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Right after Janet walked out of the cafe, she started thinking about Brandon.

‘Kent wouldn’t joke about this. And besides, his words do make sense. If the paparazzi have Emani’s secrets, they wouldn’t be hiding it for so long without a good reason.’

“Could it really be Brandon again this time?” Janet muttered as she looked up at the sky and the falling snow from above. Her eyes soon dimmed.

She fished out her phone and looked for his number. It had been so long since they last spoke to each other. The last time he texted her was to tell her about the bonus.

She soon texted him a message. This time, she was determined to know the truth.

Though she wasn’t the smartest person in the world, she wasn’t stupid either. She knew that Brandon wouldn’t help her for no reason. He probably had a purpose and she wanted to know what it was.

Brandon didn’t respond immediately. In fact, her message remained unread for quite a while.

And so, she put her phone back into her pocket. It was getting dark outside. Oddly enough, she realized she hadn’t received any response for the message she sent to Ethan, either.

Upon arriving at home, Janet rummaged through her bag for a few minutes, but her keys were nowhere to be found. She scratched the back of her head, trying to figure out where she might’ve left it. Then, she remembered that she was in a hurry to get off work, so she must’ve left her keys on the desk in the office. Right after Janet walked out of the cafe, she started thinking about Brandon.

She leaned against the door, ringing the doorbell a few times. But then, nobody answered. It seemed as though Ethan hadn’t come back yet.

Fortunately, the company was just a ten minute walk away from where she lived. She could drop by the company again to get her keys.

It was already late at night when she arrived at the company building. There were only a few floors which still had lights on.

As soon as she entered the building, she noticed the CEO’s elevator door opening from a distance. The person inside was coming out of the elevator.

It looked like Brandon had just gotten off work. Janet took out her phone to check if she had received a response from him, but it turned out that she still didn’t get any replies.

She was lucky that she ran into him here by accident. She could just ask him her question face to face. If he really did help her, she wanted to take this opportunity to ask him why he helped and thank him properly for it.

Brandon had help her several times before and all she had done was to send him messages of gratitude. She had never expressed her gratitude to him in person. To her, it felt like she was being insincere.

In the distance, Brandon was surrounded by several men in black suits. He was also dressed in a suit and leather shoes. Just as he was about to walk out of the elevator, his eyes swept across the door and noticed her.

Brandon's eyebrows knitted together. He paused for a moment and said, "I forgot a document upstairs. I'm gonna go upstairs and get it."

If the men were to listen carefully enough, they would be able to hear that Brandon was frantic.

Thereafter, Brandon turned around and shuffled back to the elevator. His bodyguards followed him back inside.

When Janet saw that he went back to the elevator, she strode over to him and shouted, "Wait, Mr. Larson! It's me, Janet Lind!"

But as soon as she ran to the elevator door, it was already closing. She pressed the button and peered through the closing door. Brandon was turning his face away, but she noticed that he looked exactly like Ethan.

As Janet stood at the door of the elevator, she was stunned. She was about to take a closer look at him, but Brandon had already turned his back to her and the door had closed.

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It never occurred to Janet that Brandon had the same looks as her own husband, Ethan, who seldom dressed up and was highly neglectful of his appearance.

She wished she could rush up and fling open the door so that she could take a closer look. She even wanted to barge headlong into the CEO's office and spin Brandon around to face her so that she could see exactly what he looked like.

But she wasn't that bold. After all, Brandon was the CEO of the Larson Group, and was her boss's boss. She dared not offend him in the slightest.

She hadn't managed to catch a glimpse of his entire face. She had just caught a fleeting look at his side profile.

But she was convinced that her eyes hadn't deceived her. Brandon's side profile looked so similar to Ethan's, plus they were almost at the same height. Were there really two people who looked so like in this world?

Just then, Janet received a message from Brandon on her phone.

"Janet, why are you under the impression that I have everything to do with what's happening in your life? The Larson Group isn't responsible for your life. As for Emani, I just found out about what happened to her this morning from my assistant."

It never occurred to Janet that Brandon had the same looks as her own husband, Ethan, who seldom dressed up and was highly neglectful of his appearance. Judging from his frigid tone, Janet knew that he had made it clear that he didn't have anything to do with what had happened with Emani.

