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As soon as Vanessa made herself clear, she beckoned the assistants behind her over and instructed, "Please go get Nancy over and get the rest of the team ready. We're going to doll Nancy up for the shoot."

The team of stylists and makeup artists was put in a tight spot. One of them said, "Vanessa, our supervisors have instructed us to get Ms. Stovall ready for the shoot. I'm afraid the shoot will be delayed if we start all over from scratch."

"Are you trying to say we're wasting your time? Is it really that tough to get everything ready from scratch? Do you really think this substitute over here qualifies to be involved in such an exclusive promotional clip?" Vanessa looked at me with a scornful look.

Sneering, she said, "Does she really think she's a match for Nancy in terms of look just because she resembles her? Has she no shame at all?"

The middle-aged woman started picking on me.

"Vanessa, since when have you become such a vicious woman? Who are you calling a shameless woman?" Stacey, who had rushed into the dressing room, patted me on my back and asked, "Are you okay?"

I shook my head because it wasn't a big deal. I had long gotten used to this kind of situation since four years ago.

Vanessa sneered when Stacey showed up. "Ms. Holmes, why is the person in charge of the Marketing Department interfering with the affairs of the Publicity Department?"

"What about you, Vanessa? Who gives you the right to poke your nose into the internal affair of Fuller Corporation? At the end of the day, I'm a staff, but what about you? According to Mr. Fuller, you're merely Nancy's manager, aren't you? In other words, you're not really affiliated with Fuller Corporation."

"Y-You—" Infuriated, Vanessa started panting heavily. "Are you calling off the collaboration with Nancy? I guess this necessitates a session with Mr. Fuller to figure out if Nancy is a member of Fuller Corporation or not!"

She seemed to have misperceived Stacey's words. Nonetheless, Stacey couldn't be bothered by Vanessa anymore. She instructed the photographers, "Since everything's ready, I want everyone to start with the shoot! Please ensure that there isn't any non-relevant personnel in the studio!"

Vanessa had never gone through such humiliation. When she was about to lose her cool, Nancy showed up and entered the dressing room.

She had put on a white tulle dress with her long hair cascading down her shoulders. Her already miniature face seemed even more delicate.

It was the third time we encountered one another. Upon a simple glance, she was startled by my presence.

Vanessa got ahead of Nancy and instructed, "Nancy, since you're here, let's get you ready for the shoot!"

Nancy ignored Vanessa's instruction and looked me in the eyes, asking in a callous tone, "Ms. Stovall?"

I nodded and replied with a faint smile, "Hello, Nancy."

She sized me up and had her eyes glued to my face. Frowning, she raised her volume and asked, "Since when have you been chosen to take over my role?"

Stacey rebutted, "Ms. Goldstein, didn't you say that you couldn't make it because you're sick?"

"So what about it? Are you trying to tell me you can always get another person from the streets to replace me?" Nancy countered.

Vanessa played along with Nancy and grumbled, "Do you really think a random woman can take over Nancy's role? She merely resembles Nancy, but she's nothing close! She should know her place and get lost already!"

"If you can't mind your words, please get out of the studio at once!" Stacey couldn't suppress her wrath anymore. "I'm sorry, but we're not looking for a nitpicking model to represent the company! We're searching for an ambassador who can carry herself in an elegant and humble manner!"

“Who are you calling a nitpicking model?” Vanessa had enough of beating around the bush. She yelled at Stacey, “You’re merely a manager from the Marketing Department! Do you really think you’re able to make the call? If Nancy wants you to get lost, do you think you’re able to keep your job?”

Stacey almost burst into laughter. “Ha! Since when has Nancy become the person in charge of Fuller Corporation? Why have I not been made aware of the change?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Nancy has been by Mr. Fuller’s side over the years! How dare you get so full of yourself in front of us?” Vanessa insinuated the sort of relationship Nancy had with Ashton was beyond their expectation.

Although the onlookers weren’t particularly fond of Nancy, they dared not pick on her after Vanessa indicated the former was related to Ashton.

Stacey, being the strong and stubborn woman that she was, had no intention to give up just yet. She found Vanessa’s words hilarious and scowled at Nancy. “Vanessa is not aware of the relationship you have with Mr. Fuller, but what about you, Ms. Goldstein?”

