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Tiffany acted post haste. The moment she had the evidence, she called a meeting of all those in the design department.

Once everyone had arrived at the meeting, she played the recording of Ronald's confession for them.

The employees were indeed flabbergasted but, at the same time, they had expected something like that to have happened.

Many people in the design department spoke for Patty because of her relationship with the executive of the company. Everyone was also well aware of the fact that Patty was highly impulsive and irresponsible, so it definitely wasn't beyond her to pass the buck to Janet.

Patty's face drained of all color in an instant. She felt shame wash over her entire being as she listened to the recording. Ronald had even dared to call her a bitch.

In all honesty, the moment Patty had found out that Janet was Brandon's wife, she knew her conniving tricks would inevitably be exposed. These days, she was suffering from intense and deep-seated anxiety.

"I was scared at that time, so my mind was a mess, and I said it was Lind who hit Mr. Williams. I'm sorry for my conduct." A second after the recording ended, Patty promptly burst into tears and buried her face in her hands.

She was the villain who had slandered and framed Janet in the first place. Now, however, she cried pathetically and played the part of the wronged victim to the tee.

Janet scowled, but before she could get a single word out, her colleagues had come up to her and apologized.

"Lind, so it turns out that it wasn't you who did it. We discussed about it before and did suspect that it couldn't have been you because you are such a sweet, kind person. You could never have done such a thing."

"Sincerest apologies, Lind. We just heard rumors from other colleagues and got caught up in the web of lies. We wronged you and judged you before we figured out the truth. You are such a good person. I hope you won't take it to heart."

All her fellow employees apologized, one after the other, in honeyed tones with flattering expressions on their faces.

They had never talked to Janet in such a humble tone.

Noisy, hypocritical voices made her feel wholly uncomfortable. She knew very well that they did this mainly due to the fact that she was Brandon's wife.

"It's alright. Let bygones be bygones." With a faint smile on her face, Janet fiddled with her fingers uncomfortably.

She was truly upset. Everyone was apologizing to her, but she was the furthest thing from happy.

“Alas...”

This was the eighth time that Ethan had sighed this morning. He put his hand on his forehead, feeling completely helpless and distressed.

It seemed like he had been completely drowned by depression.

“Is Janet still angry with you? To be frank, I think it’s best for you to sort out any problems between the two of you as soon as possible, alright? Your foul mood will make us all unhappy.” Garrett felt downcast. As long as Ethan was upset, he would give his subordinates copious amounts of work to complete.

“She still doesn’t want to talk to me,” said Ethan in a gloomy voice.

He always ended up feeling so helpless when it came to Janet.

Garrett unbuttoned two of his buttons and took a seat next to Ethan. After quite a lengthy consideration of the situation, he said, “You’ve lied to her for so long. Of course, it is natural that she will be angry, but you had done it for her own good. It’s not an unsolvable conflict. You’d better stay humble in front of her now. After some time, I’m sure she will cool down and forgive you.”

Garrett thought that Janet’s anger was completely human and understandable. Back when Ethan and he had been in school, Ethan always enjoyed fooling him.

Having first-hand experience with Ethan’s shenanigans, he completely understood the anger Janet was feeling now.

Ethan didn’t answer and instead just sighed in response.

If only she would calm down and forgive him. However, he feared that things were not that simple.

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“Miss Lind, let me introduce myself first. I’m the director of the human resources department...”

“Good afternoon, Miss Lind. Afternoon tea is on me. What do you think about that?”

“Miss Lind, if you need any help, please give me a call at any time. Just so you know, I’m the marketing manager. You can go ahead and call me Mike...”

So many people were coming up to Janet. It really appeared that they were going to surround her desk at any moment.

After Janet arrived at the company today, she didn’t have time to get started on her work yet. This whole time, she had been wearing a decent smile on her face and politely dealing with the senior executives who were trying to suck up to her one after another.

In just one day, many colleagues and senior executives pretended to come up to her by chance. Some of them made excuses to talk to her and some even boldly came up to her directly to introduce themselves.

Thanks to Janet, Gerda had the opportunity to partake in a lot of snacks and drinks this afternoon. Her stomach was already full and she was feeling satisfied.

“It must be so good to be the wife of the CEO. Janet, you’re so fortunate.” Gerda let out a loud burp. Looking at the gifts on Janet’s desk, her eyes were filled with envy.

