

Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 231:

Then I thought better of it. A man of his intelligence hardly needed me to point out the obvious.

I relayed the message to Damon.

“Ideal weather for a walk,” Lochlan commented.

I looked up from my phone. “I don’t think so. It’s almost dark, and wandering around these woods alone sounds rather terrifying. I’m perfectly happy to stay in the villa.”

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I finished speaking and noticed his expression had shifted. I realised my mistake. “You mean you want to go for a walk.”

“Wandering around alone does sound rather terrifying,” he said, his face a perfect mask of mild concern.

“I’ll accompany you,” I said, my smile feeling as genuine as if I were chewing on a piece of lemon.

Why couldn’t he just use a normal, direct sentence like, “I’m going for a walk—come with me”? Everything was a bloody riddle.

Lochlan’s gaze swept over my professional attire and heels. “You should change into something more comfortable.”

I obeyed, returning to my room to swap my suit for trousers and a jumper, and my heels for a pair of flats. The man was impossibly bossy, even in his politeness.

We left the villa a little after five. It was not yet dark. The air was fresh and clean, carrying a slight chill, and the setting sun cast a spectacular golden glow over the dramatic, forested slopes and the distant sea.

It was breathtaking.

I fell into step behind Lochlan. I had expected his long legs to set a punishing pace, but he walked surprisingly slowly, allowing me to actually enjoy the stunning scenery.

Lochlan led the way with an unnerving certainty, veering off the main path into a grove of ancient, twisted trees.

I followed, but a trickle of doubt began to seep in. The trees grew denser, their canopies blocking out what little sunlight remained and casting us into a premature twilight.

It was exactly the kind of place where one might trip over a root and break an ankle.

Just as I was about to suggest a tactical retreat, we emerged from the other side of the grove. I stopped instantly, my heart leaping into my throat.

Two more steps would have sent me right over the edge of a cliff.

Lochlan sensed my tension immediately. “My apologies. I should have warned you.”

I swallowed, forcing my heart back into its rightful place. “It’s fine,” I managed, my voice a bit strangled. “What are we doing here?”

He swept an arm towards the precipice. “This.”

I followed his gesture, and my breath caught. The view was—there were no words.

We were perched high above the ocean, watching it crash against the dark, volcanic rocks far below in great, foaming explosions of white. The sky was a blazing canvas of fiery orange and deep violet, the sun a molten coin sinking into the endless Atlantic. Seabirds circled and cried in the updrafts, their calls the only sound besides the wind and the distant, rhythmic roar of the waves.

It was raw, majestic, and utterly humbling.

“Wow,” was all I could say. It seemed inadequate, but sometimes clichés are clichés for a reason.

Lochlan stood beside me, his eyes on the horizon. “I used to come here as a boy.”

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I didn't know you grew up here," I said, surprised.

"I didn't—not exactly. I spent about sixteen months in Portugal before we moved on. My mother is a sociologist, specialized in cultural anthropology. She was on a years-long field... a kind of global research trip. I joined her whenever I could." He listed a few places offhand, names that sounded like poetry and adventure: the highlands of Papua New Guinea, the bustling souks of Marrakech, studying remote communities in the Amazon basin.

I marveled at that. As a kid who grew up in a seaside village, I'd dreamed of traveling the world like every other child, but Lochlan had actually lived that reality. No wonder he seemed so unshakeable. He had probably seen things I could only imagine.

"I have seen many seas," he continued, his voice softening. "I have watched the Pacific from the cliffs of Rapa Nui, and the Indian Ocean from the shores of Zanzibar. But each day is different. Every sunset is unique."

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He paused, his gaze still fixed on the water. “It’s the same with the waves. One bay can have treacherous undercurrents that will drag you under, while the very next cove offers the safest, most tranquil waters you could imagine. They are both part of the ocean, yet to treat them as the same would be a grave error. And you won’t know what the next wave—or the next sunset—is truly like until you are present to experience it.”

He was being uncharacteristically philosophical, and I wondered why. Was this just casual sunset chatter, or was there a point lurking beneath the surface?

“I suppose,” I conceded cautiously. “But it’s easier and safer to just stay on the beach.”

“Easier, perhaps,” he acknowledged, his voice introspective. “But one might miss the unique beauty of that second, peaceful cove entirely. They might never learn to swim again, all because of a single, frightening experience in a different part of the water.”