“Y-You—”

Stacey sneered and announced, “Haven’t you undergone plastic surgery based on another woman’s look? I’m sure Mr. Fuller has gotten sick of you after spending his time with a doppelganger over the years! Besides, I doubt you even know who you are anymore after mimicking a person so hard over the years.”

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Stacey’s remark was a vital blow for a celebrity in showbiz. On top of that, she exposed the fact that Nancy had undergone plastic surgery in front of others.

If there were any paparazzo nearby, the news would definitely make it to the headline within several hours.

I did, however, noticed the similarities between Rebecca and Nancy when I heard Stacey’s remarks. Both of them seemed to enjoy putting on monochromous dresses. If I hadn’t run into her before, I would have mistaken Nancy for Rebecca.

“What sort of nonsense are you spouting?” Enraged, Vanessa pounced on Stacey and pinned the latter to the ground. “Stacey, don’t you dare abuse your authority as Fuller’s Corporation staff! I can file for defamation against you!”

I rushed over and helped Stacey up. She tapped on my hand and assured me, “It’s fine! It’s nothing big!”

After she brought herself up, she glared at Vanessa and smirked. “Are you infuriated because I touched on your nerves?”

“Y-You—”

Vanessa could barely keep her composure. She rushed over and pushed me aside before slapping Stacey in the face.

I didn’t expect the middle-aged woman would go berserk out of the blue. As a result, I staggered and fell, knocking my arms on the edge of the dressing table.

An intense fight broke out between Stacey and Vanessa. The onlookers dared not interfere and simply shouted in an attempt to stop them. “Stop it!”

Unfortunately, their yells were of little to no effect at all.

Nancy crossed her arms and stared at me with a deadpan expression all the while Stacey was being beaten to a pulp.

Stacey, who had long hair and a pair of heels on, was an easy target.

When I saw Vanessa started scratching at Stacey’s face, I sprinted over to stop the former’s brutality. Vanessa pushed Stacey aside, aiming at me the moment I reached her. She seemed to be anticipating me all along.

Because I was not prepared, I couldn’t defend myself against her slap when I reached her. Hence, I braced myself through the impactful slap.

For a few seconds, my ears were ringing and I could feel the racking sensation from my swollen cheek.

Yelling, Stacey threw everything she could get her hands on from the dressing table in Vanessa's direction. "Have you lost your mind? How dare you slap her?"

Initially, the spot that I was standing at made sure I won't get caught in the line of fire. However, someone pushed me over to take the blow on Vanessa's behalf.

Stacey gaped in silence and looked at Nancy in disbelief. "You despicable woman! How could you push her?"

Nancy jeered and asked, "She's merely a substitute of mine, isn't it? Is it worth making a fuss because of her?"

Joseph rushed into the dressing room when Stacey was about to go berserk.

He brought everyone to a halt and gaped in silence when he saw my pathetic state. "W-What's going on?"

Stacey stepped forward and complained, "Nancy and her manager are causing a ruckus! I asked Scarlett to help me with the production of the promotional clip, but they started a fight because they were against it!"

She made it sound as though the other party was the one at fault.

Joseph was on pins and needles when he saw my pathetic state. He glared at Nancy and announced, "Ms. Goldstein, I don't think it's necessary to have you in the showbiz anymore since you can't even get the job done."

He was Ashton's assistant. In other words, to a certain extent, his instructions could be Ashton's instructions.

Nancy paled upon hearing that. She looked at Joseph and asked, "Mr. Campbell, don't you think you should listen to the other party's story as well?"

"That won't be necessary!" Joseph wasn't the one who answered the question. The voice belonged to Ashton who had just made his way in.

He approached me and had his eyes narrowed into a slit when he ran his fingers across my swollen cheek.

Shooting daggers at the rest in the room, his tone was icy when he asked, "Who's the one behind this?"

"Ashton!" Nancy was thrilled by the man's presence.

He ignored her and peered into my eyes. "Who did this to you?"

The crowd fell silent as they exchanged glances, speculating about the sort of relationship we had.

Stacey, whose hair was completely messed up, glared at Nancy and said, "It's Ms. Goldstein's manager, Vanessa! I believe Scarlett is injured elsewhere as well!"

It was evident that Stacey was trying to get the better of the vicious duo. I pursed my lips in silence.

Ashton frowned and had his eyes glued to me. He uttered in a hoarse voice, "Are you hurt anywhere else?"

I shook my head and flashed him a faint smile. "I'm fine. Have you sorted out the emergency?"

