

A Thousand Faces Hide The Genius Heiress' Wrath

Chapter 81:

“Yes, of course.” The man bowed again and clapped his hands. Ten men in elegant uniforms marched into the department, each carrying a beautifully packaged lunch box.

“What is happening right now?!”

“Oh, my God! It really is from Bengal Hotel!”

“Wow! A single meal must cost thousands. I heard they only hire master chefs who cook with fresh, top-notch ingredients.” Janice’s colleagues watched in awe and disbelief as the staff handed over the lunch boxes, one by one.

Cheryl stared at it for a moment, then glanced back at Delilah’s sandwiches and milk. She had to admit, the latter did look exactly as Janice had described—cheap.

Such was the way of the world.

It was one thing to make a claim, but once backed up by tangible proof, there would be no room left for doubt.

“Janice, can this truly be for us?” Cheryl’s voice wavered slightly as she looked at Janice with newfound admiration.

“Absolutely,” Janice responded, her chin tilting up a fraction. “I hold firm to the golden rule: treat others as you wish to be treated. It wouldn’t sit right with me to treat my colleagues with anything less than kindness. From the moment I joined Delgado Jewelry, I’ve regarded each of you as family. And I would never be parsimonious with my family.”

This statement, coming from her at any other time, might have seemed hollow. But as they sat surrounded by the food from a five-star hotel, it rang profoundly sincere.

“You’re incredible, Janice!” Everyone marveled at the gesture, except for Delilah, whose eyes nearly popped out of her head at the unfolding scene. Just when she thought she had pigeonholed Janice into a corner with her calculated vulnerability, Janice had turned the tables spectacularly.

All around them, the colleagues were diving into the lavish spread, completely disregarding Delilah’s simple offering of sandwiches and milk. Some who had initially tried the milk set it aside, opting instead to relish the luxurious feast laid out by Janice.

At that moment, Delilah's expression clouded over, her eyes shooting icy daggers at Janice, whose demeanor had changed dramatically. Janice caught Delilah's frosty stare but shrugged it off with a scornful flick of her eyes, silently asserting her superiority.

"Janice, Delilah, could you both step inside for a moment?" Stella's voice echoed from the doorway. With a taunting smirk, Janice strode confidently toward Stella's office, leading the way.

Delilah, taking a moment to steady her nerves, cast a hopeful look at Cheryl for a bit of empathy. However, Cheryl was completely engrossed in her sumptuous breakfast, oblivious to Delilah's emotional turmoil.

The rest of their colleagues were similarly detached, unmoved by Delilah's silent plea for understanding. Feeling even more isolated and ridiculous, Delilah's frown deepened. She stamped her foot in frustration and followed Janice into the office.

Inside, Stella's mood was visibly buoyant.

Janice understood the cause of her delight. What had been anticipated as a straightforward partnership had blossomed into a lucrative deal, thanks to an unexpectedly generous proposal from Freak Design.

"Stella, is there something specific you wanted to discuss?" Janice inquired.

Stella shot Janice a quick glance before her eyes landed on Delilah, who had just walked in. She nodded in acknowledgment and began, “The reason I’ve called you both here primarily concerns our collaboration with Freak Design. This partnership is crucial—it’s our key to breaking into international markets. Even though today marks your first day with us at Delgado Jewelry, you’re already integral to our future. As new design assistants, I’m entrusting you with a critical assignment: create a jewelry piece within three days that embodies the essence of our brand. If your design meets our standards, not only will you earn the position of my right hand, but you’ll also get the opportunity to collaborate with a representative from Freak Design.”

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Delilah’s eyes sparkled with anticipation, a surge of excitement flooding her veins. Freak Design wasn’t just any name in the industry—it was a titan globally, and forming a connection with their representative could significantly propel her career forward.

Yet, her aspirations reached beyond professional growth. She eyed the prospect of gaining entry into a higher echelon of society, mingling with the affluent, expanding her social circle. This could be her safety net, offering alternative paths should her current plans with Kenneth fall through.

“Stella, I’ll pour my heart and soul into this.” The proposal seemed to ignite a fire within Delilah as she quickly spoke, her voice infused with fervor. Her passionate declaration could have fooled anyone, even Janice, into believing her dedication was solely for her craft.

