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Contrary to what Charis had expected, she received a lot of praise because Janet's design had made it to the first show of the Seacisco Fashion Week.

During the senior executives' meeting, some of the board members praised her for being insightful. "Ms. Turner, you have good taste. If you hadn't praised Janet's design at the assessment meeting, there's no way we would have chosen hers and then defeated the Lester Silk Fabric this year. Thumbs up!"

"Yeah, I agree. The Lester Silk Fabric has won that selection competition for many years in a row. Their constant wins gave us a bad name. Now that we have won, our dignity has been restored. And it's all thanks to your wise decision, Ms. Turner!" The other senior executives concurred.

Charis was so embarrassed in the face of those unwanted praises. But she had to respond with a faint smile. In her usual calm tone, she said, "I'm flattered by your praises. But I can't take credit for our win. I was just lucky. Janet is an excellent designer. It was due to her hard work and creativity that we won."

Charis was a slick person. As a dubious perfectionist, she wanted her disguise to be excellent. She only praised Janet because she wanted the others to see her as a good person. And it worked!

However, Garrett was confused, rather than convinced. He was also present at the meeting. Seeing that Charis spoke well of Janet again, he thought it was rather odd. He knew that Charis wasn't someone who showered praises on people. As the spoiled heiress of the Turner family, she was always difficult to please.

"This is the first time I'm hearing you praise someone. What's so special about this particular designer? I have seen Janet's designs. They are indeed creative and extraordinary, but she's still inexperienced and hasn't shown profoundness yet. What makes you think so highly of her, Ms. Turner?" Garrett peered at her through the top of his glasses. His instincts told him that Charis was up to something, but he couldn't pinpoint what it was.

"Indeed, she needs to garner more experience. But we shall see about that. Anyway, I have to join a video conference from France soon. I need to take my leave now." Charis checked her wristwatch and skillfully dodged Garrett's questions.

'Garrett is nothing like these clueless old men. He's very smart. If I indulge him in this conversation, I'm afraid he will see right through me. I need to be careful with what I say around him. It's best I do something before he blows my cover.' Charis grabbed her documents and left the boardroom.

The moment she got into her office, the friendly spark in her eyes turned cold. She threw the documents on the desk and looked at the tall buildings through the French window.

"Janet is really something,"

Charis was both angry and surprised that Janet had managed to defeat the Lester Silk Fabric. "Aargh! I must have underestimated that bitch. How was she able to come out victorious despite all that I did?"

Charis was actually the source of the latest rumor about Janet.

To wreak havoc on Janet and prevent her from having the zeal to work, she intentionally started rumors about her. Part of Charis's plan was to make the senior executives turn against Janet at the same time. But Janet's success in entering the first show thwarted the plan. Her failure would have proved that the rumor about her getting special treatment by hooking up with a member of the board was true. Charis had thought it would bring a lot of embarrassment to Janet.

"Anyway, I still have everything under my control. Janet's win isn't necessarily a loss for me. It is just a minor setback. I need to start making preparations for the next step now."

Charis took a deep breath to regain her composure. She then picked up her phone and put a call through. As soon as it connected, she asked, "Hey, how is the task I assigned to you coming along?"

"It's going well, Ms. Turner. Ritchie is back from France. He has been in a bad mood since he heard the news. When he found out that the designer who defeated his family's company is actually Ethan's wife, he went ballistic in the company. Shortly after, he stormed out."

"Well, that's good enough for now!" There was a hint of happiness in Charis's tone. As she hung up the phone, a complacent glint shone in her eyes.

Ritchie Lester was the CEO of the Lester Silk Fabric. Charis had ordered her allies to spread the news of Janet being Ethan's wife until he got wind of it. Not only was Ritchie a competitive man, but he also harbored inexplicable hatred for Ethan. The fact that he had lost to his half-brother's wife was a slap in the face for him. He definitely wouldn't let Janet go.

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At Seacisco International Airport, the sky was grey and cloudy due to the winter.

There was a large crowd close to the exit gate. However, a man in a dark brown fur coat, black sunglasses, and a black hat stood out in the crowd. His aura was so intimidating and majestic that people cleared the way for him and stared at him in awe.

As soon as he got outside, his secretary opened the door of a black Bentley and bowed.

"Mr. Lester, this is the company's financial statement for this past quarter. Please have a look." The secretary handed him a document politely.

