

## The Mbahsb 201

### [Chapter 201](#)

Ethan held her in a vice-like grip, and Janet could barely breathe. She tried wriggling out of his hold, but Ethan slung his leg around Janet, trapping her in place.

“I am having trouble breathing!” Janet kicked her legs, trying to free herself.

“But you’re still mad at me,” Ethan mumbled, pulling her impossibly closer. Janet could feel his hot breath blowing against her.

Her skin tingled, and she couldn’t think properly. “Gosh, you’re squeezing me. I can’t even speak properly,” she said, gasping for breath.

However, Janet suddenly remembered that Ethan was the illegitimate son of the Lester family. The cause of his mother’s death was still a mystery to all.

It must have been embarrassing for him to admit his identity. Janet felt he must have experienced a lot of setbacks ever since he was a child. Therefore, it didn’t seem strange for him to hold back many secrets.

Although Janet was still unhappy that Ethan was hiding something from her, she couldn’t help but feel sorry for him at the same time.

“Well, it’s a bit upsetting to know that you’re still in touch with your high school friend but haven’t uttered a word to me. It made me feel like you’re still attracted to her. She is an excellent woman, after all.” Considering Ethan’s family background, Janet felt sorry for him. She wanted to clarify everything once and for all.

Seeing that Janet didn’t resist anymore, Ethan held her tighter and kissed her cheek. “She is not my type.”

Then, he bit her neck and slid his hand under her dress. “I only want you!” he whispered into her ear.

“Don’t mess around. I can give you some time. But you have to tell me everything — soon, and no more secrets.” Janet slapped his hand and moved farther away — keeping a safe distance from him.

Although Janet felt sorry for Ethan, part of her still feared something was going on between him and Charis.

She didn’t want to sleep with him unless he told all his secrets to her.

Ethan chuckled and rolled back to his side of the bed.

He knew Janet very well. If she wasn’t in the mood, trying to seduce her would only make her hate him even more.

Ethan was determined to speed up his plan. He had to solve the Lester family’s problems as soon as possible. Janet was the most important person in his life, and he didn’t want to continue deceiving her. Ethan had many misgivings. He feared that exposing his identity to Janet before solving the problems would only put her in danger.

Both of them fell asleep soon after the conversation, their minds filled with problems of their own.

The next morning, Janet wanted to talk to Ethan, but just couldn't find the right words to say. It felt as if an invisible wall had risen between them.

While brushing his teeth, Ethan wondered if he should do something to ease the tension. He didn't want Charis to come in between them and ruin their lives. After all, he wanted to spend the rest of his life with Janet.

"I'll pick you up tonight?" Ethan thought he could take her out for dinner.

Janet was just about to leave for work. She didn't like staying away from him either. Just as she was about to say yes, Ethan's phone rang.

She quickly glanced at the screen and sneered. "You should pick her up and have dinner with her. After all, you two haven't seen each other for a long time."

Janet slammed the door and left.

Ethan sighed and picked up the phone. It was Charis.

"Brandon, I've arrived at the airport. The driver isn't here. Can you please come and pick me up?"

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Ethan rubbed his nose and looked out of the window. "Aren't you supposed to be back next week? Well, I'm kind of busy now. I'll ask someone to pick you up."

Ethan heard the bustling sounds of traffic from the other end of the line. Charis managed to hear his words and answered casually, "Well, surprise! Anyway, it's okay if you can't make it. I'll figure it out myself."

Although Charis tried to sound cheerful, Ethan could hear the disappointment in her voice. "Are you free tonight?" she asked expectantly. "We haven't seen each other for three years. Shall we meet today?"

"I'm not free tonight." Ethan thought about Janet storming out of the house in a fit of pique. "Maybe next time."

"You always say that. You have to tell me what you mean when you say 'next time'. I haven't seen you in three years. Can't I even ask you out for dinner? Is that too much to ask?" Charis grunted.

She had always been honest about her feelings. Ethan's constant rejection annoyed her. Charis only wanted to catch up with him and couldn't understand why Ethan was constantly refusing her. She couldn't keep her composure anymore.

"I'm really busy tonight. Besides, you will be in the company tomorrow. I'll see you there," Ethan mumbled. "We can catch up then."

Charis knew Ethan well. He had always been indifferent toward everyone and was devoid of emotional attachments. But she had fallen for him despite that.

