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Chapter 91: The Red Spot

The director, who was next door, frowned, looked next to Mariana and Andrea, turned around and walked in, rather as if he didn't want to look this way again.

Mariana knew that the director had become impatient with her since what happened between her and Xavier in the break room.

After all, when it came to the costumes, it was possible to pretend nothing had happened thanks to his design talent.

But if she was involved with the actor, that was something the director would not tolerate.

Hiding the emotions in her eyes, Mariana spoke as calmly as possible:

-Miss Solis, take off your dress and give me ten minutes, I will help you change it, what do you think?

Andrea raised her eyebrows and looked at Mariana in front of her with a high-flown, mischievous smile,

-Can you change it in 10 minutes? I heard from Ana that it took you all night to get this dress altered like this.

Mariana's eyes narrowed slightly as she became enraged. Her aura became even colder,

-Don't worry, Miss Solis, with 10 minutes, they can also be changed, it won't delay your shooting schedule.

-Then, Miss Ortiz, you must hurry.

With these words, Andrea went to her living room and took off her suit.

Taking the suit, Mariana began to change it, and did not choose to cut it again, but instead slightly folded the hem, trying to raise it a little when sewing.

Andrea did not move away, but sat down next to her, looking disdainfully at the sudden movements of Mariana's hands.

-What a good servant!

But then her aide came up behind her, her voice a joy, and she spoke excitedly:

-Miss Andrea, Mr. Durán has come!

Stunned by the words, Andrea turned her head,

-What did you say? Is Leo here?

As if she couldn't believe it, Andrea repeated it again, and her assistant, hearing it, nodded her head repeatedly.

The scissors in his hand cutting the threads stopped for a moment, brushing his slender fingers with extreme speed, the blade sharp and already leaving a trail of crimson blood.

Mariana's eyes flashed with panic and she withdrew her hand, but was surprised when the red drops of blood fell on her white suit, like white snow and red flowers. .

Even though Mariana had made such a serious mistake, Andrea didn't bother with her and looked in the mirror to fix her makeup before leaving the salon to meet Leopoldo.

Dropping her hands helplessly, Mariana looked at the red drops of blood on a white cloth.

Andrea had barely taken a few steps out of the room when the man entered.

His cold, icy gaze shifted to the slender figure with his back to the door.

She was covered with a strong sense of dejection, her shoulders were thin and her fragility was overflowing around her.

With an indescribable emotion spreading through him, Leopoldo looked away.

At that moment, Andrea's luscious body pressed against his side, head up and smiling, eyes full of surprise,

-Leo, why did you think of coming to visit me today?

Lionel couldn't help but sigh as he raised his eyes and looked at the figure he had turned his back on. It was obvious that the boss had come to visit the lady today, but it was obvious that she didn't care!

As Lionel was lost in thought, the chief's cold words reached his ears,

-I'm not busy with work today, so I came.

The low, harsh voice fell on her ears, but the momentary pang of helplessness in Mariana's heart dissipated, only to be instantly overwhelmed. She struggled to keep her emotions under control and gripped the ruler tightly in her hand.

It was Leopoldo.

At that moment I was behind her, and next to her was Andrea.

-But I've had a busy day, I could have finished early.

Andrea looked up angrily in Mariana's direction before continuing,

-But my clothes were so ruined that I couldn't start my work, otherwise I could have gone for a walk with you, Leo.

A meaningful, aggrieved voice rang out and Andrea's eyes flashed with a hint of coldness. She had been aware that Leopoldo's eyes had rested on Mariana when she had first entered.

Resentment was growing, as if she could not get into Leopoldo's eyes.

-It doesn't matter, it's better to sit here.

As he said that, Leopoldo walked over to the couch to sit down and looked at the somewhat stiff figure.

The couch was located not far from Mariana, so he could clearly see the movements of her hands and even the expression on her face.

Andrea's face still wore a flirtatious smile as she affectionately approached Leopoldo and sat down next to him.

-Leo, you are the best.

Hearing this soft voice, Mariana could not help but stop her hands from moving.

The bleeding from the wound had stopped, no more blood was coming out, but the lacerations were a clear indication of the violent emotions he had just felt.

He closed his eyes and tried to suppress his emotions.

She had only ten minutes to finish the dress as quickly as possible, and she could not allow herself to be distracted by outside thoughts.

Her fingers twitched as needle and thread ran over the snow-white dress, and soon the excess hem was carefully shrunk and hidden under an outer layer.

Then he looked at the drops of blood, but paused, hesitating for a moment.

-Ah! What is it? Miss Ortiz, why is there a color of red here?

A surprised voice with a shout of surprise landed loudly in Mariana's ears, and Andrea was already getting up and approaching the table, looking at the spot of red, her words full of provocation.

-Miss Solis, I'm sorry, this is a drop of blood that I accidentally wounded on my hand before staining it, and I...

However, before Mariana could finish her sentence, Andrea interrupted her again:

-So what? When do you plan to do it, Miss Ortiz? You are a designer, so you must know that this suit is made of precious silk and cannot be washed, so how will this striking red color be removed?

Mariana lowered her eyes, unable to resist biting her lower lip.

However, as time went on, he couldn't think of a better way to cover the red spot.

