

My Poor Husband Is A Billionaire Chapter 1301

The Substitute Wife: My Poor Husband Is A Billionaire Chapter 1301

With a professional bodyguard's keen intuition, Laney sensed someone following her as soon as she entered the shop. Yet, every time she glanced back, nobody seemed suspicious.

Ian, noticing her distraction, asked with concern, "Mrs. Harding, what's wrong? Why do you keep looking back? Is there something behind you?"

Laney checked once more, but still saw no one. She shook her head. "Nothing. Maybe I'm just overly cautious since I recently gave birth."

Ian smiled. "In that case, ninjanovel.com I'll make you some nourishing dishes when we get home. Let's pay the bill first."

Laney nodded, and they proceeded to the checkout.

Hidden behind a snack cabinet near the cashier's desk, Garrett and Evan squatted, able to interact with Anya without Laney and Ian noticing. Garrett squatted down and playfully poked ninjanovel.com Anya's little face with his finger, and she giggled, grabbing his finger. Her adorable reaction warmed his heart, and he instinctively reached out to hold her.

Evan pulled him back, whispering urgently, "Mr. Harding, Mrs. Harding will spot you! What if she thinks you're a creep?"

"I'm the child's father. Can't I even hug her?"

Although reluctant, Garrett resisted the urge.

As Laney prepared to pay, the cashier scrutinized her and announced, "Congratulations, lady. You are our 100th customer today. As part of a promotion, you can get all your items free of charge. No need to pay."

Stunned, Laney pointed at herself, disbelieving. "You mean I won the prize?"

The cashier offered a sly smile. "Yes, your bill is covered." Thrilled, Laney realized she had never won anything before, and this time, her winnings covered at least ten thousand dollars' worth of items.

Ian, however, furrowed his brow and squinted at the cashier. “How do you know we’re the 100th customer?”

The cashier’s explanation couldn’t withstand scrutiny. Flustered, she stammered, “I, um... I counted...”

Seeing her hesitation, Ian grew more suspicious. “You counted? As a cashier, would the store entrust you with deciding the winner of such a large prize?

Aren’t they concerned you’d bring in someone to pose as the 100th customer?”

The cashier struggled to answer Ian’s inquiries. They were at an impasse for several minutes, with the cashier unable to respond. After Ian’s interrogation,

Laney also realized something was off. Her face darkened, and she demanded,

“Tell me the truth. What’s going on?”

The cashier stammered, “I... I...”

Unable to find an excuse, she finally caved in, pointing to Garrett hiding in the corner. “Your husband asked me to do this! He wants to get you back on his side!”

Laney looked where the cashier pointed and saw the familiar figure. Her expression shifted dramatically.

“Garrett?”

Garrett’s froze. He raised his head awkwardly and offered a strained smile. “Hi, Laney. What a coincidence!”

“When did you get here?” Laney frowned, recalling the feeling of being followed since entering the shop. She asked, her voice tinged with displeasure, “Have you been following us since we arrived?”

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Upon seeing Laney's face contort as if she were scrutinizing a freak, Garrett hastily clarified, "I didn't follow you. I just happened to see you and the baby when I came here. Unsure of how to approach you, I only dared to trail you in silence."

Laney's expression remained unreadable as she inquired, "Did you ask the cashier to comp our purchase?"

"I just wanted to take care of you," Garrett admitted, a hint of worry in his voice. "I feared you wouldn't accept my money..."

After a few seconds of contemplative silence, Laney decided to disregard him. She addressed the cashier icily, "I'll pay for it myself."

"But..." The cashier, noting the pitiable look on Garrett's face, attempted to vouch for him. "Your husband meant well. If you two are having a disagreement..."

"I'll pay!" Laney's voice cut through the air like a shard of ice.

"Okay!" The cashier hastily accepted her money.

Having settled the bill, Laney pushed the stroller out of the store without so much as a backward glance. She hadn't forgiven Garrett, let alone allowed herself to converse with him calmly.

As Laney strode away with resolve, Garrett stood rooted in shock. He shook off his stupor after a few seconds and made to follow her, only to be intercepted by Ian.

