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Chapter 271

The Nathaniel family home.

Mr. Nathaniel called for a family meeting when he arrived home. Naturally, Eric was not invited.

All those who wanted to benefit from Mr. Nathaniel, naturally, had to pander to him before he took his last breath.

His eldest and second sons had arrived. The two brothers had dragged their family members along as well. Only his daughter who had been married off did not attend the meeting.

“Why did you call us here so urgently, dad?” His second son was slightly upset because the meeting had interrupted his fun. However, he did not show his displeasure.

Mr. Nathaniel replied grimly, “I didn’t expect Eric to be affiliated with Mark Tremont. Moreover, they’re good friends. Mark’s wife is a designer in the company as well. I’ve miscalculated this time. I don’t know if he’s trying to trick us, but if it’s true, we can forget about establishing a connection with Mark.”

Mr. Nathaniel’s second son was not bothered at all. When things got rough, he would push his responsibility away. “It’s your fault for not realizing this sooner, dad. I’ve fought with Eric so much that we’ve pretty much severed ties. You can’t blame me for that…”

Mr. Nathaniel's face turned green and white with rage. "What the hell are you saying? You're nothing like Eric! Idiot!"

His second son was too afraid to speak now. Mr. Nathaniel's eldest son, however, mulled over his thoughts before he finally said, "Previously, you asked me to transfer Lily over to Eric's company. She has reported every partnership and deal to us but never said anything about a partnership with Mark. Is it possible that Eric's wary of her and kept this from her? Or did she betray us?"

Mr. Nathaniel shook his head. "I don't know. Find an opportunity to speak to Lily. We can't have a traitor in our ranks. Eric has agreed to hand the company over, but he has decided to sever ties with our family. Once he leaves, he'll take all of his resources along with him. I don't care about the rest, but you've been working for a long time to reel Mark Tremont in to no avail. I'm assuming there's no way now, but we can't let this happen… You'd better come up with something."

"Dad, you shouldn't hand Glide over to second brother," Mr. Nathaniel's eldest son suggested, "It's not like it'll do the company any good, and it's not like you don't know how he's like. That's not all, you should give Eric a sweeter deal so that he'd stay with the Nathaniel family. At least, he'll be able to help us talk to Mark."

Mr. Nathaniel's second son was upset when he heard this. "What are you saying, big bro? So you're the only capable one here, and everyone is useless? You know what I think? I think Eric's way smarter than you. You haven't even been able to speak to Mark despite working on it for such a long time. Eric's already best friends with him!"

"Enough! Stop fighting!" Mr. Nathaniel snapped irritably, "As the eldest, you should be aware of Eric's temper. Our quarrel has reached this stage now. Even if I give all of the companies in our family to him, he may not necessarily accept it! We must come up with a new idea."

“Dad, allow me to make a suggestion,” Mr. Nathaniel’s second son’s wife eagerly chimed in, “We know Eric’s temper very well. There’s no way we can make amends at this point. Didn’t you say Mark’s wife is working for Eric? Since we can’t do things legally, let’s try an alternative method. Even if it’s a cheap shot, it’s still a win for us as long as we can work with Mark!”

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No one understood what she meant. The eldest son’s wife could not stand her sister-in-law’s despicable methods and said disdainfully, “Don’t drag your unsightly affairs into this. Lest we end up penny-wise and pound-foolish.”

The second son’s wife glared at her, “What are you saying? What unsightly affairs? I’m suggesting we convince Mark’s wife to betray Eric. At that time, Eric would definitely sever ties with Mark. If Eric has a problem with Mark’s wife, Mark will certainly have a problem with him. At that time, we can take advantage of it to smooth things over and lure Mark to our side. I’m sure Mark won’t mind working with us to seek revenge from Eric!”

The eldest son’s eyes lit up. “Dad, I don’t think that’s a bad idea. Lily is still in Glide. I’ll have a talk with her so we can start our plan from there. Mark’s wife might not betray Eric, but Lily can do it on her behalf. What do you think?”

Mr. Nathaniel nodded heavily after some thought. “That’s the only way now. I’ll leave this to you. I’d be less worried if you’re in charge.”

