

## The Mbahsb 551

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After confronting the Turners, Ethan returned to Barnes.

He reported to the police that Charis had pulled some strings to get Jeff out of jail, and had even sent them all the evidence to prove it.

But since there was no evidence tying Charis to all her other crimes, there was nothing Ethan could do.

Because Charis had paid for Jeff's bail, the matter wasn't too serious. It didn't take much effort for the Turner family to get Charis out of this mess.

When everything was settled, Luke spoke to Charis seriously. "Don't go near Barnes again and just stay at home."

He didn't want the company's interests to be affected because of his daughter's selfish acts. Although he loved his daughter very much, he knew what was more important.

Charis's bare, haggard face was pale and tired. She leaned back against the sofa and waved her hand dismissively. "I know. Now that Ethan has figured it all out, I can't do anything anymore."

Ethan could make trouble for the Turner family with a snap of his fingers. Charis knew that she had to be careful.

Luke nodded. "It's good that you've come to your senses. You're a Turner; you shouldn't degrade yourself for a man."

Charis forced a smile but didn't say anything.

There was another, more important reason why she couldn't act rashly. Now that Ethan had found out about her vicious side, if she was caught again, he would definitely destroy not just the Turner family, but her as well.

Seeing her so depressed, Luke stopped scolding her. He thought for a while and said, "Why not come to work for me? It's easy for people to overthink things when they're idly. If you busy yourself with work, you might find a sense of fulfillment. Soon, you'll forget all about this fiasco."

"Okay. I'll start work tomorrow." After all, Charis also didn't like the feeling of being cooped up at home.

She was too weak now. She needed to get stronger first in order to get what she wanted in life.

As for Ethan, she believed that they would meet at the peak again one day.

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When Ethan came back, Janet could tell that he had finished dealing with Charis. She could also tell that he was angry. Although he didn't show it on his face, she believed that Ethan must've gotten into a fight with Charis.

These days, the Larson Group had focused on slowly planting its roots in Barnes. It didn't take long before the legendary corporation settled in this city.

Since Ethan and Garrett had now moved to Barnes, their secret security force Pole Shadow also followed them there. As a member of it, of course Laney also had to move.

"I didn't want to move here, but Garrett promised he'd give me a raise if I did. He's not lying to me, is he?" Laney felt that it was a hassle to uproot her life in Seacisco.

"Ethan didn't mention anything about that." But Janet was extremely happy that Laney had come to Barnes. "It's so good that you're here now. It almost feels like I'm back in Seacisco where we had so much great time together!"

Her smile was full of joy. Reuniting with a good friend after a long time felt so good. They had a lot to catch up on.

Janet's joy was infectious. Laney's dissatisfaction was instantly dispelled and she excitedly told Janet all about what she had been through in Seacisco after the other woman moved away.

It wasn't until the sun set that Ethan joined them. "Garrett has made us a reservation at this restaurant. You girls can continue to talk over dinner."

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The restaurant was situated at the top of a mountain peak. There was a cable car that could take them straight up to the summit. From there, they could truly appreciate the glorious view of the setting sun from their vantage point in the cable car.

When they arrived at the restaurant, the foursome sat in two pairs.

Staring at the Ethan and Garrett in front of her, Janet chuckled and said, "I have such a familiar feeling, almost like *deja vu*. Is your girlfriend going to rush over again, Garrett?"

It was so awkward in the moment that followed her comment.

"That isn't funny in the least bit, Janet. I've been single since I broke up with Tracey," Garrett said in a serious tone, pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose and taking a sip from his bottle of water. Then he turned to take a cursory look at Laney before he looked at Janet again.

He had even raised his voice when he said the word "single".

Janet was actually quite astonished by the fact that over six months had elapsed yet Garrett was still single. After all, he changed his girlfriends at a high turnover rate.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know it. So you are done with being a playboy now?" She genuinely felt that he had changed significantly.

After considering it for a moment or two, Garrett peered through his glasses at the dishes on the table, and then replied, "I just want a serious, committed relationship now."

Janet nodded with an approving smile. Then she turned to Laney, who was busy eating.

