

“I really like it. The message is clear, and the story is very appealing. Most of all, I can feel the emotions of love and connection between humans and dogs,” one of the judges said with a smile.

“I agree. I think the appeal is definitely there and it is well-integrated so that it seems sincere. Congratulations. This commercial is good enough to be launched to the public,” another judge commented along with her decision.

“Thank you...” I whispered without knowing what else to say.

“I have to say that it’s been a while since I’ve seen something like this from you, Ace. This truly feels like your work...” one of the judges said with a small laugh.

“Thank you for your support and the faith that you have in our work,” Ace replied professionally.

My chest felt tight, and it felt like I could start crying tears of joy at any moment. All the hard work, sweat, tears, and everything that we had all put into this project seemed to have borne fruit. After all the judges had commented positively, the final verdict was made that the commercial was indeed ready to be revealed to the public and will be endorsed by the foundation as well.

“Next, Julianna will take you through our plan for the launch and the marketing plan,” Ace announced proudly as he waved for Julianna to join us on the stage.