“Love the spirit!” Stella responded with a nod, acknowledging Delilah’s fervent pledge before turning her focus to Janice, expectantly.

Janice knew Stella was eagerly awaiting her reply. “Stella, give me three days, and I’ll give you a design that will meet your expectations.”

Stella’s eyebrow arched, a hint of a smile playing on her lips as she digested the response.

Janice made a promise, while Delilah only said she’d pour her heart and soul into the design. In contrast, Stella was far more convinced by Janice.

“Alright, you may go now,” Stella instructed. “Since today marks your debut here, take some time to unwind and mingle with your peers. However, be prepared to dive into work soon after.”

Delilah spent the morning strategizing ways to align her new colleagues with her interests. Janice's lavish breakfast spread had effortlessly eclipsed the rapport Delilah had been carefully crafting.

It appeared that her next opportunity to impress would have to be at lunch. She glanced at Janice. If Janice decided to splurge on lunch again, what could she possibly offer in response?

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Catching Delilah's worried look, Janice flashed her a knowing smile. The unease within Delilah surged. Was Janice planning another grand gesture for lunch?

Seizing the moment, Delilah stood up and announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, as you enjoyed my sister's grand breakfast today, I feel compelled to keep up the family tradition. Please allow me to treat you all to lunch at Forest Shrimp."

"Delilah, that's incredibly generous of you!"

"Forest Shrimp, the finest in Efrery, can cost a small fortune for just one meal!"

"Oh, we're really in for a royal treat! Thank you, Delilah!" The team erupted in joy, their voices echoing with appreciation for Delilah's lavish gesture.

Delilah cast a challenging gaze towards Janice. Forest Shrimp was renowned as the most opulent seafood dining experience in Efrery. Surely, Janice couldn't top this extravagance.

Yet Janice appeared unfazed, rolling her eyes dismissively at Delilah and silently forming a word with her lips.

Delilah squinted, attempting to make out the silent insult.

The word looked like "Idiot!"

A wave of anger washed over Delilah, her fists tightening as a chilly stare settled in her eyes. Janice better not get too comfortable. Once she cemented her bond with the rest of the team, they would surely shun Janice. And ostracized, how would Janice ever manage to navigate the complexities of their company?

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As lunchtime approached, Delilah, clutching a neatly wrapped present, sought out Kenneth. She had missed the opportunity to hand it over the previous day and was resolved to ensure it reached him today. However, Kenneth was nowhere to be found. The repeated missed connections left Delilah simmering with frustration. Weighed down by this, Delilah trudged back to the design department.

Cheryl, eyes wide with expectation, approached her immediately. “Delilah, are we leaving already?”

“Huh?” Delilah blinked, taken aback for a moment, her gaze sweeping over the eager faces of her colleagues. Then it clicked—the lunch invitation.

“Yes, let’s get going.”

“Let’s go, everyone!” Cheryl exclaimed, her enthusiasm infectious as the team sprang to their feet, their faces lighting up with joy.

Delilah masked her inner scoff, dismissing her colleagues as simpletons thrilled by something as mundane as lunch at Forest Shrimp. She pondered how this lunch might swing their loyalties back in her favor. Then, her thoughts drifted to Janice.

Turning to spot Janice, Delilah found her desk unexpectedly empty, which caught her off guard. “Where’s my sister?”

“She stepped out,” Cheryl responded. “She took the afternoon off and mentioned she wouldn’t be returning today.”

“An afternoon off? On her first day?” Delilah’s eyebrows knitted together in a frown, a ripple of concern washing over her. What on earth could Janice be up to? And if Janice wasn’t around, what was the point of spending money on such pathetic, incompetent losers for lunch?

The bidding event unfolded in the expansive conference hall of the Bengal Hotel. As Janice entered, the room was already buzzing with activity. Representatives from various companies, predominantly CEOs and project managers, filled the space. In her perfectly tailored business suit, Janice appeared somewhat misplaced among the gathering of veteran executives. A few onlookers even mistook her for one of the hotel staff.

“Janice, what are you doing here?”

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The voice pierced through the hum of conversations, drawing Janice's attention. She turned to find Connor and Lowell making their way towards her, their faces etched with disapproval. With a dismissive chuckle, Janice turned her gaze away, opting to ignore them.