But this was not a big deal anymore. The thing that was consuming her mind was the fact that Brandon and Ethan looked like spitting images of one another.

And just now, she had already noticed that Brandon was deliberately avoided meeting her. He had just come out of the elevator. Why did he suddenly turn around and go back in the instant his eyes fell on her?

It was quite peculiar indeed.

However, it was not appropriate for her to ask him such a question. If he denied it, it would make her look like a narcissist, wouldn't it?

Janet had no choice but to text him back politely.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Larson. Perhaps I overthought this whole thing. I happened to be in the company just now and I saw you going upstairs. Could I invite you to join me for dinner? You have helped me so many times before. I want to thank you properly in person."

After sending the message, Janet became overwhelmed by nerves. Somehow, she thought of Ethan's face again. Brandon looked exactly like him.

Brandon replied immediately this time.

"I just received an urgent meeting invitation. I need to leave the country soon and I will be very busy for the next few days."

That explained why he suddenly turned around and went back into to the elevator just moments ago.

Staring at the message from Brandon, Janet frowned thoughtfully.

She didn't believe there could ever be such a coincidence. She had seen it clearly just now with her own two eyes. As soon as Brandon saw her, he walked into the elevator without looking back.

But it was too far away, so she hadn't really got to see his face clearly until she rushed over and the elevator door almost closed.

However, seeing such a reply, there was nothing more Janet could say. After all, Brandon was her boss. She couldn't demand that he have dinner with her.

"Okay. I'll thank you in person when you are free someday."

She pursed her lips. She really had no choice but to go to her desk and get her keys.

Staring at the closed elevator door, she felt regretful, but her hands were tied. She took out her phone and called Ethan.

Since she couldn't ask Brandon, she could at least ask Ethan about it.

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Ethan stood in the elevator, all stiff and tense. His fear lingered at the back of his head. He had been sweating so much that his shirt had already stuck to his back.

Ethan had never expected to meet Janet here, of all places.

He hadn't even figured out how to tell her the truth yet.

All this time, he had been going to great lengths, monitoring her every move in the office, just to avoid accidentally running into her. Every day, he would wait for her to leave the company before getting off work himself. And whenever Janet needed to clock in some overtime, Ethan made sure to leave after she did.

That afternoon, Janet had sent him a message saying that she was going to have coffee with Kent.

Ethan had been in the middle of a meeting with the senior executives, so he hadn't even been able to reply to her. Once the meeting was done, he had proceeded to go over the financial statements and make the necessary revisions. It had taken him a while before he could finally call it a day.

He had felt safe taking the CEO's elevator under the foolish presumption that Janet would either be at the coffeehouse or on her way home by now. Ethan had never expected her to suddenly return to the company.

Just before the elevator reached the top floor, Ethan received another message from Janet.

She was asking about Emani. Ethan stood in the elevator, all stiff and tense. His fear lingered at the back of his head. He had been sweating so much that his shirt had already stuck to his back.

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She was asking about Emani.

To begin with, he had no intentions to use Brandon's name in helping Janet with this issue, since it wouldn't make any sense.

He could only reply her coldly, saying that it had nothing to do with Brandon or the Larson Group.

As the elevator door slid to a close between them earlier, Ethan realized that Janet was staring at him through the gap. He knew then that she had seen his face.

Although surprised at first, he immediately averted his eyes and turned away.

A few seconds after that, his phone pinged. Janet was inviting Brandon to dinner.

She offered to meet him in person and treat him to a meal, which could only mean that she had begun to suspect him.

It wasn't the right time to tell her the truth, however, so he had no choice but to make up some excuse and decline her offer.

Sure enough, as soon as Janet was rejected by Brandon, she called Ethan.

Ethan yanked his tie off his neck.

"Yes, is everything all right?" He spoke in the same old, relaxed voice he always used around her.

"What time are you coming home?" Janet asked in a casual tone that made it difficult to tell how she was actually feeling. "Do you have to work overtime every day now?"

Ethan clenched his fist and cleared his throat. "I don't think I'll be home until a while later," he said calmly. "I was just wrapping up my work for the day."

After saying their goodbyes, Ethan rushed into his office and made a beeline for the floor-to-ceiling windows that overlooked the streets below. When he finally spotted Janet walking out of the company building, he let out a long sigh.

