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Rubbing his temples in a bid to alleviate his headache, Frank took off his mask. Heaving a sigh, he massaged his stiff shoulder.

“He’s no longer in any real danger, but he had been seriously injured. He has multiple second degree burns and his lungs are damaged from inhaling too much smoke. He’s going to be in the hospital for at least three weeks.”

“I need to see him.” She tried to go into the ward.

Frank stopped her. “He’s awake, but you can’t go in there. He needs an asepsis environment while his burns heal. If you go in there right now, you might take in bacteria.”

Disappointment darkened Janet’s eyes. She tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear, lowering her head apologetically. “You’re right. I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking.”

“It’s okay.” Frank knew that she was just worried about Ethan. He raised his chin at the window. “You can see him through the glass, but you should ready your heart for the sight. He’s all wrapped up in gauze. I don’t think even he himself ever imagined someday he’d look just like a mummy.”

Janet smiled, knowing that Frank was making jokes in a bid to make her feel better.

After a moment of hesitation, she turned around and walked to the window. Lifting a hand to the glass, she looked at the man lying on the bed.

Ethan’s eyes were closed and there was an IV needle attached to his wrist. He had a ventilator on, and much like Frank had said, he was wrapped up in bandages and gauze like a mummy. He looked terrible. Janet had never seen him like that before.

It seemed like Ethan sensed a gaze on him, because he opened his eyes and turned his head, locking eyes with her. He couldn’t speak, so he could only blink at her from the other side of the glass. His gaze was gentle and comforting.

Tears came to her eyes again unbidden and she hurriedly covered her mouth with one hand to keep her sobs from coming out. If he had not helped her down first, he wouldn’t have been suffering like this.

Frank walked over with his hands behind his back. “Wow, even when he’s that injured he can still torment single people with PDA. What a jerk!” he joked, trying to comfort her.

Janet wiped her tear-filled eyes and gave him a watery smile. “I forgot to thank you, Doctor Watson. Thank you so much for saving him.”

“You’re welcome.” Frank laughed in his mind. Ethan invested in the hospital. There was nothing to thank him for. If anything, he should be the one thanking Ethan.

Janet had taken a lot of days off from work in a row in order to take care of Ethan. Since it was the off season, Tiffany approved her leave without asking too many questions.

Frank had gotten a room for her to sleep in, so she stayed in the hospital for several days. The service was great in the private hospital and due to Frank's excellent skills as a doctor, Ethan's condition improved quickly. After the fourth test, Frank told Janet it was okay to enter the ward to visit Ethan.

A nurse put Janet in an asepsis gown and took her into the ward.

Ethan was now wearing a hospital gown but he still had gauze wrapped around his body inside.

Standing beside the bed and looking at him, Janet couldn't come up with any words. She sobbed instead, biting her lower lip in a bid to hold her tears back.

Ethan couldn't bear the sight of her crying. He gave her a gentle smile, and tried to talk about something else. "Has the cause of the fire been determined? Did anyone tell you?"

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Only then did Janet remember that someone from the property management authority had called her this morning to give some details about the fire.

She had been so worried about Ethan's injury at the time that she soon forgot about it.

"The property management staff called earlier and told me that they've obtained some results from the preliminary investigation," Janet said now. Her brows furrowed as she tried to recall the conversation. "He said that the electric wiring of the unit below ours was faulty, which eventually caused a short circuit that led to the fire. They still have no idea how the wiring got damaged, though, since the unit has been unoccupied for a long time."

Ethan stared at her and mulled over this information. "It is strange, isn't it?" he asked after a while.

That made Janet pause.

"Yes, I also felt that something wasn't right about the whole thing. The staff reassured me that the community's fire safety measures has always been top-notch. Even if it was a short circuit, the alarms should have been triggered as soon as the wires ignited. What's more, Laney told me that a huge truck was parked in the neighborhood the entire time that night, and the driver was nowhere to be found. It was blocking the way, and that was why the fire engines got delayed with their emergency response. I wanted to ask the staff about this, too, but he sounded so apologetic and ashamed that I thought it best to let the matter go for now." She was much calmer as she recounted all that she knew.

But Ethan's face only grew darker with every word she spoke. "I don't think this is an accident at all. It looks deliberate. Arson, pure and simple."

He pondered for a few seconds before adding, "The property management of our neighborhood has always been strict, whether it involved the tenants or their guests. Plus, you mentioned there's the truck that night. No sensible driver would park their vehicles in an area allotted for firefighters or emergency responders, yet such a thing happened on this one particular day. It just couldn't have been a coincidence."

