

A Thousand Faces Hide The Genius Heiress' Wrath

Chapter 71:

At that moment, Laurie had been too engulfed in her work to grasp the significance of Janice's words. Now, the memory stung with clarity. Janice had expressed a desire for their family to be her source of light, her sun. Yet, tragically, the very light Janice sought had cast her into shadow.

This family, her supposed sanctuary, had repaid her earnest efforts with detachment and cruelty.

In the end, Janice's belief in them had crumbled, leaving her no choice but to stand strong on her own.

Laurie held back her tears as she opened Janice's chat window and tried to send a message.

But the moment she pressed send, a notification popped up on her screen, saying that she had been blocked.

“I’m sorry, Janice. I am so sorry...” Laurie’s chest tightened as she curled up in front of her computer desk, still clutching her phone. “My thoughtless prejudice drove you away.”

A thought suddenly occurred to Laurie, and she quickly wiped the tears from her face. She scrolled through her contact list until she found Aiden’s number. “They should be together. If I call him, I might be able to get through to Janice.”

Meanwhile, Aiden was also on his phone, browsing through some documents his trusted aide had sent him.

“So that black SUV is actually a company car under Freak Design,” he muttered with a groan. “Interesting.”

Freak Design was a renowned international company. They were involved in almost every venture related to design, and their branches and partners spanned the globe.

If this was all the information his people managed to dig up, he might as well fire them.

Despite being an industry giant, Freak Design was actually just a subsidiary of JE Consortium, which was founded by none other than JE.

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And Janice just happened to be best friends with JE. Given their relationship, it wasn't that difficult to come up with a myriad of speculations.

Was it possible that Janice's status was, in fact, on par with JE's? If so, then Janice's real identity must be truly remarkable.

There was just one thing Aiden couldn't understand, though. Why would someone so accomplished debase herself with a humble and oppressed life after reconnecting with the Edwards family? It was only recently that Janice began to act sensibly.

Aiden massaged his temples. He used to regard Janice as nothing more than a business partner, but now, he found himself genuinely intrigued by her.

"Aiden," a pleasant voice called out and interrupted his thoughts. Aiden put his phone away and looked up to see Janice walk into the room. "What is it?" "Bart just moved out, and you'll have a peaceful life from now on," Janice said, smiling as she sat down in front of his desk. "But with him gone, things might be a little less entertaining around here."

Aiden let out a cold, humorless laugh. "Bart will only get more anxious. Once he reaches his limit, he's bound to stir up trouble by any means he can get his hands on. You'll get your fill of entertainment eventually."

"Aren't you worried he'll get so desperate that he resorts to extreme measures? Like..." Janice trailed off and glanced pointedly at his legs.

Aiden shook his head. “He might, but I’m not just going to sit around and wait. Actually, a part of me hopes that he’ll do something drastic.”

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Janice raised an eyebrow. It only made sense for Aiden to be more vigilant after that car accident. If Bart did try something extreme, it would give Aiden an opportunity to catch him red-handed.

Of course, Aiden was more than capable of dealing with Bart at present, but he still wasn’t sure how many people were involved in the car accident years ago. There could be others behind it.

Everything he did—playing the helpless invalid, pretending to be disabled, marrying Janice—it was all designed to lure out the perpetrators and take them down in one fell swoop.

“Oh, by the way, your mom said she wants to take me to a banquet tomorrow night to introduce me to people in the social scene. Do you think I should go?” Janice flipped a strand of hair over her shoulder, that simple and innocuous action mesmerizing Aiden for a moment.

A blurry scene suddenly flashed through his mind.

Amidst all the blood and chaos, a woman had dragged him out of an overturned car and administered emergency treatment. She had the skills of a seasoned doctor, and just before he lost consciousness, he had seen her do that very same gesture.

“Aiden?”

“Hmm?” Aiden blinked and snapped back to his senses, though his eyes were still a little glassy.

Janice frowned. “What were you daydreaming about? Didn’t you hear anything I just said?”

“You can go,” Aiden said, assuming his usual indifferent demeanor. “The more exposure you get at these gatherings, the better it is for us. It sends a message to certain people

that I will soon be taking over the shares my grandfather left behind. They'll panic and reveal their weaknesses soon enough."