Laney always ate quite a lot. Perhaps it was because she used up significant calories and physical strength when she trained daily. She had been eating, minding her own business, and didn't get

involved in the conversation between Janet and Garrett.

“Laney, where do you live now? If you don’t have a place to live, you can stay with me and Ethan for a while,” Janet said, dishing out some more food for Laney.

“I haven’t found a place to stay yet. I’ll stay in a hotel for the time being. But thank you for the offer anyway,” said Laney.

“I can help you find a place. Staying in a hotel is not very convenient after all,” Garrett looked at her and said eagerly.

Without looking at him, Laney continued to eat. “It’s alright. I am confident that I will be able to handle it myself.”

Then Garrett lowered his head to eat in resignation.

Janet blinked her eyes in confusion and then sensed that something was amiss between the two.

She turned to look at Ethan, who put a rib in her plate and said, “Don’t poke around. Just eat.”

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After dinner, Janet and Ethan left first. Laney went to the ladies’ room, while Garrett stayed behind and waited for her.

“Why are you still here? I’m going to take a cab back to the hotel.” Laney purposely visited the washroom earlier so that she could leave alone.

“I’ll give you a ride,” Garrett offered. They took the cable car down the mountain to the parking lot, and Garrett opened the door of the back seat for her.

Pretending not to see it, Laney hailed a cab and left.

Looking at the car driving away, Garrett was helpless. He adjusted his glasses and got into his car.

As soon as he settled in the backseat, he received a phone call.

“Hello, Mr. Harding. I heard that you are in Barnes? Why didn’t you call me?” A female voice could be heard on the other end of the line. It was so charming and alluring that it would be exceptional for any man to resist.

“If you don’t have anything important to say, I’ll hang up.”

“Mr. Harding, are you sure you don’t want to drop by my place? I...”

Before the woman could finish her words, Garrett hung up the phone and threw it aside.

During this period of time, a lot of women had tried to get close to him, and some even went directly to his place. However, he was not interested in them at all. All he could think about was Laney.

He was far from an inexperienced man. He could tell that he might have fallen in love with her.

All at once, he was both scared and excited by this feeling. He had never felt anything like this before. He felt that Laney was different from all the women he had dated before.

However, she didn't seem to have any interest in him at all. She always kept a certain distance from him.

"Take me home." After giving this instruction to the driver, he leaned back on the seat and closed his eyes to rest.

This feeling made him rather frustrated.

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When Laney had hailed the cab, she was quick to get into the vehicle and hurriedly instructed the driver, "Sir, take me to the Beasley Hotel."

She told the driver the name of the hotel she was staying at and looked back over her shoulder.

Luckily, Garrett hadn't followed her.

Laney could see that his attitude towards her had changed greatly for quite a while now. At first, she thought it was because they had become friends. However, later, Garrett started to ask her out for dinner on several occasions.

But she didn't like playboys so she knew that she had to stay away from him.

The car quickly drove through two tunnels. She peered out of the window when she realized that something was definitely wrong.

The driver raced onwards at exceptionally high velocity.

And it was quite apparent that the car was not headed in the direction of the hotel.

Laney looked at the driver in rearview mirror. The driver stole a glance at her from the rearview mirror as well, and from time to time, he had an evil glint in his eyes.

Laney tried to open the window quietly, only to find that it was locked. She looked back and found that there were several cars following them.

"Sir, please stop the car. I want to get off here." Laney pretended to reach for the door casually.

The driver glanced at her through the rearview mirror and turned the steering wheel. He sped up and drove down a quiet alley.

Seeing what he had done, Laney gritted her teeth, quickly took off her coat and wrapped it around her fore arm, and then punched the window with it. She then jumped out of the shattered window.

A sound of brake was heard cutting through the crisp air.

The driver immediately stopped the car, opened the door and rushed out to pursue her.

At the same time, the cars that had been following them also drove over to join the scene. A group of tattooed men got out of the cars. They blocked both ends of the alley and surrounded Laney from all directions.

