

The Mbahsb 41

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 41

The next day, Janet went to work. Her stomach churned with unease the entire time. She knew that Ike wouldn't spare her for what happened last night.

As soon as she arrived at her desk and sat down, Ike stormed out of his office and threw a stack of documents on her table. "You are fired! Pack your things and get out of here now!"

Janet picked up the documents and looked at them — they were all design drafts she had previously submitted. "May I know why you're firing me, Mr. Lyman?" she asked calmly.

There was still a Band-Aid on the bridge of his nose to cover the injury he had suffered last night. His eyes were blazing with rage. Janet's words reminded him of the way he was humiliated last night. "You're incompetent for your current position!" he spat venomously. "Pack your things and get out of the Larson Group. You're just a graduate. I'll make sure you don't flourish in the fashion field, ever. As long as I'm in the industry, you won't be able to get a job, let alone succeed in your career."

"You already approved my designs. Why do you say I'm incompetent now?" Janet retorted, clutching her design documents. Her sharp gaze met his, and she didn't seem afraid in the slightest.

Ike's screams drew the attention of other employees.

Everyone stopped working and looked up at them.

"That's right. Mr. Lyman. We have already started executing Lind's design plan after you approved them," said one of Janet's colleagues.

Janet had a good relationship with everyone in the department, and her colleagues liked and respected her.

"Is there any misunderstanding? Mr. Lyman, we all have witnessed Lind's exceptional talent. She is dynamic and diligent."

Ike's face darkened when he saw his colleagues standing up for Janet. He cleared his throat and said, "There is no misunderstanding. The design plan is changed now. She is fired! I'll pick a new design from what you all submitted earlier. No more questions! I'm the director. If I say she is incompetent, it means she is!"

The people around fell silent and cast a sympathetic look at Janet.

By now, everyone guessed that Janet had offended Ike in some way, and that was probably why he was firing her. Ike had made his decision. Moreover, he was a respected senior designer in the design industry, and no one dared to question his decisions or argue with him.

Janet breathed a long sigh of relief. Considering what happened last night, she knew things would end this way.

She gritted her teeth and sorted her designs, preparing to pack her things. Her heart sank at the knowledge that she wasn't an employee of the Larson Group anymore.

“Wait!” said an intimidating male voice.

Janet looked up and found that it was Garrett.

He glanced at Janet and walked toward Ike. “Lyman, someone has filed a report stating that you have molested a female employee in the company and attempted to rape her.”

Everyone in the design department burst into an uproar. All eyes turned toward Ike as they eyed him with scrutiny.

“What? Mr. Harding, I would never do such a thing. Someone must have filed a complaint against me on purpose, just to ruin my reputation,” Ike said, shaking his head fiercely.

At that moment, Christopher walked into the design department. “You would never do such a thing?” He glowered at Ike. “Yesterday, I saw you forcefully take Miss Lind to a dinner party and threaten her with her job.”

Ike grew tense. “You’re just making groundless accusations!” he snorted coldly. “I thought Lind had potential, so I proposed to take her to a party held for designers last night. I wanted to introduce her to some designers and help her. I didn’t mean to molest her at all.”

Janet clenched her fists and glared at the man. Bile rose in her throat. She couldn’t believe he had the audacity to lie after what happened.

“Let’s see the evidence first. Only then will we know whether it’s true or not.” A knowing smile emerged on Garrett’s face. His assistant immediately opened the laptop and played a video.

The place looked like a hotel corridor. The door of an elevator opened, and Janet wanted to get in, but Ike dragged Janet out. Her hair was disheveled, the panic evident in her eyes. She struggled desperately as Ike tried dragging her into a room.

“Is this how you help an employee?” Garrett sneered, his face red with rage.

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 42

The video clearly proved that Ike had assaulted Janet and attempted to rape her. He knew nothing would save him now. His legs grew weak, and he slumped on the chair beside him.

Garrett signaled his assistant to take away the laptop. “The evidence says it all. Ike Lyman, you are fired from the Larson Group on account of molesting a fellow employee.”

Ike looked at Janet with resentment, thinking about how to take revenge on her. A group of police officers then came and dragged Ike away.

Christopher walked to Janet and said apologetically, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have let Ike take you away yesterday. Did he hurt you?”

Janet shook her head, smiling. Then, she put her design works on the table. “It’s not your fault, Chris. I told you not to get involved in the issue yesterday. I thought it was just a casual dinner with clients. How stupid I was. Fortunately, someone saved me in time yesterday, so nothing happened.”

"Well, that's good. Thank God you don't have to leave the Larson Group now. I wonder who filed a report against Ike," Christopher said, smiling bitterly.