“Fine. See you in the company tomorrow.” The smile on Charis’ face disappeared as she hung up the phone.

It had been three years, but Ethan hadn’t changed one bit.

She clutched her phone and stared into the distance.

Unrequited love was painful. Only she knew what it felt to love someone so much and not get anything in return.

She had fallen in love with Ethan when they were in high school. Back then, she chose to start a new business with Ethan instead of taking over her family’s business. Ethan had nothing but talent when they started the company together. She had been through a lot of trials and tribulations with him. She had stood by him during his toughest times.

Later, Ethan’s business picked up, and he became Brandon Larson — the CEO of the Larson Group.

Then, she confessed her love for him, but he rejected her. Charis was devastated. She left the country and stayed abroad for three years.

She actually hoped that he would regret his decision and come after her. But not once in those three years had he tried contacting her. Everyone assumed she would have moved on. But her feelings had only grown stronger during the three years. She loved him now more than ever.

Charis was born rich and beautiful. She regarded herself as the perfect match for Ethan. The Lester family was a mess. Charis had assumed Ethan had rejected her because he wanted to get rid of his family and develop his career first.

Now that the Larson Group was flourishing, she assumed he would have time to think about their relationship. Besides, she was more successful now. She had singlehandedly expanded the overseas business of the Larson Group.

She was sure about winning him back this time.

However, Ethan seemed more indifferent now. He didn’t even want to talk to her.

Charlie’s heart sank with dejection.

But she quickly comforted herself that even best friends would feel estranged if they didn’t see each other for a long time.

Charis smiled and cheered herself up.

This time, she was determined to win his heart.

## [Chapter 203](#)

The next morning, Charis’s car stopped on the street outside the Larson Group’s building. She got out of the car and looked up at the magnificent building.

It had been three years since she had left Seacisco. Many things had changed. Towering buildings dotted the streets everywhere she looked.

The Larson Group was completely different from what it was three years ago. Back then, the three worked day and night in a small studio. Now, the Larson Group had turned into a magnificent enterprise with thousands of employees working tirelessly for them.

“Why are you reminiscing the past instead of going inside and seeing what your future looks like?” Charis turned around and saw Garrett. He pushed the golden-rimmed glasses up the bridge of his nose and smiled gently. “I know you change your plan and get back early. Gosh, you look so gorgeous now!”

“You used to say that I behave like a boy. Anyway, did you get my gift? God, you’re a greedy man! Two bottles of La Romanee-Conti, huh?!” Charis joked, rolling her eyes.

The meeting seemed to bring back memories of the past. The two relived their teenage days.

However, Brandon wasn’t with them now.

“Where is Brandon? How is he?” Charis asked as she followed Garrett into the company.

“You’re a heartless woman, Charis. I know you’re eager to meet him. You left without saying goodbye. I’m standing right before you right now, but you’re asking about him. That’s hurtful.” Garrett frowned. He sounded jealous.

If Charis didn’t know Garrett well, she would have misunderstood him. “Come on, Garrett. I know those beautiful girlfriends of yours have taken good care of you. Anyway, how is Brandon?”

Brandon’s mother had passed away when he was young, and no one took care of him.

“He is a free bird. After all, he is...” Garrett bit his lip, for he almost blurted out the truth.

He was aware of what had happened between Ethan and Charis. Therefore, he felt it would be better if Charis heard about Ethan’s marriage from the man himself. Otherwise, it would only complicate things further, and Ethan would scold him again.

Garrett pouted, tilting his head toward the Larson Group’s building. “You’re going to meet him in a couple of minutes. Why are you still asking me about him? Go inside and see for yourself.”

Charis smiled at him and walked into the building.

The conference room on the top floor of the Larson Group was packed with people. The room was tastefully decorated.

All senior executives had gathered to welcome Charis back home, Brandon himself included. Brandon sat at the head of the table. His outstanding temperament and extraordinary appearance made him stand out from the rest.

Charis easily spotted him in the crowd. Three years had passed, yet Brandon still managed to make her weak in the knees. Her heart raced at the mere sight of him.

Charis slept late last night and hadn’t fully recovered from the jet lag. But the excitement to meet Brandon seemed to energize her in an instant. She spent hours in front of the mirror, dressing up to impress him. Now, she was confident about her looks.

All the senior executives came to talk to Charis. She politely greeted them and walked to Brandon.

