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She had no intention to spare Corey even a second of his sorry life.

Mason's lips twitched at her bloodthirsty suggestion. He clapped a hand on her shoulder and said, "Stay still. I'll bring the men in."

"No," Janet protested, tugging on his shirt to prevent him from leaving her. She was displeased as she said, "Remember what you promised me?" We'll take him down together. She refused to let him have all the fun without her, and insisted for him to make good on his word.

The man smiled, his eyes turning into crescents as he regarded her teasingly, "I didn't peg you for the clingy type."

She blinked at his remark, then broke into a small laugh before turning to beckon her underlings over. "Fall in."

"Roger that."

Mason stepped in front of Janet, shielding her as he said, "Stay behind me."

Knowing that she had no choice but to follow him, Janet kept silent as she stood behind him. However, just as they were about to charge in, the doors to the lounge swung open.

Everyone, including Mason and Janet, turned to stare at the open doors. The air around them seemed to grow still as they held their breaths and waited for someone to step out from within. Much to their surprise, the only figure that came out from behind those doors was a staffer dressed in uniform.

False alarm. The underlings exchanged looks with one another. "Oh—it's just a false alarm."

Janet and Mason, on the other hand, were silent, though they remained wary. Just as the staffer was disappearing from view, Janet narrowed her eyes and found that there was

something off about her. "Don't you think there's something familiar about that woman?" she asked, her crisp voice breaking the silence.

Mason raised his brow, and his dark eyes became slits as he guessed, "Do you think it was Corey?"

"I do," Janet answered firmly.

"Let's go, then."

Meanwhile, Sean was stationed just outside the boarding hall, scanning every person that filed past him. He looked somber as he called out his orders to the other men, "Let me know if you see anyone suspicious."

"Understood."

Just then, a tall and broad-shouldered woman dressed in uniform was making her way up the plane. When she passed by Sean, the briefcase she was carrying accidentally scratched his thigh. Nevertheless, he shrugged it off and continued to scrutinize the other passengers.

Suddenly, a deep voice called out from behind him, "Sean, stop the plane from taking off!" He turned and was shocked to find Young Master Mason running toward him.

Meanwhile, the plane engines were roaring to life, which meant that the plane was going to take off soon.

A thought flashed in Sean's mind. The tall and broad-shouldered woman from just now... Could that... Could that have been Corey?

His eyes widened but by the time he turned back to look at the plane, he saw its wheels were already moving on the track. "Stop the plane!" he roared, but his voice was drowned out by the loud whirring of the plane engines.

When Mason and Janet finally arrived at the scene, the plane had already taken off. "F*ck!" Mason cursed and the air around him grew cold. He kicked the signboard next to him with such force that it cracked into two; it was clear that he was outraged.

Everyone held their breaths, afraid that the slightest sound from them would only infuriate the man further. Sean, on the other hand, knew that he had made a grave mistake. He

lowered his gaze and walked toward Mason with his head hung low, the self-blame thick in his voice as he said, "It was my fault, Young Master Mason. I wasn't attentive enough and I let him get away. I will gladly receive any punishment from you and Miss Jackson."

A deadly silence settled in the hall. Mason's lips were pressed into a grim line. He then barked coldly, "He was right under your nose! How could you let him slip away like that?"

Sean's head dropped even lower. He could not protest, because he did let the man slip past him when he should have followed his instincts and detained that suspiciously tall and broad-shouldered 'woman'.

A shadow passed over Mason's handsome face. "From today onward, all of you will spend half a month at the training base, and don't bother coming back if you don't complete the mission!"

Upon hearing this, Sean shuddered. In all the years he had served by Mason's side, he had never once made a mistake grave enough to be sent to the training base for half a month as punishment. Even he knew how brutal things could get at the training base.

Sean lifted his gaze, a look of disbelief on his face. Janet, on the other hand, pursed her lips and glanced at Mason as she murmured, "It wasn't entirely Sean's fault, so..."

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Mason's expression was impassive and his voice was icy as he said, "This is a rule of the Lowry Family. There are no exceptions."

Corey has gotten away. The man who had hurt Jan has gotten away.