"Hey, I'm talking to you. Are you ignoring me?" Lowell demanded, stepping in front of her to block her path, his eyes narrowing with irritation.

"Why does it concern you why I'm here?" Janice retorted, her voice steady yet filled with disdain. "Unless you're implying that the Edwards family now owns this hotel?"

Lowell's irritation visibly intensified at her comeback. "This is Forest Corp's bidding event, not some place to stir up trouble."

Janice let out a soft, mocking laugh and crossed her arms, her posture radiating defiance. "Paranoid? Just because I'm present doesn't mean I intend to cause chaos. Perhaps I'm here to participate in the bidding, ever thought of that?"

"You? Don't make me laugh. You're nothing but a pathetic nobody we tossed out of the family!"

"Lowell!" Connor shot him a sharp glance, noticing that their heated exchange had already captured the attention of many around them. To continue would only turn them into the spectacle of the evening.

With a frosty stare, he then addressed Janice. “I don’t care what brought you here, but is this the way you address your father and your brother?”

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Janice simply shook her head, her expression one of scornful amusement. “It’s amusing you forget so quickly. Aren’t you the one in your fifties? Recall the agreement we signed? As of now, you and the gentleman beside you are nothing to me. To me, you are lesser than strangers. What respect do you expect?”

“You ungrateful brat!” Connor’s voice was a blend of disbelief and rage. “Here I thought you coerced us into signing the agreement merely to piss us off. I didn’t realize you meant it earnestly. Very clever.”

“Well, if you renounce your ties with the Edwards family, then quit dragging our name through the mud while you flaunt it!”

“With pleasure!” Janice retorted, her smirk tinged with contempt.

She scoffed at the absurdity of ever calling them family. What kind of nonsense father and brother were they? To her, they were nothing but a pair of deranged lunatics.

“Oh, and just so you know,” Janice added, a gleam of defiance in her eyes. “My last name isn’t Edwards anymore.”

“What are you implying?” Connor’s brows knitted together in confusion and annoyance, as Lowell’s face mirrored his frustration.

“Have you forgotten that? Let me jog your memory,” Janice declared, her laughter ringing with an undeniable air of confidence. “I am Janice Green. Got it?”

“How presumptuous! You’re nothing but a pathetic woman we discarded!” Lowell scoffed contemptuously.

Janice simply shrugged, her indifference palpable. “My affairs are not your concern. You’d do well to concentrate on the upcoming bidding conference.”

She gave Lowell a piercing look, her voice laced with scorn. “Forest Corp expects nothing but excellence from its partners. If your bid falls short, don’t bother disgracing yourself by bringing it forward.”

“I dare you to repeat that!” Lowell barked, fury overtaking him as he made a move to seize Janice by the collar.

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But just then, a serene voice halted him in his tracks. “Are you really about to assault my wife?”

Connor and Lowell wheeled around, stunned to see Aiden positioned in a wheelchair. Both wore expressions of confusion. “Mr. Green, what brings you here?”

They had been informed that the Green family would not partake in this bidding, making Aiden’s presence all the more startling.

Aiden was wheeled over by Braylen to where Janice stood, and she smoothly assumed Braylen’s previous spot behind Aiden. Aiden looked over at Janice, his gaze brimming with warmth. If Janice were unaware their marriage was a facade, she might have mistaken it for genuine affection.

“My wife has some free time lately, so I thought it’d be fun to let her join in,” Aiden remarked casually.

“Fun?” Connor’s brows knitted together. “What exactly do you mean by that?”

“You know exactly what I mean—it’s about the bidding event coming up,” Aiden responded, a smirk playing on his lips. This revelation made Connor’s and Lowell’s hearts plummet.

They were taken aback by Aiden’s cavalier attitude towards such a pivotal event—he seemed to be taking it lightly just for Janice’s amusement.

“Mr. Green, are you kidding me?” Connor asked with a frown. “You do realize that Forest Corp holds as much sway as our four prominent families. Are you truly prepared to risk our relationship with them over a woman?”

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Aiden simply shook his head, his demeanor calm and unfazed. "If it's something my wife wishes to pursue, then I'll support her without reservation."

Connor found himself speechless, momentarily at a loss.

