

A Thousand Faces Hide The Genius Heiress' Wrath

Chapter 41:

These justifications seemed logical, yet Kenneth sensed an underlying inconsistency.

After mulling it over, he spoke again, his voice firm. "Mr. Green, we must address a crucial concern—our families are rivals."

"Oh, come on. Do you really think I'm sending Janice to spy on you?" Aiden's laugh was tinged with scorn. "With the stature the Green family holds, do you honestly believe we need to plant spies within Delgado Jewelry? You flatter your enterprise excessively."

At this, Kenneth's demeanor stiffened, his eyes narrowing into a sharp glare.

The simmering rivalry between the Delgado and Green families was well-known among their acquaintances. For years, they had engaged in both overt competition and subtle one-upmanship. Now, Aiden's proposal to have his wife join Kenneth's jewelry firm was sure to stir the pot.

Yet, Aiden made a compelling case. What could possibly be secretive about Delgado Jewelry?

Despite Aiden's convincing arguments, Kenneth maintained his usual wariness. Doubts lingered in his mind.

"Mr. Delgado, there's actually another reason behind why I chose Delgado Jewelry," Janice interjected suddenly.

Aiden's brow furrowed momentarily, his eyes darting towards her before he quickly regained his poise and chose to remain quiet.

"And what might that be?" Kenneth inquired, his curiosity piqued.

"Has someone from the Edwards family been in touch with you?"

Kenneth was taken aback, then it clicked. "Ah, I see. You're aiming to thwart that adopted daughter. But do you really think that little of Delgado Jewelry? Is this just a backdrop for your family's theatrics?"

Janice shook her head, her voice steady and reassuring. "Be assured that my involvement will be immensely beneficial to Delgado Jewelry. As for Delilah, she's of no consequence to me. My decision to join the same company as her is solely to antagonize the Edwards family."

Kenneth weighed her words carefully, considering the potential risks and rewards.

Silence fell over them as Aiden and Janice awaited his decision. After a thoughtful pause, Kenneth finally exhaled and addressed Aiden. "I'll grant your request. However, if your wife is to join Delgado Jewelry, she must first demonstrate her genuine skills."

"Absolutely. Whether she secures a spot at Delgado Jewelry hinges on her capabilities alone. Today, I approached you solely to secure that chance," Aiden explained, his lips curving into a subdued, self-mocking grin. "My clout isn't what it once was, after all."

Kenneth eyed Aiden's legs with an inscrutable look. He didn't dwell on the moment, nor did he show any inclination towards a round of golf with Janice. Instead, he simply rose and departed.

"Kenneth is exceedingly cautious," Janice noted, her voice tinged with curiosity as she took a sip from her glass. "So, why begin with him?"

A chill seemed to sweep over Aiden's eyes, a dramatic change from his earlier downcast expression. "Three years ago, before my accident, Kenneth had dealings with Bart."

Janice nodded in understanding. "Could Kenneth have had something to do with that car accident?"

“I can’t say for sure. That’s precisely why I need you to dig deeper,” Aiden muttered, his tone grave. “Given Kenneth’s sharp mind, he’ll likely deduce that our marriage is merely a play for the shares my grandfather left behind. Furthermore, with Delilah’s entry into Delgado Jewelry and my orchestrating your involvement, he’ll probably view it as your countermove against the Edwards family. He’d never suspect your true motives.”

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Janice nodded with understanding. Aiden had tasked her with cozying up to Kenneth to unearth evidence of his alleged collusion with Bart, which was supposedly linked to the car accident. Yet, if Aiden himself hadn’t managed to uncover anything over the years, what chance did she stand?

“Janice, who exactly are you?” Aiden’s gaze fixed on her, piercing and enigmatic like the endless void of the night sky.

Nonetheless, Janice remained composed, propping her chin on her hand as she returned his stare with a spark of curiosity. “I’m not sure what you’re implying. Could you clarify?”

“I never mentioned that Delilah had also approached Kenneth. How did you come by that information?” Aiden narrowed his eyes, a dawning realization that, despite his meticulous efforts to keep secrets, the woman before him was possibly even more skilled at concealing hers.

With a light chuckle, Janice rose to her feet and picked up a billiard cue. “We all have our secrets. The game loses its thrill if you dig too deeply.”

Aiden exhaled deeply, his inner turmoil evident as Janice continued to disconcert him.