“Guys! That’s the woman our boss wants!” A heavily tattooed man had roared these words while holding a threatening club in his hand. He looked vicious, and there was a fresh scar between his eyebrows.

Laney’s eyes swept over them. A dozen tall, muscular men were all well-armed and looked highly aggressive. It seemed that a fight would inevitably ensue.

Laney touched her waist. Unfortunately, she had only a small dagger with her since she hadn’t expected anything like this before heading out.

Judging from the current situation, she couldn’t leave easily.

“Buddy, you have to let me know who wants my life before you start.” Laney raised her eyebrows and looked at the man.

She pulled out the dagger from where it was hidden by her waist, and hit it between her teeth to free up her hands. She tied up her long hair with a hair band she had on her wrist. She was petite, and she looked particularly fragile among this burly group of strong men. It seemed there was no way she could ever stand a chance to fight all these men.

Laney clenched her fists and then took the dagger out of her mouth. She was absolutely not a match for so many men. She had a hunch that she might die here today, but she had to take a few of them with her, even if it meant she had to die fighting.

“Fucking bitch! Don’t you know who you have offended? Go to hell and ask Satan!” the man leading the mob spat. He looked at the men around him and said, “What are you waiting for? Go and catch her!”

As soon as he gave the order, the strong men waved their weapons in unison and moved forward with clear intent to attack Laney.

At this moment, the sound of car engine suddenly could be heard from the alley.

A car honked and raced into the alley.

“Damn it! Who is it?” The mob of men were frightened of being hit by the racing vehicle so they all stepped out of the way.

The car stopped and the back door opened. Garrett unfastened his seatbelt and got out of the car with an icy look on his face.

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Just now, Garrett happened to be headed in the same direction as Laney. Seeing her up ahead, he asked the driver to follow her taxi. After a while, he found that there was something off about the taxi. Why did the driver take her to such a remote alley?

Uneasy, he asked the driver to follow them into the alley to see what was going on. When they turned the corner, he found that Laney was surrounded by a group of men.

The driver saw this too and warned Garrett, “Mr. Harding, I think she might’ve offended some big shot. Those men don’t look like ordinary thugs.”

Seeing the swarm of menacing-looking men, Garrett was also on high alert.

But he didn't show it. He just unfastened the cuffs of his shirt and started stretching. "How long has it been since you last fought, Jarrod?"

The driver chuckled. "Well, let's just say I've always kept myself in shape."

Garrett's driver, Jarrod, used to be a famous fighter when he was young.

Garrett looked at the strong men in the alley. Truth be told, he had no intentions of fighting them. He was vastly outnumbered after all.

It was just him and Jarrod in the car. Even if Laney joined the fight, they still didn't stand a chance. He had to think of something quick.

He stepped out of the car and looked around. Garrett usually had a warm smile on his face, which made him look like an approachable person. But now, his face was cold as ice. Although he was still gentlemanly-looking, he was more intimidating than usual.

"Who paid you to hurt my girlfriend?" He strode towards the group of men, his piercing gaze boring a hole into the man in the lead.

Perhaps it was because of the air Garrett exuded, or perhaps it was because he had stepped out of a luxury sports car—whatever the reason, the tattooed man in the lead didn't act rashly. "Who are you? You'd better mind your own business."

"My name's Garrett Harding. Laney here is my girlfriend. Whoever dares to hurt her will not only be my enemy, but the enemy of the entire Harding family." After saying that, he pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose, walked past the wall of strong men, and strode up to Laney. He patted her on the back and said, "I'll handle things from here. Wait for me in the car."

Laney stood glued to her spot.

Garrett frowned and grabbed her arm, trying to get her to listen to him.

It seemed that these hit men had indeed heard of the name of the Harding family, because they were all stunned for a moment. Not to mention, Garrett's domineering attitude made them think twice about taking action.

Garrett took their hesitation as an opportunity to escape and dragged Laney to the car.

Jarrold was smart. The second Garrett closed the door behind him, Jarrod slammed his foot on the gas and sped out of the alley.

Only then did the hit men realize that they had been tricked. They shouted and ran after the sports car, but it was too late.