He waited for another half hour before heading home.

Ethan stepped into their house and was greeted by the sight of Janet sitting in the middle of the sofa, her legs crossed, her arms folded over her chest.

Her eyes had been fixed on his face since he opened the door, and it trailed him as he moved across the foyer.

"It's getting colder and colder, huh?" Ethan said lightly as he took off his coat. His hair was disheveled, and dark locks hung low over his brow. He looked like some downbeat entrepreneur trying to try his luck out in the big world.

He peddled over to the rug and lazily shook the snow off his coat. Despite his outward composure, Ethan was practically shaking inside. He wasn't sure he was ready to face Janet's questions just yet.

It didn't help that she kept staring at him, either.

After a long, tense silence, Janet took a deep breath and opened her mouth.

Her voice rang loud and clear. "Ethan Lester!"

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Her voice rang loud and clear. "Ethan Lester!"

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"What's the matter?" Ethan walked to the fridge and took out a bottle of chilled spring water. He had the habit of drinking chilled beverages all the year round.

He unscrewed the cap and said in confusion, "If you have something to say, you can just say it."

"I saw Brandon Larson today," Janet said. She pinched the edge of the couch cushion nervously. Although she really wanted to question Ethan, she couldn't help but feel intimidated by him.

"And then? What happened?" Ethan closed the fridge door and leaned against it. He raised his head and looked straight into her eyes.

He crossed his arms over his chest. The fitting gray sweater hugged his muscles perfectly.

After due thought and consideration, she said, "The two of you look perfectly alike. Tell me the truth... Are you and Brandon twin brothers?"

This was the only viable explanation she could think of. They looked exactly alike and Brandon did seem to treat her a little specially compared to others. Perhaps this was the case because Brandon knew all along that she was his sister-in-law, and he was doing it for his brother Ethan.

Janet couldn't help herself and continued to develop a narrative in her mind. She thought that perhaps they were twins, but they were forcibly separated from each other and had to live separate lives from that point onwards. "What's tha mattar?" Ethan walkad to tha fridga and took out a bottla of chillad spring watar. Ha had tha habit of drinking chillad bavaragas all tha yaar round.

Ha unscrewad tha cap and said in confusion, "If you hava something to say, you can just say it."

"I saw Brandon Larson today," Janat said. Sha pinchad tha adga of tha couch cushion narvously. Although sha raally wantad to quastion Ethan, sha couldn't halp but faal intimidatad by him.

"And than? What happenad?" Ethan closad tha fridga door and laanad against it. Ha raisad his haad and lookad straight into har ayas.

Ha crossad his arms ovar his chast. Tha fitting gray swaatar huggad his musclas parfactly.

Aftar dua thought and considaration, sha said, "Tha two of you look parfactly alika. Tall ma tha truth... Ara you and Brandon twin brothars?"

This was tha only viabla axplanation sha could think of. Thay lookad axactly alika and Brandon did saam to traat har a littla spacially comparad to othars. Parhaps this was tha casa bacausa Brandon knaw all along that sha was his sistar-in-law, and ha was doing it for his brothar Ethan.

Janat couldn't halp harsalf and continuad to davalop a narrativa in har mind. Sha thought that parhaps thay wara twins, but thay wara forcibly separatad from aach othar and had to liva separata livas from that point onwards.

A wave of relief washed over Ethan.

He couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief.

He was amused by her question. How had she jumped to that conclusion?

Ethan walked over to her and sat down calmly. He touched her face with his fingers, smiled and pinched her cheek. "You sounded really sure. Did you see his face up close? There are innumerable people who look alike in this world. Are you sure you didn't see it wrong?"

Fortunately for him, she didn't suspect that Brandon and he were one and the same person.

However, it was not surprising that Janet would think they were twins. It was indeed a perfect explanation.

With her eyes wide open, Janet held Ethan's hand and said, "You have no idea how much you look alike! He has your exact nose and jawline!"

Seeing the serious look on her face, Ethan took a sip of water and asked with convincing astonishment, "Really?"

"Of course! Why else would I be so surprised?" Janet continued.

She was being completely honest. If they didn't bear such a remarkable resemblance, she wouldn't be as shocked as she was.

