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Gerda clicked her tongue unhappily. “Everyone knows they’re using Luna as a scapegoat. She’s just an ordinary employee. How on earth could she manage to do all of this? Lester Silk Fabric is really heartless.”

The other designers had also seen the video circulating the Internet. They began to discuss in hushed voices, but the general consensus was that Lester Silk Fabric was a cold-blooded company.

Janet pulled her chair and sat down. There was no point in dwelling on it now that things had been settled. “I can’t say I’m surprised. Now that Luna has taken the blame, we can’t do anything to Lester Silk Fabric.”

“And what about those designs? Are they really not gonna put them back on the show?” Gerda puffed out her chest indignantly.

Janet smiled at her colleague gently. “It doesn’t matter. Look on the bright side. I have gained considerable fame because of everything that’s happened. Now, all eyes are on my work.”

In the end, Luna was put behind bars. And Janet had become an online celebrity. Many people now knew her name and saw her designs. Some even paid for it.

When the dust settled, Janet poured all her energy into her work. She had been so busy with this matter the past few days, so now she could finally focus on other things.

“By the way, Lind, I’ve been meaning to ask you something. How’d you get the evidence?” Gerda was talking about the videos that Janet had posted on the Internet, which had amassed more than a million views.

Janet froze. After a few seconds, she broke into a smile and waved her hand dismissively. “A very capable friend helped me get them.”

Gerda nudged her arm and asked curiously, “What friend? A boyfriend perhaps?”

Janet’s eyes twinkled. “It’s a secret. Gerda, is it just me or do you have a lot of time on your hands? Have you finished your design for this month? Don’t come running to me again when the deadline approaches.”

“Ah! My God! I still have thirty-four drawings to finish!” Gerda scratched her head and hurried back to her desk.

Janet couldn’t help but chuckle. Suddenly, she thought of the tall and straight back of Brandon.

Now that she thought about it, she realized that Lester Silk Fabric had gone through all this trouble just to set her up. It must have cost Brandon a lot to get his hands on the evidence.

Janet couldn’t help but feel a little strange. Brandon had helped her countless times, but she hadn’t really ever met him in person.

She owed Brandon too much and she doubted she could ever repay him.

After thinking about it for a long time, Janet finally plucked up the courage to send a message to Brandon.

“Mr. Larson, would you be willing to let me treat you to dinner? You’ve helped me a lot and I’d like to express my gratitude somehow.”

After hitting send, Janet put down her phone and wrung her hands nervously. The chairman of the Larson Group had probably tasted all the splendid dishes this world had to offer. But it was a token of her appreciation.

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At the CEO’s office of the Larson Group.

The Larson Group’s stock price had fluctuated over the past few days. Now that the situation was favorable for the Larson Group and its stock price had more than recovered, Ethan decided to seize the opportunity to put more pressure on the Lester Silk Fabric.

Garrett hadn’t slept properly in the past three days, dealing with the bad press. He was yawning sleepily when Ethan’s phone pinged.

“Someone texted you.” When he saw the name on Ethan’s phone’s screen, Garrett snickered. “It seems your wife’s missing you.”

Ethan smacked Garrett on the back of the head and grabbed the phone. Instantly, his expression darkened when he read the text.

“What is it? Why’s your face like that?” Garrett asked seriously, the smile wiped from his face.

“Janet’s asking Brandon out for dinner.” Ethan put his phone down and sighed. “If I refuse, she’ll be very disappointed.”

Garrett leaned back with his hands clasped behind his head. “Yeah. You can’t have dinner with Janet without her seeing your face. Last time, when you and Janet went to the company’s masquerade ball, you almost exposed yourself. It’d be unwise to take such a risk again. It’s not good for my heart either,” he sighed.

Ethan frowned and started typing out a brisk reply.

“Thank you, but there’s no need for you to treat me to dinner. You’re an employee of the Larson Group. I helped you to protect the reputation of the company.”

