

Chapter 36 Passionate Kiss

This new lovers' restaurant opened right above Keith Ludwig's restaurant. It was very popular, so Keith had to come and experience it himself and even dragged Eric Ferguson with him.

The waiter stressed over and over again that this was a lovers' restaurant.

Keith winked at Eric and lightly tugged on Eric's arm. "Don't we look like a couple?"

"Ferg, Ludwig, what a coincidence..."

A man and a woman walked over to them. Colton White looked like a typical gentry, and the woman holding Colton's arm was a recently popular social media influencer with a small common-looking face and big eyes.

Keith snorted lightly. "Why are you here?"

"Lily said this place is nice, so we came to check it out. Isn't this a lovers' restaurant?" Colton implied something and covered his mouth to hold back his laughter.

They were all childhood buddies, so there was no need to evade each other. Eric scowled and glared at Keith.

Colton White felt amused since it was rare to see Eric at a loss like this. He did not leave and invited himself to their table. His date sat opposite Eric. When Lily saw Eric's chiseled face, she tried to suppress the excitement in her heart but dared not say anything with Colton around.

"Hey, Ferg. Isn't that the scheming b*tch?" Colton lifted his chin slightly in one

direction.

The music was pleasant and soothing. Ian dragged Nicole to the dance floor as he said, "It's just one dance. Since we're already here, don't you want to experience the feeling of being on this dance floor?"

Before Nicole could answer, the next song had already started, so it would only attract more attention if she refused. 'Whatever... It's just a dance...'

The music was upbeat. Ian and Nicole's steps only had a momentary pause in the beginning. Soon after, they matched each other's rhythm very well and gradually became the focus on the dance floor. The couples around them stopped to look at the pair. The man was devilishly handsome and the woman was elegant and beautiful. The hem of her skirt

swayed as she danced and the two of them stole all the attention.

Ian inadvertently saw a certain someone in the corner. When the song ended, he pulled Nicole into his arms, turned around with his back against the crowd, and lowered his head as he embraced the woman tightly. From the perspective of the crowd behind them, they were kissing passionately.

Suddenly, the restaurant resounded with loud applause.

Before Nicole could react, Ian chuckled and pulled her out of the restaurant.

In the corner,

Eric did not speak, but his face was a bit cold.

Keith Ludwig looked at the couple's departing back and coldly snorted. "It's

not that great."

Although their dance was comparable to professional dancers, Keith would never admit that Nicole danced well.

"Right? This scheming b*tch hooked up with another guy so soon?" Colton sneered.

Eric swept a cold glance at Colton when he heard that. "Scheming b*tch? Is that what you guys call her behind her back?"

"Yeah, what else? She did everything she could to marry you for money, didn't she? We know what she did to trap you, so we're all happy that you finally divorced her. You don't have to put up with that shrew anymore..."

Colton did not notice Eric's increasingly glum face. He recalled some of their old memories and retold them as a joke.

"I remember that when you just got married and we went out drinking together, that woman called in the middle of the night to check on you when you were in the bathroom. I picked up the call and warned her back then to know her place. She's so ignorant. Can't she see that marrying you is already an honor for her..."

Suddenly, a cup landed heavily on the table. The lively chatter and laughter at the table instantly ceased.

Keith looked puzzled. 'Eric is clearly angry! Is it because of that woman?'

Colton did not know what he had misspoken. Everyone knew that Eric was forced into his previous marriage.

The influencer was so frightened that she shuddered. She originally thought that

she would be able to hook up with someone more powerful, but she did not even get to say a word at the table.

"Ferg..." Colton looked to Keith for help.

Keith was just about to speak when Eric sneered and said, "Colton, why don't you just become the Head of the Ferguson family if you like to meddle in my business so much?"

Chapter 37 Meeting at the Banquet

After that, Eric Ferguson stood up and left, leaving the pale-faced Colton White behind.

Keith Ludwig chased after Eric. 'This must be related to Nicole again. That woman's really troublesome.'

"Ferg, why do you look so upset? We're all bros. You know that Colton's always been straightforward. Don't take whatever he said to heart."

Eric also knew that he had overreacted and did not expect to have lost control of his emotions like that. It was just that when he found out about these things that he should have known but was kept in the dark, his only thought was, 'Is this why Nicole hates me?'

His chest felt stuffy and uncomfortable.

He stood at the entrance for a while.

After getting blown by the cold wind, his mind felt much clearer. He took out a cigarette and lit it. "I know. You can tell him that it's not directed at him."

'I'm just mad at myself!' Eric thought.

Keith breathed a sigh of relief. "Okay, but you're not longing for that woman, right?"

Eric cast a sidelong glance at him and snorted. He was not bothered to answer Keith's curiosity. "Your restaurant can't compare with this new restaurant. My advice is for you to close your business..."

Keith's face reddened with anger. "Are you even my bro?!"

.....

J&L Corporation invited many socialites,

businessmen, and politicians for their anniversary. Everyone who attended the banquet was an elite.

Nicole had done her research. J&L Corporation was a relatively new company that did not have much backing, so it was not an easy feat to achieve such a reputation and develop to this scale in a few short years.

J&L Corporation's R&D focus was to integrate technology and artificial intelligence into regular life. They had already mastered core technologies that were beyond the reach of many countries.

Nicole thought, 'If I can land this artificial intelligence project, Stanton Corporation will be able to become a pioneer in this new field.'

Thus, Nicole came prepared this time.

Everyone was in the hall exchanging pleasantries when there was a sudden cry of surprise. The crowd looked towards the sound and saw a couple standing at the entrance of the banquet hall.

They were all familiar with the man - Grant Stanton of Stanton Corporation. He was ruthless, decisive, and feared by many.

The woman beside him had on exquisite makeup that highlighted her stunning features. Her long wavy hair was pinned back. Under her gentle appearance was a hidden majesty.

She wore a hand-stitched bespoke dress inlaid with diamond bits that accentuated her slender waist. Her dress glittered when she stood under the light, which made her shine so brightly. Her elegant

demeanor and extraordinary temperament made the crowd marvel at her presence.

Some people also recognized her. 'Isn't she Eric Ferguson's ex-wife? He's so blind to divorce such a stunning woman...'

People came forward to greet them. "Mr. Stanton, your female companion today is a real showstopper..."

"Mr. Stanton, welcome..."

.....

Grant Stanton's smile reached his eyes as he held up his wine glass to the crowd. "She's my Vice President, Nicole. Please take good care of her."

"Vice President Nicole is so beautiful and talented. You must be very outstanding to be able to stay in Stanton Corporation..."

"That's really remarkable! Vice President Nicole, please take care of us in the future ..."

"We must cooperate when we have the chance..."

.....

Nicole maintained a decent and elegant smile and responded to everyone's greeting. Grant saw that it was almost time, so he patted her wrist and lowered his head to whisper a reminder in her ear. "President Lichman of J&L Corporation is upstairs, so let's go."

This was their purpose of coming here. Nicole nodded gently. Her long slender neck was flawless and her every move was simply amazing.

Not far away, Ingrid Ferguson and her clique of high-society ladies watched as

Nicole accepted the crowd's praises. Their expressions were very amusing with all sorts of emotions because Nicole's diamond-studded dress stole all the attention away from their carefully selected dresses.

Ingrid looked especially shocked and angry because she already had an eye on Nicole's dress half a month ago. It was one of Louis Vuitton's private custom dresses. The diamonds on it were real diamonds from a famous jewelry brand. This dress was valued close to the nine figures and was only for display among the elites.

She had asked to rent this dress but was told that someone had already ordered it. Moreover, she was told that this dress could not be replicated because that mysterious lady wanted unique attention.