In the car, Garrett wiped the sweat on his forehead and looked back at the dozen men chasing after them. When they were safe, he sighed with relief and muttered, "Only God knows I was scared

shitless. Phew! I had no idea that'd work!"

He had seen a lot of things in his life and the people he hated to deal with the most were the outlaws. They always resorted to violence and would refuse to listen to reason.

“Who were those people?” He looked at Laney questioningly.

This woman was so bold. Even after their narrow escape, she was still so calm.

Now Garrett found another reason to like her.

Laney looked as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened. She wiped her dagger and tucked it back into its sheath behind her waist. After thinking for a while, she said, “The Burke family’s men. I recognized one of them just now. I met him before when I was on a mission. The Burkes are engaged in some illegal businesses. They hold power in both Seacisco and Barnes. Back then, I offended them. They’re probably here to take revenge on me.”

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As Garrett listened to Laney carefully, his eyes grew sharp. He stared at Laney for a long time and then sighed, “You are really a troublemaker, aren’t you?”

Laney had just moved to Barnes—a place where the Burke family held a lot of power. Because they failed to take revenge on Laney today, they were definitely bound to try again.

Laney stretched her arms and sat leisurely in the back seat of the sports car. She closed her eyes and said indifferently, “I’m used to it. It’s normal in this industry. While I make money protecting others, my life will always be at stake.”

She paused and then cracked one eye open. She glanced at Garrett and coughed awkwardly. “Thanks, Mr. Harding.”

“You’re most welcome. We’ve known each other for a long time now. We’re friends now, aren’t we?” Garrett smiled, waving his hand nonchalantly.

After mulling over it for a while, Laney figured it’d be better to draw a clear line between them. After all, she didn’t like owing others any favors. “If you need my help, just call me.”

These words made Garrett feel somewhat alienated. He pulled a long face and muttered, “Why do you have to push me away like that?”

However, Laney suddenly looked serious and she sat bolt upright on alert. She pressed her finger to her lips, gesturing at him to shush.

Garrett felt wronged and opened his mouth to protest, but Laney quickly clamped her hand over his mouth.

“Shh. I think someone’s following us.” Laney looked back as she spoke.

As expected, three black cars were tailing them, just dozens of meters away.

Garrett frowned and followed her gaze. He pried Laney’s hand off of his mouth and said, “Those guys are really something. They caught up to us so soon.”

“Even though they looked afraid of your family just now, it seems they’ll stop at nothing to get to me.” Laney narrowed her eyes and sat back in her seat. “You can drop me off at a crowded place later. I’ll handle this.”

“Do you have a death wish or something? Do you really think I’ll just sit here and watch you get killed?” Garrett cried indignantly.

Turning to Jarrod, he then barked, “Keep driving.”

He turned to Laney again and said seriously, “You can’t go back to the hotel now. Those people are just waiting for an opportunity to attack you. If they see you alone, they’ll definitely take action.”

Laney thought about it for a moment and then shook her head. “I’ll come up with something. I don’t want to get you or your family involved in this.”

Suddenly, Garrett’s eyes lit up. “I have an idea. Why don’t you hide at my place for a while? They won’t dare to break in.”

Laney pursed her lips hesitantly.

“I won’t get involved. I doubt they’ll dare to offend the Harding family,” Garrett said confidently. Then, his expression darkened. “Don’t you get it? You won’t be able to survive out there alone.”

“Fine,” Laney finally said.

Soon, the car pulled into Garrett’s mansion.

As soon as Garrett got out of the car, he opened the door and grabbed Laney’s arm, pulling her into the house.

“I live here alone. Do you want me to show you around?”

“No, thanks. Just tell me which room I’ll be staying. I can also take the couch if needed,” Laney said flatly.

As she spoke, she headed straight to the closed curtain and peeked through the crack vigilantly. “They’re lurking outside. I doubt they’ll give up. Do you have a gun here?”

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Now that Garrett was home, he felt safe and dropped his guard. He took off his glasses, picked up a bag of chips on the table, and turned on the TV. As he casually stuffed chips into his mouth, he said absent-mindedly, “I don’t have any weapons here. This is the twenty-first century. We’re all civilized people.”