Janet pursed her lips, not knowing what to think of the whole incident. She wasn't the type to think the worst of other people unless there was proof of their misdeeds.

The Lester family couldn't have been behind this terrible affair, or could they?

"Well, let's leave it to the authorities. You just have to focus on your recovery. We can go over the details later, once you're all better." With that, Janet opened the lunch box she had brought. "Frank said that you need a proper rest for the next few days."

She carefully laid out the dishes she had prepared—beef bone soup and some pickled vegetables.

At first, Ethan had no intention of eating at all. He simply didn't feel like it. However, as the tempting smell of food filled the air, he found that he had a rather healthy appetite.

"Here, drink this soup before it gets cold." Even as she said it, Janet ladled a spoonful of the broth herself, blew on it, and brought it to Ethan's lips.

He slowly obliged. The warmth of the soup spread in his mouth and glided down his throat before settling at the pit of his stomach. Just like that, the tension in his body loosened up, and he felt unexpectedly cozy in his cold hospital bed.

Before either of them knew it, Ethan had already finished the whole bowl of soup.

He looked at Janet when he was done, basking in the tender sense of comfort one usually found in one's family. He couldn't remember the last time he had felt it.

Ethan was suddenly gripped with fear that he might lose it all over again, that his beloved wife might leave him one day. On a whim, he asked, "What if I make a grave mistake in the future? Will you forgive me and stay?"

Janet looked confused, but she only filled the bowl with some more soup and got it ready for Ethan.

She didn't think anything of his words just now; all she cared about was his health. "Are you even capable of making such a mistake? Here, open your mouth. You have to finish everything I brought."

As Ethan's condition gradually improved, Janet got back to work. She wanted to be by his side and take care of him, of course, but he needed to stay at the hospital for a considerable length of time. Tiffany had already been magnanimous by allowing her a few days of absence a few weeks back. Janet couldn't bring herself to ask for more.

As for Ethan, he listened to Janet like a dutiful husband, and concentrated on his recuperation in Frank's private hospital. Once Janet had gone for the day, he made a call to Garrett. "Look into the fire incident. Launch a full-on investigation and report back to me as soon as possible."

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"Ethan, am I your all-around-nanny?" Garrett continued whining over the phone. "I only get paid for one person's worth of labor, but I put in twice as much time."

“You want a raise? Wait, you don’t need money at all. What you really want is a vacation, don’t you?”
How could Ethan not tell what Garrett was thinking? He was like an open book.

Garrett raised his eyebrows and said, “Do you realize how long I’ve been working for you without having a proper vacation? Years!”

“Fine. Once you finished the task I assigned to you, I’ll give you some time off.”

“Now we’re talking,” Garrett replied, obviously pleased with what Ethan said. But he had to be honest; the fire incident was really weird.

“I’ll call you once I find out something.”

For starters, Garrett visited the other residents of the building Ethan lived in and asked around about the truck.

It didn’t take long until he found some clues.

The fire incident happened on the day it stopped snowing in Seacisco.

Was it truly just a coincidence? If the fire broke out during a snowy day, it wouldn’t have spread to the rooftop that fast and cause injury to Ethan.

Soon, Garrett told Ethan everything he found out.

They had their own theory about who had hired that truck driver. The man had once delivered seafood for clients who lived in high-end gated communities, and the Lester family was on his customer list.

But still, it couldn’t really prove anything. The Lesters could argue that he was just a delivery man and they didn’t even really know him.

“Without concrete evidence, it’s impossible to link the fire incident to the Lester family.” The case was a little complicated.

Although the clues seemed to lead to the Lester family, it was not enough.

For a moment, Ethan fell silent. Then he put down the documents he was holding and looked ahead, expressionless. Garrett couldn’t guess what he was thinking. “Elissa has always liked this kind of dirty trick. I have long expected that she would make a move since the day we came back from Grandma’s birthday party.”

Elissa had always wanted to get rid of Ethan ever since she first knew his existence. Ethan had been keeping a low profile through the years, so that Elissa wouldn’t feel threatened and just let him be. However, when he was at Nora’s birthday party last time, Elissa must have sensed something about him had changed and she was all vigilant again.

“You think Elissa is behind this? Do you think they have found out how you are related to the Larson Group?” Garrett looked dead serious as well.

Having no idea what Ethan had been through during childhood, he didn't know exactly what Elissa could do to the latter.

