

Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 101:

Kai was already dialling. I listened to fragments of the conversation. “Yes, Hyacinth Galloway. I see. When did she leave? Three? And no one’s seen her since?”

As the lift reached my floor, I pressed the button to go straight back down. “Cancel the nine o’clock. Get Roy to bring the car round. Who’s the on-site director?”

“A Mr Shawn Tan,” Kai said, checking his tablet. “He says she left the factory this afternoon.”

“Call him again. I want a complete timeline. Every hour she was there, who she spoke to, what areas she inspected. Ask for access to the surveillance footage.”

I tried her number again. Still voicemail.

Kai hesitated. “You don’t think she’s actually missing? Maybe her phone battery died, or she stopped somewhere and lost track of time—”

“Does she strike you as the type who loses track of time?”

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He looked down. “No. I should’ve gone with her. I knew something was off about that place, but I didn’t think—”

“There’s no use assigning blame now,” I said quietly. “Focus on locating her.”

I stepped out of the lift.

It seemed improbable that anything serious had happened. Hyacinth was young, but intelligent and capable. She wouldn’t walk blindly into danger.

I hoped.

“Loch!”

The familiar voice made me draw a measured breath before turning. “Jaclyn. What are you doing here?”

She was dressed for an evening gala, not a casual night out. “I’ve got a suite here. Thought you might like a drink, unwind a bit. We can catch up on—wait, why are you in such a rush?”

Kai and I continued walking.

She quickened her pace into a jog to keep up. “Slow down, will you? Where are you going?”

“I have an urgent matter to attend to,” I said. “Have you begun the internal audit for the Jurong plant like I asked?”

She frowned. “I haven’t. You only mentioned it last night. It’s barely been twenty-four hours.”

“And yet, theft doesn’t operate on a schedule.”

She grabbed my arm. “I’m not here to talk about work. Can’t we have one evening without you obsessing over numbers?”

I removed her hand. “You should be obsessing over them. I need to know who’s been siphoning funds from that facility, and I need it now.”

“You’re not even sure there’s been theft. I—”

“Then you haven’t been doing your job. The discrepancies are obvious to anyone who bothers to look.”

Her cheeks flushed. “That’s unfair.”

“What’s unfair is that your negligence may have placed one of my staff in danger.”

She froze. “What staff?”

“My chief of staff. She went to conduct the inspection. She hasn’t returned.”

“You mean she’s missing? Who—” She stopped, her expression shifting. “You mean that secretary? She’s probably shopping. I know women like her. They’ll find any excuse to disappear for a few hours—”

“Hyacinth Galloway is not that kind of woman.” I spoke quietly, but each syllable landed with force. “She identified the embezzlement in less than a week. You failed to see it in two years.”

Jaclyn’s confidence faltered. “Well, maybe—”

“Hyacinth? What happened to her?” A voice thundered across the lobby.

I turned.

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Chapter 102:

The minute I saw who walked through that door, my brain short-circuited.

Marcus bloody Tay. Of all the names I'd considered for Shawn's mysterious partner in crime, Marcus was not one of them.

I'd suspected Jaclyn for a while, but she was too busy chasing Lochlan around and probably didn't know half the staff at her own company. I'd thought maybe HR or Finance.

But the Head of Procurement hadn't even crossed my mind.

He looked pleased with himself. "Surprised to see me?"

I tried to open my mouth, but it was taped shut.

Marcus laughed, that nasal little chuckle I'd always found irritating at meetings. Then he shook his head at the sight of my bound wrists and ankles. "Stupid Shawn. Only he'd tie up a delicate lady like this."

Delicate lady. I'd like to see him say that again after I got my hands free.

He pressed a switch. The bulb above us flickered to life, revealing a room that looked as if tetanus had taken up residence: corrugated steel walls lined with warped plywood, a floor the colour of dirty snow, a rubber mat that might once have been a bed, and a smell that triggered my gag reflex.

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We were in a converted container.

“Used to be a tallyman’s quarters,” Marcus said. “No one’s stayed here in years.”

Correction: an abandoned container.

Where no one would find my body for years.

“Ow!” I yelped as he ripped the tape from my mouth. My lips burned.

“Don’t bother shouting,” he said casually. “No one’s around for miles.” He caressed my cheek. “You’ve got grime all over your face, poor thing.”

I jerked my head away. “Don’t touch me!”

He bent down, and I caught a whiff of garlic.

“You smell good,” he said. “Be a shame to turn you into fish food.”

I stared at him. “You’re crazy.”

He grinned. “Probably.”

My wrists were still tied, my chair was flimsy, and my survival instinct was arguing with my temper. I tried to work the ropes behind me—small movements, tiny friction burns that I hoped represented progress.

I scanned my surroundings. My bag, my laptop, my phone. All gone.

So was the can of pepper spray stashed in my bag.

“Let me go,” I said, aiming for calm. “My boss will be looking for me.”

“Hastings?” He smirked. “He won’t find you.”

“It’s Singapore. He’ll find me before your next garlic dinner.”

He didn’t appreciate the joke. “You know how many ships leave these docks every day? Easy to hide one slim woman in a container. By the time anyone realises you’re gone, you’ll be halfway to nowhere.”

He checked his phone. “One leaves in an hour. Shawn’s probably already on it, if he did what I told him.”

He spat on the floor. Charming.

“Stupid Shawn. If he hadn’t panicked and knocked you out, I wouldn’t be stuck with the clean-up. After getting rid of you, I’d probably have to leave the country too.”

His gaze fell on my chest. “But first, might as well have some fun.”

I rubbed the rope harder, my heart thudding so loud I almost couldn’t hear myself think.

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Chapter 103:

Where the hell was a fire when you needed one?

He set his phone and wallet on the folding table. “I’ve wanted to shove my cock in that sweet pussy of yours since the day you showed up.” He stepped closer. “Bet your boss fucks you every night, doesn’t he? Probably why he hired you in the first place.”

“Not everyone’s got a filthy mind like yours.”

He grabbed my breast so hard I saw stars. The pain shocked a cry out of me before I could stop it. Something clattered to the floor.

I kicked out hard, my foot connecting with his shinbone. The chair toppled, cracked, and we went down in a tangle. I hit the concrete, the breath knocked out of me.

Marcus straightened, panting slightly. He laughed, delighted, as if this were foreplay.

“Legs in the air,” he said. “I like this position.”

“Go to hell.”

I kept rubbing at the rope. It sliced into my wrists, skin tearing, but I didn’t care. Pain meant I was still fighting.

He licked his lips. “Feisty. I like it. Actually, I’d like it more if you scream when I fuck you. If you behave, maybe I’ll take you with me. We’ll hide on a ship, live in a container like this, and I’ll—”

“Go fuck yourself!”

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His face twisted. He unbuckled his belt. The freak was already hard.

“Maybe I’ll let you suck me off first.” His trousers pooled at his ankles. “You should’ve kept your nose out of my business. Now you’ll learn.”

“Not here,” I said quickly. “Please.”

He paused, his suspicious eyes narrowing.

“Over there,” I said, nodding towards the filthy mattress in the corner. “It’s... cleaner.”

He followed my gaze and grunted. “Fine. On the mattress then. More comfortable for me.”

He started to drag me by the hair, then stopped, noticing the problem.

My wrists were still bound behind my back, and the chair legs were still tied to my ankles. He couldn’t easily move me.

“For fuck’s sake,” he muttered, bending down. “Gotta untie these legs. Can’t have you properly spread for me otherwise.”

The moment the rope fell from my ankles, I moved. I didn't think. I just put every ounce of strength I had left into my right leg and kicked upwards, the sole of my shoe connecting with his face with a sickening, wet crunch.

He roared, a guttural sound of shock and pain, as he stumbled backwards. His own trousers tripped him up, and he fell hard onto the concrete floor. Blood immediately began to pour from his nose, painting a dark red streak down his chin.

"You fucking bitch!" he screamed, his voice thick and garbled. He scrambled up, his eyes wild with pure rage. He lunged at me, his open hand swinging in a wide arc aimed at my face.

I twisted my head away, deflecting most of the force, but the blow still caught my cheekbone—a stinging, bright pain that made my eyes water.

"I'm going to make you beg to die," he snarled, his fingers tangling in my hair again. He yanked me violently, forcing me to stumble forward towards the mattress.

My eyes scanned the gloom frantically.

There.

Leaning against the corrugated wall near the mattress was a dark, rod-like object—an iron bar, probably left behind to prop the door open. It was just half a metre from the edge of the stained mattress.

A weapon.

He threw me onto the filthy surface, and I landed with a jolt, my body screaming in protest. But my mind was clear, focused solely on that length of cold, heavy metal within reach.

Just as he loomed over me, his blood dripping onto my shirt, his phone rang.

The shrill, generic tone sliced through the tense air, startling both of us for a split second.

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Chapter 104:

Marcus swore, abandoned me on the filthy mattress, and stomped over to the folding table.

He jabbed a button on the phone, then turned back—dressed and entirely revolting. “Don’t worry,” he said. “I’m not letting anyone disturb us. Now—do as you’re told.”

I sat with my knees drawn up and shrank back, pretending to be scared, while I inched closer to the iron rod.

“I said, do as you’re told,” he repeated, stepping closer.

I stayed still. I was trembling, yes, but it wasn’t from fear. It was adrenaline—pure and savage—burning through me. One step closer, you bastard. One step, and I’ll headbutt you so hard you won’t get back up.

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His phone rang again.

He glared at it. “Who the hell is interrupting me?”

He walked away to pick it up, scowling at the screen.

Could it be Kai? Lochlan? Someone from the factory? Maybe they'd realised I was missing. Maybe they'd already connected Marcus to it.

The idea lit up a tiny, desperate spark inside me.

Come on, universe. Just this once, prove you're not completely useless.

Outside, I could hear only wind and water. No footsteps. No shouting. Just the endless crash of waves and the sickening rhythm of my pulse.

I stared at the door, praying it would open.

Please. Just this once. I promise I'll stop being cynical for a whole day if someone bursts in here right now.

The phone rang a third time.

Marcus swore again. "That's Kai Parker, you know."

I froze.

Kai?

Hope flared so hard it hurt.

"You should answer it," I said.

He snorted. "You think I'm stupid?"

"If you don't, he'll be suspicious. And he'll dig deeper."

"Let him dig. He's not going to find anything." Despite saying it, Marcus looked agitated. He kicked at the table leg. "Stupid fucking Shawn. He got me in this mess."

"He could be calling about work. If you don't pick up, he's going to want to know why. You said you planned to leave the country, right? But I bet you haven't bought a ticket yet." My brain whirled. "You need to buy time. Answer the call. Find out what he wants. Then you can plan your next steps with more breathing room."

“If he asks me if I’ve seen you?” he sneered. “That’s what you’re hoping for, isn’t it?”

“Lie. Tell him you haven’t.” I tried to make it sound like I couldn’t have cared less. “Surely you know how to fool a young, inexperienced assistant like Kai.”

Marcus stared at me, calculating.

“Fine.” He stabbed at a button to answer the call, which had been ringing nonstop. “Good evening, Mr Parker. Sorry—bad signal earlier. What? But it’s after office hours, and I’m nowhere near the office—”

Marcus paced near the table, looking ridiculous and half-dressed.

I started inching towards the door, my wrists grinding against the rope. Every tiny movement scraped my skin raw. Progress was slow, but I’d take pain over death any day.

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Chapter 105:

“You can’t fire me for this!” he shouted suddenly. “This isn’t right! Just because one woman’s gone missing, the whole company’s supposed to give up their evening? It’s a matter for the police, not us!”

My heart leapt. They were looking for me. Lochlan must have started a search.

Marcus kept ranting. “I’m sure Miss Galloway’s just having a good time in the city. Maybe at a bar. She’s a foreigner. Probably sightseeing. She—fuck!”

He turned.

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I’d reached the door and had my teeth around the handle when I heard him shout.

“Get back here!” He tossed his phone down.

I twisted the knob and threw myself forward. His fingers clamped around my ankle.

I kicked backwards with everything I had, caught something soft, and he let go with a groan. Pain shot through my leg, but I didn’t stop. I crawled, rolled, scraped my way out into the open air.

The gravel tore into my skin. Tangy night air hit me like a refreshing slap.

“You bitch!” he roared.

I scrambled up, running blind between endless rows of shipping containers, steel towers looming like monsters in the moonlight. My wrists bled where the rope bit into them, but I kept pulling.

“Bitch! I saw you!” His voice boomed, too close.

Come on, you bloody rope—give up already.

It did. It finally snapped.

My hands were free.

I ripped the rest of the rope away, my fingers slick with blood.

“You’re dead! You hear me?”

I bolted.

Every step felt like someone driving nails through my knees, but fear was a better motivator than caffeine.

The maze of containers ended abruptly. I skidded to a stop.

Ahead lay open sea, moonlight dancing across black water.

Behind me, Marcus staggered into view, hair wild, face twisted into something that barely qualified as human.

“Nowhere to go now,” he said, panting.

I turned to face him.

He grinned, vicious. “I’m going to make you pay for this.”

I took a deep breath. “No thanks. I’ve already got plans.”

And I ran.

The pier blurred beneath my feet. For one wild, suspended moment, I was weightless.

Then the sea rose up and swallowed me whole.

Cold, dark, infinite.

And then nothing.

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Chapter 106:

When I arrived at the factory, most of the staff were already assembled.

The air was heavy with confusion and resentment, which was understandable, given that I had pulled them from their evening with the instruction that anyone who failed to appear would be immediately terminated.

Jaclyn had not stopped talking during the entire drive. “She’s probably bar-hopping,” she said. “Maybe she’s making out with some random guy right now and that’s why she’s not picking up. And you’re dragging the entire company out of bed over a secretary? Who is she to you? Since when do you care so much about a mere secretary?”

I didn't answer. Experience had taught me that silence was far more effective than argument when dealing with her.

Cary Grant was close behind me, glowering at anyone who so much as looked in his direction.

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He had insisted on coming the moment he learnt Hyacinth might be missing, and his insistence had quickly escalated into a demand.

"She doesn't lose track of time, she doesn't get lost, and she sure as hell doesn't disappear halfway through a workday to go drinking," he had said in the car, his tone cutting through Jaclyn's insinuations like a knife.

I didn't like Cary. He was arrogant, aggressive, and a reminder of the kind of men who mistook wealth for power. Yet, for that brief moment, I respected his defence of Hyacinth.

The respect did not last long.

Minutes later, I overheard him on the phone, growling, "If you'd planted the RAT like I asked, you'd have real-time access to her GPS. I'd know exactly where she is right now. Why the hell didn't you do it?"

When he hung up, I said evenly, “Planting a remote access Trojan on someone’s phone is not only illegal, it is contemptible.”

He glared at me. His anger had nowhere to go, so he directed it at me. “Get off your bloody high horse. If you’d done a better job keeping an eye on her, I wouldn’t have had to hire someone to do it.”

“She’s my employee, not my child. I don’t monitor my staff’s private movements.”

“You should have. Back when we were married, I always knew where she was within seconds.”

“And you still wonder why she left you,” I said quietly.

He turned, fists clenched. “What did you just say?”

I met his stare without flinching. The silence stretched until Kai’s voice cut through the tension. “Boss, Shawn Tan just called. He’s gathered most of the staff.”

Cary let out a short, furious laugh. “This is pathetic, Hastings. Absolutely goddamn pathetic. You’re talking about ‘investigating’ as if this is some fucking paperwork snafu, while my wife is God knows where. We don’t have time for this by-the-book nonsense.”

“Your panic will not make her appear faster,” I replied. “We follow procedure. That includes notifying the authorities. They have the resources and jurisdiction that we don’t.”

He dragged a hand through his hair, seething. “What kind of fucking incompetent operation lets someone snatch her in broad daylight? You got my wife into this. If you hadn’t been so bloody rash in hiring her—”

“Miss Galloway was hired because she’s exceptional at what she does,” I said calmly. “And while she is under my command, I am responsible for her safety. If you want to be useful, you can start by not shouting at everyone within earshot.”

He sneered but said nothing.

“We need information,” I continued. “I’m going to speak to everyone who saw her last. What is your plan?”

“What the fuck can I do? This isn’t London. Back home, I’d have every security firm in the city shaking down their contacts. I’d have the police commissioner on speed dial. Here? I’ve got nothing. The local PI is useless, and your slow-moving approach is going to get her killed.”

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Chapter 107:

“Then I suggest you follow my lead,” I said, “and refrain from interfering.”

“Like hell I will. I’ll interrogate the bastards who saw her last myself. You said someone’s been stealing from your factory. Then they’re involved. I’ll rip their entrails out if they don’t talk.”

“If you touch one of my employees, I’ll have you removed from the premises,” I said quietly. “You are no longer her husband, and you have no authority here.”

He leaned forward. “Like hell I’ll sit on my arse while she—”

“Boss,” Kai interrupted loudly. “We’re here.”

The conference room fell silent the moment I stepped in. Factory management stood stiffly, the fear in their eyes confirming what I already suspected.

Shawn Tan scrambled to his feet. “Mr Hastings.”

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“Any news of Miss Galloway?”

“No, sir. We’re still looking.”

“Have you determined who tampered with the security feeds?” Earlier, Kai had reported that all surveillance footage from the day had been erased. There were no backups—a convenient coincidence that I did not believe for a moment.

Shawn shuffled his feet. “I’ve contacted the contractor and their technical team, but it’s after office hou—”

“I’m not interested in excuses.”

Kai stepped forward. “Two of the female workers confirmed they saw Mr Tan leave his office with Miss Galloway this afternoon. She wasn’t seen afterwards.”

Shawn’s skin gleamed with sweat. He shifted under my gaze. “Yes, I walked her to the gate. Then I came straight back to my office. I don’t know where she went after that.”

“Is that the truth?” I asked. My voice was quiet, which made him tremble all the more. “If I find out you’re lying—”

He took a stumbling step backwards, trapped against the table. “I’m telling the truth, sir. I swear it.”

Around the room, everyone looked away. No one dared speak.

“Has the data recovery team arrived?” I asked Kai.

“They’re on their way.”

“Good. Keep me updated.”

Shawn's face had turned a ghastly shade of grey. He knew what that meant. Once the specialists restored the footage, the truth would surface, and his career would end.

Before I could ask another question, Cary lunged. He seized Shawn by the collar and began shaking him like a rag doll. "Where is she? Where the hell's my wife? What did you do to her?"

Shawn's eyes bulged. He gasped for air, his hands flailing weakly against Cary's grip.

Another few seconds, and the man would be dead.

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Chapter 108:

I stepped forward. “Grant, let him go.”

He didn’t. His jaw was locked tight, his eyes wild.

Shawn’s breathing grew shallow.