He finally turned his head to look at me, his profile outlined in gold by the dying light. “It’s the same with anything in life. We see a pattern and we extrapolate. But no two storms are alike. No two paths through these hills offer the same view.” He paused, and his next words were so soft they were almost carried away on the breeze. “And no two people are alike.”

I nodded, the point seeming self-evident. “Of course they aren’t. Even identical twins are not exactly the same—at least not in how they think or behave.”

It was a throwaway comment, the kind of obvious agreement you make to keep a conversation moving.

But my flippant answer seemed to please him, a subtle satisfaction warming his otherwise cool expression.

“Exactly,” he said. “Just because two men are both billionaires does not mean they will behave in the same way. One may be a philanderer. The other may be a philanthropist.”

I thought of Cary, of his very public donations and his very private indiscretions. A bitter, cynical laugh threatened to bubble up.

“Actually,” I said, the words coming out sharper than I intended, “I would argue that at their core, it’s fundamentally the same. The philanderer uses his money to buy flesh for his sexual gratification. The philanthropist uses it to buy social esteem for his ego gratification. Ultimately, it’s all self-serving.”

Lochlan stared at me for a long, unnerving moment, his gaze so intense I could feel it like a physical weight. The silence stretched, and I realized with a jolt what I had just done. I’d essentially called every wealthy man—including the one standing before me—a narcissist.

I hastily began to backtrack. “Of course not all,” I said, the words feeling slippery. “Not every billionaire’s like that. Take you, for example, boss. I believe you are a true philanthropist. Your actions are no doubt genuine. Not just for public show.”

Lochlan’s expression remained unreadable. “How can you be so sure? Perhaps I’m just more adept at maintaining the performance.”

“I know because of what you did for Kai’s aunt. Paying her medical bills out of your own pocket, for someone who’s not even an employee. That’s not an act for public admiration. That’s just... decency.”

He held my gaze for a moment longer, and I could not for the life of me decipher what was happening behind those deep, assessing eyes.

He didn’t look pleased by my attempted recovery. If anything, his expression seemed to cool further, his mouth tightening almost imperceptibly. He looked... disappointed.

He turned abruptly away from the view, from me, from the entire conversation. “It’s time to go,” he said, his voice once more the crisp, impenetrable tone of the CEO. “We have Toby’s dinner to attend.”

I followed him back along the darkening path, my mind churning. What on earth was that conversation about? Had I just inadvertently failed some kind of test I hadn’t known I was taking?

Back at the villa, I had just enough time to change. The warm evening was a welcome excuse to pull out a silk dress I had not been able to wear for months, thanks to London’s perpetual winter. It was a simple, emerald green shift that felt cool against my skin and, I noted with satisfaction, made my eyes look brighter.

When I came downstairs, Lochlan was waiting in the foyer. He had changed into an impeccably tailored navy dinner jacket and trousers, a crisp white shirt beneath it open at

the collar. The sight of him—so effortlessly and severely handsome in the soft evening light—momentarily stole the air from my lungs.

Good grief, I thought, allowing myself a purely aesthetic appreciation. If this is the corporate uniform for denizens of vice, then sign me up for eternal damnation.

His eyes did a swift sweep from my head to my heels, a flicker of something that might have been approval, or perhaps just surprise, passing through his gaze so quickly I might have imagined it.

“Shall we?” was all he said.

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At ten to seven, we set off for Toby Saltzman's villa.

On the way, I found myself scanning the shadows between the trees, searching for a familiar, broad-shouldered silhouette.

"What are you looking for?" Lochlan asked, not missing a beat.

"Cameron," I admitted.

"I sent him away on an assignment."

I didn't ask what the assignment was. I had learned that with Lochlan, you often found out these things only when you needed to.

We arrived at the villa. I stepped forward.

"Are you sure you want to go in?" Lochlan's hand shot out, stopping me just as I reached for the polished brass knocker.

“Of course,” I said, turning to face him. “I’m hardly going to abandon my boss on the doorstep of a dinner party.”

His hand closed over my wrist—not roughly, but with an undeniable firmness that stopped me cold. His touch was like a live wire.

“This is your last opportunity to reconsider,” he said, his voice low. “You do not have to go in there.”