Janet read his message and quickly replied, “But Mr. Larson, you could’ve just dismissed me.”

“If I dismiss any employee when something like this comes up, how will we keep the talented ones? Keep up the good work. That’s thanks enough, Miss Lind,” Ethan replied politely, keeping things professional.

He had deliberately distanced Brandon from her ever since what happened last time. He didn’t want her to suspect him of anything.

Reading his reply, Janet had no choice but to give up.

Ethan put down his phone, kicked the sofa Garrett was lying down on, and said, "I want you to relocate the one who had tried to force Janet to resign. Transfer her to a subsidiary company. Then, bring Charis here."

Garrett was just about to take a nap. Hearing Ethan's orders, he helplessly peeled his eyes open and stood up from the sofa. He muttered under his breath, "This job will definitely be the death of me."

Charis had expected that Ethan would want to have a talk with her, but when she received the notice, her heart still skipped a beat.

"Why did you want to dismiss Janet?" Ethan asked in a low voice. He shoved his hands into the pocket of his slacks, and the light from the window elongated his shadow on the floor.

"I just wanted to protect the company name," Charis answered defensively.

Ethan narrowed his eyes at her coldly. "From now on, I'll take care of all matters related to Janet. No one other than me. Understood?"

Ethan's cold voice sent a shiver down Charis's spine. She winced and smiled bitterly, as though she had been wronged. "I see how it is. You don't trust me now? Brandon, I don't have any ulterior motives, I swear."

Ethan had already noticed that something was wrong with Charis. He never brought it up before because he didn't want her to look bad. She and her family had always valued their image.

"I'm just warning you not to act against Janet. Otherwise, don't blame me if I disregard our long term friendship."

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After a moment's silence, Charis said in a low voice, "I see."

Charis was a dignified woman. Before Ethan could say anything more, she turned around and walked out of his office.

As soon as the door closed behind her, tears welled up in her eyes.

Ever since they first met, Brandon had never said such harsh words to her before, nor had he looked at her with such cold eyes.

She hadn't cried in years. The last time was when she said goodbye to Brandon before going abroad. She had been reluctant to leave him. But now, she felt bad about Brandon's attitude towards her.

She and Brandon had worked together for years. They had shared the company's ups and downs. But all of a sudden, with Janet now in the picture, Brandon suddenly was ruthless towards her.

Tears rolled down Charis's cheeks as she realized just how important Janet was to Brandon. The hot tears dripped from her chin to the carpeted floor.

"I met Brandon first," Charis muttered through gritted teeth.

Charis didn't like to be candid with her shrewdness. The reason why she had tried to fire Janet was to win Brandon's heart.

In Charis's eyes, Janet wasn't good enough for him. But now that Brandon had taken a liking to her, Charis figured he would deeply fall in love with her and she would eventually lose him for good.

Thinking of this, Charis was more determined than ever to separate Janet and Brandon.

But she couldn't act as overtly as before.

Brandon had just warned her not to interfere with Janet's work ever again. She had to be more careful now.

On the other side...

After Janet got off work, she went home, only to find that Ethan had come home early today.

"Oh, the workaholic is back! I'm surprised you still remember the way home!" Janet's voice dripped with sarcasm. Looking at the man who was busy cooking in the kitchen, she was not happy. After all, she hadn't seen Ethan for two or three days.

That was because Ethan had been busy dealing with the plagiarism issue the past few days. But he couldn't tell her this. While cracking the eggs into a bowl, he found an excuse. "When I crossed Ritchie's path, he made a lot of trouble. The manager of the shop at work fired me. I've been working part time the past few days while looking for a stable job."

Then, he paused and said sincerely, "I'm sorry that I haven't been here for you these days."

In fact, there was some truth to his story. Ritchie had indeed caused him a lot of trouble after all.

Hearing this, Janet's heart immediately softened. She walked over to help him with the vegetables. "So, what happened? You didn't tell me the truth. I was worried something bad happened to you."

