

## **The Mbahsb 151**

### **The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride - Chapter 151**

It was already half past one when Janet got home that evening.

Quiet as a mouse, she opened the door and crept inside. Only the sound of the clock ticking on the wall could be heard.

Janet flicked on the light switch. To her surprise, the sandwich from breakfast was still sitting on the table where she left it, and there was not a beer bottle in sight. She walked into the living room in her slippers and looked around in confusion, "Ethan?"

It was so late, but Ethan seemed to not have come back yet.

Or was he asleep in his room?

Janet had half a mind to knock on his bedroom door, but decided against it on second thought. She was afraid she'd just wake him up. In the end, she quietly opened his door and poked her head in.

To her surprise, the room was empty.

With a slight frown, Janet decided to wait for Ethan to come back. She wasn't sleepy anyway.

After everything that had happened, she was wide awake.

She popped the sandwich in the microwave to heat it up. She settled on the sofa and watched TV while eating. All the while, she kept thinking of what had happened in the elevator.

About twenty minutes later, she heard the sound of the key unlocking the door.

Ethan stepped inside wearing a simple, clean white T-shirt underneath a black windbreaker. His prominent nose stuck out more than usual, making him look even more handsome.

Chewing on her sandwich, Janet looked up at him questioningly. "Why're you so late?"

"Night shift. A colleague was late, so I covered his shift for another half an hour," Ethan explained briefly.

As he spoke, he realized he was getting more and more skillful at lying.

"Oh, do you have night shifts often? I didn't know you could stay up this late all the time," Janet said, after thinking about it for a while.

Ethan shrugged off his coat and sat next to her. "What are you eating? It smells so good."

He craned his neck to get a bite of her sandwich, then he put his arm around her shoulder and pinched it. Raising his eyebrows slightly, he smiled. "You always stay up late. Why are you getting so worked up about me staying up late?"

Unable to retort, Janet kept silent and looked down, feeling a bit sheepish. He was right. She worked overtime a lot and was often late to go home.

"By the way, something happened today," she suddenly said, looking up at him with bright eyes.

Then she relayed what had happened in the elevator with Brandon.

On the one hand, she thought it was her responsibility to inform Ethan about this. On the other, she was curious to see how he would react to this.

She was under the impression that Ethan was very tolerant of her boss despite his behavior. So since Brandon had crossed the line today, she wondered if Ethan would finally get angry. Otherwise, he was a really abnormal man.

And Janet wouldn't be pleased if that was the case.

Ethan rubbed his eyebrows, his thin lips pursed into a straight line.

When he heard how Janet had screamed in the elevator, he tossed logic out of the window and just rushed to hug her protectively. In a situation as dangerous as that, if the elevator plunged to the ground, he still wanted to protect her.

But he was Brandon at that time, so it was definitely inappropriate for him to do such a thing.

Ethan could feel Janet's eyes boring into him. She was obviously waiting for him to react.

Last time, he didn't show jealousy towards Brandon, which made Janet unhappy. If he was still indifferent to the matter this time, Janet would definitely break up with him.

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"Why are you so quiet? Say something!" Seeing that Ethan didn't reply to her, Janet frowned unhappily and tugged at his arm urgently.

Was he a robot? How could he be so pokerfaced after what she just told him?

Moreover, the question that kept hanging over Janet's head was eating away at her—did he like her or not?

"Calm down. I'm just thinking about how to deal with Brandon. I can't just scold him for getting trapped in an elevator with you. I have to think it through before I do anything." Ethan's expression darkened, as if he had made up his mind.

Janet propped herself up and asked anxiously, "What? What do you want to do? I hope you won't act rashly, Ethan. Brandon is the CEO of the Larson Group. We can't afford to offend him."

Ethan chuckled lightly. "Don't worry. I know what I'm doing. I'll just talk to him."

Janet's eyes widened in surprise. "How? You can't just walk into his office! Even I can't do that."

Ethan shrugged and said firmly, "I'll figure it out. I have a lot of connections. I'm sure I'll be able to get to him, one way or another."

Although Ethan was calm and composed as he spoke, Janet couldn't help but worry that Ethan would stir up trouble for her.

Seeing the worried look on the woman's face, Ethan gave her a reassuring smile and lowered his head to kiss her lips. His loose black hair brushed against her face.

