

The Mbahsb 71

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 71

The following Monday, Janet showed up at the office with dark circles under her eyes.

"Did you spend the weekend in prison? You look terrible," Gerda commented as she pulled out her chair and sat down, munching on a hot dog.

"The cooperation project I'm handling is moving so fast. I needed to work overtime for two consecutive days," Janet drawled and yawned. She was so tired that she felt she would doze off the next second.

"Were you able to finish?"

Leaning on her table, Janet nodded weakly. "It was finished this morning!"

As the two chatted idly, Tiffany's voice rang out from behind them. "Lind, please see me in my office."

In a daze, Janet raised her head. Gerda shot her a sympathetic look then stuck out her tongue like a little child. "Sounds like you'll need to revise your drawings. Good luck!"

Barely holding herself together, Janet trudged into Tiffany's office.

"You look exhausted. I never thought anyone else here would work harder than me." Tiffany sipped at her coffee pensively, looking Janet up and down almost sympathetically. Then, she spread out the design drawings on her desk and said, "The Color Company has sent these to the factory already. There's no need for you to make any modifications. They're very satisfied with your work. That's all I wanted to say. You can go back now and take things easy."

Janet looked at Tiffany warily and asked slowly, "Is there anything else you wanted to say, Ms. Fisher?"

She found it hard to believe that Tiffany just called her in to praise her.

"No. Go back to your desk and take a nap, will you? I'll pretend that I don't see you slacking off." The corners of Tiffany's red lips lifted, revealing a warm smile.

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"No. Go back to your desk and take a nap, will you? I'll pretend that I don't see you sneaking off." The corners of Tiffeny's red lips lifted, revealing a warm smile.

Then, having dismissed Janet, she fixed her eyes on the design drawings before her.

After lunch, a notification popped up on Janet's computer.

It was Brandon. "I heard that you did a good job."

Janet read and reread his message, feeling flattered. There were thousands of employees in the Larson Group, and she was just a newbie. How could the news about her work have reached Brandon's ears so soon?

Janet cautiously replied, "I was just doing my job, Mr. Larson. I'll do my best to keep contributing to the company."

Actually, new designers weren't usually get well-paid. Only Janet herself knew that if she didn't enjoy this job, she would've long quit.

To her surprise, Brandon then said, "We monitor every employee's output. Given your progress, I'm going to give you a raise."

"Really?"

Thrilled beyond belief, Janet lost control of herself and nearly shrieked with excitement.

She had just joined the Larson Group. A raise was the least of her expectations, but it was very much welcome, as it would help her pay for Hannah's medical fees.

Sitting in his brightly-lit office, the man watched the surveillance video from his computer screen, staring at the woman who was snickering at her desk. He couldn't help but chuckle.

"Have you been working overtime in the past two days?" he asked.

Janet looked around the office secretly, wondering if the CEO was watching her.

But then she soon realized that the CEO probably had access to the attendance of all the employees.

However, it was still surprising that he would pay special attention to her, an insignificant employee, let alone a newbie.

Janet shrugged off any feeling of uneasiness and cheered up at the thought of her raise.

She answered, "Yes. I had to work overtime because I needed to finish my design for our client as soon as possible."

After she sent this message, confusion began to creep on her.

There were thousands of employees in the Larson Group. Why did the CEO personally tell a newcomer that her salary was to be raised? Wasn't that the HR's job?

In that moment, Brandon seemed to read her mind.

"It's not yet time for annual evaluation for raises and promotions. Your raise is my special reward for you, which is why I'm the one who's telling you about it."

Janet heaved a sigh of relief and replied, "Thank you, Mr. Larson. I will work harder in the future!"

Then she sent a smiling emoji of good will.

This was her first job. She was so lucky!

And the Larson Group was a huge company, too. Perhaps the boss was willing to shell out a tiny sum in an effort to retain the talented employees.

Without thinking too much, Janet proceeded to focus on her work.

When it was time to get off work, Janet was about to turn her laptop off when Brandon sent her another message.

"Don't work overtime today. You have to get proper rest."

Janet's body went stiff.

After what had happened with Garrett, she didn't dare to even consider the idea that Brandon was interested in her. After all, a mysterious big shot like Brandon was different from the playboy, Garrett. It was impossible for him to take a fancy to her.

So she decided that perhaps he was just a really considerate boss...

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 72

When Janet came home, she found the apartment empty. Hours ticked by, yet there was still no sign of Ethan.