"The problem's been solved. Don't worry," Ethan said with a reassuring smile. That much was true. Ethan had really solved the problem that had been plaguing them the past few days.

"Your brother is really hard to deal with." Janet pouted like a child.

After transferring the egg into the pan, Ethan turned and his eyes landed on Janet's earlobe. His Adam's apple bobbed up and down as he gulped. "How about having dinner and then a little bit of exercise to unwind?"

"What kind of exercise?" Janet looked up at Ethan curiously. Almost immediately, she saw the lust in his eyes.

His face was so beautiful. It was as though God had chiseled his face to perfection. His eyes stared deep into hers, filled with burning desire.

Janet's face turned as red as a tomato. She quickly lowered her head and said shyly, "You're so naughty!" Then she focused on chopping the vegetables.

Amused, Ethan patted her on the head affectionately. He really liked it when she blushed. He could feel that she liked him, but she always pretended to refuse him. He had to admit it really turned him on.

But the romantic atmosphere was instantly soiled by the sound of the phone ringing.

“Keep an eye on the eggs, okay? Don’t let them burn.” Ethan stroked Janet’s hair. Then, he took off his apron and walked to the living room to pick up his phone.

A long forgotten name appeared on the screen.

It was Patrick Lester.

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Ethan pursed his lips. He glanced back at the kitchen at Janet, then opened the glass door to step out onto the balcony.

He was a little surprised to see that Patrick was calling him.

It was winter and the cold wind was unforgiving. Ethan stood on the balcony, letting the wind blow his hair.

“Why on earth are you answering the phone outside? Isn’t it cold out there?” Janet’s voice broke the silence.

Ethan was lost in his thoughts and didn’t notice when Janet slid the door open and poked her head out. Narrowing her eyes at him suspiciously, she looked at the phone in Ethan’s hand.

He was answering the phone out on the balcony again. Was it Charis calling again?

“It’s Patrick Lester.” Amused by the quirky expression on her face, he pulled her into his arms and finally answered the phone.

“Ethan, why the hell did you keep me waiting?” Patrick’s irritated voice came from the other end of the line.

“I was busy just now,” Ethan simply replied.

Patrick didn’t give a damn about whatever Ethan was up to. There was something he needed to talk about with Ethan, so he went straight to the point. “Your grandma’s birthday is coming up and we’re throwing her a party. She wants you and your wife here.”

Without waiting for Ethan’s response, he hung up abruptly.

Janet had overheard Patrick’s loud voice. She looked up at Ethan and asked hesitantly, “So are we going?”

Ethan held her tighter and sighed. “We are. Patrick seldom summons me. There’ll be nothing but trouble if we disobey him. Besides, I haven’t seen my grandma in a very long time. It’s only right that I be there on her birthday.”

Janet smiled at him sweetly. “I can tell that you’re fond of her.”

It was true that Ethan's expression softened when he spoke of his grandmother.

Nora Lester, Ethan's grandma, was a distant relative of the Larson family. She had known Ethan's mother when she was a girl. Although she didn't approve of what Patrick had done, she couldn't do anything about her son's decisions. She had always felt sorry for Ethan and used to secretly send him money.

She was the only Lester who ever cared about Ethan.

Thinking of this, Ethan rested his chin on the top of Janet's head. "She's a kind lady," he said calmly.

It had been a long time since they last met—too long.

"Let's not talk here. It's so cold!" Janet whined, her teeth chattering.

Suddenly, a thought occurred to her. She shouted, "The eggs! I forgot all about them!"

She broke free from Ethan's embrace and ran to the kitchen in a hurry.

Ethan followed behind her. He stared at Janet, who was extremely flustered, and he couldn't help but smile. "You silly girl! I told you to keep an eye on the eggs!"

Shaking his head, he gently pulled her to the side while he cleaned up the mess himself in the kitchen.

Twiddling her thumbs, Janet stood in the corner, restlessly watching Ethan clean up after her. "I'm sorry. I thought you were talking to Charis, so I rushed to you and forgot I was cooking."