“Didn’t you want me to do something about it? Yet now that I’ve told you what I’m going to do, you’re worried. You silly girl. Don’t worry. I’ll handle it,” he joked lightly.

“I just wanted to know whether you care about me or not,” Janet said shyly, lowering her eyes. Her delicate lashes quivered slightly.

Then she looked up and met his eyes. “So how are you going to talk to Brandon?”

“It’s a secret.” Ethan smiled mysteriously.

“You’re so mean!” Janet murmured. Despite her pouty face, she felt satisfied in her heart.

There was a huge gap between the social status of Ethan and that of Brandon, but Ethan showed no fear and was even going to talk to Brandon, which meant that he cared about her very much.

Seeing that the woman in his arms was finally grinning from ear to ear, Ethan breathed a sigh of relief.

He finally managed to get himself out of this sticky situation.

But then came another question.

What was he going to do next?

The following day, in the Larson Group, Ethan decided to leave the problem to Garrett.

While racking his brains, Garrett smoked three boxes of cigarettes. After stubbing out the last cigarette butt, he mused, “I’m not going to lie. What you’re doing is difficult. It won’t be easy to fool your wife.”

“You can’t get off work today until you come up with a solution.” Ethan’s eyes were cold and sharp.

“Fuck! Gee, thanks.” Garrett scratched his hair and sank into the sofa, deep in thought. Suddenly, his eyes lit up. “Oh! I have an idea. You should give me a raise ‘cause I’m so damn smart.”

He looked at Ethan with a mischievous smile and rubbed his hands together. “I have an excellent solution. It can solve all your problems once and for all, as long as you are willing to do it.”

Ethan’s hand, which was holding a pen and hovering over an unsigned document, paused. “What do you mean?”

Garrett smiled knowingly. “Just tell your wife that Brandon is gay and only likes men. Which means he won’t have any interest in your wife. Then all your problems will be solved.”

The pen in Ethan’s hand nearly snapped in half.

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Clenching his teeth, Ethan shot Garrett a murderous glare. “You want me to pretend to be gay?”

Garrett burst into unhinged laughter that lasted a long time. When he finally was out of breath, he leaned back against the sofa and looked at his friend innocently. “What else can you do? You want to help your wife using Brandon’s identity, but your wife refuses to accept Brandon’s kindness. And, as her husband, you can’t remain indifferent while knowing that Brandon’s hitting on your wife.”

When he finished his words, he looked at Ethan, who was sitting against the light. Garrett could only make out Ethan's outline in the dazzling afternoon light. His friend seemed unfathomable. Ethan put down the pen and leaned against his chair, gnashing his teeth angrily. After a long time, he finally said with great reluctance, "I guess it is my only choice."

Garrett's smile grew even wider, as though his trick had succeeded. He happily took a sip of the tea then set the cup on the table and smacked his lips. "Dude, I told you I'm so smart. Who else could've come up with such a good idea? Now, you won't have to go through all that trouble anymore."

Ethan curved his mouth into a sneer. "Of course only you could think of an idea so ridiculous, it might actually work, but it is also a double-edged sword."

Garrett sighed and said in a whining tone, "It took me a long time to solve this problem for you. How could you say that to me?"

Truth be told, Ethan thought Garrett's idea was feasible. Even if Janet was under the impression that Brandon was gay, it wouldn't change anything anyway. When he revealed his identity in the future, the misunderstanding would naturally disappear. But despite knowing this, he couldn't help but feel awkward.

It'd have been much better if someone else could tell Janet that Brandon was gay. But now he had to tell her himself that he liked men.

It was hard for any straight man to say it. How much more the domineering and powerful CEO of the Larson Group?

Garrett kept on smiling and winked at him. "I have another idea. You could tell Janet that Brandon has erectile dysfunction. So even if Brandon had a crush on her, there's nothing he could do about it."

Garrett was such a mischievous man with countless tricks up his sleeve.

Even though he was born into a business-inclined family and even though the three generations before him were all wealthy businessmen, he didn't take after them at all. Ever since he was a child, he thought differently—deviously, if Ethan were to put it lightly.

"I think you'll soon be the one with erectile dysfunction," Ethan said in a voice so low that it sent a shiver down Garrett's spine.