Who knew that the dress she wanted would be worn by Nicole?

'What's going on?' Ingrid thought.

Nicole used to be conservative and ugly when she was staying with the Fergusons. She only knew how to do chores around the house and did not even dare to utter a word. Nicole was so humble like a servant, but this woman in front of Ingrid was proud, confident, and had such a stunning aura. She was like a completely different person!

If it was not for the wrong occasion, Ingrid wanted to go up and tell everyone that Nicole was just an ugly, old-fashioned woman who had been abandoned by the Ferguson family. Ingrid wanted to tear off Nicole's confident mask and let everyone see how miserable and lowly Nicole actually was!

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Chapter 38 Compliments and Cooperation

The girls looked at Ingrid's grim face and quieted down.

The second floor of the banquet hall was relatively quiet. When Grant brought Nicole upstairs, an unruly-looking young man in an expensive black shirt stood up.

The two men shook hands briefly. Grant smiled and said, "Mr. Lichman, it's been a while."

Gerard Lichman laughed. The corners of his lips hooked up charmingly. "Hello, Mr. Stanton."

Without waiting for Grant's introduction, Gerard had already moved his gaze onto Nicole. It was an appreciative glance with

a decent sense of proportion that was not offensive.

"Ms. Nicole, you're not only beautiful but also capable. I hope that you won't mind that I put off our dinner and invited you to this banquet instead."

Nicole smiled, "Of course not. Congratulations on J&L's 5th anniversary. I hope we'll be able to work together happily in the years to come."

She made a double entendre.

Gerard smiled. "Mr. Stanton, may I talk to Ms. Nicole privately? After all, if there's a chance for cooperation, the person we'll be liaising with is Ms. Nicole."

"Sure." Grant was not surprised by this request and gave Nicole a reassuring glance. He then turned around and went downstairs to network with others.

Gerard and Nicole stood facing each other in front of the railing on the second floor under the ambient light. The handsome man and beautiful woman talked eloquently and calmly.

"Ms. Nicole, I'd like to know why you're so confident about this cooperation."

Gerard held a glass of wine and casually shook the burgundy liquid in the glass.

Nicole raised her eyebrows. A strand of wavy hair fell across her forehead and around her ear. The look in her eyes was very alluring.

"Mr. Lichman, the conditions I gave are very sincere. I believe that you're also aware of it. Compared to so many investors, there's no one else more suitable than Stanton Corporation. To put it bluntly, you have the technology, and I

have the money. Stanton Corporation won't expect J&L to be profitable in five years. Instead, we're looking at long-term cooperation. I believe that in the next ten years, we will be the ones to determine the level of AI development in this world."

Those that could pay more than Stanton Corporation could not provide more benefits than Nicole, while those that could provide more benefits did not have the capital.

Gerard was not just a businessman. He was also an engineer, so he wanted to find the most suitable business partner for his brainchild.

Nicole's bold words made Gerard re-examine the woman in front of him with less playfulness and more solemnity.

Gerard bowed his head and pondered. "Vice President Nicole, do you mind

participating in a three-way partnership with another company?"

"Who else?"

Nicole did not believe that there was a better fit than Stanton Corporation.

Gerard raised his glass to indicate behind Nicole. Hearing the soft footsteps that gradually approached them, Nicole's heart suddenly jumped and missed a beat.

Nicole felt a sudden silence in the air. She turned around with her glass of wine and her smile was frozen on her face with just one glance.

Sure enough, the only one who could compete with Stanton Corporation in the same project was none other than Eric Ferguson.

Eric was wearing a black suit with

expensive cufflinks that looked familiar to Nicole. It made him seem so cold, indifferent, and unapproachable.

His gaze lingered on Nicole for a few seconds before he greeted Gerard frankly.

Gerard's eyes bounced between the two of them. "I guess I don't need to introduce you both since you should be familiar with each other. Ms. Nicole, my apologies for not telling you in advance that regardless of who our final partner is, Ferguson Corporation will be involved in the project."

Looking at Nicole's puzzled gaze, Gerard chuckled and continued, "That's because Mr. Ferguson has been funding all of my projects as an angel investor since the inception of my company."

Chapter 39 Just One Dance

Nicole thought, 'So that's how it is...he's already a shareholder, huh? I just didn't expect Eric Ferguson had set his eyes on the field of artificial intelligence for so long.'

If Gerard Lichman did not take the initiative to tell Nicole this, Nicole would not have been able to find out. The fact that he told her this information also proved that he genuinely wanted to cooperate with her.

Although Nicole was not happy about Eric's involvement, she had a clear mind and separated her personal affairs and business well. She would not give up on this opportunity.

Nicole lowered her eyes and smiled. "With

Ferguson Corporation's strength, you can very well enjoy the fruits of this cooperation by yourself. Why do you need a third party to get involved?"

She raised her eyebrows slightly and glanced at Eric.

"After all, this is a brand new field that no one's involved in, so Ferguson Corporation cannot take this risk alone."

The man's voice was deep and clear. The corners of his lips hooked up. "It won't be a wrong move for Stanton Corporation to choose J&L. I hope we'll have a pleasant cooperation."

He raised his glass with his slender and beautiful hand. Gerard Lichman clinked his glass with Eric's and the two men waited for Nicole's response.

Since there was no other choice, Nicole

could only smile faintly and coldly as she gently raised her glass. The soft clink of the glasses was crisp and pleasant.

Everything was settled.

Even though Nicole was not happy about it, there was no way out. Her chest felt stuffy and unpleasant.

Gerard breathed a sigh of relief and noticed the tense atmosphere between the two of them. He tried to ease the situation and said, "Why don't you two take the first dance as the opening to our anniversary celebration? I think this is undoubtedly the best way to announce our cooperation."

Eric frowned slightly. Nicole chuckled and reached out to tuck her hair behind her ears. She smiled perfunctorily and said, "Sorry, but I don't know how to dance."

After saying that, she turned on her heels

and left, ignoring Eric's cold and sullen gaze.

Gerard shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's just one dance, but she's not even willing to. It seems that our future cooperation won't be very pleasant. Mr. Ferguson, you're the first among the elites that have such a messy divorce."

Eric's face sank as he stared at Nicole's swaying dress. His expression turned even more downcast.

'Don't know how to dance? Hah! Then was I blind back at Ian Carter's restaurant?'

However, Eric suddenly thought of Colton's words and felt the anger in his chest dissipate. Instead, his heart clenched uncomfortably. 'I really owe her too much...'

Even if Nicole was upset, she still maintained a graceful smile. When she got downstairs, Grant approached her with a warm smile. "Done?"

Nicole's dull expression seemed somewhat cold without the joy of closing a deal. This made Grant a little puzzled.

"Eric Ferguson is a shareholder, so Gerard Lichman asked for a three-way cooperation," Nicole explained.

Grant paused for a moment and finally understood why Nicole looked so cold. He smiled and stroked her hair dotingly and gently. "It's okay. That just means we have someone to share the risks with. The benefits in this certainly outweigh the disadvantages."

Nicole froze for a moment and raised her eyebrows. She suddenly realized that

what Eric Ferguson was worried about was exactly Stanton Corporation's woes as well. The benefits of this three-way cooperation did outweigh the disadvantages.

After Nicole figured it out, the moodiness in her chest was instantly swept away. She smiled and took Grant's arm, then gently placed her chin on his shoulder as she whined. "G, thanks for reminding me. Otherwise, I would've been cursing all of them for days on end!"

Grant could not help but laugh. This intimate scene was an eyesore to a certain onlooker.

Eric stared at the pair from upstairs and watched Grant and Nicole's intimate gestures. Keith Ludwig came up and scoffed.