For as long as he is still alive, he will be a ticking time bomb.

Mason couldn't forgive anybody for letting this happen and he certainly couldn't forgive himself. He had promised Janet the best life, one in which she could be without fear or worry—he said he would do everything to make this possible.

And yet, he failed miserably to bring this promise into fruition.

Meanwhile, Sean turned to look at Janet with mute despair, as though silently asking her to plead his case.

Janet shot him a meaningful look. "Give us some space. I need to have a few words with Mason."

Once again, the hall fell silent.

Sean dared not make a move. He waited for Mason to say something but the latter remained silent, his lips pressed into a hard line.

Janet reached out and gave Mason's fingers a subtle squeeze. "Get them to step down for a bit, hmm?"

Her kitten-like behavior made it hard for the man to say no, and there was no point resisting. His lips twitched and he turned his stony expression toward his men as he ordered, "Step down. We'll talk about this later."

"Understood," Sean responded, then straightened and led his men away.

Before long, Janet and Mason were the only two left behind in the hall.

His icy gaze softened as it fell on her. He then said in a resigned tone, "Babe, you know there are rules to follow in the Lowry Family. You shouldn't have asked for mercy on their behalf."

Janet raised her brows and her demeanor shifted to one of insouciance as she mused witheringly, "Oh—you mean these rules are exclusively reserved for the Lowry Family? Does that mean I'm not a part of the Lowry Family?"

The man choked and grew flustered. "No; that's not what I meant, Babe."

"So what are you trying to say?" Her eyebrows cocked once more. "If I'm not mistaken, you said that those are family rules and I'm not supposed to intervene. You've as good as told me that I'm not a part of your family."

Realizing that she was going to stubbornly hold that against him, Mason sighed inwardly and conceded, "Fine; I'll do as you say and not punish them."

I have to placate her no matter what, even if it means going against rules.

Upon hearing this, Janet smirked. "I thank you on their behalf."

Abruptly, his deep voice resonated close to her ear. "I'm sorry, Babe." He lowered his gaze and his brows drew together as he continued, clearly blaming himself for what had happened, "I let Corey get away. I couldn't get rid of him for you."

"Is that the reason why you got angry?" she asked softly as she reached out to hold his hand.

He met her gaze and nodded, humming flatly in response.

She sat down on the bench, looking decidedly unbothered. "It doesn't matter. Corey has no power outside of Markovia. Even if he got away, we can still take out the trash that's been piling up in the organization."

When the man heard this, he stiffened and looked at her in surprise. "You know about that?"

She let out a small laugh as she eyed him with amusement. "Know about what?"

"About the other organizations turning their backs on you," he answered.

"Yeah, and it's time to shake things up a bit, don't you think?"

She might have been hospitalized for a while now, but it didn't mean that news would escape her. Besides, it wasn't as though something as groundbreaking as this would not reach her ears at some point.

Mason grew grim and when he reached out to clasp his hand around hers, he said in a steel-like voice, "I'll go with you."

She considered this, then nodded. "Alright."

On the plane, Corey pulled the cursed wig off of his head and threw it on the ground.

"What's wrong, Mr. President?" the subordinate asked, wary as he approached the angry man.

Corey's lips were pressed into a hard line.

He had never been so humiliated in his entire life. He was a seven feet tall man but today, he had to disguise himself as a woman just so he could hide and slip away from the watchful gaze of a little girl. If the other leaders found out about this, he would never be able to live the shame down.

He gritted his teeth as a dark and menacing look twisted his features. "I swear I'll have my revenge on you, J'Adore."

He calmed down after what felt like a long moment, and said, "Contact Miss Rocher and tell her that I'll be dropping by to visit her personally."

It had been nearly half a month since he last saw her. He wondered if there was any progress with the virus that he had asked her to curate.

"Got it."

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After having received his orders, the subordinate backed away.

Four hours later, in Yobril, the graceful-looking woman was seated on the stool in the Fuller Corporation's medical laboratory. She assessed the man before her and asked, "Mr. Hills, are you here to check on the progress of the virus?"

The President pulled his cap lower and nodded. "Yes, how is it going?"