He regretted missing the opportunity. If he had stopped Janet from going with Ike or followed her vigilantly, he might have been the one who saved her. He would have been a hero in front of her eyes.

After Ike left, his position as the Department Director was vacant. Garrett conducted a meeting with the senior executives and appointed, Tiffany Fisher, the director of another department to take over Ike's position. She, too, was a renowned fashion designer once.

When Janet returned from work, a wave of relief washed over her when she saw a man jogging in the community.

"Ethan!" Janet waved at him.

The man gradually slowed down. Janet couldn't wait to talk to him. Looking at his handsome, sweaty face, she asked, "Is it you who filed a report against Ike?"

"Yes." Ethan glanced at her and stopped running. He opened the bottle in his hand, gulped down a few mouthfuls of water, wiped his mouth with his sleeve, and asked, "Was he arrested?"

Janet followed him as he walked. "Yes. He was fired and took away by police this morning. How did you get the surveillance video from the hotel though?"

Such an incident would ruin the reputation of the hotel. Therefore, they wouldn't share the video with anyone, lest they got into trouble. Moreover, Janet was a hundred percent sure about it because she had tried calling for help when it happened, but the waiter just ignored her.

Ethan took the laptop bag from her shoulder and walked toward their apartment. "I got some capable friends, so I asked them to help me get the footage."

"Wow! You do know a lot of people." Janet looked at him in awe, trusting his words.

The longer she stayed with Ethan, the more she felt he was reliable and observant. She felt he had friends in every field.

"Thank you for helping me. You have no idea how shameless and persuasive he was. He denied the fact even when Mr. Harding was there."

Ethan opened the door, walked in, and threw the keys on the table. Seeing the smile on Janet's face, he arched an eyebrow and looked at her. "After all I did, you're just going to thank me verbally? That seems like an insincere gesture."

"What else do you want me to do? All right. How about I cook a hearty meal for you tonight?" Janet tilted her head and looked at him, blinking innocently.

"You think it's that easy to satisfy me?" Ethan slowly raked his eyes across her body.

Janet pouted and looked at him. "What do you want then?"

Ethan's gaze settled on her plump lips as a wave of passion consumed him. He was really attracted to her.

"Well, why don't you fulfill your duty as a wife by making love to me?" Ethan stared into her eyes; his magnetic gaze seemed to suck her into a state of bliss.

"Be serious!" Janet blushed and turned around to leave. Ethan grabbed her hand and scratched his hair. "All right. At least kiss me."

Janet turned around and pursed her lips without answering his question.

Seeing that she didn't refuse, Ethan pulled her closer to him, gently took her hand, and wrapped them around his waist. "Hurry up." He closed his eyes and said, "I won't look at you."

Janet's face turned hot. Since Ethan was standing with his eyes closed, she mustered the courage to look at him. He was a handsome man, mature, and manly. Janet's heart took a sprint in her chest as she looked at him.

After a moment's hesitation, Janet looked at his lips, stood on tiptoe, and gently kissed him.

Chapter 43

As soon as Janet pressed her lips against his, Ethan felt a surge of frenzied passion. He picked her up in his arms and put her on the sofa.

He wrapped his arms around her and pecked on her lips. "You're too naive." He smiled.

Janet was startled. The man pressed her against the sofa and deepened the kiss, swallowing her screams.

The room was silent, except for the ticking of the clock and rustling of clothes.

"En... enough... Ethan!" Janet grasped Ethan's shirt and looked away, intending to escape.

She didn't expect a small peck to turn into something this wild and passionate. His tongue explored her mouth with aggression as if he was going to devour her.

Ethan pressed his forehead against Janet's and stared into her eyes, gleaming with inexplicable emotions. He cupped the back of her neck with his palm and gently nipped her bottom lip.

Then, he grasped her pert bum and pressed it against his hardness. His body had turned hot and stiff.

All of a sudden, Janet's eyes sprang up. She quickly pushed him away, gasping for breath. "No, Ethan!"

However, Ethan was not ready to let go of her. He rested his head on her shoulder and bit her collarbone, peppering soft kisses on her neck. Noticing that Janet was trembling under him, he pressed his mouth against her ear. "Don't you want it?" he whispered, his hot breath blowing against her skin. "Or is there any other reason? Are you afraid I won't be nice to you if we become a real couple?"

Janet's mind was a mess. The man's kisses drove her crazy. If this continued, they might end up having ***.

Before things went out of control, she quickly pulled back and turned her head. "No... Ethan. I really can't! Please..."

“Why not? Tell me the reason.” Ethan asked, his voice thick with lust. He looked up at her, searching for answers. His long legs were casually slung around Janet, trapping her in place.

“I’m not ready yet.” She picked up a pillow and covered her flushed face to hide her embarrassment.