I caught Cary’s arm. “If you kill him before he talks, you’ll never find her.”

His fingers loosened. Shawn collapsed into a chair, coughing and wheezing, his collar torn and his dignity gone.

Cary turned on me, chest heaving. “If she’s dead, I’ll burn this place to the ground.”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort,” I said, keeping my tone calm and level. “You’ll wait. We will find her.”

He stared at me, breathing hard, then finally turned away.

I looked at Shawn again. He couldn't meet my eyes.

By that point, I was thoroughly fed up with Cary's behaviour. His loss of control was contemptible, his violence proof of a mind that had long ago surrendered to its worst instincts. It made me wonder how Hyacinth had endured three years of marriage to such a man.

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A loud crash cut through my thoughts.

Cary slammed Shawn's head against the table with such force that the surface rattled. The sound was thick, brutal, and disturbingly final.

"Cameron." I gave a single nod.

My head of security, a former SAS officer who required no further instruction, stepped forward. He caught Cary's dominant wrist, twisted it neatly, and locked his forearm across Cary's throat in a non-lethal restraint.

"Get the fuck off me!" Cary shouted, straining against Cameron's grip. His face was flushed, veins bulging at his temples.

Shawn curled into a ball on the floor, every inch of him trembling.

I had no doubt that if Cameron let go, Cary would launch himself across the room again.

Something I could use.

“Mr Tan,” I said, “Mr Grant has an extremely personal investment in Miss Galloway’s safe return. He is, shall we say, prone to impulsive decision-making when under stress. If you don’t provide him with answers, once he leaves this room, there’s no telling what regrettable and irreversible private actions he might take.”

As if to prove my point, Cary gave a guttural sound that was more animal than human. Still pinned to the wall, he kicked out hard at an office chair. It skidded across the floor and crashed into a filing cabinet.

Shawn flinched violently, his eyes darting from me to Cary, panic rising in his face.

I waited.

“Where is my wife?” Cary shouted.

“I...” Shawn swallowed. “I don’t kn—”

I gave Cameron a slight signal.

He loosened his hold just enough.

Cary lunged forward.

Shawn screamed, cowering away. Cameron pulled Cary back again, but not before Cary’s fist clipped Shawn’s nose. Blood streamed between Shawn’s fingers as he fell back, voice shaking. “She’s not here, all right? She’s kept—”

“What is going on here?”

I whipped my head around, glaring at the man who’d interrupted at the worst possible moment.

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Chapter 109:

Marcus Tay stood in the doorway, eyes moving from Shawn's bleeding face to Cary's restrained fury. Jaclyn hovered behind him.

Marcus's expression hardened. Surprise, followed by irritation, flitted across his face before he masked it behind a well-rehearsed smile. "Good evening, Mr Hastings. Sorry I'm late." He didn't sound sorry at all.

Jaclyn shoved past him. "Will you stop this madness, Loch? You can't just beat up employees because your secretary's been gone for a few hours. She's an adult, for God's sake. The police won't even treat it as a missing person case yet. You're being ridiculous."

She jabbed a finger at Cary. "And you have no right to assault Shawn. Get the hell out before I call the police."

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“Fuck off,” Cary hissed. “No one tells me what to do.”

Jaclyn recoiled.

I ignored them both. My attention was on Marcus.

He crouched beside Shawn and began whispering furiously, stabbing his finger into Shawn’s chest as he spoke.

Shawn’s eyes widened, and for one brief moment, I saw raw panic replaced by something else—relief. His shoulders eased. His face slackened. The terror that had gripped him moments ago dissolved.

Whatever Marcus had said had restored his confidence.

Which meant they were working together.

When Marcus turned back to me, his manner was composed. He looked directly at me, no longer the sycophantic subordinate but something else—confident, even smug.

There was challenge in his eyes, the kind that said he believed himself untouchable.

I held his gaze. He didn't flinch.

He knew I suspected him. He also knew I had no solid proof.

No witnesses. No footage.

No body, no crime.

The thought chilled me.

What if she really was gone? What had they done to her?

I forced a breath through my nose, tamping down the anger coiling tight in my chest. Rage would achieve nothing.

“Sir.” Timothy entered the room. He leaned close and murmured, “Our men checked every hospital and clinic in the region. No one matching Miss Galloway’s description has been admitted.”

The words hit like a physical blow.

I glanced at Cary, still struggling against Cameron’s restraint, muscles quivering with rage.

For a moment, I almost envied his simplicity. His fury was unrestrained.

Maybe it was time to adopt his methods. Bypass the police, get Shawn and Marcus alone somewhere quiet, and extract the truth from them by any means necessary.

I looked at Cameron, on the verge of giving the order.

The room had descended into a chaotic hum of low voices. Jaclyn was hurling insults at Cary, Marcus was making subtle, pointed remarks about my heavy-handedness, and Shawn sat slumped in a chair, cradling his nose.

Then, abruptly, everything stopped. The noise, the movement—even the air—seemed to still.

Every face turned towards the doorway behind me.

“Mr Hastings.”

The voice was faint, hoarse, and unmistakable.

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Chapter 110:

I clutched the doorframe, because if I didn't, my legs would probably fold like wet paper.

Every inch of me hurt. My feet were sliced open, my clothes plastered to my skin, and I was fairly sure my hair looked like a drowned cat that had given up on life.

Still, I wasn't going to collapse. Not yet. Not before I saw those bastards hauled off in handcuffs.

"Hyacinth!" Lochlan spun around. Relief lit his face. He started towards me, arms half-raised like he meant to catch me.

But someone else got there first.

A pair of arms wrapped around me—tight, desperate, and much too familiar.

For one dreadful second, I thought I was hallucinating.

Cary.

Of course. Because the universe clearly thought I hadn't suffered enough today.

"Hyacinth! Thank God you're okay." He crushed me to him, then immediately started patting every part of me. "You're bleeding. Jesus, your face—what happened? How did—"

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“Perhaps wait until she’s had medical attention before interrogating her, Mr Grant,” Lochlan said, prying Cary’s hands off me with impressive gentleness that still somehow brooked no argument. He turned to me. “You need a doctor. I’ll call for an ambulance.”

“No.” I shook my head. The room tilted like it was on a boat, but I gritted my teeth and held my ground. “I’m not leaving until everyone knows what actually happened.”

I fixed my eyes on Marcus Tay. The colour had drained from his face the moment I walked in.

Good. Let him sweat.

Lochlan frowned. “You’re injured.”

“Please,” I whispered, leaning close enough that only he heard what I said next.

For a second, our eyes met. His hesitation lasted exactly two seconds before he sighed and nodded. “Fine.”

He gestured to his security chief, who stepped smoothly in front of the doorway just as Marcus started to edge towards it.

Kai appeared beside me, his expression soft with relief. He didn't say anything—just reached for me like he meant to check I was real.

I managed a shaky smile and squeezed his hand.

“You should sit,” Lochlan said, steering me to a chair. Cary tried to help, which mainly resulted in him being shoved aside.

Kai produced a first-aid kit out of thin air. He started cleaning the blood off my leg, and I hissed through my teeth when the saline hit.

The cut on my thigh throbbed in time with my heartbeat. Pain was proof of life, I supposed, and better a torn leg than a cracked skull.

“See?” Jaclyn's voice sliced through the room. “I told you she was fine. Probably just fell somewhere. Now can we all go home?”

I could barely lift my head, or she'd have seen my eye roll. Yes, Jaclyn, I simply fancied an impromptu swim through industrial sewage for fun.

Lochlan's voice stayed calm. "Not yet."

"What now?" Jaclyn threw up her arms. "You still want us all here? Why? To watch her get plasters? Count me out."

She marched towards the door, and Cameron didn't even blink as he blocked her path.

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Chapter 111:

“Move,” she snapped.

He didn’t budge.

“Loch, call off your guard dog,” she demanded. “I’m leaving. This circus has gone on long enough.”

Lochlan didn’t even look at her when he spoke. “Shawn Tan, Marcus Tay, Daryl Koh, Wayne Chen, and you, Jaclyn, will remain. Everyone else can go.”

The others practically tripped over each other rushing for the exit.

“How are you feeling?” Cary crouched beside me again, determined to make himself useful. “Who did this to you? I swear, once I find the bastard—”

“What are you doing here?” I cut him off.

He looked up, eyes bloodshot, suit wrinkled, face gaunt. He was always a handsome man in that expensive, arrogant way, but the stubbled, exhausted look didn’t suit him.

“I came to talk to you,” he said.

“Portia told me you refused to sign the papers.”

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“I’m not signing them. I want another chance.”

My brain, already battered by concussion and chlorine, decided it couldn’t process that conversation right now. I’d nearly been murdered, and he wanted to talk about marital reconciliation.

The man’s timing was as impeccable as ever.

Kai nudged him aside, dabbing at a cut on my arm.

“You can’t fire me!” Jaclyn’s voice rose to a shriek.

“Your negligence directly contributed to what happened today,” Lochlan said in that calm, unhurried way that somehow made everyone else sound unhinged by comparison.

“So you believe her?” Jaclyn spat. “Over me? Over Marcus? Over your entire management team? She’s been here two weeks! What does she know? Marcus has worked here for years. He’s loyal. He wouldn’t hurt anyone.”

She turned to me, face twisted with outrage. “Well, Hyacinth? What proof do you have that Marcus tried to kill you?”

I looked straight at Marcus.

He smiled—that same smug, confident look that screamed, You have nothing.

He’d taken my bag, my phone, my laptop. There were no cameras in that container.

He thought I had nothing.

Jaclyn took my lack of response as proof she’d won.

“See?” she said, turning to Lochlan. “She’s got nothing. I don’t know what she has against Marcus, but I’m not going to believe my Head of Procurement tried to commit murder based on the word of a hysterical girl.”

Hysterical.

That was new.

I'd been called plenty of things, but never that.

"That lack of judgement," Lochlan said mildly, "is precisely why you can't remain as CEO." He gave me a reassuring nod.

Jaclyn's mouth twisted. "You're firing me because of her? She's lying!"

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 112:

Lochlan didn't answer.

The silence stretched, which apparently made Jaclyn more determined to fill it. "Oh, I know what this is. She's gunning for my job, and she's trying to get your attention. She pretends some crime exists—she'll score brownie points in your book, and she can replace me as CEO."

I looked at her. She really had to stop talking. The more she spoke, the more she revealed just how woefully inadequate her IQ was.

"Miss Lemon," I said, surprising myself with how steady my voice came out, "I don't know what Marcus or Shawn has told you, but I'm telling the truth."

"Oh, shut up!" Jaclyn's voice went up an octave. "You've been nothing but trouble since you got here. Loch won't even talk to me after work because of you. And you can drop the innocent act. Maybe it works on men who think with their cocks, but it doesn't work on me."

"Jaclyn!" Lochlan warned.

Cary muttered anatomical insults directed at her and several generations of her family.

“See? That’s exactly what I mean!” she went on, pointing at me. “She bats her lashes and suddenly no one can think straight. She’s got that one wrapped around her finger”—she jerked her thumb at Cary—”and now she’s working on you. You’ll be next, Loch. You’ll see.”

I put a hand on Cary’s arm before he grabbed the nearest object and flung it at her.

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I ignored Jaclyn and turned my attention to Shawn, Wayne, and Daryl, who probably wished they were anywhere else.

“Gentlemen,” I said evenly, though I’d have liked nothing better than to see their scheming, stupid faces locked up, “if you tell the truth now, I’ll appeal to the court for leniency. This is your only chance.”

Shawn looked like he’d just been in a major fight, and lost. His face was blotched white, his nose bleeding, and he was wheezing hard.

I kept my eyes trained on him. “You’ve all made a mess of things, but Marcus made it worse. You think he’s going to protect you? He left me tied up in a shipping container and planned to toss me into the sea. He’ll do the same to you if it buys him another hour of freedom.”

The colour drained from Shawn's face so fast I half-expected him to faint.

"The data recovery team is already restoring the footage," Lochlan said as if on cue. "Your situation is grave, but not beyond redemption."

"You're going to jail either way," I said. "But do you want to go down for fraud, which means bail's possible and you'll likely get out after a few years, or do you want to go down for attempted murder and kidnapping? I hear it's a capital offence here, punishable by death."

The three men exchanged nervous glances.

Marcus opened his mouth, but I beat him to it. "You think Marcus will save you? Whatever he told you, he lied. He was planning his escape while you were panicking about losing your jobs. There's a ship waiting for him right now. He told me that himself."

The effect was immediate. Shawn's knees nearly buckled, Daryl looked ready to be sick, and Wayne started whispering frantic prayers under his breath.

Kai's phone chimed. He read the message, looked at me, and said, "The surveillance tapes are back."

Shawn froze like someone had pressed pause on him.

I piled on the pressure. “Confess while you still can. Once the tape confirms my story, you lose your chance for leniency.”

His mouth opened and closed, open and closed, like a fish stranded on land.

But the way he kept sneaking glances at Marcus told me he’d need another push.

“Marcus told me you were the one who engineered the whole thing,” I said. “He said you created the mess and he was forced to clean it up for you.”

Shawn’s head snapped towards Marcus, incredulity and betrayed rage chasing each other across his plump face.

“She’s lying!” Marcus growled.

Timothy came in holding something small and silver.

“Is this it?” he asked.

“Yes!” I took the lapel pin with both hands, grinning despite the blood still crusting my knuckles. “Thank you.”

I held it up and met Marcus’s eyes. “You thought I had no proof.”

His smirk faltered. “What is that?”

There’s a special kind of satisfaction in watching a man’s face when he realises you’ve just destroyed his life.

Marcus looked like someone had unplugged him from the mains. Every ounce of smugness drained out of him the moment I switched on the recorder.

“You thought you’d be safe once you smashed my phone and tablet,” I said. “But you didn’t know I was wearing this.”

The lapel pin was a tiny voice recorder, a welcome-aboard gift from Kai. I wore it to every meeting and then forgot it half the time.

I’d worn it on the factory trip. When Marcus tried to rip off my blouse, it had clattered to the floor.

Timothy had found it exactly where I'd hoped—half-buried in dust inside the shipping container.

I'd told Lochlan about it the moment I saw Marcus in the room, and he'd sent Timothy to retrieve it and lock down the container as a crime scene.

Marcus's voice filled the room, tinny but unmistakable. "Stupid Shawn. Only he'd treat a delicate lady like this. You know how many ships leave these docks every day?... You won't be found. Ever."

I paused the playback.

No need to play the rest.

If Cary heard what came after, I'd be mopping bits of Marcus off the wall before the police arrived.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 113:

Kai stepped out of the room.

I could hear him on the phone, talking rapidly to the police.

Marcus didn't look so calm now. His complexion was the colour of wet cement, and sweat beaded on his forehead. His breath came out in short, ugly gasps.

Then, in true cowardly fashion, he whirled on Shawn, his eyes blazing, and smacked him so hard that his handprint bloomed crimson across Shawn's cheek.

"You fucking idiot! Why didn't you leave the country like I told you?" Marcus roared, his voice cracking with panic.

Shawn stammered, his eyes wide. “I... you said you were only going to scare her! I never agreed to murder!”

The two men grappled immediately. Shawn shoved at Marcus’s chest, their shoes scuffing against the carpet in a desperate, frantic noise.

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I looked at Lochlan, expecting him to signal Cameron to intervene.

Lochlan remained perfectly still. “They deserve it,” he said, almost as an explanation to me.

Cary flew over the conference table, clearing the surface with terrifying ease. He hit Marcus like a dropped safe.

“You touched her? You tried to kill her?” Cary bellowed, his face contorted into something inhuman. He landed a punch that snapped Marcus’s head back against the glass wall. “I’ll match it—injury for injury, wound for wound!”

Marcus, though heavyset, was no match for Cary's raw strength and unbridled fury. He cowered, throwing up weak, frantic arms to protect his face. Cary ignored the pathetic defence, pounding him with brutal, systematic efficiency.

My head throbbed, stunned by the sheer violence. I'd have liked nothing more than to see Marcus go down. The man had tried to rape me, kill me.

Still, I couldn't watch him be beaten to death.

"Cary! Stop it!" I yelled, pitching my voice as high as it would go.

He didn't hear me. Enraged, impervious to sound or reason, he kept hitting. Marcus was no longer fighting back; his face was a bloody, swollen mess.

"Lochlan!" I pleaded. "Please let Cameron intervene! I don't want Cary to go to jail for killing a man!"

Lochlan looked at me. His expression was unreadable. He held my gaze for what felt like a lifetime—a long, agonising moment where a man's life hung entirely on his decision.

Finally, he gave Cameron a single nod.

Cameron stepped in. He seized Cary by the arms, effortlessly hauling him away from Marcus. Cary roared like an animal and struggled against the restraint, but he couldn't break free.

Marcus lay still, barely breathing, his eyes swollen shut, blood leaking from his mouth.

The other three—Shawn, Daryl, and Wayne—were huddled in a corner, hands over their heads, terrified by the scale of the violence. Even Jaclyn was shocked into complete, horrified silence.

“In here,” Kai said, pushing open the door.

The sudden arrival of order—the sight of ten uniformed officers—made the entire room breathe a collective sigh of relief.

I tried to stand, but the residual shock, blood loss, and the sharp drop in adrenaline hit all at once. My knees buckled. The world tilted sideways, and the sterile white walls of the conference room dissolved into a blur of grey.

Before I could draw my next shallow breath, everything went dark.

Someone strong caught me, cushioning my fall, but I didn't know who. I was gone.

It was three in the bloody morning, and I was being held hostage in a luxury hospital suite.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 114:

Technically, I was the patient, but, like I said, that was a mere technicality.

My wardens were two grown men glaring at each other across my bed like rival warlords negotiating over territory.

Said territory being me.

Lochlan sat on my left, posture immaculate, hands steepled, expression carved from calm granite.

Cary sat on my right, hair dishevelled, shirt creased, jaw locked in its familiar, self-righteous clench.

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I was the unwilling centrepiece between them, trapped under a white duvet.

If there were a prize for the world's most awkward throuple tableau, this would win by a landslide.

I'd woken an hour ago, immediately assessed the situation, and decided that unconsciousness was vastly preferable. So I'd pretended to be asleep, which bought me exactly twelve minutes of peace before they started arguing again.

Kai and the others had conveniently vanished, proving that chivalry was well and truly dead.

I wanted to scream for help, but I doubted the nurses would risk entering a room radiating that much testosterone.

“She only applied for a job with you to piss me off,” Cary said, his tone clipped, his arrogance as alive and well as ever. “I’ll tender her resignation for her.”

I considered “accidentally” flatlining just to make them both leave.

“Miss Galloway is a grown adult,” Lochlan replied smoothly. “She doesn’t require a guardian to speak on her behalf. If she wishes to resign, she will do so herself.”