Melissa appeared nonchalant as she answered, "We're close to completing it, but it might take another half a month before the virus is fully engineered. On top of that, I'm not even sure how it will turn out. I can't promise that it will work."

Upon hearing that, the President clenched his fists and pressed his lips into a thin line before he coolly said, "It has to work. Keep in mind that I expect to see the final product after half a month."

"May I ask why are you in such a hurry, Mr. Hills?"

The President narrowed his eyes and chuckled dryly. "That's none of your concern, Miss Rocher."

Melissa pursed her lips and said icily, "In that case, I'm going to need a test subject within half a month, Mr. Hills."

After all, there was no way of knowing what the effects of the synthetic virus would be without first using it on a test subject.

Pleased to hear that, he did not hesitate to promise her. "Of course. I'll bring you a human subject within half a month."

"Human subject?" She stiffened at that and her eyes widened. "Are you saying that the virus is meant to be used on humans?"

The President nodded. "Of course I'm going to use it on humans. It's not as if I'm spending billions for you to engineer a virus for animals."

"No, you can't." There was a hard edge to Melissa's voice as she recoiled from him. "I'm afraid I'll have to stop all the laboratory work on this."

She could not imagine how the human body would react to the virus. The effects were far too cruel and volatile. She did not go through medical school to risk human lives.

Upon hearing her words, the President let out a cold bark of laughter. "Are you saying you're quitting, Miss Rocher?"

Melissa took a deep breath and answered in a clipped tone, "The effects of this virus are cruel and unpredictable. It would be unconscionable of me to use it on a human test subject."

He slammed his open palm against the table and roared, "You're already halfway through with the experiment! If you abandon it now, who's going to pay for the losses?"

"I will. I'll pay for the losses." She eyed him steadily, her gaze stubborn and unwavering.

She would rather bear the cost of the experiment than to allow the virus to be used on humans.

Melissa rose from her seat and turned to address the President with a stony expression. "If that concludes your business here, Mr. Hills, you may leave." With that, she gestured toward the exit.

The President glared at her menacingly in fury and gritted his teeth before sneering, "You won't just be bearing the losses if you quit the experiment. I wonder how you might fare if I were to leak the audio recording of our previous conversation."

She stiffened and turned to look at him incredulously as she demanded, "What are you talking about?"

The President closed his eyes and mused, "I happen to have recorded our previous conversation in which you agreed to conduct research on and engineer this deadly virus." Then, he opened his eyes and looked at her wickedly as he added. "Would you like to have a listen?"

The anger and panic bubbled within Melissa and her face was aghast. She clenched her jaw and cursed, "You b*stard." He actually recorded our conversation!

Her mind was racing. If he leaked the recording, everyone would know that she was a doctor who would willingly abandon her ethics to have fame and fortune. If that happened, her career in the medical world would be over.

She could not imagine how devastating the consequences would be for her.

With that in mind, she bit her lip and forced herself to regain her composure.

Meanwhile, the President continued darkly, "I don't think you'd want to end up as a disgraced and unwanted street rat, do you?"

Any amount of clarity and rationality that she may have had dwindled into nothing. Desperation seized her like an icy claw and she knew she had no choice.

Melissa closed her eyes slowly and her red lips parted before she responded, "In that case, please bring me the test subject and the antidote by the end of the month, Mr. Hills."

He nodded, taken aback by how quickly she had acceded to his demands, and replied, "That won't be a problem."

Upon having heard that, Melissa drew in a shaky breath and walked out of the laboratory.

The President watched her leave before he narrowed his eyes and let out a scoff.

After she left the laboratory, Melissa was walking down the hallway when she ran into Sheldon, who came to ask her how the research was going.

"Is something wrong?" he asked when he saw the look on her face.

She shook her head and forced out a tiny smile. "Nothing. Is there something I can help you with, Mr. Fuller?"

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"Yes." Sheldon nodded his head. "I'm here to talk to you about the project."

Acting as if her conversation with the President had never happened, Melissa replied, "Alright. Shall we head into your office then?"

"Sure."

Just as Sheldon nodded, he saw a man scurrying out from the laboratory. The man had a black cap pulled over his head and he looked secretive, as though he was trying to avoid any attention.