But Garrett waved his hand dismissively and laughed. "Okay, okay, no more joking around. I think the first solution was better anyway. We're at the end of our rope. This is our only choice."

Ethan didn't say anything, but his dark expression spoke volumes.

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It was early autumn in the Seacisco city. The originally green leaves started to turn yellow and orange. The days were getting shorter and shorter. By the time people got off duty, the sun had already sunk in the horizon.

Today, when Ethan came back home, Janet wasn't there.

He opened the refrigerator, took out a can of ice cold beer and gulped it down. Then he crushed the can and leaned against the refrigerator, his hooded eyes riddled with anxiety.

Ethan didn't have the slightest idea how to initiate the uncomfortable conversation with Janet.

Just as he was fretting, the door opened.

Janet walked in and stopped when she saw him. Her eyes curved in a smile like crescent moons. "You're home early today!" she said with pleasant surprise.

As she spoke, she walked to the fridge and put in all the fruits and vegetables she had just bought.

Noticing that there was something wrong with Ethan's expression, Janet turned to look at him questioningly. "What's with the long face? Is there anything wrong?"

Ethan took a deep breath to calm himself down. His jaw tightened and his eyes grew even more serious. "So, I reached out to Brandon. Although I didn't meet him face-to-face, I talked to him over the phone."

Janet's eyes went wide with disbelief. Then, she asked him curiously, "How'd you manage to get in touch with him?"

She was already satisfied with the fact that Ethan said he'd talk to Brandon, but she didn't expect that he'd actually be able to reach the President of the Larson Group. Even she, an employee of his, couldn't just waltz into his office and talk to him.

Ethan's slippers squeaked as he walked across the apartment to the sofa. Lowering his eyes, he said, "I have my ways."

"Okay then. So what did he say? Was he mean?" Janet asked tentatively. She followed Ethan to the sofa, but she didn't sit down. She could feel that Ethan was upset, so she couldn't help but feel a little anxious.

Ethan rubbed the back of his neck and pursed his lips into a straight line. After a long time, he said with great difficulty, "You don't have to worry about Brandon anymore. He doesn't like women."

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Janet's eyes went as wide as saucers and her hands flew to cover her mouth. "Are you saying Brandon's gay?!" she gasped breathlessly.

She was so curious about this juicy piece of gossip that her eyes lit up excitedly. She plopped down next to Ethan on the sofa and tugged at his sleeve incessantly. "How'd you know? Who told you? You can't just start a rumor like this, Ethan. Brandon's the president of a big group and can't be trifled with."

Ethan squeezed his eyes shut, his head pounding painfully. He held the woman's hands to stop her from pulling his sleeves and pulled her into his arms. "Brandon said it himself. Don't tell anyone."

"Really? I had no idea! He didn't seem gay at all." Janet still couldn't completely believe this news. She shook her head in disbelief, but she was relieved that she didn't have to fret over what had happened last night.

So it turned out that her boss was gay.

“Brandon also told me that he only takes care of you because he thinks highly of you. He doesn’t have feelings for you. So you can relax now,” Ethan explained helplessly, sighing in secret.

Janet was still in shock. She looked up at the man and saw the complicated emotions surging in his eyes. Suspicion crept into her heart.

Brandon was the president of a big and powerful group. How could someone like Ethan have met with him so easily?

Did Ethan make up this story just to set her mind at ease?

“Wait a minute, Ethan. You’d better not be lying to me. If Brandon’s really gay, why would he tell someone like you? He would at the very most have just told you that he’s not interested in me. Why would he come out to you?” As Janet spoke, she became more and more suspicious.

Ethan had anticipated such a reaction and was prepared. “I asked him directly if he was hitting on my wife or not. He denied it firmly. Maybe he wanted to clarify this misunderstanding completely so as not to cause unnecessary trouble, so he told me his little secret. Besides, if he really is straight, why would he lie to me about his \*\*\*uality?”

What he said made sense, but somehow Janet still felt that something was off.

And a woman’s intuition was always right. Thinking of how Brandon had treated her before, Janet really couldn’t believe that he was gay.

Of course, she might’ve been misled by her first impression of him. Besides, she didn’t have any gay friends. She didn’t know much about them or have the slightest clue as to how they behaved.

“Hey, aren’t you happy that Brandon has no feelings for you? What reason would I have to lie to you about him being gay?” Ethan locked eyes with her seriously.