There was a brief, tense silence in which I could practically hear Cary’s ego tearing.

“She’s coming back to London with me. That’s settled,” he said, adjusting my blanket, which had required zero adjustment. “She’s had her little adventure. Now I’m removing her from the employment of someone so grossly incompetent as to let her get locked in a cargo container by a psychopath.”

Little adventure?

I clenched my hands under the covers.

Cary’s bossiness hadn’t faded; it had gotten worse.

Lochlan was unruffled. “Are you referring to me, or to the former employer who made her so miserable she fled halfway around the world?”

“You, of course,” Cary snapped. “You sent her straight into danger.”

“She was performing her duties admirably. I trust my employees to exercise intelligence and initiative, both of which she possesses in abundance.” Lochlan’s tone was as infuriatingly calm as always. “You, on the other hand, appear to have misplaced both.”

Cary made a sound that was somewhere between a growl and a strangled curse.

“She’s my wife, Hastings. She’s not staying here another second. If you had an ounce of decency, you’d—”

“Decency?” Lochlan cut in. “Forgive me, but I recall reading something about your own lack thereof. A Miss Abrams, wasn’t it?”

I internally flinched. Apparently, Lochlan had an encyclopaedic memory for other people’s humiliation.

Cary looked ready to throttle him, which, frankly, I’d pay to see if I weren’t the one lying helplessly in between.

“She’s coming home with me,” Cary said—no, declared—again. “She’s mine to protect.”

I opened my eyes. “I’m not a rescue dog, Cary. You don’t get to say ‘mine’ anymore.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 115:

Both heads snapped towards me instantly.

So much for feigning sleep.

“Hyacinth.” Cary jumped up from his chair. “You should be awake. You need rest.”

“I’d get plenty of rest if the two of you would shut up for five consecutive minutes,” I said. My voice came out rough, partly from exhaustion, partly from sheer disbelief that this was my life.

My eyes landed on Lochlan, and I realised I’d accidentally scolded him too. “Sorry, boss. I didn’t mean—”

“It’s fine. Our fault for arguing,” he said courteously. “How are you feeling?”

“Drugged. Blissful.” And slightly homicidal at finding my ex-husband in the room. “Don’t worry. I’ll live.”

“You gave us quite a scare,” Lochlan said.

“Yes,” Cary added. “She nearly died, and you—”

I cut him off. “If you open your mouth again, I’ll discharge myself and walk straight into traffic. At least that way, I’d be in control of what kills me.”

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A pause. Then, blessedly, silence.

The silence lasted so long that I started to drift off again.

Until a knock at the door broke it.

A woman's voice followed. "Loch, can I come in?"

Lochlan moved to the door, his voice lowered. "What are you doing here?"

"I want to talk to her," came the plaintive voice.

Jaclyn. Of course.

"If I apologise to Hyacinth, will you forgive me?" she said. "Will you give me my job back?"

Her job? Had she been fired?

If so—good call.

“It isn’t my place to forgive you on her behalf,” Lochlan said. “She’s resting. You can come back later.”

I pictured him closing the door in her face.

“No, wait! I brought you breakfast! You haven’t slept all night. You should rest. I can stay with her.”

“That won’t be necessary. Thank you for the offer, though.”

The door clicked shut.

The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was Cary’s face looming over me.

The second thing I did was close them again.

Too late. He'd seen me.

"Hyacinth!" He sprang up from his armchair like a jack-in-the-box.

I stayed perfectly still, hoping he'd think I'd slipped back into a coma.

Unfortunately, it didn't work.

"How are you feeling?" he asked, leaning over me, blotting out the ceiling lights with his large, overbearing frame. "I told that imbecile of a doctor not to give you so much sedative. You've been asleep for thirty hours."

Only thirty? Frankly, I could've done with another thirty. Or three hundred.

He hovered closer, close enough for me to smell the faint trace of his cologne. Still expensive. Still the same one that used to cling to my body after we'd had sex.

"Listen," he went on briskly, already in full control-freak mode, "I've sorted everything. Your discharge papers will be ready by lunch. The pilot's prepping the jet for a six o'clock flight back to Heathrow. You're coming back to London with me. You'll rest properly at home."

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 116:

Home. Right. The house where he once left me alone in the middle of the night to answer the summons of—

He brushed a strand of hair from my forehead in a gesture that might've been tender if it hadn't felt like he was reasserting ownership of property.

"I've already told Hastings you're coming with me," he said. "Don't worry about the paperwork. I'll handle everything. You've made your point, and I won't have you working for a man who puts you in danger. I'm tendering your resignation."

That jolted me upright so fast the room spun. The IV stand wobbled ominously, and I nearly threw up on his shoes. “You can’t do that!” I snapped. “You can’t just decide for me!”

Cary frowned. “You can’t keep working for Hastings,” he said. “Look what happened. Come back to Mayfair. Your old job’s waiting for you.”

“You mean the one where I had to revise merger contracts while listening to you shag your latest fling through the wall?” I turned my head and gave him my most withering look. “Pass.”

His jaw tightened. “That was then. I swear there won’t be another woman in my office again. Just you.”

“No thanks,” I said. “I prefer my workplace infidelity-free.”

His tone sharpened. “What will it take to make you drop this farce?”

Farce.

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I'd given up my career, my life in London, even my frigging wardrobe, just to have a clean break from him.

And he thought it was a farce.

I thought of all the nights I'd spent lying awake, alone in bed—half of me seething, half of me wishing I were stronger. Of all the rules he'd laid down for me.

Portia had told me I didn't have to repay him for the hospital bills he'd paid for my mother, that I didn't owe him anything.

But sitting here, watching him expect me to comply with his every command because he thought he still owned me, I knew I'd made the right call to pay back every cent.

"Nothing," I said calmly. "But you could sign the final papers. That would save us both time."

Cary gave a short, incredulous laugh. "Never. As long as I don't sign, you're still my wife in the eyes of the law. And you won't be working for Hastings while you're legally Mrs Grant."

“Then I’ll see you in court. The tabloids will have a field day. Your mother will love to see the precious Grant name dragged through the mud.”

He stared at me. “You wouldn’t.”

“Besides,” I added lightly, “I still have those recordings from Kingfisher Park. You wouldn’t want that to leak, would you?”

That got him.

He finally muttered, “Do you hate me that much?”

I didn’t. Not really. Hatred required energy, and Cary had drained me long ago.

What I felt was worse: nothing.

“I don’t hate you,” I said. “I just want my life back. And I’m getting that divorce whether you like it or not.”

I reached for the call button. Somewhere in the building, a nurse was about to become my favourite person in the world.

“That’s not your call to make,” he said sharply. “You don’t get to walk away.”

Ah yes—there it was. The tone. The imperial decree voice that brooked no disobedience.

Once upon a time, I’d mistaken it for assertiveness. Now it just sounded like a man allergic to rejection.

“Then I guess I’ll see you in court,” I said.

He looked down, his composure cracking. “Just one more chance, Hyacinth. Please.”

“No.”

“You don’t mean that.”

“I do. Stop pretending this is romantic. It’s pathetic.”

That did it. His eyes hardened. He reached down suddenly and pulled me into his arms, muttering against my hair, “You’re mine.”

Someone cleared their throat. “Excuse me.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 117:

Lochlan sat up from the pull-out sofa.

The blanket slid off his lap, revealing that he was, of course, fully dressed in one of his immaculate suits. The man probably slept in pressed shirts and a tie clip. He rubbed his temples. “Kai, water.”

Kai—sweet, ever-efficient Kai, whom I hadn't even realised was lurking in the corner—sprang from his chair and snapped into action.

I blinked several times, but the scene refused to rearrange itself. No, I wasn't hallucinating. Lochlan was here. In my hospital room.

Which meant he'd probably heard my entire argument with Cary. Every humiliating word.

Brilliant. Absolutely bloody brilliant. I wished for death. Failing that, a spontaneous fire alarm.

I turned my death glare on Cary. Why hadn't he told me my boss was here?

The man had the audacity to look unbothered.

"You're probably hungry," he said in his best magnanimous tone. "I'll ask Greg to bring food. What would you like? A full English? Or that French toast you like so much? Greg can have it here in twenty minutes."

And then came Lochlan's voice, as smooth and polite as poisoned silk.

“That will not be necessary, Mr Grant. The hospital provides meals tailored to the patient’s needs. Introducing outside food could compromise her recovery.”

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Translation: Stop waving your wallet around, you pompous bastard.

Cary turned, squaring his shoulders. His whole body went taut, and suddenly the air between them crackled with testosterone. “Oh, yeah?” he said. “The restaurant I’m ordering from serves her favourite comfort food, which she can actually eat. Something you wouldn’t understand, being just a work acquaintance.”

Lochlan adjusted his cufflinks with lethal calm. “What Miss Galloway requires is nourishment, not nostalgia. This is a hospital, not a bistro.”

I could practically see the warning sign appear over Cary’s head: Aggression Level Rising.

“Hospital food is rubbish,” Cary said flatly. “If she can’t eat it, she won’t recover.”

“The food here,” Lochlan said evenly, “is prepared by professional dieticians. I can vouch for its quality.”

“How would you know?” Cary’s voice dripped with contempt. “Sick often? Stayed here before, have you?”

“No. But I own a stake in this hospital.”

That shut Cary up for half a heartbeat.

I couldn’t take another second. I threw the blanket aside, swung my legs off the bed, and stood up.

Both men froze mid-standoff. Their heads turned in perfect synchrony.

“What do you need?” they asked at the same time.

“The bathroom,” I muttered, and marched off before either could offer to help me.

Inside, I locked the door and leaned against the cool porcelain sink. My reflection stared back at me—pale from blood loss, exhausted from fitful sleep, and still burning with mortification from having my boss witness my argument with my ex-husband.

I splashed cold water on my face, partly to wake up, mostly to avoid committing homicide.

When I finally opened the door again, I was greeted by the scent of freshly cooked food.

Greg stood beside the bed holding a tray loaded with a magnificent full English breakfast: sausages, eggs, toast—the works.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 118:

On the other side of the bed, Kai held a tray of Lochlan-approved food—delicious-smelling chicken soup and grilled salmon.

I stood there, trapped between the expectant gazes of both men.

They stared at me, waiting. Cary's expression said, "I know what you want." Lochlan's said, "I know what's good for you."

I was still weighing which option would make me hate myself less when a knock came at the door.

"Is this a bad time?" came a voice I hadn't expected to hear again.

Jaclyn appeared, half-hidden behind an enormous bouquet of flowers.

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"No, of course not. Come in," I said immediately. I was so relieved for the interruption I could've kissed her perfume-soaked cheek.

She stepped inside, surveying the scene.

"These are for you," she said, setting the bouquet on the table.

“Thank you,” I said. They were beautiful, and more importantly, they were not from another man.

Jaclyn clasped her hands. “I owe you an apology,” she said to me, though her eyes kept flicking towards Lochlan, as if seeking approval. “I trusted Marcus and Tan. I didn’t know what was going on. I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine,” I lied smoothly.

Of course it wasn’t fine. She’d been CEO for two years and had somehow managed to miss an entire criminal enterprise operating under her nose. But she’d interrupted the male ego Olympics, so she got temporary absolution.

“Thank you,” she murmured, then turned fully towards Lochlan as if she’d finally crossed an unpleasant task off her to-do list. “I’ve been thinking. Your father’s right. I’m not fit to stay on as CEO. I’ll head back to London.”

So I hadn’t misheard it last night. She had indeed been fired.

I applauded in my head.

Lochlan gave her a polite nod but said nothing.

“When are you heading back?” she asked brightly. “Mind if I hitch a ride on your plane?”

He looked at her with the same expression one reserves for a slow-moving intern. “I still have business here. To clean up the mess you left.”

Her cheeks flushed.

I tried very hard not to laugh.

Cary shouldered Kai aside, reclaiming his prime position beside my bed. “You should come back with me. You’ll rest better at home.”

“I’m not going anywhere with you,” I said.

“I think I agree with Mr Grant,” Jaclyn piped up suddenly. “Hyacinth needs proper rest. She can’t work. Kai’s got his plate full. And since I’m stepping down, Loch, why don’t I fill in for her?”

I stared at her.

The woman who had come to apologise to me had just tried to steal my job. In front of me.

While I was still hooked up to a drip.

I eyed the IV stand, gave it a cautious nudge, and decided, yes, I definitely had the strength to hurl it at her.

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Chapter 119:

“Come back to Mayfair,” Cary repeated, sounding more confident now.

As if Jaclyn’s little speech had somehow validated him. You don’t need to stay here.

That was what he said, but in my ears, it automatically translated to: They don’t need you here. No one wants you but me.

I’d heard it so often during my three years working for him that I’d stopped reacting to it.

But now.

I gave the IV line a testing tug.

I hadn't forgotten the slap in his study the night I left London.

Maybe it was time to return the favour.

If only my boss weren't in the room.

"Hyacinth?" Lochlan's voice cut through my increasingly violent fantasies.

"Hmm?" I looked up. "Sorry, what?"

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"I said," he repeated, "are you planning to quit your job with us?"

"Of course not," I said instantly.

Jaclyn turned to frown at me.

I pretended I hadn't seen it.

Honestly, what did she expect? That I'd hand her my position with a polite curtsy? Who did she think she was?

Lochlan's mouth curved slightly. "Good. Then I expect you to report for work once you've made a full recovery."

"Thank you," I said brightly, then turned to Kai. "You can send me the quarterly budget allocations and the internal memos from the VPs. I'll review them once I get my laptop back."

Kai looked at Lochlan.

"It's my leg that's hurt, not my brain," I said quickly. "I can handle a bit of paperwork."

Lochlan hesitated briefly, then nodded.

"I'll let you rest," he said, standing. "A nurse will stay with you full-time. Call if you need anything."

"Thank you, boss."

Kai followed him out.

"Loch, wait!" Jaclyn's voice rose as she hurried after them. She cast me one last look of pure loathing before scurrying out. "I can handle paperwork too! I used to, remember? Back when we—"

I rolled my eyes at her retreating back. She truly thought any woman with a functioning vagina near Lochlan automatically posed a threat to her.

“You’d rather work for him while you’re still sick than come back with me?”

Oh right—Cary was still here. I’d momentarily forgotten, which said a lot about how desperately I wanted to.

“Lower your voice,” I said. “This is a hospital, not a fish market.”

At my scolding tone, he didn’t look furious. He looked... scared. As if losing me was suddenly a real possibility he couldn’t bully away.

I reached for the French toast—mistake. Cary’s eyes lit up with the smug glow of a man convinced he’d just won a symbolic victory.

I immediately swapped the plate for the chicken soup.

He frowned. “Let me feed you.”

I gave him a flat stare. “I can use a spoon.”

He still held the spoon in his hand, refusing to hand it over.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 120:

I eyed the IV stand again, seriously considered hurling it at him. Violence seemed to be one language he understood. That, and arrogance.

But when I looked at him again, I saw the bruises blooming across his cheeks and the faint cut on his jaw that had dried and crusted over.

He'd gone all out when he pounded Marcus and almost killed the man.

That violence had been for me. Because Marcus hurt me.

He could've gone to jail because of me.

I pulled the blanket over my head and muttered, "I'm tired. I want to sleep."

"Hyacinth," he began again.

I yanked the blanket higher.

There was a beat of silence. Then nothing but his breathing, slow and heavy.

I stayed at the hospital another three days, and Cary refused to leave.

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He lingered by my bedside like a barnacle that had mistaken me for a ship's hull.

He tried to help with everything. Fetching water. Folding my blanket. Hovering during the nurse's rounds.

When he offered to give me a sponge bath, I nearly committed actual violence.

"Why can't I?" he grumbled when I snapped at him. "I've seen you naked plenty of times. It's just a sponge bath. We used to do so much more in a—"

"Shut up!" I hissed.

The nurse, bless her, wordlessly wheeled her basin into the bathroom, pretending to have gone deaf.

I waited until she was out of earshot, then turned to Cary. "You have five seconds to leave, or I'm calling security. Don't you have a business to run?"

He didn't budge. "My business is taking care of you."

“Five, four,” I counted.

“Hyacinth.”

“Three, two.”

He stared.

I stared back. “One.”

“You wouldn’t.”

I reached for the call button.

He shot to his feet. “Fine.” He stormed out.

After the nurse finished, I made a call on my new phone. Kai had brought me replacements for everything Marcus had destroyed: phone, laptop, tablet.

“Company’s picking up the tab,” he’d said. “You got attacked on company time, so it counts as a work expense.” Corporate compassion at its finest.

He’d also mentioned a promotion and a raise, which I suspected had less to do with my skills and more to do with Lochlan’s guilt management strategy. Still, never look a gift billionaire in the mouth.

I called Portia.

She picked up on the first ring.

“Oh thank God,” she said, exhaling. “I thought it was you, but I wasn’t sure. I heard Scary Cary was flying out to Singapore. I wanted to warn you, but your phone was off for four days. What the hell happened? I was this close to calling the cops.”

“Long story,” I said. “I’m fine now, mostly. But I need an update.”

“Right. But you’re not going to like it. Vanessa Abrams is out.”

“Out of what? Prison? On bail?”

“She’s been released. Free as a bird.”

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Message from Noa: And we’re almost at the end of the month dear readers, as always remember that God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best. (>_>=)✎

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 121:

I sat up too quickly and immediately regretted it. “How?”

“Her family hired one of those flashy forensic psychiatrists who write miracle diagnoses for rich clients,” Portia said. “The kind who can look at a serial killer and say, ‘He was under stress.’”

“You’re joking.”

“Nope. The corporate whore claimed she had an ‘acute psychotic breakdown’ and wasn’t criminally responsible for her actions.”

“She sounded perfectly lucid when she ordered my kidnapping,” I said flatly.

“I know. But the court bought it. Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity. She’s been remanded to a private psychiatric facility for assessment.”

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“Let me guess. Somewhere peaceful. Expensive. With champagne on the terrace?”

“You’ve got it. A lovely little retreat in the Cotswolds. She’ll be Instagramming ‘healing journey’ quotes by the weekend.”

I muttered a curse.

Portia was much more explicit. “I can’t believe that psychotic slut walked. That family is rotten. The whole fucking Abrams clan should be dumped in the Thames with weights on their ankles. ‘Psychotic breakdown’ my arse. The only thing unhinged about her is how hard she clings to men who don’t want her.”

“Were you at the hearing?” I asked.

“No. If I had, I’d have thrown my shoe at the judge. Rich twats cry ‘stress’ and suddenly the legal system curtsies? Meanwhile normal people have to sell a kidney for bail.”

It made me sick too, but none of it surprised me.

