

Wife Mask 351

Chapter: 351

Casting one last disdainful look at Elliana, Lance turned his attention back to Dillen. "Mr. Perez, what kind of person is River beneath the brilliance?"

With no hesitation, Dillen answered, "We didn't speak for long, so I can't pretend to know her well. But' the impression she left was powerful, sharp-minded and serene. She shared a few thoughts that day, and I still carry them with me. It felt like being handed ten years' worth of insights in a single moment."

The weight of his words settled over the group like a hush. Everyone looked thoughtful, moved by the idea of such wisdom.

Lance let out a soft sigh. "If there were even the slimmest chance I could hear River's advice face to face, I'd trade anything I had, all my wealth included."

At that, Elliana gave him a sideways glance and smirked. "Anything? You sure you've even got enough to bargain with?"

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Compared to Dillen and Alonso, Hutton was much more direct. He didn't care for pleasantries. After a brief nod in response to everyone's greetings, he got straight to the point.

Seeing that, Lance didn't waste a second. He led Hutton straight to the computer.

Elliana lifted her head slightly, peeking at Hutton as he focused on the screen.

At this point, night had already fallen.

Elliana's phone buzzed. It was a message from Cole. "Honey, are you still dealing with Lance?"

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Lance sighed, feeling utterly defeated. Gathering his composure, he said earnestly, "Elliana, could you please eat somewhere else? I really don't have the energy or time to bicker right now. If you have issues with me, let's deal with them after working hours, okay? Please?"

Elliana leaned back, a playful smile tugging her lips. "Nah. If I leave now, bet you will need my help later on, and I will have to return despite my reluctance. You know, for the sake of Cole. Might as well sit right here and save the trip."

Lance stood there, dumbfounded by everything she had just said. After a long pause, he let out a heavy sigh and said, "Fine, have it your way!"

Without another glance, he spun on his heel and headed toward Hutton. As he walked off, he muttered to himself, "She's absolutely out of her mind, that one."

Elliana happily returned to her meal, ignoring his muttered frustration.

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"Alright," Elliana said with a shrug, her voice flat and detached. Then, she rose to her feet and quietly walked away.

That response threw Lance off balance. He couldn't understand why the same Elliana who had refused to leave earlier was now giving in so easily.

While he stood there puzzled, Hutton had already jumped up from his seat and was hurrying after Elliana, visibly thrilled.

For a man over sixty years old, Hutton's sudden burst of energy left the whole room stunned. They watched in disbelief as the aging scholar jogged after her. No one had a clue what was going on.

Whatever anyone thought didn't matter to Hutton in the slightest. As soon as he caught up, he bowed his head and greeted her with full respect. "What brings you here?"

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Lance blinked, confused, and asked, "Mr. Tucker, I don't understand. What do you mean?"

Hutton Looked at him as if he were a fool. "Mr. Evans, you were standing right here when I spoke with my mentor. And you're telling me you still don't get it?"

Though Hutton grasped that River's true identity was meant to stay under wraps, Elliana's public scolding made it obvious she wasn't hiding anything from these people today. That gave Hutton the confidence to speak so directly to Lance. But Lance's brain was still spinning. Even with all the clues laid out in front of him, he looked completely lost and kept asking pointless questions.

Hutton could only shake his head, convinced there was no saving Lance. Noticing that Elliana had walked farther down the hall, he hurried after her. It had been ages since he last saw his mentor. Now that she was here, he didn't want to waste a second. If they could share a meal, that would be the perfect chance to catch up.

Lance stood frozen, watching Hutton eagerly rush after Elliana, still struggling to make sense of anything. He couldn't tell whether they were crazy or if he was missing something huge.

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And now, Knowing Elliana was River, Lance didn't see her as unattractive anymore. There was something brilliant in her gaze, the very quality Dillen had mentioned before.

Lance stammered, "I-I am sorry. I didn't see clearly before. I was completely out of line. Please give me a chance to make it right. I swear I'll stop acting like an idiot and show you due respect."

Hutton stood there, a smile on his lips as he saw Lance finally come around.

Both Elliana and Emmanuel cracked into Laughter.

Lance felt his face burn even more under their amusement and wiped his forehead once again, completely flustered.

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Lance gazed at her, his voice cautious as he said, "Elliana, I know exactly that your expertise as River is top-notch, and I also understand how serious the flaws in this project are, but don't you think one billion is a little excessive?"

"If you think my price is too high, then feel free to find someone else," Elliana replied without the slightest pause.

That left Lance completely stunned. He knew better than anyone that aside from River, there wasn't another person out there who could fix their technical problem. Now he was stuck between two impossible choices-either agree to pay Elliana a billion and salvage the twenty-billion project, or refuse and watch the Seek project fall apart. In that moment, the answer became painfully clear. Anyone in his shoes would choose to pay her.

Trying one last time, Lance begged, "Elliana, we've already poured twenty billion into this project and haven't seen a single return. Our funding is stretched thin. Can you at least offer us a discount—for family's sake?"

For family's sake? Elliana looked at him with a teasing smile. "Alright, I'll give you a family discount—twenty percent off."

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Myles, Aron, and Hugh were nearby, listening intently to the entire story. When Emmanuel finally revealed that Elliana was, in fact, River, the three men were left in complete disbelief. Their eyes widened, and their jaws nearly dropped.

Since the Evans family had raised Myles, Aron, and Hugh, they felt comfortable enough to show their genuine reactions around Emmanuel.

Unable to hold back, Hugh said, "Mr. Evans, are you saying Mrs. Evans is actually River—the top figure in the AI community? Are you absolutely sure?"

A chuckle escaped Emmanuel as he glanced at Hugh. "Caught you off guard, huh? I was floored when I found out. But yes, it's true. Hutton Tucker confirmed it. If that weren't the case, I wouldn't have dared to come to Cole asking him to sign off on an eight-hundred-million fee."

Eight hundred million? The number alone was enough to make Myles, Aron, and Hugh turn green with envy. Having that kind of talent really did make earning money look effortless.

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And just like that, she turned and exited the AI R&D Department.

Emmanuel stepped out and followed behind her.

"Is there something else, Emmanuel?" Elliana asked, glancing back at the sound of his footsteps.

Without saying much, Emmanuel handed over another check, this one for one billion. "This is the order Cole asked me to place with River."

Elliana's eyes widened. "What kind of order did he place?"

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Lance went quiet. Jason had the upper hand in both talent and position. And Jason also seemed to like Trinity. He knew he didn't stand a chance.

Emmanuel placed a firm hand on Lance's shoulder. His voice softened. "As your father, I see things you don't. Trinity isn't as simple as she seems. I don't want you to end up with someone like her. Give up on her."

"Dad, you can say we're not a match, or that she doesn't like me. But don't say she's not a good person. Trinity is kind, pure, and exceptional," Lance replied.

Emmanuel let out a sigh. "Alright. No matter what I say, it won't change anything. See for yourself. Time will show the truth."

Elliana, unaware of the conversation between Emmanuel and Lance, left the AI R&D Department and headed straight to the elevator, eager to see Cole.