"I don't think so. But one thing is for sure; Elissa won't stop here. Sadly, we don't have any conclusive evidence yet. And even if we do, it will be hard to put Elissa behind bars because of the Lester family's influence."

Looking at Ethan, who was lying on the bed with an indifferent look on his face, Garrett asked with doubt, "Do you mean that we should do nothing? This isn't you."

Ethan's most terrifying and frustrating quality was that he could conceal his thoughts and feelings so well that no one could guess.

"Are you going to let them go just like that?" Ethan closed his eyes for a few seconds and opened them again. This time, they looked sharper than swords. His smile also added to his domineering aura. "The Larson Group will hinder the Lester family's business from now on. We will leave them nothing."

Out of all people, he should know that the best way to get back at Elissa was to bring down the Lester family first. Ethan had been doing it for a decade now. The Larson Group was his most powerful weapon, and he must be very careful with what he was going to do next.

When Ethan was trapped on the rooftop, he had to call for the Larson Group's helicopter. The news would reach Elissa for sure. She probably saw him as a bigger threat now. If she knew he didn't die in the fire, she would make a move again. When that happened, Ethan would make sure he was fully prepared to fight back.

"Okay! This is more like it, buddy! We haven't done anything big in the past few years. It's getting boring. But now!" Garrett said with a grin.

One thing he liked about Ethan the most was his determination. If it was someone else who told him about taking down the Lester family, he would have laughed at that person.

But since it was Ethan who said that, Garrett believed in him. He knew that the former never failed once he set his mind to something.

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Ritchie, who just came home from Lester Silk Fabric, sat down on the sofa with his legs crossed.

It could be seen on his face that Ritchie was in a bad mood as he smoked his cigarette. Suddenly, he spat and cursed, "Damn it! Apparently, a chopper from the fucking Larson Group rescued Ethan from the fire. That son of a bitch is still alive!"

Elissa was playing bridge with several ladies in the living room when her son arrived. She was infuriated by Ritchie's impoliteness, but she pretended to be calm and said to her friends, "My son is here. Let's play next time."

As much as the rich ladies wanted to complain, they couldn't. Elissa was the hostess of the Lester family and this was her house, so they had no choice but to obey her and leave.

Once all her friends were gone, Elissa stood up and walked up to Ritchie.

Sometimes she couldn't help but wonder what he had learned during his years abroad. It cost her an arm and leg to send him abroad to study. But when he came back, she hadn't seen any improvement at all. Instead, he kept swearing every day just like those uneducated hooligans.

"How many times do I have to remind you to be polite? This is Seacisco. Everyone here knows you. You are Ritchie Lester! Don't be so arrogant." Elissa reprimanded Ritchie for his lack of manners.

But aside from her son's bad habits, he was perfect in her eyes. After all, he was so much like her, from body to mind.

"I've asked my people to find out about what happened. It was just a coincidence. Larson Group has also publicly announced that their helicopter was just passing by at that time. When they saw someone was trapped in the fire, they saved the man, who happened to be Ethan in this case."

"Is that guy really so lucky?" There was a trace of doubt in Ritchie's voice.

With a sneer, Elissa replied, "We both know that's just bullshit. I believe either Janet or Ethan is close with Brandon. They must be so close that the Larson Group sent a helicopter to rescue him."

"What? I don't think so. How could Brandon have something to do with those two worthless people? Even when I was abroad, I still pay attention to what was happening in Seacisco. I know that Brandon is a promising rich man." Ritchie didn't believe that Brandon could be related to Ethan and Janet at all.

"Those are just some rumors and gossips made for the like of you. Maybe it's just the marketing method of the Larson Group. You know, keeping their boss mysterious to keep the public interested," Elissa pointed out. Rumors never deceived Elissa. She only believed what she had seen with her own eyes.

After months of preparing, it was a shame she couldn't get Ethan this time. Fortunately, she didn't leave any evidence that could point to her. And even if there was evidence, no one could easily catch Elissa Lester.

In the middle of their conversation, Elissa's phone rang.

"Madam, it's from Mr. Lester." The servant handed the phone to Elissa.

"Are you coming home for dinner, Patrick?" A smile formed on Elissa's lips.

"No, I'm going to have dinner with the directors tonight. By the way, prepare something that I could bring when I visit Ethan in the hospital tomorrow," Patrick said in a serious tone, seemingly uninterested with having dinner at home.

Hearing Ethan's name, Elissa was stunned.