The second son was annoyed. “Why should he be allowed to carry out our plan? You’re biased, dad!”

Mr. Nathaniel glared at him. “You can’t do anything except licking the plates clean. Shut up!”

…

Glide Designs.

It was lunchtime, but Arianne was in no mood to eat. She laid her head on her desk and took a nap. It was the most peaceful when her colleagues went out for lunch. Sleep slowly crept up on her when she suddenly heard the distinct clicking noises from a pair of high heels. She frowned as she lifted her head to have a look. It was Lily.

Lily had always been very time-conscious. She would leave very quickly for lunch and return promptly. It seemed like she had never left the office for lunch and only ate in the canteen. However, today she was the last to leave. Moreover, she looked ill-at-ease as she carried her bag, she was clearly heading out.

“Miss Pierre, I see you’re bringing your handbag with you. Are you heading out for lunch? I heard the food in the canteen is pretty good these days. You’re usually very frugal. I hardly ever see you going out for lunch,” Arianne said casually.

“Uh… I… My relatives are here on vacation for a few days. We planned to have lunch somewhere nearby. Aren’t you going to eat?” Lily asked absent-mindedly.

“I don’t feel like eating. I won’t be having lunch. You go ahead, I’m going to take a nap,” Arianne said before she rested her head on her desk again.

After lunch, everyone else gradually returned to the office. At this moment, Arianne had woken up as well. She instinctively glanced at Lily's desk. Usually, Lily would have been back ages ago. Working hours would begin in five more minutes, but she was nowhere to be seen. It was not like she was intentionally keeping track of Lily's movements, but she felt wary ever since Eric told her Lilu had been sent by the Nathaniel family. Although Eric said Lily was currently working for him, she still could not help but keep an eye on her.

This time, Lily was fifteen minutes late. This would not be unusual if it was someone else. However, for the industrious and conscientious Lily, it was weird.

Naturally, Arianne did not make a fuss about it. Lily was a supervisor. Not even Eric would pick on her if she were late, much less anyone else.

By the time Arianne arrived home from overtime at the office, it was past ten at night. Mark was not home yet, and the Tremont Estate felt lifeless. The lights did not seem bright enough, and she felt strangely empty.

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At this very moment, it hit her that Mark had grown important to her like a family member. Whenever he was around, the Tremont mansion would come alive. She did not like coming home to a lifeless house. This made her already tiring day even more exhausting.

Rice Ball mewled and pounced into her arms. She smiled and carried it upstairs. "I'm going upstairs to shower and sleep. I've been really busy lately. I'm sorry that I haven't been able to take care of you."

Rice Ball responded to her, seemingly sympathetically, and whimpered pitifully.

By the time she came out from the shower, Rice Ball had already fallen asleep on the blanket at the corner of the bed. She could not bear waking it up so she let it be. She gently slipped into the blanket and fell asleep.

After some time had passed, she awoke from her dreams to Rice Ball's sudden yelp. She turned on the lights in a panic. Both Mark and Rice Ball were clearly surprised by this.

Rice Ball shrunk into the foot of the bed, widening its eyes pitifully.

Mark leaned against the bedroom door, unmoved. Who knew what he had experienced? He had returned after a long day at work. After he had showered, he had looked forward to a hard-earned sleep. However, just as he lay on the bed and stretched his legs, he ended up kicking Rice Ball's round little body. He was born sensitive to furry animals. He paused instinctively after his legs flinched. Then, he scrambled to the doorway, faster than the speed of light.

Realizing what had happened, Arianne felt mildly apologetic and quickly carried Rice Ball downstairs. When she returned to the bedroom, Mark was sitting at the side of the bed with his head lowered, looking lonely. She stepped forward and gently said, "I was too exhausted when I came home and let Rice Ball sleep on the bed. It's alright now. Go to sleep…"

Mark immediately relaxed. He pulled up the blanket and lay down. "Don't let that fat cat in while I'm asleep. If I see it again, I'll turn it into soup."