Three years married to Cary had cured me of any illusions about justice. There were two sets of rules: one for people with private jets, and one for everyone else.

Portia exhaled sharply. “So, what now? You need me to fly over and stab someone? Because honestly, I’m free this week.”

“I don’t need stabbing. I need strategy.”

Her rant paused. She sniffed. “Alright. Talk to me.”

“Let me think.”

I leaned back against my pillows.

Three days in this hospital. Three days of Cary glued to my side. Three days of him deciding he knew better—hovering, bossing the nurses around, staring at me like if he blinked I would disappear again.

Three days of Lochlan’s guards at the door, which I appreciated, but I couldn’t keep using them like my private bouncers.

Lochlan was my boss, not my keeper.

And I had no powerful family, no childhood friend with a godfather in Parliament, no built-in army of old-money cousins ready to form a polite lynch mob.

Just me, my medical chart, and the man who refused to accept the word no.

I could block Cary once with Lochlan's resources. Maybe twice. But long term? Impossible.

Cary believed he was being romantic. Noble. Heroic. He thought he was rescuing me.

It didn't matter that I wanted him to go; in his head, I was the damsel. He was the knight. He was convinced persistence equalled love. And I had no leverage that would make him stop.

Unless someone else gave him a reason.

Someone he couldn't ignore.

Someone with the same unhinged pedigree he came from. Someone who would declare war if she thought another woman was touching her toy.

"Portia," I said slowly, "I need you to spread a rumour."

She perked up. "Oh? Juicy. Go on."

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 122:

“Tell your London gossip pipeline that Cary Grant flew to Singapore,” I said, keeping my tone light, “to win back his estranged wife.”

Portia went silent, then laughed. “You evil genius. You are dangling meat in front of a rabid bitch.”

“Vanessa will hear it within hours. She’ll think he’s reconciling with me, and she’ll go feral with jealousy.”

Portia let out a whistle. “And she’ll barrel straight at him.”

“Exactly.”

Portia cackled. “You’ve been spending too much time with billionaires. Your brain’s morally corrupt now. I’m so proud.”

I shrugged. “Adapt or die.”

“Do you have any photos?” she asked briskly. “Rumour’s good; image is better.”

I hesitated. Then opened my camera roll.

And there he was. Cary, asleep on the pull-out sofa in my room—tie gone, shirt rumpled, jacket on the floor.

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Evening light had painted his face gold, softening his sharp edges, catching on the stubble he hadn’t bothered to shave. He looked tired. Human. Vulnerable in a way he would never allow while awake.

I had taken that picture impulsively—confused, annoyed, sentimental—something I did not want to name.

In the past, I'd been the one sitting up in bed, waiting like a fool while he was off doing whatever he did. Now he was the one doing the waiting. The symmetry felt cruel.

I shook the thought off and sent the photo.

The Singapore skyline glowed outside the window behind him. The hospital suite looked expensive. And my face was not in it. Perfect deniability.

Portia made a delighted sound. "Oh, he looks like a tragic husband who cried himself to sleep. This will spread faster than an STI at a hedge-fund boys' trip. Leave it to me."

Lochlan and Kai dropped by the next evening.

Cary was gone. He'd bolted mid-afternoon after getting a call that had clearly shaken him.

I wondered if Portia's rumour mill had spun faster than expected.

"Good evening, boss," I said cheerfully.

“Evening,” Lochlan replied, looking uncharacteristically tired.

Which made sense. I managed his schedule, so I knew he’d been pulling sixteen-hour days since the factory disaster. Now, with Jaclyn gone and half the local management on edge, he was probably juggling six crises before breakfast.

I was about to assure him I was fit to return to work when Kai beat me to it. “Good news, Hyacinth. We’re flying back to London tomorrow, assuming you’re well enough to travel.”

“Of course I am.” I jumped out of bed to prove it, doing a neat little spin that would’ve impressed a physiotherapist.

Kai grinned, but Lochlan’s brow creased slightly in disapproval.

I ignored it. “So, Marcus Tay finally confessed?”

Kai nodded. “How’d you know?”

Because I’m not an idiot.

Out loud, I said, “The staff already turned on him, and the evidence pile was high enough to bury him alive. The part that still makes no sense is why he tried to kill me. It was embezzlement, not high treason. You don’t arrange a murder over creative accounting.”

Kai exchanged a look with Lochlan.

I recognised that look. It was the one men used right before telling women something they thought we couldn’t handle.

“What?” I said. “Don’t do that. Spit it out.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 123:

Kai sighed. “Because he wasn’t just covering up embezzlement. He was covering up murder.”

“What?” My mouth went dry. “You mean he actually killed someone?”

“Two someones,” Kai said. “A double homicide ten years ago.”

Something clicked. “You’re talking about those phantom employees. The ones with fake names on the payroll.”

“Yes. They were real,” he said grimly. “Illegal immigrants. Marcus got them jobs, forged their papers, and took eighty per cent of their salaries. When they tried to leave, he panicked. A fight broke out, and he killed them.”

“Jesus.” I blinked, trying to wrap my head around it. I’d assumed he was a greedy sociopath, not a homicidal one.

“Shawn Tan helped with the fake documents,” Kai went on. “He was complicit. When Marcus threatened him, he had no choice but to keep quiet. They decided to pretend the workers were still alive, kept them on the payroll, and split the money for over a decade. No one came looking for the victims, so it stayed buried.”

“That’s bloody evil,” I muttered.

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“You uncovered the embezzlement within weeks,” Kai said. “Marcus panicked. He thought you’d dig deeper and uncover the murders. That’s why he tried to silence you.”

I felt a sharp chill under my skin, the kind that crawls up your spine and stays there. I’d known Marcus was dangerous, but I hadn’t realised I’d been that close to dying.

I looked at my boss.

If Lochlan had listened to Jaclyn and assumed I’d wandered off clubbing, if he hadn’t ordered everyone back to the factory, if that phone call hadn’t distracted Marcus for those precious few seconds—I’d be a headline now.

Or, more likely, I’d be fish food.

I swallowed hard. “Thank you, boss. Really. I don’t know how to repay you.”

Lochlan’s gaze met mine briefly. He gave me one of his signature courteous smiles. “You’re my employee. Your safety is my responsibility.”

More words of gratitude began piling up in my throat like an emotional traffic jam, all of them shoving and tripping over each other, desperate to get out before I embarrassed myself by actually crying.

Maybe sensing my face was about to crumple like a wet tissue, Kai cut in. “I had to eat the cake. It can’t be kept too long. I’ll buy you another one.”

I blinked. “What cake?”

“The ondeh-ondeh cake.” Kai slapped a palm to his forehead. “Right, I forgot. You didn’t know. Boss bought you cake the night you—”

“Kai.”

Lochlan hadn’t raised his voice, hadn’t even glanced up from adjusting the sleeve of his suit jacket, yet the temperature in the room somehow dropped a solid five degrees.

His expression stayed faultlessly composed, calm and courteous as always.

Except I happened to be looking at him.

And unless sleep deprivation was making me hallucinate, I caught it—the tiniest flicker in his eyes. A flash of something that looked suspiciously like embarrassment.

He smoothed his cuff again, gaze serenely elsewhere.

Why on earth would he feel embarrassed?

More importantly, why was he buying me cake?

I turned to Kai, eyebrows raised.

He gave me an apologetic shrug, then mouthed, “Tell you later.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 124:

Lochlan rose from the chair. "I should let you rest," he said.

Which was fine, except I suddenly didn't want him to go.

Ridiculous, really.

Being rescued from death apparently scrambled my common sense like eggs.

Also, I had been horizontal for far too long, and my brain had decided the appropriate way to demonstrate independence was to stand up on wobbly legs and walk my boss to the door like a deranged hostess at a five-star sanatorium.

So, of course, I got up.

Too fast.

My knees buckled. Gravity launched an immediate and enthusiastic coup d'état. I let out a very dignified squeak.

Lochlan caught me.

One second I was upright; the next I was in his arms, pressed against the expensive wool of his suit—his scent clean and quiet and infuriatingly masculine, like cedar and restraint and a hint of something sinful buried under layers of propriety.

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His hand wrapped around my waist, firm, steady, and entirely inappropriate for a woman who hadn't had sex in over a month and whose last memory of it involved me riding a man like the world was ending.

Heat flared low in my stomach. Absolutely traitorous. Useless, horny stomach.

Lochlan's expression flickered, surprise breaking through that usual marble composure.

Remembering what happened to the last woman who tried to get intimately close with him, for a moment I thought he might drop me out of sheer panic about physical contact, but when I instinctively grabbed his lapel for balance, his arm tightened in response.

Our faces were close. So close that I could see the tiny mole under the outer corner of his left eye—a mole I didn't even know existed. It was ridiculous how attractive a microscopic dot could suddenly become when it was attached to a man built like a Greek tragedy in a tailored suit.

An unhinged thought grabbed me by the throat: I wanted to touch that mole. Maybe even lick it.

Yes. Lick.

My hand actually moved, acting like it had resigned from my body and taken independent career steps in the field of Terrible Decisions.

I only realised what it was doing when it froze halfway to his face, fingers practically caressing him.

Lochlan cleared his throat—a polite little warning cough.

Brilliant. Now I could add “humiliated to horny” to the growing list of feelings I had no business feeling around my boss.

I could feel the warmth of his breath. It was indecent. No man who looked like that should be allowed to breathe near a recovering patient.

There should be hospital regulations. A warning sign at the ward entrance: Caution—attractive men in proximity may cause delusions, thirst, and spontaneous lapses in dignity.

He was about to step back; I could tell, his body already shifting away.

Meanwhile, my traitorous blood was trying to turn itself into molten lava.

I opened my mouth, desperately searching for something clever and absolutely not sexually deranged to say. Something like, “Sorry, my knees forgot they have a job,” or maybe, “Turns out if you lie in bed too long, your legs file for retirement.”

Something—anything—to take his mind off the fact that I’d almost groped him.

But before my dignity could assemble itself, the door slammed open.

“What the hell are you doing?” a voice roared. “Get your hands off my wife!”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 125:

Cary roughly shoved Kai aside and was in front of me in an instant. “Get your fucking hands off my wife.” His eyes gleamed with murder.

I groaned inside. What was he doing back here? I’d genuinely believed he’d flown back to London by now.

Lochlan released me slowly, partly to make sure I wasn’t about to topple over, but also—I would bet a month’s salary on it—to wind Cary up. He was polite enough not to smirk about it, but politeness didn’t hide intent.

Cary's fist came up. If I wasn't standing between them, he'd have swung already.

"Don't!" I snapped.

Cary stared at me, disbelieving. "He's the one who groped you, and you're yelling at me?"

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Heat flared in my cheeks, this time out of embarrassment. "Mr Hastings wasn't groping me." If anything, it was the opposite. "Why are you even here? I thought you'd left."

"And leave you alone with him?" Cary snorted. "He shouldn't even be here. What the hell is he doing in my wife's room? It's past visiting hours."

I'd corrected him on the "wife" issue so many times that I no longer bothered. If he wanted to live in delusion-land, fine, but I would not be applying for residency.

"To check on Miss Galloway," Lochlan replied evenly. "She got hurt because of me, after all."

I fidgeted.

Well, technically I had been injured during work hours, but the way he phrased it made it sound as if I'd taken a bullet for him personally.

A vein throbbed in Cary's temple. "Let me make this clear. She's mine. In life or death. I'll kill anyone who even thinks about touching her."

Lochlan listened to that naked threat with a faint smile. He didn't say a word, but that small, dismissive smile was enough to show exactly what he thought of Cary's threat—insignificant, like the buzz of a gnat.

He turned away from Cary completely and addressed me. "The doctor confirmed you're well enough to fly. A nurse will help you pack. The flight leaves in the afternoon, so there's no need to rush breakfast."

Cary erupted. "The hell she is! She's not going on your plane, you arrogant bastard! She's flying on mine. I'm not letting her get stuck alone with you for fourteen hours. I know you've got a giant bed on that jet of yours!"

Kai snapped to attention. "Mr Grant, please watch what you say. My boss has no untoward intentions towards Miss Galloway. There is nothing between them."

I wanted to crawl under the bed and die. Everything about this felt like public humiliation—only worse, because it was private and personal and very much my life.

Cary scoffed. “He pays your salary. Of course you’d defend him. I’m a man. I know how men think. Your boss has been hovering around my wife since—”

“I swear to God, shut up!” I burst. “My boss isn’t even interested in women!”

The room went instantly, shatteringly silent. Cary froze mid-rant.

Kai froze mid-defensive stance.

Even the unflappable Lochlan stared at me, his perfectly composed expression momentarily lost to blank surprise. Once I realised what I’d just blurted out, I died internally on the spot.

“Oh God. I didn’t mean you’re gay,” I squeaked. “I meant... you wouldn’t look at someone like me twice. Or even someone like Miss Lemon, who’s stunning. Not that you don’t look at women, or—”

Oh God. Please someone euthanise me.

After a beat of silence, Lochlan said, “You need more rest. Good night.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 126:

Translation: you have brain damage. Go to sleep before you spout any more nonsense.

He turned to leave.

Cary lunged.

For one terrifying second, I thought he might actually swing—crash—and ruin both his reputation and my life. But before he even reached Lochlan, a shadow blurred.

Cameron materialised between them, silent, immovable, eyes cold with the promise of violence.

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“Don’t,” the ex-SAS operative said. Even the fluorescent lights flinched.

Lochlan hadn’t moved an inch. His voice was soft. “Get him out.”

Cameron stepped forward, ready to grab Cary by the collar and physically eject him.

“Stop!” I called, louder than I meant. “Please.” Everyone paused.

I turned to Lochlan, my voice steadier than my insides. “Thank you. Truly. And I’m sorry. I’ll be ready to fly tomorrow. Please let me speak to him alone.”

Lochlan studied me for a beat. “Are you sure?”

“I’m sure.”

He nodded. “Call if you need anything.”

Which, translated, meant: if he tries to drag you away again, I will have him removed by force next time, and no one will stop me.

He left with Kai. Cameron remained by the door for a second, assessing Cary like he was calculating acceptable joint-breaking options, then followed.

Two guards stationed themselves outside.

The instant the door clicked shut, Cary spoke, voice low and furious. “You’re not getting on that plane with him. Last time I let you do that, you disappeared on me for two months. I’m not letting it happen again.”

I looked at him, anger freezing into something sharper, colder. “Cary, you’re delusional. We are done. You don’t own me. You don’t get to decide where I go, what I do.”

“You’re my wife.”

“No. I’m not.”

I walked to my things, took out my purse, pulled a black card, and threw it at him.

It hit his chest and fell to the floor.

He stared. “What’s that?”

“Money. The beginning of paying you back. You bought me once, and that’s why you think you still own me. I’m paying it back—every cent. When I’m done, I want you gone from my life.”

I met his eyes, steady, unblinking.

“Permanently.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 127:

Kai helped me check out of the hospital in the morning.

I'd barely slept. Every time I closed my eyes, Cary's face hovered behind my eyelids—shock, disbelief, and that wounded look that said he'd finally realised I'd stopped him.

He hadn't taken my card. He'd only said, "I'm not giving up on us."

So when I spotted him loitering near Lochlan's jet, I wasn't remotely surprised. Of course he'd be there. Cary Grant—the man who mistook obsession for devotion.

Lochlan greeted him with the kind of smooth politeness that could freeze the Thames solid. "Mr Grant. A pleasure to see you again." The word "pleasure" might as well have come with air quotes and a complimentary glass of arsenic. "Though I must admit, I didn't expect to find you here. Are you not travelling on your own aircraft?"

Cary shrugged, pretending he was casual, but his jaw twitched. “It’s taken a little knock. Engine trouble. Happens. But you’ve got plenty of room on this thing, haven’t you? I need to get back to London tonight, and I can’t exactly take commercial. Give me a lift.”

That wasn’t a request. It was the same old Cary command, complete with the subtle assumption that the world existed to accommodate him. His gaze slid over Lochlan and fixed on me. I glared back, telepathically screaming, Boss, say no.

Lochlan smiled slightly—that small, elegant curve of the mouth that meant someone was about to be verbally dismembered.

“I’m afraid that won’t be possible, Mr Grant.”

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I could’ve applauded. The man had backbone.

A vein throbbed in Cary’s temple. He took a step forward, aggression barely disguised as civility. “Don’t be a prick. I’ll pay you. Name your price.”

“Thank you for the generous offer, but as it happens, Mr Grant, I find myself in the fortunate position of not needing your money. Especially not for the company of an unscheduled passenger.”

Ouch. Smooth, surgical, devastating.

Cary’s jaw clenched so tightly I could almost hear enamel cracking. His eyes flashed, full of restrained fury. He stepped closer, lowering his voice to a private growl meant only for Lochlan.

I busied myself pretending to rearrange my handbag, which is code for eavesdropping shamelessly.

When Lochlan straightened again, his expression was unreadable. “Very well, Mr Grant. I suppose an extra passenger is permissible. Do join us.”

I turned my head sharply, silently mouthing, What the hell are you doing?

Lochlan caught my look, and for a fleeting second, amusement flickered in his eyes. “Mr Grant has made a rather surprising concession,” he said mildly. “He’s ceded a lucrative London contract to my company as payment for his passage.”

His gaze held mine deliberately, assessing, probing. The unspoken message was almost audible: He’s willing to give up millions just to stay near you. Are you touched?

I kept my face cool. “Well, it’s his company. His money to lose, I suppose. Shall we board?”

Lochlan inclined his head slightly, the faintest shadow of a smirk playing at his mouth.

I didn’t know why I felt so irritable. It was Lochlan’s jet, not mine. He could invite a marching band for all I cared.

Still, the fact that he’d allowed Cary on board, knowing full well he’d spend the flight breathing down my neck, left a distinctly sour taste.

Mental note to self: buy a private jet once I’m a billionaire.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 128:

Inside, the cabin was a floating palace of cream leather and polished wood. Cary strode in and dumped his jacket on the seat opposite mine like he'd reserved it. I slipped away to the toilet and locked the door.

I dialled. "Portia? It's me. We're on the plane back to London. Did the rumour mill do its job? Any sign of Vanessa?"

"Hyacinth! You should've called earlier. It worked like a dream. I posted the picture, and Vanessa went absolutely ballistic. Word is, she found out Cary flew to Singapore after you, and she went full banshee. Threw her Birkin at the wall."

"Yes, but did she actually come here? I need her breathing down Cary's neck to keep him off mine."

"That's the snag," Portia said, sounding regretful. "Her brother's put her under house arrest. Literally. She smashed an antique vase at him when he refused to let her leave. He's locked her in the mansion for the week. No Vanessa cavalry coming, I'm afraid."