After thinking for a while, Ethan rubbed the top of her head gently. She looked so upset right now, trying to convince him.

After mulling the situetion over in his mind, he seid, "I wes just esking out of surprise. I don't know if I heve e twin brother or not. My mother never told me eny deteils of my birth. But when I wes born, the Lerson family wes elreedy down end out, end every member of it hed e tregic tele to tell. So, there is the possibility thet this mey be true."

He hed retionelized to himself thet it might be eesier for Jenet to believe thet Brendon end he wes twin brothers. So he decided to go along with it.

"Then you should meet each other!" Janet held his arm and said excitedly.

All of a sudden, she felt that she was doing a great deed by reuniting the twins. If Brandon really was Ethan's twin, Ethan would finally have another blood relative in the world that he could call family.

Looking at the expectant look on her face, Ethan felt a comforting warmth fill his heart. He had always thought he didn't know much about love, but he was really warmed by her words.

He smiled and asked gently, "How?"

After thinking for a while, Janet said, "I think he might know about your existence. Maybe you can just go see him directly."

After mulling the situation over in his mind, he said, "I was just asking out of surprise. I don't know if I have a twin brother or not. My mother never told me any details of my birth. But when I was born, the Larson family was already down and out, and every member of it had a tragic tale to tell. So, there is the possibility that this may be true."

He had rationalized to himself that it might be easier for Janet to believe that Brandon and he were twin brothers. So he decided to go along with it.

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Ethan was stunned and started coughing.

How could he make it work?

Currently, technology wasn't advanced enough to create a person who looked exactly the same as him and who could interact with him face to face.

"My idea is the exact opposite. Indeed, Brandon might know something about this. He just so happens to be the CEO of the Larson Group, so, of course, he knows more about this than we do. But he didn't say this right out. He must have his own reasons for this. It's better not to rush into meeting up with him. Furthermore, we happen to be very different in our social statuses. If it turns out we're not related, it would be very embarrassing, am I right?" Ethan explained all this in a whisper.

Janet scrutinized his face carefully. Something occurred to her right then. Could it be possible that Brandon and Ethan were actually the same person?

But as soon as she thought of that, she shook the idea from her mind. How could that be possible? This was Brandon Larson. He was one of the richest men in Seacisco. How could he and Ethan be the same man?

She tossed the idea out of her head and thought Ethan's explanation made more sense. They were only ordinary people. If Ethan went to see Brandon just like that and told him that they were twin brothers, Brandon might take it that they wanted to milk him for money.

Furthermore, there had been a lot of rumors circulating about her in the Larson Group already. If something were to happen again, everyone would point their fingers at Ethan as well. She didn't want that to happen at all. Ethan was stunned and started coughing.

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"Just forget about it. But it really seems that you two look alike. If you saw him with your own eyes, you would be as startled as me how much you guys resemble each other." With a heavy sigh, Janet embraced Ethan tightly to her.

Fortunately, Ethan was only an ordinary man who she could enjoy the rest of her life with, without any complications or bother from the outside world.

"Maybe I'll get to meet him some other time." A smile popped up on Ethan's face right then; however, it happened to be a forced one.

Knowing that Janet suspected something already, he had to speed up his plan. He couldn't keep this from Janet for long. The thing he wanted the most now was to get her to live in the biggest mansion in Seacisco and for everyone to look up to her.

He didn't want to continue talking about Brandon with Janet so he changed the topic. Holding onto Janet's wrist, he said in a hushed voice, "You said you had coffee with Kent Perkins just now? Did he say anything to you?"

Janet nearly forgot about it. Now that Ethan suddenly reminded her of it, she had a lot to tell him. "Kent said that it wasn't just some ordinary reporter who had blitzed the media with all those bad things about Emani, but some big shot who hated her guts and wanted to help me out. But I have already asked Brandon about this matter and he said that it wasn't him. I don't know if he's lying to me or not. But no matter what, I feel that it's really strange. If it wasn't him, then who the hell could it be? If it was really Brandon, why wouldn't he admit it?"

Ethan regretted bringing up this at all.

It looked like he had laid out a trap for himself.

When he was trying to think of an excuse, a strong smell of smoke suddenly came into the room.