Ritchie slowly took off his sunglasses and hat. After placing them beside him, he collected the document. His eyes were filled with rage at this time. Although he had good-looking eyes, they were scary to look at because of the menacing glint in them.

After flipping through a few pages of the document, Ritchie angrily closed it. He looked at his secretary with his eyes as sharp as daggers. "I heard that our company was knocked out of the first show by the Larson Group this season."

A deafening silence filled the car.

Beads of cold sweat suddenly appeared on the secretary's forehead. It was as if an unknown force was squeezing at his lungs. But he mustered up the courage and cleared his throat. "It's true, Mr. Lester. It's our fault. We failed to choose the right designer to handle the project this season."

“Of course, I know it’s your fault. I have had a video meeting with the director of the design department. Now tell me, why were you all hired? Was it to make silly mistakes? Or to bring good results? Are you and your counterparts dumb? We have headlined the Seacisco Fashion Week for many years in a row. We have also been in business before the Larson Group. How could you let them defeat us? This is ridiculous!” Ritchie angrily threw the document at the secretary’s face. His eyes were bloodshot and the veins on his temple were protruding.

Ever since he heard about the humiliating loss, his blood had been boiling. He was so mad that he gave the members of the design team an earful when he had a video conference with them.

The secretary quivered in fear and his face turned red. He wasn’t directly involved in the matter, but he could only suffer his boss’s scolding in silence.

“Do you know the female designer who helped the Larson Group to win? I heard that the judges spoke highly of her work.” Ritchie snorted aggressively, rolled down the window, and rested his arm on it.

With a shaky voice, the secretary replied, “Yes, I know her. I heard that her name is Janet Lind. It’s said that she’s a young designer who just joined the Larson Group this year. She also happens to be Ethan’s wife.” Ritchie raised his head and shot his secretary a cold glance that could have frozen lava.

Since the secretary worked closely with Ritchie, he knew that Ethan was the illegitimate son of the Lester family. He fiddled with his fingers and looked at his boss carefully.

“Oh, interesting!” Looking straight ahead, Ritchie rubbed his lips with his fingers and commented. Sparks of anger, contempt, and vengeance filled his eyes at this time.

His mind had been void of thoughts about his half-brother lately. In fact, he wouldn’t have remembered Ethan if not for what happened at the selection competition.

Right from childhood, his mother had groomed him to resent Ethan. Ritchie was disgusted by the mere thought of his half-brother. He had made it a point of duty to bully Ethan for years.

Just as he had wished, Ethan suffered and lived a miserable life. He soon got tired of bullying him. As the conceited second son of the Lester family, he felt that he couldn’t continue to attack a sore loser. It was at this time he traveled abroad to study.

Thoughts of Ethan barely crossed Ritchie’s mind while he was abroad. He felt that Ethan was a lowlife who was surviving on leftovers at the bottom of the food chain.

When he heard that Ethan had gotten married to the daughter of the poor Lind family, he didn’t take it seriously. It was a case of ‘good riddance to bad rubbish’ as far as he was concerned.

Judging by the dubious expression on Ritchie’s face, his secretary instantly knew that he was planning something. He asked carefully, “Mr. Lester, is there something you would like me to do for you?”

“No, you are useless to me in this aspect. The way I see it, Ethan’s wife is smart and powerful. I can’t afford to allow you to spoil my plans before I get started. I’ll deal with her myself.”

Ritchie's eyes darkened as he concocted a plan. He decided to meet Janet. Aggressiveness was in his DNA. His parents had passed it on to him. One of his greatest hobbies was destroying Ethan's happiness. Now that he knew that Ethan had a good marriage life and that his wife was an enemy of Lester Silk Fabric, he wanted to crush them.

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After finishing her designs for the fashion week, Janet didn't need to work overtime anymore. On Monday, she got off work on time and walked home with Laney.

Janet eyed the white T-shirt and jeans Laney was wearing and pursed her lips. "How about we go shopping? I heard from a colleague that there's a clothing shop in the mall that's on sale right now."

"Why? I have enough clothes already." Laney was a casual girl. She thought that her outfit was fine. If she ran into some thugs, it'd be easy for her to deal with them in comfy clothes.

After hesitating slightly, Janet linked her arm in Laney's arm and smiled. "Let's buy some dresses. My treat. Although you look great, your clothes are too neutral. You should try dressing up some more. You have such a beautiful face. Don't waste it."