“Why don’t you ask your assistant to send us some guns? I know you have access to the arms industry. If those guys make a move, I could protect you if I have a weapon.” Standing by the window vigilantly, Laney looked at Garrett, who was lying on the sofa and watching TV.

With his glasses off, Garrett looked less refined and more down-to-earth. He was thirty years old, but there was still a bit of teenage spirit in his eyes. Despite this, his jaw was firm and his eyebrows were straight. Now that she was getting a closer look at him, Laney found that he seemed really matured and handsome.



“Don’t worry about it. This is my place. We’re safe here. Relax. Do you want some snacks? Chips, chocolates, biscuits—whatever you like. My pantry’s fully stocked.” Garrett gestured at Laney with a bag of potato chips in his hand.

Laney was bewildered. She had never seen this side of Garrett before.

Shouldn’t the son of a rich family like him be a bit more self-disciplined?

How could he be so fond of junk food?

Albeit a bit dubious, Laney walked over and sat beside him. She looked at the bag of chips and swallowed her urge to eat some. “That does not look healthy, Mr. Harding. Anyway, I’ll find a way to drive those guys away. I can’t hide in your place forever.”

While munching on the chips, Garrett plucked a piece of tissue from the tissue box on the table and wiped his mouth and fingers. Then he sat up straight and said seriously, “Let me see if I can talk to someone from the Burke family. Just stay here in the meantime.”

Laney was left with no choice but to agree.

Garrett put down the bag of chips and brushed the crumbs off his shirt. “Now, let’s find you a room.”

Laney nodded and followed Garrett around the villa like a meek puppy.

It didn’t really matter to her which room she’d stay in. Finally, after a tour of the mansion, Garrett made her stay in the room next to his.

“It’ll be more convenient here. You can shout for me if anything comes up.” At least, this was the reason he gave her.

Laney didn’t object. A room in a villa was a luxury to her, having spent many a night on the streets before.

She walked around the room and found no personal effects here. Perhaps no one had lived here before.

Just as she was thinking about ordering some things online, Garrett said quickly, “I asked my assistant to buy you some clothes and other daily necessities. Someone will bring them here later. If you’d need anything else, just tell me, okay?”

“Oh, thanks. I was thinking of buying them myself.” Laney thanked him in a hurry. It seemed out of character for Garrett to be so considerate.

But on second thought, she realized that he had had so many girlfriends before, so he should know better than anyone else how to treat a girl right.

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And that was how Laney started living with Garrett.

In her eyes, Garrett had always been a playboy, but his house was far from what she thought it’d be. It was quiet, and he never brought his girlfriends here.

Unlike the image he used to keep up, he didn't go to bars or clubs on weekends. He only liked staying in and watching TV dramas with junk food. He would cry when he was touched, and he would cover his eyes with a pillow whenever he saw disturbing scenes from horror movies.

Sometimes, when he'd get scared, he'd nestle in Laney's arms and whine, "Aren't you scared at all?"

"I've seen a lot of real shit more horrifying than that," Laney would explain calmly.

At first, she couldn't understand whether Garrett was really scared or if he was just pretending. But after listening to him complain, she'd sigh and pat him on the back to comfort him. "Don't be scared. It's fine. It's all fake."

Then Garrett would throw himself into her arms and held her tight.

On work days, he always had a routine. He would set out to the office and come home from work at the same times, always making it a point to have dinner with Laney.

Although he didn't know how to cook and always left the kitchen in a mess, when Laney cooked, he would stand to the side and praise her generously, like a supportive husband.

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Laney had been staying in Garrett's house for a week now.

When she had nothing else to do, she would exercise, do chores, or busy herself in the garden. The rest of her time was spent watching the men lurking outside.

Standing in front of the window of the study and looking out, Garrett happened to see Laney hiding behind a tree in the garden with a dagger in her hand, looking extra vigilant.

Seeing this, he was in a trance for a moment and a faint smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

"Mr. Harding, can you hear me?" The person on the phone called out his name twice before Garrett finally centered himself.