Biting her lower lip, Janet hesitated slightly. Yes, it was true, but her gut told her that something strange was afoot, although she couldn’t tell what exactly.

‘Forget it, Janet. You should be relieved that Brandon has no feelings for you. Besides, Ethan is good to you. That’s more than enough. Just let it be,’ Janet told herself.

“I know you wouldn’t lie to me, it’s just... It feels so unbelievable. It’s only natural for someone who hears such groundbreaking news to try to confirm it. But now that you’ve explained everything, I believe you.” As she spoke, she slipped her arms around his waist and buried her face in his chest. Then she raised her head and looked at him with her smiling eyes.

“Okay. Good.” Ethan breathed a sigh of relief and rubbed the back of her head gently. When his eyes fell on her slightly opened lips, he felt a sudden urge.

“I wanna kiss you.” He lowered his head and pressed his lips against hers. Then he stuck out the tip of his tongue and danced with hers.

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The design drafts Janet submitted a few days prior was approved.

Before the end of Friday, she received an email from the company. She and her other two colleagues were selected to be the next intermediate designers. In other words, she was promoted without a hitch.

“Wow! You should treat us to a meal in celebration!” Gerda wiggled her eyebrows at Janet playfully.

Several colleagues who were close to Janet also cheered and congratulated her.

Janet beamed at them happily. “Of course! All of you should come.”

Everyone was excited to hear her invitation. They laughed and proposed, “How about tonight? It’s a Friday after all. Plus, we don’t have to work tomorrow. We can party all night long!”

“Okay! What’re you guys in the mood for? I’ll book a table in advance,” Janet asked softly with a gentle smile on her face.

She had never had a meal with her colleagues before. In fact, she had never seen them after work. It was a good chance for her to get to know them more.

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“How about that Korean barbecue restaurant we went to last time? It’s an authentic restaurant run by a Korean family. It’s the best and most delicious place in the entire city,” Gerda suggested, clapping her hands excitedly.

“Well, the food in that restaurant is indeed delicious. But it’s also a little expensive. With so many of us going there, I’m afraid we will empty Lind’s wallet.”

Now that Janet didn’t have any financial pressure, she thought for a moment and readily agreed, “It’s okay. I don’t often invite you to dinner, after all. Gerda, give me the phone number of the restaurant. I’ll reserve a table.”

Janet had not only received a promotion but a salary hike as well. She could occasionally squander without burning a hole in her pocket.

After making a reservation in the restaurant, Janet sent a message to Ethan, informing him about the dinner party.

Not long after she sent the message, her phone rang. It was indeed a call from Ethan.

“Who are you going with? A man or a woman?”

“Well, I’m going with my colleagues — mostly girls. One guy is joining us, but he already has a girlfriend,” Janet explained in a low voice.

“Why are you whispering? Are you afraid others might hear us?” Ethan complained. “What’s wrong? Are you hiding me and our relationship from others? Are you ashamed of me?”

Janet frowned. She couldn’t understand what he meant.

“I’m used to keeping my voice down when I’m in the office. It’s a little inconvenient to chat loudly with so many people around.” Janet looked around. She was in the company’s bathroom now. After all, it was a common area where people enter and exit all the time.

Ethan hummed but didn't say anything more. He was idly knocking on the table with a pen, having no intention of hanging up.

"All right. I'll hang up then." Janet was anxious to return to work.

Just as she was about to hang up, Ethan spoke, "I miss you. What do I do?" His voice was thick with emotion.

Janet's breath caught in her throat; her face turned red. She didn't know what to say. "I... I..."

"Why are you stuttering?" Ethan giggled. "All right. I'm hanging up. I won't disturb your work."

Janet stared at the black screen in confusion.

Ethan had disappeared after flirting with her. What was that supposed to mean?

It was late in the evening when she got off work.

It was almost dark outside.

Janet and her colleagues planned to take a taxi.

As soon as she finished packing her bag, her gaze fell on a hand with a royal blue gift box.

"Congratulations on your promotion! I just bought it from downstairs. Don't refuse it. It's not expensive." Janet looked up and saw Christopher. He put the box on the desk and looked at her, almost as if he was prepared to hear her refusal.