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Chapter 92: Showing off skills

-Miss Ortiz, it's just a dress change for you, do you hate me so much that you want to ruin my dress?

The relentless voice was still echoing in her ears, and Mariana was unable to think calmly.

At that moment, a cold voice broke in on him,

-Since you have nothing else to do, come out for a walk with me.

After saying this, Leopoldo stood up and Andrea's anger disappeared and she approached him, hugging him gently.

-If you don't want to stay here any longer, let's go.

By now Mariana was the only one left in the room. Leaving the ruler in her hand, she looked at the dress not knowing what to do, still trying to think of a way.

As she pondered, the door to the living room behind her was pushed open again.

Turning her eyes in a daze, Mariana saw Lionel, who had returned.

Lionel, who was an important person to Leopoldo, did not usually appear in front of her in public or show any familiarity with her. Her relationship with Leopoldo had not been exposed, and it was clear that Leopoldo did not want her to publish it.

Lionel walked over to Mariana, pulled out his phone, handed it to her and nodded slightly, motioning for her to look at it.

A look of confusion still swirled in her eyes, but Mariana picked up the phone anyway.

It was a video of internationally renowned designer Alicia, or a video of her showing off her skills.

In one of the world design competitions, Alicia had the children paint the hem of a white dress with various brushes, five or six of them working together, and within seconds the dress was colorful and bright.

The dress turned back to white in an instant with an Alice needle.

The video was admired by many designers and, naturally, it was also studied and forwarded by all.

There was a deep respect for Alicia's ability and, naturally, so was Mariana.

-Mr. Durán said to show you the video, that you would understand.

-Did... Mr. Durán ask you to bring that?

-Exactly.

-Thank you.

-I will give Mr. Durán your thanks.

With that, Lionel nodded and turned to leave.

Time was passing, even if Andrea could not attend her for a moment due to Leopoldo's arrival.

But if Andrea knew she was in a situation where she had a ready opportunity to make things difficult for him, she didn't think Andrea would be willing to pass it up.

Mariana returned to work.

Remembering the technique he had just seen Alice use, he began to draw and became more and more skilled. The dots flip and swirl quickly over the suit, leaving a white trail that hides the red drops of blood.

Finally, Mariana put down the needle and thread and looked at the new white suit in front of her with an uncontrollable smile.

All designers would probably be proud of the final product, and so would she.

At that moment, Andrea also returned with a bad face.

-Why have you stopped, Miss Ortiz? Is it already done?

The threatening words fell on Mariana's ears, showing that she was not in a very good mood.

Without seeing Leopoldo, Mariana understood why. His face was still cold and calm, Mariana looked at Andrea and spoke indifferently:

-The suit has been made, look, please.

After saying this, he unfolded the suit and placed it in front of Andrea.

The drops of red blood were already covered and none were visible.

Andrea stepped forward and picked up the suit. After examining the fabric with her hands, the white stitching on the surface remained intact and the red drops of blood on the inside were not visible at all. It was well hidden.

Putting down the cloth, she said:

-Don't get so cocky, you must do it to make up for your earlier mistake!

At these words, a hint of coldness shone in Mariana's eyes as her face remained calm. Her tone was so indifferent that she didn't even bother to argue:

-Since it's done, I'll go first.

After saying that, without waiting for Andrea's response, he left.

Andrea's eyes burned with anger as she looked behind her back, making her delicate face look a little fierce.

His assistant approached with the suit and spoke cautiously:

-Miss, the director is already pressing, let's quickly put on the suit and go.

However, to his surprise, the next moment he was struck with bad luck.

-Plaf!

With a loud sound, a hard slap landed on his assistant's face, and in an instant, the red marks of five fingers appeared on his white skin.

-Get on with your business!

Taking the suit from his hand, Andrea went to change.

Andrea was agitated with hatred and anger at this point.

A short while ago, she had just left the room, said a few words to her assistant and Leopoldo left, leaving her in vain. It was as if he had not come to see her, but to see Mariana.

This perception made Andrea return to the salon furious after Leopoldo had left. She thought that if Mariana couldn't fix the drop of blood, she was going to teach him a lesson and even get the director to throw her off the set.

But, he saw that she had fixed the suit perfectly.

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Chapter 93: Sadness

Not being able to unburden herself made her hate Mariana even more. As Andrea dressed, she was calm again and her assistant, who had been out of the room, dared not say anything, her eyes brimming with tears, the slap marks on her face were hidden by make-up, they were barely visible.

Andrea stopped looking at this girl and walked to the set with pride. And so, it all ended unnoticed.

As Mariana left Andrea's room, she was exhausted, but Lionel's words remained in her mind.

"Mr. Durán said that if he saw it, he would know what to do."

He did, and he did.

Mariana dropped straight onto the couch, and only came to her senses.

The name, Diana Solis, that had been on her mind for so long came back to her. Mariana took out her cell phone and called Lionel, biting her lip.

-Ma'am? Do you have something you want to tell me?

After a moment of silence, Mariana's eyes were full of doubt. She didn't know what the name Diana Solís meant and she didn't know if she should go looking for an answer or not.

-Ma'am?

After a long silence, Lionel asked again.