By now, the room was so silent to the extent I could hear others breathing. Some were surprised, some were thrilled, but most were confused.

Ashton had no intention to let them off the hook just yet. He caressed my swollen cheek and glared at the rest.

"Who's the fool that dares lay a finger on the woman I have been looking after with utmost care?" As he spoke, he emanated a strong murderous intent.

Nancy's knees turned to jelly. She took a few steps back as all the colors drained from her already pale face.

Similarly, Vanessa also noticed something was wrong. Her face paled and she stared at Nancy with a confused look, wondering how Ashton was associated with me.

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I knew Ashton was infuriated, but this was ultimately still his company. There was no need to make a ruckus here. Besides, knowing his personality, Nancy's showbiz career was probably over.

"I'm fine, it's just a small injury. Speaking of which, what shall we eat?"

He took a few moments to compose himself. While holding my hands, Ashton proclaimed reassuringly, "You're my woman. You don't need to give in to anyone."

His obsidian eyes bored into Vanessa menacingly. "It's basic courtesy to return one a favor."

Upon hearing his words, she collapsed to the ground, begging repeatedly. Her voice quivered. "Mr. Fuller, I know my mistake! I didn't do it on purpose, I'll apologize to her! I beg you, please let us off this time."

Her words fell on deaf ears. With his unchanging look, he continued, "Can an apology resurrect the dead?"

Vanessa knew there was no getting through to him. She wiped off her tears and turned towards me. "Ms. Stovall, I didn't mean to hurt you! Hit me back all you want. But just this once! Please convince Mr. Fuller to let Nancy off the hook."

Ashton remained unresponsive. He turned towards me, his expression softened. "Will your palms be ok?"

He took my hands in his as he spoke, gesturing for me to open up my palms. Then he looked right at Vanessa.

Taking it as her queue to come in, she stood up and stopped right in front of me.

Slap! It happened in a flash. Before my brain could process anything, Vanessa was already bleeding from the corners of her lips. Although Ashton had led my hands, I had almost no part in this. The brute force came entirely from him.

It did nothing to reduce his rage. The air remained stale and grim.

He glared at Vanessa, voice cold, "Don't let me see you ever again."

Next, he stared at Nancy. Although he said nothing, it was enough to convey his hatred towards her.

With my hands still in his, Ashton reminded, "Next time, don't show any mercy. There's nothing to feel bad about." Just then, he remembered the other two present in the studio. Stacey and Joseph's failure to protect me had earned them a resentful stare.

I knew Ashton was worried for me, but he shouldn't blame them for my grievance.

Now that the score was even, I tugged on Ashton's elbow and asked, "Are you done with work? My stomach's growling."

He chuckled lightly before giving a light tap on my nose. He had no qualms about showering me with affection in front of a crowd. "All right. Let's go grab something delicious."

Ashton led the way out of the studio. Once outside, I let out a sigh. Looks like Fuller Corporation will go into a frenzy.

The prediction was realized sooner than expected. Behind me, there were loud murmurs. "Who is this woman?"

"So who exactly is the replacement here?"

Only after we got in the car, then there was finally some respite. I turned over and asked, "Do I really look like Nancy?"

He smiled as his fingers trailed down my cheeks. "No. She's not worthy to be compared to you. You're way better than her."

Upon hearing his words, I pursed my lips in embarrassment. Did he become gentler? The truth was, Ashton had not. He had only gotten more ruthless over the past four years. What made the difference was, he was now good at concealing his emotions. The only ounce of warmth he had left was all reserved for me.

Back at the villa, Summer was having fun with a furry little dog.

I was surprised to see her here. I turned and asked, "Were you the one who brought her here?"

Ashton nodded. "Once everything is settled, we'll return to K City. I've already chosen the school Summer would be attending. Meanwhile, let her enjoy herself first."

Noticing our arrival, Summer ran excitedly towards me with expectant eyes. "Mommy, can we keep it?" She pointed at the brown fluffy dog behind her. It looked to be approximately three months old.

I reflexively frowned at her request. Just as I was about to say no, Ashton interjected. "When we're busy, this little buddy here will make a good companion for Summer."

I did notice. Back in R Province, with Michael by her side, she had been an unstoppable chatterbox. But ever since our return, Summer had mellowed down considerably.

I could not blame her. It was a new environment, and she had no friends. I guess a dog will make a good companion for her.