“Do you think all these gifts and foods are for nothing? They all want to get something from me.” Janet shook her head, feeling more and more worn out.

She sorted out all the gifts on her table, feeling a slight annoyance when she saw the flattering faces of those people surrounding her.

Maybe Tiffany was right. She could no longer work in the Larson Group anymore.

Finally, the workday was over and Janet felt greatly relieved.

She was now the focus of the entire Larson Group. All the employees of the Larson Group wanted to do nothing else but flatter her. Even the cleaner downstairs went out of her way to greet Janet respectfully when she saw her.

So as soon as Janet was off work, she especially made a detour, intending to take the stairs instead of the elevator to head downstairs. She didn’t want to have to ride the elevator with the others. In her eyes, it would only make her feel more embarrassed to be fawned upon by others in a small space.

When Janet was about to reach the first floor, she could smell someone’s perfume. She made her way down the stairs and saw the perfume wearer leaning against the door frame and smiling up at her.

“Isn’t this such a coincidence, Miss Lind?” With a wide grin on her face, Charis turned her body so that she was now facing Janet.

The woman was both tall and slim. When she focused her gaze on Janet, she bowed her head down slightly.

“Hello, Miss Turner. Excuse me, I’m on my way out.” Janet forced a smile on her face. Now that Charis was standing in front of the door, blocking her path, Janet was in a dilemma. She could neither get out nor go back upstairs.

This encounter started to make Janet feel even more uncomfortable. Judging from the casual expression on Charis’ face, she must already know about Ethan’s dual identities.

It really seemed like Janet was the only one in the world who was left in the dark.

Cocking an eyebrow, Charis observed the subtle shift in Janet’s expression.

“Just to let you know, I do know that Brandon is Ethan,” Charis said, very relaxed, but there was a hint of malice that could be seen in her eyes. “You have to understand him. He hid it from you because he’s worried about a lot of things. After all, you and he are worlds apart.”

The fake smile on Janet’s face faded away at once.

She didn't want to have a chat with Charis and she knew that Charis was standing in front of the door deliberately to cause trouble for her. She decided in the next moment to go upstairs directly and take the elevator out.

However, what Charis said next made her stop in her tracks.

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Charis heaved a long sigh before continuing. "It's a wonderful feeling, really. It feels like it was only yesterday when Brandon and I started a business, and now, Larson Group is practically an empire. I always knew that Brandon would succeed. He's the most brilliant man I've ever known. He has come so far despite having to start with nothing. As the CEO of Larson Group, he is responsible not only for a multibillion-dollar enterprise, but the livelihood of some ten thousand employees as well. But he is yet to avenge his mother and bring down the Lester family. When he chooses a wife, he must consider more factors than the ordinary people do."

Janet looked Charis in the eye and asked, "What are you trying to say? Ethan married me. No matter how close you were in the past, he is now my husband."

Tension crackled in the air between them.

Charis narrowed her eyes. She had thought that Janet was a doormat, a pushover who would rather run away and hide than fight. It seemed like she had underestimated the woman.

Even so, Charis remained composed. Her arrogant nature forbade her from feeling inferior to anyone, after all. She drew close to Janet, her lips curled into a sneer. "I meant exactly what I said. I just feel so sorry for Brandon. He should have had a better life."

The sound of her heels clacking against the floor echoed throughout the empty staircase.

Every step she took felt like a dagger to Janet's heart.

When they were finally toe to toe, Charis braced her hand on the banister and looked Janet up and down. Then she broke into a huge, mocking smile. "You understand, don't you? Brandon should have married someone from a rich and powerful family, someone who had the same status as him. He needs a wife who can help him further his career, his vendetta, his ultimate success. Brandon only married you to honor his late mother's wish. Sure, he might have some feelings for you, but does he

really think you deserve the title of Mrs. Larson? You know as well as I do that businessmen base their every decision on the pros and cons. No one gambles just to lose in the end. This might be the reason why Brandon has kept his true identity from you, don't you think?"

Janet didn't want to listen to another word Charis said.

She pushed past the other woman and dashed up the stairs.