-I want to know something about a woman.

She gritted her teeth and closed her eyes, and when she opened them again, Mariana had made a decision. She looked into the mirror that reflected all of her, and there was no place to hide even the emotion in the depths of her eyes.

It was the yearning.

For a moment, however, Lionel said nothing. He hadn't expected Mariana to call at that hour to ask something like that.

-Madam, it is better not to know.

-What if I need to know?

It was the first time Mariana showed him strength, and although Lionel could not see her face at the time, he felt it fully in the words.

-I don't know anything about that one, but the only thing I can say is that the reason why Mr. Durán is so tolerant with Miss Solís is because she is the cousin of that one.

There was a sudden pain in the heart.

Andrea had done so much damage, but Leopoldo could still forgive her, even tolerate her, all because of Diana.

If you treated Andrea this way, what would happen to Diana?

Closing his eyes tightly, forcing himself not to think about it anymore.

-Well, I can see that.

With that, the call had been hung up.

He leaned back weakly, sinking into the soft couch.

The woman in the mirror looked somber and sad, her hands clasped on her knees, her eyes dazed, lightless. There was absolute silence in the room.

Putting his phone away, Lionel looked at the office of the president of Grupo Durán, hesitated, but entered with the folder in his hand,

-Sir, this is the cooperation agreement with the Sanda Group, it has just been drafted, please review it.

With that, the folder was placed on the table, but did not come out.

-What? -Anything else?

Lionel looked a little embarrassed, not knowing how to hint to his boss,

-Sir, I don't know if I should say it.

-If you know it's inappropriate, don't say it.

Lionel was still gritting his teeth in a persuasive mood:

-Mr. Durán, since some people can go away for so many years and never come back, why don't you get along with the person in front of you?

-Bang!

A heavy blow fell to the ground.

Lionel couldn't help a shudder and fell silent. His death would be for talking too much!

For a moment, the atmosphere in the room became tense to the max.

After a glance at his boss's face, Lionel dared not linger any longer and hastened to say:

-I'll go first.

The assistant left very neatly.

The office door closed firmly again and the room fell silent.

Fingers gripped the expensive black pen again and it seemed that the coldness that had just fallen on him, with anger.

The person in front of you?

The day went by and, despite occasional difficulties on Andrea's set, Mariana thought no more of Leopoldo.

When they returned home, they had not spoken to each other since that day on the set. Mariana felt the relaxation, but also a deep sense of helplessness and a sense of disappointment.

That day, Mariana soon packed up her things and left the set to return to her villa in the suburbs.

When she opened the door, she was naturally greeted alone by her nanny.

-Are you back so early today, ma'am? I haven't made dinner yet, so it may take a while to wait.

With a smile on her face, Mariana waved her hand at the nanny and said softly:

-All right, I'll go upstairs and change my clothes, I'm not very hungry now either.

And with that, he went upstairs.

Leopoldo was still not coming when she finished eating. After a quick wash, Mariana went to her room and went to bed.

But he was about to fall asleep when the door of his room opened violently, and the dim white light from outside fell into the darkness of the room, illuminating the woman lying on the bed.

Startled, she looked toward the door to see a tall figure with an unknowable expression. Mariana was about to ask a question when the door slammed shut again, but he turned toward the woman on the bed.

The smell of alcohol reached his nose, had he been drinking?

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Chapter 94: All is Well

-Mr. Durán, this is my room, you're in the wrong place, let me take you back....

Before she could say more, Leopoldo, who had been standing next to the bed looking at her, suddenly fell towards the bed, right on top of Mariana's body, and the smell of alcohol tightened around Mariana for a moment, making her slightly drunk as well.

The next moment, her slender, soft body stiffened, there was a warm, moist heat on her neck, and it was his kisses.

These kisses landed heavily on the skin with an indescribable charm, making the body turn with heat, while the temperature of the contact there became hotter and clearer.

Mariana struggled as she noticed the man's growing lust, strong nibbling and sucking with deep intent.

However, the woman's strength was no match for the man's, and even with all her strength, she could not move him at all.

The man's movements became more and more unrestrained, a slight pain became present and Mariana gave up the fight. Staring into the darkness, she felt momentarily confused.

The man on top of her was Leopoldo, she knew it, but what was he doing, did he know it himself?

And what was worse, she knew it and was unable to stop him, letting him do what he wanted.

As the heat continued to burn her body, Mariana closed her eyes and the tears fell, disappearing into the black hair and were never to be found again.

The next day, Mariana woke up and moved slightly, feeling a pain in her whole body, but she also felt that Leopoldo was next to her.

He was still asleep with his eyes closed. Always the man had the coldness in his gaze but now it had been hidden, and his face was much more tender than usual.

Unconsciously, she reached out and gently stroked him, from his eyebrows and eyes, to his nose and lips, to his throat, everywhere, gently.

It was the first time I had looked at him so closely, the God was so partial to him, and this man had to be molded with great care and energy.

It seemed that the man was about to wake up, Mariana withdrew her hand, closing her eyes and pretending to sleep.

Leopoldo looked up at the white ceiling above him, and for a moment he couldn't tell where he was.

His eyes lowered slightly and he saw the woman lying in his arms who was calm, her cheeks flushed and her eyes, closed.