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I looked from his hand to his face, all sharp angles and shadows in the dim light. “And leave my boss to the wolves? I don’t think so. This is my job.”

My tone was breezier than I felt. What in God’s name is in there? A dragon?

“Very well,” he said, releasing my wrist. “But you will stay with me. Do not wander off. Stay close.”

A prickle of unease—which I promptly ignored—ran down my spine.

“Sir, yes, sir,” I muttered under my breath as he reached past me to open the door.

The wave of sound and heat that hit us was a physical thing.

Damon had mentioned a small dinner party, but the cavernous living room was thronging with at least forty people, a sea of dark suits and murmured conversations.

The majority were men, their ages and waistlines varying but their expressions uniformly sharp and assessing.

The handful of women I spotted seemed to fall into two categories: efficient-looking secretarial types clutching tablets or glasses of wine, and what I could only describe as “professional dates,” women whose too-perfect hair and strategically draped silk dresses spoke of a very specific evening assignment.

It all looked perfectly, boringly elegant. A string quartet played something inoffensive and classical in a corner. Waiters circulated with trays of canapés that looked more like architectural models than food. The men were in black tie, the women in cocktail dresses.

It was exactly what one expected of an upper-class soirée.

So why had Lochlan tried to give me an out?

My question was momentarily forgotten as he plucked something from a small, velvet-lined tray near the entrance. Before I could process what he was doing, he had fastened a cool, metallic band around my left wrist.

I looked down. It was a silver bracelet, deceptively simple at first glance, but its design was unique: a continuous, intertwining pattern of thorns and vines that was both beautiful and faintly threatening.

“What’s this?” I asked, surprised.

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“Just wear it,” he said, his tone leaving no room for argument. “At all times.”

Mystified, I ran a finger over the intricate metalwork. It was a statement piece, that was for sure—but what it was stating, I hadn’t a clue.

Just then, Toby Saltzman descended upon us, his arms spread wide in a parody of avuncular welcome.

“Lochlan! My boy!” He moved to envelop Lochlan in a back-slapping hug, but Lochlan executed a neat, sidestepping dodge that was a masterpiece of polite evasion, leaving Toby patting air.

Toby’s eyes, red-rimmed and puffy, flickered to my wrist.

I saw it then—a flash of something: disappointment? Annoyance?—before his smile snapped back into place.

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“Miss, uh, Secretary,” he nodded at me, the greeting perfunctory.

“It’s Galloway,” Lochlan corrected. “And she’s my CAO.”

“Right. Anyway, come, come, let me introduce you to everyone.” Toby said, shepherding Lochlan toward the center of the room. “We have the deputy mayor, Mateus Ribeiro, and António Pereira, who—let’s just say—makes things happen in planning. Essential for our resort, absolutely essential. And several gentlemen who represent our target clientele for a luxury development of this calibre.”

He gestured vaguely toward me. “My dear, you can help yourself to refreshments. I’m sure the other ladies would be glad for some company.” He pointed toward a small, rather forlorn-looking group of women huddled near a potted palm.

“Hyacinth stays with me,” Lochlan said. It wasn’t a request.

Toby’s smile tightened at the edges. “Relax, Lochlan. The real festivities don’t start till later.”

But he didn’t try to dismiss me again.

The unease I’d felt at the door now blossomed into full-blown mystification.

Lochlan was visibly tense, a coil of restrained energy beside me, yet I could see no reason for it.

I trailed slightly behind him as Toby made the introductions, my inner cynic taking notes. Deputy Mayor Ribeiro, a man with a handshake like a dead fish. António Pereira, whose eyes were calculating the square footage of my soul.

Toby worked hard to position himself as the dominant force, the seasoned uncle guiding his brilliant but green nephew. I tried to be unobtrusive, a fly on the wall, but it was awkward. These men wanted to talk business with Lochlan Hastings, not make small talk with his assistant.

I saw my chance to slip away when a server came by with a tray of champagne flutes. I reached for one, desperate for the liquid courage, but Lochlan leaned in, his breath a warm whisper against my ear that made me shiver.

“Don’t drink anything here.”

I froze, my fingers closing around the stem of the glass. I held it—a prop—but didn’t take a sip. Right. No drinks. Noted.

I scanned the room instead, trying to look casually admiring.