I caved.

Back inside the villa, dinner was being prepared. Due to Mrs. Eriksen's old age, she had retired. Ashton found a new housekeeper to replace her duties.

She was a woman in her mid-forties. Her name was Susan Madden.

While waiting for dinner, Joseph had arrived at the villa. He was greeted by Ashton, who was sitting placidly in the living room.

He mustered up his courage and said, "Mr. Fuller, what happened just now was due to my negligence. What shall we do with Nancy?"

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Ashton continued tapping away at his phone, his demeanor languid. "She's no longer carrying herself the way a celebrity should. Four years of being in the limelight is enough. It's time to make way for the new generation."

"I understand. What about her mother, Vanessa?"

"You make the call. Also, find another celebrity to replace Nancy. This time around, get someone decent."

Joseph nodded. He gave me a quick look before leaving.

Back in the living room, Summer was chatting happily away with her dog, Snowfluff. It was indeed a wonderful companion for her.

Meanwhile, I tried placating Ashton about the incident earlier on. "There's really no need to go this far on Nancy!"

He responded with an enigmatic smile. He proceeded to blow on the hard-boiled egg Susan had cooked before gently placing it on my bruise; this helped ease blood circulation.

It was not as serious as Ashton had made it out to be. The marks were barely visible now.

"She needs to learn her place. There are some people in this world she can't afford to offend," he said indifferently.

Before I could respond, Ashton noticed Susan had finished preparing dinner. He took my hand, carried Summer in one arm and led the way into the dining room.

Soon, the weekend arrived. Ashton had booked an early flight for us to return to K City. Summer was still fast asleep in his arms.

It was only in the waiting area that Summer had woken up. She noticed beside her, there was a kid approximately seven or eight months old being cradled in by his mom.

The vivacious child was moving about spiritedly. When he saw the donut plush Summer was holding, he reached out his tiny set of hands. Conflicted, she looked at her precious donut, and then at the kid's expectant pair of eyes.

After some moments of deliberation, she walked towards the child's mom. "Miss, can he play with this?" Summer gestured at her plushy.

The woman understood her grand gesture and nodded appreciatively.

Seeing her donut given away, Summer surpassed the sad longing that was welling up within her. She ran back to Ashton and me before asking, "Mommy, will you give me a brother in the future?"

Clearly, Summer did not understand the complexities of her words. Ashton chuckled before pulling her into his arms. "Not so fast, brat. Your mommy is going to give me a child."

It was amusing to see him take her seriously.

Summer pursed her lips, looking serious. "Then, will you marry Mommy?"

"Of course!" Ashton proclaimed. His gentle gaze looking right at me.

Feeling satisfied with his response, Summer asked chirpily, "Mommy, once you're married to Mr. Fuller, will I have a daddy? Will I also have a brother too?"

I could only answer with a helpless smile. Noticing the clock, I stood up. "It's time for boarding. Let's go."

Summer felt unsatisfied with my answer, but just like a child of her age, she was quick to forget.

Fast forward in the cabin, Summer had fallen sound asleep. Ashton chose this time to pick up where they left off earlier. "How about we get married in October?"

That's next month!

This was happening all too fast for me. "Ashton, let's just take things slow."

Compared to marriage, Summer's future was my priority once we returned to K City.

Despite my rejection, he replied patiently, "Ok. I'll wait until you're ready."

I slept throughout our four-hour flight.

Upon touchdown, Ashton received a work call. As the chairperson of a listed company, it was natural for him to be busy.

He glanced at his watch before saying, "I'll get the chauffeur to send you and Summer back to the villa first. I'll be back in time for lunch."

"What time will that be?"

"Half-past twelve." With that, he gave a light peck on my forehead before sending us off.

Approximately forty minutes later, Summer and I arrived at the villa. Ashton had been living here for the past four years, and even the housekeeper had changed.

The chauffeur carried our belongings in and gave the housekeeper a few instructions before he bade farewell.

After a tiring flight, Summer was sound asleep on the sofa. I was fiddling with my phone, getting bored with reading the same old news on the internet.

Unexpectedly, I chanced upon a headline mentioning both Fuller and White Corporation. Both companies had been engaged in a long-standing rivalry with each other for the past four years. Neither side seemed to be giving in.

In fact, rather than it being a rivalry between corporations, many would see it as a personal competition between Ashton and Marcus.