Only then did Leopoldo remember what had happened yesterday. The coldness returned to his eyes, Leopoldo got up, got out of bed, picked up the clothes from the floor and put them on, and went out.

Everything went quickly and without a moment's hesitation.

When silence returned to the room, Mariana opened her eyes slightly.

Unconsciously, he reached out and touched the empty spot where the warmth still lingered, but there was no longer a strong figure beside him, and his heart seemed to feel empty as that empty spot.

What had it really been for him the night before?

He put on his clothes and looked at the cell phone on the table, his heart thudding.

The neck was covered with bruises and bruises, so you could tell at a glance what had happened the night before.

With those mixed feelings, Mariana didn't want to go to the set today and didn't want to see Andrea, so she called the director saying she wasn't feeling well and took some time off.

The moment she hung up the phone, Mariana felt a little more relaxed and, after a moment, got up to wash herself.

Since she had nothing to do today, she wanted to see her grandmother. After buying some fruit, Mariana went to Grandma's house.

To her surprise, the person who opened the door was Clara Moreno, her mother.

-Mom.

After glancing at the fruit in Mariana's hand, Clara took it with a sullen face and spoke unkindly:

-Come in, Mrs. Durán.

The words were full of mockery, especially the word "Mrs. Durán".

He felt something blocking his heart, making him unable to breathe.

-Mom...

-Since you've come to visit Grandma, come in quickly.

After saying that, he turned around and left without looking at Mariana for a second.

Mariana's heart ached and her face turned slightly white.

Clara had never wanted him to come to Leopoldo's grandmother's house; if he had not come, they would still have a superficial mother-daughter relationship, but Mariana was already here, she did not treat him kindly.

Mariana hid all the emotions from her eyes and, with a smile on her face, walked through the door and saw the old woman lying on a lounge on the balcony, sunbathing. As she approached, the warmth of the sun illuminated her and seemed to dispel the coldness in her heart.

-Grandma.

At the sound of the voice, Grandma turned her eyes with a look of surprise.

-Mari!

With that, he was about to get up from the couch, and Mariana took it upon herself to step forward.

At that moment, the grandmother reached out her hand, full of joy, and took Mariana by the hand, pulling her close and looking at her carefully before caressing her hand with satisfaction.

-It seems that Leopoldo takes good care of you, at least he hasn't lost weight, but your face, why does it look a bit bad?

-Mari, tell me, is Leo treating you badly? That bastard! If he treats you badly, tell me, I'll teach him a lesson for you!

Mariana felt warmth in her heart and a smile appeared on her face.

-Grandma... I've been working too much and probably haven't had a good rest.... don't worry about me.

Then, she changed the subject,

-Grandma, how are you feeling these days?

-Don't worry, everything is fine.

Mariana wanted her grandmother, who was so good to her, to stay with her as long as she could.

At lunchtime, Mariana sat with Grandma, laughing and joking for a long time, and Grandma ate more than usual.

After the two had eaten, the grandmother took Mariana to the study.

Every time she came, grandma would take her to the studio and take those pictures of Leopoldo as a little boy and show them to her.

I knew that grandma had a bad memory, but I loved her very much.

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Chapter 95: Bitterness

So, every time Mariana pretended to see these photos for the first time so that grandma would have joy.

The two were sitting in the studio, flipping through an album of photos of Leopold as a child, suddenly, their eyes fell on the last photo in the album.

In the photo, Leopoldo was young and looking at the smiling woman next to him, as if they were in love.

With fingers trembling, trying to repress the various emotions, Mariana spoke in a mute voice:

-Grandma, who is this girl?

Hearing this, Grandma's face, which had been smiling, darkened, and her friendliness faded, a little unnaturally.

-This is one of Leo's childhood classmates.

The voice was weak, as if he didn't want to mention it.

However, Mariana sensed something in her grandmother's tone:

-Grandma, is your name Diana Solis?

Surprised, the grandmother looked at her with surprise and said unconsciously:

-How do you know it?

It was really her. So the two of them had known each other for a long time?

-Grandma, she...

She was going to ask again, but Grandma had already closed the album.

-Mari, this is all in the past, isn't Leo with you now? You are already a couple, so the most important thing is to give grandma a great-grandchild.

-Grandma...

-This is my last wish, to see you happy.

The words fell on Mariana's ears with an expectation.

She looked at her grandmother and couldn't help but fall gently into her grandmother's arms:

-We will, Grandma, we will.

The promise she wasn't sure if it was a promise to her grandmother or to herself.

In the room, it was warm and cozy, but the person at the door was terrified, her hands trembling as she held the tray.

It was Clara.

The grandmother asked her to bring some refreshments, but when she approached the door she heard the words "Diana Solis", which made her startled.

Clara turned around with her tray and went downstairs, a little disoriented. It was as if she had received a blow.

It was already late when she left her grandmother's house. Mariana looked silently at the night sky, as if remembering the last time she was in Zoraida's courtyard with Leopoldo. The memory was so distant that it seemed like a long time ago.

He saw Clara, whose face was as somber as tonight.

-Are you looking for me?

Mariana didn't think Clara was here to see her off.

