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Chapter 212: Do You Expect Me to Beg You?

“Utterly useless!”

Carl glared at Harmony. “I placed so much hope on you, Ms. Johnson, only for you to come back and tell me that you can’t handle this?”

Harmony was stunned.

Why was Carl blaming it on her when he should be scolding Samantha?

“Mr. Lewin, Samantha and Professor Cornell joined hands to play tricks on me, us. On us. How can you—” Harmony defended herself aggrievedly.

Carl did not have the patience to continue listening to her and interrupted her in a deep voice, “I don’t want to hear you talk about what happened. I want results! You boasted that Professor Cornell appointed you to do the interview, but now he rejected you and sent you back here! Are you seriously crying foul here when it’s clearly your responsibility?”

Harmony bit her lower lip firmly. She could no longer control her emotions and instantly turned pale.

Carl could clearly see the animosity between Harmony and Samantha. It was one thing for him to dislike Samantha, but he was not an idiot who failed to think for himself when someone else was trying to incite discord.

He found it laughable that Harmony wanted to use him as a pawn!

To him, none of those women viewed him with any respect!

He originally thought Harmony was someone that could be nurtured, but it became apparent that he was wrong.

“Get out and reflect on yourself, and call Samantha in!” Carl did not bother to continue talking to her.

Harmony had a completely humiliated expression. She was well aware that a touch of impatience could ruin a great plan. It did not matter though, because that was nothing compared to how she held herself up through all those years.

She closed her eyes and took two deep breaths. By the time she opened her eyes again, her expression had reverted back to calmness and she could even flash a smile as she responded softly, "Understood, Mr. Lewin."

Back at their workstation, Harmony said coldly to Samantha, "Mr. Lewin wants you to go to his office, Samantha."

Samantha was playing Minesweeper on the computer. She did not respond to Harmony's statement nor glance at Harmony at all, and Harmony did not know whether Samantha did not hear clearly or was deliberately ignoring her on purpose.

The anger that Harmony so painstakingly suppressed began to surface again. After gulping a few times, she said again, "Samantha, Mr. Lewin wants you to go to his office!"

Samantha remained indifferent.

Harmony was finally sure that Samantha did it on purpose!

She clenched her fists suddenly and was unable to control herself from raising her voice, "Samantha Larsson!"

Samantha was not the only one who heard her name being called out. Everyone in the entire office heard Harmony and looked over.

Samantha's dark eyes looked at Harmony and her lips curled up into a smile. "Yeah, I heard you."

"You..." Harmony's face soured in anger.

Samantha savored Harmony's expression and slowly approached the latter with a smile. "You look really pretty right now, Harmony. I love it."

"Samantha!" Harmony's teeth nearly cracked from being gritted.

Samantha cocked an eyebrow at her and got up to walk towards the office.

Harmony looked at her from behind and was grasping her pen so hard that it nearly snapped in half.

...

Samantha knocked on the door and walked in after hearing Carl say 'come in'.

Carl sat behind his desk with an aloof expression and spoke in a magnanimous tone once Samantha went up to his desk. "Don't say I didn't give you a chance, Samantha. I'll let you do the interview with Professor Cornell."

Samantha smiled slightly.

She had seen no shortage of oddballs and strange events during her two years abroad, but the world was so big that there would always be surprises in store.

Harmony and Carl had shed a whole new light on her understanding of shamelessness.

Carl clearly had no other choice but to let her interview Selby, but the way he put it was as though he was the one giving her that opportunity.

Seeing her silence, Carl continued to add, "You're just lucky to have a big-hearted boss like myself, Samantha. I'm still willing to give you an opportunity, so you should know to put on your best behavior and learn to be grateful!"

He truly was a manipulator extraordinaire with a knack for gaslighting.

Samantha smiled instead of getting angry and her bright black eyes were stained in a cheery little look. The corners of her lips curled up slightly as her smile spread across her fair face.

He had to admit that Samantha's appearance was really very sweet. Her smile alone could tug one's heartstrings unknowingly.

Even though Carl was jealous of Samantha and did not take kindly to her, he still ended up a little dazed when she smiled at him like that.

Deep down, however, he was actually feeling a little proud that he could shock the foolish little girl with just a couple of sentences.