"What's that smell? This is so weird."

Ethan had also noticed the smoke. He got up and went into the kitchen to check what was going on.

"The stove doesn't seem to be on." He knitted his brows and smelled something burning again.

The smell of smoke caused Janet to cough. Covering her mouth with her hand, she got up from the sofa and asked him, "Ethan, do you have the feeling that it's getting hot here?"

"I'll go check outside." Ethan's eyes darkened noticeably. He made his way to the door and as soon as he opened it, a heat wave and thick smoke rushed into the room.

It appeared that some apartment downstairs from them was on fire. The stairway had already been sealed by the fire and the thick black smoke blurred their path ahead.

They heard people shouting and running in a hurry to get away.

People were shouting out loud, "Fire! Fire!"

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Ethan immediately closed the door. He ran into the bathroom to wet the towels, which he then draped over Janet and himself.

"What would cause this fire? There's no one else on our floor, and I'm pretty sure the 21st floor is empty as well..." Janet coughed, her eyes tearing up from all the heavy smoke. She couldn't fathom why this was happening.

Their apartment was on the top floor, and no one else lived beside or below their unit.

The fire had escalated at this point, and a dark cloud of smoke spread through the corridor, turning the place into a hot oven.

"Shh, it's okay," Ethan comforted her. "Someone must have called 911; the firefighters should be on their way. They'll be here soon." His face was glistening with sweat, with drops trickling from his chin. "I'll go and check how bad it is out there. Let me see if we have a way to escape on our own. Stay here and watch yourself, okay? Make sure you don't get burned."

"Ethan!" Janet grabbed his arm in a vise-like grip. "Be careful."

He hiked up her towel over her head and said, "I will. Don't worry."

With that, Ethan pulled the door open and disappeared into the dark.

As the fire had come from the floor below, the stairs were naturally out of the question. They couldn't take the elevator, either.

Judging by how fiercely the fire raged, Ethan figured that this was no accident. Moreover, their neighborhood had always been commended by the community for its fire safety measures. This disaster was definitely intentional. He was sure of it.

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Meanwhile, Janet had been staring at the clock on the wall since Ethan left. It had been almost ten minutes, and he still hadn't returned.

Feeling restless and panicked, she opened the door and screamed into the burning hallway. "Ethan!"

A tall figure soon emerged from the thick smoke and pushed her back inside their apartment.

"I told you to stay put, didn't I?" Ethan rasped. "Save your energy. We're going to have to make a run for it."

"I was worried about you!" Janet wailed, feeling aggrieved. Ethan's face had black patches from the ash in the air, but it did nothing to conceal his good looks. He still looked dashing as ever, despite the severity of their situation.

He grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her into the bedroom, closing the door behind them. Then, he took out his phone and dialed 911.

After a brief conversation with the emergency responder, he looked to Janet and considered their options. There was only one option left. Without another moment's hesitation, Ethan called Garrett. "Send a helicopter over," he ordered as soon as the line connected, no longer caring about having his identity exposed.

Janet froze, stunned at what she had just heard. She turned to Ethan, but he had already dashed into the bathroom and was dousing his body with water.

"Come here!"

He waved at her urgently.

She ran over, and he promptly poured a bucket of water on her.

The air was rapidly getting heavy, and tendrils of smoke were beginning to enter their apartment through the vent. Ethan knew that it wasn't safe to stay in the apartment anymore.

He grabbed two new towels and soaked them in water before handing one to Janet. He covered his mouth and nose with the other and motioned for her to do the same. "The stairway is blocked, and the elevator isn't working. We can only escape through the rooftop, but we'll have to run through the corridor to get there. I need you to listen carefully. Once we're out of the apartment, just run as fast as you can. No matter what happens, you must not stop, okay?"

Janet nodded obediently. She could barely keep her eyes open because of the smoke.

They went to the front door and braced themselves. The moment Ethan opened it, a wave of heat rushed past them and into the apartment.

Janet could feel the water on her clothes evaporate in a second. Just as they had agreed, she blindly ran forward, pumping her legs with all the strength she had left. Ethan was following close behind, making sure that the fire wouldn't reach her as they fled.

With one last spurt, they managed to reach the rooftop.