"Ahem, sorry. Could you please repeat that? The signal here is spotty." As he spoke, Garrett returned to his seat and put on his glasses.

"We'll put everything regarding Laney to rest now. We didn't know that she's your girlfriend. But Mr. Harding, would it be too much to ask for more shares in the cooperation, if ever?" The man on the other end of the line was the head of the Burke family.

It was never really that important for the Burke family to take revenge on Laney anyway, especially so when someone as Garrett Harding was trying to intervene.

"Of course. Thank you for doing this for me, Mr. Burke." Garrett smiled. A dangerous cold light flashed in his eyes as he added, "But if you dare to hurt Laney again, I won't let you go. I promise."

"Mr. Harding, we won't do anything to hurt her. You can rest assured." The head of the Burke family laughed awkwardly.

After getting off the phone with the Burke family, Garrett received another call from his family.

"I heard that your girlfriend offended the Burke family? Moreover, I heard that this so-called 'girlfriend' of yours is a hit woman? Is that true?" Although they were posed as questions, the woman on the other end of the line sounded resigned.

"I'll handle it. Don't worry about me, Mom," Garrett said lightheartedly.

"How can I not worry about you? You're my son." The woman sighed again.

"I promise I'll handle it, Mom. I can take care of myself. Anyway, I have to get back to work now."

Just then, the door to the study was pushed open and Laney strode in.

"Mr. Harding, have you heard anything from the Burkes yet?" Laney poked her head in and asked through the crack of the door.

With a distressed look on his face, Garrett fumbled for an excuse. "We're still, er, negotiating. The Burke family hasn't responded yet. Just stay here for a few more days, okay?"

"Okay. Please inform me when you hear from them, Mr. Harding." Laney nodded, closed the door, and left.

Garrett had been having a good time with Laney these days and didn't want her to leave yet, so he hid the truth from her in the meantime.

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Another week passed.

Laney had begun to use the tree in the garden as a makeshift dummy for her to practice fighting. Every day, there would be a new batch of fallen leaves by the base of the tree.

"I'll ask my assistant to get you a new sandbag. The poor tree never did anything wrong to you." Looking at the balding tree, Garrett sighed.

Today, Laney was in a bad mood, so she said nothing and just nodded gloomily.

She was getting bored and restless. She wasn't used to living such a boring life. "I think those thugs are gone. I plan to leave tomorrow."

"But they're lurking all over the city. It's not safe out there, Laney. Just stay with me," Garrett hurriedly said.

Laney was getting really bored here. She hadn't fought with anyone for a long time and she felt she was getting rusty at it.

She pounded the tree with her fist and muttered, "Fine. Two more days."

Sure enough, two days later, Laney couldn't stand it anymore. She packed up her things and was about to leave.

"I'm going to lose my mind if I continue to stay here. I've never been so bored in my life. I'm going to fight those guys! At least it's more exciting than being locked up here."

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“Wait, don’t leave yet—” Garrett reached for her hand and tried to stop her.

Laney shook off his hand and shouted, “Get away from me!”

Before Garrett could respond, she ran out the door with her luggage. “If they want me, then they’ll have to come and get me!”

Garrett rubbed his temples. He knew he couldn’t stop her.

Laney went straight to the Pole Shadow.

The people there hadn’t seen her in weeks, so they all thought that something bad had happened to her. After all, the news that the Burke family wanted her dead had spread some time ago.

“Laney, I think you should leave the country and go into hiding for a while,” someone suggested, their voice riddled with worry.

But Laney didn’t want to run away. She had been staying with Garrett for nearly half a month and was bored out of her wits. “It’s okay. I’ll stay vigilant. I’ll kill whoever tries to kill me.”

Seeing that Laney looked so confident, no one tried to talk her into running away anymore. They all knew she had it in her.

Laney stayed with the organization for a few days. During this period, she did whatever she’d normally do, but no one tried to hurt her.

She was confused. Did the Burkes just let her go?

That wasn’t like them...