Finally, at eleven o'clock, Janet heard the sound the door unlocking. She walked to the door subconsciously.

When the door swung open, she met Ethan's gaze.

The man looked exhausted. He put away the key and said curiously, "I thought you were exhausted from working overtime. Why aren't you in bed yet?"

"I got to take things easy today. Anyway, I cooked fish with sweet and sour sauce. Have you had dinner?" She should have been bed by now. For some unknown reason though, Janet had decided to wait for him tonight. After a moment's silence, she asked hesitantly, "Why are you so late tonight?"

She had been working overtime the past few days, so she was out of the apartment early and came back late at night. She hadn't seen Ethan in almost three days.

"Fish with sweet and sour sauce? Sounds great. I haven't had dinner yet." Ethan shrugged off his coat and tossed it on the sofa. He picked up the remote control on the table and turned on the TV. The sound of a football match droned on. "The convenience store was restocked today," he murmured absentmindedly. "I had to help move things."

"Oh," said Janet. Shrugging it off, she walked to the kitchen to prepare the food.

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Hearing the sounds of dishes clinking, Ethan followed her to the kitchen and leaned against the door frame. "How's work?"

Janet looked up at him, her eyes lighting up excitedly. "I was just about to tell you. Mr. Larson himself told me that he's going to give me a raise. He thinks I'm a promising designer. Maybe I'll be rich in the future!"

Ethan surveyed the excitement on her face and asked slowly, "What do you think of Mr. Larson?"

As she stuffed the fish into the microwave oven, Janet smiled softly. "I think he's nice and approachable. He cares about his employees. He even told me that I can tell him if I had any problem. Truth be told, I never thought that the CEO of the Larson Group would turn out to be so nice. What was most important was that he wasn't as arrogant as I thought. He doesn't put on any airs and he appreciates talent. No wonder the Larson Group is so successful. With such a boss, I think I'll be willing to work for the Larson Group forever."

At first, Ethan was pleased to hear her praise Brandon so much, but the more he listened, feelings of jealousy stirred in his heart.

Even though he was Brandon himself, hearing Janet praise someone she thought was another man made him a little unhappy.

She had never praised Ethan like this. Didn't she have a good impression of him as Ethan?

Odd as it may sound, he began to be jealous of himself...

Forcing a smile, Ethan strode over to Janet and asked sourly, "You haven't even seen this Brandon Larson guy. Why do you speak so highly of him? He has never shown his face to the public. Maybe he's super ugly."

Janet stuck out her lower lip in a pout. She looked up at the man and tried to defend the boss who had just given her a raise. "Don't be so judgmental. After all, a person's quality doesn't depend on their appearance. Besides, when I first went to the Larson Group, I saw a man take the exclusive elevator to the top floor. Later I knew that it was the exclusive elevator for the CEO. So the man I saw was Mr. Larson. His back alone was good-looking, so I doubt he's ugly."

Amidst the tense atmosphere, the plate of fish continued to be heated in the microwave oven.

Ethan snickered and looked down at the woman's parted lips.

Unafraid, Janet looked back at him defiantly. "Well? What do you have to say to that?"

Instead of arguing with her, the man slipped his arms around her waist and pecked her on the corner of her lips. "Tsk, I'm just a little unhappy. I'm your husband. I can't just stand still and listen to you praise another man like that!"

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"You're just impossible. How can you get jealous so easily?" Suddenly, Janet's face turned hot. She lowered her gaze, unable to look at Ethan anymore. She tried to push him away and pleaded, "Step back. You're too close."

She was trapped, being pressed in between Ethan's large body and the kitchen sink behind her.

Her flustered face made him want to have her even more.

"I have a question." Ethan's deep voice came from above her head, his breath rustling her hair slightly.

Clenching his fist, the man cleared his throat and asked in a gruff voice, "Well, between Brandon and me, who has the better figure?"

As soon as those words left his lips, Ethan felt incredibly embarrassed.

He knew it was a stupid question, but he just wanted to hear Janet praise him to his face.

Standing there and thinking for a long time, Janet stole a glance at Ethan from the corner of her eyes.

For a second, it seemed that his broad figure matched that of the man in the elevator.

"Actually, you have similar builds."

Ethan frowned. With pursed lips, he muttered, "We can't be exactly the same."

"I didn't get a good look at him. How could I tell who has the better figure?" Janet asked defensively. His question was too... difficult.