“Let’s have a match,” she suggested, tossing a cue stick towards him without waiting for a response.

Aiden caught it reflexively, hesitated for a moment, then rose to join her.

In a fluid motion, his bodyguards sprang into action, clearing the space and forming a protective barrier around Janice and Aiden, ensuring the playing field was reserved solely for them.

Delilah's excitement surged when she found out Kenneth had allowed her to join Delgado Jewelry. Yet, there was a stipulation—she had to pass the interview. Even as Lowell's sister, she wouldn't receive any special treatment.

"Really? An interview? Imagine the gossip if this got out," Delilah muttered, feeling a bit frustrated but knowing she couldn't do anything about it. After all, Kenneth was a powerful figure, just like Aiden.

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But that was in the past when Aiden wasn't a cripple. Now, burdened by his limitations, how could he possibly measure up to Kenneth?

With a defiant tilt of her head, Delilah, clutching her document-filled folder, marched up to the reception desk. "I'm Delilah Edwards, here for the interview."

The receptionist, exuding professionalism, looked up and responded with a courteous smile. "Do you have an appointment?"

"Appointment?" Delilah's brow creased in irritation. "Do I need an appointment? Didn't Kenneth inform you of my interview today?"

“He did say we were expecting two interviewees today,” the receptionist noted, scanning the list before nodding. “Delilah Edwards... Ah, here you are.”

With a hint of impatience, Delilah snapped, “Please, let’s not dawdle. I need to be in that interview room. If you dare delay me, I’ll guarantee Kenneth gets rid of you for good.”

The receptionist frowned at Delilah’s cutting words, finding her demeanor rather off-putting.

“Hello, I’m here for the interview.” A crisp and familiar tone cut through the air.

At the sound, Delilah spun around, a wave of recognition washing over her as she laid eyes on the newcomer. “Janice? What the hell are you doing here?”

Ignoring Delilah’s outburst, Janice strode past her to the reception desk. “Hello, I’m Janice Green, here for the interview.” The receptionist, struck by Janice’s poised demeanor and charming smile, felt her spirits lift. “Yes, I’ve just confirmed your appointment. Right this way, please.”

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“Thank you,” Janice responded, her smile broadening as she followed the receptionist.

“Janice, wait!” Delilah, feeling slighted and overlooked, hurried to intercept her. Blocking Janice’s path, she demanded, “Explain yourself. Why are you here?”

Janice paused, offering Delilah a casual glance before replying, “It seems you missed my earlier words. I’m here for the interview.”

“Interview?” Delilah exclaimed, her eyes widening in disbelief. “You’re just here to embarrass yourself. You’ve lost the Edwards family’s support. What gives you the right to be here, huh?”

“Seems like you’ve conveniently forgotten your own pathetic display yesterday. And yet, you have the gall to talk about embarrassment?” Janice retorted, shaking her head in disapproval. “Moreover, this is the Delgado family’s turf. As an adopted daughter, where do you find the audacity to stir trouble here?”

Her words struck Delilah deeply, hitting her right where it hurt and painting her expression with utter humiliation. She advanced, locking eyes with Janice, her voice low and menacing. “Just wait, Janice. It won’t be long before Kenneth is mine. Why not crawl back to that pathetic partner of yours and stay out of everyone else’s way?”

“Are you out of your mind to spout such nonsense?” Janice huffed dismissively. “I don’t recall any alliance through marriage between the Edwards and the Delgado families. Given the current plight of the Edwards family, you’re hardly in a position to be making proposals to the Delgados. Claiming Kenneth as your man? Are you living in a fantasy?”

Janice’s rapid-fire rebuttal left Delilah speechless, robbed of any chance to respond.

Though the Edwards family had made significant strides over the previous year, they still trailed behind the other four prominent families. The only reason the Edwards family had a foot in the door with the influential Green family was due to the old friendship between Janice’s and Aiden’s grandfathers. This connection had facilitated a marital alliance, offering the Edwards family a chance to elevate their status through ties with the Green family. However, destiny had its own harsh twist. Aiden had suffered a tragic accident that left him disabled.

To make matters more complicated, Alcott had introduced his illegitimate son to the family, clearly aiming to supplant Aiden as the heir. With these developments, the Edwards family’s aspirations crumbled.

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Reluctant to see Delilah tied to a disabled spouse, they had reintroduced Janice to the scene, hoping she could protect Delilah's interests.