“Long time no see, Brandon.” Charis smiled and clinked her glass with his.

She wanted to hug him and tell him how much she missed him and how lonely she had been for the past three years.

A smile tugged at the corners of Brandon’s lips. He took a sip of the red wine, staring into the distance. It looked like he was thinking about something else. “You must be tired after the long journey. Welcome back.”

Charis sat beside Brandon. She wanted to spend her entire day talking to him.

She thought Brandon would inquire about her personal life and what she had been doing for the past three years. But he was sipping on his wine without uttering a word.

Brandon’s indifference broke Charis’s heart. “We are meeting each other after three years! Don’t have anything to say to me?”

Brandon put down his glass and looked at her. “We have made huge profits from the overseas market this time. The company has decided to reward you for that.”

Charis arched an eyebrow and looked at him with expectant eyes. “I obviously don’t want to work for free. What reward will I get?”

“During the meeting with the senior executives, we decided to give you a promotion along with a raise. In addition to that, you will also get extra shares and a bonus. We will always treat you fairly,” Brandon said calmly.

Charis’s jaw tightened; she was utterly disappointed.

Brandon only regarded her as an excellent employee

However, Charis wanted to earn his love and care, not monetary rewards.

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“You haven’t changed at all.” Charis looked down at her glass of wine, unable to hide the disappointment in her eyes.

Ethan swept a glance over the room, then made a point of glancing at his watch. Without another word, he stood up and buttoned his suit jacket. “It’s getting late, and I still have work to do. Enjoy yourself.”

He had only attended the party for formality’s sake. Charis’ return was no small matter, after all, and Brandon Larson certainly had to be present at her welcome party.

Charis’ head immediately shot up. “Oh, you’re not done for the day yet?” she blurted out. “Do you need my help with anything?” They had only been talking for a few minutes. She was reluctant to see him leave so quickly.

Her offer made Ethan frown, but his tone remained polite. “This party is all about you. There’s no point in you disappearing in an event held in your honor.”

In the end, Charis could only sit back and watch dejectedly as Ethan walked away. When he was finally gone from sight, she downed her wine glass in one gulp.

“Oh, did you not have a pleasant conversation?” Garrett asked, plopping down on the seat beside her. “Didn’t he give you an update on what has been happening to him recently?”

With a bitter smile, Charis picked up the bottle on the table and filled her glass with more wine. “How do you expect us to catch up with anything? He said he was busy with work and took off within a couple of minutes.”

Garret cocked his head to the side and rubbed his chin. So Ethan hadn’t told her anything. He watched her drink her sorrows away out of the corner of his eye. “I know you came back for Ethan, but there’s something you need to know, Charis.”

She recognized the seriousness in his tone and paused. She already knew what was coming. “You’re going to tell me to give up on him, aren’t you?”

Charis’ face crumpled into a sneer. “There’s no need for that, I’m afraid. I’ve loved him all these years. I’m not giving up until I have absolutely no choice but to do so.”

Garrett chuckled humorlessly and shook his head. “I haven’t even finished talking yet. I’m not telling you to give up, I just wanted you to understand something. Now, if you don’t want to hear it, then I won’t say anything. But know that if you act carelessly in the future, it might affect more than just your relationship with Ethan.” He grabbed the wine bottle and placed it somewhere out of her reach.

Charis sat back and mulled over his warning. After a while, she asked, “Does he have a girlfriend?”

She told herself that it was all right if he did. Ethan was a catch; there was no way someone so brilliant would stay single for years at a time. That was all okay, because she could wait. She had already waited for the better half of her life.

“He is married,” Garrett stated bluntly.

His words struck her like lightning, and Charis’ eyes instantly welled up.

How was this possible?

How could Ethan have gotten married without her noticing?

“Why haven’t I heard of this?” Charis demanded. “I’ve been paying attention to his every move, even when I was abroad.”

Garrett raised an eyebrow and sighed. “You might have been paying attention to Brandon, but he isn’t the one who got married. Ethan is.”

True enough, Charis hadn’t cared much for Brandon’s other identity as an illegitimate son. She always saw him as the CEO of the Larson Group, nothing more, nothing less.

“What exactly happened?”

Garrett proceeded to recount the circumstances that had led to Ethan and Janet’s marriage. “Ethan cares about his wife,” he emphasized. “Very much so. I’m telling you this because I don’t want you to

overstep his boundaries. If you do, you would only be ruining whatever relationship you have with him, and you may never have the chance to mend it again.”