"I mean, it's no big deal if I go..." Janice tapped her chin with her forefinger and flashed him a mischievous grin. "This constitutes extra work, so you might have to pay extra."

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Aiden chuckled. "Aren't you mistaken about something? Our deal was that we were going to register our marriage, right?"

"Right!"

"Which means that it's perfectly normal for you to attend these events—as my wife."

Janice's brows furrowed as she pondered his argument. "It's normal, yes, but—"

"Then we are in agreement!" Aiden leaned back and rested his intertwined hands on his lap. His eyes twinkled with amusement as he regarded her. "If anything, attending these social gatherings with your mother-in-law is expected. Asking for extra pay is highly inappropriate."

Janice's jaw fell open. "I never imagined that someone as handsome as you can be so stingy. Fine, then! The important thing is that I help you secure the shares as soon as possible, so I can finally escape this sham of a marriage."

"Glad you understand."

But why did he feel a little prickle in his heart just now? Aiden shook his head and dismissed the thought. Just then, his phone rang.

He glanced at the caller ID and frowned, then gave Janice a peculiar look.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Janice asked, annoyed at his expression. "What, is that call for me?"

"See for yourself."

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Aiden handed her the phone.

The moment Janice saw the name flashing on the screen, her face darkened. “Interesting! She’s actually calling you now!”

“Should I answer it?” Aiden asked with a playful glint in his eyes.

“Don’t even think about it. What are you doing?”

Before Janice knew it, Aiden had grabbed the phone from her hand and was pressing the answer button.

Laurie’s voice came through just as he put the phone on speaker.

“Aiden, I’m truly sorry for calling you at this time.” Laurie’s voice was strained, as if she had been crying, though there was still a touch of reverence in her tone.

“Kindly get to the point, Mrs. Edwards. What do you want?” Aiden eyed Janice across the table, while she glared daggers at him.

“Is Janice with you? I was hoping we could talk so I can apologize to her.”

“Apologize?” Aiden repeated, his eyes never leaving Janice’s face as he tilted his head to the side. “Are you joking? You’ve already cut ties with her. Apologizing now seems rather pointless, doesn’t it?”

“I’ve truly realized my mistakes. I was wrong. I was too biased towards Delilah. But I’ve come to my senses. I just need to talk to Janice. If she forgives me just this once, I will strive to give her all my love and make amends for the past.”

At that point, Janice couldn’t take it anymore. She snatched the phone and spoke into the receiver. “You’ve come to your senses? No, you haven’t! What you did come to realize is that without me, you will lose your wealth and status.”

“How can you say that, Janice? I’ve genuinely realized my mistakes. I want to make it up to you. Please give me a chance. I will love and cherish you like I should have.” Laurie sounded desperate now. Her pleas were enough to break someone’s heart.

But Janice had long since given up on her mother. “No, thank you. You’d better reserve all your love for Delilah.”

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“Janice? Janice!” Laurie called out repeatedly, but the call had been disconnected.

She slumped back in her chair in a daze. Had she really lost her biological daughter? Was the obedient girl, who was always eager to please her, never coming back?

Just then, the door creaked open.

Connor walked into the room, looking utterly exhausted. He frowned when he noticed his wife’s red and puffy eyes. “Laurie, what’s wrong?”

Laurie glanced up at him and shook her head without saying anything.

Connor sighed and tried to push aside his own weariness. He took her hands in his and squeezed them lightly. “Is it about your new project? To be frank, I don’t think you need to worry too much. So what if you lose one project? It’s not the end of the world.”

“What do you mean by that?” Laurie’s face darkened as she angrily pulled her hands away. “Not the end of the world? I didn’t build this company from the ground up just to play house. I want to keep growing, to strengthen my foothold and climb higher. Do you even understand what this project means to me? Just think about your bid for the development project in the western suburbs. Can you just move on with your life if you actually lose the bid?”

Connor’s expression turned grim. She had certainly hit a sore spot there.

Laurie ran her hands over her face and heaved a long sigh. She didn’t have the energy to argue any further. “I’m going to take a shower. Take some time to think about what I said.”