"What are you doing?" Garrett shoved Ian aside impatiently. "Out of my way!"

Ian spoke evenly. "Mr. Harding, since Mrs. Harding doesn't wish to see you, it would be best not to disturb her."

Garrett snorted, as if he'd just heard the most ridiculous joke. "I'm her husband. It's none of your concern whether I seek out my wife and child. Don't forget..."

He jabbed a finger into Ian's chest arrogantly. "You're merely an assistant. This isn't your concern."

Ian nodded and replied, "Indeed, I am an assistant, and it's my responsibility to resolve issues for my employer."

A sinister glint in his eyes, Garrett questioned, "So, are you implying that resolving issues for your employer includes sending fake divorce papers and forged wedding rings?"

Ian hesitated for a moment before looking up with a calm smile. "Mr. Harding, I don't know what you're talking about. I serve Mrs. Harding and only act in the best interest of her and her daughter. You, however, are not my concern." |

Hearing this, Garrett's fury mounted. Seizing Ian's collar, his eyes burning with rage, he demanded, "Tell me! Did you send the divorce agreement and the wedding ring?"

Ian regarded him indifferently and countered, "Do you have any evidence?"

Garrett sneered in anger, "Do I need evidence? You're the only one with access to Laney and the time to acquire her ring to fabricate it. Can you honestly say you didn't do it?"

Ian's lips curled into a sneer. "Without evidence, no one can make such accusations. Mr. Harding, casting baseless aspersions will only push Mrs. Harding further away."

Garrett's fury reached a boiling point, and he raised his fist, intent on teaching Ian a lesson.

Seeing the imminent altercation, Evan rushed forward in an attempt to intervene.

Sensing something amiss, Laney quickly wheeled her baby back to investigate the situation.

Upon her return, she was greeted by the sight of Garrett and Jan grappling near the store entrance.

Moments later, Ian found himself sprawled on the ground, a scrape marring his arm.

While Garrett loomed above, fist raised in triumph.

“Garrett!” Laney cried out, incredulous, “How could you hit him?” Garrett’s head snapped in her direction, his eyes locking onto the disappointment etched across Laney’s face.

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Laney was extremely disappointed by the sight of Garrett attacking Ian.

She never would’ve imagined that despite everything they had been through, Garrett would remain so self-centered and immature, displaying no signs of improvement in his character. Garrett walked stiffly towards Laney, attempting to reach for her hand. “Please, Laney, listen to me. I’m not...”

“Stop talking to me!”

Laney backed away from Garrett and looked at him with a cold, cautious stare, as though he were a stranger. “There’s nothing left for us to discuss. Please return to where you came from.” Laney’s harsh and impassive words pierced deeply through Garrett’s heart. In a burst of intense emotion, he exclaimed, “Can’t you see that he was pretending? He’s always had malicious intentions hidden deep down, and even sent me fake divorce papers. He made it seem like I was attacking him! He’s trying to drive a wedge between us!” “I don’t care who sent the fake papers.” Laney spoke in a cold tone. “I only believe what I see. If you ever lay a finger on my family again, Garrett, I’ll sign the real divorce papers and mail them to you.”

Garrett stood frozen in utter disbelief, unable to move or react upon hearing those words.

After a long pause, he shook his head with a wry grin and said, “Laney, as someone who used to be a bodyguard, you should be able to tell whether Ian was pretending. Yet, you refuse to even consider it. Could it be that I’ve lost your trust entirely?”

Laney stared at Garrett intently, then helped Ian get back on his feet. In a monotone voice, she remarked, “Enough. To be honest, there wasn’t that much trust left between us.”

With those words lingering in the air, she left with Ian and her child without taking a single look back.

Garrett watched them leave, with his face reflecting the strong sense of loss that he felt. The anguish pierced his heart, ninjanovel.com update fast overwhelming him like a swarm of ants whose incessant crawl suffocated him in a veil of agony.

Laney... Did she already consider Ian as part of her family?

If so, what significance did he hold in her life?