Janet pursed her lips and reluctantly took the gift box. "Thank you, Chris. By the way, we're going to have a barbecue. Why don't you join us? Don't refuse, or I won't accept this gift."

Janet followed suit.

Now that Christopher had given her a gift, she decided to treat him to dinner in return.

"Well, since you insist, I can't really refuse. Let's go." A small smile emerged on Christopher's handsome face.

They had a good time at dinner. The atmosphere was warm and lively.

Gerda ordered a crate of beer and drank most of it.

"Lind, come on! I already finished drinking twelve bottles. Look at you. You haven't even emptied one bottle. That's unfair!" Gerda's face turned red from all the alcohol she consumed. She urged Janet to drink more.

"Okay, I'll help you empty these bottles." Janet was happy. Being around friends seemed to encourage her. She opened two bottles of beer, picked one up, and downed the entire contents in one gulp.

She completely forgot about her low tolerance of alcohol.

"Awesome! It seems like Gerda has met her opponent tonight. Lind, defeat her! No one can compete with her when it comes to drinking. You should avenge us!" Everyone whistled excitedly.



Janet giggled as she finished three bottles of beer and let out a loud burp. "Yeah! I'm going to defeat her!"

Looking at her flushed face, Christopher sensed something was wrong. He patted her back and whispered in her ear, "I think that's enough. You seem a little drunk already."

Janet shook off Christopher's arm and straightened up. She could not walk steadily. "Nonsense!" she slurred, shaking her head. "You are drunk! I'm not! I must defeat Gerda today! No one can compete with me!"

She was insanely drunk tonight.

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The party lasted until the early hours of dawn.

Gerda and Janet got piss drunk, while the others who hadn't joined in the drinking competition just had a lovely meal.

Once they realized that Janet had completely wasted, they finally decided to call it a night.

They had worked together to lift the two girls from their seats and carried them outside. "Hey, what should we do with these two? They're drunk as a skunk."

Christopher glanced at the still unconscious Janet and cleared his throat. "I'll send Lind home."

"Oh yeah, you and Janet went to the same university, right?" One of their colleagues asked with a mischievous glint in her eye.

Christopher just smiled. "Yes, we were schoolmates." He was not particularly good-looking, but he always looked neat, and had a calm and gentle demeanor that made people feel safe around him. It didn't hurt that he was tall and had broad shoulders, too.

Gerda opened her eyes then, and grinned. "I heard that you two are close. Didn't you stand up for her when Ike deliberately targeted her?"

"Aren't you supposed to be drunk?" Everyone had turned to Gerda in surprise, and couldn't help but admire her seemingly indestructible tolerance to alcohol.

"I was just pretending. Lind is too stubborn for her own good. She knows she can't handle her drink, but she still insisted. If I hadn't acted like I was drunk, she would have kept at it until she had to be rushed to the ICU." Gerda paused and let out a loud burp, her face turning red as a tomato. "Well, then. Let Christopher send her back. We can leave it all up to him."

After reaching a consensus, they hailed their respective taxis and split up.

Christopher looked at Janet, who was slumped against the wall of the restaurant.

The early autumn breeze was chilly, especially given the hour. Christopher took off his coat and draped it over Janet's shoulders, then he put an arm around her waist to support her to the curb.

His hold on her was loose and casual; he didn't have any ulterior motive. He only wanted to see that Janet went home safely, and perhaps spend a little more time with her in the process.

Christopher slung her purse over his neck and ushered Janet to the street. It wasn't easy, seeing as he was practically dragging a dead weight. All the jostling must have woken her up, because Janet began to groan.

"Janet?" Christopher leaned close and parted her messy hair to find her struggling to open her eyes. Her plump lips pursed as he tucked her locks behind her ear. "Are you all right? Do you feel uncomfortable anywhere?"

"Be quiet. I want to get some sleep." Janet appeared to be sleep talking. She reached up with her slender fingers and scratched her nose. Before he knew it, she had settled into a comfortable position in his arms, and was sleeping soundly against his chest.

"Okay... Sleep well." Christopher was unaware that he was sporting a huge grin at that moment. He had even forgotten the fact that Janet was already married.

Shortly after, he called a taxi and put Janet in the backseat with much difficulty before flopping beside her.

He then instructed the driver to drive on. Christopher only knew the name of Janet's residential community, but he had no idea which apartment building she stayed in, let alone her unit number.