Charis chuckled knowingly. Her voice was calm when she spoke again, but what she said still jarred Janet's resolve. "I'm just worried about you, Miss Lind. You might find yourself broken and miserable in the future. Alas, there's no such thing as forever. You and Brandon may be living harmoniously now, but how long will that last? Once the passion fades, you will be faced with the harsh reality that you were never compatible to begin with. You come from different worlds. The gap between the two of you is

nothing less than a chasm, one that a piece of legal paper could never hope to bridge. Your marriage means nothing in the grand scheme of things. Haven't you realized yet? Because of you, he gave up a better future, a shot at his revenge—his one great purpose in life. Do you honestly think Brandon will never regret his decision?"

Janet tried to ignore Charis as she kept on bounding upstairs, all to no avail. The latter's voice grated on her ears, and her words embedded themselves in her mind.

If she were any less of a person, she would have marched over and slapped Charis in the face.

But Janet was not that kind of woman. Besides, Charis was right.

Janet inhaled deeply in an attempt to calm herself, only for her breath to catch in her throat. Her heart felt like it was made of lead, and it was sinking rapidly into a dark abyss.

There was no way she could face Ethan after this.

Her doubts and insecurities melded together with her heartache, and they washed over her like a tidal wave. She was drowning.

The worst part of it was that she was powerless against Charis' words. She could not refute them. She could only flee.

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Gerda was upstairs at the moment. She had a lot to eat today, so she was running on the treadmill in the gym, trying to feel less guilty.

While she was running, she noticed Janet rushing out of the stairwell with streaks of tears on her face.

"Lind? What were you doing coming out of the stairwell?" Even though Gerda was normally a jovial person, she could tell that Janet was in a sour mood.

Upon seeing the worry on Gerda's face, Janet felt even more dispirited.

She threw herself into Gerda's arms and sniffled. "Just don't ask me anything, okay?"

She had buried her face in Gerda's hair.

And so, Gerda just caressed Janet's back in silence. When she felt that the latter was shivering, she felt really sorry for her. But at the same time, she was furious.

"Who did this to you?" Gerda was filled with righteous indignation. She was just about ready to roll up her sleeves and smack somebody on the back of their heads.

Janet shook her head, adjusted her mood, and smiled at Gerda. "It's okay, Gerda. I'm feeling a lot better now. There's no need for that."

She then pursed her lips and added, "Whenever something happens, you don't have to worry about defending other people right away. At times, you just need to think more about yourself."

Janet's words left Gerda speechless.

What does she mean by that? She sounds like she's planning on leaving. Gerda was confused.

The second the elevator arrived, Janet entered it right away.

She was lost in thought. And the more she thought of what Charis said to her, the more she felt Charis was right. There was indeed a great difference in social standing between her and Ethan.

Janet used to be the Lind family's adopted daughter. Even though the Lind family wasn't that influential or wealthy, it still had its own company. But now, she had lost this identity as well after she disowned her family. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she was now a woman without a family. All she was, was an ordinary employee. Compared to a guy like Brandon, the billionaire CEO of Larson Group, she was nothing.

Ever since they met, Ethan had been helping her with all sorts of problems, but not once had she helped him back.

Only a wealthy noble lady like Charis deserved a man like Ethan. Charis was capable, strong, and she had been working with him since they were young. Their relationship was incomparable to all others.

When the thought crossed Janet's mind, she felt even more upset and self-abased.

As much as it pained her to self-deprecate, she had to admit that this was the truth. In every aspect, she was inferior to Charis.

It was no wonder that Ethan had hidden his true identity as Brandon Larson from her. She was qualified to be Ethan's wife, but she wasn't good enough to be Brandon Larson's wife.

Janet walked out of the Larson Group building in a daze.

She'd rather not work for the company anymore. Just seeing Charis would remind her of what the latter said to her.

It was clear to her that she wasn't good enough to compete with Charis.

"Where am I supposed to go now? To the villa?" Sadly, that was also where Ethan lived. If she wanted to move out, he'd certainly try to stop her.

Janet was uncertain of what to do next. As she looked around the bustling city, she didn't know where she should go.

The world was vast, and yet she had no home.

Never had she felt this lonely before.

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Charis haughtily walked back to her office, a smug smile plastered on her face.

Seeing Janet running away with a pale face, she instantly knew her plan had worked. She closed her eyes and breathed a sigh of relief.

A senior leader had informed Charis the episode between Brandon Janet outside the club the other day. She was startled to know that Brandon's real identity was exposed too soon.