Seeing that things had gone eerily quiet, Laney began to look for a place to stay near the Pole Shadow.

Coincidentally, she saw one of the hit men when she visited a housing rental agency. It was their leader, the tattooed man.

He was chewing gum with his hands in his trouser pockets. He seemed to be wandering the street aimlessly. When he saw that Laney was staring straight at him, he stopped and greeted her casually, “Oh, hey.”

Laney’s eyes went as wide as saucers.

The strong tattooed man shrugged and walked past her, showing no intention of attacking her.

“Aren’t you on a mission?” Laney followed him and asked curiously. “Don’t you need to kill me?”

The strong man raised his eyebrows and looked at her in confusion. “It’s been a long time since that mission was called off. Your boyfriend talked to the Burke family himself and asked them to let you go, so they did. Didn’t you know that?”

“My boyfriend?” Laney was stunned.

She paused for a while to put the pieces together. When it all clicked, she was very angry. She dropped whatever she was doing and went straight to Garrett's place.

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Garrett was munching on some chips when someone started banging on the door.

He dragged himself out of the sofa and went to open the door. "Who is it? It's so early—" But before he could finish his words, Laney grabbed him by the collar and threw him into the living room.

Although she was short, she was strong. Laney pulled him up and pinned him down on the sofa. "Garrett Harding, how dare you lie to me?!"

"I'm sorry," Garrett said in a low voice. He knew that she must've found out the truth. He didn't put up a fight and just looked up at her sincerely.

He then lowered his eyes and muttered, "I lied because I really enjoyed your company and wanted you to stay here longer..."

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Garrett was still in his pajamas. His hair was a little disheveled, which made him look like a pitiful child. Without his glasses, Laney could see the nuances in his bright brown eyes.

Laney suddenly felt bad. She loosened her grip on his collar and pulled away slightly. As she looked at his pitiful face, she found herself at a loss for words, and her anger gradually dissipated.

Somehow, she even blushed! Realizing that, she turned her face away to hide it. "Forget it. I'll let you go this time."

After saying that, she turned around and hurried out, ignoring Garrett's stunned expression.

After walking out of the villa, she took a long, deep breath.

What was she thinking just now? Why did she suddenly blush?

Laney buried her flushed face in her palms and kept walking, although she didn't know where she was headed.

She pushed her feelings to the back of her mind, refusing to fall into his trap.

Laney had long suspected that Garrett liked her.

At the beginning, she had had a bad impression of him. But after getting along with him for such a long time, she had gradually changed her disposition towards him.

But she didn't believe that she could be with someone like him. They were worlds apart and didn't stand a chance of being together.

Besides, Garrett was never short of girlfriends. He might've never met someone as fierce and challenging as Laney, which was probably why he was so infatuated with her now.

Laney sighed heavily. She regretted not making things clear to Garrett just now.

Next time she saw him, she would draw the line.

She then headed back to the Pole Shadow in low spirits. Recently, a lot of new faces had joined the organization, and she was tasked with developing a training plan for each of them. She soon buried herself in the work and left her worries behind.

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In the W Marks Studio, the staff were running around like headless chickens—as usual.

The fashion world was constantly changing, so a studio like the W Marks was busy all year round.

At present, Draco had only two assistants, both of whom were buried neck deep in work.

Janet was so busy that she always went to work early and returned home very late. She had been working non-stop, taking few breaks at a time just to eat and sleep. Sometimes, she'd even do an all-nighter in the studio.

One night, she had fallen asleep at her desk when her phone started to ring.

With her eyes closed, she fumbled around blindly until she found her phone beside the keyboard.

She put the phone near her ear and answered tiredly, “Hello, who’s this?”

“Where are you, Janet? You haven’t come home yet.” Ethan’s calm and serious voice came from the other end of the line.

Only then did Janet sit bolt upright in shock. She rubbed her eyes and said apologetically, “I’m sorry, honey. I worked until two o’clock in the morning, so I decided to sleep here.”

“It’s a Saturday.” Ethan sighed heavily.

“Have you forgotten about our appointment?”