Connor watched her disappear into the bathroom. He wanted to say something, but ultimately held himself back. Admittedly, the development project Laurie had mentioned was driving him crazy.

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His bid proposals were usually flawless, but this time, they were somehow riddled with issues. Either the details were wrong, or the pricing was off. It was all he could do not to collapse from the stress.

The presentation was set for tomorrow afternoon, and if he failed to deliver a satisfactory proposal, the shareholders would definitely tear him apart.

As he brooded over these thoughts, a knock came at the door. Connor got up and opened it to find Lowell standing in the hallway.

“What is it?”

“Dad, I came to bring you a piece of the cake Delilah baked earlier. She saved this especially for you.” Lowell handed over a small plate of cake.

Connor’s face instantly lit up. “Delilah is such a kind and thoughtful girl. Anyway, how is your proposal coming along?” Just like that, his expression turned serious again. “The

presentation is tomorrow. If we can't come up with a decent bid, we will miss out on this lucrative project. Edwards Group will become the laughingstock of our peers!"

Lowell blushed and mustered a sheepish smile. "Don't worry about it, Dad. I'll finish everything by tonight."

"You used to be efficient when it comes to proposals. Why are you dragging your feet with this one?" Connor's brows drew into a scowl, and his tone turned cold. "Or have you been so lax lately that you've actually forgotten how to write a business proposal?"

Lowell pressed his lips into a thin line as Janice's face flashed in his mind.

No way!

He had always written the proposals himself, so what did she have to do with any of this?

However, he realized that every time he composed a proposal, Janice was always hovering nearby, watching him write.

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Yes, that must be it! Janice's presence had always annoyed him, so her constant loitering must have motivated him to finish the documents quickly and write something beyond his acumen.

Damn that girl. For a moment, Lowell had actually begun to think that he was incapable of writing a proposal without Janice. What disgusting, insidious tactics.

He told himself that he would show her just how worthless and unnecessary she was to the Edwards family.

"Oh, right. Dad, about Delilah's situation..." Lowell brought up Delilah's concern.

Connor let out a resigned sigh. "Your mother has been very emotional lately. I'll have to wait until she calms down. When the time is right, I will discuss this matter with her. Delilah is her favorite, anyway, so it shouldn't be an issue."

"Thanks, Dad. Delilah has really suffered too much this time around. We can't let Janice off so easily."

"No, of course not."

Lowell left to work on his proposal, while Connor turned back into the room with his cake.

He had just closed the door behind him when Laurie emerged from the bathroom and saw him standing there with a plate of cake in his hands.

“Laurie, come and try this cake that Delilah made,” Connor offered with a smile, hoping it would ease his wife’s bad mood. But Laurie’s gaze only darkened, and her tone was indifferent when she replied, “No, thanks.”

Connor paused, taken aback by her response. “Delilah made this herself. Are you sure you don’t want a taste?”

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Laurie sat on the edge of the bed and stared him in the eye. “Have you ever tried a cake that Janice made?”

Connor frowned. Why was she bringing up that ingrate all of a sudden? “Janice has done nothing but cause trouble. She’s not as sweet and considerate as Delilah. When did she ever make something for us?”

“Huh.” Laurie let out a dry, humorless laugh, her eyes dimming further. “Connor, Janice is our real daughter, born of our flesh and blood. How can you dismiss her like that? Is she that unbearable to you?”

“Am I wrong, though?” Connor retorted crossly. “Ever since she came back, she’s been targeting Delilah at every turn. She would either accuse Delilah of stealing her things or try to harm Delilah outright. If we didn’t keep an eye on her, she could have seriously hurt Delilah.”

“Is that really the case? Think about it carefully—when all is said and done, who has been hurt the most? And who has benefited the most?” Although Laurie said those words to Connor, they were also directed at herself.

She had come to realize that she had always overlooked a very basic detail whenever an issue arose.

Every time Janice and Delilah got into a conflict, the blame always lay at Janice’s feet, without fail.

And even though Delilah was always the victim, she never seemed to suffer any real harm. In contrast, Janice would either be berated or beaten up. Her bruises wouldn't even completely fade before she was subjected to another beating.