Janet's bright eyes observed Laney's facial features. Laney was pretty. She had innocent yet sharp eyes, which made her look beautiful.

Laney opened her mouth to say something but couldn't find the words to protest. In the past, when she trained in the organization, she had always been boyish. Now that she thought about it, Laney realized that she had never really experienced what normal girls went through—things like shopping and dressing up.

"Fine. Let's check the store out," Laney relented with a helpless smile.

But before the two of them could step inside the shopping mall, they were stopped by a man.

"Janet Lind?" he asked. The man was well-dressed, and there was a bodyguard standing behind him.

When the man's eyes landed on Janet's face, he smiled inexplicably. Janet couldn't help but frown subconsciously. The man looked extremely arrogant in her eyes.

She didn't even know who he was, but at a glance, she knew she didn't like him.

Janet eyed the well-dressed man warily. "And you are...?"

Ritchie Lester walked over and introduced himself. "I'm Ethan's older brother, Ritchie. Would you like to have dinner with me so we can catch up, as family?"

Janet hesitated. Ethan hadn't told her much about the Lester family. She only knew that they didn't get along well with him. Otherwise, she knew nothing about them.

Ritchie was being polite enough, but there was something about the arrogance in his eyes that was off-putting to Janet.

"I'm sorry, but I have prior commitments tonight. I'm going shopping with my friend." Janet forced a smile and refused him politely.

Ritchie's eyebrow twitched slightly. Casually tinkering with the ring on his thumb, he said in a low voice, "We're family now. Won't you make time for me?"

Janet lowered her head. She didn't want to offend him, which would only bring trouble to Ethan. Finally, she took a deep breath and said, "Fine."

"I'm coming with you," Laney immediately said, staring at Ritchie on high alert.

But Ritchie raised his hand to stop her. In his eyes, Laney was just a stupid woman who didn't know her place. Snorting with disdain, he glanced at Laney indifferently and said, "I'm afraid it's none of your business."

Janet looked at Laney and shook her head subtly. "You should go back. I'll see you tomorrow at work, Lane."

Laney looked at Ritchie again hesitantly before finally nodding.

Nonetheless, she planned to secretly follow Janet in case something bad happened to her.

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A bodyguard opened the car door. After waiting for Janet to get into the car, Ritchie got in and sat next to her.

Janet looked out the window uneasily. She could feel Ritchie's intense gaze burning a hole on the back of her head.

Just to be safe, Janet secretly texted Ethan, telling him that Ritchie had come to her.

Minutes had passed and her phone still didn't buzz. Perhaps Ethan was busy. Janet put away her cell phone and sat up straight. She was used to this. After all, Ethan was probably busy unloading goods in the convenience store.

Ritchie's eyes wandered over Janet's body and a faint smile appeared at the corners of his mouth. "Are you texting Ethan? My dear sister-in-law, there's no need to be nervous. It's just a simple meal between family members."

Janet looked up at Ritchie. Only then did she realize that there was some resemblance between him and Ethan.

"No. I was just wondering if my friend has got home safely," Janet said with a gentle yet alienating smile.

As though he didn't believe her, Ritchie snorted and stopped talking.

The car stopped at a restaurant famous for its black truffle dishes in Seacisco.

The waiter at the door greeted Ritchie with a respectful smile. "Mr. Lester."

It wasn't until then that Janet realized that the Lester family might be more powerful than she had thought. Perhaps they were even at the top of the power pyramid in Seacisco. The restaurant manager personally came to introduce the new menu to Ritchie.

And it seemed like Ritchie was used to this kind of treatment. After entering the private room, he simply asked the staff to leave them alone. He didn't pretend to be polite anymore when it was just him and Janet left in the room.

With his long legs crossed, Ritchie looked at Janet with no holds barred.

The car was dimly lit earlier, so only now did Ritchie get a clear look at Janet.

She wasn't as beautiful as a fairy, but her skin was smooth and flawless. Overall, she looked clean and comfortable, but there was a certain tenacity in her eyes, which was likely to arouse a man's desire to conquer her.

Ritchie had seen countless beautiful women in his lifetime, but he usually didn't bother to waste time on them. The Lester family was so rich and powerful that women tended to pounce at any chance to be with him.

Janet wasn't his type, but she was Ethan's wife, which was enough to pique Ritchie's interest in her.

Janet felt very uncomfortable under his gaze.