"Kenneth and Lowell go way back as classmates, and he offered me this interview opportunity because of Lowell," Delilah declared proudly. "Once I secure a position in Delgado Jewelry, I'm certain I can charm Kenneth. And when I become his wife, you'll be drowning in regret."

"Really?" Janice responded with a dismissive shrug. "Well, good luck with that."

Delilah's irritation flared at Janice's aloof demeanor. Her eyes narrowed as she snapped, "And what's with that smug look? You're seriously counting on that crippled guy? How pathetic."

"Maybe you should worry about the upcoming interview, Delilah. Don't forget, you're just an imbecile who can't even manage the simple task of holding a paintbrush."

Delilah's face turned sour at Janice's barbs. The latter had mercilessly stripped her of her carefully crafted facade.

Janice sneered inwardly as she watched Delilah redden with embarrassment. Who could have known that Delilah, a touted fashion designer, was actually inept with a paintbrush? Some people even said that Delilah was going to be Laurie's successor. It was ridiculous and pathetic at the same time.

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Despite their wealth and influence, the Edwards family was being toyed with by such a useless and incompetent person. It was truly a wonder they even got as far as they had.

“Please continue leading the way,” Janice told the receptionist, cutting her encounter with Delilah short.

Delilah watched them go, her anger surging in her chest. Then her lips curled into a malicious smile. She quickly stepped forward and aimed a kick at Janice’s heel.

Unfortunately for her, Janice saw it coming. She dodged just as Delilah was bringing her foot down.

But in the next second, Janice let out a surprised yelp and stumbled forward.

Delilah froze in shock and confusion. She hadn't actually stepped on Janice, so why did she fall?

Delilah was still in a daze when a man emerged from a nearby room.

Janice fell right into his arms, and he instinctively reached out to catch her.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" Janice scrambled back to her feet and bowed her head in apology. "I didn't mean to crash into you."

"We meet again," a cool voice said from somewhere above her. Janice looked up to find a familiar, handsome face. "Mr. Delgado!"

"Janice! Oh, my goodness, are you all right?" Delilah finally snapped back to her senses. She rushed forward and acted all innocent as she usually would. "I'm sorry, it's all my fault. I was walking too fast and accidentally stepped on your foot!" She had perfected the look of guilt—red, teary eyes and pouting lips—and she did not hesitate to use it to its full extent in order to garner sympathy.

Deep down, however, she was anxious.

Why did it have to be Kenneth, of all people? Had he seen her try to trip Janice?

Just then, she caught the sly glance Janice threw her way. Janice had stumbled on purpose. She had likely seen Kenneth about to walk through the door and pretended to fall to get close to him.

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Was this woman trying to bag both Aiden and Kenneth?

Janice noticed the traces of frustration in Delilah's expression and took immense delight in it. She had just given Delilah a taste of her own medicine and outmaneuvered her in her own game.

"It's my fault, Kenneth. My carelessness caused my sister to fall," Delilah plowed ahead, biting back her anger to maintain her innocent act. Kenneth's gaze softened, which gave her hope that her performance had worked.

"You're Lowell's sister, Delilah?" he asked.

“Yes!” Delilah replied earnestly. Upon closer inspection, she noticed that Kenneth’s face was blank, almost indifferent. She felt a ripple of unease. “By the way, Lowell asked me to give you his regards. Oh, and this is a gift I prepared for you.” She took an exquisitely wrapped box from her purse and offered it to him with both hands.

Kenneth glanced at it briefly and made no move to take it. “That’s not necessary. I’m one of the interviewers for today. Accepting your gift would be highly inappropriate.”

“Huh?” Delilah’s face fell in disappointment as she reluctantly put the box away.

Kenneth’s brows furrowed at her reaction. “You may give it to me after the interview.”

Delilah’s eyes instantly lit up. “Really? Thank you, Kenneth.”

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Janice, who had been watching their exchange in silence, couldn't help but admire Delilah's acting skills. Her expressions changed so seamlessly. Was Kenneth fooled by her?

Janice clicked her tongue. Sure enough, men were susceptible to the manipulations of someone as experienced as Delilah. Take her three brothers, for example. Delilah had them all eating out of the palm of her hand, completely at her beck and call.

However, Aiden was an exception. No matter how much Delilah peddled her act of being pitiful and aggrieved, he never bought it.

Perhaps only a cold and unfeeling man like Aiden could withstand such deception.