Moreover, she had married Ethan in place of Jocelyn. She wasn’t supposed to get married to him in the first place. If she and Ethan had *** and became a real couple, she wouldn’t be able to forgive herself for deceiving him.

After all, Janet didn’t know what would happen to her and Ethan in the end.

Ethan’s body froze. He narrowed his eyes and examined her. “Haven’t you had *** with your ex-boyfriends?”

Janet clutched the cushion tightly and shook her head subconsciously. Then she realized something was off.

She was here as Jocelyn. Ethan must have heard that Jocelyn jumped from one relationship to another. How could Jocelyn still be a virgin?

Janet panicked. Staying with him seemed too dangerous.

“Well, I have a deadline coming. I should submit my designs as soon as possible. Let go of me. I need to go back to my room.” Janet pushed Ethan away. Her body was hot as if she were having a fever.

Ethan, too, was hot. The smell of his sweat mingled with the faint minty fragrance made her blush.

“At least let me hug you a little longer. I won’t force you,” Ethan said in a grumpy voice.

He frowned unhappily and wrapped his arms around Janet.

He wondered why Janet wanted to work late at night. ‘Is her client that important?’

Although he was the client, it didn’t make him feel any good.

The tightness of his grip made Janet uncomfortable. She felt a surge of heat travel southward.

She pushed Ethan away and hurriedly smoothed her dress. “No. I really have to work now.”

Seeing her running back to her room in a fit of panic, Ethan turned his head and leaned back on the sofa, sighing helplessly.

In the room, Janet held her pencil for nearly an hour but didn’t know where to begin.

She couldn’t calm down as she couldn’t stop replaying her hot kiss with Ethan in her mind. He was eager to make love to her.

‘Oh stop it, Janet!’ She scolded herself silently. She squeezed her eyes shut and blushed again.

She couldn’t concentrate on the design, so she turned on the laptop to contact the wealthy client. She named him “Rich Party A”.

“Sir, I had a really bad stomachache today and had to go to the hospital. Could you extend my deadline by a day?”

She sent the message along with a crying emoji.

Rich Party A responded immediately: "You don't need to work on the design anymore."

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 44

Thinking the client was unhappy, Janet quickly sent a message. "I'll finish the design. I promise. I've brought my laptop to the hospital. You don't have to give me an extra day. I'll finish it today, I promise."

Rich Party A replied, "I don't need it for the time being. Don't worry. You'll still get the payment."

Janet clapped her hands excitedly as her heart swelled with gratitude. She quickly typed, "I'm grateful and moved. You're the best client in the world!"

Ethan turned off his phone and walked into the bathroom, holding his clothes.

A small smile stretched across his lips as he recalled what happened in the living room.

It was Friday, and the weather was relatively hotter and humid. It felt as if the entire city was set ablaze. Everyone was sweating profusely, and the scent of sunscreen wafted in the air.

After work, Janet took the bus back home. She gazed out the window, listening to music and watching the scenes whizzing past. Suddenly, her ringtone blared, interrupting the music.

She looked at the phone: It was a call from the hospital. Her heart tightened.

"Hello, Miss Lind. We are speaking from the municipal hospital. Hannah Stone is on the top of the waiting list for liver transplantation now. Please arrange the expenses for the operation as soon as possible. We can perform the surgery as soon as we find a suitable liver for her."

It was the best news she had heard in a long time. Janet wanted to scream with joy.

"Okay, okay. Thank you. Thank you so much!" Janet hung up the phone and breathed a sigh of relief.

Hannah had been waiting for the transplant for a long time. It was finally happening. Janet prayed for Hannah to find a suitable donor and get better.

Now, all she needed to do was arrange the money. Fiona owed her a large sum anyway for marrying Ethan in place of her daughter.

The next day, Janet went to the Lind family's villa again.

"What the hell are you doing? If you break into the house again, I'll call the police!" The maid tried her best to drive Janet out.

"I'm here to see Fiona. Let me in!" Janet tried breaking into the house.

"They haven't come back yet! Get out of here! Or I'll call the police!" The maid stood by the door like a human shield.

Janet sneered and pointed at the window upstairs. "Do you think I'm an idiot? I saw through the window. Fiona is right inside, walking around."

Fiona didn't even bother hiding when she wanted to deceive Janet. Perhaps she thought Janet was a fool, whom she could easily deceive.

Sound of laughter and the muffled voices of Fiona and Bernie came from the house.

The maid rolled her eyes to hide her guilt and tried shutting the door. "They're not here. Is something wrong with your ears? If you don't leave right now, I'll ask the security guards to drive you away!"

Janet quickly hurried to the door. Her heart sank with dejection.