I groaned. So I'm trapped on a fourteen-hour flight with my ex-husband and my boss, and no jealous lunatic to create a diversion. Brilliant.

"Sorry, love."

"I'll come up with something. I'll call you when I do."

I hung up, stared at my reflection in the mirror, grimaced, then plastered on my best everything's fine face and opened the door.

Cary was already sitting opposite my seat, looking right at home.

Lochlan had retreated to a separate seating area, probably to preserve his sanity. Lucky man.

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I sat down, pretending to be very, very busy with my laptop. Cary leaned forward. "You should rest. Long flight ahead."

"I'll rest when I'm dead," I said sweetly.

He frowned, clearly missing the point. Then, in an attempt at gallantry, he reached over to unbuckle a blanket from the armrest. “You’ll get cold.”

I gave him a smile so frosty it could’ve iced a cocktail. “If I wanted a blanket, I’d ask for one.”

He hesitated, then decided the best way to assert dominance was by hovering. He poured me water. Adjusted the table. Rearranged the meal the attendant had just set down as if I were a child who needed supervision.

“You know, you don’t have to—”

“I’m just trying to help,” he interrupted, flashing that old Cary smile that used to melt me back when I was naive and had questionable taste in men.

I watched him fussing, and something mean and clever clicked into place in my mind.

The flight attendant placed a new platter of fruit on the table between us: kiwi berries, strawberries, slices of melon—the whole pastel Instagram palette.

Cary reached for a kiwi berry at the exact moment I leaned forward for the same fruit. Our hands brushed.

I snapped a picture. The fruit platter, our hands almost touching, his wedding ring glinting under the cabin lights.

I opened my social media, typed: [On my way back to London. Trip ruined by clingy ex.] Added a sigh emoji for flair.

Uploaded.

A woman insanely obsessed with Cary would recognise his hand instantly.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 129:

The plane touched down at Farnborough Airport at half past one, London time.

After the jet taxied to a private stand on the apron, we disembarked and entered the private lounge. I paused at the sight of the woman.

“Thank you for the plane ride, boss. I think I’ll, um, stay behind,” I said to Lochlan.

He’d seen the woman as well and glanced at me questioningly, as if to ask if I was sure.

I nodded.

I’d aired enough of my dirty laundry in front of my boss. I wasn’t about to do it again.

He left with Kai, and I mentally thanked him for not asking any awkward questions.

“My driver’s waiting outside,” Cary said with barely concealed glee. “Let’s go.”

He'd thought I was staying behind for him.

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I tilted my chin towards the woman. "Someone's waiting for you."

"Who—" He glanced up, and the glee vanished.

Vanessa stepped through the entrance, wearing an all-white suit that made her look like a ghost. Her blonde hair was scraped back, her skin pale enough to make an undertaker proud, and, because subtlety was never her strong suit, there was a bloodstained bandage wrapped around her left wrist.

Well. That answered the question of whether my social media post had worked.

"Christ," Cary muttered beside me. His entire body stiffened. "What the hell is she doing here?"

Vanessa walked towards us, heels clicking unsteadily, eyes glassy.

"Cary," she breathed, voice trembling. "I had to see you. You wouldn't take my calls."

“Because I told you not to bloody call me,” he snapped, stepping forward. His gaze landed on the bandage, and he swore again. He ran a hand through his hair. “You cut your bloody wrist to get your way again, didn’t you?”

Vanessa flinched but didn’t deny it. The soft bandage at her wrist was stained red, as if the wound were still fresh. She’d lifted it just enough to make sure we’d all seen it.

“Go home, Vanessa. You shouldn’t even be here.”

Her lips quivered. “You don’t mean that.”

“Oh, he does,” I said cheerfully. “He’s very clear when he’s done with a woman. Trust me, I’ve had the pleasure.”

She shot me a look that could’ve frozen a snake mid-strike. “I’m not talking to you.”

“And yet you keep doing it,” I replied pleasantly.

Cary sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Hyacinth—”

I made a please-go-ahead gesture. “Carry on, then.”

I’d just watch quietly while he comforted his mistress. Just like I used to do, when I was Mrs Grant and that was my miserable daily entertainment.

“Cary,” Vanessa pressed on, ignoring me entirely, “I know I went too far. I lost control. But I can’t sleep, I can’t eat, I—”

“You also can’t stop lying,” I said.

She turned fully towards me now, trembling all over. “You think this is funny? You think taking him from me makes you the better woman?”

“No,” I said lightly. “But it does make me the one he flew over ten thousand miles to find.”

Her nostrils flared. For a split second, the fragile facade cracked, revealing something darker and meaner underneath. Then she smiled, a wild, fragile thing, and reached into her designer bag.

When her hand came out, there was a small knife in it. Not large enough to kill someone outright, but plenty to make a point.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 130:

I stepped back instinctively.

Cary froze. “Vanessa. Don’t.”

“I told you,” she whispered, her voice shaking, “if you left me again, I’d rather die.”

I relaxed marginally; so the knife wasn’t meant for me.

Her eyes welled up. “I know I ruined things, but I can’t just stop caring. I love you, Cary. You can hate me, I don’t care. Just don’t leave me again.”

I lifted an eyebrow. “And you think a knife is the way to achieve that?”

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“Shut up!” she shrieked, eyes darting between us. “You think you’ve won? You think he loves you?”

“No,” I said, calm and almost bored. “But it’s clearly killing you that he doesn’t love you either.”

She lunged—towards me, not him.

The knife trembled in her hand, the blade flashing under the recessed ceiling lights. My right hand came up instinctively, the bulky handbag a last-ditch shield.

A sickening blend of triumph and utter insanity burned in Vanessa’s eyes. She wasn’t aiming for an argument; she was aiming to end me.

Cary moved with a sudden, animal speed I hadn't seen outside the bedroom. He caught her right wrist just as she was about to sweep the blade towards my chest, jerking her arm back violently.

"Vanessa! What the hell are you doing?!" Cary's voice was a low, choked roar.

Vanessa fought him like a feral cat. "Let go! She deserves it! She stole you! She's the reason!"

He slammed her against the nearest table. The impact rattled the crystal glassware, but she held onto the knife. Cary struggled to wrench the weapon from her grip, his jaw clenched, his muscles corded and straining against her frantic resistance. The knife became a wild, unguided pendulum between them.

A sharp, sick sound—a shick—cut through the noise of the struggle.

Vanessa shrieked.

The blood-stained gauze on her left wrist ripped instantly. The force of the movement sliced through the compromised skin beneath the dressing, opening the previous self-inflicted wound further.

Vanessa stopped fighting at once. Her eyes widened, focusing on the sudden, shocking surge of bright arterial blood gushing freely over Cary's tailored black cuff.

She gave a small, whimpering gasp before her eyes rolled back.

The knife clattered uselessly onto the polished floor.

“Vanessa!”

Cary let go of her right arm. His face was pure white shock. He scooped her limp, bleeding form up against his chest, cradling her.

“Shit,” he breathed. There was genuine panic in his voice this time. He turned to the gawking staff. “Call a bloody ambulance!”

The lounge attendants scattered into motion. Within seconds, a murmur rippled through the room, curious eyes turning our way.

Cary cradled Vanessa in his arms, pressing his hand to her wrist to stop the bleeding. His face was pale, drawn, every trace of anger replaced by grim responsibility.

I stood there, rooted to the floor, watching the whole scene with a strange, hollow feeling in my chest.

It was exactly what I'd wanted. She'd come. She'd distracted him. He'd have to go with her. And I was free.

Free, apparently, to feel like absolute rubbish.

As he carried her towards the waiting paramedics, a patch of blood trailing across the floor, something in my stomach twisted unpleasantly.

He glanced back once, just before disappearing through the glass doors. His expression was unreadable, but there was something in it—an accusation, maybe, or disappointment.

Either way, it stung.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 131:

“Roy, hold the engine for a moment,” I instructed, my voice level.

Roy glanced into the rear-view mirror, his eyes briefly meeting mine before returning to the windscreen. He was professional, and if he was puzzled by the command, he certainly knew better than to question it.

Kai, already settled in the front passenger seat, muttered, “Miss Abrams went in, sir.”

I offered no response. The Rolls-Royce Ghost idled silently, the air conditioning blowing cool, lightly fragrant air through the cabin. It did little to mitigate the heated agitation in my chest. I wanted to yank off my tie, but I was not in the privacy of my Mayfair residence.

I kept my eyes trained on the tablet in front of me, but the latest issue of The Financial Times failed to capture my interest.

Hyacinth was still in the lounge. With Cary Grant. And with that woman, Vanessa, who, even from a brief look in passing, advertised herself as a woman looking for trouble.

Hyacinth had asked to stay behind. I should have said no. Getting tangled up with that ex-husband of hers, who appeared to have descended into a permanent state of juvenile drama, was a dreadful idea.

But then, what business was it of mine?

I was just about to ask Roy to depart when Kai's voice suddenly tensed. "She's just come out again. She's bleeding. Mr Grant's carrying her to an ambulance."

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I lifted my eyes to the glass entrance doors.

Hyacinth emerged a short while later. She moved as if on autopilot, her eyes unfocused, tracking the ambulance lights receding into the distance.

"Kai," I said simply.

He understood the quiet command and exited the car, striding across the apron and gesturing to her. "Hyacinth, here."

She registered her surroundings enough to open the door and slide onto the leather seat beside me. She flashed a wan smile—or perhaps a grimace—that did not reach her eyes.

“Hi, boss.”

“Roy, start the car,” I said.

The Ghost glided forward.

I studied her from the corner of my eye.

She was pale, still, and unnervingly composed. There were no traces of tears on her face, no dramatic sobbing—she rarely indulged in such theatrics. The silence in the cabin was heavy, charged with the lingering violence of the scene she had just orchestrated, or at least witnessed.

Her ex-husband, who’d flown halfway around the world to reclaim her, had just left cradling his bleeding mistress.

It was over.

Wasn't that what she had wanted? I knew she had been laying bait for Vanessa—I had observed her social media post with a covert curiosity I still couldn't adequately explain. Her cold, detached attitude in the Singapore hospital had been abundantly clear: she wanted Cary out of her life permanently. Yet now that he was gone, she looked not like a victor, but like a woman who had just lost something irreplaceable. Her expression was a subtle study in disconnection.

I realised I'd been staring at her for a full two minutes, analysing her thoughts and mood with the same meticulous scrutiny I reserved for quarterly earnings reports. It was not a professional use of my time, nor was it appropriate.

She was an employee, not... not what? The thought stalled, incomplete, on the edge of a dangerous precipice.

I cleared my throat. "Hyacinth, I want you to take a few days off. There's no need to rush to report to work."

She snapped out of her daze, blinking slowly. "I'm perfectly fine, thank you, sir. I can start tomorrow."

"It's an order, not a suggestion. A minimum of three days. You have just returned from a long journey and have had... an upsetting encounter."

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 132:

She gave a small, defeated sigh. “Very well. Thank you, boss.”

We arrived at Lauderdale Tower. Roy eased the car to the kerb. We alighted, Kai volunteering to take her luggage.

We headed into the lift lobby, a silent, formal trio. I swiped my thumbprint on the keypad, unlocking the penthouse access. The doors opened with a soft chime.

Hyacinth didn’t move. She stood there, lost in thought, her gaze fixed somewhere beyond the metallic surface of the doors. I coughed lightly, a polite reminder.

“What?” she asked, startled, her eyes finally focusing on me.

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“You need to press for your floor, Hyacinth.”

A flush crept up her neck, blooming across her cheeks. “Right.”

She reached to press the button for the thirteenth floor.

The subtle look in her eyes as she did so—a flicker of self-consciousness, instantly suppressed—told me she remembered the last time this happened.

So did I.

The lift began its silent, swift ascent.

Behind us, Kai's phone buzzed with an insistent vibration. He fumbled in his jacket pocket, reaching for it, and momentarily loosened his grip on the handle of Hyacinth's luggage.

The case, a rigid, four-wheeled affair, immediately rolled forward on the polished floor. It struck the back of Hyacinth's knee with a sharp, unexpected thump.

She let out a tiny, stifled sound of surprise, and her legs instantly buckled. She pitched forward, arms flailing, and in a pure panic response, grabbed the nearest solid object to stop her fall.

That nearest solid object happened to be my body, just below the waist.

Specifically, her right palm slapped against my hip, her fingers digging into the firm flesh of my rear with a desperate, crushing grip.

A rush of heat—instant and devastating—shot through the fine wool of my bespoke trousers. My mind, usually a fortress of calculation and control, instantly dissolved.

Her touch was not a light brush; it was a tight, panicked hold, and the sheer, unexpected intimacy of it sent my memory hurtling back to the cramped confines of the private car in Singapore, and the subsequent stream of dreams that had haunted my nights—each featuring Hyacinth and the indecent things she did to me.

I inhaled sharply, a silent, minuscule gasp of pure male arousal. My muscles involuntarily tensed. I was profoundly grateful my suit jacket was long enough, and cut correctly, to conceal the swift, embarrassing reality unfolding beneath the silk lining.

Hyacinth released her hold immediately, stepping back and clasping her hands to her mouth, her face pale with shock and mortification. "Oh my God, I'm so sorry. Are you alright?"

Kai, having finally silenced his phone, seized control of the rogue suitcase and offered a hurried apology.

I said nothing. Words, in that moment, were a liability.

The lift bell chimed discreetly. We had reached her floor.

The doors opened.

Hyacinth bolted. She shot out of the lift and nearly clipped her leg on the frame in her haste to escape. I watched her hurry towards her door, keys fumbling in her hand.

I allowed myself a slow, private exhale, adjusting the lay of my jacket and thinking: So, I wasn't the only one unnerved by the contact.

The faint, fragrant ghost of her panic-stricken touch lingered—an uncomfortable reminder that I was far less controlled around her than I meticulously pretended to be.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 133:

The air outside the private hospital room was cool and sterile, but my blood was still boiling.

I stared at the phone screen. Call Failed.

I'd called her using a new number—one Greg had acquired minutes ago. How the hell did she know it was me? Or was she simply screening all unidentified calls?

“Fuck,” I muttered, loud enough that Greg, who was approaching, froze. He'd been holding up a tablet, but he paused, clearly thinking twice about coming too close to an untamed tiger.

“What?” I snapped, my impatience raw.

“The apartment at Lauderdale Tower, sir,” he said carefully. “Mrs Grant’s apartment is on the thirteenth floor. The nearest one available for sale is on the twentieth.”

“Bought it?”

“Yes. All the paperwork’s done. I’ve contacted the interior designer and the movers. It’ll be ready in two weeks.”

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“Do it faster. Offer a bonus or a bloody threat. Either way, I want to move in by the end of this week.”

“On it, boss.”

“Penthouse?”

“I’ve made calls, but can’t reach the owner.”

We both knew who the owner was, and why he wouldn't sell.

"His agent said he's not willing to sell under any circumstances."

Just as I expected.

Lochlan. That man living in the same building Hyacinth now called home was a coincidence I couldn't stomach.

Short of asking Hyacinth to move back with me—which she'd never do in a million years—the only way to get closer to her was to move into her building.

Chasing back your wife is a long bloody war, Grant. You need some patience, I told myself, even as my temper coiled tight in my chest.

Had she always been this antagonistic? Or had she only shown her true self after the divorce?

Behind me came a soft, whimpering sound.

“Cary.”

“Fuck.”

I turned and walked back into the hospital room.

Vanessa’s face was pale from blood loss, and the tears welling in her eyes made her look pitiful. The thick, ugly bandage on her left wrist was an eyesore.

“Cary,” she called again, her voice soft and pleading.

“The doctor said you’re fine,” I said, staying as far from the bed as possible. My tone was cold and clipped. “You’ll be discharged in a few days.”

She still reached out a hand. “Cary, can I have a hug?”

When I didn’t move, she dropped her voice into that manipulative murmur I knew too well. “The doctor said it’s going to leave a scar.” She raised her bandaged hand, proof of her suffering.

“That’s your own doing,” I said flatly.

If she'd been reckless enough to do this to herself, she could live with the consequences.

If I'd been colder, I'd have let her bleed out in that airport lounge. Too fucking bad I still had a human heart.

Vanessa's voice rasped, but her eyes burned with a bright, unsettling intensity. That look made my pulse jump. I'd seen it before—on someone else—but couldn't recall when.

"You owe me."

"I don't fucking owe you anything, Vanessa."

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 134:

She raised her wrist higher. “I risked my life for you. I bled for you. This proves I care more about you than that cold bitch Hyacinth ever did.”

“You did that for yourself.”

A slow, possessive smile spread across her pale lips. “Yet you stayed. You saved me. I knew you would. You saw how much I love you, didn’t you?”

I shoved my hands into my pockets. “Vanessa, you fucking idiot. You tried to kill her, then reopened your own wound. I stayed because you’re a liability I can’t afford running loose, not because I want you.”

The madness in her eyes didn’t fade. Her voice turned sharper. “Don’t lie. You saw her face—she didn’t care. But I did. I showed you what loyalty is. I put my life on the line. You sent me away for her, Cary, but did you forget you came to me first?”

I flinched. A sharp, involuntary tremor.

“You seduced me,” she hissed. “You made me think you wanted me. You kissed me. When I stripped naked in your office, you didn’t say no. I know you were just using me to get a rise out of Hyacinth. It didn’t work. She left. But I’m still here. You can’t toss me aside now. Not after I nearly died for you.”

I made the mistake of stepping closer.

She grabbed my hand and pressed it to her lips.

I tried to pull free. She wouldn’t let go, and the IV line on her hand stretched dangerously taut.

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“Let go!” I roared.

“No.” Her eyes were wide, wild. “I need you to stay with me, all night. I won’t feel safe unless you’re here. If you leave, I’ll finish the job.”

I stared at her. “You’re insane.”

“Maybe,” she whispered, smiling faintly. “And you’re stuck with me.”

I looked at her, pale and bandaged, and felt nothing but cold dread.

“You knew what I was, yet you still let me in,” she said. “You kissed me, Cary. You let me take her place. You let this happen. You made me think I mattered.”

I slammed my palm against the wall. Her words were acid, corroding what was left of my temper.

“I know you were using me,” she said again. “But I don’t mind. Being used means I’m useful, right? Keep using me, Cary.”

“No,” I said quietly. “The show’s over, Vanessa. The game’s up.”

My heart hammered against my ribs. It had been a stupid game from the start—parading women in front of Hyacinth, faking intimacy, trying to prove how little she meant to me, when the truth was the opposite.

I’d been terrified she’d realise she owned my heart. Stupid male pride had kept me silent, and now it was worse—because even if I offered it, she wouldn’t take it.

Vanessa yanked suddenly, the IV line stretching, the needle pulling painfully against her skin.