-You just talked about someone named Diana Solis, who is she?

Mariana did not understand why she had that question.

-Do you know her?

How could Clara know Diana? According to what the grandmother said, the two families knew each other, so they must be business partners. The Durán family did not have frequent dealings with ordinary families.

-How can I know her? If you don't want to tell me, then nothing, why test me with your words?

After a pause, Clara looked at Mariana, with a slightly unpleasant face and a very impulsive tone. With just one question, she had made Clara feel unhappy with her.

-Since there is nothing else, I will go back first.... Mom, take care of yourself.

After saying that, Mariana turned and left.

Clara was stunned for a moment and, looking at Mariana, her heart could not avoid a sad feeling, but then she thought of something, and went back to the house.

In bed, Mariana closed her eyes thinking about what Grandma and Lionel had said.

The information was that, indeed, this woman, Diana Solis, was extraordinary for Leopoldo, a very important person in his life.

As he thought about it, his head grew increasingly numb.

Mariana was awakened by the weight of her body and opened her eyes to the darkness in front of her, obviously it was not yet dawn.

The man on top of her was moving and, just like the night before, the smell of alcohol surrounded her.

Mariana pushed against the man and screamed:

-Leopoldo, Leopoldo, wake up!

But there was no response.

-Leopoldo! It's Mariana! Wake up!

The next moment, the pushing hands were clamped with one of the man's hands, and she could not move.

The man's movements became more violent. She couldn't understand how it had happened like this, and remembered what her grandmother had told her today about Diana.

But although there was a slight resistance in his mind, his body sincerely longed for it.

It was a charming room.

The next day, Mariana woke up and Leopoldo was gone. The pain in his body was a clear indication of what had happened the night before.

Finally, he got up, cleaned up and went to the set.

Just as she arrived on the set, she saw Xavier walking toward her.

-Is the great designer Ortiz coming to work?

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Chapter 96: Nothing can be done

With a smile, Mariana looked at him, who was standing in front of her with his arms crossed, and spoke in a low voice:

-This is my job.

-What? You work because? -a smile emerged and he took a step closer to Mariana-am I here?

He was such an attractive man. Even Mariana couldn't help but look into his eyes, and then she felt a little helpless:

-Don't be ridiculous.

With that, he passed Xavier and left.

And, naturally, the man didn't let her go so easily, walking beside her, still looking cynical:

-Is that man in a bad mood these days?

Apparently, Xavier was such a proud man but now he spoke to comfort her.

-Xavier, you don't have to tell me this.

Immediately, laughter rang in his ears,

-Mariana, what were you thinking, that such words have moved you?

-How is this possible?

With these words, Mariana continued on her way.

The man behind her had stopped smiling and his gaze fell on the slender, smooth figure with many emotions, taking a long time to calm down.

After spending the whole morning in the dressing room, Mariana was almost exhausted.

It was lunchtime.

But Mariana waited for a long time without anyone bringing her food.

Normally, she would have eaten lunch by this time, but now Ana screamed:

-I'm starving.

But the crew was still missing.

Mariana glanced at Ana, who was lying on the sofa, and had to get up and leave the dressing room.

As she passed by the set, an angry voice made Mariana stop.

The man who usually served her food stood listening, hands clasped in frustration and even trembling slightly in fear.

And it was Andrea standing in front of him, shouting angrily and making sarcastic comments:

-What? How dare you bring me that pig food? -Do you want to keep working on the set or not?

Looking at the set member who kept apologizing, Andrea's eyes were full of contempt.

She had called Leopoldo from time to time during this period, but, each time, Lionel had blocked her, not once did Leopoldo return her calls.

It was evident that Leopoldo did not want to see her.

This infuriated her, but she could do nothing, and had no choice but to keep her anger bottled up, and this worker was right in her crosshairs, naturally she had to vent her anger on him.

The entire set remained silent, not daring to say a word, although some looked up from time to time.

They saw the trembling person and felt sympathy for it, but because Andrea was so dominant, they had to keep their mouths shut to protect themselves.

After all, the lead actress in Emperatriz Santa was chosen by Grupo Durán, and even the director used to respect Andrea and would not easily blame her.

-He is unlucky, Andrea has been in a bad mood the last few days.

-Yes, I don't know what's wrong, Andrea is always angry lately, she doesn't like anyone.

-I didn't go over to hand her a bottle of water, and she was upset and yelled at me.

The whispering continued, but by then Mariana could no longer hear them and walked towards her.

At that moment, the whole set, who were still chatting, looked at her with surprised, mocking or frightened eyes.

It seemed incomprehensible and unbelievable that Mariana had taken the initiative to approach Andrea under those circumstances.

The scene was silent for a moment.

-Luis, the director said that another lunch ration is needed, it seems that some boss has come and wants to invest in the team, let you send it quickly, do not delay.

Mariana did not look at Andrea, but her gaze fell on the trembling Luis.

At the sound of the voice, Luis raised his head with eyes full of confusion and looked at Mariana, whose face was calm. Then he looked at Andrea, who was furious, and shook his head very gently at Mariana.

Mariana understood that Luis wanted her to leave quickly so as not to bother Andrea anymore.