It looked like Fiona didn't even bother to lie or come up with an excuse this time. Now that Janet was married to Ethan and her plan had succeeded, she didn't feel the need to pay her anymore.

"No. I'm going to wait right here. You go in and tell them if they don't give me the money today, I'll tell Ethan that Fiona asked me to marry him in place of her daughter Jocelyn, and this wedding was a hoax. Ethan was supposed to marry Jocelyn in the first place. If he knows the truth, he won't spare Fiona for deceiving him. If I can't get the money, I'll make sure she doesn't live a peaceful life either."

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 45

Seeing that Janet was dead serious, the maid went into the house and told Fiona about what Janet had said.

"Did she really say that?" Fiona was enjoying her strawberries. Her hand stilled when she heard that. Her gentle face reddened with rage.

She looked at Bernie, who was sitting next to her. "Janet has gone too far. How could she talk to her parents this way? After all, we adopted her. Although she is not close to us, I wish she at least showed us some gratitude for the things we have done for her. Do you remember what I said back then? Your parents insisted on letting us adopt her. It was unnecessary, wasn't it? Look at what trouble it has brought us. Now, she is blackmailing us. What do you think we should do?"

The memories of the past made Fiona hate Janet even more. She pulled a tissue from the box and wiped her tears.

Seeing Fiona cry again, Bernie shook his head helplessly. "No, Janet is not that kind of a person. She would never do that. It was all your fault. Why didn't you just give her the money as promised? None of this would have happened if you hadn't gone back on your word."

Fiona dramatically cupped her face and wailed loudly. "Jocelyn is our biological daughter — our flesh and blood. Doesn't she need money to live on in the future? We have raised Janet all these years, and for what? Her marriage with Ethan is a way of repaying us for raising her all these years. It seems fair. Why is she still coming here and making trouble?"

On the one hand, she was resentful, and on the other hand, she was terrified that Janet would reveal the secret that she had married Ethan as Jocelyn's substitute.

Jocelyn was Fiona's precious daughter — the true heir of the Lind family. She was far superior to an adopted child like Janet. If Ethan knew that he wasn't married to Jocelyn, he would undoubtedly make trouble.

Fiona had met Ethan — the man looked cruel. Judging from his appearance, she knew he was not someone to be trifled with. Moreover, he had the strong support of the Lester family. Although Ethan was just an illegitimate son of the Lester family, the Lind family still couldn't afford to offend him.

Bernie picked up the cup on the table and took a sip of tea. His face darkened. "Janet just wants money. How about we give her some money to calm her down. It's not like we don't have any."

Fiona wiped her tears with the back of her hand, and the jade bracelet on her wrist jingled. She looked at him and reluctantly nodded.

She was unwilling to give Janet even a penny. Her heart sank at the thought of giving her money.

Fiona went upstairs with her phone. In a fit of anger, she called Janet. "Janet! You've gone too far this time. Are you going to fall out with your family for money? We have raised you all these years. How could you turn into such a selfish woman? Are you really going to force your parents this way?"

She scolded Janet, venting out the resentment that had accumulated in her heart over the years.

Janet had become immune to Fiona's hatred and maltreatment. "Where is the money?" she asked coldly. If you don't give it to me, I'll tell the truth to Ethan right away."

Fiona's anger reached its peak. She tried her best to control herself and said, "We have tried our best to raise money for you. I don't have money. I'll ask the maid to give you some things later. You can use them to meet your expenses."

Janet was standing at the door of the Lind family's villa. After a while, the maid came out with several bags and threw them at her.

"Take these and get out!"

The door of the villa slammed shut.

Squatting on the ground, Janet rummaged through the bags. Inside were old-fashioned, outdated jewelry, used expensive clothes, and second-hand bags.

"Are you collecting scraps? There are a few paper boxes in our house. You can take them too." The woman living next door glanced at Janet as she entered her house.

"No, thank you." Janet smiled bitterly.

Fiona didn't want to give her money, so she insulted her by treating her like a beggar.

Janet picked up the bags and slowly walked out of the villa.

It wasn't the first time Fiona had humiliated her. She could sell these second-hand goods and get money. It was better than going home empty-handed.

However, even so, the money would probably be less than one-fifth the fee for Hannah's liver transplant operation.

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 46

Janet propped her cheek on her palm and looked at her paycheck with a worried look. Although she had just received her salary, it was just a drop in the bucket for Hannah's surgery.

"You just got your paycheck today. Why do you still look unhappy?" her colleague asked, frowning. One look at Janet told her that she was upset. "Would you like to have a barbecue with me tonight?"

Janet shook her head, smiling. "How about next time? I have plans tonight."

"Okay. See you tomorrow." The colleague smiled and took her bag to leave.