"Tsk tsk...I heard that Grant Stanton isn't

close to women, but why is he so attached to this woman? They must have an unspeakable relationship!"

Eric faintly retracted his gaze with a cold face. He ignored Keith and went downstairs to network with the other guests.

The banquet hall was finally abuzz. Gerard walked over and whispered a few words to the emcee, who then came forward with a microphone.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to J&L Corporation's 5th anniversary! To celebrate this momentous day, I will announce the latest project partners of J&L Corporation on behalf of Mr. Lichman, which are Ferguson Corporation and Stanton Corporation. Now, let's invite Mr. Eric Ferguson and Ms. Nicole to share the opening dance!"

The crowd cheered loudly.

Chapter 40 Some Kind of Relationship

When Nicole heard her name, she froze for a moment. She did not want to have anything to do with Eric Ferguson, but this situation was out of her control and she felt everyone's eyes on her at this moment.

The awkward relationship between them after their divorce added to the mystery of this coincidental cooperation.

Eric also did not expect this. Without a doubt, this was Gerard's doing.

Nicole was still in a pickle when Eric walked to her. He was exuding a cool aura as he bent slightly and reached out, inviting Nicole to the dance floor.

Everyone's eyes were focused on the pair.

There was no way Nicole could reject Eric's invitation because she did not want to leave a negative impact at the beginning of their three-way cooperation.

Grant gave his baby sister a heartfelt look. Nicole smiled faintly, then stretched out her hand to take Eric's.

The people in front of them consciously made way for the pair. Nicole carried her dress with her other hand and walked forward without looking at Eric. Eric's palm was slightly cold. At that moment, he suddenly realized that in their three years of marriage, they had never held a wedding ceremony and he had never taken the initiative to hold her hand. This was the first time they held hands.

Nicole's fingers were long and beautiful, like a work of art. Her hand was warm and delicate, and he immediately etched

this feeling in his heart.

The band began the next song at the right time. The refreshing and cheerful music echoed in the banquet hall.

The moment Nicole's hand landed on Eric's shoulder, their eyes met momentarily. Eric's dark and deep gaze was affixed to her face. When his hand rested on her slim waist, Nicole's body stiffened for a moment as she felt very uncomfortable.

The two of them had never been this close in their three years of marriage. Being here like this after the divorce was also really unexpected.

Nicole merely took a few seconds to regain her composure. She then put a fake and indifferent smile on her face.

Their good footwork, confident posture,

and humility, completely captured the audience's eyes while the music from the center of the stage drowned out their conversation.

"Can't dance, huh?" The man's deep and clear voice was very seductive.

Nicole raised an eyebrow. "Depends on the person."

She was straightforward and unforgiving.

Eric's eyes sank imperceptibly. The two of them moved back and forth. The music took a steep turn and the rhythm gradually quickened. The man tightened his grip on her hand and her slender waist.

"Why didn't I know that you know how to do business? Is it Stanton Corporation's idea to cooperate with Gerard Lichman, or is it yours?"

Nicole did a graceful turn and the two

came together again.

"There's a lot you're not aware of, and I don't have to tell you anything." The corners of her lip curled up gently with a hint of mockery.

In their three years of marriage, he never thought to understand her as his wife, so what was the point of telling him anything after their divorce?

To him, Nicole was just a passing character in the past three years, but for Nicole, this was an unforgettable lesson.

The light shone on the pair. Eric was as handsome as usual. His tall upright built made every woman marvel at him.

Nicole's dress swayed with every step she took. Her graceful posture and her striking features stunned the crowd. If time froze at this moment, one could see the people in the hall gasp collectively.

All eyes were on these two people. Their movements clearly matched tacitly, but the pair had no intention for interaction.

To be precise, Nicole had no intention of dealing with Eric. She only wished for this song to finish quickly because being so close to Eric Ferguson made her very uncomfortable.

Eric's gaze felt like thorns on her face as he quietly inspected her. The music took a turn into the final section.

Eric leaned his body forward while Nicole took a step back and lifted her head to end the dance. Her long and slender neck curved delicately. When the song was about to end, Nicole subconsciously straightened her back, but she did not expect Eric not to take a step back.

Their lips unexpectedly touched. One was

soft and delicate, and the other was cold and thin.

The last note dragged on before it stopped abruptly as if it reflected the freezing of time at this moment...

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GET IT

Chapter 41 He Did It on Purpose

The lights flickered.

Nicole gently shook the glass of wine and stood in front of the railing on the second floor. She watched the pretentious exchange of pleasantries of the people below.

Eric, who was walking over not far away, looked up at that instant and suddenly met Nicole's clear and cold gaze.

Nicole faintly retracted her gaze and ignored the discomfort in her heart. That kiss on the dance floor earlier made the crowd gasp. No one cared which of them actually made the wrong move at the end of the dance. They were just waiting for a good show to happen between the ex-couple.

Any reaction on either of them would lead to endless speculation.

Thus, at the moment their lips touched, Nicole instantly turned her face to the side. Fortunately, the music stopped and she drew back in time. She glanced coldly at Eric and turned away without looking back.

Keith was joking with several people around Eric. After sending them away, he let out a sigh of relief and looked at Eric, who had a cold and noble temperament. Keith frowned when he remembered the scene earlier and subconsciously blurted out. "You did that on purpose during the dance, right?"

Others might not be able to tell, but he knew that Nicole's beat was on point. The problem was with Eric.

Eric grew up in the gentry circle and received elite education on all sorts of social etiquette. How could he be slow to react during the dance?

'Could it be intentional?' Keith thought.

Eric's dark eyes swept over Keith. His face was taut as he said, "No."

"That's good. Don't even think about that woman. I think I lost my mind to think so. That woman must've done it on purpose. Hmph! She surely is good at scheming!"

Of course, Keith believed his best friend's words unconditionally.

Thus, those seeds of doubt disappeared in an instant.

The second floor of the banquet hall.

Grant was networking elsewhere while Nicole felt bored and looked around.

Suddenly, she saw someone waving at her from the doorway. The corners of her lips curved up into a smile as she waved back in response. Ian Carter soon arrived in front of her.

"Carter, you're late..."

Ian leaned nonchalantly on the railing looking relaxed and unrestrained. "Well, I come whenever I want to. If I hadn't heard that you were here too, I wouldn't have bothered to attend such an event."

"Don't even. I know that your father forced you to come." Nicole rolled her eyes at him.

Ian was not the least bit embarrassed after getting exposed by Nicole. He just grinned and said, "My purpose is always you."

Nicole wanted to say something when

she inadvertently saw the people walking towards her. Her face sank unhappily.

"Nicole, are you shameless? You're already divorced from my brother, yet you still try to seduce him? Do you still want to marry into our family? I'll tell you now that our family will never accept a woman like you!"

'Urgh, what kind of sh*tty luck do I have tonight? Everyone I hate just keeps popping up... Ingrid came over with her groupies trying to show me who's boss?' Nicole thought.

Nicole had been in the limelight today, especially after that kiss. Everyone began to speculate about the "reunion of the century" of this rich ex-couple.

'Remarriage? Nicole can dream on!' Ingrid thought.

Ingrid Ferguson was more agitated than anyone else. If it were not for her status as a Young Lady Ferguson, she would have jumped up and cursed at Nicole. 'How is this shameless lowly woman worthy? Her dress should've been mine! This eyesore stole my moment of glory! Stupid Nicole took away all my attention!'

Nicole swept a glance at Ingrid and the few ladies behind her. Besides Ingrid, the others did not look so hostile and were probably dragged over as backup.

'Ha! How childish!' Nicole thought.

"Yo, who's this with the foul mouth?" Ian looked at Ingrid with a cold smile.

Whoever dared to bully Nicole in front of him was dead meat regardless of gender.