Charis was annoyed that Janet could enjoy the glory and pride of being the wife of the CEO of the Larson Group.

The gold-digger would definitely cling to him more after knowing that Ethan was Brandon.

Charis didn't make her move right away.

She wanted to observe what was happening, fully analyze the situation, and then find the perfect opportunity to attack Janet.

Therefore, Charis secretly watched Janet's every move. Several department managers and senior executives tried flattering Janet with gifts and eateries. Although Janet had a pleasant countenance, Charis could tell at a glance that, deep down, she was unhappy. Janet was pissed off but was pretending to remain calm.

A smile emerged on Charis's face. She guessed Janet was pissed off because Brandon had lied to her.

Charis's opinion of Janet changed in an instant. She was surprised to know that Janet didn't care about Brandon's real identity as she believed.

If Janet wasn't her rival in love, Charis would have admired her wholeheartedly.

Charis was born with a silver spoon, and the impoverished girls she had seen in her life were all greedy about money. Even though they all pretended like they didn't care about money, almost everyone of them revealed their true colors as time went by.

Janet's behavior surprised her. The woman was strangely unaffected by wealth and power.

However, it was also an opportunity to make her plans work.

Brandon and Janet had quarreled. Charis could use this chance to amplify the gap between the two and drag them apart forever.

After all, it wasn't her fault. She was merely seizing the opportunity God had given to her.

Brandon had warned her earlier. But Charis couldn't miss this marvelous chance.

If she didn't make a move now, it would be impossible to separate Janet and Brandon once they reconciled.

Charis couldn't let that happen.

She had to take the risk. Otherwise, she would never have the chance to be with Brandon.

Janet was tired of the people trying to flatter her the entire day. Therefore, she decided to take the stairs that day when she got off work to avoid her colleagues.

"Have they upgraded the surveillance system on the staircase?" Charis asked her assistant.

"All the CCTV cameras in the staircase will be shut down when we get off work later. The technical department will stay and upgrade them in the evening." The assistant balanced the documents in her arms and added, "If there's nothing else, can I leave for the day?"

“Okay. Ask the technical department to finish upgrading as soon as possible. After all, it’s a matter of safety. Without the working cameras, we won’t be able to investigate what’s going on if anything does happen.” Charis waved her hand.

Coincidentally, the company was working on upgrading the security system. Charis could wait for Janet in the staircase after work when the cameras were shut down. That way, there wouldn’t be any traces left behind.

Things seemed to progress better than she had expected. Judging from Janet’s reaction, Charis realized she must have suffered a heavy blow.

She stood in front of the window, with her arms over her chest, and stared at the business hub of Seacisco before her.

She pursed her lips and thought about the prospect of her next move. It was pretty easy. Charis only had to make Brandon kick Janet out of his life. That way, he would be hers forever.

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After getting off work, Ethan sat inside his car, staring at everyone leaving the Larson Group’s building.

He didn’t start driving until he saw Janet walking out. He then followed her closely, making sure to tail her at a moderate speed. When he noticed that she wasn’t on her way home, he sped up and pulled over beside her.

Janet looked inside the car and saw Ethan.

He was truly dashing in his suit. And the smile on his face made him look all the more charming. Ethan rested his hands on the steering wheel, visibly hesitant before asking, “Wanna go home together?”

Janet ignored him and continued walking along the road.

Ethan followed her for a few minutes before she finally stopped in her tracks, frustrated and livid.

Why am I angry with Ethan? Charis is the one who provoked me! This is all because of my pathetic self-esteem and insecurities. Janet thought in distress.

The mere thought of that made Janet feel even sadder.

She and Ethan were like two parallel lines that would never meet in between. If it weren’t for his mother’s last wish, they never would’ve gotten together.

Because Janet stopped walking, Ethan stepped on the brake and pulled over behind her.

It took a few moments before Janet decided to step into the car in silence.

Ethan frowned.

Instead of feeling happy, he sensed that something was amiss.

The reason why Janet wasn’t talking to him before was because she was angry with him. But now, he could tell that something else was wrong.

The light in his eyes dimmed, and his heart sank. He quietly turned the steering wheel and drove back to the villa.

Slowly, the black Maybach pulled over at the gate of the villa. When Ethan unfastened his seatbelt, he noticed that Janet wasn't getting off the car. She was staring at an old couple beside the pedestrian crossing.