It was the first time that she heard from Patrick that he wanted to see Ethan. Perhaps he had also realized that Ethan had a deep relationship with Brandon and he could use it to their advantage.

"Alright, I'll prepare everything. I heard that Ethan was seriously injured this time. I'm also thinking about visiting him. I'm just not sure if it's a good idea." Although Elissa said so, there was no hint of worry on her face at all.

While listening to the two, Ritchie thought that this might be a good opportunity for them to finish Ethan. So after the call, he said to Elissa, "Shall we plot another plan, Mom? I don't believe that Ethan can always be lucky!"

"Of course, we have to kill Ethan no matter what." Determination mixed with cruelty flashed through Elissa's eyes.

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Saturday morning.

Early that morning, after cooking some nutritious broth, Janet delivered it to the hospital.

She had become just like a supervisor, making sure that Ethan ate on time every single day.

When Frank came to visit Ethan, he even joked that he had never seen anyone gain so much weight after being hospitalized.

Once Janet was finished feeding Ethan, she started cleaning up the table. She tied her long hair into a ponytail, revealing her neckline. She looked particularly charming at this moment.

Ethan's Adam's apple bobbed up and down as he grabbed her wrist.

His entire body was bandaged, so only his hands could move.

"Do your wounds hurt?" Janet asked worriedly.

Ethan stroked her fingers gently. If he had more strength right now, he'd pull her into his arms and kiss her passionately.

Janet had no idea just how attractive she was to him right now.

"Come here," Ethan said, restraining his urges.

Janet's eyes widened in confusion but she still leaned over, obeying his command.

Just then, they heard a knock coming from the door.

Ethan glanced at the door, frowning at the sight of Patrick. The man was donned in a suit, followed by his assistant. The latter was carrying several gifts in hand.

Upon seeing him, Ethan scowled. "Mr. Lester, don't you think it's rude to barge into my room without my permission?"

Patrick beckoned his assistant to put the gifts on the table. With his hands behind his back, he said in a heavy nasal voice, "Ethan, is that how you're supposed to speak to your father?"

Patrick appeared to be serious, but in truth, he felt proud to see the man his son had grown to become. It was apparent that Ethan had become tougher, stronger than before, and his tone was just as imposing as Patrick back when he was younger.

Ethan looked away, leaning against the headboard in silence.

Janet stood up and continued to clean the table. She didn't like the Lesters; in fact, she disliked anyone who mistreated Ethan.

While watching her clean the table beside Ethan, Patrick guessed that she must be the Lind family's daughter.

"Miss Lind, please leave us. I'd like to talk to Ethan alone," Patrick commanded with a condescending stare.

Janet pursed her lips, glanced at Ethan, put away the tableware, and nodded.

But before she could leave, Ethan grabbed her wrist.

"Janet is my wife. Whatever you have to say to me, she has the right to hear it too. Now, if you wish to say something, go ahead," he said calmly.

Anger surged in Patrick's heart. He couldn't figure out what was on Ethan's mind anymore.

Suppressing his anger, Patrick asked, "Ethan, why did the helicopter of the Larson Group come to save you?"

Ethan let go of Janet's wrist, put his hands behind his head, and nonchalantly replied, "The Lester family is powerful, isn't it? You should figure out the reason already, so why bother asking me? Besides, the incident has already been reported on the news. The Larson Group also made a statement that their helicopter just happened to pass by and saved me along the way."

Patrick appeared dignified as he stood beside the bed, offering not a shred of fatherly love. "Do you think I'll believe that bullshit?" After a pause, he asked in a more powerful voice, "How are you connected to Brandon?"

"Why are you asking me that?" Ethan looked up. They were both equally daunting.

In a sonorous, powerful voice, Patrick replied, "As you know, the Larson Group is now the biggest enemy of the Lester family. If you have any special connection to Brandon, perhaps you can help the Lester family. And if you make a great contribution, I'll consider taking you back into the Lester family."

Back when Ethan was nine years old, he came to Patrick, wanting to live in the Lester household. He was on his own for many years. For those reasons, Patrick believed that Ethan longed to become a part of the Lester household.

"Do you really think I'd want to go back to the Lester family?" Ethan sneered.

Patrick asked, "Don't you want to come back? Isn't that why you came to your grandmother's birthday party?"

Ethan shook his head and clicked his tongue, like he had just heard the funniest thing in the world.

"You're quite confident. I really want to know why you think I'd want you to take me back to the Lester household. That family means nothing to me now," Ethan declared sternly.

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Patrick had not expected to hear such words from Ethan.