The Green family's power was a force to be reckoned with, and although Janice might not grasp the full importance of the project, the array of experts at the Green family's disposal certainly did. Their involvement would pose a significant threat to Edwards Group, presenting them with a formidable rival.

"Mr. Edwards, let me assure you of one thing—Green Group will not be stepping into the competition directly," Aiden continued.

Connor's confusion deepened. "What are you implying? If Green Group isn't directly involved, are you suggesting that Janice will take the reins herself?"

"Precisely! This time, my wife has prepared the bidding proposal."

Upon learning that Janice had crafted the proposal, a wave of relief washed over Connor. He had been skeptical, unable to fathom that someone who merely vied with Delilah for attention could actually deliver a competent bid. Yet, Lowell seemed visibly perturbed.

“It’s getting late, Janice. Let’s make our way to the conference room,” Aiden suggested, his voice carrying a sense of urgency.

“Sure,” Janice responded, her hands on the handles of the wheelchair as she guided it towards the elevator.

Connor’s gaze followed them, his expression growing more troubled. “To think that ungrateful brat has garnered so much of Aiden’s trust—it’s more than I anticipated. But...”

“Let’s not forget, Aiden’s confidence is only buoyed by his grandfather’s will. Soon enough, he might find himself vulnerable and unable to even fend for himself.”

Alcott was a man driven by practicality, not sentiment. The thought of entrusting the Green family’s legacy to someone confined to a wheelchair was intolerable. That was why he wasted no time pulling his illegitimate son back into the family. Alcott was probably biding his time, waiting for the right moment to transfer the shares to his illegitimate son. When that happened, Aiden would be reduced to a mere figurehead.

“Snap out of it, Lowell! What’s on your mind?” Connor pressed, casting a glance at Lowell, who seemed lost in his own world. He gave Lowell’s shoulder a light tap to snap him back to reality.

“Just a bit on edge,” Lowell admitted, offering a strained smile that didn’t quite reach his eyes. “It’s just the thought of competing with so many strong contenders later.”

“Don’t worry,” Connor encouraged him, giving Lowell’s shoulder another reassuring pat. “Your previous proposals were nothing short of brilliant, winning us many crucial projects. I know you’ve got this—Forest Corp will be a done deal soon.”

“Thanks for believing in me, Dad.” Lowell managed to muster a facade of confidence, yet beneath it, doubt gnawed at him. He couldn’t shake the feeling that his meticulously crafted proposal, the product of endless sleepless nights, was somehow incomplete. But what was it missing?

Meanwhile, the conference room at the Bengal Hotel buzzed with subdued anticipation. Most attendees kept to themselves, their expressions serious and contemplative, respecting the secrecy demanded by the occasion.

Janice and Aiden sat off to the side, blending in yet somehow still drawing occasional sidelong looks. Word had spread earlier that Green Group wouldn’t be part of the bidding, so Janice and Aiden’s unexpected arrival left everyone stunned. Those who had felt secure now started to doubt themselves.

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With Green Group's unmatched strength, was there really anyone who could rival them for a project they wanted? Oddly enough, Aiden came in person, bringing along a woman, and their closeness was evident to anyone watching.

"Hey, Connor, isn't that woman next to Mr. Green looking a lot like your daughter who came back recently?" Greg Dury, sitting next to Connor, leaned in with a hint of curiosity, sparking the conversation just as the host was about to make his entrance.

Connor's brow furrowed, his response laced with a cold edge. "Perhaps you're mistaken. My daughter wouldn't attend such an affair."

“Wait, hold on!” Greg’s expression shifted into a frown, his mind racing. “Isn’t there a marital connection between the Edwards and Green families? That would make her Mr. Green’s wife, then.”

“Greg, you might be letting your eyes deceive you,” Connor replied, a trace of annoyance creeping into his voice as he slid a bottle of water toward Greg. “Better focus on the bidding event ahead.”

Greg raised an eyebrow, a slow grin replacing his earlier confusion. “Indeed, the event boils down to the allure of our proposals, doesn’t it? But with your brilliant son here, the odds are heavily in favor of Edwards Group securing the win.”

Nearby, Lowell forced a strained smile, his usual confidence wavering amidst the competitive tension that filled the room.

Realizing Connor wasn’t in the mood for further conversation, Greg retreated into his own thoughts, settling back quietly in his seat.