The décor was opulent, all deep colors and heavy fabrics. But the air was unusually thick and sweet, a cloying scent that clung to the back of my throat.

I spotted them then: several discreet diffusers placed on shelves and side tables, releasing a steady, perfumed haze.

Aromatherapy? At a business dinner? I thought snarkily. Toby's taste really is all over the place. It smells like a high-end brothel in here.

After what felt like an age, Toby clapped his hands. "Gentlemen, dinner is served!"

He led the way not to a dining room, but through a set of double doors into a different space altogether.

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It was not a room for eating.

It was a theatre. Rows of deep, plush armchairs were spaced apart in a semicircle, all facing a low, black stage. The lights here were already dim.

As we found seats, Lochlan's hand found mine, his grip firm. "Stay close," he whispered again, and the command now felt less like an order and more like a warning.

The classical music from the other room cut off. A new, thrumming bassline started, the kind you'd hear in a high-end Vegas nightclub.

The lights on the stage brightened, and women appeared. They began to dance, their movements precise, gymnastic, and intensely erotic.

My stomach tightened. This was not a cultural performance.

The first dance ended to polite applause. The second began with a theme: women in uniforms. Nuns with skirts slit to the hip, waitresses with nothing but aprons, policewomen with handcuffs swinging from their belts.

The music picked up tempo, and the uniforms started coming off. Piece by piece. It was a striptease.

I squirmed in my seat, my face heating.

The male guests around us were no longer politely clapping; they were whistling and making loud, appreciative noises.

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Lochlan was a statue of silence beside me, but he placed his palm over the back of my hand, a small anchor in a suddenly stormy sea.

“Excuse me.” I desperately wanted to flee to the toilet and hide until it was over.

As if reading my mind, Lochlan’s grip tightened. “Don’t go anywhere without me,” he said under his breath.

So I stayed put, my muscles coiled like springs.

As the striptease ended, a polished chrome pole rose smoothly from the stage floor.

The third dance featured a solo performance. A woman emerged, bathed in a single, crimson spotlight. She didn't so much walk as slither toward the chrome pole, her movements languid and intentional.

She began to dance. She used the pole to frame her body, arching her spine in impossible, deliberate curves as she dragged herself slowly up the metal. Then she performed a series of controlled, grinding rotations—a slow, hypnotic display of hips and gravity.

As she climbed higher up the pole, she peeled away her remaining clothes and tossed them onto the stage. She used her legs to clasp the pole, suspending herself head-down, opening her mouth and running her tongue over her ruby lips suggestively. Gradually, she shed the final layer of her costume until she was wearing nothing but a jeweled G-string and tiny nipple pasties.

The room roared its approval.

Then, the music shifted again, into something slower, sexier, more seductive.

The main lights stayed down, but a dim, rosy glow illuminated the room. The girls, now mostly nude, came down from the stage and began to move through the audience, still dancing. The pole dancer, a blonde, made a beeline for Lochlan. Her breasts swayed with her movements, and she came so close I could see the fine goosebumps on her bare arms and the sheen of sweat on her skin.

She smiled, a practiced, inviting thing, and moved to straddle his lap.

Toby, seated nearby, laughed, a loud, booming sound. “Enjoy, Loch, my boy! It’s my treat!”

Lochlan’s hands came up, not to receive her, but to firmly push her away.

“No, thank you,” he said, his voice cold enough to freeze hell. “I already have a date for the evening.”

Every muscle in my body went rigid.

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Chapter 236:

He was talking about me. I was his “date.” A shield. A human prop to ward off advances.

I felt a hot flush of humiliation, quickly followed by a surge of anger. I had signed up for a business dinner, not to be used as an excuse in a bloody orgy.

I looked around. Most of the male guests now had a girl on their lap, being danced for, their hands roaming over bare flesh with a proprietary ease.

Others were being fed grapes or sips of wine by giggling, topless women. And then I saw her.

Vicki. Toby had introduced her as his secretary during the London dinner. But she sure as hell wasn't acting like a secretary now.

She was standing by a column, and with a slow, sultry smile, she undid the zip of her dress and let it pool at her feet. She was down to her lace underwear beneath.

Toby gave her arse a sharp, possessive slap and jerked his head toward a portly man in the front row.

Vicki sauntered over and perched herself on the man's lap.