Finally, the microwave oven beeped and the smell of sweet and sour sauce wafted to their noses.

"Okay. The fish is ready." Dropping her gaze again, Janet tried to push Ethan away again.

But Ethan took this as an opportunity to grab her hand. His eyes flashing seriously, he said, "It's not hard. Touch my body and you'll be able to tell who has the better body."

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Her flushed face made him want to have her even more.

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Without waiting for a response, he shoved her hand under his T-shirt.

And just like he said, his skin was firm, with distinctly toned muscles bulging out.

Janet's eyes went as wide as saucers. She felt as though she touched fire and instinctively tried to pull her hand back, but Ethan was too strong. He pressed her palm forcefully against his abdomen. There was nothing she could do but feel his defined muscles.

If her hand moved any lower, he would have needed to unbuckle his belt.

She shut her eyes tight and her whole body went stiff. Her other hand flew to her face and she quickly turned her face away from him. But it was too late. Ethan could see how red her face was.

"Okay, okay. You have a better figure, even better than those models in the magazines. You're also tall and handsome. There. Happy now?"

Janet knew that if she didn't praise Ethan, he would never let her go.

Sure enough, Ethan finally let go of her hand. His dark eyes clouded over but Janet couldn't read his expression. He raised his hand and touched her cheek gently. "Why is your face so red? I'm your husband."

"No, I..." Janet gnawed her lower lip, at a loss for words. Before she could say anything, Ethan had scooped her up and onto the kitchen counter.

Surprised, she looked up at the man's beautiful and deep eyes.

Before she could react, Ethan had already leaned forward and pressed his lips against hers.

His passionate kiss overwhelmed her. She had nowhere to go and nothing to do but part her lips slightly and let him kiss her fiercely.

This wasn't the first time they kissed, but she still wasn't used to it.

Ethan's kiss was too intense, conveying a passion that seemed to want to devour her.

What felt like an eternity passed before he finally pulled away.

He nearly lost control of himself. Fortunately, he had come to his senses before then. Still, he continued to peck on her neck gently.

His palms still rested on her waist, but he didn't go any further.

"I'm going to bed," Janet whispered hoarsely. She twisted her head in an effort to avoid his advances. Her eyes had clouded over in a daze, but her lips were red and swollen.

Ethan rested his forehead against her shoulder to calm himself down. "You just got a raise. Shouldn't we be celebrating?"

Janet stared at him blankly. Finally, when she came to her senses, she remembered that Ethan had given her two rings, but she hadn't given him anything in return yet.

"Okay. What do you want to do?"

Ethan pressed his lips against her bare neck then finally pulled away. With a gentle smile, he winked and said, "Figure it out yourself. I know you're tired. Go to bed."

Then he turned around and went back to his room to get changed.

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The next day, after work, Janet went to a shopping mall nearby.

It was on the most bustling commercial street in the city. Some kind of a fun activity was going on in the shopping mall. Many children were performing on the stage as people cheered and clapped for them.

When Janet entered the mall, she was almost knocked down by the crowd. Suddenly, a strong hand gripped her arm and pulled her back.

Janet turned around and saw Christopher smiling at her. He was wearing a denim blue shirt and matching jeans. "Be careful. Otherwise, they might drag you to the stage to perform."

"Thank you, Chris." Janet smiled sheepishly as she smoothed her bangs. "Why are you here?"

"I went to the grocery store nearby and bought some daily necessities." Christopher lifted his bags and waved them at her. "What about you?" he asked, arching an eyebrow.

"Well, I came to pick up a gift for my husband." Janet looked away as a blush flamed her cheeks.

The smile on Christopher's face vanished in an instant. His heart sank with dejection. He quickly forced a smile, trying to look normal. "Why didn't you bring your husband with you? Do you need my advice?"

Christopher seldom got the chance to be with Janet alone. Therefore, he wanted to stay with her, even though it meant he had to help her pick a gift for her husband.

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Afraid that Ethan might not like her choice of gift, Janet thought it might be a good idea to get a man's opinion. After a moment's thought, she nodded. "Okay. Thank you, Chris."

The two strolled into an opulent leather product store.

Glancing around, Christopher picked up a reddish-brown leather wallet and handed it to Janet. "The wallets here are good. What do you think?"

"Yes, I love the color." Janet's eyes lit up. "You have good taste, Chris."

Christopher smiled bitterly.