Laurie suddenly recalled the incident where Delilah had claimed to suffer from a mango allergy.

Looking back at it now, her story didn't add up. If Janice had truly known about Delilah's allergy, why would she feed her mango pudding on purpose?

Janice had been desperately trying to win over the family, and sabotaging Delilah in plain sight would only turn them all against her. Why would she do something so foolish? Moreover, while Delilah did act like she was having an allergic reaction, Bartley's examination revealed no such symptoms. Exactly what happened back then?

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Laurie remembered Janice calling her blind and foolish, mistaking fool's gold for the real thing. She had thought nothing of it at the time, but now... Perhaps Janice's words were true all along.

"What's the matter, Laurie?" Connor asked, growing more concerned. "Did that rebellious girl say something to you? Whatever it is, don't listen to her. She's just a liar and a waste of time. She is nothing compared to our Delilah."

“Enough!” Laurie exploded, pinning him with a furious glare. “You say that Janice never made us cake, but that’s only because you never gave her the time of day.”

Connor blinked in shock. Vaguely, a vision of a timid girl holding up a cake with both hands appeared in his mind. “Dad, I made this cake for you. Please try it.”

“Get out! I don’t eat junk. Don’t try to bring me something so disgusting again.”

Connor snapped back to his senses and gritted his teeth. “So what if she made one? She spends most of her days away from home. Who knows what kind of germs she carries? We can’t trust any food she makes; it would only get us sick.”

In the next second, Laurie shot to her feet and struck him across the face.

Connor stared at her in disbelief. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Get out! I don’t want to share a room with you tonight!” Laurie stood her ground, looking like a warrior ready to tear him apart.

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Connor bristled with unease. "What has gotten into you, Laurie? Did Janice say something to you to make you act like this? I already told you, you shouldn't listen to her."

"I told you to leave!" Laurie screamed, pushing Connor toward the door.

"Return to your senses, Laurie! Don't believe a single word Janice says! And don't forget why we took her back in the first place!" Connor's words pierced Laurie's heart.

They had taken Janice back mainly to keep Delilah from marrying a disabled man. Essentially, they had made Janice a substitute.

Meanwhile, Delilah overheard the muffled commotion and came out of her room to see what was going on. She poked her head out just in time to see Connor being shoved through the door by Laurie. Needless to say, Delilah was utterly bewildered.

What on earth was happening today? Laurie had been behaving strangely since she came home, and now, she was arguing with Connor as well.

Delilah left her room and approached Connor. “Dad, what’s going on? Is Mom upset because of me?” Of course, she made sure to put her signature pitiful expression on. “Well, it’s true that I’m not good enough. I suppose it’s only natural for Mom to be angry.”

Just like the old song and dance, Connor melted at Delilah’s sorrowful face. “It’s not your fault at all. It’s that useless wench, Janice. Even when she’s no longer here, she still manages to cause chaos in this household.”

“Did Janice tell Mom about those things?” As soon as she said this, Delilah immediately covered her mouth, as if she had spoken by accident.

“What things?” Connor asked in a stern tone. “Tell me.”

Delilah shook her head, looking timid and contrite. “I’m sorry, Dad, I’m afraid I can’t say it.”

“What? Are you disobeying me now?” Connor demanded. “Don’t be scared. Whatever it is, you will always have my support.”

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Delilah let out a few more sniffles and choked sobs before recounting an exaggerated version of the interview.

Lowell had mentioned the incident to Connor, but not in so much detail. Now that he heard it from Delilah, Connor was incensed.

“Just great! That ingrate is really trying to tear this family apart!” Connor seethed, his eyes narrowed as he spoke. “So she dared to say you didn’t know how to hold a paintbrush, that you were nothing without your mom? It’s no wonder your mom is so mad. That brat must have provoked her!”

“I can’t seem to do anything right, Dad. Maybe I should just tender my resignation tomorrow,” Delilah sobbed again.

“No!” Connor placed his hands on Delilah’s shoulders, his voice reassuring. “Even if you’re a talented designer, you still need ample time to adapt to your surroundings, especially when your previous focus is different from your current one. I’m certain that once you get the hang of things, you will soar to the top.”