On her wrist, I saw nothing. No silver bracelet.

A cold dread settled in my gut. The other women with the bracelets, like me, were sitting stiffly, pretending to be fascinated by their wine glasses.

The women without were the entertainment.

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Was this the “festivities” Toby was talking about?

The air in the theatre had thickened into a soupy miasma of sweat, expensive perfume, and something far more primal. A wave of lightheadedness washed over me, quickly followed by a surge of nausea so potent I had to clamp my jaw shut.

Right. That was my cue.

I stood up. I had to get out of this pit immediately, this place where men were openly groping and finger-fucking the dancers as if they were nothing more than living sex toys.

I saw more than one woman sink to her knees and bury her head between a man's spread legs, and the sound of drunken, approving cheers made the bile rise in my throat.

Before I could take a single step toward sanity, a firm, warm pressure encircled my wrist. Lochlan. His grip was an iron manacle, deceptively calm but utterly unyielding.

His attention seemed fixed on the depraved spectacle, but the granite set of his jaw betrayed a tension the rest of his body refused to show.

I pulled against his hold, a futile effort.

"I need fresh air," I hissed, the words tight and strained. "Now."

"Later," he replied, his voice low and devoid of inflection, his eyes never leaving the room.

A cold disappointment washed over me, so sharp it almost eclipsed the nausea. So that was it.

I had misjudged him.

Underneath the impeccable suits and the polished vocabulary, he was just like all the other rich, entitled arseholes after all, and it had simply taken me this long—and this extreme a setting—to figure it out.

The bile in my throat felt like a physical manifestation of my disillusionment.

I tried to shake off his grasp again, a gesture as useless as trying to reason with a brick wall.

“Look, it’s perfectly fine if you want to stay and enjoy the live-action pornography,” I snarled. “But I really think I’m cramping your style. And frankly, I don’t want to be held responsible for limiting your fun.”

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“Just stay,” Lochlan said, the words a quiet command.

He lifted his other hand—the one not clamped to my wrist—to halt the approach of a woman whose entire outfit consisted of sequined nipple pasties and a thong. She reached out a hand to invite him to dance, but his upraised palm was a polite, impenetrable barrier.

She pouted and slithered away toward more receptive prey.

Toby swaggered over, his arms wrapped around the waist of a completely naked woman, his fingers digging into the flesh of her hips.

He jeered, his voice slurred with wine and lust. “Lochlan, my boy! I thought you spent years on Wall Street. Surely you’re used to this by now? Why are you acting like a blushing virgin who’s never seen a pair of tits before?”

The naked woman giggled vacuously, and I felt my tenuous grip on my lunch weaken another notch.

Toby, not waiting for a reply, gestured lazily toward the blonde pole dancer who was still hovering close by. “Elena, darling, why don’t you go and make proper friends with Mr Hastings? Show him what a good time really looks like.”

Elena sauntered over.

This time, she didn’t attempt the failed lap-sitting maneuver.

Instead, she planted her high-heeled feet directly in front of Lochlan’s chair and began a solo performance that was less a dance and more a graphic anatomical demonstration.

Her hips thrust in a relentless, circular motion, her breasts bouncing with a rhythmic jiggle that defied gravity and good taste.

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She dropped to the floor, arching her back before rolling onto her shoulders and spreading her legs wide in a vulgar V. The minuscule G-string she wore was a pointless formality, concealing nothing and highlighting everything.

I looked away, fixing my gaze on a particularly ugly gilt scone on the far wall.

I could feel the heat rising in my own cheeks.

Out of the corner of my eye, I stole a glance at Lochlan. Was he watching? Was he—God forbid—enjoying this? Should I just wrench my arm free and make a run for it?

He was watching, yes.

His gaze was direct and unwavering, but it lacked the glazed, hungry lust that was so transparent on the faces of the other men.

It was more... analytical. Curious, even.

I found my eyes drifting surreptitiously downward, toward his trousers.

No visible reaction. Nothing straining against the fine wool of his suit.

Yep. Definitely not aroused.

For some inexplicable reason, that made me feel a hell of a lot better.

At least someone here has functioning self-control, I thought, a bizarre sense of pride mingling with my revulsion.

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Toby waddled closer.

He was plastered, his face flushed a mottled red from alcohol and lechery.