Janet slowly packed up her laptop. When she was about to leave, someone patted her back.

It was Christopher. He was dressed in a brown wind breaker, looking fresh and pristine. He smiled at her, his eyes twinkling with delight.

"Ready to go? How about I walk you to the bus stop? What's wrong? You look upset. Having trouble at work?"

Janet clasped the straps of her backpack and smiled. "No. I was just thinking about something. By the way, Chris, are you free tonight? I just got my paycheck today and was thinking of taking you out for dinner." She had already promised to take Christopher out, so she planned to invite him for dinner.

She didn't have enough money for Hannah's operation, anyway. Spending money on a meal didn't seem like a big deal. After all, she had to return his favor.

"Yeah. I came across a new western restaurant. I want to give it a try," Christopher suggested, feeling both surprised and flattered.

He pressed the elevator button. As the door closed, he examined her face and asked, "Is the man who picked you up last time your boyfriend?"

This question had been lingering in his mind ever since he saw Janet with Ethan. Even though he seemed hesitant to question her, he wanted to find an opportunity to find out about Ethan.

Perhaps the man was her cousin, friend, or relative. After all, he didn't look like the type Janet would date.

The man looked like a beast and didn't seem like the right match for her.

"You saw him the other day?" Janet looked at him, hesitant to reveal their relationship. "That man is..."

Just as she wondered whether to tell the truth or not, her phone rang.

"Sorry, I have to answer this call."

Janet quickly walked out of the elevator and headed to the bathroom. "What's up?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"When will you come back? I'm hungry," Ethan said. Janet could picture him lying on the sofa, frowning.

"There are sandwiches in the fridge. Have them first."

After a moment's thought, Janet felt that since she was married to Ethan now, she had to tell him that she was going to have dinner with another man. "I'm taking Christopher out for dinner to pay back his favor last time. I might be a little late."

The man remained silent for a while. "You're not even sure if he was the one who helped you. Why do you have to pay him back?" he asked coldly.

Janet bit her lip. "But I've already invited him. It wouldn't be nice to cancel the plan all of a sudden."

She heard the rustling of clothes. Then, Ethan spoke, "I'll come with you. Which restaurant?"

After telling him the restaurant's name, Janet walked back to Christopher. "Let's go."

They passed two streets and arrived at the opulent western restaurant.

"Well, I guess someone is going to join us for dinner. I'm sorry, Chris," Janet stuttered as they reached the door of the restaurant.

"It doesn't matter." Although Christopher sounded relaxed, he immediately figured out the situation. "Is it a male or a female friend?" he asked, trying to sound relaxed.

When Janet was about to answer him, she saw Ethan standing outside the restaurant. The setting sun cast a golden hue on his towering frame, outlining his features.

'Wow! He has arrived soon.'

Christopher followed her gaze and saw a tall man with broad shoulders wearing a vintage black jacket. He looked like a mature man with fortitude yet seemed arrogant at the same time. His eye-catching features made Christopher gulp with insecurity.

"This is my husband, Ethan. This is Christopher... I mentioned him over the phone," Janet said as she awkwardly walked to Ethan.

Christopher's eyes widened; his jaw dropped in horror. "What? When did you get married?"

He couldn't help but look Ethan up and down, who was also staring at him. It was, after all, a matter of self-esteem between the two men.

Janet broke into a cold sweat. She forced a smile, trying to hide her fear because Ethan's sharp gaze was fixed on Christopher. He looked unhappy.

He put one arm around Janet's shoulder, suppressing his anger. "Haven't you told others that you're married and have a husband?" he asked in a low voice.

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 47

Janet's head started to pound. It was hard for her to deal with this matter with ease. Normally, she wouldn't admit that she was married—especially since she had married in Jocelyn's stead. If people knew that she was married, their little secret would be exposed.

Forcing an apologetic smile, she tried to laugh it off and said, "I told Chris just now, didn't I?"

Ethan snorted but said nothing.

The atmosphere among the three seemed to be cold as ice. Janet had no choice but to bite the bullet and lead the way into the restaurant.

After they sat down, Christopher excused himself and went to the bathroom to calm himself down. He just couldn't accept the fact that Janet was married out of the blue.

Ever since he had taken his seat, Ethan hadn't even glanced at Janet. While flipping through the menu, Janet nudged him gently. "Are you mad at me?"

The man rested his chin on his hand as he skimmed through the menu. His eyes were cloudy, and he didn't even look at her when she tried to talk to him. With a small, stiff smile, he replied, "No. Leave me alone."

Disappointed, Janet pursed her lips but didn't say anything more.

"Did you two order already?" When Christopher returned, he smiled at them politely.