He had already deduced that the woman beside Aiden was Connor’s long-lost daughter, who had recently returned. A faint tension hung between father and daughter, hinting at some unresolved conflict.

Moreover, whispers of fierce familial disputes within the Edwards family had been circulating, possibly involving these two.

Suddenly, the grand doors of the conference hall burst open. A man clad in a crisply tailored suit, exuding an air of authority, strode in, flanked by a group of stern-faced bodyguards dressed in black.

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His presence commanded an immediate silence across the room. He positioned himself at the head of the table, sweeping his gaze over the gathered attendees with a formidable expression.

His eyes lingered on Aiden for a moment longer than the rest, a silent acknowledgment of his presence, before he casually moved on.

“Ladies and gentlemen, good day. I am Colson Navarro, representing Forest Corp. Today, we seek to forge a partnership through this bidding event.”

After a strategic pause, he cut to the chase. “I’ll keep this brief. Let’s proceed.”

He nodded to his assistant, who promptly stepped forward and addressed the assembly. “Please prepare to present your proposals.”

People handed in their proposals, marking the beginning of what promised to be an agonizing wait.

Reviewing the proposals was a quick task, yet the anticipation stretched time painfully thin for those involved.

Janice appeared unbothered by the suspense. With her proposal already submitted, she turned to engage in light conversation with Aiden.

“Are you acquainted with the representative from Forest Corp?” Janice murmured, leaning in close to ensure her words were for Aiden’s ears alone.

Aiden’s response was a subtle squint, a shiver running through him as her breath tickled his ear, making his voice slightly husky.

“Why do you ask?”

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“He seemed to linger over you a bit too long just now.”

With a quirk of his eyebrow, Aiden responded with a touch of humor, “Perhaps my charm was just too much for him to ignore.”

Janice gave a playful eye roll and shot back, “It seems you’re not only clever but quite the narcissist as well.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” he teased back, their playful exchange feeling like an intimate dance only they understood.

Connor and Lowell, who were watching this exchange from a distance, felt a mix of suffocation and annoyance.

As they tensed over the pending results, Janice and Aiden didn’t take the bidding seriously at all.

“Dad, I think we might be worrying too much,” Lowell said, managing a strained smile. “Sure, Green Group holds some sway, but it’s obvious Aiden isn’t interested in the project. He’s merely playing along with whatever Janice wants. Janice can barely compete for attention with Delilah. How could she ever pull off something as demanding as a bid proposal?”

Lowell’s words seemed to offer Connor some reassurance, yet they felt more like an attempt to convince himself. He was reluctant to acknowledge that his past proposals could be in any way tied to Janice’s efforts.

“That’s true,” Connor agreed with a nod. “There’s no need for undue concern. Considering what we’ve seen so far, as long as Green Group stays on the sidelines, securing this project should be a sure thing. You’ve poured your heart into this proposal, staying up all night. It’s bound to succeed.”

Lowell’s smile twisted wryly, the optimism failing to reach his eyes. Though he had indeed labored into the early hours, his faith in the proposal’s success had dwindled.

Just then, there was a stir among the representatives from Forest Corp.

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Colson, with a set of bid proposals in hand, let out a weary sigh and furrowed his brow. “I’ve gone through all your submissions. Many are passable, a few are impressive, but a couple are disappointingly inadequate.”

His words cut through the calm, sending a ripple of tension across the room.

Impressive and disappointingly inadequate? What could that possibly mean? Was it possible that amidst a pile of proposals, some shone brightly while others were complete letdowns? Yet, considering the seasoned veterans in the room, it seemed unlikely that any proposal would be outright disastrous, right?

Colson's eyes swept over the gathered crowd before he pulled out two distinct proposals. "These two made quite the impression on me. Any guesses on which companies they represent?"

A wave of confusion rippled through the room. No one could venture a guess.

The proposals, after all, bore a striking similarity in style.

Without a peek at the signatures, they were indistinguishable. But then, Lowell caught something—a subtle crease, nearly imperceptible unless scrutinized closely.

Was it possible that his proposal had captured Colson's attention with this subtle mark? The one next to it had to be Janice's. Only a foolish rookie like her could come up with something so pathetic.