The old woman was holding the old man's arm as they crossed the road together. It somehow reminded her of something she always read in fairy tales, "And they lived happily ever after."

"That's beautiful," Janet exclaimed, her face lighting up along with the setting sun.

Ethan's heart tightened and his voice became hoarse. "Someday, when our hair greys out and our bones go brittle, we'll be like them."

Janet shook her head, chuckling under her breath. "I don't think so."

Ethan clenched the steering wheel, immediately feeling tense.

Thereafter, Janet looked at him intently and smiled. "You're much taller than that old man, so I won't be able to support you like that."

Just as Ethan felt relieved and was about to say something, she cut him off and added in a trembling voice, "Ethan, I want a divorce."

For the first time ever, Ethan's mind went blank. Despair and disbelief clouded his thoughts and his heart.

"Who talked to you and what did they say?" he asked.

Ethan had thought that Janet was merely upset.

He had led himself to believe that after a period of time, she would stop getting angry, and by then, he'd apologize to her again. Then, everything would be okay again.

Not once did he think that they'd get a divorce.

Still shaking her head, Janet looked down while twirling the lace on the hemline of her dress. "I just want a divorce, Ethan. I'm exhausted..."

"Janet, why do you suddenly want to get a divorce? Everything was fine before!" The way Ethan narrowed his eyes was daunting.

After casting him a glance, Janet looked down once more. His intimidating appearance frightened her. "I'm not okay with the fact that you've been lying to me, Ethan! I can no longer trust you. And in a marriage, trust is the most important thing."

Ethan knew that he did lie and Janet was indeed mad, but there was definitely more to the story. So he was patient with her. "Are you hiding something from me?"

Janet shook her head again.

No matter what he said, she didn't want to say another word.

Ethan rubbed his temples and closed his eyes as he sat in the driver's seat in silence for a long time. When he opened his eyes again, he said, "I will never agree to a divorce, Janet."

The setting sun finally slid down the horizon, and everything around them turned dimmer. Ethan couldn't see her face clearly anymore.

"I'll pretend that I didn't hear what you said today. Never mention it again," he said in a soft voice.

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The car was filled with a thick silence. Instead of making a scene, Janet chose to be calm and asked, "Will you please unlock the door? I want to go back."

She turned away and stared at the scenery through the window. It was a very long winter this year, in Seacisco.

Ethan unlocked the door with shaky fingers. The tremor in his fingers had not stopped yet.

Janet shut the car door carefully and went back to the villa. She had to get Ethan to agree to the divorce because she didn't think she would be able to live with him as a couple like they had done in the past. She knew if he didn't agree then the divorce would not happen. Janet was completely worn out as she entered the villa.

She knew she could not be compared to someone as perfect as Charis. Which was why it baffled her that Ethan was so into her. These questions without answers left her feeling confused and pained.

No, she would not think about this anymore. It only proved to be a waste of her time since she could not find the answers to them anyway. She went to her room in silence and buried her face in the pillow, covering herself with the bed sheet. She had thought that everything was done with. She would leave Ethan even if he refused to grant her a divorce. She did not belong here with him, not after the hell he had put her through.

Tears fell from Janet's eyes and she bit her lips hard to try and stop them from falling. She missed home and wanted to return there, to the house where she and Hannah had live before.

A huge wall separated them. Ethan found it difficult to get the words he so desperately wanted to say out of his mouth. He remained in front of Janet's door, lost in thoughts.

Ever since Janet had found out about his secret identity as Brandon Larson, she moved out of their bedroom.

Ethan was quite busy lately, by taking care of work from his company. He had to go to work early in the morning and come back late at night. To make it worse, Janet was avoiding him on purpose. He hadn't seen Janet for a while now and he knew the situation would continue if he hadn't gotten off work early today to wait for her outside the Larson Group. Ethan massaged his head. He had a terrible headache that made his head throb. He figured that someone must have said something to Janet. He decided to call Garrett.

“I did not say anything to her so don’t add me to your list of suspects.” Garrett had been sitting in a booth at the bar and complaining about the way young people prefer to dance in the bar, when he got the call from Ethan.