But he did not move a step and continued to speak insistently:

-Luis, there is no time to lose on the part of the director. Luis, think about it, if you delay the director's investment because of this little matter, the director will be angry at that time, you'd better leave quickly.

-What are you doing? Have you come to teach me what to do? He's just a stage assistant, and now you have to defend him. Is this set Miss Ortiz's world now? Is no one else allowed to speak?

The words were wrapped in great anger.

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Chapter 97: Cover headlines

-Miss Solis, it's my fault, designer Ortiz was just passing me a message....

Before Luis could finish, Andrea had already interrupted him again:

-You know it's your fault?

Then she looked triumphantly at Mariana, her words still unrelenting:

-The producer trusts you to let you direct the set meals! It's not for you to profit. The set meals are now junk! How dare you try to cheat me out of those meals!

With that, Andrea violently threw the lunch box in her hand to the floor, juices flowing and the food soaked in mud.

-If you want me not to blame others, well, since you think the food served here is good, then you can eat the good food on the floor in front of me, then I'll take you at your word! And I'm not going to make things difficult for you.

Mariana stared incredulously at the food on the floor, angry.

And Luis looked at the juicy food on the floor, showing a look of helplessness.

Mariana saw Luis like that, she understood that he was going to do what Andrea said.

-Miss Solis, the food on the set has been specially adapted by a nutritionist. All the crew members, including the director and the producer, and even Xavier, ate the same lunch. And since you are the protagonist, the meals Luis prepares for you are much more elaborate, don't you see?

Looking at Mariana, Andrea was unmoved by her comment.

Mariana took a box of food from one of the staff members, and placed it in front of Andrea.

It was true that the box inside was not as varied as Andrea's, nor as elaborate, and it was clear that Andrea's box had been prepared well.

-Miss Solis, even the director and the producer are eating the same lunch box, why can't you?

Looking directly at Mariana, with a lot of anger, for a moment Andrea could do nothing. What she intended was to make things difficult for her today, and she knew that, as her agent had taken care of her beforehand, the food she delivered to her was different from what was delivered to the others.

I did not expect to find Mariana, who had mentioned the director and producer, and even Xavier, were more important than her, were receiving a meal like this, so what more could be said?

Andrea knew that if she kept it up, tomorrow's front page headlines would be full of her stories.

-Mariana, remember what you said today!

With those cold words, Andrea left with her assistant, without looking at anyone else.

Mariana stepped forward and looked at Luis sympathetically and said softly:

-Luis, sometimes it's not good to put up with everything....

He wanted to explain himself more, but...

-Miss Ortiz, I know everything! But, after all, you have offended Miss Solis because of me, and I'm afraid the days ahead are going to be even more difficult.

Previous incidents between Andrea and Mariana had spread throughout the set, so even Luis.

-That's it, what else can I do? Well, Luis, I've come for my food box and Anita's, so you can give them to me.

-Okay.

Luis went to one side and picked up two boxes and handed them to Mariana, then went to another side, picked up yogurts and shoved them into Mariana's hands.

-There's nothing good to eat here, but there's still some yogurt left after lunch, so I'll give you some more.

Mariana wanted to refuse, but...

-Do you think it wasn't good? If you don't like it...

-Yes, I like it, then, thank you.

In the following days, when Luis would come to deliver Mariana's food, he would have a few laughs with her, and the two became much closer, talking and laughing.

Every time Luis arrived, he would bring some snacks, fruits and so on, and give them to Mariana, which were not too expensive.

Mariana took them, but did not expect anyone to see her actions.

Andrea looked at Mariana and Luis, she already had a plan.

Luis was obviously offering Mariana some fruit. Instead, that image seemed to those who were a little farther away, as if the two were shaking hands and talking and laughing.

Andrea looked at the two standing there, her mind already made up.

Once back in his living room, he pulled out his cell phone.

-Hey, how come the big star has time to call a little reporter like me?

The words coming from the other end of the phone were satirical, which made Andrea's expression impatient.

-The shooting schedule for Empress Santa has been very busy lately. And I have an issue here, I don't know if you're willing to accept it. Gomez, once the job is done, the price is negotiable.

There was a moment of silence, and then came the serious words, and Andrea flashed a satisfied smile.

-Well, tell me, Miss Solis.

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Chapter 98: Obsession

In the evening, Mariana returned to the villa and, after a short dinner, went first to her small studio and drew some designs.

When he looked up again, it was already 23:30.

Mariana got up to the window and stood there, opening it gently, and the cool breeze blew in. On her neck there were still some unfaded red spots, reminding her of that night.

He stopped thinking and lay down on the bed.

However, only a moment later, the alcohol-smelling man entered, and stood over her. The warmth and the familiar smell of alcohol made Mariana slowly relax.

-Leopoldo...

-Shhh...

Mariana was struck dumb as she felt the touch of a cold finger against her red lips, the slightest tingle and pain.

You didn't even want to hear his voice, did you?

But, still, she found herself shamefully drowning in this fleeting happiness, as if this was the only moment they belonged to each other.

There was no Diana, no Andrea, just the two of them in bed.

The panting was getting more and more intense, the air temperature was rising and Mariana was already in a trance, losing herself.