What did he mean to her?

On their way back, Laney grew suspicious of Ian after tending to his wound.

As she recalled the positioning of Garrett and Ian in that moment, along with the pained expression on Garrett's face as he defended himself, she couldn't shake the feeling that Ian's wound was questionable. His wound didn't seem to be the result of being forcefully pushed and scraped, but rather appeared more self-inflicted.

Ian glanced at her briefly before quickly lowering his head. Only he knew what was running through his mind.

Laney let out a sigh, but ultimately, chose not to express her uncertainty.

Upon arriving home, Laney lulled Anya to sleep and carefully placed her back in the crib. Afterwards, she went to get the medicine box for Ian.

Ian stopped her and mustered a weak smile. "I can take care of it myself, Mrs. Harding," he murmured.

"It's okay. Let me help you," Laney insisted.

She guided him to the couch and delicately applied the medicine to his wounds.

Despite being aware that he might try to frame Garrett, Laney couldn't find it in herself to neglect his well-being.

Ian had been a great source of support for her. During her most difficult moments, it was Ian who stood by her side, offering quiet care and assistance.

There was no denying that he had shown her kindness in many ways.

Nevertheless, Laney also didn't want to wrong Garrett.

While tending to Ian's wounds, she inquired tentatively, "By the way, what led to your scuffle with Garrett earlier?"

Ian's expression immediately turned tense, and he bowed his head down dejectedly. "I just told Mr. Harding not to bother you without your permission..." he muttered.

Laney probed further in a calm tone, "Is that really all that happened, Ian? I wouldn't like for my assistant to lie to me." Ian's fingers curled slightly as he began, "Mrs. Harding..."

With her eyes fixed on Ian, Laney continued in a composed tone, "Ian, I need you to be honest with me. Did you deliberately set up Garrett? And... were you responsible for sending him the fake divorce papers and wedding ring?"

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Ian's complexion drained of color as Laney interrogated him. Desperate to explain himself, but noting the disappointment in her eyes, he realized further words were futile. "It was me," he admitted.

Laney's voice was sharp and distinct as she asked, "Why? Why did you do that?"

In a hushed tone, Ian replied, "Mrs. Harding, I merely want to remove obstacles for you. Since leaving Garrett, your life has flourished. No longer bound by the Harding family, you've built a career you love and embraced a life of freedom and joy. Isn't that a blessing?" His eyes locked onto hers, his expression solemn. His voice was soothing, yet seemed to mask a torrent of emotion. "Had I not intervened, Garrett would have pursued you relentlessly, causing you trouble and casting you back into the depths of despair." Laney averted her gaze, her voice trembling. "Don't do this again. You're crossing the line between assistant and employer."

"Oh, my lady!" Ian sighed, resigned. "Why don't you understand?" Her heart pounded in time with his words.

"Understand what?" His tender, steady voice whispered into her ear.

“Laney, I’ve stood by your side all this time, doing everything in my power for you, because I love you.”

Laney’s entire being froze.

As Ian reached for her hand, she snapped back to reality, stepping away from him.

In her retreat, she knocked over the medicine box, its contents scattering across the floor.

The tincture of iodine spilled, releasing a faint alcoholic aroma. Disappointment clouded Ian’s features at her reaction. “Laney…” Laney halted him, her voice a flurry of emotion. “I’m sorry, I can’t accept your feelings.”

His eyes downcast, Ian remained silent for a moment. Then, discarding his crestfallen demeanor, he offered a gentle smile. “I understand, Mrs. Harding.

Fear not, I’ll strive tirelessly until ninjanovel.com the day you’re ready to accept me.”

Laney was unsure of how to navigate the situation. He hastily gathered the fallen items and made a hasty exit.

Ian watched her frantic departure, his eyes brimming with unspoken disappointment.

It was clear to him that Laney still harbored feelings for Garrett. Her excitement upon seeing him, followed by her fury at his violent actions, were unmistakable signs.

Love stirred emotions, while indifference bred a steady, unchanging state.

In Ian’s presence, Laney had always maintained a calm, composed demeanor, revealing no emotions.