Ethan had guessed this. After drying his freshly washed hands, he raised his eyes to look at Janet seriously. "It's my fault. I didn't give you enough sense of security."

After saying that, he spread out his arms and said gently, "Come here."

Janet obeyed and leaned her face against his chest, blushing slightly.

Then, thinking about the invitation from Patrick, she murmured, "The Lesters treat you badly, especially Ritchie. He hates you and I just got him into trouble. He probably has a huge grudge against us. Won't something bad happen if we just go there?"

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Ethan smiled at her dotingly and raised his hand to rub the tip of Janet's nose. "You're a smart girl."

After he mulled it over for a while, his expression became unreadable. "I'm sure my grandmother's birthday isn't the sole reason why Patrick's summoning me. He must have something else up his sleeve."

After all, the Lester family must've heard about the so-called plagiarism issue.

They probably would've been really happy if Janet's reputation was ruined in the process, but in the end, it was Ritchie who marred his own name by his own doing.

Janet could feel that Ethan was a little unhappy. So she softened her voice and said with a small smile, "Then we'd better not go, right?"

She was thinking that if avoiding all this potential conflict was an option, she'd take it. A simple and happy life with Ethan was all she wanted.

Hearing this, Ethan chuckled. He gently tucked Janet's hair behind her ear, revealing her beautiful, fair face. After looking into her clear eyes for a long time, he finally said, "I don't want to go either. But because Ritchie has stirred up trouble for us, I can't ignore the Lester family any longer and neither can they."

He could hide for a while, and he couldn't hide forever. Even if he refused to go this time, the Lester family would look for other opportunities to make life difficult for him.

Besides, Ethan wasn't the kind of man who would let someone push him around.

Disappointed and depressed, Janet lowered her long eyelashes and mulled over things for a while. "Well, I guess you're right. We can't keep avoiding the Lester family forever. Now that they've come to us, we have to face them."

Janet looked down as she spoke, which worried Ethan.

"Is there something else on your mind? Are you upset?"

Janet shook her head, absent-minded. "No, no."

Ethan's expression immediately darkened. Without warning, he scooped Janet up and made her sit on the kitchen counter. Before the woman could respond, he grabbed her chin and stuck his tongue into her mouth, his fingers moving restlessly towards her crotch.

"Hmm... Ethan!" Janet tried to push Ethan away, but it was useless. She could only let him do whatever he wanted with her.

It wasn't until he felt that her body was trembling did he finally pull away. In a hoarse voice, he said, "Tell me the truth."

Janet's fingers reached for his shirt. Her face was scarlet as a tomato. Pouting, she finally relented. "Fine. I feel a little upset."

With his hands on her waist, Ethan lowered his head and rested his forehead on her shoulder. With remorse, he murmured, "It's my fault. This conflict was supposed to stay between me and the Lester family, but you got caught in the crossfire simply because you married me."

He paused for a few seconds and then continued seriously, "But Janet, now that you're with me, I won't let you suffer. I'll avenge you."

Blushing, Janet shook her head and didn't seem to notice that there was a hint of viciousness in the man's voice. She reached out her arms and wrapped them around his neck. "We're a couple. Of course we're going to have to face problems together."

Ethan didn't say anything. After a long time of silence, he quietly nodded and lowered his head to plant a kiss on Janet's neck. His kiss was very light yet possessive. His lips gradually made its way to the woman's lips and the two kissed each other passionately again.

It was not until Janet noticed that Ethan was on the verge of losing control that she pulled away shyly.
“Calm down. I’m on my period.”

Ethan’s fingers brushed against a sanitary pad and he closed his eyes, his expression darkening instantly.
“I’ve restrained myself for so long.”

Flustered, Janet covered her face with her hands. This was not what she wanted either. In an attempt to alleviate her shame, she changed the topic. “How about we go shopping? We can buy some gift for your grandmother!”

Rubbing the spot between his eyebrows, Ethan sighed and nodded helplessly.