Ingrid turned pale and fiercely glared at Ian. "What does it have to do with you?"

Are you her lover?"

Ian was delighted. "Her lover? I like this identity."

Nicole suddenly felt a headache because of the noise. She helplessly glanced at Ian with a warning intent. "Shut it."

She then swept an indifferent glance at Ingrid. "Ms. Ferguson, what do you want?"

Ingrid arrogantly lifted her chin and said, "Don't think I don't know what you're up to. I know you kissed my brother on purpose just now. Do you want my brother to fall for you? Dream on!"

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GET IT

Chapter 42 Ugly Past

Ian Carter looked extremely shocked. He caught onto the main point. "Kiss your brother? Haha...stop daydreaming.

Nicole's not crazy or stupid, so why would she look for a f*ckboy?"

"If you don't believe me, ask anyone here. Everyone saw it!" Ingrid argued.

Her friends hesitantly nodded their heads.

Ian dismissed them without a second thought. "Why should I ask the people you're colluding with? Do you think I'm dumb?"

Ingrid's face turned red with anger. "It's true anyway! Nicole, you don't dare admit it? My brother only cares about Wendy. You exist only because you can give her a

blood transfusion. Stop your wishful thinking that you can still marry into our family. We will never accept you!”

She knew that Wendy was a thorn in Nicole’s heart. Every time this name was mentioned, it made Nicole feel twice as desperate.

However, in front of others, Nicole faintly hooked her lips and laughed lightly. She coldly swept a glance at the girls behind Ingrid.

“The whole world knows about your brother’s affair with Wendy Quade. Ms. Ferguson, your words only confirmed the fact that he cheated during our marriage. You should’ve spoken out sooner.”

Ingrid’s face turned pale. She sneered in anger and furiously pointed at Nicole. She insulted Nicole without holding back.

"Don't you guys know who she is? Whatever she's wearing, eating, and using now is given to her by the men she slept with. Do you honestly think that she's a daughter from an affluent family?"

The atmosphere was slightly cold. Ingrid's outburst not only alarmed the people near the railing on the second floor but also startled many others who looked over one after another.

However, Nicole frowned slightly with a cold expression. She did not have any obvious mood fluctuations.

It was as if she was merely a bystander watching this farce.

"Nicole is a poor wretch that doesn't even have a penny on her! When she was still married to my brother, she'd reach out to beg my brother for money to spend. She's

just a maid in our house, doing the laundry, cooking, cleaning, and even landscaping! Whenever she comes back to our villa, our maids would take a day off. Hahahaha... My brother didn't marry a wife. He married a maid! She's even worse than a maid!"

Ingrid laughed unrestrainedly and tried to expose Nicole's most unknown and vulnerable side, stripping Nicole of her glory to reveal her miserable and bleak past.

"Ingrid Ferguson!"

A cold, stern voice suddenly came from behind her. Ingrid's laughter stopped abruptly as she looked back in shock.

"Brother?"

She did not know when Eric had been standing there. His face was extremely

glum. Ingrid subconsciously took a step back and her face was miserably white.

Quinn had already warned the maids in the Ferguson Villa, so they would never talk about what kind of life Nicole led while she lived with them. Thus, Eric would never get the chance to know because Nicole would never tell him.

Ingrid just felt like biting off her tongue at the moment. She had lost her mind and blurted out how they treated Nicole when she was staying with them.

'If Brother finds out... Forget it. So what if he finds out? He doesn't even like this woman. They're divorced!'

Ingrid took a deep breath. She still had to maintain her Young Lady Ferguson image in front of her groupies.

"Brother, I'm just teaching her a lesson.

"This woman tried to seduce you..."

"Oh, quit the act..."

Ian, who was standing on the side, could not help but sneer and interrupt Ingrid's words. He was shaking with anger and wanted to beat Eric Ferguson up.

'Is this how the Fergusons treated our precious Miss Stanton that we coddled and pampered?'

"Ms. Ferguson, you still have the audacity to flaunt such repulsive acts everywhere like they're such glorious deeds? It's Nicole's lifetime of bad luck that she was blinded and married into your family!"

Ian's voice was cold as he stood protectively in front of Nicole. Nicole's rash decision and three years of recklessness should not be talked about and ridiculed!

"You... What's the relationship between you two? Tell us the truth. Did you have an affair with Nicole long ago before Nicole and my brother got divorced...?"

Ingrid still did not forget to hurl mud at Nicole.

"Ingrid Ferguson! Shut up!"

Eric Ferguson yelled at her and could feel his blood boiling. His heart clenched so tightly that it was hard to breathe.

Chapter 43 You're Different

Eric Ferguson did not bother to look at Nicole's expression and walked straight to Ingrid. His face was inexplicably cold.

"Was everything you just said true?" He asked with gritted teeth.

Ingrid was a little flustered. She bit her lower lip and did not know how to respond.

She grew up around her parents and was not close to her brother, who grew up abroad. After Eric returned to the country, he became a first-class business whiz in the industry and expanded the Ferguson family's wealth by hundreds of times.

This made Ingrid insufferably arrogant.

"Answer me!" Eric saw Ingrid's hesitation

and forced her to speak.

A crisp, cold scoff came from the left side behind him. Without a thought, he knew that it was Nicole who was laughing.

"Mr. Ferguson, it's all true."

As soon as Nicole admitted it, the surrounding people looked at these two people with a complicated gaze. They did not expect that behind Nicole's bright and beautiful exterior was such an ugly and miserable past.

After hearing Ingrid Ferguson saying it, they felt sympathetic towards Nicole. The scandal online after Nicole and Eric's divorce did not seem so groundless after all.

It was truly not easy to marry into a rich and powerful family...

Eric's body stiffened and felt something

tightly clenching his heart. It turned out that not only did his close friends despise Nicole, but even the entire Ferguson family were bullying her, and as Nicole's husband, he was clueless about everything!

Over their three years of marriage, Eric only went back to their house a handful of times. Each time, he only went to talk to Nicole about Wendy's health condition so that Nicole would willingly go to donate blood. He would also be polite to Nicole and ask if she had enough pocket money before he left her a bank card and left.

Eric had always thought that he had been nice enough to Nicole. It turned out that he had been deceiving himself. He owed her too much!

At this moment, he did not know how he should face Nicole.

His fists were tightly clenched and his whole body was tense.

However, Nicole only laughed lightly. Her voice was pleasant, but it had a piercing chill.

"Mr. Ferguson, you can go home and ask any maid to find out if it's true, but even if it is, so what?"

'So what if you find out about it now?'

The others only threw hell at Nicole because they all thought that Eric acquiesced to their actions.

Thus, what did it matter that he found out about it now?

Eric was the least innocent of them all because he stabbed her and left the deepest wound in her heart.

Under the soothing ambient light, Nicole's

bright smile was charming yet dangerous, and her beautiful eyes were extremely cold.

She was unforgiving.

"Mr. Ferguson, if it's true, what are you gonna do about it? Are you going to let M s. Ferguson and Mrs. Ferguson kneel to me and apologize? Will you let them do my laundry and cook for me as my maids? Or do you want to get rid of your poor ex-wife, who doesn't even have a penny to her name, by throwing money at her again?"

Everyone looked surprised. When it came to that point, everyone thought that both sides would just cry and apologize to each other. Someone would compromise and everything would be swept under the rug. They did not expect that Nicole would dare to speak out so blatantly.

The Fergusons were so rich that they did not need a dowry from Eric's wife.

However, being of equal social status was an unspoken rule among the gentry circle. It was just that no one would openly talk about it.

If this drama continued, it would surely get out of hand.

"Apologize? Dream on!"