The two of them were busy examining the wallet, so they didn't see Elaine staring at them through the glass door.

Elaine had just come out of a clothing store opposite the leather shop. The blood on her face drained when she saw Janet and Christopher interacting with such intimacy.

'Are they together?' she wondered.

Elaine couldn't find a satisfactory job after she got fired from the Larson Group. She had no choice but to work for a small company to make ends meet.

Her pathetic life only made her hate Janet even more. She felt the woman had ruined her bright future.

Bile rose in her throat when she saw Janet and Christopher shopping happily in the mall.

She felt that Janet was a slut, who must have seduced Christopher after joining the Larson Group.

Just as Janet and Christopher were busy choosing the right wallet, they heard Elaine's voice. "Hi! What a surprise to run into you two here!"

After a short pause, Janet forced a smile. "Elaine! Long time no see."

It was a small world, after all.

Since Christopher was not familiar with Elaine, he greeted her with a polite 'Hello'.

"Would you like to have dinner with me? We three haven't seen each other for a long time. After all, we used to be schoolmates. And Lind, I want to apologize for what happened before. I misunderstood you."

Elaine shook her head sadly and looked around as if she had no intention of leaving.

"No, I'm going home for dinner." Janet smiled politely.

She was aware of Elaine's hypocrisy.

Moreover, her relationship with Elaine wasn't good enough to have dinner with her.

Christopher didn't bother beating around the bush, so he bluntly said, "Elaine, I don't think we are close enough to have dinner together."

Elaine's face flushed with embarrassment. She remained silent.

With that, Janet and Christopher put down the wallets, intending to leave.

However, as soon as Janet arrived at the door, the anti-theft sensor on the door instantly turned red and began to beep aloud, startling everyone.

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"Miss, please wait!" The store manager ran over and blocked Janet's way.

Everyone in the store also turned to look at her curiously.

"Is she a thief?"

"She doesn't look like one..."

Janet frowned slightly and was even more confused.

She hadn't taken anything and had walked past the door twice. "Why is the alarm going off? Is it broken?"

"Miss, have you taken anything that you haven't paid for?" The manager smiled politely.

Janet tilted her head to the side and replied calmly, "No."

But the alarm kept ringing incessantly.

With an embarrassed look, the manager leaned closer and whispered, "Miss, please tell us the truth, or we will have no choice but to frisk you."

Just then, Elaine sauntered over.

"Hey, what's that in your pocket?" Pretending to be shocked, Elaine pointed at the pocket of Janet's coat.

Janet frowned and fished her hand into her pocket. Sure enough, there was something inside. To her surprise, she pulled out a wallet.

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With a puzzled look, Elaine pointed at an empty spot on the shelf and said to the manager, "Look over there. Are you missing a wallet?"

The manager looked at the wallet in Janet's hand. His eyes instantly darkened and he said with disdain, "Yes, this is the most expensive wallet in our store."

Hearing this, Elaine feigned shock and her hand flew to cover her mouth. "I always thought those things they said about you were just rumors back then. It turns out that our classmates were right all along. Why do you still misbehave? You've even resorted to stealing!"

Janet looked back at her, bewildered. She had no idea how the wallet had ended up in her pocket.

She slapped the wallet onto the counter and said firmly, "I didn't take this. I've never stolen anything in my life. You stop trying to ruin my reputation. If you don't believe me, check the store's security camera footage."

"Yes, check the footage. My friend's always been a decent, upright person. She would never do such a thing." Christopher stood by Janet firmly.

Irritated, Elaine crossed her arms over her chest. "Christopher, haven't you heard what people have said about her back in college? She's not as decent as you think."

"Elaine, unlike you, I don't fall for whatever other people say so easily." Christopher's usually gentle eyes turned fierce in that moment.

"Then check the security camera footage!" Elaine snorted and said nothing more.

The best way to have this matter cleared was to check the security cameras.

And so the manager scurried off to check the footage, as asked. In the video, Janet and Christopher were standing next to the shelf with the wallet. Unfortunately, Elaine's body blocked Janet's, including her arms. So it was impossible to see whether Janet had taken the wallet or not.

Elaine smiled smugly. She sneered, "Just admit it already. Did you steal the wallet?"

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Janet frowned deeply. "The footage can't prove that I stole the wallet. Why are you so hell-bent on slandering me? Perhaps it was you who took the wallet and slipped it into my pocket to frame me."