During the day, Mariana continued sorting the fabrics scattered in the wardrobe department and dealing with Andrea's various problems.

At night, she would lie in bed with Leopoldo, who came to her room drunk, and they would do the intimate things that only lovers should do.

It was the obsession with him.

The day went on as usual, and it was finally time for the cast and crew to get production underway, during which time some sequences from *Empress Santa* were shot.

Mariana got up early this morning, put on her makeup and headed to the venue.

According to the agreement between the company and the production team, all the costumes for the main characters were to come from the wardrobe team directed by Mariana during the filming of *Emperatriz Santa*.

This was another collaboration that will benefit both parties, in addition to allowing them to develop the costumes.

Clearly, the publicity benefits of stars like Xavier and Andrea wearing their designs would be considerable.

To minimize contact between Mariana and Andrea, all deliveries to Andrea had been made by Ana.

After confirming with Andrea's people about the costumes and other things, Ana went to Mariana's side to sit down.

-Mari, this Andrea is really too tormenting, I'm exhausted!

He looked at her and Mariana spoke in a soft voice:

-Anita, I'd better go, it's my business, I shouldn't drag you into this kind of work.

-Mari, what are you talking about! Your business is my business, that's fine.

The two sat in one of the seats at the press conference, where there were seats reserved for the cast and crew.

In a moment, the journalists filed in, each choosing a seat and readying their cameras to point at the stage in unison.

However, the next moment a loud noise was heard.

-Look! I didn't expect Mr. Durán to be here today.

-Yes, yes, Emperatriz Santa is a Grupo Durán project, but I did not expect that Mr. Durán would also deign to come.

-Do you think Mr. Durán came to support Andrea?

The noise and confusion in Mariana's ears triggered a different sense in her heart and she couldn't help but raise her head and look in the direction of the crowded door.

The cameras that had been placed in front of the stage and pointed at him turned and focused directly on Leopoldo.

Mariana's gaze fell on that figure, and on the other side, Ana began to exclaim again:

-It's really Mr. Durán, isn't it? He's coming for... It can't be for Andrea, can it?

-Sit down here, Mr. Durán," a fat man in a suit next to him held out his hand and pointed to a chair in the center.

Leopoldo sat quietly without saying a word.

The man then had security guards surround him, who immediately separated the journalists.

-Please return to your seats and be seated, the investment conference is about to begin.

The journalists returned to their seats, taking more pictures of Leopoldo's back.

-Do you have your eye on Mr. Durán?

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Chapter 99: She was an unfaithful woman

Ana approached Mariana and spoke,

-Mari, why do you love Mr. Durán, when you have such a handsome and rich man like Xavier by your side!

-Although, he is handsome and rich, and he is the prince charming for many girls, but, I think Xavier is better!

Mariana smiled, not knowing what to do. How could two such people belong to her?

Ana was about to say something else when a sweet voice suddenly sounded from the stage.

The two had to stop talking and looked up to see a lady in a sexy dress and delicate makeup holding a microphone and introducing the investment conference with a smile.

-Ladies and gentlemen, today is the launch of Emperatriz Santa and we are delighted that Mr. Durán has been here.

The applause was so loud, the fat man was so excited.

However, Leopoldo remained in his seat, indifferent.

The presenter had a moment of embarrassment, but in an instant she was smiling again and spoke again:

-Let's invite our director and Xavier, who plays the male lead, and Miss Andrea, who plays the female lead, to the stage!

He immediately burst into applause.

Mariana looked at the man and woman standing on the stage, and Xavier and Andrea's world was different, they belonged to the lights, to a much higher and dreamy stage.

She, on the other hand, was behind the scenes.

-Well, this is an investment release, it is sure to bring the sincerity of our Holy Empress team, the director has edited a version of the trailer so far not aired, so please watch the screen.

The presenter said to the director, Xavier and Andrea as she looked at the large screen behind them.

Andrea, looked at Mariana, and what she did not expect was that Leopoldo would also be at today's investment event.

So he would be the first one to see what was going to happen next, right? Andrea found that very interesting.

The large screen gradually lit up, but the next moment, the images on the screen caused the crowd of journalists to erupt. The room suddenly became chaos, with flickering lights flashing in front of them.

-Mari, how can this be?

Ana's voice, very surprised, and Mariana looked at the screen.

Was it her?

It was a shot of her talking and laughing with some of her male colleagues from the wardrobe crew. Then there was a shift to a scene at the entrance of the salon where Luis was handing her fruit. The angle of the shot was a bit tricky, to make it look like she was holding hands with Luis.

What Mariana didn't expect was that the final image on the screen would be of her and Xavier walking down the hallway. There was an image of Xavier looking at her, both with a slight smile on his face.

Mariana stood up, trembling all over her body.

At that moment, he was still putting up the photos and the lights came on immediately. When he opened his eyes again, it was the microphones and the exciting journalists.

-Miss Ortiz, do you have something to explain? You seem to be sweethearts, are you in love?

-Miss Ortiz, as the production designer, you were involved in the Facebook incident some time ago, but you didn't leave the production, is it because of Xavier?

-Miss Ortiz, please answer our question positively, can you lead the wardrobe team, is it because you have the support of the main character of this drama?