Dinner preparations unfolded in a heavy silence.

Laney couldn’t fathom how to interact with Ian. She forced down a few bites of food, but the stifling atmosphere soon became unbearable. Setting her chopsticks aside, she decided to clean up the trash can.

Ian had always taken care of such tasks. Observing her actions, he stepped forward to intervene. "Let me handle it, Mrs. Harding." "It's okay, I can manage," Laney replied.

"No, please let me," Ian insisted.

As their conversation continued, both reached for the garbage bag simultaneously.

For a moment, they froze in place.

Their fingertips grazed one another, amplifying the already palpable awkwardness.

Laney jerked her hand back as if stung, snatched the garbage bag, and darted out the door.

Stepping outside and inhaling the crisp air, Laney's heart, which had been racing from the awkward encounter, slowly regained its composure.

Laney gazed skyward, wondering how to face Ian upon her return. Truth be told, she harbored no romantic feelings for him.

In her eyes, Ian was family, a friend but never a lover.

Sighing deeply, she prepared to approach the dumpster when she noticed a new family moving in next door.

Upon closer inspection, her expression darkened.

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The new neighbor swaggered towards Laney, smirking as he greeted her,

"Hello, I've just moved in next door. Nice to meet you." Laney clenched her teeth, glaring at him. "Garrett, why are you here? Haven't I told you to stop bothering me? Why move in right next to me?"

Feigning innocence, Garrett lied smoothly, "The Harding Group is considering buying some land in this city. I'm here to investigate and just happened to stay

next door. I only came by to check on you and ensure my daughter's well-being."

The moment Garrett's words hung in the air, Evan darted over, a business proposal clutched in his eager hands. In a solemn tone, he said, "Boss, feast your eyes on this proposal."

Garrett scanned the document, nodding seriously. "Hmm, it's good. But give it some more thought."

Laney hesitated but reluctantly relented. "Do as you please. Live there if you want, but don't bother me."

She turned to leave with the trash, but George offered to help. "I'm free right now. Let me give you a hand." ;

For the first time, Laney didn't refuse.

Inside, Garrett exhaled a sigh of relief.

As they walked, he contemplated whether to explain the incident at the store to Laney.

By the time they disposed of the trash and returned to her doorstep, he still hadn't mustered the courage.

Fearing Laney wouldn't believe him, he hesitated.

Laney stood in front of her door, eyeing Garrett coolly. "Do you have something to say? If not, I'm going inside."

After a few moments of silence, Laney furrowed her brow and turned to leave, feigning disinterest.

"Wait!" Garrett reached out, grasping Laney's arm, his words tumbling out in a jumble. "I didn't... I didn't hit Ian. He fell by himself. As for the divorce papers and wedding ring, he might have orchestrated it."

His voice quivered, pleading, "Laney, can you please believe me?" Gazing into Garrett's anguished eyes, Laney's heart softened. "Alright, I believe you."

His eyes sparkled with hope. "Really? You do? Then can we fire Ian? I'll help you find someone else..."

“Garrett.” Laney’s voice was weary. “I’m not going to fire Ian.” The color drained from Garrett’s face as realization struck. “You’ve fallen for him?”

With composure, Laney replied, “It’s not love, but gratitude I feel towards him. During the darkest days of my life, Ian cared for me and provided company. The pain from those times is etched in my memory. You, my husband, were never there.”

Waves of guilt surged through Garrett. His eyes brimmed with torment, and his lips quivered, unable to muster a defense. Laney offered a faint smile before continuing, “We’ve already accumulated countless misunderstandings. One more won’t change much. The crux of our issues is inequality. You and your family have constantly belittled, pitied, and manipulated me as if I were a mere plaything. I refuse to endure a life tethered to the whims of the wealthy and powerful, and I won’t subject my daughter to such insecurity.”

Garrett prepared to make a promise, but Ian emerged from Laney’s house, cutting their conversation short.

His heart ached, as if pierced by needles.

So, Laney was already living with Ian... Garrett thought, disbelief welling up within him.