He sighed loudly after gathering his thoughts. “In my opinion the only thing you did wrong was to hide your identity from Janet, and it is not so unforgivable. And despite the fact that the senior executives in our company like to gossip, I believe that they aren’t stupid and they can at least behave themselves in certain situations. I believe she must have been prompted by something. Janet was devastated and probably believed that her world might collapse at any time when she found out about the truth. I do not think she can handle any more stress right now. You will need to figure out what it is that happened to her before you try to find a solution to the problem.”

“What exactly has Charis been up to lately?” Ethan ground out.

Garrett had not been expecting that line of question from Ethan so suddenly. He frowned at Ethan’s words. “She traveled abroad to deal with some financial issues we had a few days ago. She just got back actually. I think she will mind her words. She is smart enough to know that.”

“I tasked my assistant with investigating what happened to Janet today. There appeared to be nothing unusual during the day, but the surveillance video cannot account for what happened when she went downstairs by the time she was off duty.”

Garrett could not help but think that Ethan was making accusations he could not support with facts. “There was a general meeting of the top executives a few days ago and the decision was made at the meeting to upgrade our security system. So it wasn’t really an accident that the CCTV cameras were shut down after work. The two things happening at the same time is purely coincidental and I think you are overthinking it.”

“Janet walked downstairs from the floor of the design department, but then she chose to take the elevator from the second floor. Why? What exactly on the first floor made her so afraid that she went back to take the elevator?” Ethan could feel in his gut that something dubious had happened.

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Janet woke up the next day with a sharp throbbing in her eyes.

She padded into the bathroom and looked at herself in the mirror. Her hair was a mess, and her eyes were all bloodshot and puffy. She looked terrible.

“Just skin and bones,” she muttered, pinching her arm and forcing a smile.

Realization suddenly struck her. She had nothing to worry about at all.

She was only in her twenties; she still had much of her youth to squander, not to mention a whole life waiting ahead of her.

Janet delved into her thoughts. She had never had much ever since she was a little girl. When she was in primary school, she had a favorite pencil box with a pretty Barbie pattern. Jocelyn ended up throwing it away out of spite. And while Janet was torn over the loss, she eventually forgot about the knickknack altogether.

Perhaps Ethan would be just like that pencil box.

Besides, he had made a point of keeping his true identity from the start.

Janet didn't want to think that it was due to some misgivings on his part, but she couldn't really blame him if that was the case.

With renewed resolve, she opened her computer and proceeded to send out her resumes to design companies all over the country.

Shortly after, she received a notice for interview from Flying Kite, a famous establishment in Barnes.

The thing, however, was that she hadn't sent them her resume.

Curious, Janet opened the e-mail to confirm its contents. Sure enough, the HR Manager of Flying Kite expressed their appreciation for her designs, and even mentioned that they were aware that her former superior at the Larson Group had nothing but praise for her.

It occurred to her then that she had previously spoken to Tiffany about changing jobs.

Was it Tiffany who had recommended her to Flying Kite?

Gratitude bloomed in Janet's heart. She hadn't expected that someone else in Larson Group genuinely cared about her besides Gerda.

Flying Kite Design Company came second to the Larson Group. Because it engaged mainly in the overseas market, and it wasn't particularly known in the local landscape. But Janet had seen their designs, and they were quite on par with those of the Larson Group.

And here she was now, staring at their invitation and the impressive pay they stipulated.

Janet pondered it for a second before deciding to accept their invite.

She had been planning to leave, anyway, and they did offer a very attractive salary. Given her skills and experience, she was almost certain that she was going to get this job.

More importantly, Barnes was located farther up in the North, while Seacisco was in the South. She could finally escape Ethan, and stay away from him for good.

After she settled down in Barnes, Hannah could also come over and stay with her.

Janet didn't pack much. She only brought some necessities, which didn't even require a suitcase. Ethan had already gone to the company early that morning. Without telling anyone, she booked a plane ticket online and took a taxi to the airport.

On her way, she called Tiffany. "Thank you, Miss Fisher. I received an offer from Flying Kite, and I'm on my way to the airport as we speak. Can you send me the forms needed to file for resignation? I'm afraid I don't have time to drop by the company."

"I see, of course. Well, I wish you a smooth journey and a bright future ahead." Their conversation was brief. After hanging up, Tiffany paused and wondered.

She wasn't sure why Janet thanked her in the first place. Was it for formality's sake? She was actually neutral on whether Janet should leave or stay, and she was just surprised to learn that Janet had already made such a bold decision so soon.