“Stop that!” I barked, lunging forward and pinning her back to the pillows. “Lie still, damn it, or you’ll rip your wound open again.”

Her arms shot around my waist, dragging me down.

“You didn’t say no when I answered Hyacinth’s call on your phone,” she breathed, her voice thick with triumph. “Didn’t say no when your mother set us up. Didn’t say no when I undressed in your office and Hyacinth walked in and I lied, saying you loved me. Why are you saying no now?”

She tried to pull me closer, desperate and frantic, her voice breaking with need. “Don’t push me away. Just stay. Just—”

“Don’t push it,” I warned, my voice low, ragged.

For one unsteady heartbeat, it was almost easy to give in—to bury my guilt in her arms, her need, her chaos.

Then I saw it: Hyacinth burning our wedding photos in the yard, her eyes filled with a grief so raw it was almost beautiful. The memory hit me like a bullet.

The heat drained from my body. I felt cold, hollow, human again.

“Stop it!”

I shoved her away hard. She fell back onto the bed, startled. I stepped away, my breath uneven, my hands shaking with fury I couldn’t properly place.

Then I walked—no, ran—out of that sterile white room, away from the madness, the temptation, and the wreck I’d made of my life.

Behind me, her voice rose, shrill and furious.

“You can’t run from me! You know you want me!”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 135:

I declined the call from the unknown number, blocked it, and set my phone face down on the table.

“Who’s that?” Portia asked, sipping her Sauvignon Blanc like she was judging its pedigree.

“No one important.” Probably Cary. But that answer still held.

“Your little scheme worked,” she said, eyes glinting with wicked amusement. “Maybe too bloody well. Here’s to Vanessa being successfully removed from the playing field, if only temporarily.”

We clinked glasses.

“She’s hospitalised, I take it?” I asked.

“Honey, please. Word from a friend of a friend who knows one of Armond’s bodyguards: she’s been admitted to some exclusive psych suite. Blood loss, self-harm, the full Shakespearean spectacle. Apparently, she’s under suicide watch.” Portia smirked. “That woman’s always been melodramatic, but attempting murder and then stabbing herself for a guilt trip? That’s Oscar-worthy.”

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I waved a hand. “As long as she keeps Cary away from me, she can set herself on fire for all I care. I’ve got enough chaos in my own life.”

“Speaking of chaos,” Portia leaned in, her eyes glittering, “tell me about the murderer again.”

I recounted Marcus, the factory, the kidnapping, and how it ended with blood and ocean water.

“Jesus, who needs Netflix when I’ve got you?” she said, shuddering.

“I’ve signed up for a self-defence class. Starts next week.”

Her brows lifted in approval. “Good. About bloody time. I’ve been telling you for years that your only weapon can’t be sarcasm and a good heel kick.”

“Come with me,” I said. “You could use the stress relief. Punching things sounds therapeutic.”

Portia laughed. “Tempting. But between running my clinic and the pro bono work for the women’s shelter, I can’t promise I’ll make it. I’ll see if I can swing it, though.”

“Fair enough,” I said, picking up my wine. “If I come back bruised, you’ll just have more skin to treat.”

“True.” She smirked, then leaned forward with mock seriousness. “Now, let me inspect the wound.”

I lifted my dress hem, revealing the long, healing gash along my thigh.

Portia whistled low, then ran her cool fingertips just shy of the scar. “That’s nasty. But we’ll fix it. I’ll bring you the good cream, the one that costs more than gold dust. You’ll be baby-smooth again in a month.”

“You’re a saint,” I said, pulling the dress back down.

She sat back, grinning. “Now for the truly important question. How’s the situation with the penthouse god?” She pointed a finger at the ceiling.

“Lochlan? He’s a great boss. Professional. Efficient. He gave me a raise and a promotion, probably to compensate for the whole ‘almost murdered on company time’ situation, but I’ll take it.”

“I don’t give a damn about your job. I mean him. Have you climbed Mount Hastings yet?”

“Portia!”

“Oh, come on. That man wears a three-piece suit like sin in human form. You can see the muscle under the tailoring, can’t you? You just know his abs are carved like something you’d lick champagne off. Those hands? Big, veiny, probably capable of doing unspeakably creative things to a woman. I bet when he loosens his tie-”

“Stop right there,” I said sharply, heat prickling at the base of my throat.

Portia’s grin widened. “You’ve thought about it. Don’t lie.”

“I have not,” I said too fast. “He’s my boss.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 136:

“And?”

“I’m not sleeping with my boss. Ever again. We both know how well that turned out last time.”

“Yes, but Cary was a prick,” she said cheerfully. “Lochlan looks like the sort who’d take his time, praise your every moan, and ruin you in three different ways before breakfast.”

“Portia!”

She snorted with laughter. “Darling, you sound defensive. You’re thinking about it, aren’t you?”

“No,” I said firmly. “Absolutely not. Not even once.”

Well, except for the nightly dreams that left me waking in a sweat, my pulse thudding, my body aching, and the faceless man between my thighs somehow always wearing a white shirt rolled to his forearms, his voice smooth and low. I told myself it wasn’t Lochlan, just a generic sex dream. My subconscious, however, had clearly gone rogue.

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Portia wiggled her eyebrows. “If you won’t, I bloody will. I’ll text him right now and see if he’s free for dinner.”

“Be my guest. But don’t get your hopes up. The last woman who tried that lost her CEO title and got shipped back to London in disgrace.”

Portia paused mid-reach for her phone. “Oh. Well. That’s... slightly arousing but also career-ending. Never mind then.”

My phone buzzed again. Unknown number. Decline.

Portia's expression softened. "Have you spoken to your parents yet?"

"No," I muttered, suddenly fascinated by my coaster.

"Hyacinth." She sighed. "They already know. The whole bloody country knows about the divorce. You need to call them. They're worried."

"I know," I said quietly. "I just... don't know what to say."

"You'll think of something. You always do. And they'll forgive you for everything, because that's what parents do."

I gave a small nod, pressing my lips together. "Fine. I'll go this weekend."

Portia smiled, satisfied. She was about to say more when her phone vibrated. She glanced at the screen, frowning.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

“It’s my mum. She’s managed to sprain her ankle again.” Portia rolled her eyes heavenward. “Probably trying to chase the cat off the counter in heels. I’d better go.”

“I’ll come with you-”

“No need. It’s probably nothing. I’ll check on her and call you after.”

She grabbed her bag and kissed my cheek. “Don’t mope while I’m gone. And for God’s sake, if Lochlan calls, say yes for once.”

“Not happening,” I called after her.

Her laughter echoed down the corridor until the door clicked shut.

The flat felt suddenly too quiet. I gathered the empty glasses and set them in the sink, humming faintly to drown out the silence.

Then, from above, a soft “plink.” I looked up.

A darker patch spread slowly across the ceiling, followed by another fat drop of water hitting the table with a wet, deliberate “tap.”

I frowned, staring as the next one fell, and the next, until it wasn’t just drops anymore.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 137:

It was raining. Inside my flat.

“Damn it,” I muttered.

A widening stain spread across the ceiling like a giant bruise, and within seconds, a steady drip-drip-drip started hitting the marble floor.

The place was supposed to be luxury, not a leaking shoebox, but apparently someone upstairs had other plans.

I snatched my laptop and work files off the coffee table and shoved them onto a dry, high-backed chair, then called the building manager.

Five minutes later, the lift chimed, delivering Mr Noel Pritchett, the ever-efficient manager whose skin tone was the exact shade of expensive, over-tanned leather. His suit was, as usual, two sizes too small, as though he were competing with the seams for dominance.

“Evening, Ms Galloway,” he said briskly, glancing up at the spreading stain. “I see we’ve got a leak from above. I’ll check it out.”

I stood there, umbrella open over my head, watching the ceiling weep.

Fifteen minutes later, he was back, damp and irritated. “Someone upstairs threw a pool party,” he said flatly. “Burst a major supply pipe. The flat’s flooded.”

“A pool party,” I repeated. “Inside a flat.”

“Yes. The tenant’s out of the country. His son invited some friends over and... well, you know how teenagers behave.”

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I stared at him. “Is the ceiling about to collapse?”

“No, just leaking. We’ve got a restoration crew on the way. It’ll be fixed by tomorrow noon. But you can’t stay here tonight.” He reached into his pocket, pulled out a key card, and handed it to me. “The Corinthian Hotel. Premium suite. Our treat.”

I was still annoyed but grudgingly impressed by his efficiency. “Thank you, Mr Pritchett.”

I folded my umbrella, grabbed my laptop and handbag, and turned towards the door.

“Ms Galloway,” he called after me, “there’s another option if you’d rather not go out at this hour. We can arrange temporary accommodation here in the building.”

“Here?” I thought there were no vacancies.”

“The penthouse,” he said simply.

I spun around. “You’re joking.”

He wasn’t.

“We’re owned by Velos Capital,” he reminded me. “Mr Hastings’ penthouse is under company lease. He’s authorised me to offer it to you for the night.”

Before I could respond, my phone rang. Lochlan’s name flashed on the screen.

“Good evening, boss,” I answered.

“I heard about the leak,” he said, straight to the point. “You’ll stay in my flat tonight.”

“That’s very kind of you,” I began cautiously, “but Mr Pritchett just offered me a suite at The Corinthian-”

“That won’t be necessary,” Lochlan interrupted. “I rarely stay at the penthouse. You’ll have the place to yourself.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 138:

For some reason, my pulse tripped. Of course he wasn’t staying. Why would he? But the image of his suit jacket hanging over a chair, of his cologne lingering in the air, of his sheets—no. Absolutely not.

“You’re reporting for work on Monday as Chief Administrative Officer,” he continued. “We might as well use tonight to go through the new mandates. Saves time.”

“Understood, Mr Hastings,” I said, perfectly composed while my thoughts did backflips.

After a quick goodbye to a relieved Mr Pritchett, I stepped into the lift. The button for the penthouse was already glowing.

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The ride was smooth, silent, and wildly at odds with my brain, which had devolved into a loop of irrational thoughts: Just a work meeting. He’s not staying. I won’t be sleeping anywhere near him. Perfectly professional.

The lift chimed softly. I stepped out—and nearly forgot how to breathe.

The penthouse was glass and light and money, stretching out in elegant silence. And in the middle of it stood Lochlan Hastings, not in one of his immaculate suits, but in a dark sleeveless top and fitted shorts. It was only the second time I’d seen him dressed down, and the difference was almost indecent.

The smooth, polished executive exterior was gone, replaced by something rougher, more elemental. He looked less like a CEO and more like a man carved for physical pursuit—broad chest, taut shoulders, lean waist, and those forearms, all sculpted power and quiet readiness. Even standing still, his body carried a tension that suggested he could launch into action at any moment.

I just stared. And kept staring.

Portia's voice unhelpfully popped into my head: I bet his hands are enormous. Imagine what those hands could do to a woman.

God help me, I did imagine. Because I'd always had a weakness for hands—strong, slightly calloused ones, capable of both destruction and control.

Cary had hands like that. I could still remember them, the way they'd grip my hips, my throat, the way they'd make me forget how to breathe until I was clawing for more. The memory hit me like a live wire, and my throat went dry.

I couldn't look away from Lochlan's hands now, resting casually by his sides, long-fingered and steady, elegant even in stillness.

Portia's theory started to make dangerous sense. Maybe I kept thinking about Cary because he was the only man I'd ever had, the only one I had any comparison for. Maybe what I needed was another man. A different man.

I wondered what Lochlan would be like in bed. Would those hands be as commanding as Cary's—gripping, possessive, ruthless—or would he be gentle, deliberate, the kind of lover who stayed calm even while undoing you entirely?

The images were uninvited, vivid, and far too detailed. My pulse was doing something unprofessional, and the air felt heavier than it should.

Then the hands I'd been staring at moved.

I blinked, realising belatedly that Lochlan had crossed the space between us and was now standing right in front of me.

"I'm sorry," I said quickly, trying to sound businesslike rather than breathless. "I didn't mean to interrupt your workout."

"You're not," he said simply, the corner of his mouth twitching. "Come in."

He gestured towards the interior, and I followed, trying very hard not to stare at his shoulders. Or his back. Or anything, really.

The flat was vast and beautifully designed. Everything looked expensive, curated, the kind of place that would photograph perfectly for an interiors magazine but gave off very little sense of an actual human living there.

Then I saw it: a glass-walled room at the far end filled with gleaming gym equipment, far more than any normal home gym would ever require. Every surface shone, every machine looked maintained with military precision.

That, I thought, was the only part of this place that seemed alive. It had Lochlan written all over it.

He led me into the study, a sleek space overlooking the Thames. The city lights shimmered beyond the glass, silent and seductive. He sat opposite me at a polished black table. I placed my files on the table and drew in a quiet breath, acutely aware of how close he was, of how the air felt denser with him in it.

“Let’s go through the brief,” Lochlan said.

And I tried not to think about the way that voice might sound saying my name in a different setting entirely.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 139:

“Let’s go through the brief,” I said, as if this meeting were necessary.

It wasn’t. HR could have handled every detail. I just wanted her here. Near me.

She sat, her focus on the tablet between us, the picture of professional curiosity.

But I noted the details: the faint flush in her cheeks, the slower-than-usual cadence of her speech that suggested a drink or two. The simple black dress, more suited for an evening out than a work briefing.

Who were you drinking with? Was he waiting for you? The fact that you came here, that you cancelled your plans for this—does that make me the more favourable option? A useful piece of data.

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“Your immediate priority is taking oversight of the central shared services functions,” I began, my voice calm and measured. “This means HR, Compliance, Group Legal, and Facilities.”

I continued to speak while my mind catalogued her. She wasn't wearing perfume, but a faint, clean scent—soap or shampoo—clung to her. It was distractingly simple.

She leaned forward to point at a chart, her forearm brushing against mine. The contact was a spark on dry tinder.

I should fire her. Terminate her contract with a generous severance. Wait the requisite week, then have her tracked down. Ask her to dinner. A clean solution, bypassing the tediousness of an office romance.

“You’ll see the primary pain point is the inter-departmental communication lag,” I said, tapping the screen to highlight the data.

She nodded, her expression thoughtful. The neckline of her dress was modest, but as she shifted, it gaped just enough to reveal a hint of cleavage.

Or I could make an offer. A financial arrangement for a single night. A significant sum, discreetly transferred, to satisfy this persistent fixation. It would be a transaction, clean and simple. No messy expectations.

An email notification bloomed on my laptop. Lucas Gottesman. The oil tycoon was still begging for a meeting. I’d blacklisted him after he’d suggested a trade—Hyacinth for one of his secretaries—as if they were collectible assets.

My years in global finance had been a masterclass in the depravity that power enables. Yacht parties where women were circulating currency, wives traded like stocks, private chats filled with illicit recordings.

Lucas's proposition was pedestrian by comparison.

And yet, the thought of her in that world—my world—was intolerable.

Which was precisely why firing her was the most logical course of action. For her protection, and for the preservation of my own focus.

The briefing continued. She was studious, taking notes with focused intensity. My eyes caught on the small, leaf-shaped recorder pinned to her dress.

Another gift from Kai? Do they see each other outside work? Is that where her interest lies?

The wave of possessiveness was immediate, irrational, and infuriating.

Beneath the table, she stretched her legs, and her shoe connected softly with my own. A jolt, straight up my spine.

“Sorry,” she murmured, pulling her foot back as if burned.

“Quite alright,” I replied, my voice a study in neutrality, even as my jaw tightened minutely.

I glanced at her. Her gaze was fixed on the screen, but I could see the rapid, fluttering pulse at the base of her throat. A tell. She was not as composed as she seemed. The knowledge was a dark, satisfying thrill.

Finally, the briefing was over. She stood, gathering her things with an air of palpable relief.

“Thank you for the detailed brief, boss.”

The professional script demanded I leave. I had given her the penthouse; the gentlemanly thing was to depart. My flat in Belgravia awaited. Yet my feet remained rooted.

“Would you care for some coffee?” she offered, likely a polite formality. “I could make some.”

“A fine idea,” I said, rising smoothly. An excuse, seized. “I’ll show you the kitchen. The machine is custom-built.”

She followed me into the stark, open-plan kitchen, her eyes scanning the immaculate, unused surfaces. Then her gaze flickered to my attire.

“I’m sorry, boss. I’ve probably cost you your workout session. I know how religiously you stick to your schedule.”

“It’s fine,” I lied.

She stopped before the complex espresso machine, studying it. My eyes traced the line of her hips against the counter.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 140:

It would be so easy. A single step forward. To bend her over, to push that dress up her thighs, to feel the warmth of her skin against mine. To take what I want, right here, and be done with this distracting fantasy.

She turned around.

I met her gaze, my expression one of polite consideration. “Why don’t you join me in the gym?”

Hyacinth hesitated, her fingers twisting slightly. “The gym? I seldom work out. And it’s getting late. I don’t want to bother you any more than I already have.”

“It’s no bother at all,” I said, my tone softening into concerned mentorship. “If you’re not inclined for a workout, I could teach you a thing or two about self-defence. After the incident in Singapore with Marcus Tay. I felt responsible.”

It was a calculated play. I had long since learned that with a woman of her particular pride and independence, a direct order might be met with resistance. But an admission of fault, a display of vulnerability—that was a key that turned the lock. Her eyes widened, and she was quick to absolve me.

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“It wasn’t your fault. No one could’ve seen that coming.”

Precisely the response I anticipated. I let a shadow of remorse cross my features.

“You’re my employee. Your safety is my responsibility. I shouldn’t have sent you into an unclear situation without adequate preparation.”

As predicted, she hastened to shoulder the blame herself. “I decided to go and inspect the factory without telling you. The fault was mine.”

I gave a slight, conceding nod, as if her point had merit.

She relented, her posture softening. “Maybe... maybe that’s a good idea. I was actually about to sign up for self-defence classes.”

I know, I thought. That was why I had suggested it.

She glanced down at her dress. “Should I go and change?”

Absolutely not. If she went down to her flat, she’d likely talk herself out of returning.

“No need,” I said, my voice calm and instructional. “We’ll start with a few simple moves that involve mostly your hands. Your attire is fine.”

I led her into the gym, a spacious, mirror-walled room filled with the quiet hum of expensive equipment. The air was cool, carrying the faint, clean scent of disinfectant and leather.

“The first, and one of the most useful, techniques is a simple wrist release,” I began, positioning myself in front of her. “It’s for when someone grabs you, like this.”

I reached out and closed my hand around her wrist. My fingers encircled it completely, my thumb meeting my forefinger with room to spare.

So slim. So fragile. I could feel the delicate bones beneath her skin. I could pin both her wrists with a single hand, hold her still while—

“The key is not to fight the strength of the entire grip,” I instructed, my voice even and patient. “You focus on the weakest point.”