A smirk of derision spread across Lowell's face as he looked over at Janice.

Perhaps he was reading too much into it. After all, Janice couldn't possibly put together anything remarkable. Her frequent involvement had probably left his memories all tangled up. Indeed, all prior proposals had been his own creation.

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At this moment, Colson set Lowell's proposal on the table, tapping it lightly with a hint of disapproval etching his brow deeply. "This has to be one of the most disgraceful proposals I've ever encountered."

“What?” Lowell’s voice cracked, surprise and disbelief mingling in his outburst.

Heads turned in his direction, and in that moment, the authorship of the proposal seemed irrevocably tied to Edwards Group.

“So, Mr. Edwards, are you outright labeling Forest Corp as insignificant?” Colson’s sneer was cold and pointed, his eyes cutting sharply through the room. “Presenting such a mediocre proposal here is utterly disrespectful of our time.”

“Mr. Navarro, there’s clearly been a misunderstanding,” Connor interjected hastily, his face flushed with confusion. “Our proposals have always received accolades for their excellence!”

Colson simply shook his head, his patience evidently worn thin, and signaled his assistant with a glance.

The assistant promptly lifted the document and circulated it among the other CEOs and delegates for scrutiny.

“What is this? It’s utterly unprofessional!”

“Absolutely! This bid proposal is a mess—so many errors, and even the pricing is ridiculous. How could they dare submit this for consideration?”

“Seriously? I used to think Edwards Group was a serious contender.”

The crowd scrutinized the bid proposal, their faces twisted in disapproval.

They had once viewed Edwards Group as a strong competitor. However, this proposal diminished all such perceptions, rendering it unworthy of any rivalry.

At that moment, the document found its way into Greg’s hands. He skimmed through it briefly and let out a sardonic laugh. “You can’t be serious, Mr. Edwards. Was this mess drafted by an intern? If you weren’t serious about the project, you could’ve spared us all the trouble and said so. Wasting our time like this is pathetic.”

“What are you implying, Mr. Dury? This proposal was personally crafted by my son. Are you suggesting it’s the work of some ghostwriting intern?” Connor’s voice was steeped in anger, yet a pang of doubt gnawed at him internally.

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Beside him, Lowell kept his head down, his cheeks burning as he evaded the critical eyes that surrounded them.

What went wrong?

How could his meticulously prepared proposal be dismissed as worse than an intern's work?

"Mr. Edwards, I suggest you take a look for yourself." Greg extended the proposal towards him.

Connor accepted the bid proposal, casting a brief glance over the document. His expression darkened rapidly, his cheeks flushing a deep crimson with rage.

With a sharp flick of his wrist, he flung the proposal at Lowell. "You actually wasted an entire night on this mess? Unbelievable."

"Dad, what seems to be the issue with it?" Lowell, looking perplexed, stooped to retrieve the pages scattered at his feet. He scrutinized the document, convinced it mirrored his usual thorough work.

"Really, I should have reviewed it myself beforehand. I placed too much trust in you, and now, it's made me look like a fool." Fury surged within Connor, his chest tightening.

Painfully, Lowell's previous submissions had set a high bar. However, this latest effort was rife with errors—a glaring difference.

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It was so flawed that the critical pricing section was miscalculated, with errors not even an intern would typically make.

“Well, Janice Green’s proposal is simply stunning.” At this moment, Colson picked up another bid proposal.

The assistant circulated this new proposal among the attendees.

Janice, eyebrows knitting together, sensed something off about Colson’s timing.

He had chosen to highlight the disparity between the two proposals, aiming to cast a shadow over Connor and Lowell in front of their colleagues.

Janice lightly tapped her chin, her eyes thoughtfully scanning Colson. She was surprised that he would take such a step, seemingly without a solid reason.

However, the unfolding events hinted at him defending her.

“Aiden...”

“Hmm?” Aiden’s head lifted, his gaze locking with Janice’s clear, inquisitive eyes.

His slightly bewildered look caught Janice off guard. “Were you nodding off just now?”

He shrugged nonchalantly, massaging his temples. “I usually skip these meetings. They’re utterly pointless to me. But today, I came specifically to support you.”