“But—”

“I’ll find a way to secure your position as a designer at Delgado Jewelry,” Connor declared firmly. “And as long as you hold that position, nothing that Janice says will ever sway your mom.”

“Dad, you’re the best,” Delilah said, sinking into Connor’s comforting embrace.

The next day, Janice arrived at Delgado Jewelry in Aiden’s car. “I should go to work by myself next time,” she said, glancing at Aiden’s legs. “It’s not convenient for you to move around as it is, and it will only be a hassle to bring me to work every morning.”

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Aiden gave her a small smile. “We’re newlyweds; we’re supposed to be intimate. If I don’t do at least this much, people will suspect that our marriage is fake. My grandfather’s shares are at stake here. I can’t take any risks.”

Janice rolled her eyes. Even with speculations swirling around, who would dare to question Aiden right to his face? Aiden would simply take note of the fool’s name and deal with them later. From start to finish, their marriage was only for appearances.

“Suit yourself. In that case, thank you,” Janice replied, not saying more as she smoothed her hair.

She had gone for a chic and professional look today—a white blouse and a black pencil skirt that matched her black pumps, with her hair tied up. Every inch of her attire screamed “sharp and capable.”

Even Aiden, who was never interested in women, found himself taking a few extra glances at her.

He was taking yet another peek at her when he caught the sly gleam that crossed Janice’s eyes.

“Aiden, you mentioned we should be more intimate. What if I start with a kiss?” Janice offered, her laughter twinkling in her eyes, causing Aiden’s cheeks to flush with sudden embarrassment.

“Janice, you’re really pushing my limits,” Aiden muttered, his tone half-exasperated.

“Oh, lighten up!” Janice’s laughter filled the car, her smile wide. “For someone destined to lead the Green family, you sure get flustered easily. Didn’t you suggest we should be more intimate? I’m just going along with you. Can’t you see how serious I am?”

Aiden responded with a silent, intense gaze, his eyes locked on hers, filling the space with unspoken words.

“Fine, I’ll stop teasing,” Janice conceded as the atmosphere thickened with tension.

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She gracefully exited the vehicle, her elegant silhouette catching the eyes of onlookers. Turning back to flash Aiden a mischievous grin, she lifted her chin defiantly. “Goodbye.”

With that, she strode towards the Delgado Jewelry building, her confident steps gradually easing the stiffness in Aiden’s demeanor.

“Mr. Green, where to next?” inquired Braylen Rayne, the driver and bodyguard.

“To the Bridgeway Auction,” Aiden declared, diverting his gaze. “This evening, my wife is attending a grand banquet. It’s only fitting, as her husband, that I present her with some exquisite jewelry.”

Braylen raised an eyebrow. As an observer in their relationship, he always felt that Aiden was a bit too attentive to his wife. Braylen couldn’t resist probing further, “Mr. Green, there’s been a development regarding the woman you asked me to locate.”

Aiden’s brows furrowed in confusion. “Already? That was sudden.”

Braylen found himself puzzled by the reaction. Previously, Aiden had expressed frustration over the slow progress in finding the woman, yet now he seemed taken aback by the breakthrough.

Did he truly want to find her, or not?

Aiden quickly regained his composure, his voice steady as he inquired, “What’s the current status?”

“She is a doctor at Auburn Hospital. Based on the details you provided, she was involved in a car accident three years ago where she played a key role in saving a life. However, you might want to verify the specifics personally.”

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Aiden nodded, lapsing into a contemplative silence.

Braylen waited expectantly for further instructions, but as the silence stretched, he ventured again, "So now we..."

"Let's head to the auction first," Aiden replied, his voice composed, eyes momentarily closing. "There's also a bidding event this afternoon. We're swamped with tasks. The issue concerning the woman can wait until tomorrow."

“Understood!” Braylen exhaled quietly, feeling increasingly perplexed by Aiden’s unpredictable nature.

The design department of Delgado Jewelry occupied the 13th floor of the building.

As Janice stepped into the elevator, she tapped the button for the 13th floor and leaned back against the wall, waiting as the elevator began its ascent.

At that moment, her phone burst into a melody. Prescott was calling.

Janice answered promptly, and Prescott’s animated voice filled the speaker.