I used my other hand to tap the web of skin between the thumb and forefinger of my own hand, the one imprisoning her.

“Right here.”

She was looking at our joined hands, her expression one of intense concentration. I could feel the fine tremor in her arm.

“Now, you’re going to rotate your wrist inward, towards your own body. Don’t pull away. Turn into the pressure, right against this weak point.”

To illustrate, I stepped in closer. Much closer. Now we were almost chest to chest, my body shielding hers from the mirrors. Her scent was stronger here, intimate and distracting.

She’s enveloped. One step forward and she would be pressed between me and the weight bench. The thought was... compelling.

“Like this,” I murmured. I placed my free hand over hers, covering it completely, and guided the rotation. Her skin was warm under mine.

The movement was small, but the effect was immediate; the pressure of my grip on her wrist broke.

“You see?” I said, my voice low, spoken almost directly into her hair. “Leverage, not strength.”

She looked up at me, her breath catching slightly. The pulse at the base of her throat was a frantic, betraying rhythm.

“I see.”

I didn’t release her wrist immediately. I held it for a moment longer, letting the lesson—and the proximity—linger.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 141:

I tossed back the rest of my whisky.

It was good stuff—aged thirty years, costing more than most people made in a week. I couldn't taste a damn thing.

The bar was all polished brass and low lighting, packed with people pretending their lives weren't a mess. Right now, I was the king of them.

Armond Abrams's face was burned onto the back of my eyelids, that smug, thuggish bastard. "Play nice with Vanessa. Or else."

He'd dropped the polite businessman act the second the meeting-room door closed—just the two of us. He'd leaned across the table, his voice a low growl. "My sister is on suicide watch because of you. My mother is heartbroken. You seduced Vanessa, used her for your sick little game, and now you think you can just toss her aside?"

Play nice?

I'd laughed in his face. "Hell no. I'm not her fucking therapist. She's unhinged."

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“She talked me out of coming after you before,” he’d snarled. “Threatened to hurt herself if I touched you. But now? Now I’m not holding back. That little ‘accident’ at your Brighton construction site? The two workers who took a fall? That was just a warning. A taste. You don’t go crawling back to my sister, begging for her forgiveness, and there will be more. At every subsidiary, at every project. I will burn Mayfair Global to the ground.”

I signalled the bartender for another.

I wasn’t afraid of Armond. I welcomed a fight. But he’d threatened my family. My father could handle himself, but my mother... Tanya Grant lived in a world of charity galas and designer labels. The thought of that world colliding with Armond’s brand of violence made my skin crawl.

I hated the woman. I hadn’t spoken to her since her little stunt with Hyacinth. But she was still my mother. No one threatened what was mine. Not even the things I hated.

My mind was already working, cutting through the alcohol haze. Favours I could call in. Weaknesses in the Abrams empire. They had rumoured mafia ties; I had better, cleaner, more expensive weapons. I’d destroy them. All of them.

“That’s a lonely-looking drink for a man like you.”

A woman slid onto the stool next to me. She was all legs and cleavage, poured into a dress that left nothing to the imagination. Sophisticated. Willing. She had bigger tits than Hyacinth, longer legs—probably a hell of a lot more fun in bed, without all the frustrating, infuriating principles.

A slut.

“Fuck off,” I said, not even looking at her properly.

She recoiled, muttered something about arseholes, and left.

Good. I didn’t need the distraction.

My thoughts circled back to the real problem. Hyacinth. That stubborn, impossible woman. Offering to pay me back—every last penny for her mother’s hospital bills, for the life I’d given her. She wanted to cut the tie completely. As if it were that simple.

A dark thought surfaced, oily and tempting. She only married me because she was desperate for money. What if she was desperate again?

I could make the Galloways desperate.

Jeremy and Jenna with their simple, pathetic jobs. I could have them fired with one phone call. But that was small-time. They’d just find other jobs.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 142:

What if... what if there was an accident? A car crash. Something serious. Not fatal, but costly. Life-alteringly, bankruptingly costly. Hyacinth would be drowning in medical bills, in panic. She'd have to come to me. She'd have no other choice.

But what if she ran to Lochlan instead?

That thought was a spike of pure fire in my gut. That sanctimonious bastard with his polite words and bespoke suits. He'd probably write a cheque without a second thought, just to spite me.

The fury was a physical pressure in my skull. I drained the fresh glass the bartender had left.

“Cary?”

I looked up. Another slut? For Christ’s sake.

But it wasn’t. It was Dr Liz Forbes. My therapist. Here, in this den of expensive sin.

“Doc?” My tongue felt thick. “What the hell are you doing here?”

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“It’s a bar, Cary. People drink here.” She looked at the empty glass in front of me, her expression the same no-nonsense mask she wore in sessions. “When I allowed you to drink during our sessions, it was a tool to lower your inhibitions. I didn’t prescribe it as a primary coping mechanism.”

“I’m fine,” I grunted, gesturing to the bartender. “Get the lady whatever she wants. Put it on my tab.”

She sighed but sat down. “Talk to me. What’s happened?”

And so I did.

It was an impromptu therapy session fuelled by top-shelf whisky. I didn't give her details, just the broad strokes. A business rival. Threats. Family. She asked the questions, and I gave her blunt, ugly answers. It was easier with the alcohol blurring the edges.

At the end of the night, she was still sober, and I was not.

"I'm driving you home," she stated. It wasn't an offer.

I was too far gone to argue. I gave her the address to Lauderdale Tower.

The car ride was a blur of city lights. Next thing I knew, we were in the lobby, her small frame struggling to support my weight. My arm was draped over her shoulders, hers around my waist. From a distance, it probably looked like a hug.

"Just need to get to the lift," I slurred, focusing on the polished brass doors.

We stumbled towards them. As we approached, the doors slid open with a soft, mocking ding.

And there they were.

Hyacinth. In Lochlan's arms.

His hands were on her, holding her close. Her face was tilted up to his. They were frozen, staring out at us—at me, drunk, being held up by another woman.

The world snapped into a brutal, sobering focus.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 143:

Of all the people I never expected to see, Cary Grant topped the list.

Which, in a twisted kind of way, made perfect sense. He had the persistence of a recurring fungal infection.

I stared.

He stared back.

He had a woman's arms wrapped around his waist.

And I had Lochlan's arms around mine.

It was a farce, really. A terribly staged one.

As if electrocuted, I separated myself from Lochlan. My mouth opened, ready to spout some pathetic explanation—that I was merely seeing my boss to the door after his generous offer of the penthouse, that a sudden leg cramp had chosen that precise moment to strike, and he was just playing the gallant knight preventing my tumble.

Then I shut my mouth with a click. Why on earth should I explain myself to Cary? He was a relic, a former mistake I had officially paperworked out of my life. I owed him nothing. Besides, judging by the florid flush on his face, he was utterly pissed.

“You!” Cary barged into the lift, his hand shooting out to grab a fistful of Lochlan’s immaculate shirt collar. “What the hell are you doing with my wife? What are you doing here?”

His wrath was a palpable, messy thing. Lochlan, with a look of pure distaste, pushed him back. Cary stumbled—a testament to how drunk he was.

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Lochlan brushed down his shirt, noticed my stare, and his gaze sliced towards me, cold and sharp. “I’d have ended our briefing earlier if I knew you’d invited your ex-husband over.”

He put particular weight on the word “ex,” the faintest trace of disdain curling through his voice.

A flicker of anger sparked in my chest. Oh, brilliant. He thought I’d invited him? As if I didn’t have better ways to spend my evening.

And even if I had, so bloody what? It was my private life. He might be my boss and my occasional rescuer, but that didn't grant him a front-row seat to pass judgement on my personal disasters.

Though, mostly, I was just profoundly confused. "I didn't invite him," I said, my voice flat.

Lochlan's expression shifted from cold sarcasm to mere suspicion.

Cary scrambled up from his undignified stumble and lurched towards me, enveloping me in a cloud of expensive, alcoholic fumes. "What are you doing with him so late at night? Are you sleeping with him?"

His drunken roar was impressively loud. I found my eyes drifting to the woman who had been propping him up. She was just standing there, observing the scene with the detached curiosity of a naturalist watching wildebeests mate. She made no move to help or hinder him.

Who was she?

She was around Cary's age, dressed in a professional suit, with light makeup and a pretty, composed face. Not his usual type at all. She looked too put-together, too calm, too decidedly non-slutty to be one of his regular parade of women.

Where was Vanessa? Was this a new one-night stand, a fresh lay picked up from a bar?

I wouldn't put it past him. His fidelity had always been a fictional concept.

"Answer me!" Cary roughly seized my shoulders and shook me.

I snapped back to the present, and my hand reacted before my brain did, cracking across his face. "You've lost your bloody mind," I snapped. "Go home and sleep it off, you lunatic."

To my surprise, he didn't hit back. He didn't even shout. He caught my wrist instead, pressing my hand against his chest as though I'd just confessed my undying love instead of delivering a well-deserved slap.

His tone softened, turning pathetic. "I was wrong. I know you wouldn't. You wouldn't sleep with Hastings. You still love me. You wouldn't do that to me."

The sheer, unadulterated audacity left me speechless. He could traipse around with a random woman clinging to him, he could do every conceivable thing to me, but the thought of me with someone else was unthinkable?

If Lochlan weren't my boss—if he were just some bloke—I would have been sorely tempted to say, Yes, I'm sleeping with him. In fact, he's infinitely better in bed than you. A taste of his own medicine, and all that.

But I glanced at Lochlan, who was watching this circus with icy detachment, and then back at the raving mess in front of me. Lochlan was my boss, I sternly reminded myself, not a prop in my pathetic marital postscriptum.

I wrenched my hand from his grasp. “Can we talk about this tomorrow? Go home, sleep it off, and when you’re sober we can—”

Before I could finish, he wrapped his arms around me in a bone-crushing hug.

He started mumbling a stream of sorries, his tears hot and wet against my neck, trickling down my collar. A great, heaving sob shook him.

I just stood there, frozen, unsure what to feel. It was all so absurd and bleak.

This wasn’t how I’d imagined our divorce would play out. Cary was pride and arrogance personified, a control freak of the highest order. He was never, ever supposed to be this.

“Let me go, alright? Just calm down,” I said, softening my voice.

He started bargaining like a toddler. “Say you still love me. Say you won’t leave me.”

My headache was reaching critical mass. I looked at the calm woman. “Will you please pry your boyfriend off me?”

“He’s not my boyfriend,” she said, utterly unfazed.

When I asked, “Then who is he to you?” she said nothing.

Helpful, that.

Lochlan, who had been watching this spectacle silently, finally pulled out his phone and made a call. I heard him summoning reinforcements.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 144:

Shortly after, the night-shift building manager and two security guards appeared.

Lochlan pointed at Cary, who was still glued to me. “He doesn’t live here. Remove him.”

The property manager, a portly, gentle-looking man, hesitated. “One moment, Mr Hastings. Let me just check.” He consulted his tablet. His expression turned awkward. “I’m sorry, sir. But Mr Grant is the owner of the flat on the twentieth floor.”

What.

Cary had bought a flat on the twentieth floor?

My headache wasn’t just big now. It was preparing to detonate. Was he planning to haunt me for the rest of my life?

The woman added, unhelpfully, “He’s drunk. I was seeing him home. He gave me this address.”

Lochlan fell silent for a moment. Then he said to the manager, “Then please assist him to the twentieth floor.”

I nodded vigorously. Yes, just get him out of my sight.

The manager immediately directed the two guards to take hold of Cary.

Cary remained rooted to the spot. He held onto me tightly, his tall frame a dead weight. The crying and mumbling had stopped, and he’d gone quiet and still.

The two guards tried to pull him away, but they couldn’t budge him. I tried to help, pushing at his arms, but it was like trying to shift a marble statue.

It was as if he intended to stay fused to me forever.

Lochlan stepped forward. He unceremoniously pried Cary’s arms apart, using considerable force to peel him off me.

Cary's eyes flew open, bloodshot and wild. "Lochlan Hastings!" He swung a wild, uncoordinated punch at Lochlan, but he was so unsteady on his feet that it missed by a mile without Lochlan even needing to dodge.

The property manager urgently waved the guards forward again. Cary shoved them away. "Get your hands off me!"

"Mr Grant, please don't make a scene. Let us take you upstairs, all right?" The portly manager spoke in a soothing tone.

"Who says I'm making a scene? She's my wife!"

"I beg your pardon?" The manager looked utterly flummoxed. The guards looked similarly stunned.

Lochlan's voice was icy. "He's talking nonsense. If you don't remove him now, I'm calling the police."

"So, you're saying he's not Miss Galloway's..." The manager looked between us, hopelessly confused, before settling his gaze on me. "Miss Galloway, is Mr Grant your husband?"

"No," I said, my face cold. "Get him out of here."

Cary looked at me with such pure, gut-wrenching pain in his eyes that I almost felt bad.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 145:

Almost.

The three men, manager and guards together, finally managed to manhandle a struggling, roaring Cary into the lift. The doors closed on the sound of him hammering against them and shouting. The noise faded as the lift ascended.

I let out a breath I didn't realise I'd been holding. Then my expression hardened.

If Cary was living in the same building, even if he couldn't access my floor, my life was about to become a nightmare of trying to avoid him in the car park.

I'd just moved in. I couldn't very well pack up and move again.

"I'm curious," Lochlan's voice came from beside me. "Do you actually want to be free of him, or don't you?"

I snapped back to the present and looked up into his inscrutable eyes. "If I didn't want the divorce, I could have just ignored his affairs, turned a blind eye. But I didn't. Once I decided on it, there was no going back."

Lochlan gave a short, sharp nod. "You'll stay at the penthouse for the next few days."

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"Stay at your place?" That seemed wildly inappropriate. "I thought the offer was just for tonight. The leak in my ceiling will be fixed tomorrow."

"But Cary won't be fixed tomorrow," he countered, his tone practical. "And it's obvious he knows where you live. Do you want a repeat of tonight? Or do you have a better plan?"

I had nothing.

He had a point. But even if I stayed at the penthouse, couldn't Cary still ambush me in the car park?

As if reading my mind, Lochlan said, "There's a separate, private entrance to the building, with exclusive access to the penthouse."

"All right, fine," I relented. "Thank you, boss."

"It's late. Get some rest."

He turned and walked out towards the waiting car, where Roy stood dutifully by the door. I gave a small, tired wave.

I trudged back into the penthouse, washed up, and lay down in the vast, unfamiliar bed. A surreal feeling washed over me. I was living in my boss's penthouse. What fresh, bizarre hell was this?

I drifted into a night of fitful, chaotic dreams.

The next morning, I was swimming up from the depths of a groggy sleep when my phone rang. I squinted at the screen, the light stabbing my retinas.

Portia. Of course. Who else would call at what felt like the crack of dawn on a day I was technically meant to be enjoying my impromptu penthouse exile?

I answered, but before I could even muster a greeting, her voice screeched down the line. “Darling! Your phone is finally on! Never mind that, just get online and look at social media. Now!”

I held the phone away from my ear, her pitch threatening to shatter both my eardrum and the last vestiges of my peace.

With a sense of profound dread, I navigated to the app, and there it was, sitting at the top of the trending list like a king on a dung heap.

Several major influencers had shared the same video, and it had already gone thermonuclear.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 146:

The video was from the airport private lounge, the day I arrived back in London.

Someone, however, had taken the editorial scissors to it with malicious intent. It was a masterclass in selective storytelling. The clip conveniently omitted the part where Vanessa tried to redecorate the lounge walls with my internal organs using a knife.

Instead, it opened with her walking towards Cary, pale, weak, and tearful, the very picture of a spurned lover, and ended with her clutching her self-inflicted wound and Cary sweeping her into his arms, shouting anxiously for an ambulance.

A truly Oscar-worthy performance, if you ignored the whole attempted murder part.

The captions from the original posters were almost identical, as if they'd all attended the same workshop on manipulative bullshit. They wailed about a "poor little rich girl driven to self-harm by a heartless man."

The comments section was a predictable swamp, with ninety per cent of the ghouls rallying behind the so-called "rich girl," who had been quickly identified as Vanessa of the Abrams family.

A few people questioned my presence, with some in-the-know types naming me as Cary's ex.

There were a handful of sensible souls who called out Vanessa's theatrics, but they were quickly drowned out by the chorus of white knights speculating that Cary must have "led her on and then cruelly abandoned her."

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"Did you do this?" Portia demanded.

I let out a dry laugh. "Do you really think it was me?"

"I'm just trying to work out who else would bother! It feels like something you would do, but also not. The video is clearly trying to paint Vanessa as the pitiable one. I thought

your grand plan was to shove her and Cary together so you could make a clean getaway. This fits.”

I shrugged, though she couldn’t see it. “There were plenty of staff in that lounge. Maybe a bystander uploaded it for the clicks.”

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Portia scoffed. “Oh, please. A random bystander would go to all the trouble and expense of paying for influencers to boost it? Don’t be naive.”

“Honestly, who did it isn’t important,” I said, settling back against the absurdly expensive pillows. “The outcome is the only thing that matters.”

“The outcome? The outcome is that if people believe this video, they’ll think Cary and Vanessa are star-crossed lovers and he’s a monster for rejecting her. You get to wash your hands of the whole mess. That’s why I thought it was you. But if it wasn’t, was it one of your admirers? Lochlan, perhaps?”

“Ha!” I barked a genuine laugh this time. “Darling, there are many things I’m not sure of, but I can tell you with absolute certainty it wasn’t me, and it most definitely was not my boss.”

“Then who?”

“Aren’t you the lawyer?” I countered. “Don’t you have a whole doctrine called *qui bono*?”

“Who benefits?” Portia muttered to herself. Then, with a flash of understanding, “Ha! I get it! It’s Vanessa herself!”

I didn’t confirm or deny. The truth was, I didn’t particularly care. I’d got enough problems of my own without playing detective in the tragicomedy of Vanessa Abrams.

I told Portia, “Cary has moved into my building.”

“What!” Portia yelped. “But he left with Vanessa at the airport. Doesn’t that mean he’s chosen her? He should be signing the divorce papers, not playing musical flats. What’s his game, trying to have his cake and eat it too?”

“God only knows what goes on in that head of his,” I said, a weary sigh escaping. My dearest wish was for him and Vanessa to be locked in as a couple forever, sparing the rest of humanity from their particular brand of chaos.

On second thought, I added, “Then again, maybe not Vanessa. Perhaps he’s already moved on to a new model.”

I told her about the professionally dressed, unnervingly calm woman who had delivered Cary home last night.

“Who is she?” Portia asked, her lawyerly instincts kicking in.