His smugness lasted for only a few seconds when he heard Samantha's crisp and beautiful voice. "I won't do the interview!"

Carl stared in disbelief and thought that he misheard her. "You... What did you say?"

Samantha maintained her sweet smile and repeated patiently. "Mr. Lewin, I told you I won't do the interview."

She used the gentlest of tones to convey a very powerful message.

Carl felt as though he had been struck by lightning and never once imagined that Samantha would refuse it.

Did she actually refuse the opportunity that everyone else so desperately wanted?

“You...” Carl’s eyes sank. “You don’t know what’s good for you even if it hit you in the face, Samantha!”

Samantha was amused by his remark and ended up laughing out loud. “You just announced my removal from the assignment in front of all our colleagues, Mr. Lewin. You’re only letting me do the interview because the person you chose has been sent back here. How would a leader like you expect to convince his people if you can change your mind on a whim?”

“You...” Carl was instantly lost for words.

“I’ll be heading out to continue my work if there’s nothing else.” Samantha left him with that remark, then turned around and prepared to walk out.

“Hold it!”

Carl stood up immediately but maintained his pride and reproached her loudly, “I’m your superior, Samantha. You should obey your superior’s orders as a subordinate. If I tell you to go, then it’s your duty to go!”

Samantha stopped walking and turned to look at Carl’s frustrated expression. Her voice was exceptionally calm as she said, “You’ve taken me off the assignment, and I duly obeyed you as your subordinate by sitting it out. You think you can just order me to do the interview because you’re in a tight spot and you need someone to remedy the disastrous situation? I’m not going to obey orders like that.”

“Samantha!” Carl’s fists were clenched tightly and his entire body was shaking in anger. “This is very unbecoming of you!”

Samantha seemed to have not heard it and turned around resolutely to walk out.

As she laid hands on the doorknob, Carl eagerly said again, “What do I have to do to get you to agree to the interview, Samantha? You don’t expect me to beg, do you?”

Samantha finally seemed interested and turned around to look at him. Her lips parted open and she said clearly, “Sure. Why don’t you try and beg me?”

“You!”

Carl made that remark in an offhand manner, so he was understandably shocked and saw red when Samantha actually dared to say something like that to him.

Chapter 213: Wanna Come Home with This Stud?

Despite knowing that Samantha was retaliating against him on purpose, he could not just tell her to leave like before. After all, she was the anchor that Selby wanted to do the interview with, and the general manager had even personally instructed him to do a good job.

At that moment, he realized that he had been playing into Samantha's hand ever since the meeting that morning. She had calculated her every step and had already expected such a result.

He had really underestimated her before.

His initial impression of her was that she relied on her good looks and husband to join Lychee TV, but...

Carl pursed his lips tightly. He had no choice but to lower his ego even if that was the last thing he wanted to do.

"I..." His lips trembled fiercely as his mouth opened and closed a couple of times. Finally, he uttered a few words as if he was being choked. "I'm begging you now. Can you do the interview?"

Samantha turned around and looked at Carl.

After staring for a few seconds, she said, "Okay. I'll do the interview."

Carl was stunned once more.

He was already prepared for the possibility that she would make things difficult for him and hardly expected her to agree so easily when he really did beg her.

Did she still have any intention of playing tricks?

His guard was up as he looked at her warily.

Samantha knew what Carl was thinking and allowed him to look at her without avoiding his gaze. She continued and said, "Mr. Lewin, I joined Lychee TV to realize my dreams and ambitions. All I want is to work hard towards my goal."

"If you treat me fairly, just like you do to your other subordinates, we can always interact in a peaceful manner. But if you treat me unfairly as if I'm some kind of imaginary enemy, I won't let myself be bullied."

It was inevitable for her to deal with a bunch of different personas once she entered the workplace. Samantha was not looking to make enemies out of her colleagues for no reason, not unless the person was willfully targeting her.

She simply wanted to use that incident to tell Carl that she would not take the initiative to provoke others. However, that did not mean she was a pushover who would let herself be trampled on.

Carl looked at her in surprise because he did not foresee that she would make such a remark.

Samantha gave him a nod and turned around to walk out of the office.