After pouring a cup of tea for Janet, Ritchie handed the overflowing cup to her then refilled his own cup. "How's life with Ethan? We haven't given him any money since he cut ties with the Lester family."

After taking a sip of the tea, Janet replied curtly, "We both have jobs. Although our salaries aren't that big, it's enough to support us."

Janet wasn't used to opening up to strangers. Her humoring Ritchie now was solely for Ethan's sake.

Ritchie looked at Janet's clothes up and down. Although he was smiling, he sneered with such disdain. "It looks like you're not living a good life. Your clothes and shoes are cheap. In a word, you look very poor."

"This is Ethan's and my life. It has nothing to do with you." Janet's eyes grew cold as anger brewed within her.

With a pitiful sigh, Ritchie's arrogant eyes wandered to Janet's chest. "You're so beautiful and talented. It's unfortunate that you ended up with a poor guy like Ethan. Why don't you divorce him? Then I'll keep you as my mistress and make sure you live a rich life."

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In the blink of an eye, Janet had poured the cup of tea on Ritchie's face.

Ritchie's expression immediately darkened. He raised his hand to wipe the tea on his face. Fortunately, the tea wasn't piping hot. His eyes flashed with rage and he looked at Janet aggressively.

Taken aback by his fierce gaze, Janet stepped back abruptly, but she stood her ground. "If you just want to talk nonsense with me, I'm leaving."

As soon as she finished speaking, Janet turned around to leave.

Ritchie grabbed her wrist and rushed to lock the door to the private room. Then he pressed her against the wall as easily as though she were a ragdoll.

With an evil smile on his face, his eyes flashed dangerously even as tea dripped from his hair. He lowered his head, bringing his face closer to Janet's, admiring her seemingly calm demeanor. "It would've been so much better if I could persuade you, but since you don't know how to behave yourself, I'm going to have to use more than just words."

Janet's eyes widened with fear when she realized what he wanted to do. She struggled to break free from his grip and wanted to run out of the private room.

But the man was obviously much stronger than Janet. Seeing her struggle, Ritchie grabbed her hand, which was reaching for the door knob desperately. He grabbed her other hand and easily raised her arms above her head.

"I'm calling the police!" Janet gritted her teeth. She felt ashamed and angry, and her eyes showed it.

"So what? They can't touch the Lester family. Didn't you know that, my dear sister-in-law?" Ritchie's eyes suddenly turned red with desire. His impulsive actions excited him.

How would Ethan react when he found out that his woman was defiled by his brother?

Ritchie felt desire surge within his body as he pressed his body against Janet's. Unable to wait any longer, he ripped Janet's shirt open, sending her buttons flying into the air. "If Ethan finds out that I've had sex with you, do you think he will still want you?"

Using all her strength, Janet tried to break free from his grip. Her hair was in a mess. In a sobbing voice, she shouted, "If Ethan finds out, he'll never let you go!"

Without any hesitation, Ritchie sneered coldly. "Ethan is a loser. Even if he finds out about our little fiasco, what can he do? Maybe he'll even give you to me as a plaything."

"Let me go! Ritchie! Get your dirty hands off of me!" However, her efforts were futile. She kicked and screamed, shouting for help.

Helpless tears welled up in her eyes. She regretted agreeing to go with Ritchie. How could she have been so stupid? Then again, how could she have known that this Lester brother would be like this?

"This restaurant is my property. Even if someone hears you, they won't come to help you," Ritchie said with obvious delight as he watched her struggle. Then, he lowered his head and started kissing her on the neck, panting breathlessly.

"If no one's willing to help me, then I'll have to help myself!" Suddenly, Janet bit Ritchie's ear—hard.

"Fuck!" Ritchie felt as though Janet was about to tear his ear off, so he instinctively retreated a few steps back.

"Fuck off, you bastard!" When he was caught off guard, Janet kicked his shin. She initially wanted to kick him in the balls, but he was too far away for her to reach it.

"If you dare touch me again, I will take you with me to hell!"

The ferocity in her voice scared even Ritchie.

Then, Janet ran to the table quickly to retrieve her phone, but Ritchie acted faster than her.

"Oh, no you don't!" Ritchie grabbed her phone and smashed it against the floor. In the blink of an eye, Janet's phone screen shattered into countless pieces.

Janet had no choice but to step back as the men approached.

Just then, the door of the private room was violently kicked open.

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