“No idea. But whoever she is, I just hope she’s got the stamina to occupy Cary’s attention full time.” And leave me the hell alone.

But I was thoroughly sick of talking about Cary. I changed the subject. “I’m going to my parents’ house today.”

“Ooh.” Portia made a series of commiserating noises. “Want me to come with? For moral support?”

I was very tempted. “Thanks, but no. This is one of those things I’ve got to handle on my own.”

I hung up, feeling the distinct thrum of a headache beginning behind my eyes. The moment of reckoning was here. By now, my parents would have undoubtedly heard about the divorce, and if they surfed the internet like everyone else with a pulse, they’d have seen that bloody video.

I dragged my feet getting out of the luxurious penthouse bed, mentally rehearsing a speech that sounded more pathetic and contrived with each iteration.

When I finally drove to my parents' house, it was mid-afternoon. The familiar semi-detached house with its slightly overgrown hedge looked like a sanctuary, which only made my guilt sharper.

The door flew open before I could even reach for the knob. My mother, Jenna Galloway, a pleasant-looking woman dressed in comfortable, soft trousers and a cardigan, rushed out and wrapped me in a tight hug that smelled of laundry powder and unconditional love.

"Hyacinth, darling! Come in, come in." She pulled me inside, calling out towards the back of the house, "Jeremy! She's here!"

My father appeared from the garden, a man whose default setting was cheerful. He was a born optimist, always able to find a silver lining in a thundercloud. He was dressed for digging, with dirt smudged on his knees and a trowel in his hand.

"There's my girl!" he boomed, his smile wide and genuine.

"For heaven's sake, Jeremy, look at the state of you," Mum chided, but her tone was fond. "He's been out there since breakfast, digging up that same patch of earth. I keep telling him it's nearly winter. Everyone knows you plant flowers in the spring. But does he listen?"

Dad didn't argue back, just smiled his good-natured smile. "The chap at the garden centre said these seeds were specially hardy. Said they could sprout in winter. It's worth a shot, isn't it?"

Mum rolled her eyes and spread her hands in my direction, a classic see-what-I-have-to-live-with gesture.

I couldn't help but smile. I knew this routine. They were just talking, filling the air with comfortable, familiar noise to avoid asking about the elephant in the room.

My divorce.

I'd definitely inherited my tendency to prattle when nervous from my mother.

But I couldn't keep avoiding it. I took a deep, fortifying breath. "Mum, Dad, there's something I have to tell you."

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 147:

I told them about the divorce, sticking to the clean, publicly palatable reason: Cary had had an affair.

I omitted the minor detail that our entire marriage had been a contractual transaction from day one.

I hastened to add the good news, hoping to soften the blow. “But I’ve got a new job with a big company, Velos Capital. And I’ve just been promoted. I’m the Chief Administrative Officer now—a proper C-level executive.” I said it with a pride I hoped was convincing. “Very few people, let alone women, make it to that rank at my age.”

Dad grabbed Mum’s hand and patted it soothingly. They both took the news surprisingly well, which, now that I thought about it, shouldn’t have been a surprise at all. They’d probably seen it in the news and had already done their worrying in private.

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Mum came over and gave me another, longer hug, and Dad joined in, a warm, solid presence. When we pulled apart, my mother had tears in her eyes, but all she said was, “You’re right to leave a cheater. Once a cheater, always a cheater.”

Dad nodded solemnly in support. “I’m going to have a word with that bastard Cary. Give him a proper tongue-lashing for hurting my girl. And if he gets violent...” He put up his fists in a comical fighting stance and shadow-boxed the air. “I’ve attended a boxing lesson or two, you know.”

I laughed—a real, proper laugh that eased the tightness in my chest. “Thanks, Dad, but that won’t be necessary. I’ve cut ties with him completely. I just never want to see him again. You really don’t need to beat him up.”

He gently stroked my hair and sighed. “I just want you to be happy, sweetheart.”

Mum nodded, dabbing at her eyes. “That’s all we want. As long as you are happy.” She asked, “Are you happy with your new job?”

Grateful to move on from the subject of Cary, I seized the chance and painted a rosy picture of my new role, the much higher salary, and what a good, decent boss Lochlan Hastings was.

At the mention of Lochlan’s name, Mum and Dad exchanged a quick, unreadable look. I caught it but didn’t understand why. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, dear,” Mum said a little too quickly. “It’s just that we’ve heard the Hastings are a... a big family.”

I nodded. “Yeah, they’re one of the old-money families in London. Very low-key, but very wealthy.”

We eventually moved on to other topics. I volunteered to help Dad in the garden, a doomed endeavour from the start, as neither of us was blessed with green fingers. We ended up with dirt all over us, having successfully planted a grand total of three seeds in what felt like three hours.

I had dinner with my parents; Mum made my favourite shepherd’s pie. I spent the night in my old room, the one I’d grown up in, surrounded by the ghosts of my less complicated past.

Mum came in to tuck me in, a habit she’d never quite broken.

Before she could leave, I said, “Sorry.”

She paused by the door. “What for, love?”

“I knew how much you liked Cary. I thought you’d be disappointed that I left him.”

Mum came back and sat on the edge of the bed, stroking my hair. “We just wanted you to be happy, dear. When you married Cary, that’s what we wished he’d be able to provide for you. But now it seems that we were wrong about him. If divorcing him makes you happy, then both your dad and I will support you a hundred per cent. You can date, you can throw yourself into work, you can even remain single—as long as that makes you happy.”

I nodded.

She added jokingly, “And if you’re disappointed in men and want to explore other options, your dad and I aren’t old fossils. We can understand.”

I was confused. “What do you mean?”

She smiled teasingly. “Well, Portia has been single for as long as I can remember, and you and she are such good friends. If you decided to take your relationship beyond friendship, your dad and I wouldn’t mind.”

I was stunned for a second, then a burst of laughter escaped me. “Mum, it’s not like that between me and Portia! We’re just friends! Besides, Portia’s definitely straight!”

I didn’t elaborate by telling her about Portia’s very vivid, very dirty fantasies regarding Lochlan Hastings.

Mum just smiled back. “I’m just saying. Whatever you decide to do, your dad and I will support you.”

I kissed her cheek. “I know. Thanks, Mum. I love you, Mum.”

She kissed me back. “I love you too. Now get some rest.”

After she left, I sighed and lay in the darkness, staring at the familiar cracks in the ceiling.

It turned out all my nerves and anxiety had been for nothing. My parents had accepted the news with a grace that, really, I should have expected. They’d always supported my decisions, no matter what.

Portia once commented that while she loved her own parents, she’d trade them for mine in a heartbeat, because mine indulged me completely. Not with expensive gifts, but with an overwhelming, almost baffling permissiveness.

When I was a kid and wanted to take up dancing, they’d signed me up for one of the best studios in the city, even though it ate a huge chunk of their retirement savings. They’d said nothing when I gave it up a month later and decided, at six years old, that I wanted to be a sailor.

Instead of laying down the law, they’d taken me out to sea and arranged for me to meet a friend of a friend who was an actual sailor.

Their indulgence was so smothering it made me rebellious. By the time I went to uni, I’d insisted on working to pay my own fees, and they had, once again, deferred to my wishes.

The only time they'd ever strongly disagreed with me was when I married Cary.

I knew they still suspected I'd only married him for the money to save Mum, and they were right, of course. But I would never tell them that.

Besides, I didn't regret it—not really, not when weighed against the alternative. My parents were the best people in the world, and I'd have given up my life for them, let alone just my freedom in a marriage.

Instead of a white knight, Cary had turned out to be a domineering, controlling tyrant, and my heart had been the casualty.

But if asked if I would do it all again to save my mum, the answer would be a resounding, unhesitating yes.

I was drifting off to sleep fast, a feat only possible in the unique safety of my childhood bed, when my phone buzzed on the nightstand. I fumbled for it, the screen bright in the dark room.

It was a message.

From my father-in-law.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 148:

“You have got to be fucking kidding me.”

I stared at my mother across the polished expanse of the dining table. The words coming out of her mouth were so profoundly stupid they barely constituted coherent speech.

“Watch your mouth, boy,” my father warned from the head of the table, his tone that of a man used to instant obedience.

I bristled. No one took that tone with me anymore. Not even him.

He turned that cold gaze onto my mother next. “For once, Cary is right to disagree with you. Your decision is nonsensical.”

Mum’s face flushed an ugly red. She clutched her steak knife, her knuckles bleaching white. “I just want what’s best for him, for the family.”

Dad’s frown deepened. “And you think him marrying that Abrams girl is what’s best for him?”

“Of course!”

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I kept staring, trying to find a shred of logic in her delusion. “She manipulated you into a half-arsed plan to abduct Hyacinth. She’s the reason you spent weeks in a cell. Why are you sticking up for her? What the hell do you see in that manipulative bitch?”

Mum’s grip on the knife tightened. I could see the internal war in her eyes, the conflict between what she knew and whatever twisted narrative she’d built for herself. But all that came out was, “She only did those things because she loves you. She’s the best choice for you.”

“The best choice?” I scoffed, the sound harsh in the quiet room. “She’s a liability and a lunatic.”

“She is devoted,” Mum insisted, her voice rising. She fumbled for her phone, swiping at the screen before shoving it towards us. A video played—the one that was polluting the entire internet. “Look! Look what she’s willing to do for you. She hurts herself for you. That kind of devotion is rare. If you marry her, you’ll have her complete obedience. She’ll never cheat. And you can use her influence with her family to gradually take over the Abrams business. It’s a win-win. You get the business, the profits, and she gets the man she loves.”

I was fucking fuming. “I’m not a prize to be won, and I’m not marrying that woman. I’m still married to Hyacinth.”

“You’re already divorced!” my mother cried, her composure cracking.

“As long as I don’t sign the Intent to Finalise, the court won’t legitimise a damn thing. It’s not over.”

My father, who had been watching this exchange with detached interest, cut in. “So, you’re telling me you are still legally married to Hyacinth?”

“Yes.”

He leaned back, a thoughtful look on his face.

He'd only met Hyacinth once in three years, too busy with his extended "convalescence" overseas. We all knew what that meant: a discreet harem of women kept well away from London and his legal wife.

"I came back to London because this divorce is making a huge splash. I thought it was a done deal. But if it isn't..."

I saw my opening. My father only understood one language: the cold clink of profit and power. Feelings were a currency he considered worthless.

"Hyacinth is the best choice," I stated, my voice firm and businesslike. "She's worked tirelessly for Mayfair Global. She's increased the company's profits manifold. She's highly capable, with a stable character and unwavering loyalty. She's willing to make unconditional sacrifices for the company and for the family."

My mother kept interrupting, her voice a shrill counterpoint. "You can find capable employees anywhere, Cary! You don't have to marry them!"

My father grew tired of her noise. "Be quiet, Tanya," he said, not even looking at her.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 149:

She fell silent immediately, her face a mask of wounded pride.

My anger flared at the way he dismissed her, like she was a nuisance to be managed, but I bit my tongue. I had to stay on topic.

“Putting her work ability aside,” I continued, “Hyacinth has exceptional looks and a high intelligence and emotional quotient. With that kind of superior genetic material for the Grant family lineage, the children would undoubtedly be of the highest calibre.”

I was racking my brains, throwing every conceivable advantage Hyacinth possessed at him, trying to pre-empt any further obstacles in my path to winning her back.

My father pondered this while my mother leaned towards me, her whisper harsh across the table. “But the video’s gone viral. Everyone has seen how much Vanessa loves you, what lengths she’ll go to. If you stick with Hyacinth, how are you going to deal with Vanessa and the Abrams family?”

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“I’ll take care of it,” I said.

My mind was already plotting the systematic dismantling of the Abrams empire, and I couldn’t help but recall my conversation with Dr Liz Forbes.

It turned out my therapist was more than she seemed.

After our session yesterday, I’d thanked her for driving me home drunk, and she’d coolly informed me she’d sought me out deliberately. She had a proposal.

Her mother was from the Fenwicks, a solid, old-money family from The Wirral with business that overlapped the Abrams, possessing both legal and illegal influence.

She said she could make calls, that she could help me annihilate the Abrams so they’d never be a threat again.

When I'd asked warily what she wanted in exchange, she'd told me to think it over, to check her claims and decide what price I was willing to pay.

I'd been verifying it all day; the Fenwicks were indeed a titled family, her mother a Lady, and they had the power to not just compete with, but utterly destroy the Abrams.

But what did Liz Forbes want from me?

My father's voice cut through my thoughts. "I need to see both of them before I decide."

"What?"

"Ask Hyacinth here for dinner. I'll talk to her, sound her out. See if there's a chance to save this marriage. If not, you'll marry Vanessa."

Fury, hot and immediate, boiled in my veins. I fucking hated being told what to do. "You don't get to decide who I marry."

Mum cut in, a rare moment of alliance. "He's right, Alaric. Hyacinth's not going to come here. She's cut ties with Cary completely."

My father shut down our objections with a finality that brooked no argument. “Do what I say.”

My mother looked mad, but she never dared argue with him once his mind was set.

I was fucking livid, but I also knew my father. He was an immovable force when he decided on a course of action. Besides, a part of me—a desperate part—wanted to see Hyacinth, to force her into the same room as me.

“Fine,” I ground out. “I’ll call her.”

Alaric waved a dismissive hand. “No need. I’ll take care of it. She probably doesn’t want to talk to you.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 150:

When the intercom buzzed, I was halfway through a punishing session on the treadmill.

I poked the screen, and Roy's familiar, smiling face filled the display. I granted him lift access and was waiting by the doors when they slid open on the penthouse floor. He stood there, his arms laden with bulging shopping bags, looking like a particularly cheerful pack mule.

"I've brought you supplies," he announced, his voice booming in the quiet hallway.

"Um, thanks," I said, taking some of the bags from him. The weight was surprising. "But why?"

"Boss's orders." He breezed past me into the flat, making a beeline for the kitchen with the confident stride of a man who knew exactly where he was going.

The familiarity of his movements was telling. He was here often, which meant Lochlan had stayed here often, which strongly implied my boss had been economical with the truth when he'd claimed he barely used the place.

“That’s very nice of the boss, really,” I said, leaning against the kitchen island as he began unloading an impressive array of fresh produce, meat, seafood, and even condiments into the vast, depressingly empty fridge. “But it’s really not necessary. I’ll only be staying here for a couple more days, till—”

Till I figured out another place to flee to, or devised a foolproof plan to make Cary Grant spontaneously combust.

Roy turned around, wiping his hands on his trousers. “You can stay as long as you want. This place is yours.”

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“What?”

“You’re the CAO now. A corporate residence is one of the staff perks.” He grinned, a wide, avuncular smile. “Typically, it wouldn’t be a place like this, but hey—boss says since you’re already living here, might as well assign this penthouse to you.”

“I...” I was utterly speechless.

I knew Lochlan was a generous boss, but this was bordering on feudal lordship. This penthouse had to cost an arm and a leg, even if I was just a temporary tenant and not the owner. “I don’t know what to say,” I finally managed, which was both true and profoundly inept.

Roy shrugged. “Just take it and enjoy it.”

He glanced around the stark, minimalist space. “Maybe I’ll bring some flowers next time. Or a painting. Liven the place up a little.” His voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. “Boss doesn’t like flashy stuff. When he used to live here, I always thought this place looked more like a museum than a home.”

I laughed. “I have to agree.”

Roy’s usually friendly smile turned teasing. “Kai volunteered for this errand, you know, but boss asked me to come instead.”

“Oh?” I had no earthly idea where he was going with this.

Roy winked at me. On another man, it might have seemed sleazy, but from him, it was just friendly—like a mate sharing a bit of gossip. “Kai thought about asking you out, you know.”

“Oh.” This time, the syllable was accompanied by a warm flush of embarrassment, though I wasn’t completely shocked by the revelation.

“I told him to go for it, but he said boss would probably frown on an office romance, so...” Roy shrugged again, a gesture of philosophical resignation.

“Oh.” I wasn’t sure if this third “oh” was born more of relief or disappointment.

Kai was a nice guy—friendly, good-looking, and incredibly efficient, the absolute best kind of colleague one could wish for.

But an office romance? Right after joining a new company? It was a complication I definitely did not need. “Is there a formal rule against office romance, then?”

“Not explicitly, no, but I can’t say I know of many couples dating at headquarters.” Roy checked his watch. “Right, gotta run. Have to drive my kids to a football game.” He smiled a self-deprecating smile. “Seems that’s all I do these days—drive the boss around during work hours and drive my kids around at the weekends. And to be honest, my kids can be as bossy as my real one.”

I laughed. “Enjoy the game.”

“I’ll try. But first, I’ve got another errand to run for the boss.”

“Speaking of the boss,” I began, hesitating, “where is he staying these days? I mean, since he’s so generously given the penthouse over to me.”

“Oh, don’t you worry about that,” Roy said breezily. “Boss has plenty of places in the City. He only chose this one for the convenience. He’s moved back home now.”

He must have seen the flicker of guilt on my face because he added, “Mr and Mrs Hastings have missed him, anyway. It’s no hardship.”

I nodded, somewhat mollified.

Roy’s eyes twinkled, clearly struck by another amusing thought. He leaned in slightly, his voice dropping again. “Between you and me, he’d have had to move back there even without you needing this place. Mr and Mrs Hastings summoned him back for something important.”

I played along. “Which is?”

“Matchmaking.”

“What?” Lochlan? Needing to go on arranged dates? The concept was absurd.

“As the eldest son, his marriage is the family’s top priority,” Roy explained, warming to his theme. “They were on at him about it the Christmas before last, and he went along with it—met a few young ladies from suitable families—but nothing came of it. Back then, his focus was still on Wall Street, so after Christmas he just left, and Mrs Hastings couldn’t do much about it. Now he’s back in London for good, well—there’s nowhere for him to run now, is there?”

“So even he’s just like everyone else, unable to escape the parental marriage inquisition.”

I was oddly amused by the notion, and felt a fresh wave of gratitude for my own parents’ wonderfully laid-back attitude. They’d never dream of strong-arming me into matrimony.

I’d always imagined that something as mundane as arranged marriages and parental nagging was beneath a man like Lochlan, who seemed to exist in a rarefied stratosphere of his own. He was supposed to remain mysteriously aloof, entirely above such earthly concerns.

Roy sighed. “I can understand why they worry. Boss has always been a bit detached, especially when it comes to matters of the heart.”

“Is that so?”

What about the obvious, tumultuous history with Jaclyn Lemon?

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Message from Noa: Have a wonderful weekend dear readers. God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best. (=◡=) /

Also, I wanted to share that I really like Ephesians 5:2, because, at the end of the day, what God wants from all of us is to live a life walking in love: ‘And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’ (ESV).

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