He snatched a glass of wine from the tray of a passing waitress dressed as a topless policewoman, squeezing her tits so hard it made her jump.

He thrust the glass toward Lochlan. “Here, lad. Loosen up. This will help.”

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“No, thank you,” Lochlan replied, his voice impeccably polite. “My physician has advised against alcohol while I’m convalescing.”

Toby scoffed. “Convenient excuse.”

His piggy eyes then swiveled to me, and the smirk returned. “What about you, sweetheart? A little something to help you enjoy the show?”

He leered, making a crude, sweeping gesture with his glass. “Don’t worry, it’s good stuff. A bottle of this probably costs you six months’ salary. But if you come to my room later, you can have a case of it. Whatever vintage you like.”

Every fiber of my being recoiled.

Etiquette—that archaic ghost of my upbringing—whispered that I should take the glass offered by my boss’s business partner. But a much louder, more sensible voice inside my head was screaming, Screw etiquette!

I'd consider myself extremely polite for not pouring the entire bottle over the pig's head.

I saw Lochlan draw a breath, about to intercede on my behalf, but I beat him to it. I summoned a smile that felt like it might crack my face. "No, thank you."

Toby's sneer deepened. "What, your doctor advised against it too?"

"No," I said, my tone sweetly reasonable. "But I can't hold my liquor, I'm afraid. Drinking alcohol tends to make me violently and projectilely ill. You wouldn't want me making a mess on your beautiful Persian rugs now, would you?"

Toby tilted his head, his eyes narrowing as if trying to discern if I was lying.

He must have decided it wasn't a risk worth taking, because he simply shrugged, his interest in me evidently exhausted.

He turned his attention back to Lochlan.

"So, Loch, my boy," he said, sloshing his champagne, "not enjoying the theatre? Not tempted by any of my lovely girls?" His gaze flickered between Lochlan and me with insinuating glee. "I see you're rather preoccupied with your own companion. If you prefer

your entertainment somewhere more private, the second floor is at your disposal. I've had it entirely redesigned for my most distinguished guests."

He leaned in, his voice a confidential, booze-soaked murmur. "I've got everything. A room with mirrors on the ceiling, another with a custom-built St Andrew's cross. There's a whole cabinet of toys, from the usual ones to the... well, let's just say you'd need a safeword. All soundproofed, of course."

My stomach, which had already been performing acrobatics, now felt like it was trying to escape my body entirely. A custom-built St Andrew's cross? What the hell? And this was the man Lochlan wanted to do business with?

My boss didn't bat an eye. He offered a polite, almost regretful smile. "It sounds like a truly comprehensive facility, Toby. Perhaps another time."

Another time? I stared at the side of Lochlan's head, my professional worldview cracking.

Was he actually considering it?

Would he actually say yes if I weren't here?

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Toby shrugged, as if the rejection were a minor inconvenience. “Suit yourself. But while you’re making up your mind,” he said, his eyes sliding back to me with a predatory gleam, “that charming piece you have there... it’s a shame to keep her all to yourself.”

He leaned closer to Lochlan, his voice dropping. “Let her circulate a bit. I’ll give you the contracts for the Baltic ports in exchange. How about it, eh?”

I felt the blood drain from my face.

I fixed my gaze on Lochlan, my eyes screaming, Well? If he so much as nodded, I’d cheerfully bash that ridiculously expensive bottle over his head and run like hell out of this godforsaken hellscape.

Lochlan sighed, as if Toby had proposed a tricky but not entirely disagreeable golf wager.

“That is a remarkably generous offer,” he said, his tone one of genuine appreciation—which made me want to punch him in his perfectly sculpted throat. “But not tonight, I think. She has a frightfully jealous streak, and it would make the rest of the trip rather tiresome for me. Perhaps in a couple of months, when her novelty has worn off.”

The air left my lungs in a silent whoosh.

Novelty? Worn off?

What the fuck?

He said it with the same detached tone he might use to discuss trading in a company car.

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Every ounce of professional respect I had for him shattered into a million pieces.

That was it. The moment we were off this godforsaken resort, I was resigning.

This sunny, pristine compound was nothing but a gilded sewer, and my boss—the great Lochlan Hastings—was clearly a card-carrying member of its filthiest club.