He could tell that there was some tension between the couple, but he was still flustered and didn't know what to say.

"Not yet. Chris, is there anything in particular that you want to eat?" Janet handed him the menu with a small smile.

Throughout the course of the meal, nobody spoke a word. Only Janet and Christopher would occasionally make a comment, only for the conversation to die shortly after.

When he was done with his steak, Ethan sank into the back of his chair, giving off a cold aura.

Just then, Jocelyn and her friends entered the restaurant.

"Wow... Look over there, Jocelyn. Is he a celebrity?"

Jocelyn followed the gaze of her friend and found Ethan sitting at a table. He was incredibly handsome, but seemed oblivious to the fact that he had become the center of attention.

"Wait. I know him..." A smug smile appeared on Jocelyn's face, but then the corners of her mouth dropped when she saw that Ethan was accompanied by both Janet and Christopher.

Two handsome men and a beautiful woman were all seated together. The scene was quite eye-catching.

Jocelyn gritted her teeth with rage.

She had once tried to flirt with Christopher, but he immediately rejected her. Janet, on the other hand, always seemed to be surrounded by men. She already had Ethan, but now she even had the audacity to hook up with Christopher.

Jocelyn tried to comfort herself, telling herself that Janet was nothing but rubbish. Maybe Christopher was with them now because he knew Ethan.

"Is that so? Introduce us to him! But the gorgeous girl next to him is probably his girlfriend."

“You should see her without makeup. She’s hideous. You look much better than her. Anyway, I’ll just go there and say hi. You guys can order ahead.” Before waiting for a response from her friends, Jocelyn sauntered over to Janet’s table.

Janet had been threatening her parents, saying that if they didn’t give her money, she would tell Ethan the secret of her being a substitute. Yet she had the gall to have dinner at such a high-end restaurant.

Today, Jocelyn was determined to reveal Janet’s hideous true colors in front of Ethan and Christopher.

Janet and Christopher were racking their brains for a topic when they suddenly smelled a pungent perfume.

“My dear younger sister, you’ve pushed our parents too far. How could you come to such an expensive restaurant for dinner?”

Batting her eyelashes piteously, Jocelyn emerged at their table, tears streaming down her face.

“Our family is struggling financially, and our parents are bleeding dry. Why can’t you think about our family and stop spending so much money? You squander the family funds like this every single day. You’re an adult already, but you keep demanding money from our parents. Sooner or later, they’ll jump off a building from the pressure!”

Jocelyn’s voice wasn’t that loud, but she spoke clearly enough for everyone to hear her. She wept and whined so incessantly that all the guests in the restaurant glanced at their table.

Then, the hall was filled with hushed whispers.

“Oh, what a scandal!”

“How could that girl squander her parents’ money like this? What a parasite! And are those two her toy boys?”

“If I had a daughter like her, I would’ve died from anger already. She even has the audacity to date two men at the same time. Young people nowadays really have no shame!”

Ethan’s handsome face immediately darkened.

Christopher lowered his gaze helplessly. This dinner was awkward to begin with. Now, he was even being slandered.

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 48

Janet unhurriedly put down her knife and fork and calmly looked at the woman with heavy makeup.

She knew that Jocelyn just wanted to smear her name in front of all these people.

But she also knew that Jocelyn was an idiot. She was wearing a Chanel dress, an Hermes handbag, and a Dior necklace. How dare she talk about being frugal while dressed like that?

“I asked you for money because you owe me money. Isn’t it only natural for people to pay off their debts?” Janet’s voice was clear yet calm.

Tears rolled down Jocelyn's cheeks uncontrollably. She sobbed, "Mom and Dad took good care of you, yet this is how you repay them! They really can't afford to give you money now. We are family. How can you bear to treat them like this?"

Then, she suddenly took her necklace off and threw it at Janet, crying even louder. "We really don't have the money! This necklace must be worth something. Take it as a payment of our debt! Please don't threaten Mom and Dad anymore!"

Jocelyn carefully painted herself as the poor daughter who had been forced to sell off her own things for the sake of her parents. Janet, on the other hand, was made to look like the cold-blooded creditor who was ungrateful to her parents and was only after their money.

Narrowing her eyes slightly, Janet took the necklace without hesitation. Glancing at Jocelyn's Hermes handbag, she said calmly, "I think that Chanel dress might be worth something... And that Hermes handbag, too—actually, isn't that a limited edition piece? In that case, I won't make things difficult for you. You don't have to strip your clothes. Just give me the bag as partial compensation for your debts."

Jocelyn's pitiful and painful expression immediately went stiff.

This was her only Hermes Birkin. She had been waiting to get one forever. It had only been a few days since she got it. Even if it was second-hand, it was still cost her a fortune. How could she just give it to Janet?