The taxi sped into the night. Throughout the drive, Christopher sat stiff and virtually motionless. Janet's head was nestled in the crook of his shoulder. Soon, he heard her muttering under her breath.

He lowered his head and stared at her delicate face. "What? Can you say that again? I didn't hear you clearly just now."

Janet huffed, her eyelashes fluttering slightly. "I said, aren't you going to kiss me?"

Christopher felt his ears burn. He cleared his throat and took a deep breath. "Do you know who I am?"

He was just a man, after all—a man with feelings for her.

"Why aren't you kissing me already?" Janet placed a hand on his other shoulder and pulled him close. She sounded petulant, coy almost.

Christopher leaned into her invitation, his hand pressing against the small of her back. He traced the curve of her cheek with his forefinger, pausing when his burning gaze fell on her lips. A muscle ticked at his jaw as he hesitated.

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Christopher's heart raced in his chest as he leaned closer to Janet.

"Ethan..." Janet mumbled softly, shattering all the intimacy into pieces.

The light in Christopher's eyes dimmed in an instant. He immediately stopped and sat upright as the corners of his mouth twitched. The light outside the window fell on his face, outlining his features. He looked hurt.

He restrained his emotions and lifted the coat on her shoulders. "It's all right. Go to sleep."

He turned his head and looked out of the window.

The Korean restaurant they had dinner in the evening was quite far from Janet's home. When they arrived, it was already past midnight. The moon hung among the foamy clouds, casting a silver light on the land.

Janet was drunk; she had no idea what she was doing. Her arms dangled out of her coat as she waved her hands. Her loose shirt, unbuttoned on the top, slid to her shoulders, revealing her cleavage and collar bones. "Hmm, it's uncomfortable here. My back hurts a lot."

"Hey, Janet, don't move. You're home." Christopher's mouth became dry. He hurriedly lifted the coat and wrapped it around Janet, revealing nothing but her flushed face.

"Well, hurry up and carry me upstairs. I'm so sleepy." Janet leaned back and slumped onto the back seat of the taxi as soon as Christopher got out.

Christopher wanted to drag her out of the taxi, but Janet didn't seem to cooperate with him, so he bent forward and lifted her off the car.

Just as he was about to put her down, a strong force pulled Janet from his arms.

"What the hell?" Christopher looked up and saw a strong figure standing in front of him.

The dim light on the street cast long shadows, making Ethan look like a towering mountain that seemed to even block the dazzling moon.

"You were holding her with such ferocity!" Ethan sneered. His droopy eyes turned murderous as he looked at Christopher. Then, he turned to look at the woman in his arms. A frown lined his forehead, and his jaw tightened.

"You've misunderstood me. I'm here to drop Janet," Christopher hurriedly explained.

Ethan ignored him and gently put Janet down and wrapped his arm around her shoulder, forcing her to stand steadily. Seeing that her wobbly feet didn't support her, he held her shoulder tightly to offer more support. "Don't you know how to walk? Why are you asking others to carry you?" he chided her.

"Ouch!" Janet yelped in pain as she felt someone was crushing her shoulder. The pain made her sober up a little.

When she opened her blurry eyes, her gaze fell on Ethan, who was a picture of pure rage. His sharp eyes were like bullets waiting to pierce through her. Janet trembled with fright.

"Are you awake?" Ethan sneered and fixed her clothes. "Can you stand on your own now?"

His venomous words and the anger in his eyes seemed to sober Janet up. She nodded and stood beside Ethan, trying to balance her weight.

Christopher took a deep breath. "Mr. Lester, don't get me wrong. Janet got drunk during dinner. I wanted to safely drop her home. Nothing happened," he explained to prevent any misunderstanding.

Ethan's towering presence made Christopher look insignificant. His explanation only seemed to worsen things.

"Only guilty people feel the need to explain, Mr. Garrison." Ethan looked cold and indifferent. His one arm was wrapped around Janet, who was swaying around like a puppet dangling from the rope. "I'll deal with you later."

With that, he took Janet away.

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Just as Janet walked forward, Ethan grabbed her waist and threw her on his shoulder.

"Ethan!" Janet's eyes sprang open in horror. She screamed and hit his back, but the man continued to walk forward.