Kenneth happened to notice the smirk Janice was sporting. "Mrs. Green..."

"Just call me by my first name. Mrs. Green sounds too formal," Janice said, waving her hand.

Kenneth thought for a moment. The title did sound awkward and misplaced, especially when it was pertaining to someone so young and vibrant. In truth, Janice barely fit the image of a married woman.

“I see. All right, Janice. You and Delilah may come inside together.”

“Kenneth, I’m suddenly so nervous,” Delilah said, looking flustered. “I’m not sure if it’s because I’ve just met my idol, but my heart is racing uncontrollably. I’ve often heard Lowell mention you at home. He said you’re a standout in your generation. Over time, I’ve come to regard you as an idol.”

Seriously?

Janice couldn’t stand any more of Delilah’s pretenses. She found the latter’s comments greasy and nauseating.

In an attempt to avoid hearing more of Delilah’s disgusting remarks, she walked past Kenneth and hurried into the room. Kenneth’s eyes trailed after her until she disappeared through the door. Then he turned to Delilah and said, “Stay calm.”

“Okay, I’ll do my best!” Delilah bobbed her head and took several deep breaths in an exaggerated manner, trying to look cute and endearing.

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Inside the room, a woman was already seated behind a table.

She looked sharp and capable, her hair styled short and chic.

She wore a matching blazer and cropped pants ensemble, giving off a cool, sophisticated vibe.

“Let me introduce you. This is Stella Avila, the chief designer at Delgado Jewelry,” Kenneth said to Janice and Delilah as he sat beside the woman. “If you pass today’s interview, you will be working as her assistant.”

Stella glanced at Janice and Delilah, her tone icy as she spoke. “I don’t care about your background; I only recognize talent. If you don’t have the skills necessary for this job, I ask you to take your leave right now.”

She leaned back in her chair, saying nothing more.

“I’ve already reviewed your resumes,” Kenneth continued, gesturing toward the documents in front of him. “You both used to work as clothing designers, and only recently switched to jewelry design. You may not be a perfect fit for our company. So, how do you intend to prove that you deserve the position of jewelry designer at Delgado Jewelry?”

He looked up and glanced between Janice and Delilah.

“Kenneth...” Delilah called out.

Kenneth rapped his knuckles against the table, his expression turning stern. “This is a formal job interview. Please mind the way you address me.”

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Delilah mustered an awkward smile. “Mr. Delgado, I believe that design is a universal craft that can connect people from different lines of trade. Although my experience is mainly in clothing design, I have also dabbled in designing jewelry. Here, I have prepared a sketch for your reference. Perhaps it can provide you a deeper understanding of my abilities as a designer.”

Delilah approached the table and handed over her sketch. “I created this design overnight. It might be a bit rough, but it should be able to showcase my skills.”

Kenneth took the sketch, glanced at it for a few seconds, then passed it on to Stella.

Stella examined the draft and said, “Not bad. The concept is innovative and aligns well with Delgado Jewelry’s brand positioning.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Stella,” Delilah replied with a sweet smile.

“I take it you’ve done quite a bit of research into our company’s design philosophy?” Stella inquired.

“Yes, of course. Delgado Jewelry primarily targets young people who pursue fashion and individuality. That is why I incorporated the most popular elements of the current times into this design,” Delilah explained her sketch with commendable confidence. It seemed like she was well-prepared, indeed.

But Janice knew that Delilah was simply reciting previously rehearsed lines.

Delilah ended her little speech with, “If I were given more time, I could refine this design much further.”

Stella nodded in approval, though her expression remained largely unchanged.

“Stella approves of your design, which means that you show some talent,” Kenneth remarked before turning to Janice. “Do you have a sketch prepared for us?”

“I do.” Janice produced her draft and handed it over. “I won’t say much. Let my work speak for itself.”

Stella raised an eyebrow, intrigued by Janice’s confidence. She found herself giving the latter a second look and had to admit that she found Janice’s temperament rather appealing.

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“Your confidence is very impressive,” Stella remarked.

Kenneth always appreciated a bold woman who was sure of her capabilities.

When he took a look at Janice's draft, his eyes widened in surprise.

Although he had seen countless designs of high aesthetic caliber, he was still taken aback by Janice's submission.

"What's the matter, Mr. Delgado? Judging by your reaction, am I in for a treat?" Stella noticed the change in Kenneth's overall demeanor, and her expectations were now raised. Was Janice's design that brilliant?