These words sounded unpleasant to the ears, but Arianne did not bicker with him over it. She was tired and so was he. There was no need to sacrifice her sleeping time over such a small matter. The matter regarding his picture with Aery was swept under the rug due to how busy they were. They did not

resolve the issue at all. When people were busy, troubles seemed to diminish since they had no time to worry at all.

Early in the morning the next day, Arianne and Mark woke up at almost the same time. Once they had finished washing up, they went downstairs together for breakfast. The pair was quiet. They did not waste a minute of their time. They got up from bed together, ate together, and left the house together.

Mark had dropped her off at a stop to hail a cab since her destination was nowhere near his destination. He was in a rush and had to seize every second and minute in the day, and she was not so willful as to demand him to be considerate toward her. It was already a luxury that he had dropped her off at a stop.

She had just arrived at the company when she felt an even stranger atmosphere compared to yesterday. There was an air of nervousness as well. She could not understand why. She had just put her bag down on her seat when Lily said, “Mr. Nathaniel is looking for you.”

Arianne grunted in reply and walked toward Eric’s office, knocking on the door. “Eric, I’m here.”

Eric opened the door. “Come in. I need to speak to you urgently.”

Arianne was even more puzzled. “What is it?”

After shutting the door, Eric placed a profile in front of her. “Something has gone wrong with the work under your account. Someone has intercepted it. Someone must have leaked some relevant information, and this big client has terminated their contract with me. I gave you the information in the profile long ago. Only you and I have it. Mine’s right here, where is yours? With contracts like these, we

have to keep everything confidential until the end. I even had to personally sign the contract. There's certainly no unrelated personnel at our meeting place."

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Arianne rushed back to her desk to find the documents in her hands, but despite her best efforts, she could not find them at all! She returned to Eric's office with a pale face. "No… The document I have has gone missing. How can the client be so contradictory? The contract has clearly been signed. This is too much!"

Eric lowered his voice as he said, "Due to my current situation, setting aside my broken ties with the Nathaniel family, Glide is only a mid-sized company so I can't give them too much profits. We can't let our competitors find out about this. If news of this gets out, my competitors will swoop down and give our clients higher profits. At that time, contract cancellations like this would be normal. It's not that I can't afford it, it's just not necessary for me to fork out that kind of money. Understand?"

Arianne felt mildly vexed. "I really don't know what happened. I'm the designer, I shouldn't have accepted such an important role. Now that something has happened, I don't know what to do either. I kept the document properly locked away in my drawer. I don't know how it went missing! What do I do now?"

Eric was in a terrible shape from worrying, but he tried his best to stay calm. "We're definitely not getting that deal now. We've wasted our overtime hours, and the date to my second brother's handover is approaching soon. There's no need for us to find a new deal. Just finish whatever work you have and be done with it. I can't be bothered to investigate this matter. It won't be my problem after I leave the Nathaniels."

Arianne gritted her teeth and said, "You have to investigate this. This is clearly set up by someone in the company. I would never betray you for this small bit of profit. If you don't investigate, what if this traitor continues to work for you after you leave Glide? He or she can betray you again!"

Eric paused thoughtfully and said, “Actually, I’d love to investigate this, but I’m too exhausted. I don’t have the energy to do it. Forget it. I’ll bring a few trustworthy people along with me when I leave. Go back to work. Don’t bring up this matter again. I believe that it has nothing to do with you.”

Arianne gloomily returned to her desk, feeling absolutely vexed. Eric trusted her so much, but her negligence had caused a bungle. The profits from this deal would go to the funds of Eric’s new company. It was very important to Eric. Now it was lost because of her. She felt very guilty about it. After giving some thought, she decided to investigate the matter. She went to the security room and asked for the surveillance footage. She was certain the document was still with her twenty-four hours ago because she saw it when she was packing up. That meant someone had stolen it within twenty-four hours ago.

A security guard checked the surveillance footage and said, “It’s all here. You’ll have to slowly go through it. The electricity went out during dinner time yesterday. It was only for a few minutes so it shouldn’t be a problem.”