Ingrid refused to admit defeat. There were so many people watching, so she certainly would not apologize to Nicole.

She glared at Nicole and stubbornly said, "I will never apologize to you. You even want me to kneel and be your maid?! Stop daydreaming!"

"That's enough!"

Eric dragged Ingrid back with full force.

Ingrid hit the railing, which was so painful that her eyes instantly welled up with tears.

He did not bother to glance at Ingrid and looked at Nicole with a complex gaze. He could not fulfill any of those conditions she mentioned earlier, except for money, but would she even accept it?

For the first time, Eric felt powerless.

"Nicole, I..."

"Mr. Ferguson, since you can't do anything, don't act like you have a guilty conscience. Apologies aren't worth anything. Are you trying to gain sympathy? Don't you think you're being too shameful?"

Chapter 44 Blind

Nicole sneered and looked at Ingrid Ferguson with a cold gaze. She lowered her eyelids slightly and said, "Ms. Ferguson, are you trying to embarrass me by bringing out this ugly past over and over again? Mind you, I'm not embarrassed. Your family should be embarrassed for treating their daughter-in-law like a maid. I wonder who will ever dare to marry into your family again..."

"Anyway, you're not worthy of being a Ferguson! Nicole, you were clearly trying to seduce my brother earlier. Aren't you gonna admit it?"

Ingrid was adamant that Nicole was deliberately seducing her brother with that kiss earlier.

'Nicole wants me to apologize?!'

Ingrid was resentful and thought, 'Why can Nicole be so arrogant? Why didn't my brother back me up?'

"Ms. Ferguson, you actually think that I want to seduce Mr. Ferguson?"

Nicole laughed lightly. She was never one to beat around the bush and had always gone straight to the point.

'Seduce? I don't think I'm cheap enough to do this!'

That kiss at the end of the dance was unexpected and shocking. It must have planted seeds of doubt in the hearts of the crowd. In everyone's opinion, Nicole must be the one who was seducing Eric Ferguson.

Her eyes were clear and cold as she

swept a glance at Eric. The corners of her lips hooked up into a mocking smile.

"Three years ago, I was blind enough to marry Mr. Ferguson, but I'm certainly not so blind as to fall for Mr. Ferguson now. Even if I seduce every man on earth, I won't ever look at Eric Ferguson again."

Nicole did not want to look back and relive that depressing and suffocating past again.

Ingrid shuddered from Nicole's cold gaze. She felt that the current Nicole in front of her was a completely different person from the submissive Nicole in her impression.

The wine glass that Nicole placed on the crystal table made a crisp clink and broke the awkward silence. Nicole then turned around and went downstairs under the watchful gaze of the crowd. Ian glared at

Ingrid and Eric viciously before he quickly followed after Nicole.

The crowd looked at Eric, who stood there with a glum face. His gaze followed closely after Nicole's departing back with an indecipherable expression.

Keith stood on the side and felt shocked. Seeing Eric's attitude, it was clear that he felt heartbroken for that woman after knowing the truth.

"Mr. Lichman, I wanted to ask if this three-way cooperation of yours can be expanded to a four-way cooperation?" Keith laughed as he pulled Gerard Lichman over, trying to divert everyone's attention to other places.

After all, Eric Ferguson's gossip was not something that anyone could just watch for entertainment.

Everyone also had the good sense to continue mingling and drinking in the banquet hall.

Gerard Lichman had a faint smile as he pushed up the gold-rimmed glasses on his nose bridge. "No."

Keith said, "Can't you be a little more euphemistic?"

Gerard hesitated for a while and replied, "Sorry, it's not possible."

Keith was speechless. 'Forget it. I'd be better off talking to Eric...'

Once he turned around, the man who was standing there earlier had already disappeared.

"Where did he go?" Keith muttered to himself.

Gerard faintly glanced at a certain

location downstairs before he smiled and left.

At the same time, there were not many people around in the lounge downstairs, so it was quiet.

Ian pestered Nicole and was asking her what happened before he arrived.

"Did Eric Ferguson take advantage of you? Why did Ingrid Ferguson say that you seduced him?"

Nicole rolled her eyes at him. "No, it's just an accident."

This could only be an accident. Otherwise, there was no other explanation for it because no one would believe that Eric Ferguson did it on purpose.

"If he dares to bully you, I'll definitely beat him up!" Ian waved his fist.

Nicole swept a glance around and did not see Grant anywhere. "Where's my brother?"

"He just went to the VIP table with Chairman Lichman to talk business. Do you wanna go find him?" Ian asked.

Nicole shook her head. "Forget it. Let's not bother him."

When she turned her head, she saw Eric Ferguson walking towards them.

'It's such a coincidence that he keeps popping up everywhere. Why is that guy haunting me like a ghost?!

Nicole raised her eyebrows, held Ian's arm, and intended to leave as if she did not see Eric.

"Nicole, let's talk." The man's dark eyes sank.

"There's nothing to talk about." Nicole did not stop and left him high and dry. She did not want to have the slightest thing to do with this man.

He was just here to give her an apology, but an apology was the most worthless form of guilt.

She did not need it!

Chapter 45 Really Calculative

Ian Carter glanced sideways at Eric Ferguson. He smiled smugly and recklessly as if he was mocking Eric's current situation.

'Look at him! Even Eric Ferguson has his day...'

Keith Ludwig finally caught up to Eric. He followed Eric's gaze and saw Nicole's departing back. "Tsk tsk... Ferg, since you're already divorced, don't regret it. This is all that woman's cheap tricks anyway."

Eric cast a sidelong glance at him and said, "Do I need you to teach me how to do things?"

Keith suddenly felt a chill on his back and

did not dare to speak for a while.

'That woman humiliated Eric in front of everyone. Even I feel like dying from anger, so let alone Eric! Although what Ingrid said was indeed a little overboard, that woman asked for it since she begged to marry Eric in the first place! Was it not her own fault then?'

When Nicole first entered the hall, many came over to mingle with her perhaps because of her position in the Stanton Corporation or because of the drama tonight.

Since Nicole came here to expand her network and find out insider information, she was happy to chat with people. She would clink her wine glass with every one of them and take a small sip. No one forced her to drink.

After the mingling session, Nicole still felt

a little tipsy even though Ian had taken a few drinks on Nicole's behalf. She then found an opportunity and slipped to the bathroom.

Nicole washed her face with cold water and felt the stuffiness in her chest dissipate. Just when she was about to wipe her face with a paper towel, Nicole heard Ingrid's voice gradually approaching from outside.

"I won't let that b*tch Nicole get away so easily! She humiliated my family and is so shameless to surround herself with a continuous stream of men! Does she think she'll be a strong independent woman by sleeping her way to the top? She should just take a look in the mirror to see what a wretch she is!"

Ingrid Ferguson and her groupie walked in and saw Nicole leaning on the sink,

staring at them with her arms crossed and a cold smile on her face.

For a moment, Ingrid was stunned and instantly regained her nasty look as she coldly snorted. "Ugh, I have such bad luck seeing this b*tch everywhere I go."

"I feel the same way." Nicole could not help but laugh.

Ingrid raised her eyebrows. "Who are you to say that? Others might not know your true nature, but do you really think that you can erase the past and start over? You're just an uncouth lowlife who just smells of poverty wherever you go."

Nicole hooked her lips and did not turn around, but she still accurately turned on the tap behind her. Her action was smooth and quick. Water flowed out, but no one knew the meaning of her action.

Perhaps she was just trying to keep her words from being overheard.

"Ms. Ferguson, you should be thanking God that I didn't take the initiative to make a fuss about the previous things you did to me, so don't come and find trouble for yourself." Her voice was extremely cold, but the curvature of her lips made her look much gentler.