Laney hid behind a large pillar as she watched Janet walk through the airport entrance. She immediately sent Ethan a message, and then followed Janet inside.

Ethan had instructed her to keep an eye on Janet and report her every move. Laney had initially thought that Janet was merely going out for a walk, since the latter didn't bring any luggage with her. But Laney's cool soon crumbled when she realized that they were heading to the airport.

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"Mr. Larson, the surveillance system has just been updated. It was scheduled to be done yesterday, but the tech department was worried that something important might occur while the security cameras were out of service, so they put it off until after the employees left for the day." The assistant explained the situation in a shaking voice. He wasn't sure what was going on, but he was scared nonetheless. Especially given the dark and formidable face his boss was sporting.

Even so, his fear did not curb his curiosity. Why was the president suddenly investigating this matter?

"Keep looking into it. Contact me once you find new leads." Brandon's lips curled into a sneer. "Call Miss Turner here."

He was nearing the end of his tether. The mandate to execute the system update at such a fortuitous time had come from the senior executives—all of them, it seemed. Clearly, whoever was behind this was meticulous. They had made sure that there were no loose ends, no trace left.

Charis entered Brandon's office with a stack of documents and her laptop. She looked tired, as though she had spent the last several nights buried in work.

"We just had three separate meetings in a row. The recent turmoil in Wall Street and the collapse of the stock market has put everyone in a state of panic." She sounded weary as well, but she brightened up as she approached Brandon's desk. "You never ask me to stop by around this hour. What's up?"

By all accounts, she appeared unaware of what was happening behind the scenes.

"What were you doing at the stairwell yesterday after work?" Brandon asked bluntly, though his voice remained calm.

Charis frowned for a brief second before it was replaced with a smile. She dropped the documents she was carrying on his desk and said in a playful tone, "You must be kidding, Mr. Larson. You know that I hate taking the stairs. I had a meeting until ten o'clock last night, long after everyone has gone home. As soon as I was finished, I packed up and left the office through the elevator."

Brandon stared at her in silence, a myriad of emotions flickering in his eyes.

Charis was no fool. It didn't take long for her to put two and two together, though she didn't let on just how much she knew.

"Did you have a quarrel with Miss Lind again? You've been wearing a long face since yesterday." She heaved a long, dramatic sigh. "I don't know what you fought about, but if you think I had anything to do with it, then feel free to check into it. There are surveillance cameras everywhere in the company. You can confirm my whereabouts throughout the day."

Charis seemed unbothered, and anyone would have immediately thought that she was innocent in all this.

Sure enough, she was in a meeting when Janet had left the day before. Brandon had confirmed it himself, and more than a dozen senior executives served as her witnesses.

He was starting to have doubts. Deep down, his instincts told him that Charis was involved in this debacle in one way or another, but he didn't have any proof to back up his hunch. He had no choice but to overlook his suspicions, at least for now. "I'm not suspecting you. You're thinking too much."

Charis' smile widened. She didn't believe him, of course, but she would gladly take his word.

"In that case, I'll be taking my leave. Look at you, you should go home soon, too. No matter how important your work is, you still need to take care of yourself."

As soon as Charis left and closed the door behind her, Brandon received a call from Laney.

"Mr. Larson! Janet booked a plane ticket out of Seacisco. It leaves at 2 P.M."

"I'm coming right now. Make sure she doesn't see you." Brandon's heart was hammering inside his chest. He grabbed his suit jacket from the sofa and strode out of his office.

The airport was crowded when he arrived.

Laney walked over, looking really anxious.

"Mr. Larson, her plane just took off. I followed your orders and stayed out of sight, so I wasn't able to stop her..." Laney was visibly distressed. She could have stopped Janet from leaving. Hell, she could have dragged her friend away from airport if necessary.

Brandon raised his hand and shook his head.

"She hasn't been at her best lately. Let's just give her some space. She probably needs a break." Even as he said that, his face turned glum, like a dark cloud had formed above his head. He had felt his heart sink into a bottomless pit with every word Laney spoke.

"Go and see where she's headed." He stared out of the floor to ceiling windows and watched a plane soar into the distance, disappearing into the clouds. His scowl deepened, and people noticeably steered clear of him as they passed by.

At six o'clock that afternoon.

Janet finally landed in Barnes after a four-hour flight.