Arianne’s heart sank. “There was a power outage during dinner time? The company’s electric circuit has always been pretty good. How could there possibly have been a power outage?”

The security guard shook his head. “I don’t know. These are the surveillance footage from twenty-four hours ago. You can have a look.”

Arianne shook her head. “No need. The footage I need to see is the few minutes during the power outage.” If her guess was right, someone had done something to the electrical circuit to cause a power outage. Once the power had gone out, there would not be any evidence of it in the surveillance footage. She did not have lunch yesterday so she was starving by dinnertime and had rushed to the canteen at once. The information was stolen while she was out for dinner.

She returned to her desk, dejected. She considered giving up and to be more optimistic like Eric, but she could not accept it. She had a stubborn streak in her since she was young after all. She refused to silently accept this loss!

“Who was the last to leave for dinner last night?” She asked the person sitting next to her, “Did you see anyone near my desk?”

Her neighbor paused thoughtfully before replying, “My friend was going to buy me supper last night so I skipped dinner and waited until I was done with overtime to have a nice meal. I went to the pantry to make some coffee halfway through dinner time. When I returned, the office was pretty much empty. Only Miss Pierre was left. I’m not sure if she went to your desk. Whatever it was, she was the last to leave apart from me. She has always been very prompt with her meal times. Why was she dawdling during lunch hour and dinner time? You didn’t lose anything, did you? I’m not a kleptomaniac. I can’t afford to steal Mrs. Tremont’s things. It’s not worth getting thrown into jail over that.”

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Arianne took a deep breath. “Thank you, I understand. I didn’t lose my personal belongings. I lost something confidential from the company.”

Her neighbor sighed. A fearful expression could be seen on her face as she said, “It has nothing to do with me!”

Arianne did not reply. She did not want to suspect Lily, but the time was too coincidental. Eric believed he had managed to get Lily to work for him, he would be very disappointed if he found out Lily was behind this.

Arianne rose to her feet and called Lily to the pantry.

Lily said impatiently, “What is it? It’s working hours. If you have something to say, do it when we’re off the clock.”

Arianne went straight to the point. “I know the document was stolen by you. You used to work for the Nathaniels so I can understand if you gave it to them. Why did you do it?”

Lily’s expression sank. “It’s your mistake. Why are you pushing this on me? I’m not going to take the blame for someone else’s mistake. This has nothing to do with me.”

Arianne narrowed her eyes. “How did you know what this is about? Eric only asked you to summon me to his office. He didn’t disclose anything to you. He and I are the only ones in the company who are aware of this. Are you still going to quibble with me?”

Lily ignored her and turned around and left immediately.

Arianne was now very certain that Lily was behind it all. Eric was running out of time. She had to solve the matter before the company switched management! She did not knock on the door and barged into Eric’s office instead. “Lily did it. There was a power outage during dinner last night. There’s no surveillance footage as evidence and no witnesses. She didn’t immediately go to the canteen for dinner and lingered for a very long time in the office. I’m guessing the information was stolen during that time. I just had a talk with her. She refused to confess and left immediately. You didn’t tell her what happened, right? I managed to expose her so she knows what happened. How could she, aside from those involved, possibly have known about this if you never told her?”

Eric reached out and covered his face with his hand. “I had a rough guess. I didn’t expect you to investigate this. I didn’t quite believe it at first because the Nathaniels won’t benefit from this. I can’t figure out Lily’s motive.”

“Tell her to lay her cards on the table. Ask her for an explanation!” Arianne was more straightforward than Eric.

Eric picked up the phone and called Lily’s desk. “Come to my office.”

Lily was usually swift and decisive in everything she did. This time, after Eric had called her in, she dawdled for five minutes before entering the office. She was holding a resignation letter when she walked in. “Mr. Nathaniel, I know why you called me here. This is my letter of resignation. I’ll be honest.”

Eric furrowed his brows, clearly upset. “Speak then.”