Charis struggled to hide her shock and her pain. She covered her face with her hands and took several deep breaths, but she still couldn’t calm down.

For a moment, Garrett just watched her, helpless and unsure of what to say next. In the end, he reached over and gave her a light pat on the shoulder. “Take your time to process this. You’re not a child anymore, you should know what to do.” He got to his feet. “I’m leaving now.”

It was all Charis could do to contain her sobs. She managed to compose herself enough to stop Garrett with a question—“Does his wife know that Ethan and Brandon are the same person?”

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“She doesn’t.” Garrett frowned.

He was smart enough to guess what was going on in Charis’ mind. “You better keep the secret to yourself — don’t tell it to Janet. Ethan doesn’t want her to know that he is associated with the Larson Group. I think you know the consequences if you revealed his secret.”

“Of course, I know. But he doesn’t even want to reveal his true identity to that woman. Do you think he really loves her?” Charis sneered.

“Stay out of it. He has his reasons. You better stop meddling in this.”

Just as Garrett turned to leave, he heard Charis’ sad voice. “I met him first! I have known him for many years!”

Looking at the pained look on her face, Garrett sighed helplessly.

“It doesn’t matter who came first. Stop overanalyzing everything. You still have a lot of work today. Forget everything and move on. People can change a lot in three years. Stop staying in the past, Charis.”

Garrett buttoned up his suit jacket, turned around, and left.

Charis stared into the distance for a long time and finally calmed down. Her mind was elsewhere.

She couldn’t accept the fact that Brandon was married. Therefore, she tried her best to convince herself that she still had a chance with him.

Charis knew Brandon better than anyone else. She had known him since high school.

Considering he married Janet as Ethan Lester and didn’t want her to know his real identity as Brandon Larson, Charis felt he hadn’t really accepted Janet as his wife.

After all, Janet was just an ordinary employee of the company without any family background. She didn’t deserve Brandon at all. As the CEO of the Larson Group, Brandon needed a wife who could match his status. Charis felt she was the ideal match for Brandon. Not only could she aid in the development of the Larson Group, but her family could also support Brandon.

She believed Brandon had married Janet only because he needed to fulfill his mother’s final wish.

Charis' heart became light, and she saw a ray of hope.

Brandon was the most important man in her life. She had loved him for so many years, and it had turned into an obsession. She couldn't just let go of him and move on.

After the welcome party, several senior executives showed Charis around the Larson Group.

"Miss Turner, this is our executive department, and that's the HR department. The design department is upstairs. Let me take you there," one of the senior executives offered.

'Design department?'

Charis' eyes lit up. Garrett had told her that Janet Lind worked in the design department.

"Let's go to the design department. Mr. Harding told me that all our designers are talented. I want to meet them." Charis smiled gracefully.

She couldn't wait to meet Brandon's wife.

The senior executives led her to the design department. The employees of the design department knew Charis well. They all stood up and greeted her. The originally quiet office turned lively.

Charis smiled and shook hands with every employee who greeted her as she walked through the crowd.

She stopped and looked at a beautiful woman standing behind a chair. Their gaze locked, and Charis could sense the hostility and vigilance in her eyes.

'This must be Janet.'

## [Chapter 206](#)

Janet had been thinking about Charis ever since Ethan told her about this woman.

Charis worked for the Larson Group and was about to return from abroad, which meant they would be seeing each other often.

"You don't look well today. Didn't you sleep well last night? Today is a big day. Cheer up!" Gerda patted Janet's shoulder.

The two had become close again after the news about the fraud group got televised.

Janet felt it was normal for Gerda to misunderstand her after hearing the rumors because the two had become friends only after Janet joined the company. After all, Gerda didn't know Janet well enough.

"Big day?" Janet looked listless.

"Miss Turner is finally returning to the company today after three years abroad. She is a legend. I heard she and Mr. Larson had started the company together — she was one of the core founding members. Later, she left the country to explore the overseas market. She is only about four or five years older than us. I admire her a lot!" Gerda adored Charis and spoke at length about her, oblivious to the look on Janet's face.



Janet's lungs constricted. It felt as if a giant rock was sitting on her chest. "She sounds like an amazing woman," she said, forcing a smile.

When Janet returned to her desk, she heard everyone talking about Charis.