"These... these are all fake! They're useless to you. Anyway, you should stop coming to such fancy restaurants and save money for our parents!" As she spoke, Jocelyn hurriedly covered her bag.

Janet crossed her arms over her chest and looked around at the guests in the restaurant. "Do you think everyone here is an idiot? As you said, this is a high-end restaurant. Do you think that the people who can afford to eat here can't tell whether a bag is real or fake? Even if you insist that you're using the fake, I can still take it. After all, it's still worth some money. Give it to me!"

Hearing this, Jocelyn was panic-stricken. Everyone around her was eyeing her and whispering to each other. She was caught in a dilemma now.

She gritted her teeth angrily. She had planned to make things difficult for Janet by pretending to be pitiful, thinking that Janet would just take it in silence since they were in public place.

Never in her wildest dreams would she have expected Janet to act so audaciously, not caring about the people around her at all.

In the past, Janet had always been the submissive and silent one in their family. How could she change into another person overnight? Had marriage really changed her?

Heartbroken, Jocelyn reluctantly set her Hermes Birkin on the table. She took out her wallet, phone, and cosmetics from the bag then threw it at Janet. "There! Happy?"

"Wait, I want to see what's in your wallet." Janet smiled sardonically. She knew that Jocelyn liked carrying a lot of cash with her.

"Don't push it!" Jocelyn hissed through gritted teeth, glaring at Janet murderously.

Janet sneered indifferently. "What? You said you didn't have money, right? So I'm letting you pay off your debt with your belongings. Isn't it only reasonable? Besides, there should be no money in your wallet, right? I mean, you've been talking all night about how our family is struggling financially. Why are you so nervous? The next time you want to slander me, don't dress like that. It's one thing to be unable to pay off your debts, but it's another thing to simply refuse to pay. You'll have bad credit."

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 49

The people around them felt there was an inside story, so their opinions gradually changed.

The opulent restaurant housed wealthy diners. Many people could tell that Jocelyn's attire and accessories were all real deals from renowned brands by merely looking at her.

"Well, it looks like she is the shameless one. She wears only luxury brands. I'm sure she is from a wealthy family."

"I guess she is slandering the girl only to avoid paying the debt."

"Damn it! I didn't expect the situation would reverse."

Jocelyn felt a pang of regret. But she opened the wallet anyway that was stacked with money.

"Give it to me." With a faint smile, Janet stood up and took out the money from Jocelyn's wallet. She carefully counted the bills and neatly arranged them. "Eight thousand dollars is also money. Thank you, Miss Lind."

Jocelyn had nothing left now apart from her clothes and shoes. "Just wait and see!" she said through gritted teeth.

Janet smiled and put the necklace and the money into the Hermes Birkin. "Okay, Miss Lind. I'll wait for you to repay the debt next time."

With that, she stood up and waved at the receptionist. "Please give us a doggie bag so Miss Lind could put her phone and cosmetics in it."

Then, she turned around and flashed a sweet smile at Jocelyn. "You don't need to pay for the bag. It's on me."

Jocelyn almost tasted the blood as she gritted her teeth a little too hard. She would lose her mind if she stayed there longer.

Noticing that Janet was staring at her Chanel high-heeled shoes, Jocelyn feared that she would snatch them away from her and make her walk home barefoot. Therefore, she quickly took the things from her bag and walked out of the restaurant in a huff.

Seeing her leave, Janet sat down and began estimating the prices of the things she got from Jocelyn. The Hermes Birkin alone was worth a lot of money.

A triumphant smile stretched across her lips.

She put away the things and looked up. Christopher was staring at her with wide eyes, holding the knife and fork in his hands.

Janet's face flushed with embarrassment. She looked at him and sighed. Her behavior now was against the impression of what he thought of her. But Janet was not a pushover.

"Every family has a skeleton in the cupboard, Chris. I'm sorry you had to watch that. Our family is a little special," Janet said, smiling.

"No. I know you are kindhearted. However, when someone rubs you the wrong way, you have to stand up for yourself. Nothing' wrong with that." Christopher smiled at her in awe.

Janet had impressed him yet again today. Seeing her delicate appearance and innocent face, he had thought Janet was someone who would endure all the problems and suffer in silence. However, she was not. Although she was as sweet as the rose, no one could get past her thorny exterior.

This incident only made him adore her even more. However, she didn't have special feelings for him.

Christopher cast a sidelong glance at Ethan, who had been silent the entire time, wondering what relationship he shared with Janet.

Janet felt that Christopher was only joking. She didn't care about what he thought of her. After all, money was more important than her image at the moment.

Janet stole a glance at Ethan and caught his indifferent gaze.