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Just then, a sizable crowd of onlookers from the neighborhood gathered in the open space downstairs. The crowd raised their heads and looked at the top floor which was engulfed by thick black clouds of smoke.

A member of the property management's voice was amplified loudly by a loudspeaker.

"Everyone, be quiet! Keep calm! Keep a safe distance from the fire. We have called the fire department and the firemen will be here shortly!"

"Why did the fire seem to start at the top floor? What about the people on the top floor?"

"Have all the people on the lower floors managed to evacuate? If you are fine, come and report to me!"

People were all talking and shouting over one another. It was a scene of utter chaos.

The fire had started on the penultimate floor of the building. Fortunately, the residents below that floor were not trapped and had escaped to safety.

Only Ethan and Janet were still caught in the fire since they lived on the top floor.

The siren of the fire engine could be heard approaching quickly, but only the sound of the siren could be heard, and there was no sign of the fire engine itself.

Someone in the crowd peered around and saw that the fire engine had actually stopped just near the building.

The firefighting access was originally unimpeded. Now there was a big truck parked at the entrance, which completely blocked the way of the fire engine.

What's more, this high-end community's pedestrian system was separated from the vehicle system. Except for the firefighting access, the fire engine had no way to approach the apartment building from the ground. Just then, a sizable crowd of onlookers from the neighborhood gathered in the open space downstairs. The crowd raised their heads and looked at the top floor which was engulfed by thick black clouds of smoke.

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The property manager was so anxious that he shouted, "What's going on?! Where is the driver of that truck? This is a matter of life and death. We don't have a second to waste here!"

Many people couldn't stand idly anymore. They also tried to contact the driver to move the truck, but sadly no one recognized this truck and they had no idea who to call. "Damn it! There is no phone number left on the truck either. We have no way of contacting the driver!"

"Then we have to wait for the tow truck!"

"God knows when the tow truck will arrive! Besides, this truck is too big to be towed. It's also impossible for the fire engine to forcefully hit a way out!" The property manager was wholly overwhelmed by anxiety.

He was very clear about the fact that the resident of the top floor was a big shot. However, there was such an unexpected situation at the critical moment of rescue. The manager wiped the cold sweat on his forehead and nervously watched the thick smoke billowing from the top floor.

Ethan and Janet were blocked into a corner of the rooftop.

The surrounding area was as hot as the surface of the sun, and the heat was almost unbearable. The floor under their feet was so hot that they could hardly stand.

Janet was sweating profusely. Her face was red and her hair had curled from the heat.

Ethan observed the rooftop calmly. He couldn't just sit still and wait to be burnt to death.

He had already called for the firemen, and there should have been many people calling the police outside. Why hadn't the firefighters arrived yet?

The wet blanket and wet towel they prepared in a hurry just now had already become bone dry from the sheer heat. Janet covered her mouth with the towel but she couldn't help coughing and choking from the noxious gases of the fire.

"Ethan, we'd better find a way to get out of here. This fire is going to eat us up if we don't act fast." Janet stared at the fire in the staircase leading to the rooftop. It seemed to be impossible for them to go downstairs via that route. Now they were truly in a predicament.

Their wet clothes had also been dried out by the heat from the flames. Even though the rooftop was an open space, the temperature and size of the flames was just too great. The water in their bodies would evaporate quickly.

Ethan walked to the edge of the rooftop and looked down.

By this time, the fire had already burned the rooftop from the staircase to where they stood.

Janet felt the heat increasing exponentially. Her mouth was dry, and her hands and feet were weak. She felt dizzy because of the dehydration from such close proximity with the flames.

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The rooftop wasn't that big. It was only a few dozen square meters wide. The potted plants on the roof had become withered because of the heat.

There was nowhere for Janet and Ethan to hide. Moreover, it was rather windy today, making the fire even worse. Gradually, smoke was forming on the rooftop.

Ethan knew that they couldn't wait any longer. As the smoke increased, so too would the concentration of carbon monoxide within the area. And by then, he and Janet would likely pass out on the rooftop due to excessive intake of carbon monoxide.

It would take some time for the Larson Group's helicopter to arrive. They couldn't wait for that long.

Ethan walked to the edge of the rooftop and tied a roll of rope to the railing, which he had taken from the bathroom earlier.