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Lily glanced at Arianne. No one knew what was going through her mind at this moment. “You managed to discover the truth so easily because I didn’t do a clean job.” She looked at Eric, “I didn’t want to do it either, but your eldest brother made me do it. I asked him why, but he didn’t give me a reason. It wasn’t easy for me to find a footing in the capital. The Nathaniels gave me a lot of opportunities. My family isn’t doing too well, and I don’t want to lose my job. My mother would kill me if we lose our financial resources. Your eldest brother only needs to say the word, and I’d have to leave. I have no choice…”

The disappointment in Eric’s eyes was clear. “Did you think that I’ve become a stray dog, unable to fend for himself, and that I won’t be able to take care of you? Do you think I’m unreliable? Fine. That’s fine. I had intended to take you with me when I start my own company after leaving Glide. However, it seems

like our objectives are not aligned. Let's just hope my brother will take you in after everything you've done for him. Go back to the headquarters now. I don't need you here."

Lily lowered her head as she turned to leave. She took two steps forward before pausing. "I'm sorry, Mr. Nathaniel… For letting you down."

Eric did not reply to her, a slightly frustrated expression could be seen on his face.

Everyone watched as Lily packed her things and left.

Arianne was not a kind and pure person. She had expected this outcome after investigating the matter so she did not feel guilty or pity Lily. A crime was still a crime. Lily had to bear the consequences. It was only natural.

Eric left right after Lily, looking rattled. No doubt he was going to confront his oldest brother. Arianne did not stop him and secretly sent a message to Mark, giving him a brief summary of what happened. She asked him to send Jackson over to check on Eric if he was too busy. If a fight broke out, Eric would not lose if Jackson was around.

She did not expect a reply to her message since she could tell Mark was very busy lately. However, he replied this time with a simple, "Ok."

Eric did not return to the office that day. However, he was in high spirits when he arrived for work the next day. He even made an official announcement that the company would be handed over to his second brother and returned to the Nathaniel family from tomorrow onward. He also announced that

he had already made preparations to start a new company long ago. Everything was ready except for the most crucial aspect.

Based on the look on his face, Arianne could tell he did not lose during his fight yesterday. She approached Eric just as he was heading back to his office. “What happened yesterday?”

Eric propped his legs on his office desk. “I went and confronted my oldest brother. When he discovered I knew about it, he immediately said it was my second brother’s idea. He said my second brother wanted to pull another trick on me before I left and that he had nothing to do with it. I know those two very well. They’re only good at pushing the blame away whenever something happens. I was so angry so I beat him up. My eldest brother is much older so he can’t beat me. Jackson suddenly arrived and thought I was getting beaten up. So he stepped forward to lend me a hand. My eldest brother couldn’t endure our beatings so he told the truth and revealed that the entire family had plotted to trap me.”

Eric continued to say, “It’s actually funny now that I’m talking about it. It’s like they’re united against some foreign entity when they attacked me. I’m a foreigner to them… They wanted to create a rift between me and Mark through you. If they succeed, they plan to smooth things over and use it as an opportunity to lure Mark to their side. They’re afraid I’ll wreck their chances of establishing a connection with Mark. They really can’t bear to lose a big fish like Mark. You texted Mark yesterday, right? You’ve been a big help to me.”

Although Eric was smiling when he spoke, Arianne felt her heart wrenched as she listened to his words. He was part of the Nathaniel family as well. Not only was he treated like an outsider, but they actively opposed him as well.

When Eric noticed her silence and bleak expression, he said jokingly, “The Nathaniels think Mark and I are normal friends. That’s why they came up with this idea. Would they beg me to come back if they knew that eating and sleeping together are common occurrences between Mark and me? They’ve underestimated me. It’s undeniable that I gained a foothold from my connections to Mark and Jackson. They thought I’d confront you after realizing that I’ve been betrayed. Even if you were responsible for

losing the deal, I'd make Mark compensate me with money at the most… It's not like Mark can't afford to lose the money."

Arianne giggled. "Alright, alright. Based on the current situation, it seems like today is my last day at work. You better sign my resignation letter. I don't want to end up working for your second brother."

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Eric made an 'okay' sign as he said, "Have a good rest this weekend and report for duty at my company on Monday. Your pay remains the same. Don't worry, I won't treat you unfairly. I'll send you the address later.