Just then, the glass door of the department flew open, and everyone unanimously turned around.

A graceful woman walked in, surrounded by all the senior executives of the company. A beautiful smile graced her lips, revealing her pearly teeth. She was wearing a simple black suit paired with exquisite makeup. She looked calm and confident with an air of authority.

Janet's colleagues gasped in awe as she walked in.

But somehow, Janet didn't like Charis. It was probably because she felt insecure about her relationship with Ethan.

As everyone admired her, Janet couldn't help but look at herself. She was dressed in plain clothes and wasn't wearing any makeup. She didn't bother to even put on lipstick before coming to work.

All of a sudden, she felt dwarfed.

After greeting the other employees, Charis walked toward Janet, sizing her up. Suddenly, she was on her guard.

It was not because of how beautiful Janet was. However, there was something in her eyes. She looked innocent yet enchanting. Her eyes seemed to have the power to lure anyone.

Charis' heart leaped to her throat.

She was the princess in her family who always got everything she wished for. She had always been proud, yet she somehow felt inferior around Janet.

Today, she had worn an expensive outfit and styled herself to perfection to impress Brandon. However, Janet looked breathtaking even without any makeup. Charis knew she wouldn't be able to compete with Janet if she brought her style game on.

Charis' heart sank. No wonder Garrett kept telling her how important Janet was to Brandon. After all, no man could resist a beautiful woman like her.

## [Chapter 207](#)

Out of caution, Charis decided not to meet Janet. Instead, she walked to Tiffany's office and smiled at the employees along the way.

"Miss Turner, I didn't expect to meet you again after three years." Tiffany smiled and stood up to shake hands with Charis. "I was busy with work, so I couldn't come out to welcome you. Please forgive me."

Charis let go of her hand and sat cross-legged on the leather chair opposite Tiffany. "Well, I don't like occasions like these, anyway. I'm glad you didn't come out. Otherwise, the place would get too crowded."

Tiffany smiled. "Are you here to talk about work with me?"

Tiffany knew that Charis was in charge of the marketing department before.

“I heard the design department has witnessed rapid development in the past few years after I left. Our designs are a huge hit all over the country. I came to see what everyone’s been talking about.”

Tiffany nodded in understanding and briefly reported their current situation to her.

“When did she start working here?” Charis asked, flipping through Janet’s designs. Her face bore no expression.

“This is our new designer, Janet Lind. She has incredible talent, and all her designs are unique. She has contributed a lot to our company. Mr. Larson appreciates her work, and I also think she is an asset to our company.”

Charis remained silent. Tiffany was a picky woman. If she praised Janet, it meant the woman was indeed talented.

Charis dejectedly put down the drafts. Janet seemed like a bigger threat now.

Not only was she beautiful but seemed like a bundle of talent as well. It wasn’t surprising that Brandon wanted to hone her talent. Charis couldn’t help but wonder if Brandon was really serious about being with this woman.

“Okay. I should leave you to your work.” The moment Charis left the office, the smile on her face disappeared.

She had to somehow separate the two before Janet knew the truth.

He and Janet were worlds apart. The woman was born into an ordinary family, which meant money and power could easily lure her. Charis felt Janet would never let go of Ethan if she knew he was the CEO of the Larson Group.

After work, Charis planned to have dinner with a friend.

He was the son of the Perkins family — a handsome, wealthy man. However, he was also a notorious playboy in the city. He had dated countless women. The man was a charmer and could get any woman in bed. But despite that, he had never been with a woman for more than three months.

Kent Perkins was talking over the phone as he walked into the box. “Get a goddamn abortion! Don’t call me again,” he grunted impatiently.

One of the women he had dated had been pestering him for the past few days. She was a married woman. Kent, as usual, had abandoned her after getting what he wanted. However, the woman claimed to be pregnant with his child and insisted on keeping the baby. She had also said she wanted to divorce her husband and be with him, which forced Kent to flee the UK and return to Seacisco.

“Gosh, you haven’t changed one bit. One day, you’ll pay the price for all this!” Charis’s nose scrunched up with disgust.

If her family wasn’t friends with the Perkins, she wouldn’t want to be associated with Kent in any way. He had tricked a lot of women into bed with his charm.

Kent was used to her attitude. He took off his coat and hung it on the back of his chair before filling her glass with wine. "What's up?" he asked, smiling.

Charis seldom asked him out.