Neither of them spoke.

The man lowered his head and continued to look at his phone.

Janet cleared her throat and ate the remaining steak.

After saying goodbye to the couple, Christopher left the restaurant alone.

It was late at night, and the neon lights illuminated the roads. The city was decorated with colorful lights. The traffic was at its peak.

"Do you want to walk back?" Janet asked, stealing a glance at Ethan.

She had a sudden urge to walk home with Ethan. No one would know their names and identities. They were just an ordinary couple, walking back home like the others.

Ethan finally broke his silence. "Okay," he said, turning to look at her.

He couldn't understand the woman in front of him. The incident at the restaurant and the way Janet's elder sister, dressed in an opulent outfit, spoke to her confused him.

"What's going on with your family? Why does the Lind family owe you money?"

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 50

"It's no big deal. My parents owe me a lot of money. After I fell out with them, they refused to pay me back. It's a family matter. I can handle it. There's no need for you to get involved." Janet's tone was relaxed even though she deliberately omitted the most important part.

Ethan glanced at her from the corner of his eye and sighed.

It was true that he didn't know that much about the Lind family, but since Janet was being stubborn about it, he respected her decision. "Fine. But if you need any help, just tell me."

Janet nodded obediently and lowered her gaze. "Okay," she said softly.

Ethan pinched her cheek and warned in a low voice, "And from now on, you have to tell others that you're married."

"Okay, okay, okay. Do you want me to wear a sign with the word 'married' on it?" Janet raised her head and glared at him, pouting like a spoiled child.

"It's for your own good. It's obvious that Christopher guy had ulterior motives. Trust me. His intentions were written all over his face." As he spoke, Ethan pulled Janet closer to him.

"What? In that case, why couldn't I see it? Christ has helped me before. Don't be so quick to judge him." Janet rolled her eyes helplessly.

"Are you kidding me? It's all over his face that he wants to fuck you," Ethan snorted, his eyes darkening dangerously.

How could he say that?

Janet looked at him indignantly. Ethan was always such a jerk.

"Can you, for once, act like a normal guy? Not everyone thinks like you."

"True. I guess he's different from me. I'm legal to do you, he isn't." Ethan raised his eyebrows in a relaxed way.

At a loss, Janet pushed him away and scurried on ahead, her ears burning red.

Even after they got home, Janet still gave Ethan the cold shoulder.

After knocking on her door to announce his presence, the man walked into her room carrying a glass of warm milk. "Are you planning to ignore me forever, Miss Lind?"

Without so much as glancing at him, Janet continued to draw. Suddenly, Ethan took her hand and stuffed something cold onto her palm.

Startled, Janet looked at the item in her hand. It was an old platinum ring inlaid with an emerald. The edges already had a light layer of patina. The ring seemed to carry a long history with it.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"My mother left it for me. Put it on. That way, people will know that you're a married woman." Ethan leaned against her desk, looking at the ring on her hand with a slight smile.

Turning the ring over, Janet shrugged and slipped it onto her left ring finger. The dark-colored emerald shone dimly on her fair slender finger. It looked good on her, but the ring was one size too big.

Holding her hand up, she tried to hold back a smile.

"It's very beautiful. Thank you," she said stiffly.

That weekend, Janet took the things she got from the Lind family to a second-hand shop.

But the shop assistant offered a price far lower than she had expected.

"How could all of this be worth only twenty thousand? The bag alone is worth more than that!" Janet was so angry that she felt she was about to explode. It was painfully obvious that the shop assistant was taking advantage of her.

"Any second-hand good is priced at ten percent of its original price." The shop assistant sneered at Janet complacently. Then, after punching a couple of numbers into the calculator, she snapped, "Get out if you're not planning to sell your things. There's a line behind you."

"All of these are authentic!" Janet stubbornly continued to bargain. Twenty thousand dollars barely covered Hannah's hospitalization. "Surely you can offer me something higher!"

"I don't care if it's real or fake. They're all second hand. Plus, they're all old models from more than a decade ago. Only this Hermes is worth something. Do you think this is a charity? I can add five thousand for the bag, but that's the best I can do. If you still think it's too low, take your things somewhere else." The shop assistant could tell that Janet was in urgent need of money and deliberately used this to her advantage.

Feeling helpless, Janet accepted the money even though she was getting the short end of the stick. Just as she turned around to leave, a woman in her early thirties stopped her. Janet saw from her name tag that she was the shop manager.

"Miss, why the long face? Were you not able to sell your goods at an ideal price? If you still lack money, perhaps you'd be willing to sell the ring on your finger. We can give you a good price for it!" The shop manager smiled, staring at the emerald ring on Janet's finger, her eyes shining greedily.