There was no need for overtime today so Arianne was very relaxed. She returned to the Tremont Estate as soon as work ended. The weather was getting warmer lately so she felt a little hot. She changed into a pair of pajamas made from thinner material after her shower. Then, she went to the kitchen to lend Mary a hand.

Mary's heart ached seeing this since it was rare for Arianne to come home early. "You don't have to help me. Go and relax. You're tired enough from work."

"I'm not tired," Arianne replied with a grin, "Let me help you. I'm all fired up today. Usually, I'd be too lazy to move."

Mary noticed that Arianne was pretty good at selecting vegetables. She sighed as she shook her head. "Mr. Tremont won't be back for dinner today either. He's extremely busy lately. How unfortunate that he won't be able to eat the vegetables you personally picked out."

Arianne blushed. “Mary… Stop teasing me. I’ll go and hang out with Tiffie after dinner and go shopping for summer clothes while we’re at it. The weather’s been pretty warm lately, and I don’t have many presentable outfits.”

After dinner, Arianne called a cab. When she arrived at Tiffany’s house, Tiffany was frying vegetables when she called her. At the same time, Lillian was nagging non-stop next to Tiffany.

Arianne suddenly felt she had come at the wrong time. Tiffany was usually busy and tired. She would only be an extra burden to Tiffany. Although she had told Tiffany to see her after eating dinner, Tiffany bolted from the house to see her as soon as she finished cooking to avoid annoying Lillian.

“Why did you suddenly decide to visit? Thank goodness you’re here. Otherwise, calluses would form on my ears from my mother’s nagging,” Tiffany said, complaining about Lillian.

“Silly girl, calluses are developed over time. They don’t magically appear after a bit of nagging,” Arianne said teasingly.

“Do you think I’m an uncultured girl? I’ve studied abroad, you know.” Tiffany pouted.

Arianne brought her to a nearby restaurant and ordered her favorite dishes. Before the dishes arrived, Lillian appeared. “Eating good food behind my back?”

“Mrs. Lane… I just happened to be free today and wanted to take Tiffie out for some fun. Have you eaten? Would you like to join us?” Arianne offered, feeling embarrassed.

Naturally, Lillian happily accepted. She sat down without any awkwardness and asked for a menu from one of the waiters. Then, she ordered a few more extra dishes.

Tiffany could not restrain herself any longer. “I’ve already ordered some dishes. Can you finish them all after ordering so many? You’re not even eating the dinner that I worked hard to cook for you. What are you doing here?”

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Lillian glared at Tiffany. “You won’t even eat what you’ve made, and you want me to eat it? It tastes horrible… You get to dine in a restaurant, but you want to leave me at home? I thought about you every time I had something good to eat in the past, wishing that you’d get to taste it too. You ungrateful brat. Arianne, don’t you think so?”

Arianne had an awkward smile on her face. “It’s okay, Auntie Lane. Order what you want.”

Lillian smiled contentedly. “Arianne’s more sensible. Marrying a good husband, not having to worry about food and clothes. Her bread is already buttered in life. Tiffie, learn from Arianne. Look at the kind of boyfriend you found for yourself. I get angry whenever I think about Ethan. Forget how much we lost because of him, but what about your youth? In the end, we didn’t get anything.”

Tiffany pulled a long face. “Mom, you didn’t use to speak so uncouthly. Even if we’re poor now, you’re Mrs. Lane. Can you watch your words? Eat if you want. Ari is my best friend, I don’t mind being embarrassed in front of her. She won’t mind as well. However, I hope nothing like this happens again.”

Arianne quickly mediated the situation. “It’s fine, Tiffie. Don’t be like that. We’re so close, there’s no need to be concerned about trivial matters. It’s rare that we get to sit together for a meal. Let’s enjoy it.”

Not wanting to quarrel with Lillian in public, Tiffany held it in and said nothing.

When the dishes were served, they actually occupied the entire table. Lillian enjoyed herself while Arianne plastered on a smile since there was company. Tiffany was the only one who could not bring herself to smile.