Elaine's nostrils flared and her eyes went wide. To cover up her ploy, she raised her voice and pointed a finger at Janet. "Don't you dare accuse me! The wallet was found in your pocket, so obviously, you were the one who stole it!"

"Elaine, how many times do we have to say that the footage doesn't show that it was Janet who stole it? Stop framing her." Christopher looked at her coldly and added, "I know she didn't steal the wallet."

Elaine had wanted to paint Janet as a thief so that Christopher would dislike her. But now that Christopher was even protecting Janet, Elaine was utterly enraged.

"Christopher, just how well do you know Janet? Maybe she's not the good girl you make her out to be. There were a lot of rumors about her back in college. Her classmates wouldn't make up stories for no reason. Plus, now she's trying to put the blame on me. You heard it yourself!" Elaine's voice was shrill, which made her sound as though she really believed what she was saying.

Clenching her fists, Janet said through gritted teeth, "You were the one who started all those rumors. Years have passed and we're supposed to be more mature now. Haven't you grown up yet?" Janet frowned deeply. "The footage can't prove that I stole the wallet. Why are you so hell-bent on slandering me? Perhaps it was you who took the wallet and slipped it into my pocket to frame me."

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At the time, Janet had ignored what Elaine did because they were about to graduate. There was no use getting worked up over such a trivial thing.

"How dare you accuse me of starting those rumors? Do you have any proof?"

Elaine couldn't help but snicker at Janet's stupidity. They had graduated years ago. Even if Elaine indeed was the one who spread the rumors, Janet had no evidence.

Moreover, the video didn't show that Elaine deliberately framed Janet.

All the bystanders in the store watched this scene unfold with great interest. Since the wallet was found in Janet's pocket, surely she was the prime suspect.

"But she's so pretty. I'd never have thought she was a thief!"

"You know what they say: you can't judge a book by its cover."

Hearing their whispers, Christopher raised his head and cleared his throat loudly. "The matter hasn't been investigated thoroughly. Don't draw conclusions just yet."

The manager couldn't just let Janet go after what happened. "Miss, store policy dictates that you have to pay ten times the price of what you stole. The wallet was found in your pocket. You must pay us back, or we'll call the police."

Janet looked at him, speechless.

Hesitating, she clutched her bag so tightly until her knuckles turned white. Suddenly, she saw something at the corridor outside the store.

Turning around, she sneered smugly. "Okay. Call the police."

Elaine's eyes widened as she couldn't believe her luck. Snickering, she said arrogantly, "It sounds like you don't have the money to pay for it. That's probably why you resorted to stealing, you poor thing."

Elaine nearly jumped with joy. If Janet was sent to jail for shoplifting, her career would be ruined.

Elaine's words undoubtedly smeared Janet's name even further.

"I'm asking the manager to call the police precisely because I didn't steal the wallet! Why do I have to pay ten times the item's price? I'll wait for the police to deal with this matter." Janet's voice was clear, confident, and had no trace of fear.

But Elaine was unfazed. She firmly believed that Janet would be put behind bars. Seeing Janet act as stubborn as a mule, she couldn't help but sneer with satisfaction.

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Realizing that this matter was about to get out of hand, Christopher decided to put an end to this.

He pulled Janet aside and said in a low voice, "How about this? I'll pay for it. The Larson Group values its reputation. If they find out about this, you'll probably be fired. Besides, the wallet was found in your pocket. If they really call the police, you might really end up in jail."

"Chris, I didn't take the wallet. If I agree to pay ten times its price, it'll just prove that I'm guilty, right?" Janet spoke calmly. There wasn't a trace of panic in her voice.

Elaine eavesdropped from the sidelines. She thought that Janet was just too proud to accept Christopher's money. But it was futile. Did she think that the police could prove her innocence?

Anyway, the wallet was found in Janet's pocket, and what had really happened wasn't caught on the store's security camera. That meant that Janet, by default, was the thief.

Unable to contain her excitement, Elaine urged the shop manager to call the police already. "The thief can't pay you. You're wasting your time if you don't call the police right now."

The shop manager agreed and called the police. It didn't take long before two men in uniform strolled into the shop.

Realizing that this matter was about to get out of hand, Christopher decided to put an end to this.

He pulled Janet aside and said in a low voice, "How about this? I'll pay for it. The Larson Group values its reputation. If they find out about this, you'll probably be fired. Besides, the wallet was found in your pocket. If they really call the police, you might really end up in jail."