The winter in the North was very cold, much colder than anything she had experienced back in Seacisco.

She wrapped her down jacket tighter around herself before walking out of the arrival area. However, before Janet could even reach the end of the lobby, a group of burly men wearing black surrounded her.

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With her clear eyes slightly open, Janet's lips parted and she vigilantly looked at the group of men in black making their way towards her.

"Miss, you must come with us!" The men dressed in black stood in a row before Janet and bowed their heads in unison.

Janet's heart stopped beating in her chest.

"Bros, stop scaring her!" Laney's nervous voice sounded out from outside the crowd. She brushed past the tall and strong men and somehow managed to squeeze through. When she caught sight of Janet, she wanted to say something but stopped once she thought about it.

Seeing that it was Laney, Janet looked around the airport, searchingly. Pretty soon, she could make out a tall figure walking from the landing platform in the distance.

The man had handsome features and his crisp black suit set off his thick and strong neckline. Today, he was wearing a dark gray cashmere scarf around his neck with a black coat as his outermost layer. His handsome appearance attracted many people's gazes in the airport.

While holding a white scarf in his hand, Ethan made his way towards Janet. His black eyes seemed to pierce through the stunned woman.

"You didn't bring a suitcase with you. At the very least, you should have taken the scarf and gloves and put them on." Ethan's face was calm through and through. He proceeded to wrap the white scarf around Janet's neck. His cold eyes finally softened in appearance now.

He placed his hands in his pockets and then began to look around. "You should've told me before you went ahead and left. If you want to relax some more, I'll take a few days off and take you abroad to have fun at a later time."

Janet seemed to be avoiding him and said simply, "I want to put Seacisco behind me. Ethan, why don't you leave me alone, all right?"

Ethan seemed to ignore what she was just saying. After thinking it over for a few seconds, he bowed his head and turned to look at her dotingly. "If you really want to stay here, I'll go on to accompany you for a few days."

"Is that right? What the hell is it that you want to do?" Clenching her teeth tightly, Janet glared daggers at him. "You refused to divorce me, but I can't continue to be husband and wife with you anymore. I no longer want to work in the Larson Group anymore either, so I must move to another city."

The tenderness in Ethan's eyes instantly dissipated. He went up to her, clenched her wrist with his hand, and narrowed his eyes at her. "What's the issue? There's no problem we can't solve together."

Janet's ears immediately reddened. She calmed herself down and turned her gaze away. "There's nothing we can do to solve this problem."

Looking down at Janet's lowered gaze, Ethan lifted his hand and grabbed hold of her chin. He bit her bottom lip hard and said in a low and stubborn voice, "You really want to leave? There's no way I can let you do that."

Janet wanted to push him away with all her might.

"Ah!"

Suddenly, she was in the air.

Ethan grabbed hold of her waist, lifted her up with just one of his hands, and carried her on his shoulder.

Ethan pinched her buttocks hard, and then patted her twice there with a very vengeful look on his face. "I remember you finished the food I cooked every day this month. So why didn't you gain weight?"

"We're at the airport! There are people watching!" Janet covered her face with her hands in absolute shame and anger. She was so embarrassed!

Regardless of the fact that they were in a public space, Ethan quickly carried Janet into the luxury car that was parked outside.

"Ethan! Let me go!" After a moment of dizziness, Janet tried to get up from where she was in the passenger seat. Ethan was already sitting in the driver's seat. He proceeded to press a button and locked the car doors.

"Why are you doing this to me?" Janet used everything she had to try and open the door.

"Just because you happen to be my wife." Ethan placed his arm to block her from leaving and didn't move an inch no matter what Janet did.

Janet glared at him with fierce eyes. "I'm only Ethan's wife! I'm not Brandon's wife!"

Ethan knew what Janet meant. He sneered and pressed down on her. He pinched her small face and rubbed her lips with his fingers until they were raw. His face was devoid of emotions, but his tone was filled with threat. "If you don't change your mind, I'll take you back and lock you up. You won't be able to go anywhere."

Ethan's fierce eyes frightened Janet a great deal. She curled up in the passenger seat, trying to put some distance between them. When she thought of what had happened before, tears appeared in her eyes. She choked and said, "Ethan, you're way too selfish. Since you don't want me to be Brandon's

wife, why do you want to keep me here? Why don't we just go our own separate ways? We can both be free and happy in that case."