Arianne honestly felt bad when she looked at Lillian. From not having to worry about her meals and clothing, within a night, Lillian did not even have a roof over her head. Lillian had to spend her days in a rental house and worry about her meals. It was really tough.

When they finished their meal, there were still plenty of dishes on the table that were left untouched. Without hesitation, Tiffany called for the server to pack them up.

Lillian said, “What are you doing? Isn’t this embarrassing?”

Tiffany did not expect Lillian would stop her. She had no energy to argue with Lillian. When the leftovers were packed, she handed them to Lillian and said, “Take them back. You ordered them so you can’t waste them. If you refuse, I won’t give you your allowance.”

With a flushed face, Lillian left in a hurry with the packed leftovers as though she was scared of being seen.

Arianne said with a smile, “It’s okay, Tiffie. It’s normal that your mom still can’t get used to it. She’ll be fine as time passes. I’m here mainly to hang out with you. Eric’s company has been handed over to his second elder brother, and he’s setting up a new company. I’ll report there next week, and it’s located farther from Glide. New companies are usually super busy or super free in its beginning phase, but I don’t think Eric’s company belongs to the latter. When we get started, I won’t have the time to hang out with you anymore.”

Tiffany suddenly grabbed her hand. “Ari, take me along with you. Eric must need more manpower in his new company. As long as his pay is similar to what Jackson is giving me, I’ll take it! You don’t know how awkward it is for me to face Jackson now in the office… Talk to Eric for me?”

“Sure, I don’t think it’ll be an issue. I’ll contact Eric tonight. Walk around with me. I plan to buy some clothes. The weather’s getting warmer, and I don’t really have anything to wear.” Arianne agreed to Tiffany’s request immediately. She had an ulterior motive after all. She wanted Tiffany to stay further away from Jackson. What happened previously was a complete mess. To prevent awkwardness and possible consequences, it was the best for Tiffany to leave Jackson’s company.

Arianne was covered in sweat when she finally returned to the Tremont Estate after shopping. She took a shower and kept her new clothes in the wardrobe. She was taken by surprise when she saw that Mark actually had ten times more clothes than her. The exaggerated difference baffled her. Did women not have more clothes than men usually? Why was it different when it came to her?

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Mark mostly wore suits. Let alone his other garments, just his suits alone were countless.

After leaving the wardrobe and texting Eric, Arianne heard Mark's approaching footsteps. There was a sense of weight in his soft and slow pace. After listening to it for so many years, it was already familiar to her.

When Mark entered the room, he saw Arianne looking at him from the bed. He concealed the exhaustion on his face and asked, "Still awake? I'm going to take a shower and will be in the study later for some matters. Rest early."

Arianne nodded and lay down but was unable to fall asleep. Her eyes were glued to the bathroom door. After some time, the sound of water flowing stopped before Mark who was clad in a bathrobe came out.

"Why aren't you asleep yet?"

Arianne looked away. "Why are you so busy recently? You're even busier than usual. It's Friday, and you still have to work even though it's already so late. Are you going to work on the weekends too?"

Mark stared at her in amusement. "Are you complaining that I have no time to keep you company? It seems that you were only at ease when I wasn't around in the past. I thought you'd be delighted if I'm not home."

Arianne had thought he was unaware of this, but it seemed he was aware of it all along! With a slight guilty conscience, she dared not look at Mark. "No… I'm just curious about what's keeping you occupied. What if you break our promise and meet Aery in secret? I just don't want her to get her way, that's all."

A slight frown appeared on Mark's face. "So you only want to get back at Aery? It's not because you're jealous or anything?"

When Arianne heard the word ‘jealous’, she instinctively blurted out, “Of course! Why would I be jealous!”

Not saying a word, Mark turned to leave for the study room. He did not return throughout the night, only coming out from the study when morning dawned. He went out again after breakfast.

When Arianne woke up, she realized she was alone again. She was also slightly confused as to why she was suddenly like that. Previously, she was afraid of him being home. When he was not around, she would be in a great mood. She would feel relaxed, both physically and mentally. However, not that he was not at home, she felt that the Tremont Estate was too quiet, as though it was lacking something. And she seemed to have… lost her sense of peace as well.