"Nothing. I just haven't seen you for three years, so I wanted to catch up." Charis shrugged noncommittally.

Kent was indeed happy to have dinner with a beautiful woman.

The two chatted as they ate. Gradually, Charis shifted the topic to women, which she knew would undoubtedly captivate Kent's interest. She casually mentioned Janet in the conversation, praising her beauty.

"How beautiful is she?" Kent sounded curious. "Do you have any photos of her?"

Charis took out a photo of Janet at work and showed it to him. Kent's eyes widened as he looked at the picture. He took the phone and zoomed in, examining every inch of her beautiful face. "Wow! Pretty is an understatement. She seems innocent though."

"Well, she looks more beautiful in person. But, unfortunately, she is married. I don't think you can get her." Charis took back her phone just to rub his ego.

"Oh, really?" Kent's brows shot up as if he was already interested in the challenge. "What if I got her?"

Charis knew that Kent was determined to get Janet to prove himself. She was his next conquest. However, she smiled and played along. "Well, that means you've won. I will introduce you to all the beautiful women I know. Can't wait to see how you're going to get her."

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With that, Janet walked forward without looking back.

Ethan quickly followed her and grabbed her wrist. "Even if you're angry, you shouldn't have gone to have dinner with Kent. He is a notorious scum in Seacisco. If I didn't come here tonight, do you know what he would have done to you?"

Janet struggled to withdraw her hand from his hold but couldn't escape Ethan's vice-like grip. She looked up at him and glared. "It's none of your business! You better stay out of this. We don't have feelings for each other. Our marriage is just a deal and we only try to make do. You have no right to interfere with my personal life."

Janet didn't mind living alone. She wanted to live a peaceful life without any unnecessary problems and complications. After earning enough money, she had planned to bring Hannah over from the countryside. After all, Hannah was the only one who truly cared about her.

Although she looked gentle and sweet, deep down, she was more stubborn than anyone else.

Ethan's body froze. He silently let go of her wrist.

Janet walked to the other side of the road and hailed a taxi. She didn't bother to look back at him even once.

Janet knew that Ethan must be mad at her for what she had said. However, it didn't matter because she believed the one he truly loved was back. Janet regarded herself as an outsider and thought it was time for her to step back.

As soon as Janet returned home, she went to her room, picked up all the things Ethan had dumped in her room, and moved them into the living room. Then, she took her belongings from Ethan's room and moved back to her room.

She didn't want to live in the same room with Ethan anymore.

When Ethan returned home, he saw that Janet had already moved back into her room and locked herself there.

Ethan wandered around in the living room dejectedly.

It was yet another cold, lonely night. He was angry and upset. However, considering he was the one who had caused all the problems in the first place, he held back his anger.

Ethan walked toward Janet's room and raised his hand to knock on the door. But eventually he clenched his fist and decided against it. He walked back and slumped on the sofa, letting out a weary sigh.

Ethan had always been a proud man. He didn't want to beg her to talk to him. Besides, even if he did, he feared it would only worsen things and increase her anger. Ethan had no choice but to control himself and wait for Janet to cool down.

After all, she seemed upset and angry. Ethan felt it was better for them both to take a break and then sit down and discuss the problem.

Charis was the reason for all their problems, so he decided to talk to her first.

A thousand thoughts swarmed Ethan's mind. He took a deep breath, went downstairs, and dialed Charis's number.

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"Hey, I thought you were busy," Charis squealed with surprise. "Why have you called me at this hour?"

She had just returned home from work.

"I'm not calling to say hello. I want to ask you something," Ethan said coldly. "Why did you tell Janet about what happened between us in the past?"

When Charis decided to tell everything to Janet and sow the seeds of doubts in her mind, she knew Ethan would come to her.

"What's wrong? Did she quarrel with you?" Charis asked, pretending to be surprised.

"She's unhappy," Ethan grunted.

"I'm sorry, but I didn't mean to do it. You know me," Charis whined innocently. "She asked about us and our past, and I couldn't just walk away from our conversation. That would be rude. However, I made it clear to her that although I liked you, it's all in the past, and you're married now. I told her that I no longer have a crush on you and I only wish you two nothing but happiness. I didn't expect Janet would bicker with you for such a trivial issue. I thought she was a reasonable woman."

Charis had already prepared what to tell Ethan when he questioned her. She wanted to make it seem like she didn't do anything wrong, and Janet's shallowness was the reason for their problems. She wanted to shift all the blame on Janet.