His son's eyes were just as cold and disdainful as that woman's had been.

Ethan's expression was so much like Sylvia's that for one brief moment, Patrick felt as though he had been transported back to the past. He could certainly see her in their son.

It took Patrick a while to snap out of his daze. Embarrassed by Ethan's dismissive attitude toward him, he couldn't help but lash out. "You'd better think it over carefully. Don't act all arrogant and just be grateful for my offer. Once you come home, we will recognize you as a member of the Lester family, and your situation will definitely change for the better."

The way he saw it, he was already being more than gracious by making this offer. If his son had any sense, he would gladly accept the opportunity and make the most of it.

But Ethan was done talking to Patrick. He touched Janet's hand and said, "See Mr. Lester out for me."

He was clearly sending Patrick away.

As for Janet, she didn't like the man at all.

He might look and sound like a decent, rich man, but his hands were tainted with blood. Patrick had raped an innocent woman, and abandoned her and their child in the years that followed. They all knew that he was only trying to cozy up to Ethan now because of his selfish interests. Contrary to what he had been expecting, however, Ethan had no regard for the Lester family whatsoever.

Without missing a beat, Janet strode over to the door and opened it before gesturing at Patrick. "Please, Mr. Lester," she said in a chilly voice that could rival Ethan's.

Patrick was beyond mortified at this point. This couple had actually dared to give him the cold shoulder. Him, of all people!

The shameless Lind girl was just as brazen as his bastard son.

Patrick struggled to compose himself. He refused to lose his cool in front of these insolent youngsters. "Don't worry, I can manage by myself," he scoffed.

Just before he walked out of the room, he glanced back at Ethan with a last reminder. "I'm warning you, Ethan, if you blow this chance, you will never get another one. You may never step into the threshold of the Lester residence for the rest of your life. You—"

He was cut off as Janet unceremoniously slammed the door on his face.

"I can't believe a man could be this mean," she grumbled, crossing her arms over her chest. "You're still his son! The least he could have done was to be courteous and respectful. He doesn't deserve to be anybody's elder."

A surprised grin broke out on Ethan's face. He hadn't seen her so worked up before. It was adorable.

He leaned back against the headboard and studied Janet.

She bristled under his scrutinizing gaze, and she awkwardly averted her eyes. Her husband was an enigma, really. He usually didn't talk much, but he always liked to stare at her with his gentle eyes.

Janet felt a blush creep into her cheeks. "I'm sorry; I shouldn't have spoken ill of your father. I just... I just feel terrible for you, for everything you've been through."

Ethan had lost his mother at a young age, and had to fend for himself ever since. And then his father turned out to be a massive scumbag.

"Come here." Ethan waved her over with a faint smile.

Janet plopped on the edge of the bed with her head lowered, like a child who knew she had done something wrong and was about to be scolded. The bed was high enough that her feet dangled just a couple of inches from the floor. She began to swing her legs nervously as she waited for the inevitable.

Ethan reached out and gently stroke her hair. He could tell what was on her mind. "It doesn't matter. I don't see them as my family, anyway. You are my only family."

Janet's lashes fluttered as she raised her eyes to look at him.

Moments later, they were entangled in a deep kiss, teasing and chasing until they were both out of breath

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Ethan stayed in Frank's hospital for two weeks.

Janet came to see him every morning before going to work. And after work, she would come back to see him and stay in the ward until late at night.

Janet was good at taking care of people. She was kind and considerate and would go out of the way to help others.

On the day Ethan got discharged from the hospital, he kissed Janet's cheek and pinched her slender waist. "You are cut out to be a good wife."

Ethan recalled their past. Janet would sometimes get pissed but never lost her temper. Even if she got angry, she would still speak softly as if she would break into tears the next second. She was a pitiful fragile doll.

Janet's face turned beet red. "Stop it!" She pushed Ethan away. "I used to take care of Hannah. She is old, and it was more difficult than taking care of you."

Ethan's lips curled up into a smirk. He leaned against Janet's shoulder and buried his face in her thick locks, inhaling her sweet scent.

The alluring scent aroused him.

"Ahem! Can you guys stop it? Ethan, you've just recovered. You shouldn't indulge in any kind of physical activities until you get better," Frank advised, clearing his throat.

Janet immediately pushed Ethan away and turned to look at Frank. "Doctor Watson, how is Ethan now? Is there any sequela of his burn?"

"I've tried my best, but there are still a few burn scars on his back. Luckily they are not too obvious." After a moment's thought, Frank added, "They won't be visible if you turn the lights off."