Janice’s lips quirked into a smile. “Then, I owe you my thanks.” Her train of thought derailed by Aiden’s words, Janice momentarily forgot her initial query. Once her proposal was on display, it elicited gasps of admiration from around the room.

“This proposal is remarkably thorough and precise!”

“It’s no surprise Mr. Navarro holds it in such high regard. Next to yours, mine looks like trash.”

“Mr. Green, your wife is truly exceptional.”

The room filled with eager flattery directed at Aiden, though he remained coolly detached, as if such praise was mere routine. Forced smiles plastered their faces as they nodded in agreement.

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Soon, the document made its way to Connor.

When Connor laid eyes on the bid proposal, his expression visibly changed. The style and mastery over the data had an eerily familiar ring to it, mirroring the way Lowell had always crafted his proposals.

He turned to Lowell, his face etched with bewilderment. Lowell, catching his puzzled look, reached out to snatch the document.

“How can this be? This is my bid proposal.”

Well, not exactly.

The caliber of this proposal mirrored the high standard he once consistently achieved.

Doubts crept into Lowell’s mind, questioning the authenticity of his previous work.

In that instant, the image of Janice grew vivid in his thoughts. He pictured her stealthily using his computer, refining his proposals while he took his breaks.

With his eyes widening in shock, Lowell stared at Janice. Could it really be her? Had she been the secret architect of his success all this time, meticulously enhancing his proposals without his knowledge?

“Everyone, the outcome seems quite clear,” Colson announced, tapping on the desk with measured calm. “This time, the contract goes to Green Group. We will soon commence detailed negotiations concerning the development of the western suburbs with them.”

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The words struck Lowell with the force of a blow.

“Lowell, you owe me an explanation,” Connor demanded, his voice tinged with rage. “What on earth is happening here?” Lowell’s mind whirled in disarray, disbelief etching his features. The thought that all his previous successful proposals had involved Janice’s assistance was a jarring revelation. Was he truly being overshadowed by Janice, the same person he had dismissed as a complete failure?

“It’s Janice!” he blurted out, his eyes burning with animosity as he clenched his teeth. “She stole my bid proposal.”

“What?”

The room gasped in collective astonishment.

Their eyes pivoted to Janice, wide with disbelief.

“Dad, my bid was ready well in advance. However, the very day Janice was ostracized from the Edwards family, it mysteriously vanished from my computer,” Lowell continued, his expression grim as he pointed accusingly at Janice. “I thought she was incapable of betrayal, so I attributed it to a cyber-attack by one of our...”

Competitors. But after reviewing Janice’s proposal today, I’m convinced she sabotaged mine and passed it off as her own.”

This bold accusation left everyone in the room speechless, their minds reeling from the implications.

Connor was taken aback for a brief moment before his response surged forth. “Now it makes sense why Janice’s proposal seemed familiar—she took it straight from yours!”

“Exactly! I poured my soul into that, working late into the night,” Lowell replied, his face contorted with distress. “How am I supposed to deliver top-quality work when I’m hit with such treachery?”

Suddenly, Connor struck the desk, rising to his feet. “Janice, you ungrateful brat, how could you steal your own brother’s project proposal! Now, make it right—apologize to Mr. Navarro this instant!”

Across the room, Janice and Aiden exchanged knowing looks, familiar with the tactic of shifting blame, though they had never witnessed it executed with such audacity.

“If you’ve lost your mind, do us all a favor and see a doctor instead of embarrassing yourself here,” Janice retorted, her voice dripping with exasperation.

“Janice, how can you still not admit it?” Connor demanded, his voice a mix of incredulity and anger.

“What exactly should I be admitting to?” Janice responded, her tone steady as she shook her head. “You screwed up the bidding, and now you resort to slander, accusing me of stealing your proposal?”

She paused, a scornful smirk playing on her lips, then tapped the desk emphatically with her index finger. “Why don’t you ask everyone present what they believe?”

The gathering was visibly perplexed by the unfolding scene. It was clear to anyone with a shred of sense that Lowell’s account was fraught with contradictions.

Greg let out a weary sigh, shooting a glance at Connor, his expression one of disbelief. “Mr. Edwards, I urge you to take a moment to reflect on your son’s words. Consider the implications for your esteemed reputation.”

“What exactly are you trying to say, Mr. Dury?” Connor’s brow furrowed in confusion.

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