"Janet, come here. I'll get you down from the rooftop using this rope." Ethan helped Janet to the edge of the rooftop and tied the other end of the rope to her waist.

Dazed and dizzy, Janet stared at the crowd. There were numerous people beneath the building, small as ants. Her vision was blurring, and her legs grew weaker by the second. The rooftop wasn't that big. It was only a few dozen square meters wide. The potted plants on the roof had become withered because of the heat.

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"Ethan, I... I'm scared," Janet stammered.

Ethan lifted her up from behind and gently put her on the edge of the rooftop. He leaned close to her ear and said, "Listen to me, Janet. I know you're afraid, and of course, it's dangerous. Trust me, I won't resort to doing this if I have any other choice. The fire has spread to the rooftop. Our only option is to find a way down by ourselves. If we hesitate any longer, both you and I could perish here."

For a moment, Janet sobered up. She stared into his eyes through the thick smoke. And in that instance, her vision blurred.

She turned around, embracing Ethan tightly. This was a fear that she had never experienced before. Bitterly, she cried, "What about you?"

Ethan planted a kiss on her tear-streaked face. "I'm strong enough to hold onto the rope by myself and go down after you."

Janet wiped away her own tears, still worried about him.

"I'm going to be fine," Ethan added. He kissed her lips and smiled.

Thereafter, he double-checked the rope on Janet's waist and tied it more firmly. "If you're feeling scared, make sure not to look down and try not to move as much. Just leave everything to me. Got it?"

After taking a few deep breaths, Janet closed her eyes and nodded.

As she held onto the rope tightly, Ethan lowered her bit by bit.

By then, the fire was approaching and the heat wave was burning all in its wake. Ethan groaned in pain; his forehead covered in sweat. He felt a scathing pain on his back. It was as if a red-hot iron bar was pressed onto his back through his shirt.

But right now, Janet was hanging in the air. He must endure the pain and lower her down as cautiously as possible, lest he dropped her.

Janet closed her eyes, daring not to look down. She could hear Ethan's faint grunts of pain. When she opened her eyes to see what was happening, all she saw was dense smoke.

The top floor and the rooftop continued to burn. Soon, the rope approached the window. But then, the fire coming out of the window ignited the rope.

While Janet was halfway down, the rope continued to burn. She felt as if it would break at any moment.

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Janet's heart skipped a beat and jumped into her throat when she heard the noise.

Ethan gritted his teeth. Blue veins stood out on his arms because of the overexertion. He courageously endured the severe burning sensation engulfing every fiber of his back while he slowly loosened the rope and helped her down.

It was still a fifteen-floor drop from where she was hanging and it was bone chilling.

As time ticked by quickly, Ethan felt not only pain, but mostly dizziness. The smoke on the rooftop had become thicker and thicker. He had already inhaled copious amounts of toxic carbon monoxide. He couldn't keep himself from coming apart at the seams even if he wanted to do so.

Janet's hands were trembling, even her lips. She tried hard and pressed her feet against the bricks of the small ledges that were between every floor as she went down in an attempt to reduce the weight on the life-saving rope so that Ethan could bear less pressure. If she relaxed for even a mere millisecond, she might went into a free fall and dragged Ethan down with her.

But at this time, there was no other way to save themselves.

Ethan could only grit his teeth and speed up. Although the life-saving rope was fire-resistant, it might eventually be burnt to ash from being exposed to the fire for so long. Janet's heart skipped a beat and jumped into her throat when she heard the noise.

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Janet suddenly felt like she was being let down to fall when she heard the knot in the rope cracking, and she unconsciously screamed in utter panic.

As the descending speed gradually increased, the life-saving rope finally reached its limit and broke. All of a sudden, Ethan felt like all weight had been lifted out of his hands.

He looked down nervously when he heard Janet's scream and he felt his heart skip a beat.

Fortunately, Janet was safe.

The firefighters below had already laid out a rescue cushion under them to prevent Janet from hurtling headlong into the ground. Thankfully, she had landed right on target on the cushion.

With his hands grabbing the handrails, Ethan couldn't hold on any longer and passed out.

Closing his eyes, he was still thinking that Janet was not far from the ground now and that she should be safe.