If it were in the past, Ethan wouldn’t have cared too much. Janet had always been a workaholic, and he had always been supportive of her work. However, recently, she had been working non-stop, leaving no time for him and herself.

“I still have some work to do. Can I go see you when I’m done?” Janet eyed the unfinished design drafts on her desk warily.

“I’ve made a dinner reservation already. It’ll be up to you whether you make it or not, but I’ll wait until you show up.” Ethan’s underlying message was clear—that she should take a break from work and have dinner with him.

## [Chapter 560](#)

Later that evening, Janet went to the Michelin-starred restaurant Ethan had booked.

Wearing just a simple T-shirt and jeans, Janet stood out like a sore thumb in the fancy restaurant.

Sitting opposite her was a calm man with a cold temperament. He propped his chin on his palm and watched helplessly as the woman tinkered with her iPad.

“Is your work really that urgent?” Seeing the dark circles under Janet’s eyes, Ethan felt tired for her.

It had been half an hour since Janet sat down. She had been on her iPad that whole time, tirelessly working on her design drafts.

Janet broke off a piece of a cookie and popped it into her mouth. “We just received two big orders. Plus, we’re launching another line this coming fashion week. Everyone’s been so busy lately. In fact, Elizabeth’s still in the office.”

Ethan frowned slightly and plucked the iPad from her hands. “Can you take a look at me for one second? You can continue working after dinner. I won’t take up too much of your time, I promise.”

With the iPad taken away from her, Janet looked at him sheepishly. “Sorry, honey. I’ve just been so busy at work lately. When my schedule frees up, how about we go on a trip?”

“So you’re aware that you’ve been neglecting me?” Ethan grumbled. Realizing he was whining like a child, he coughed in embarrassment and cut the steak for Janet. “Let’s eat first.”

Janet put on a charming smile and ate the steak that Ethan had cut into bite-size pieces for her. As she chewed, she looked around the restaurant, deep in thought. “This restaurant’s design is pretty simple but elegant. The color scheme will look good on clothes, I think.”

“Why’s your mind still on work?” Ethan felt both helpless and amused. “Please pay attention to your husband, whom you’ve neglected for so many days.”

From under the table, Janet gently touched Ethan’s thigh and smiled innocently. “But I’ve never neglected you in bed.”

With his chin resting on his palm, Ethan’s eyebrows shot up.

The more he got to know Janet, the more he felt that she was two different people in and out of bed.

Her eyes sparkling, Janet continued, “It’s really inspiring to work with Draco. He makes me enjoy being a workaholic. And when you’re doing something you’re passionate about, you’ll really forget everything else.”

“Good evening. It’s a special night for couples. Tonight, we’re giving out complimentary drinks to the couples dining here. Please enjoy.” Just then, a waiter approached with two glasses of drinks and some dessert.

Staring at Ethan’s glass, Janet commented, “Your drink is prettier than mine. Yours looks glittery somehow.”

“Then let’s exchange,” Ethan suggested with a smile.

He handed Janet his glass, and the latter marveled at it for a long time. The color of this glass of drink was like a mix of blue and purple, like the Milky Way galaxy, shining and beautiful.

She took a sip and her eyes widened in surprise. “It’s delicious! Would you like to have a taste?”

Looking at the colorful girly drink, Ethan wasn’t interested at all. He proceeded to eat his steak and said, “I can’t drink. I have to drive later.”

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After dinner, Janet went back to the studio to continue working.

The deadline was fast approaching. She had been working tirelessly for a few more days.

One night, Elizabeth showed the rest of her design drawings to Janet. After a while, she frowned and said, "You don't look well, Janet. Do you want to take a break?"

"Just a little sleepy. I'll have another cup of coffee later and I'm sure I'll be fine." Janet shook her head and smiled. "Anyway, are these drawings done? I'll go through them later."

Seeing that Janet was completely immersed in work, Elizabeth didn't say anything more. Anyway, after tonight, they would finally have some days off.

She set down the drawings and turned to leave.

Suddenly, she heard a loud thud from behind her.

Elizabeth immediately turned around and found that Janet had passed out and fallen to the ground.