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Both men had a brilliant mind for doing business.

There was a question lingering at the back of my mind. White Corporation had always been under Sally's control. When did Marcus come into the picture? What exactly happened in these four years?

As I was lost in my thoughts, time flew by. It was soon after noon. Summer had just woken up. In a half-asleep state, she asked, "Mommy, is Mr. Fuller busy with work?"

"He'll be back soon. Let's freshen you up and wait for him together."

It was pretty obvious she had taken a liking to him. Whenever he was not around, she would ask for his whereabouts.

Yet, I couldn't help but worry about the possibility of Jared taking Summer back to the Crest family. If that day ever comes, what should I do?

After Summer had freshened up, she was in high spirits. As this was her first time here, she started exploring parts of the house. First, it was the living room, then she proceeded to the yard.

Meanwhile, I sat in the yard patiently for Ashton to arrive home. Joseph had carried Snowfluff over to Summer.

He continued standing, looking anxiously at his watch.

I assumed he had something to say to me. "What's wrong?"

"Erm... Mr. Fuller might be running a little late. There is traffic."

Oh right. It was two minutes before the agreed time. Understanding the likelihood of Joseph's words coming true, I unknowingly stopped smiling.

Immediately after, there was the sound of hurried footsteps approaching the yard. Next, a voice started, "There was a traffic jam, but nothing I can't handle!"

Ashton walked right up to me. There was a sheen of sweat on his forehead; he had rushed home. His pair of obsidian eyes glistening. "Made it in time, just a minute before half-past twelve!"

It was adorable to see him put in the effort to keep his promise. I reached for his forehead and started dabbing the sweat off. "There was no need for you to rush home in this hot weather. Look at you now, all sweaty."

As I spoke, Ashton removed his outerwear. With a boyish grin, he said, "Just a workout!"

"In the future, there's no need for you to rush back. It's not like I'm going anywhere. I'll always be here."

"I know. But, I just wanted to see you earlier!"

Hearing his sweet words, I broke into a smile. Summer, too, was delighted to see him. She ran over and hugged his leg. "Mr. Fuller, are you not feeling well? Why do you need to work out?"

Ashton picked her up into his arms. "My body has always been in tip-top condition." While saying that, he looked suggestively at me.

After their meal, Ashton took a bath and came back down with a file in one hand.

He handed it to Joseph. "Once Summer's school application is processed, you can start sending her to school."

Joseph took the file and was already on his way to complete his task. Nearby, Summer had heard everything. She looked at the floor and pouted sadly.

Naturally, Ashton had noticed. "Summer, do you not want to attend school?"

She started shaking her head. "It's not that I hate school, but I don't know anyone there. I'll be alone."

I knew it was daunting to be alone in a new environment. I chuckled lightly. "That's normal at first. But I believe you, my dear, will make some new friends in no time!"

She continued pouting, seemingly considering my words.

Ashton had handled Summer's school matters perfectly. There was nothing much for me to worry about.

That night, I started unpacking some clothes I bought from R Province. Although they were cheap and well-worn, they felt comfortable.

While folding halfway, Ashton, who had finished his work, walked to my side. He took the half-folded clothes from my hands. "I'll do it."

I couldn't help but notice his long and slender hands, and on his wrist was a watch that was priced in the millions. Just closing a deal with these hands would guarantee me a worry-free life for the rest of my life.

"What're you thinking?"

I kept the clothes he had folded into the closet before suggesting, "Now that Summer's school is settled, it's time for me to find a job."

Although he nodded, his words said otherwise. "I think you should rest a few more days."

"It's been two weeks. I've had plenty of rest."

"Then, how about working at Fuller Corporation?" While suggesting, he kept the rest of my clothes in the closet. He took a sweeping look and presumed they were not to my liking. He continued, "Also if you don't like these clothes, I'll get you new ones."

"There's no need. Some of these clothes were specially designed for me, they did cost quite a bit. Also, I feel comfortable wearing them now. Anymore would just be a waste of space."

Ashton had no qualms about my decision. Instead, he pulled me to the center of the bed, voice hushed and sincere, "Give it some thought. I really want you to come work for Fuller Corporation."

I knew that a straightforward rejection would not convince him. "Ashton, I don't want this to be just a job. If it was in the past, I would be more than happy to work a stable nine-to-five at Fuller Corporation. Now that I have you supporting me, I want to work on something I am passionate about."