"Chris, I didn't take the wallet. If I agree to pay ten times its price, it'll just prove that I'm guilty, right?" Janet spoke calmly. There wasn't a trace of panic in her voice.

Elaine eavesdropped from the sidelines. She thought that Janet was just too proud to accept Christopher's money. But it was futile. Did she think that the police could prove her innocence?

Anyway, the wallet was found in Janet's pocket, and what had really happened wasn't caught on the store's security camera. That meant that Janet, by default, was the thief.

Unable to contain her excitement, Elaine urged the shop manager to call the police already. "The thief can't pay you. You're wasting your time if you don't call the police right now."

The shop manager agreed and called the police. It didn't take long before two men in uniform strolled into the shop.

When the police arrived, Elaine immediately ran up to them, dragging Janet behind her. "Sir, it's her who stole from this store, but she still doesn't want to admit it."

"Please hold on. I want you to check the security camera footage. I have evidence to prove that I didn't steal the wallet, but was framed," Janet said with a confident smile.

Elaine narrowed her eyes at her, sniggering as though she had heard a dirty joke. "What tricks are you playing? Didn't we just check the store's security footage?"

"I'm not talking about this shop's security camera. I'm talking about the security cameras in the shopping mall's corridor." Suddenly, Janet turned around and pointed to the security cameras in the corridor right outside the shop.

In order to attract more customers, the shop's storefront was made of glass, so the security cameras in the corridor could easily capture what went on inside the store through the glass walls.

"Please check the mall's security cameras. The footage from that angle should be able to prove that I didn't steal anything," Janet said calmly, a small smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

"Don't listen to her! She's probably just stalling for time and plans to run away when you're not looking!" Hearing Janet's calm explanation, Elaine was the one who was filled with panic. All the color drained from her face as she urgently tried to convince the policemen.

After all, she was the one who slipped the wallet into Janet's pocket, taking advantage of the blind spot of the store's security camera. But she didn't take into consideration the mall's security cameras. If what she had done was really captured on video, she would be doomed.

"Elaine, I'm just asking the police to check the mall security cameras. Why are you so scared?" Janet looked at her with fake empathy, although her eyes flashed dangerously.

Flustered, Elaine forced herself to keep calm. "If the thief isn't scared, why should I be?"

As requested, the police immediately checked the mall's security footage.

Everyone held their breath and peered at the computer screen, wondering what tricks Janet would play. After all, the wallet had been found in her pocket.

While the footage was a little pixelated, it was still very clear that Elaine had stood next to Janet and, under the cover of her body, secretly took the wallet from the shelf and slipped it into Janet's coat pocket.

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What a twist!

Elaine stared at the computer screen, dumbfounded.

"Elaine, you haven't changed one bit. All you know is to bring trouble for the others." Janet sneered.

"I didn't... No... It's..." Elaine panicked. She finally understood why Janet was stubborn about not agreeing to the compensation but insisted on calling the police.

If no one had called the police, Elaine could have gotten away with the problem by paying the price to the shop manager even if they found out she had flicked the wallet.

However, the arrival of the police worsened the situation. They just couldn't solve the problem in private anymore.

Christopher shook his head in disappointment. He didn't expect Elaine to be shameless enough to do such a cheap thing. "Elaine, was it you who did that?"

The unmistakable evidence proved Elaine was the culprit.

Elaine couldn't get away with the crime no matter how hard she tried. She lowered her head in shame, for she couldn't come up with an excuse. "I... I didn't do it on purpose," she tried explaining.

However, Janet knew she was lying. Elaine was bluffing now to escape from the problem.

Janet looked away from Elaine. After all, the woman was a hopeless liar.

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The police quickly stopped Elaine. "You are suspected of theft and false accusation. Come with us, please."

Elaine stepped back and tried defending herself. "No, I won't come with you. I can compensate by paying ten times the price of the wallet. Please don't take me away."

"You are the suspect of this crime. There is no point in compensating now. This is a police case now, and the people who have filed a complaint do not intend to let you go," a policeman said mercilessly.

Hearing this, Elaine grabbed Janet's hand and pleaded, "Janet, can you let go of me this time? Please show mercy. I know I made a mistake. I will never hurt you again. I promise."

"You tried ruining my reputation last time in the Larson Group, and tried framing me for theft now. What makes you think I'll let go of you?" Janet asked calmly.