"See for yourself," Kenneth said quietly as he passed the second sketch.

Stella took it with her usual indifference. With her background and expertise, she had long since believed that no design could truly astonish her.

But she was proven wrong in the next second.

Janice's design captivated Stella with a single glance, and it was evident on her face.

"I always thought my designs were unique and flawless, unmatched by any competitor in the industry. I now realize that my views were quite narrow." Stella did her best to suppress her excitement as she looked up at Janice. "You must have spent a lot of time designing this piece."

Janice cocked her head to the side, contemplating how to respond. “Actually, it didn’t take that much time. I doodled that sketch while having breakfast this morning.”

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“What?” Stella gaped in shock. “Doodled it? You’re not joking, are you?”

“I’m sorry. Is there a problem with that?”

Stella was both amused and exasperated. Such a perfect design should have taken a lot of time to conceive and polish. And yet, Janice claimed to have “doodled” it during breakfast. Only a truly gifted creative could make such an outrageous claim—or an utterly ignorant aspirant. Even JE herself would spew such nonsense.

“If this is a prank, Janice, I suggest you stop. I refuse to believe that one can complete such a high-quality draft in such a short amount of time,” Stella said seriously.

“You don’t believe me? I can draw a new design right now, if you like.” Janice shrugged.

Stella’s eyes widened ever so slightly, her gaze taking on a more complex edge.

Janice didn’t seem to be bluffing, but was anyone really capable of such an exceptional feat?

“What do you think, Mr. Delgado?” Stella massaged her temples, feeling somewhat exasperated by the situation and sensing that she needed to defer to Kenneth.

Kenneth, too, was impressed by Janice’s design, but the claim that she had completed it in such a short period of time was hard to believe.

“Janice...”

“It must be amazing to be best friends with JE,” Delilah suddenly interjected. “You don’t even need to design anything yourself when you have someone so prestigious at your disposal.”

Despite the malicious tone in her words, Delilah’s expression remained innocent.

Janice raised an eyebrow. It was clear that Delilah was accusing her of submitting JE’s design, not her own.

“What?” Stella frowned tightly. “Janice is JE’s best friend?”

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Delilah nodded. “That’s right. Janice represented JE in yesterday’s fashion design competition. Even Mr. Layne Morris acknowledged her as such.”

She took a deep breath and turned to Janice, continuing, “You may have a famous designer who can design on your behalf for free, but I’m not giving up. I will strive to catch up to you.”

Janice had to admit that Delilah’s declaration was strong and assertive.

Stella's expression turned serious. She had been so consumed with the exhibit collaboration with Freak Design that she hadn't kept up with other matters. She was unaware of yesterday's events.

"Delilah, are you sure Janice's draft was done by JE?" Delilah's face faltered, her eyes widening as she glanced at Janice, almost as if she realized she had made a mistake. "No, no! That's not what I meant at all! Actually, Janice worked really hard on her sketch."

Though she verbally denied it, her behavior betrayed her words.

"I knew it. There's no way anyone could have completed this kind of top-quality work in just a matter of minutes. So someone else created this design," Stella sneered. Her disdain for Janice grew with every word. "It's a shame. I had such an excellent first impression of you—confident, lively. I never imagined you were just another fraud."

Kenneth leaned back in his seat, propping his chin on his palm as he watched Janice with growing interest. Now that things had escalated, what would Aiden's wife do? Would she leave in disgrace, or would she fight back?

"I'm so sorry, Janice! I shouldn't have revealed your secret. But it isn't just our careers at stake here—it's the reputation of Kenneth's company. We may be family, but I have no choice. I need to stand by the truth," Delilah feigned innocence.

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Throughout this exchange, Janice remained calm, a hint of mockery dancing in her eyes. “Have you forgotten what I said earlier? I offered to draw a new design right here, right now.”

Stella fell silent. Janice had indeed made that offer, but the idea had seemed so absurd that she hadn't taken it seriously. Now that Janice was bringing it up again, could she really pull it off?

“Also, it's true that JE and I are best friends. What of it? Just because JE and I are close doesn't mean you can throw baseless accusations that I make her create the designs I submit.” Janice shook her head, chuckling softly. “What a bunch of fools.”

Stella's face reddened in anger at the insult. Her cold, composed demeanor cracked, revealing the embarrassment of having been called out so bluntly.