Sheldon frowned when he realized that there was something familiar about the man's build. He craned his neck to take another look, but the man had disappeared at the end of the hallway.

Meanwhile, following the President's lucky escape, Janet was officially discharged from the hospital.

There were still a lot of things for Mason to attend to in the Lowry Family Conglomerate and she had a lot of school work to catch up on. The both of them had no choice but to temporarily return to Sandfort City.

This time, they were joined by the likes of Henry, Lee, Lara, and the others.

Lara piped up, "Janet, have you managed to investigate where Corey has gone into hiding?"

"Ah," Janet responded. She then added nonchalantly. "He's in Yobril."

Given his identity, the President's every move was kept well under wraps and there was hardly any news of him in the city. Even if Janet and Mason were the world's foremost hackers, the only way for them to pinpoint the President's exact location was to head over to Yobril themselves.

"Perhaps Desire and I could bring a couple of men over to Yobril and start searching for him," Lara suggested.

Janet considered it and with a raise of her brows, she agreed. "That's a good idea. I still have a couple of loose ends to tie up, but after I'm done, I can track him down with you and ambush him in Yobril."

"Okay," Lara and Desire replied in unison.

Henry, on the other hand, had heard the details of the President's escape and how he had slipped past everyone at the private airport.

He wanted to laugh at the thought of the President having to wear women's clothes to escape unnoticed. As it turned out, the man was willing to do anything to survive.

He pinched the bridge of his nose and when a sudden thought came to mind, he turned to address Mason. "By the way, Young Master Lowry, remember the helicopter that was used for your search and rescue mission? I paid for it out of my own pocket and seeing as you're still alive, don't you think you should pay me back?"

When Mason heard it, he lifted his gaze and assessed Henry expressionlessly, his eyes dark and unreadable.

Janet, on the other hand, crossed her legs and laughed lightly. "Hand the invoice over to Lara. It's not as if money is a problem anyway."

Henry grinned. "I appreciate it, Janet, but seeing as you offered, I'm willing to let the matter drop."

"Oh? That's pretty generous of you!" She could not hide the surprise in her voice.

He rubbed his hands together and chuckled deviously. "I was thinking that you could sing for me in lieu of the payment."

As soon as he said that, everyone fell silent.

Mason, in particular, had a dangerous look on his face as he bridled next to Janet. He lifted his gaze once more and asked icily, "Henry, say that again."

Lee could sense the tension that was building in the atmosphere and quickly moved toward the seats at the back.

Lara and Desire, on the other hand, exchanged a nervous glance. They rose from their seats and quickly fell in step behind Lee, not wanting to be caught in the crossfire that was about to happen.

Meanwhile, Henry was so entranced by the thought of hearing Sweet Tune's melodic voice that he completely ignored the intimidating look on Mason's face.

After all, it was not as if he was asking Janet to sleep with him. He was only asking her to sing, which seemed like a reasonable suggestion. He looked up and said boldly, "She has a wonderful voice. I'm willing to excuse all debts if she could just perform a song for me."

Janet raised her brow, looking amused. "The helicopter must have cost you millions."

Henry nodded earnestly. "That's right. About thirty million."

"Thirty million," she repeated as a smile tugged at the corners of her pink lips before she quipped. "Thirty million for a song. I think it's a bargain."

Mason loosened his tie, his lips pressed into a grim line.

"Well, of course. A-list celebrities are paid the same amount to star in a movie, but all you have to do is sing a song. It's a bargain indeed."

Janet hummed in response. "Then, we'll head over to your company when we get back and make a studio recording."

Meanwhile, the air stewardess pushed the trolley down the aisle.

Mason reached out to grab a drink and without even looking to see what it was, he tilted his head backward and finished it in one gulp.

Meanwhile, Janet glanced up at the air stewardess and said softly, "Water for me, please."

"Sure." The air stewardess handed the bottle over to Janet and said. "Here you go, Miss."

"Thank you." Janet twisted the cap and took a sip.

When the air stewardess moved down the aisle, Janet turned to speak to Mason, but before she could say anything, she saw that there was a smudge of milk on the corner of his lips.