Janet glared at Ethan, her face burning with embarrassment.

However, the fact that there were still scars on Ethan's back broke her heart.

Ethan looked up and pinched Janet's ear.

He squinted, his eyes gleaming with mischief. "It's okay for a man to have some scars on his body."

The apartment where Janet and Ethan lived was burned down to ashes. Therefore, while Ethan was at the hospital, Janet had been staying at Laney's place.

She had been busy taking care of Ethan and had no time to look for a new apartment. But now that Ethan was discharged from the hospital, she had to start looking for a place to stay.

Janet was worried.

The rent of the apartments around the Larson Group was frightening. Finding an apartment as cheap as the previous one was an impossible task.

To make matters worse, all their belongings in their previous apartment were destroyed in the fire. She had to spend a lot of money to buy new ones.

Janet was determined to find an apartment today. Just as she was about to turn off the computer and leave work, her phone chimed with a message. It was from Brandon.

"Garrett told me you don't have a place to stay after the accident. I can provide a temporary residence for you and your husband. You can live there for the time being and then slowly start looking for a new apartment."

Since Brandon and Ethan looked so much alike, Janet believed they must really be twin brothers.

Therefore, she had this feeling that Brandon now regarded her as a member of his family since she married his brother.

And now, Brandon was offering to help them again. She thought Ethan had probably guessed it right. Perhaps Brandon knew that he and Ethan were brothers, and that was why he was looking out for them.

Janet thought about this and decided to put aside all her doubts.

After a moment's hesitation, she politely accepted his offer.

She thought Brandon was simply taking care of his brother.

Once Janet agreed, Brandon instructed his staff to take her to the new residence.

At first, Janet was happy because the place was just a ten-minute walk from the Larson Group. She estimated it was the same as the community they had lived in before.

However, her body froze when she arrived at the locality.

Luxury cars like Lincoln and Maybach were parked all around the community. The trees and flowers in the garden were rare and exquisite. Inside were independent baroque-styled villas, and every building had special service staff.

It was obviously an expensive gated community.

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For a moment, Janet thought she had entered Downtown Abbey. The place looked too posh and elegant for her.

“Are you sure this is the place Mr. Larson mentioned?” Janet asked the man who was escorting her into the community. And then she carefully examined the luxurious, exquisite villas on both sides.

Janet knew she wouldn’t feel comfortable living in such an opulent community.

“Yes, Miss Lind. The entire neighborhood is the real estate project Mr. Larson has recently undertaken. He said you can move into any villa of your choice. We will help you pick the right one if you can’t decide,” the man replied politely.

Janet was stunned.

She thought Brandon would probably find a studio apartment for her but never thought a villa would be allocated to her. The community was located in the heart of the city, and the environment looked serene. Janet felt she couldn’t even afford a room here with her ten years’ salary put together.

Besides, the man had revealed that the entire neighborhood belonged to Brandon. It looked like Brandon had endless wealth — what people saw was just the tip of the iceberg.

The more Janet wandered around the villa community with the man, the more uneasy she felt.

She quickly took her phone out and sent a message to Brandon.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Larson. The residence you’ve recommended looks very expensive. I can’t live there. Besides, with my current salary, I can’t afford the rent.”

Brandon was prepared for such a situation. He quickly replied, “This is, by far, the smallest group of houses on my property. They are vacant now, so I decided to offer one to you. This way, I wouldn’t have to waste my time looking for other houses for you. The neighborhood is a new project. Can you do me a favor? I would like you to live there for a while and experience the service and comfort of living there. I want you to experience everything and offer feedback and suggestions for improvement. If you offer this help, I’ll allow you to live there rent-free.”

Although it seemed like a good offer, Janet didn’t dare accept it. She returned to the hotel where she and Ethan were staying for the time being and discussed the situation with him.

“Mr. Larson’s house looks great,” she admitted honestly. It was a villa she could never afford in her life.

“Well, since it is good, why do you seem upset?” Ethan could tell Janet was lost in thought. He couldn’t understand why she was upset even after they had found a house to live in.

“But the house is too good for us. It’s too opulent and cozy. I can’t live there at ease.”

Ethan pursed his lips and thought for a while. Then he said, “But he is asking you a favor. Besides, the hotel room is expensive as well. We can’t afford to stay here all the time. Why don’t we move into Brandon’s house first, and then continue looking for other houses? Once we find a comfortable place we can afford, we can vacate the villa.”