When Janet fell on the air cushion, she felt a sharp pain all over her body, as if her bones had broken.

Ignoring the pain, she staggered to her feet and looked up desperately at the rooftop.

The life-saving rope was burned, and there was absolutely no way for Ethan to escape.

At this time, a loud sound came from the rooftop. The fire on the rooftop could be seen from the ground.

Frightened, Jenet shouted at the rooftop, "Ethen!"

However, there was only the sound of burning coming from the rooftop now that the fire had grown so big.

Seeing that there was no response from Ethen, Jenet was about to lose her mind completely. She hurriedly said to the firefighters, "My husband is still up there! Please save him!"

One of the firefighters had no choice but to answer, "Our vehicles are still stuck out here; we had to carry the rescue cushion in ourselves just now.

Jenet suddenly felt desperate. She pushed the people standing in front of her out of her way and was about to rush upstairs to save Ethen herself.

"Hey! Calm down, miss. It's too dangerous!" Everyone around rushed to stop her deed in her tracks.

"Jenet! Ethen risked his life to save you!" Laney lived on the lower floor and she had already run down before the fire spread. She now grabbed Jenet's wrist and said in a softer tone, "Calm down. Even if you rushed up, you won't be able to save him; you will only get yourself killed."

"Let me go up there! Laney, Ethen is still up there, fighting for his life!" Jenet broke down and cried. She couldn't calm down even a little and kept shaking her head, trying to struggle out of the grip of the crowd.

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The fire seemed to grow bigger with every passing minute, and the smoke mingled with the clouds in the sky.

It was a serious fire accident, and the people gathered around gasped in fear.

At that moment, a helicopter with the Larson Group’s logo broke through the smoke and hovered above the rooftop.

The rope ladder rolled down, and the rescuers climbed down. Several men in bright orange suits jumped off the rope and saved Ethan, who had passed out.

The sound of the propeller gradually reached Janet’s ears. Seeing the helicopter parked in an open space near the neighborhood, she immediately rushed over.

Ethan’s face was covered in soot, and there were multiple burns on his body. He was unconscious. The blood from the wounds soaked his shirt.

All the residents swarmed around him, and some kind-hearted person called 911.

“He is severely injured.”

“Don’t worry, young lady. The ambulance will arrive soon!”

Tears streamed down Janet’s cheeks when she realized what Ethan had been through. She wiped the tears off her face and escorted Ethan to the ambulance along with the firefighters.

Laney saw Janet’s swollen ankles and realized she must have hurt herself when she fell on the air cushion.

“You should treat the injury on your ankles first.”

Janet shook her head fiercely. She forced herself to calm down and got in the ambulance with Ethan.

“Please go to this hospital.” Janet gave the address of Frank’s hospital.

The driver didn’t refuse. He knew it was a high-end private hospital, and the equipment there was much better than those at public hospitals.

As soon as they arrived at the front gate of the hospital, Janet saw Frank standing there with a dozen medical staff as if they had been waiting for a big shot.

Frank ran over as he watched his people wheeled Ethan into the hospital in a stretcher bed.

His face turned grim when he saw Ethan’s conditions.

“Take him to the OR and call the attending doctor of the Dermatology Department right away.” Frank hurriedly ordered the nurse. Then, he and a dozen doctors pushed Ethan into the operating room and began treating him.

Janet clenched her fists and anxiously paced outside the door.

Her swelled-up ankles had turned red.

Laney couldn’t help but feel sorry for her. She went to the nurse and got some ointment for Janet. “You don’t have to keep staring at the door. He is right inside there and won’t go anywhere.” She grabbed Janet’s arm and helped her sit down. “The doctors are treating him now.”

Although Janet was sitting on a chair, her eyes were still fixed on the door of the operating room. “Ethan is seriously injured. He said he would get out of the place safely with me.”

Tears welled up in her eyes as she thought about it.

Laney wasn’t good at comforting people. She hadn’t even cried once after becoming an adult. All she could do was sit beside Janet and accompany her.

Some doctors came out of the OR, and then more went in.

The next afternoon, the light of the operating room finally turned green.

Frank walked out, his face taut with exhaustion.

Janet’s heart sank when she saw the expression on his face. “Doctor Watson, how is Ethan?” She hurriedly ran over and asked him.