The voices fell noisily on her ears, causing Mariana's mind to cloud a little, her gaze was slightly dazed.

The microphone stretched forward as if it was about to prick him in the face, the reporters were mad as if he knew some secret.

At that moment, Ana suddenly stepped forward and stopped Mariana in front of her, hugging her tightly with her arms outstretched and talking:

-What are you doing here? Today is the launch of Empress Santa's investment, it's not about Mariana, please go back to the subject, this is just a personal and private matter, it's not necessary to explain it to everyone....

However, his words were violently interrupted the next moment by a reporter:

-How can it be a personal affair? The video shows that designer Ortiz seems to be unfaithful between relationships, and that one of the men is, Xavier! I think Xavier would also want to know what the answer to that question is.

The journalist's words seemed to be phrased in advance, aggressively forcing her to respond.

Suddenly, her wrist was gripped by someone's hand, with warmth settling on her skin and then instantly transferring to her heart.

She was forced to turn around, moving forward with the man.

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Chapter 100: He Said Home

When Mariana looked up, she realized it was Leopoldo.

At that moment, the journalists who had been asking questions stood up, stunned as they watched Mariana leave with Leopoldo, their eyes wide with surprise.

Was it... Leopoldo?

After a moment of silence, the crowd of reporters turned to raise their cameras.

Numerous flashing lights came on again, pointing to the backs of the two as they walked away.

As soon as they were stunned, the security guards who had been present to manage the scene came out en masse, holding hands in front of the group of journalists.

The crowd could only watch the two leave.

Andrea, standing on the stage, looked at the two disappearing from the entrance, angrily.

Why hadn't Leopoldo, after seeing the video, abandoned her? Why had he come to her aid? It couldn't be like that!

Xavier turned to look at the video, smiling playfully as always, and reached out to stroke her chin.

What a beautiful photo.

Mariana followed Leopoldo stumbling, and he led her to the elevator, then to the garage, and finally opened the car door and pushed her in, stepping aside to get into the car as well.

Everything seemed to have happened in an instant, and Mariana was still a bit disoriented, with a confused look on her face.

The man next to him had already started the car.

-Where do we go now?

-Home.

The calmness in his tone surprised the woman first, yet she felt warm in her heart.

The whole trip was in silence.

Soon they arrived home, and after entering, Mariana went upstairs, entered her room and fell into bed.

The moment his eyes closed, what had happened at the launch appeared before his eyes again, the lights were so blinding that they seemed to burn his soul.

To which world did he really belong?

After remaining silent for a while in front of Mariana's room, Leopoldo became angry, but, finally, he stopped interrupting and returned to his room. He went to the window, took out his phone.

-Mr. Durán.

Lionel's voice came on the other end of the line.

-Did you find anything?

-It was the journalist who pressured Mrs. Marina. We got his phone, hacked into it and got a recording of the call.

Journalists always left open the possibility of recording the calls.

-Tell me!

-It is Ms. Solis, she contacted that reporter and edited that video to be shown at the launch of the investment.

The reason he didn't say, because his boss knew. Lionel held the phone tightly, waiting for the words there.

I kept thinking of the image of Mariana stunned and helpless in front of a crowd of frantic journalists. At that moment, that image made Leopoldo's heart hesitate for a few moments, and then he turned to her.

-Create a car accident so that she cannot continue filming Empress Santa.

Lionel, clenching the phone in his hand. Only after a while did he answer in a deep voice:

-Yes.

Hanging up the phone, Leopoldo looked out the window, thinking about something.

In the evening, after attending to reporters, Andrea returned to the living room and suddenly slammed her purse on the floor, her smile instantly fierce.

His eyes were bloodshot, his body was shaking and his chest was full of rage, unable to calm down for long.

-Miss...

At that moment, her assistant, who was standing behind her, carefully picked up the expensive bag on the floor and hesitantly approached Andrea's side, saying with some concern and fear.

-What? You want to make me laugh too, don't you?

Andrea turned sharply, angrily, glaring at her assistant, and spoke with hatred.

Seeing the look of fear on the assistant's face, Andrea snorted with disdain, removed the bag and turned to walk away.

Driving alone to the bar, Andrea was wearing a black cap and large black glasses that almost covered most of her cheeks.

-Whisky.

As soon as he sat down at the bar, a glass was quickly placed in front of him.

He drained the glass in one go.

-Another drink.

At that moment, the seat next to her was occupied, and Andrea sensed something, and turned her eyes to see a well-dressed man.

-Miss, are you alone?

The words were tinged with a slight coquetry.

Andrea took the glass handed to her by the waiter, her fingers brushed the wall of the glass thinking about something, without looking at the man.

The bar was a place to have fun, but she was in a bad mood today and really wasn't interested in anyone.

After taking another drink, Andrea spoke :

-Another one.

Andrea was already a little dizzy.

-Miss, how boring to drink alone!

The man lifted the glass in his hand and held it up to Andrea's face, tilting it slightly so that the liquid inside fell into Andrea's glass.

She looked at the man and Andrea took the glass and drank it.

The man's eyes showed he was planning something and the smile intensified as he stared at Andrea and he drank.

Shortly after drinking, Andrea's body became hot and her face was warm.