Ethan could understand Janet’s concern. She was hesitant to accept Brandon’s help because she didn’t want to be indebted to him all her life.

Janet seemed reluctant regardless of what Ethan said. But knowing that his wife needed a nudge, Ethan took her to the villa that night.

The villa was equipped with furniture of various kinds and daily necessities. They didn’t have to buy anything apart from personal belongings.

Janet was frightened and uncomfortable about the extravagance, so she sent a message to Brandon that night.

“Mr. Larson, thank you for your timely help. I will find another house and move out as soon as possible.”

However, Brandon didn’t reply.

Seeing Janet’s message, Ethan turned and glanced at her. He could tell she was fighting a battle in her mind. Janet’s innocence made him fall in love with her all over again.

They were in the downtown area of Seacisco. She could never find an affordable house here.

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After work that Friday, Laney accompanied Janet home as usual.

“Are you busy with work lately? Why have you been acting so mysteriously the past few days?” Laney asked with a slight frown. She still lived in the same old apartment, which was near Janet’s new place.

Because their homes were relatively near each other, Laney usually walked home with Janet.

Janet sighed. “I’m looking for a house.”

“I heard that Mr. Larson is lending you a house.”

“I know, but Mr. Larson’s villa is way too luxurious for me. I have to spare some time to find a new apartment,” Janet said warily. It was clear that the matter was really stressing her out.

“Let me help you. I have nothing to do after work anyway. Are you looking for an apartment near the office?”

Secretly, Laney couldn't help but think that Janet was being too naive. This was the most prosperous city center in Seacisco. Ordinary wage earners like them couldn't afford rent here.

"Of course it'd be great if it's near the office. I know that housing there is really expensive, but I was able to find a cheap apartment before, right? I'm going to try my luck."

But finding an apartment at the right price point was not as easy as Janet thought.

After making a few enquiries, she found that rent in the area was ridiculously high. Although the apartments on the periphery of the city were much cheaper, she'd have to spend a lot of time commuting. If she wanted to get to work on time, she'd have to get up two hours earlier than usual.

Laney figured that Ethan didn't want Janet to live in a tiny apartment in the suburb and spend hours commuting anymore, nor did he want to expose his identity. That would've explained why he gave her a house under the name of the Larson Group.

"Apartments here are really expensive. If you're looking to rent a place as cheap as your old place, you'll have to consider renting in the suburbs," Laney suggested.

Knowing who Ethan was, Laney thought it was more reasonable for Janet to just live in the villa.

Janet shook her head, feeling depressed and helpless due to the exorbitant rent prices.

When she came home, Ethan immediately sensed that something was wrong.

"Did you go looking for a new apartment again?" Ethan asked, leaning back on the spacious sofa. The room was warm enough today, so he only wore a casual cotton shirt.

Feeling sore and tired, Janet rubbed her shoulders and threw herself into Ethan's arms. "My conscience is telling me not to live in a fancy house like that. I feel like a freeloader, Ethan. This house doesn't belong to us, nor is it our home."

Ethan wrapped his arms around Janet's waist and held her tightly. Twirling her hair with his fingers, he murmured, "Given our current situation, it'll be difficult to buy a house. You've been taking care of me in the hospital lately. Your work must've been affected, right? Why don't you stop looking for a new place and focus your time and energy on work first?"

Leaning on Ethan's chest, Janet could feel his well-defined muscles through his thin clothes. Her eyelids drooped and she said resignedly, "I guess we have no choice but to live here for the time being and move out as soon as we have enough money."

Janet had been busy with her work lately.

The following day, while Janet was poring over her work, Tiffany came to her desk again.

"Please see me in my office, Lind."

Janet promptly put aside her work and went to Tiffany's office. To her surprise, not only Tiffany was there but also a beautiful and sexy woman.

Lounging on the sofa, the corners of the woman's slanted eyes were slightly raised, and her big black locks hung loosely around her shoulders. Her stunningly beautiful face was unforgettable.

“We have a big project on our hands, Lind. You’ll be in charge, along with the senior designer, Patty Jenkins.” Tiffany gestured at the beauty sitting on the sofa.

“It’s nice to meet you, Miss Lind. Good luck to us and our cooperation,” said Patty with a reserved smile.

“Nice to meet you, Miss Jenkins. I hope we’ll have a pleasant cooperation, too.” Janet nodded with a smile.

She had heard of Patty. This beautiful designer was very famous in the design department. Not only was she a looker, she was also very talented. Plus, she was the girlfriend of the director of operations of the Larson Group, so everyone tried to curry favor with her.