Toby laughed, a loud, booming sound that drew glances from the nearby revelers.

He clapped Lochlan on the shoulder. “I knew you had it in you! Fine, fine. I’ll hold you to that.”

And with a final, appraising look at me that made my skin crawl, he sauntered off to find another potential debauchee.

I sat there, frozen, the moans and the music fading into a dull roar in my ears.

No wonder he’d brought me on this trip.

I noticed the blonde dancer was still going at it, her enthusiasm undimmed; her nipple pasties were now gone, discarded on the floor somewhere.

I leaned in close to Lochlan, my lips nearly brushing his ear. I felt him tense.

“Boss,” I gritted out. “May I be excused? I need to... recalibrate my moral compass.”

“Do not go anywhere,” he murmured back, his gaze still forward.

“If I stay in this room for one more minute,” I hissed, “I’m seriously—and I mean seriously—going to puke. And I won’t be able to aim for the rug.”

Lochlan stood abruptly, his hand still firmly wrapped around my wrist. “Let’s go outside.”

The blonde dancer—Elena, if that was even her real name—looked crestfallen, her seductive routine faltering for a split second before she pasted the smile back on and turned her attention to a more appreciative patron.

I all but fled the theatre, stumbling out into an opulent corridor that felt blessedly quiet and still.

At the far end, glass doors opened onto a balcony.

I made a beeline for it, Lochlan in tow, and sucked in great lungfuls of cool, clean night air.

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Chapter 240:

It was like stepping out of a sewer and into a garden.

I patted my cheeks, which were burning.

I noticed Lochlan's cheeks also bore a suspicious red tinge, though whether from arousal, embarrassment, or the stifling heat, I couldn't tell.

As the initial shock began to recede, leaving behind a simmering rage, I spun around to face him, ready to demand exactly why the hell he had thought bringing me to such a den of vice was in any way acceptable.

But before I could utter a word, his phone pinged, the sound unnaturally loud in the quiet.

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He retrieved it from his pocket, reading the screen with a frown that carved a deep line between his brows.

He looked at me, his expression unreadable. “I have to take care of something. It will only take a moment.”

“Go,” I said, waving a hand. “I’ll be fine.”

If he stayed, I might actually consider punching him.

He didn’t move. He was unusually hesitant, his gaze scanning the empty corridor as if expecting threats to materialize from the wallpaper.

I sensed his reluctance to leave me alone, and frankly, I shared the sentiment. The idea of being left by myself in this house of horrors was profoundly unappealing.

“I’ll be fine,” I repeated, more firmly this time. “I’ll just hide out here on the balcony and wait for you to come back. I promise I won’t accept any drinks from passing nymphs.”

He gave a curt nod. “Okay.”

Before turning to leave, he fixed me with a look of intense seriousness. “Do not drink anything. Do not eat anything. Nothing in this house.”

“Sure,” I agreed wholeheartedly.

That was one order I had no intention of disobeying.

I watched him stride away down the long corridor, his tall form disappearing around a corner.

Who had summoned him away? The text had clearly been urgent. What pressing business could it be?

Or, more likely, what pressing bit of blonde, gyrating business? The cynical part of me—which at this point was about ninety percent of my entire personality—piped up. Maybe it wasn’t an important text at all. Maybe it was a complete load of bollocks, a convenient excuse to slip away from his prudish assistant and finally go and get his dick wet with that pole dancer like every other rich wanker in this place.

I shrugged mentally. Not my problem.

Or at least, it wouldn't be once I finished drafting my "go fuck yourself" resignation letter.

The balcony was secluded, a nice spot for a private conversation—or, my mind supplied unhelpfully, a tryst. And apparently, I wasn't the only one who had that thought.

The theatre doors banged open behind me, and a drunk man, his face buried in the ample naked bosom of a statuesque brunette, staggered out into the corridor.

He was giggling drunkenly, while she cooed what I assumed were sweet nothings in his ear.

This was my cue to exit.

I slipped away from the balcony railing before they could see me and ducked into the nearest door, which blessedly turned out to be a toilet.

I locked myself in the furthest cubicle, leaning against the door with a sigh of relief.

This had to be the safest spot in the entire house.

I was wrong, again. Spectacularly so.

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Message from Noa: Have a lovely morning dear readers. God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best. (๖O_ =)๖ ♥

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