During lunch, Eric replied to Arianne’s text. “As long as Jackson is okay with it, I can take her in. It’s pretty great for you and your best friend to work together.”

Upon receiving Eric’s reply, Arianne called Tiffany. “Tiffie, Eric says as long as Jackson lets you go, he’ll hire you. Send in your resignation letter first. It’s not like you’re some bigshot in the company, they should let you go. I don’t think they’ll feel Eric’s company is poaching a staff member from the company as well.”

Tiffany hung up happily, preparing to email her resignation letter to Jackson. She could not wait until Monday to do it. An email was the same. As long as Jackson permitted it, she could directly report to work in Eric’s company on Monday. When she thought about working with Arianne, her mood turned for the better.

Chapter 280

In the West Mansion, Jackson was eating with his mother, Summer, when his phone dinged. He was in no hurry to check it but Summer could not help reminding him, “Son, are you not going to take a look? What if it’s something to do with the company?”

It was only then that Jackson fished out his phone and was greeted with Tiffany’s resignation email. Faced with the table of delicacies, he suddenly lost his appetite. He did not reply to the email either, merely chucking his phone aside.

Summer registered the changes in her son’s expression. “Is it something difficult? You’re still young, there’s a lot in business that you don’t know about. You can ask mom. It’s not a shameful thing to ask for advice.”

Jackson remained silent for a moment before he said, “I have an employee resigning, but I don’t really want to let the employee go. What should I do?”

Summer mulled over Jackson’s question before she replied, “Well, find out the reason for the resignation. If the person is unhappy with their current position or salary, you can offer an increment or something. Someone you’re unwilling to dismiss must be someone quite capable, right? You should try your best to keep them if they’re really talented.”

Jackson replied honestly, “Well, I wouldn’t say the employee is exactly talented or capable. The employee just passed probation and isn’t very good at the job. Always making mistakes as well.”

Summer was surprised. “Jackson, this isn’t your style. Is the employee… a young lady?”

Jackson nodded and felt strange. “Mom, it’s not like what you think. I just thought that she has huge potential. Our company has good benefits. She needs a stable job so I don’t see a reason for her to leave. She only mentioned she’s leaving without giving me a reason. Anyway, it’s a bother to think about it now. I’ll deal with it on Monday.”

Summer covered her mouth with one hand and chuckled, but she no longer said anything.

Tiffany was anxious when she did not receive a reply. She was not the most patient person. If she did not resolve this during the weekend, it would bother her. Just when she was about to call Jackson, Lillian appeared. Lillian came over. “You’re resigning? Are you crazy? How are you going to support the family if you resign? I don’t approve!”

Tiffany said huffily, “You’re just afraid of me not being able to depend on Jackson anymore, aren’t you? I’m telling you now, don’t even think about it. With our family’s condition, I’m too ashamed to even approach him. Don’t worry, I have my plans. I won’t let you starve!”

Lillian’s attitude remained the same. “No means no. The Wests is great, why are you leaving? Is the company you’re going to better than his? Higher pay? Were you headhunted? If not, I won’t allow you to resign. If you resign, I’ll go to your office and look for Jackson on Monday!”

Tiffany knew Lillian would make good on her words, and she felt a headache coming on. “Stop creating troubles for me, alright? The company I’m going to is founded by his best friend, Eric. Ari’s also working there. I’m not trying to hook up with Jackson. I’ll have an easy life staying with Ari as well. Ari treats me very well just like how I treat her. You understand?”

Lillian laughed disdainfully. “A rich best friend is not as dependable as a rich man. Get yourself a rich man, and you can spend the rest of your life spending his money. Can your friend take care of you for the rest of your life? You should understand the situation. It seems like you didn’t inherit the intelligence

from me and your father. Maybe the nanny didn't notice when you knocked your head on the floor. How foolish!" Lillian was merciless with her words.

"Okay, okay. Go do whatever you have to. Stop supervising me! I finally have a break during the weekend. I want to rest!" Tiffany replied, vexed, as she closed her laptop.