“Janice, I’ve uncovered the information you were after. It turns out Aiden’s car accident did involve Kenneth.”

Janice’s eyes narrowed thoughtfully at the mention of Kenneth. Was he truly linked to this?

Despite her limited interactions with him, her impression from their brief meeting the day before had painted him as a man of integrity, unlikely to entangle himself in dubious affairs. “Prescott, is there any way you can dig deeper into Kenneth’s involvement?” Janice queried, her voice laced with curiosity.

“I’m afraid not,” Prescott replied, his tone now laced with somber seriousness. “While investigating, I ran into substantial resistance. Someone’s actively trying to thwart my efforts, possessing skills that rival even my own.”

“Really?” Janice tilted her head slightly, a hint of intrigue lighting up her face. Prescott was ranked among the top ten hackers globally, and if someone had managed to outmaneuver him, they were no amateur.

“Janice, should I continue investigating?”

“No.” Janice brushed a stray lock of hair behind her ear, her lips curling into a faint smile. “Since I’ve been drawn into this game, I might as well play it on my own terms. It might even prove to be more exhilarating this way.”

Prescott shuddered faintly, yet a spark of exhilaration surged through him. Janice was back, and it seemed everyone was about to witness some significant upheaval.

Janice instructed, “Oh, and one more thing. Have Leah relay a message to Delgado Jewelry—if their designs captivate at the exhibition, Freak Design is willing to form a long-term partnership with them.”

Prescott’s brow furrowed in puzzlement. He couldn’t fathom Janice’s rationale behind the move, but he trusted her instincts implicitly. She was undoubtedly orchestrating a deeper game. Once she’d disconnected the call, Janice dialed another number. “Is it ready? Okay, deliver it immediately.”

As she concluded the conversation, the elevator dinged to a stop on the thirteenth floor.

Pocketing her phone, Janice exited the elevator and noticed a familiar face energetically engaging with a group of colleagues. “Huh, she really knows how to mingle,” Janice mused quietly to herself.

Delilah was there, distributing a generous stack of breakfast sandwiches to several co-workers. Janice watched her with a scoff and chose to ignore her, striding deeper into the office.

“Hey, Janice,” Delilah called out after spotting her.

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Janice halted, turned, and shot Delilah an icy glare. “What do you want?”

“Janice, why do you always treat me so coldly?” Delilah’s face fell into a look of wounded innocence. “Though the Edwards family kicked you out, you remain my sister.”

“Stop right there!” Janice interjected sharply, her hand shooting up to halt Delilah’s flow of less-than-sincere words. “It’s too early to be pressing my buttons.”

Delilah’s expression congealed into a mask of stunned silence, her mouth opening and closing wordlessly, clearly cowed by Janice’s stern rebuke.

“Hey, Delilah, is Janice your sister?” a curious female colleague chimed in as she approached them.

“Yes, she is,” Delilah replied. She quickly mustered a forced smile and instinctively reached for Janice’s arm. However, Janice smoothly sidestepped the gesture.

The colleague’s eyebrows rose, a puzzled look crossing her face as she noticed the subtle avoidance. It was clear to her that, despite being sisters, Delilah and Janice shared a complicated bond. “Why do you two look nothing alike?”

Delilah's eyes sparkled with an opportunity to subtly undermine Janice. "Actually, we're not biological sisters. But she's always been the sister I hold in the highest regard. However, a few days ago, Janice had a falling-out with our family and decided to leave home. I think there might be some misunderstandings between us, which is why she seems a bit aloof."

She paused, offering a smile that managed to look both hurt and hopeful. "But it's alright. I'm sure once she cools down, we'll sort everything out."

Her narrative skillfully framed Janice as a spoiled brat, quick to take offense and storm off.

The colleagues, previously neutral, now observed her with amused expressions, their loyalties swaying towards Delilah, who had recently charmed them with a free breakfast. Their attitude towards Janice turned dismissive.

Janice's lips curled into a knowing smirk as she caught on to Delilah's subtle game of gaining favor while leaving her out. She was no stranger to Delilah's tactics and had anticipated this move.