"What did you say? How dare you warn me? I'm the Young Lady of the Ferguson family, but what are you? After getting kicked out of my family, you're nothing!"

Ingrid glared at Nicole with a glum face. Without Eric's presence, Ingrid was not afraid of anything anymore.

This Young Lady Ferguson had always looked down on her "sister-in-law" since the very beginning, so that sense of

superiority had been engraved in her.

'How could this nobody Nicole even qualify to be on an equal footing with me at home and be respected? Can she help in Brother's career or can her family be of any assistance?'

In the past three years, Ingrid had deliberately asked Nicole to hand wash her clothes. When it was damaged, she would scold Nicole. Ingrid did not even bother to stretch her hands to pour herself a glass of water and preferred to order Nicole around instead. If she was not satisfied, she would get Nicole to redo it.

The countless times of humiliation and Nicole's forbearance and silence made Ingrid addicted to this feeling. Thus, Ingrid took it for granted and felt that Nicole deserved to be servile and

submissive.

Even after the divorce, Ingrid felt that Nicole could not refute her because Nicole would always be inferior to her.

"Only you think that the Fergusons are unbeatable. I really wonder where you got your superiority complex..."

Nicole scoffed and showed a playful smile.

"Hah! Why didn't you say that when you were so desperate to marry my brother? Nicole, have you forgotten how shameless you were? You'd rather be a mobile blood bank for Wendy just to marry my brother. This is your glorious past..." Ingrid could not help but provoke Nicole with the past.

Nicole collected her smile. Her face was calm and somewhat cold.

"Ms. Ferguson, I wasn't being shameless. I was just blind! If you want to mention the past again, then I'll get really calculative with you."

'Calculative? What's this broke woman trying to be calculative about?' Ingrid thought.

"Do you think I'm afraid of you? Nicole, if you have the guts, come at me then! Ah--" Ingrid suddenly shrieked.

Chapter 46 Don't Want to Put Up With You

Ingrid Ferguson's face stiffened. She screamed and saw that a cup of cold water had been splashed on her face and body.

Nicole gently put down the decorative bottle at the sink and dusted her hands. Her gaze was calm as she said, "You asked for this."

"Nicole, how dare you..."

Ingrid was so angry that her face flushed red. She was shivering. The dress she wore was from Dior's off-the-rack collection. Although it was not as luxurious as Nicole's custom-made dress, it still had an eight-figure price tag. Many celebrities did not even qualify to look at i

t, but now it was ruined!

Nicole smirked. Her smile did not reach her eyes. "Do you really think that I'll put up with you like before? If you dare provoke me again, I'll teach you a lesson and settle both the new and old accounts together!"

Ingrid shuddered when she saw a penetrating coldness at the bottom of Nicole's eyes. She could not help but feel frightened.

However, she no longer wanted to think so much at this moment. She was the Young Lady of the Ferguson family and was revered everywhere she went. How could she be bullied like this at a banquet?

How was she going to get out later?

Her spare dress was far less expensive than this one.

Ingrid gritted her teeth and glared at Nicole. She was so infuriated that she was about to lose her mind. "Nicole, I won't let you get away with this!"

She lunged forward and raised her hand at Nicole.

'I'll show Nicole how powerful I am!'

Before the slap could land on Nicole's face, Nicole smirked slightly as if she was just waiting for Ingrid to make the first move. Nicole's eyes flickered and her body moved nimbly to the other side as she accurately clasped Ingrid's arm. She ruthlessly grabbed Ingrid's long wavy hair with her free hand and pushed Ingrid forward.

The running water was filling up the golden sink and was about to overflow. Ingrid plunged headlong into it, splashing

out a lot of water.

Ingrid's groupie in the back exclaimed and looked extremely shocked.

Nicole coldly swept a glance over and the groupie was instantly silenced. She watched the scene in horror and did not dare to go forward.

Ingrid struggled violently, but Nicole did not forcefully resist. She just wanted to teach Ingrid a lesson, so she let go of Ingrid and took a step back. Not a single drop of water got onto Nicole's dress and she still looked as beautiful and seductive as ever.

However, Ingrid was incredibly wretched. Her hair and makeup were no longer presentable.

Ingrid leaned against the wall and gasped for air. A trace of shock and unfamiliarity

flashed in her eyes.

She did not seem to know this side of Nicole, or perhaps she had never really understood this woman!

Ingrid's groupie immediately went forward to hold her. "Ingrid, a-are you okay?"

"Ms. Ferguson, I've already told you just now that I won't put up with you anymore. If you mess with me again, you'll pay the price!"

Nicole raised her hand to tuck a stray strand of hair behind her ears, then unhurriedly lifted her eyelids. Her intimidating gaze landed on Ingrid, whose face was pale. Ingrid looked like a wet dog, which made Nicole smile with satisfaction.

She pursed her lips and seemed to be

mocking Ingrid, then turned on her heels and left nonchalantly.

Ingrid only dared to scream in exasperation after Nicole left.

Nicole was in a great mood because she gave what Ingrid deserved, but who would have thought that when she looked up, she saw Eric who had been there for God-knows-how-long.

She paused for a moment and wanted to walk away as if she did not see him, but he called out to her. "Nicole."

Eric stood there and watched as Nicole deliberately ignored himself. He was clearly extremely uncomfortable, but he had to endure it because he owed it to her.

Thus, when he heard what was happening in the women's restroom, he

held back from going in to stop them.

The Ferguson family owed her much more than that.

Nicole stopped in her tracks and looked at him with raised eyebrows. "What's wrong, Mr. Ferguson?"

Without waiting for Eric's reply, Nicole smirked and said, "Oh, by the way, Ms. Ferguson is inside, but you came too late. She's not presentable enough to come out and meet people right now."

She put away the smile on her face. Her gaze was clear and cold as she glanced at him. "Eric Ferguson, have we ever met in private in the past three years? Have you ever given me a chance?"

"Wasn't he the one who acquiesced to all the bullying that others did to me?"

Every time they met, he had a business-like attitude. All he ever mentioned was Wendy Quade. Nicole felt tormented by that name.

Suddenly, Nicole recalled the time they had just gotten married. She did not understand why Eric was deliberately being cold to her and began to learn how to be a virtuous wife. Every day, she would prepare meals and wait for him to come home. She was afraid to disturb his work, so she dared not even call him.

However, Eric would not come home for several days in a row, so Nicole could not resist sending him a text message asking if he wanted to try her cooking. She never got a reply.

The countless attempts and gestures of goodwill yet getting repeatedly slapped in the face made her feel exhausted and worthless.

Later, when Nicole got used to Eric's cold shoulder, she learned that she was destined to be alone in their new house and that he would never come back.

They each had their own purpose in this marriage.

Now, Nicole finally freed herself from the past yet he wanted an answer?

If he had treated her as a wife, his family and friends would not dare to laugh so

blatantly at her wishful thinking.

'Wasn't he the one who took the lead to humiliate me?'

These words pierced his heart like a needle, which gave off a dense soreness in his chest. Eric frowned. "You actually had many opportunities to tell me..."

'So it's my fault?' Nicole sneered.

Nicole no longer cared about the past. She did not need others to stand up for her. She used to put up with their vile treatment because she loved Eric, but now, she would not endure any of it because she did not love him anymore!

"Mr. Ferguson, you only care about Wendy Quade, so how can you tolerate other women? I'm very impressed that you care more for her than your marriage, so what's the use of talking about this

now?"

"Actually, Wendy is..." Eric knitted his brows. He wanted to explain to Nicole about his relationship with Wendy when he was coldly interrupted by Nicole.

"That's enough. I'm repulsed by that name. Mr. Ferguson, it's best if we pretend not to know each other in the future..."