However, the senior designers were not on the same floor with them. Janet didn’t really know much about Patty, and she had only seen her several times in the department meetings. Janet felt that Patty was a bit arrogant and unapproachable, but perhaps it was all justifiable since she was indeed young and talented.

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“Here’s some info on this project. Lind, you can have a look for yourself first. We’ll meet up with the client in the afternoon and discuss these matters together then.” Patty handed the documents in her hand over to Janet and then winked at Tiffany before she left the room.

Tiffany didn’t say a word as if she hadn’t seen anything.

Janet saw the interaction between the two of them, decided to put it out of her mind, and instead she lowered her head and began to read the documents.

The client of this project happened to be Yoyo Fashion, a large-scale fashion brand company located in Seacisco. This brand was very popular among those at home and abroad, from teenagers to middle-aged people. So it was obvious that it had a very wide range of consumers.

Inside the meeting room.

Ronald Williams, the project director of Yoyo Fashion, began to state his opinions.

“We want the design to be fashionable, leisurely, and comfortable all at the same time. Our customers are basically 16 to 40 years old, so I hope your design can meet their standards and preferences.” After having said that, Ronald turned around to look at Janet and Patty and said to them, “Miss Lind and Miss Jenkins, if you have any suggestions, you can put them forward at any time during our meeting.”

While listening to Ronald just now, Janet had already quickly made two sketches. As she was about to stand up and hand the drafts over to him, Patty had already come up to him with an iPad in her hand.

“Here are some of my previous designs that you can look at. How do you like this style?” Patty said this in a confident tone and displayed her drafts to the people of Yoyo Fashion. “Here’s some info on this project. Lind, you can have a look for yourself first. We’ll meet up with the

client in the afternoon and discuss these matters together then.” Patty handed the documents in her hand over to Janet and then winked at Tiffany before she left the room.

Ronald nodded as he skimmed through. "Well, it's very good. But the style is a little simple and there's nothing eye-catching about it." He then turned to look at Janet and asked, "What does the other designer think?"

Patty looked in the direction of where Janet was sitting and then smiled politely at Ronald. "Miss Lind just so happens to be the preliminary designer of our company. She's only here to assist me."

After having said that, she went on to carefully explain her ideas in greater detail.

She didn't even give Janet the chance to speak up at all.

At the same time, Janet could do nothing about it. She simply sat there, forcing herself to smile.

After that, Janet met up a few more times with Patty and the client. She discovered that Patty was very domineering in all these meetings. This woman always went out of her way to control the overall situation and made decisions all by herself, without giving Janet even a chance to let everyone know her opinions.

Due to the fact that Patty had a higher rank than her and had a strong background in the company, Janet decided to simply put up with it. She didn't bother complaining and just did her job of assisting Patty.

Janet had originally thought that the cooperation would go fairly smoothly. Patty was really an insightful designer, but her stubbornness happened to stand in the way. Because of her arrogance and bad temperament, she never compromised when dealing with the client. That was why frictions could not be avoided and the cooperation between the two sides turned out to be not very smooth.

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bad temperament, she never compromised when dealing with the client. That was why frictions could not be avoided and the cooperation between the two sides turned out to be not very smooth.

During the project, the conflicts and disagreements between the two sides were growing more and more serious by the day.

Therefore, Ronald, the project director of Yoyo Fashion, specially invited Janet and Patty to have dinner with him, saying the reason he was inviting them out was because he wanted to take this opportunity to ease things up between the two sides.

The restaurant he picked out happened to be in a five-star hotel.

At the dinner, Ronald and several male colleagues of his drank a lot and their faces were red as a result. During the meal, those men headed out to smoke, leaving only three people behind. Ronald, Patty, and Janet were the only ones left in the private room.

Ronald kept chatting a storm with Patty and began to get fresh with her.

A hint of impatience flashed across Patty's pretty face right then. "Mr. Williams, please behave yourself. If you're really drunk, I'll ask someone to take you home. We can discuss the project in-depth tomorrow at the company."

After saying her piece, Patty pushed Ronald's hand off her legs in total disgust.

Ronald only continued to grin shamelessly. He went on to stroke Patty's thighs with the palm of his hands again and whispered in her ear, "Miss Jenkins, you're too stubborn. And I can't let things go on like this. How about this, if you join me for one night, I'll make a compromise and take your opinions into consideration. I promise that this project will be completed smoothly and perfectly from now on."