With a stone-cold face, Ethan didn't say a word on the way. When he walked out of the elevator, he took out the key, opened the door, and threw Janet on the sofa.

"Can you please let me explain?" Janet asked, her voice breaking almost as if she was about to cry. Her head began to spin, so she sank on the sofa. Janet struggled to sit up, but her stomach churned; she wanted to throw up.

"Fine. Explain!" Ethan leaned forward and rested his hands on either side of the sofa as he stared into her eyes.

Janet hugged her knees and looked out the window to avoid his sharp gaze.

Ethan grasped her chin, forcing her to look at him.

"I got a promotion and salary hike. Christopher gave me a gift to congratulate me, so I invited him for dinner. I drank too much during dinner. I had no idea he had dropped me home. Nothing happened between us." Tears rolled down Janet's cheeks and dropped on Ethan's knuckles.

He looked like a fierce beast that was about to swallow Janet alive.

"Is that all? Why didn't you tell me that you invited him when we were talking over the phone? Did you lie to me?"

Ethan sounded calm, but Janet could sense his coldness.

"Well, he gave me the gift only after I spoke to you. I invited him as a way of thanking him for the gift — it was a spur-of-the-moment decision. I forgot to tell you about it," Janet argued weakly.

"You were so drunk." Ethan sneered. "How do you know that he didn't do anything to you in the car?"

Janet was so scared that she didn't dare to retort. Her shoulders trembled as fresh tears filled her eyes.

"You have low alcohol tolerance. Why did you drink so much?" Ethan drew a tissue from the table and wiped her tears.

A shiver ran down Janet's spine despite the gentleness in his voice.

The lights in the room were off, so half his face was hidden in the darkness.

“Well, I was happy. It was fun to be around all my friends, and I was having a good time, so I just drank without thinking much.” Janet curled up and hugged her knees. She wished she could hide from the man’s intense gaze.

Ethan withdrew his hand. Two red fingerprints were etched on her cheek. Janet had soft, tender skin — even a slight pinch would leave marks on her flawless cheek.

“I called you so many times, but you didn’t answer. Are you deaf?” Ethan stood up, took out her phone, and threw it beside her.

Janet frowned and saw a series of missed calls from Ethan.

“I was drunk, and my phone was muted. I didn’t notice it. It wasn’t my fault,” Janet explained, desperately trying to convince him. Her pitiful voice was in stark contrast with his harsh tone.

“Do you think I’m a fool? You haven’t checked your phone for six hours. Are you going to say you didn’t even once look at your phone after you left work?” Ethan’s eyes narrowed. Bile rose in his throat as the image of Christopher holding Janet in his arms flashed in his mind.

“Fuck!” he cursed and pressed Janet against the sofa. Then, he grabbed her dress to tear it apart.

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“Ethan! What are you doing? Get your hand off me!” Frightened, Janet recoiled from his touch and continued to step away until she felt the arm of the sofa against her back. She was trapped. Ethan had an obvious advantage in terms of size; he could be all over her in an instant.

She tried her best to push against him, but his chest was like a solid wall. He squeezed himself between her legs and pressed his knee over her thigh to stop her from flailing. The next thing she knew, Ethan was sweeping his hot hand down her abdomen and to her crotch.

“Nothing happened between you, right? What are you afraid of, hmm?” He leaned forward and nipped the delicate shell of her ear. “Since you don’t seem to have any awareness to the possible dangers around you, I’m afraid I will have to teach you a lesson.”

“How dare you? Stop touching me!” Janet’s face had drained of all color, while her eyes turned bloodshot and teary.

Ethan’s eyes were like bottomless pits that threatened to swallow her whole. The air around them thrummed with the promise of danger and excitement.

“You don’t like me touching you?” he asked, his voice low and menacing. “You must really be having an affair with that man.” Janet had never seen him so angry, nor had she imagined that he was capable of such frightening rage.

“It’s not that! I’m just—I’m scared.” She realized too late that it was the wrong thing to say.

Ethan swooped in and began pulling at Janet’s clothes. She felt the distinct bulge underneath his trousers as his burning lips trailed kisses from her ear to her neck.

“Let me go! “Stop, Ethan. I’m not ready. I don’t want this! Please, come to your senses...” Janet cried out desperately, even as she struggled against his ruthless assault.

His eyes spoke of a raw, ferocious hunger, and she knew that he would devour her all night.