However, the phone call displeased her. It seemed that Ethan truly cared about Janet. He had called her late at night just to talk about this.

Ethan didn't think Charis was lying. After all, she would easily be busted if she really lied about this and he asked Janet to confront her.

He knew Charis well. She was bold, straightforward, and wouldn't waste her time creating problems in their lives.

But Ethan couldn't entirely be sure of it. His intuition told him that things weren't as simple as they seemed.

Janet would never make trouble out of nothing. If Charis had merely talked about the past and their friendship, Janet wouldn't be jealous.

"Why don't you say anything?" Charis knew Ethan well and understood what he must be thinking. She sighed and said, "Do you want me to talk to Janet tomorrow and explain everything clearly to her? I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to cause any problem."

"No, thanks," Ethan said unhappily.

Charis's heart sank.

It looked like Ethan was suspicious of her.

The cold wind gave him a headache.

Reading women's minds was an impossible task.

Ethan felt the only solution to the problem was to keep Janet away from Charis. It would be better if the two never saw each other again.

However, unlike Christopher, Charis was important to the Larson Group. She was the daughter of the Turner family. Ethan, despite being the CEO of the Larson Group, couldn't just kick her out.

"Charis, you better mind your own business," he said, massaging his throbbing temples. "Stay out of our personal problems."

At that moment, he heard rustling noises behind him. Ethan turned around and saw Janet standing behind him. Her dress billowed with the cold wind as she stared at him with tears in her eyes.

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An hour ago.

Janet had deliberately made noises while moving her things back to her room.

Her anger flared up when Ethan didn't respond. She slammed the door, making it rattle against the hinges.

She had thought Ethan would stop her and explain everything to her. Part of her hoped all this was just a misunderstanding, and Charis was nothing more than Ethan's classmate. Janet waited for a long time but didn't hear any sound outside.

Janet walked to the bed and slumped down. She was mad at herself for not being decisive enough. She had stormed off like she didn't give a damn. However, she couldn't stop thinking about what was going on in Ethan's mind.

She fell on the bed and buried her face in the pillow.

It was a quiet night. As Janet stirred in her sleep, she felt like someone was standing by her bed. She quickly opened her eyes and turned the light on. However, there was no one else in her room.

The white blanket was still smooth and fluffy. Janet realized no one had been watching her sleep. Ethan hadn't whispered sweet things into her ear during her sleep.

Janet sat up and massaged her temples.

'Why hasn't Ethan bothered to explain himself? Was my guess right then?'

Janet couldn't stop thinking about the smug look on Charis's face. They definitely had a history.

The more she thought about it, the angrier she became. Finally, unable to take it anymore, she got up from the bed.

She knew sitting in the room and wracking her brains was pointless. The only solution to the problem was to talk to Ethan about it.

But Janet was a coward. Her momentum disappeared as soon as she walked out of the bedroom. She trudged across the living room as if nothing had happened, pretending that she only got up to get some water.

However, to her surprise, the living room was empty.

'Where is Ethan?'

She frowned and tiptoed to his room.

However, Ethan wasn't in his room either.

Janet was enraged. She couldn't believe Ethan had left the house without even telling her.

Janet took a bottle of beer from the fridge and walked to the balcony. A gust of cold breeze brushed against her as she looked down. Her gaze fell on the man standing in the garden downstairs.

It was Ethan.

He was leaning against the tree, talking over the phone.

Janet grew suspicious. 'Why does he have to go downstairs to answer the phone? Does he not want me to know who he is talking with?'

Janet quickly ran downstairs and walked toward Ethan from behind.

The cool night breeze caused the shadows of the trees to dance under the street lamps.

Janet could clearly hear his voice. He uttered Charis's name and was asking her not to get involved in their business.

'What does he mean? It looks like the two indeed have a history — an unforgettable past.'

Janet's heart sank.

Countless thoughts and possibilities buzzed in her mind. Her vision grew blurry. She froze and didn't dare to walk any further.

It looked like Charis was telling the truth. And Ethan didn't care to explain himself probably because he never cared about Janet.

A wave of shame consumed her. She felt stupid for trying to defend Ethan for a moment.

Janet wiped her tears, turned around, and ran back. A pang of jealousy settled in her heart. All of a sudden, she broke into a cold sweat, and her body began to tremble.