



## Chapter 22 Early Darkness

Instantly, his gaze locked with hers, and a faint smile curved his lips. The intensity of their connection seemed to make the heart's blossoms even more vibrant. Little did he anticipate that this remarkable woman had already mapped out a future with him.

"Alright then, my dear wife, head off to work. I'll be there to pick you up after I finish my shift," he suggested warmly.

Rather than declining his offer, she nodded in agreement. As they embarked on their journey of cohabitation, it was essential for them to establish open lines of communication and deepen their understanding of one another.

Ember felt a pleasant warmth envelop her as she adorned the garments he had thoughtfully purchased for her. Not only did they provide physical comfort, but they also brought a serene calmness to her heart. However, she couldn't help but notice how striking the dress was. Merely a few steps into wearing it, and it caught the attention of countless passers-by.

Upon arriving at her workplace, Ember was greeted by a chorus of admiring colleagues. They showered her with compliments on her exquisite attire and inquired about its origin.

"That dress costs a staggering \$58,000. Can you believe it? If she's willing to splurge on it, then she can afford it. Given her family background and lifestyle, it's within her means," one colleague whispered, subtly insinuating their curiosity about Ember's financial capacity.



As the discussion continued, a dissonant voice pierced through the crowd, causing a ripple of unease among Ember's female coworkers. Even Ember herself couldn't help but offer a helpless smile.

"Fifty-eight thousand? That's incredibly extravagant," the voice exclaimed, casting an envious gaze upon Ember. The revelation of the dress's price prompted the surrounding colleagues to view her with a mix of awe and envy.

"Fifty-eight thousand? Ember, that's beyond my wildest dreams. I certainly wouldn't splurge that much," a colleague remarked with a tinge of self-pity.

Ember chose not to engage in her colleagues' gossip. Last week, Rose Thompson had her eyes set on the very same coat. However, upon seeing its price and considering her maxed-out credit card for the month, she reluctantly decided against it. She had planned to make the purchase next month, convinced that only someone like herself deserved to wear such extravagance. In Rose's eyes, Ember simply wasn't worthy of such opulence.

"Ember is content with street market bargains worth a few dollars. She's not the type to consider such exorbitant clothing. Did she really buy it with her own money?" Rose interjected, instantly shifting the envious glances directed at Ember to skeptical ones.

Ember's colleagues were aware of the advances she faced from affluent clients in her role as a talented young designer. The industry's unspoken rules dictated that these powerful individuals would dangle riches in front of aspiring designers,

exploiting their vulnerability and compromising their integrity. But Ember refused to be treated like a commodity, viewed with disdain by everyone.

Rose's casual remark triggered an awakening among the colleagues, and Ember understood the implications behind her words. Ember wasn't a pushover; she possessed an unwavering strength. In the past, Ember tolerated Rose's behavior solely due to her relation to the company's chairman and her close rapport with David Smith. However, now that her trust in David had been shattered, Ember no longer saw any reason to endure Rose's presence.

"Rose, what are you insinuating? The truth shines through, and those who are genuinely clean require no defense. I believe everyone here knows Ember's true character. Do you think you can sow doubt by uttering baseless claims? Smearing my reputation."

Rose was taken aback by Ember's sudden change in attitude. She stood there, momentarily stunned, like a rooster caught off guard in the heat of battle, but soon her arrogance resurfaced, and she continued to challenge Ember.

"Even if you don't disclose the price of that dress, I doubt you could afford it. And if you can't afford it yourself, it must mean that someone else gifted it to you. So, tell us, which influential client sent you this extravagant gift?" Rose's words dripped with skepticism.

Ember's rosy lips tightened, and she hesitated. She wasn't ready to reveal the details of her marriage to everyone just yet. But Rose, seizing the opportunity to fuel the gossip, pressed

further.

"See? You can't answer because it's true. That dress must have been designed by you for the office and your shared villa. It's evident that you two must have engaged in secretive rendezvous when you were in his luxurious abode," Rose provocatively insinuated

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