If she didn't teach Elaine a lesson, the woman would continue to bother her.

"Sir, you can handle the case according to the law."

Elaine sneered, fury blazing in her eyes. "Why are you so cruel? It's all because of you! I won't let you go!"

Her words dripped with malice. Janet shrugged indifferently.

"I have never intended to harm you in any way. But you have been making things difficult for me time and again right from college. Elaine, it's time for you to introspect and realize what all you have done. Don't even think of bothering me again. Otherwise, you'll have to face the consequences. It will be worse than this."

Janet scoffed at Elaine and stormed out of the shop with her bag.

Christopher followed her out, guiltily lowering his eyes.

"I'm sorry. It's all my fault. I remember Elaine confessing her love for me before. Has she been troubling you because of that?"

The setting sun cast a soft glow on Janet. She shook her head and sighed. "Don't beat yourself about it, Chris. Elaine is a crazy woman. Besides, you already rejected her proposal in college. It's not your fault."

"Well, do you want me to continue helping you with the gift?" Christopher asked hesitantly.

Janet checked the time on her phone: it was almost seven in the evening. "Forget it." She waved her hands dismissively. "You better go home. I'll look around."

Before Christopher could respond, Janet hurriedly sprinted off.

The Mysterious Billionaire and His Substitute Bride Chapter 79

At nine in the evening, Janet finally returned home with a shopping bag.

She had gone to several men's clothing shops, hoping to find the perfect outfit for Ethan.

Unfortunately, she didn't know his size. Therefore, she ended up buying a belt for him.

Ethan put away the documents on the table and looked at Janet. A frown lined his forehead as he realized she looked exhausted. "What happened? Why are you so late?"

He opened the refrigerator and took a bottle of soda.

"Well, I got caught up with something." Janet put the bag on the table and slumped on the sofa. "I'm thirsty. Grab me a bottle."

After a moment's thought, Ethan frowned and pressed the soda bottle against her cheek. Then, he sat beside her. "No. Are you on your period?"

"Ethan! How... how did you know that?" Janet involuntarily cupped her mouth with her palms and looked at him with wide eyes. She was both embarrassed and shocked.

It looked like the boundaries between them was getting thinner with every passing day.

Ethan slung his arm around her shoulder and raised his chin toward the bathroom. "You're very forgetful. You left the box of sanitary pads on the washbasin this morning. I've put them in the cabinet for you."

Janet didn't know what to say. Ethan tucked a loose strand of her hair behind her ear and smiled. "Did someone taunt you? You came home looking upset."

Janet sighed and told him everything about what Elaine had done at the shopping mall.

"Why didn't you call me? I would have taught her a lesson for bullying you." Ethan's face darkened. He leaned closer and pinched her cheek.

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Janet slapped Ethan's hand away and nestled closer to him. "I could handle it myself!" she said, blinking at him. "Besides, there were surveillance cameras everywhere."

Ethan arched an eyebrow in reprimand. "Well, thankfully, there were surveillance cameras this time. What if there wasn't any way to prove your innocence?"

Janet pursed her lips and played with her fingers.

"I didn't think about it. Even otherwise, I don't think you'd be able to prove my innocence. It would have only been unnecessary trouble for you."

Ethan looked at her as a small smile tugged at the corners of his lips. "What makes you think I wouldn't have been able to help you?"

Dealing with such a problem was a piece of cake for Ethan. He could buy the entire shopping mall with the snap of a finger.

Every shop in the mall would belong to him, and his wife could just take anything she liked.

"By the way, I bought you a gift." Janet pointed at the bag on the table.

"Miss Lind, you've acted fast. I'm impressed." Ethan's face beamed with joy. He had only casually mentioned it in their conversation last night.

Ethan picked up the bag on the table and opened it. Inside was a pure black leather belt. Although it looked stylish, the texture and quality were average. Ethan knew that was all Janet could get for her budget.

In his unoccupied villa, there were hundreds of belts with excellent workmanship that was a thousand times better than this one. However, Ethan loved this belt more than anything else.

"It looks good." Ethan's smile broadened, and his eyes twinkled with delight. He leaned forward and kissed the top of her head. His heart melted into a puddle at the sweetness of her gesture.

He happily clutched the belt.

Janet smoothed her bangs and smiled.

She had chosen the belt in a hurry. Part of her had been worrying that Ethan might not like it, but she was finally relieved to witness his reaction.