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Janet reached out and dabbed his lips with her finger, giggling as she said, "You have milk on your lips."

Mason raised his brows and quickly held her hand before she could retract it. His voice was low as he murmured, "Wipe it off for me then."

She blinked, but just as she was about to wipe the milk foam off from his lips, she felt a sudden warmth encase her finger.

Mason's mouth had gently clamped over her index finger and he gave it a teasing bite.

Janet quickly withdrew and stared at him with wide eyes.

He laughed and picked up the bottle of milk that he'd left aside. Then, he downed it slowly, deliberately spilling the milk over the corners of his lips. When he was done with his drink, he slid the tip of his tongue out and slowly swiped it across his lips, eyeing her suggestively as he did so.

She swallowed and hastily broke eye contact by turning to face the other direction.

He blinked slowly and drawled with amusement, "Janet, were you looking at me by any chance?"

Janet coughed and tried to keep her voice even as she retorted, "No, you must have been mistaken."

"Really?" Mason reached out and turned her to face him, appraising her with a dangerous gleam in his eyes as he purred. "Could it be that you wanted me to lick your lips instead?"

"Don't be ridiculous," Janet sputtered as she was flustered.

She marveled at his audacity, although it should not have been a surprise, given his devilish good looks.

All he had to do was look at her and he would stir her deepest desires awake.

She shuddered. She had not always been like this—in fact, lust and physical pleasures had hardly ever crossed her mind. Now, it seemed as if Mason had corrupted her and it was tardy for her to pretend otherwise.

"Jan." As if he read her thoughts, Mason leaned closer toward her and pressed his lips to her cheeks. Then, he continued in a low, raspy whisper. "It's only natural for you to feel this way. You don't have to be embarrassed by it."

Janet flushed at his words and hurriedly clasped a hand over his mouth. She then turned to glance at Henry. The man may not be paying any attention to them, but she cringed at the thought that he could overhear them. "Okay, I get it. Please stop talking."

However, Mason only chuckled and unbuckled both their seatbelts. He pulled her up from her seat and said, "Fine. Then, we'll just have to talk elsewhere."

"What are you doing?" Janet hissed in bewilderment, trying to keep her voice low.

If Lara and Desire saw her flustered like that, she would lose all her dignity as a leader.

However, she was seized with such panic that she could not hold her ground. She was practically frog-marched toward the private room in the plane, which was not quite as exclusive as its namesake, given that the only thing segregating it from the rest of the aircraft was a piece of curtain.

If there was so much as a breeze, everyone would see that they were hiding in there.

Janet took a cautious step back, but that only invited Mason to step closer to her.

He laughed softly, his low voice only audible to the both of them, and he drawled, "Babe, now that we're all alone, you can kiss me."

Janet swallowed and looked away from him, casting her eyes on the floor. "I told you—you must have been mistaken."

"Is that so?" He smirked and pressed his lips to hers, as though tracing the curve of her mouth with his own. "What if I want you to kiss me?"

Mason sounded stubborn and with his hands clutching her, she could tell that there was no way for her to escape. "Kiss me, Janet," he said again, though with an air of authority this time.

Janet knew that he would be more inclined to push her boundaries if she did not accede, so she braced herself before she pressed her lips to his.

His lips were cold, but there was something soothing and familiar about them that made her lower her guard.

It was only a kiss, but it was enough to make her heart beat erratically as she melted into him.

Janet did not dare to make another move, afraid that it would only encourage him.

"Is that all you've got?" he asked hoarsely and wrapped an arm around her waist before she could respond. His lips found hers once more with an urgency that had not been there the first time.

As much as she hated to admit it, Mason was an expert in kissing. Within minutes, she felt as though every part of her body, even her breath, ached for him.

Mason lowered his head and buried his face into her chest. His voice sounded as if it came from the back of his throat as he demanded, "How was it?"

Janet bit her lip, refusing to answer.

However, he showed no signs of backing down and instead reached under her shirt as he growled, "Answer me, Janet."

"What do you want me to say?" she asked, feigning innocence.

He bent his head and nipped at her collarbone before saying in a gravelly tone, "Tell me how the kiss was."