After that, Nicole strutted away on her high heels without looking back.

Her good mood was ruined. Nicole came out again with a sullen face, just in time to see Grant waiting for her after he was done mingling.

Grant probably heard the others talking about Nicole's fight with Ingrid earlier because his face was glum, but he looked relieved to see Nicole again.

Nicole walked over with a smile then hugged Grant's arm petulantly. "Is it over yet? Can we leave early? I'm so tired today ..."

Grant dotingly pinched her nose. "We can leave if you're tired. There's no need to care about the others."

Nicole smiled with squinted eyes. 'Brother's still the best...'

"Do you need to tell anyone?"

"No, I've already said my goodbyes long ago." Grant stroked her head. "Let's go, the driver's waiting outside."

Nicole nodded and took Grant's arm as they walked outside. The handsome man and beautiful woman were an extremely eye-catching pair.

As soon as they went out, Ian caught up t

o them from behind. "Mr. Stanton, do you mind if I tag along?"

Nicole looked at Grant, but Grant's face was cold. He had always been reserved and serious to outsiders. "I do mind. It's out of the way."

Ian was rendered speechless.

Nicole smiled and waved at him. "See ya later, Carter..."

Ian did not dare to mess with Grant Stanton, so he did not have the guts to cling to Nicole and hitch a ride with them. He could only stand there looking aggrieved as he watched the siblings get into their car. When the car door closed, Ian quickly went forward in a panic and opened the door on Nicole's side.

"What are you doing?" Nicole was startled.

Many people were talking near the

entrance, so they also noticed the movement there. With Grant's status, it was impossible to keep a low profile even if he wanted to.

Ian knelt on one knee and carefully held the hem of Nicole's dress that was clamped outside the car door. He then put it into the car and smiled looking up at Nicole. "Alright, you can go now. Bye!"

It turned out that Nicole's dress was caught outside the car door, so Ian deliberately went over to help her with it. In the eyes of the crowd, that gesture was extremely humble.

The men standing on the balcony of the banquet hall on the second floor saw this scene. Keith laughed and looked at Eric who was next to him. "This lapdog Ian surely has a knack for chasing women, huh? He even dares to flirt in front of

Grant Stanton?"

Keith assumed that there might be an ambiguous relationship between Grant Stanton and Nicole.

Eric's eyes were dull. "Let's go and have a drink with a few others..."

Chapter 48 Drunk

Inside the car, Nicole could hear the lovely and soothing sound of music that was like a refreshing stream of water to her ears. It was her favorite violin piece, "Serenade".

Nicole finally felt relaxed at this moment. She tugged at the hem of her dress in fascination, seemingly thinking about something.

Grant glanced to the side at his sister. "Lil N, is Ian Carter pursuing you?"

He could see at a glance that there was something fishy with Ian Carter.

Nicole paused in her movements and was startled. "Nah, he's just fooling around. He'll be back to normal in a

couple of days."

Grant looked away and laughed. "That's good."

"You don't like him?"

That was strange. The Stantons always had a good relationship with the Carters. Otherwise, they would not have allowed Nicole to get close to Ian and Hugh.

"He's had too many girlfriends, and his private life is too messy. He's not suitable for you, but if you're happy..." Grant was a little hesitant.

Nicole laughed. "What are you implying? How can I go for my friend? Besides, I'm not interested in men right now. I just want to focus on my career!"

Grant was visibly satisfied with this answer. "Yes, men are nothing. You can have as many as you want. Just take

things slow.”

‘I must train my baby sister to become the world’s richest woman!’

The driver in front thought, ‘Eldest Young Master is a bad influence on the Young Lady...’

Tattle Bar.

Since Eric Ferguson called them out for drinks, his buddies, who were nearby, went there as long as they could make it.

Inside the private room, Eric already had several empty bottles in front of him before his friends arrived.

Keith tried to stop Eric, but he did not manage to and could only watch on the side.

Colton White and the others who came later were shocked to see this scene. Eric

had not looked like this for many years. The last time he got so drunk was when Hendrick died.

"What's going on?" Their friends came in alarmed. "Why did you guys start drinking already?"

A glass of cold whiskey slipped down Eric's throat, but his face did not change in the slightest. He extended his hand. "Sit."

Everyone sat down in amazement. Keith was sober and poured them all a glass. "Bros should go through thick and thin together, am I right?"

Colton looked at Keith and asked, "Bro, what happened here?"

Keith pursed his lips. "What else could it be? It must be because of his stupid ex-wife..."

However, he dared not say it out loud.

Eric's eyes darkened as waves of emotions tumbled inside. He tugged on his messy shirt collar and revealed his collarbone. "I was married for three years but didn't introduce you guys to Nicole. Do you guys know her?"

This name was very popular recently, so who would not know her?

"Just because of her? Ferg, you both aren't of the same social status, so divorce is just a matter of time. Don't be so sad. Speaking of which, we should even celebrate it!"

Keith was desperately trying to stop Colton with his eyes but to no avail.

"Yeah! She's not on our level, so there's no need to introduce her. You don't even like her, so we've never acknowledged her

as our 'sister-in-law'."

"Right, didn't she marry you with a motive? We've seen gold diggers before, so don't take it to heart."

.....

'Look, it's because of my acquiescence that Nicole got hurt...' Eric's mood was very complex and he felt frustrated.

'She had a motive? I can't think of what her motive is... She didn't spend a penny of what I gave her and even threw it all out at that party when she fought with Wendy ... She didn't want anything when she asked for a divorce and left without taking a cent... My family bullied her like that yet she didn't say a word and even acted like everything was fine in front of me... My friends ignored her, yet she just shrunk into her shell quietly and didn't even complain... What exactly did she

want then?’

The alcohol gave him a burning sensation down his throat. Keith the blabbermouth then told everyone what happened tonight. Colton and the others were unfazed by it and kept drinking.

“Ferg, you’re just soft-hearted. It’s not your fault, so why are you blaming yourself?”

“Yeah, she asked for it. Women just like to find trouble for themselves. If she had a problem, she should’ve told you in time. If she kept it to herself, who can help her?”

“Who doesn’t have some conflicts at home? She can’t blame anyone for not being able to handle your mother and sister...”

“Stop thinking about it. Since she wanted a divorce, she should make a clean break.

You don't owe each other anything, so why torture yourself so much? Don't go looking for trouble."

"Keith, you usually have a lot of tricks up your sleeve. Why don't you think of a way to deal with that woman?"

Keith drank so much that he was a little tipsy. "I...I don't dare to...my nudes are still with her..."

"Hahahahahahahahaha..."

Everyone drank to their heart's content, and Eric even more so. In a daze, he remembered Nicole's face when she looked at him with disgust. 'Since she wants us to be strangers, should I fulfill her wish?'

Chapter 49 Throw It Away

Nicole's alarm clock rang, waking her up from her beauty sleep.

Nicole had requested to go back to her apartment last night. She felt a lot more comfortable without waking up to so many maids.

She looked at her phone and saw that the photos from last night's party had pushed her and Eric to fame once again.

[Rich ex-couple suspected to be back together?]

It was attached with a picture of Eric and Nicole's kiss at the end of the dance. It was an ingenious shot. Even the lighting and background looked very artistic.

Nicole sneered and did not pay attention t

o it. She closed the article and opened her email.

Logan had already sent Nicole's schedule to her early in the morning. Nicole washed up and listened to some finance news.

Last night's trouble had all been forgotten after a good sleep and she would not let Eric Ferguson affect her mood again.

Yvette kept bombarding Nicole with calls because she had just seen the picture online. She wanted to confirm the truth of the matter because the picture did not look photoshopped.