Janice glanced sideways at Delilah and smirked. “I hope you’re not mad at me for being blunt. You may not know this, but Delilah was caught plagiarizing JE’s design in yesterday’s competition. She was exposed and blacklisted in the clothing design industry. This is the kind of person you’ve chosen to believe without a shred of proof. Honestly, calling you fools is putting it lightly.”

“What did you say? This woman plagiarized JE’s design?” Stella leaned forward, glaring at Delilah.

“This is all just a big misunderstanding,” Delilah hurriedly explained. “What happened is that I accidentally took the wrong draft. You know that JE and Janice are close friends. Janice had one of JE’s designs, and I wanted to study it, so I borrowed it and forgot to give it back.”

Janice clapped her hands and said in a mocking tone, “You may just be the queen of tall tales, Delilah.”

“Why are you always targeting me?” Delilah’s eyes immediately filled with tears. “I may have taken your place within the Edwards family for over ten years, but it was never intentional. I’ve always seen you as my sister. Why can’t you accept me and treat me as such?”

“Oh, please spare me of your manipulations, Delilah,” Janice sneered. “You should count yourself lucky that we’re currently in Delgado Jewelry, or I would have kicked you out before you even opened your mouth.”

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Kenneth rapped his knuckles against the table and cleared his throat, interrupting their argument.

“That’s enough,” he sighed, appearing frustrated. “It seems neither of you is easy to deal with. I’m starting to wonder if I made a mistake giving you this opportunity.”

“I don’t care about your grudges against each other. Please, do not bring your personal disputes to the company. You are here to apply for a job, not to settle scores between you.”

“I’m so sorry, Kenneth! I’ll be more careful next time. I won’t argue with my sister again.” Delilah sobbed, looking pitiful and heartbroken.

Janice, on the other hand, crossed her arms over her chest and remained silent.

“To properly assess your abilities, we shall have an impromptu design challenge,” Kenneth suggested.

“No problem,” Janice replied nonchalantly.

Kenneth nodded and turned to Delilah. “How about you?”

Delilah was spiraling into panic, but she had no choice in the matter. “I have no problem, either.” What was she supposed to do now? She didn’t even know the correct way to hold a paintbrush, let alone create a design on the spot. Was she finally going to be exposed?

Meanwhile, Aiden sat in his wheelchair with a light blanket covering his legs. He appeared relaxed and comfortable, but as he listened through his headphones and took stock of Janice’s current situation, his lips curled into a small, cunning smile.

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“Interesting,” he murmured, fingering the bracelet on his wrist. “It’s a pity I can’t witness this scene in person, while Kenneth gets the front-row seat to this drama.”

“Mr. Green, our informant reports that shortly after Kenneth took over Delgado Jewelry, he investigated the personnel transfer records from the last few years. Do you think he’s going to discover the moles we planted in his company?”

Aiden remained unfazed. “Kenneth is a very cautious man. It’s normal for him to suspect that rival businesses could have deployed spies around him. For now, have a handful of the less significant informants expose themselves on purpose.”

The person on the other end of the line fell silent for a moment, finding Aiden’s decision baffling. “Mr. Green, if we expose our men, wouldn’t that waste all our efforts so far?”

“Waste?” Aiden narrowed his eyes and shifted in his wheelchair. “I already have a better candidate on deck. The rest are dispensable.”

The other party fell silent once again. After a long pause, he replied, “Understood. I will make the necessary arrangements.”

“Wait,” Aiden suddenly called out. “Send me the photos of Janice at Delgado Jewelry.”

“Yes, sir.”

Less than a minute later, Aiden received several pictures in his inbox. They were obviously taken discreetly, from different angles. Even so, Janice was still as captivating as ever.

Aiden knew he shouldn't care that much, but for some reason, he felt an inexplicable urge to see Janice in action. His eyes narrowed in anger as he peered at the photo showing her losing her balance and falling into Kenneth's arms.

Kenneth was holding Janice in a gentlemanly yet somewhat intimate manner. Their eyes were locked together, and if one didn't know any better, they might think it was a scene from a romantic movie.

That very same scene grated at Aiden's nerves. He took a deep breath and deleted the photo. Then, without pausing to consider the time and place, he called Janice.

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At Delgado Jewelry, Janice was just about to begin an unexpected design project when the sudden buzz of her phone in her pocket interrupted her.