“Don’t try to be brave when you encounter problems like this again. I can always help you. Remember that.” Ethan looked into her eyes. Their faces were inches apart; they could feel each other’s breath.

Janet’s face turned hot when she met his gaze. His hot breath drove her insane. She curled up in his arms as countless thoughts exploded in her mind. She couldn’t comprehend her emotions.

Janet’s mind instantly flitted to the passionate kiss they shared last night.

She quickly withdrew herself from his warm embrace.

“Oh, I... I see. I’m glad you like the gift. Well, it’s getting late. I’m going back to my room.”

Ethan’s brows furrowed as he saw Janet sprint into her room. He didn’t bother chasing after her.

Something seemed wrong. Ethan understood that Janet didn’t think he was capable enough to help her, and that was why she didn’t call him for help.

It looked like he had to get close to Janet as Brandon.

Even if Janet didn’t ask him for help, she could always resort to Brandon’s aid.

The next day, when Janet was engrossed in work, her phone chimed.

It was a private message from Brandon.

“The Larson Group is holding a dinner party next week. I want you to attend it on behalf of the design department.”

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Janet was taken aback.

“No, no, no! I don’t think it’s a good idea,” Janet muttered to herself, staring at the screen.

She was a new employee of the company. How could she attend such a ceremonious occasion?

Janet quickly typed her message. “Mr. Larson, why don’t you ask Ms. Fisher to attend the party? I’ve never been to such opulent parties before. I’m afraid I might end up making a fool of myself and bring disgrace to the design department.”

Brandon quickly replied, “Fisher isn’t available that night. Many big shots and prestigious people in the design field will attend the party. You can get to know them and increase your contacts. It will help your career in the long run.

His words reminded Janet of what Ike had previously done to her. She was afraid that history might repeat itself.

A shiver ran down her spine.

Just as she wondered how to refuse, Brandon sent another message.

“Don’t worry. This is a formal dinner party organized by our company. Garrett and other senior executives will also attend it. Besides, you can bring a date.”

Janet’s eyes widened. She looked around to see if the CEO was watching her through a secret camera. He was talking to her as if he had read her mind.

Janet breathed a sigh of relief after knowing that she could bring someone to accompany her. Janet was taken aback.

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Janet breathed a sigh of relief after knowing that she could bring someone to accompany her.

She could take Ethan with her. That way, she would feel safe and protected.

After work, the HR department sent Janet an invitation to the dinner party. It was an elegant gilded envelope written in a beautiful font.

The invitation revealed the Larson Group’s power and wealth.

When Janet arrived home, she was surprised to find that Ethan was already back.

He walked out of the bathroom in nothing but a towel, water dripping from his hair. His chiseled muscles flexed with every move.

“Ethan, why are you not wearing any clothes?” Janet hurriedly turned her face as a blush flamed her cheeks.

Ethan looked at her and smiled. Then, he picked up the remote and turned on the TV. "I just came home after a run, so I took a shower. I didn't know you'd come back early."

Janet often worked overtime and came home late.

"Put on your clothes. Otherwise, I won't be able to talk to you." She covered her face with one hand whilst fanning herself with the other.

It was a scorching summer day.

Ethan chuckled, shaking his head. Then, he picked up a black shirt from the sofa and put it on. "I'm dressed now. What do you want to say?"

Janet blew out a loud breath and walked to the sofa. She took out the invitation from her bag and sat beside him. "Our company is holding a dinner party next week. Would you be able to join me?" she asked, studying his face.

She would feel safe only if he accompanied her.

Ethan looked at the invitation and nodded. "Sure. Anyway, I'm free that day."

Then, his eyes widened as if he remembered something. "Well, let me just grab my jacket, and I'll take you to buy some clothes."

Janet frowned in confusion. "What clothes are you going to buy?"

Ethan quickly buttoned his shirt. The black shirt clung to his pert muscles and complimented his skin tone. "If we don't buy clothes, what will you wear to the dinner party?" he asked, arching an eyebrow.

"I have many dresses. I can pick something nice from my wardrobe." Janet frowned. "An evening dress is insanely expensive. We don't have to waste money on that."

Ethan rubbed his temples and sighed. "I'll pay for it. You can wear it for other important occasions in the future."

"No, no! You have no idea how expensive they are." Janet shook her head fiercely. "Don't buy me clothes. Otherwise, I won't talk to you."

"Okay, jeez. I won't." Ethan rubbed her hair, amused by her response.