Nicole picked up and helplessly explained what happened. Yvette then breathed a sigh of relief and started to badmouth the Fergusons, then suddenly said, "Hey, look! The article's been taken down!"

After checking, Nicole saw that it was gone.

Nicole would not waste her money on this, so who could it be?

Eric Ferguson?

Yvette laughed loudly on the other side of the phone. "Look at our group chat! Ian spent money to take it down!"

Nicole clicked into their group chat and saw a ton of messages.

[Ian Carter: \$1 million PR fees! The audacity!]

[Yvette Quimbey: Carter, didn't you go to the party last night? Why isn't there a single shot of you?]

[Julie Nixon: If there's a shot of him, I wonder who'll pay to take it down...]

[Yvette Quimbey: Hahahahaha!]

[Ian Carter: Meanies!]

Nicole laughed helplessly and sent a message.

[Nicole Stanton: Next time, please transfer the money to me directly, then I'll come out to make a statement.]

[Ian Carter: *cries in despair* *vomits blood*]

Nicole put away her phone and was a lot happier.

At about 7:00 am, Logan drove over to pick Nicole up and brought breakfast for her. "I bought this on the way. I don't know if it's to your liking..."

Nicole was not that picky and took it. "Thanks. Let's go."

"There's a meeting at 8:00 am. President Stanton said that you're fully in charge of J&L's matters and that he won't ask questions."

Nicole knew that Grant was delegating it to her as part of her training, so she nodded and said, "Have you contacted J&L? We have to do our inspection in advance."

"I heard that Ferguson Corporation is doing their inspection next week, so I made an appointment for tomorrow morning."

"Good job."

Nicole looked down at the documents. She did not want to meet with people from Ferguson Corporation. Although Eric might not be personally involved in this project, she still did not want to take the

risk.

They talked on the way to the office about work matters. Nicole was relieved that Grant was willing to give her someone as capable as Logan.

As soon as they arrived at the office, the receptionist came over holding a huge bouquet and looked at her with a smile. "Vice President Nicole, someone sent you flowers."

Nicole frowned slightly and glanced at the card on it.

[Dearest Nicole,

I'll love you for ten thousand years <3

Yours truly,

Ian Carter]

Nicole did an eye-flip in her heart and said to the receptionist, "Throw it away for me,

thanks.”

After taking two steps, Nicole stopped in her tracks and looked back. “If there are any more flower deliveries in the future, just reject them.”

She did not want to give Ian the slightest hope and wanted to nip his little spark in the bud.

“Yes, ma’am.” The receptionist looked regretful. ‘These flowers are so pretty... but they’re about to be thrown into the trash can...’

The meeting began on time at 8:00 am.

When Nicole went into the conference room, everyone had already arrived.

Nicole sat on the main seat and looked at the people in the room. “Our cooperation with J&L Corporation has already begun. Now, we’ll need to form a project team to

follow up with the tasks. Logan will send you all a list later.”

Everyone knew that this cooperation with J&L Corporation was in a brand new field. Getting involved in this project would likely catapult them to success, so everyone was very eager.

After the meeting, Samantha Lindt came to Nicole.

“Vice President Nicole, why am I not on the list?”

‘How can I miss such a good opportunity to reap benefits in this important core project?’

Nicole looked up from her desk and raised her eyebrows. “If every employee who wasn’t on the list came to ask me this question, thousands of people would come knocking on my door. How do you

think I should answer?"

Chapter 50 Backer

Samantha Lindt hated Nicole, but since Nicole had something over her head, Samantha dared not get into an all-out fight with her.

"My experience in leading teams is no less than those on the list, and my performance is one of the best among the senior managers. Vice President Nicole, are you still holding a grudge against me because of what happened last time?"

Samantha was obviously a bit discontented.

Nicole lowered her eyes and laughed. "No, I don't hold a grudge against you, but I do remember that you were against cooperating with J&L before this. I'm just

afraid your attitude will affect our cooperation, so..."

"I will comply with the company's decision." Samantha eagerly showed her allegiance.

Nicole gave her a perfunctory smile. "This list has been announced at the board meeting, so I'm afraid there's no way to change it now. Let's talk about it next time we have the chance..."

She had already started to pack up the things on her desk, giving Samantha an obvious signal that she was done with this conversation.

Samantha gritted her teeth and said, "I'm sure it can still be changed. Vice President Nicole, just wait and see."

She then turned on her heels and left Nicole's office with confidence. Nicole's

gaze was deep as she raised her eyebrow. 'Great! She took the bait.'

In the afternoon, Logan called Nicole's office phone. "Director Zielinski wants you to meet him at his office."

'An old man that's about to retire?' Nicole raised her eyebrows. "Sure."

Aside from Grant and Logan, no one in the company knew of Nicole's real identity. As the newly instated Vice President, Nicole would like to see what Micah Zielinski wanted to talk to her about.

Micah liked to engage in speculative trading. He only became a member of Stanton Corporation's board of directors through special means and had refused to let go ever since. However, he did not have many shares in the company and was not considered a threat, so they let

him be.

Nicole knocked on Micah's office door and heard a tired voice coming from inside, "Come in."

She smiled and went in. "Mr. Zielinski, you were looking for me?"

Micah's eyes lit up when he saw her, but he suddenly thought of something and instantly looked regretful.

"Come, sit down." He pointed to the seat in front of him.

Nicole took a seat.

Micah smiled and coughed slightly. "Ms. Nicole, you're very pretty. No wonder Grant was willing to disregard so many objections and forcefully pushed you into this position."

Nicole's smile deepened. "So...he didn't

like that Grant's backing me?

She did not explain anything and just smiled at him.

Micah saw that she was not carrying on the conversation and coldly snorted. "Do you know that your position was originally reserved for Samantha Lindt?"

'Is he trying to scare me?'

Nicole paused for a moment and said, "Ms. Lindt is certainly capable, but I'm more suitable for this position."

Micah's face instantly sank and threatened her. "Young people who are arrogant in the workplace and have no respect for their elders will suffer."

Nicole smiled and stood up. "Then I can only prove myself with my capabilities. Mr. Zielinski, if there's nothing else, I'll take my leave."

"Nicole!" Micah was a little anxious. He was dissatisfied with the direction of this meeting and instructed, "Add Samantha Lindt to J&L Corporation's project team."

Nicole's smile widened. "It is really him... Samantha Lindt's backer is such a miserable old man? Did she think that I'd be intimidated by this old geezer? How absurd!"

Micah saw that Nicole only smiled without a word. His face turned glum. "Did you hear what I just said?"

"Yes..."

Micah's expression eased slightly. Nicole continued, "But I can't do it."

"What do you mean?"

"It won't be fair to the others."

"Nicole, do you think that you're safe just

because you have Grant? Do you believe that I'll..." Micah was exasperated and threatened her.

"Fire me? I don't believe that the board will fire me because of Samantha Lindt. I suppose Ms. Lindt didn't tell you what I have on her when she came crying to you. Please tell her not to mess with me."

Nicole swept a clear and cold glance at the shocked Micah Zielinski, then stood up and walked out without hesitation.

As soon as she left Micah's office, she called Grant's private number.

"What's wrong, N?"

"There's something fishy with Micah Zielinski. Samantha Lindt is one of his people. He must be the one who wanted to prevent our cooperation with J&L Corporation in the first place."

Grant laughed and praised her. "You caught on quick."

"You already knew about it?"

"How could I not know of the dissent among my company's board of directors?"

Nicole sighed in relief. "Then I'm relieved."

"That old fox is not easy to deal with, so I'll handle him. You should just focus on following up on J&L's cooperation. By the way, I heard that Eric Ferguson plans to personally take charge of this project." Grant gave her a heads-up.