For a while, they engaged in a tug of war with her clothes, but Janet was no match for him. Ethan was relentless and unmovable.

It wasn’t that she didn’t want to accept his passions; she was simply much too frightened of him at the moment.

Ethan turned a deaf ear to her pleas and proceeded to take off his black shirt. And then he was burying his head in her chest, licking and biting her tender flesh. Janet felt the electric sensations rush to her very core.

“No! No!” She was screaming now, covering her face with her hands. It was bad enough that she was terrified of him, but she couldn’t deny the fact that her body was instinctively responding to his advances. “You bastard! Let go of me!”

Ethan had already freed himself from his trousers and was about to silence her with yet another fierce kiss when he saw the look on her face. He paused.

Janet’s hair was a mess, her eyes wide with horror. Fresh tears were streaming down her flushed cheeks.

“Fuck....” Ethan mumbled through gritted teeth. He glanced down at his swollen cock, took a deep, fortifying breath, and zipped his pants up.

He grabbed Janet’s shirt and bra from the floor and handed them to her before wordlessly striding into his bedroom. He slammed the door shut behind him.

Janet stared at the crumpled items of clothing in her arms. She was still in a state of shock, and it took her a good while to compose herself.

She stared at Ethan’s door, biting her lip in an effort to hold back her tears.

She knew, without the shadow of a doubt, that her husband was absolutely furious this time.

### **The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride - Chapter 160**

Janet slowly put on her clothes.

She knew she was wrong. However, Ethan shouldn’t have reacted that way either.

She was innocent, and Christopher did not do anything to her.

‘Can’t I talk to another man just because I’m with Ethan now?’

“Are you insane?” Janet cursed under her breath as she buttoned up her shirt. Tears streamed down her face.

She stood up and wanted to go back to her bedroom, but she waited in front of Ethan’s room for a long time. Janet even pressed her ear against the door to hear what was happening inside.

But the room was strangely silent.

Janet clenched her fist and was almost about to knock on the door. But she ultimately decided against it.

What could she possibly tell him after getting inside?

Ethan was still angry. He would probably pinch her face and continue to question her or push her onto the bed. She had just escaped from him. Going inside would be like voluntarily setting foot into the trap and letting Ethan interrogate her all over again.

“Janet, you’re such a wuss!” She hated herself for hesitating outside, not knowing what to do.

Janet wandered around in the living room for a while and glanced at Ethan’s bedroom door.

‘Should I take the initiative to apologize to Ethan?’ she wondered.

But they had never got into a fight like this before. Janet was hesitant whether to apologize first. After all, Ethan had also been mean and rude to her earlier.

Lying on the sofa, hugging the pillow, Janet stared at the closed door.

“You have to come out sometime. Then we’ll talk.” She snorted and buried her face in the cushion.

Janet wanted to stay awake. She held her cushion and waited, but her eyelids grew heavy.

Janet didn’t know when she fell asleep.

The next morning, she was awakened by the honk of the car downstairs.

Thinking she was sleeping on the bed, Janet stretched herself and turned over. But as a result, she clumsily fell on the carpet. Janet winced in pain, for her back hurt. Fortunately, there was a carpet. Otherwise, she would have broken her waist.

Janet scratched her hair and sat up. She had a terrible hangover. Her stomach felt queasy and her temples throbbed as if someone were piercing them with an electric drill. She sat on the sofa, staring at the wall, not knowing what to do.

Once the fog in her mind settled, she looked at herself and found a blanket wrapped around her. Breakfast and hangover pills were lying on the tea table beside her. The steaming bowl of porridge made her mouth water. She stared at it in a daze.

All of a sudden, she stood up and ran to Ethan’s room. “Ethan? Are you in there?”

There was no answer. She twisted the doorknob and peeked inside.

The empty room looked spotless. The window was open, and the dark blue curtains billowed with the wind.

It looked like Ethan had left.

Janet’s heart sank as she turned around and closed the door.

It was Saturday, and Ethan didn’t return home all day.

It was nine in the evening. Sitting on the sofa, Janet stared at the clock.

She felt uncomfortable for no reason as if a weight had settled on her heart, crushing her soul.

Janet sat up straight and took a deep breath. Unable to stand it anymore, she dialed his number.

She wanted to ask him when he would come back.