"Aiden?" she murmured, eyeing the caller ID with a hint of confusion. It was unusual for him to call at this hour.

“Janice, please, feel free to take your call,” Kenneth remarked, offering her a warm, understanding smile.

With a smile, Janice said, “I’m sorry. It’s just that newlyweds tend to cling to each other quite a bit.”

Kenneth raised an eyebrow in silent curiosity but chose not to comment.

Answering the phone, Janice asked, “Honey, are you missing me already?”

Her cheerful voice and sweet words immediately calmed Aiden’s anxious mood. “Am I interrupting anything?” he asked.

“Not at all,” Janice assured quickly, giving Kenneth a playful smile that seemed to speak volumes about her commitment to her partner. “I’m in the middle of an interview. We’ll catch up when I get home.”

“Is it wrapping up soon?” Aiden inquired.

“Almost done here,” Janice confirmed, glancing at the clock. She was confident the design draft wouldn’t take much longer. “I’ll swing by and pick you up then,” Aiden blurted out, then paused, suddenly unsure if he had overstepped.

Janice frowned, not understanding Aiden's intentions. Wasn't he concerned that this call might raise Kenneth's suspicions? Now he was offering to pick her up? Since when had their pretend relationship taken such a turn?

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"Of course, I'll wait for you," she agreed immediately.

Once the call ended, she turned to Kenneth with a sheepish smile. "Mr. Delgado, my apologies for the interruption."

“I must say, Mr. Green is quite lucky,” Kenneth remarked with a dismissive wave of his hand, his tone even. “Having such an elegant and talented wife is a gift he should never take for granted.”

“True love will come your way too, Mr. Delgado,” Janice stated, her gaze drifting towards Delilah.

Delilah, feeling a sting from Janice’s words, managed a strained smile. “Someone as exceptional as Kenneth surely deserves an equally incredible partner.”

“Absolutely!” Janice responded with a knowing smile. “His future partner will undoubtedly be both gorgeous and intelligent. Those who merely play the damsel in distress will probably be overlooked.”

Delilah seethed internally. The audacity of Janice to mock her, suggesting she wasn’t fit to stand by Kenneth’s side. What could she do now, trapped in her ignorance about design? Would she risk humiliating herself here?

“Well, with my husband on his way, I suppose I should get moving,” Janice declared with a purposeful air. She gracefully seated herself, twirling her pen with a flourish before diving into her sketch on the blank paper.

Her movements were deliberate and fluid, each line drawn with a bold, unwavering hand.

Kenneth and Stella looked on, their initial skepticism slowly turning into belief as they observed Janice's confident strokes. Her assurance was palpable; if she harbored any doubts, they certainly didn't show in her deft, skilled sketching.

Meanwhile, Delilah sat opposite, her brow furrowed as she stared at her own untouched paper, her pen idle, betraying her reluctance to begin.

"I'm finished," Janice announced suddenly, her voice calm yet triumphant. She capped her pen and glanced at the clock—barely ten minutes had elapsed, a fact that visibly stunned everyone in the room.

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"Please, have a look," she urged, offering the completed design draft to Kenneth and Stella.

Kenneth accepted the draft, and his eyes widened in astonishment at the first glance. The rapidity and quality of Janice's work were beyond anything he had expected.

"Janice, I owe you an apology for my earlier doubts," Kenneth admitted, his voice thick with newfound respect. "Your talent could truly be a game-changer for Delgado Jewelry."

"Absolutely incredible. This draft is a work of art!" Stella's voice rose with uncontainable excitement as she admired the brilliance of the design. "I've never witnessed someone come up with a flawless design in such little time!"

With a smooth motion, she stood and extended her hand, her voice bright. “Janice, it’s wonderful to have you here at Delgado Jewelry.”

Kenneth shook his head, offering a wry smile. “Stella, don’t you think you’re getting ahead of yourself? Shouldn’t I, as the CEO, be the one extending the welcomes here?”

“Mr. Delgado, I apologize. It’s just that Janice’s talents are too remarkable not to celebrate,” Stella replied, her usually composed demeanor faltering in her excitement over Janice’s arrival.

Kenneth nodded in understanding. Over the years, Stella had been the linchpin of Delgado Jewelry, enduring immense pressure from every direction. Her smiles had become rare treasures. Now, with Janice capable of alleviating some of that burden, her joy was palpable.

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