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"Janice, I got breakfast for everyone. Oh no, it's gone," Delilah exclaimed with a dramatic sigh, feigning disappointment as she reached for an empty spot where the breakfast was supposed to be. Turning to Janice with a look of contrived regret, she added, "I totally forgot about yours! But hey, you don't usually eat breakfast anyway, so it's fine, right?"

Unruffled, Janice reached out to snatch the last breakfast sandwich from Delilah's bag, brandishing it triumphantly. "Look, there's still one left."

Delilah's face flickered with annoyance before settling into a cunning smile, pleased internally that Janice had fallen for her ploy.

"Janice, how could you take Delilah's breakfast? You don't even like breakfast, do you?" a colleague chided, coming to Delilah's defense—an outcome Delilah had anticipated and savored.

"No problem, as long as Janice is satisfied," Delilah responded, her voice tinged with feigned martyrdom as she played the victim to Janice's apparent cruelty.

Their colleagues began to show signs of sympathy towards Delilah, their looks towards Janice tinged with disapproval.

"Janice, how could you bully Delilah?"

Janice glanced at the colleague who had just spoken. This woman was always defending Delilah for some reason. Janice's eyes darted to the woman's name tag.

"Cheryl Juarez?"

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Pity, she had a nice name, but her judgment was sorely lacking. “She left home? More like she was so troublesome that her own family kicked her out!” Cheryl’s haughty expression made her look like Delilah’s sidekick.

In all fairness to Delilah, Janice knew that a surefire way to keep people on her side was to give them small favors here and there. Today’s exchange was a testament to that, because even though their other colleagues were not as vocal as Cheryl, they were all looking at Janice with disdain.

Not that Janice cared in the slightest. She picked up the sandwich and took a bite.

“Yuck! What kind of pathetic breakfast is this? Come on, Delilah, if you were going to treat everyone, you might as well have bought us something edible!” She spat out the bit of sandwich with disgust. “Aren’t you from the Edwards family? Why are you treating your co-workers to such cheap food?”

Delilah froze. She was surprised and confused. What was Janice trying to do?

“What nonsense are you spouting now, Janice? The important thing is that Delilah bought us breakfast. We don’t mind if she’s being frugal with it. She is much better than you anyway.” As usual, Cheryl quickly stepped up in Delilah’s defense.

And just as always, Delilah dissolved into tears. She choked on a sob and sniffled, looking like a lost and beaten dog. “Janice, I bought these sandwiches and milk to build camaraderie with everyone. I wasn’t trying to be stingy, I only wanted to be grounded and relatable.”

“There’s nothing wrong with that! I really enjoy sandwich and milk!” a male colleague chimed in to support Delilah.

Pretty soon, the rest of their colleagues were nodding in agreement.

“Nonsense!” Janice declared in obvious dissatisfaction. “What do you mean, grounded and relatable? Why, if you treated them to something better, does that mean you’re setting yourself apart from the rest of us?”

Everyone was bewildered, unsure of what Janice was trying to convey.

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Janice heaved a long sigh and gave Delilah a look that was a mixture of frustration and disappointment. “If you don’t want to spend money on your co-workers, then just say so. Stop making excuses.”

“Sister—”

“Shut up! I don’t have a miserly sister like you. It’s my first day here, and I wanted to make a good impression. So I spent a month’s worth of my living expenses to treat you all to breakfast.”

Everyone’s jaws dropped in shock.

Cheryl spoke cautiously, “Janice, you say that, but—”

“But what?” Janice let out another sigh, this one filled with exasperation. “I ordered meal sets from a five-star hotel, so it would naturally take some time. Actually, it should be here any minute now.”

“What?” Cheryl exclaimed. “Is that true?”

Right on cue, a sharply dressed man emerged from the elevator. “Excuse me, I’m here for Janice Green.”

“Oh, right on time!” Janice took a brief second to smile at Cheryl before waving the man over. “That would be me.”

The man approached her and bowed slightly. “I’m here to deliver the ten breakfast meals you ordered from Bengal Hotel. Please sign here.”

“No problem.” Janice took a pen out of her pocket and signed the delivery slip the man was holding.

When she was done, she said, “Please help me distribute the meals to my dear colleagues, so they can enjoy the food while it’s still warm.”

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