Carl still could not snap out of it even after she had completely disappeared from his sight. It took him some time before he could carefully digest Samantha's words, and a hint of thoughtfulness appeared in his eyes.

Samantha...seemed to be a much better person than Harmony was.

He finally grew to understand why Selby had insisted on her to do the exclusive interview.

Samantha was not someone to be underestimated.

...

Samantha returned to her work station and switched off the computer game. She opened a new document and started writing a manuscript for the interview.

Harmony had just returned after making some coffee and caught a glimpse of Samantha's computer screen. An uncontrollable rage surfaced from the bottom of her eyes and she wanted nothing more than to pour the coffee on Samantha's head.

Reason kept her emotions under control, although she could not help but mock, "You're not going to go far if all you have going are those cheap tricks!"

Samantha's hand stopped typing.

She narrowed her eyes at Harmony, curled her lips into a smile, and replied very gently, "You seem to have a thorough understanding of your own shortcomings. There might still be hope for you."

She lowered her gaze and thought for a moment before adding with a smile, "Would you like me to help you intercede with Mr. Lewin? I can let you tag along with me during the interview so you can play the supporting role and learn a thing or two while you're at it."

She responded with the same lines Harmony used to mock her previously.

Those repeated blows from Samantha left Harmony feeling lightheaded due to the intense anger and she was on the verge of collapsing.

A sway of her hand caused her cup of coffee to spill all over her clothes, for she had not been able to hold it firmly enough.

Harmony let out a scream. “AHHH—”

Samantha glanced at her from head to toe and smiled even more resplendently. ‘That’s karma for you!’

Harmony once again drew everyone’s attention and felt so ashamed that she rushed out of the office lobby.

...

Samantha met Selby the next afternoon to do the exclusive interview.

The interview ended smoothly and Samantha got up to shake hands with the professor.

Samantha smiled and said, “Thank you for accepting Lychee TV to do an interview with you, Professor Cornell. I’ll report the truth as you have said to the public.”

Selby pushed the bridge of his spectacles and smiled in return. “I trust that you will do your best and I look forward to your news report.”

After leaving the university, Samantha returned to Lychee TV and went to her desk. She went through the entirety of the interview and duly transformed it into a manuscript.

She was completely focused on writing that she did not notice the passage of time. It was already dark by the time she was done.

Everyone in the office had gone home and only her table light was still on.

Samantha looked at the time at the top right corner of the computer. It was unknowingly already almost ten, which explained why there was no one around.

After saving the document she typed and switching off her computer, she grabbed her bag and got up to leave.

The elevator door shut once she went in. As soon as the elevator made its way down, a shadowy figure appeared in the office lobby and walked towards Samantha’s workstation.

...

It was completely dark at the entrance when she walked out of Lychee TV's building. There were no people or vehicles around at night because the area was located in a commercial district.

Samantha requested a ride on her e-hailing app but no one seemed to accept her request even after she had waited for almost ten minutes.

The wind was a little cold at night and Samantha immediately folded her arms as it blew over.

A car then drove over out of the blue and stopped in front of her.

Samantha was confused. Why would a car stop in front of her when no one had accepted her ride request?

The car window then lowered slowly to reveal a man's handsome, godlike face. His bottomless eyes were staring right into her soul and there was a naughty little smirk on his lips. He opened his mouth and asked in a low and sultry voice, "Hey there, beautiful. Wanna come home with this stud?"

Samantha was speechless.

Words and actions like that were beyond nauseating, but they were inexplicably alluring when Timothy was the one who did it.

She was surprised that he would come pick her up. Samantha did away with her stand-offish character and immediately hopped in after opening the door to the front passenger seat.

She then said to Timothy, "You can start driving now, Handsome. I've already fastened my seat belt!"

Timothy glanced at her and freed up his hand to squeeze her cheek. He whispered, "Could you speak a little more decently? Don't go seducing me."

Samantha was speechless and stared at him unhappily. "When did I say anything indecent? The only reason you always think I'm seducing you is because your mind is filled with dirty thoughts."

Timothy's thin lips trembled.

"Filled with dirty thoughts? More like filled with thoughts of you. I like you so much that my heart resonates whenever I see you or hear you speak."

In the end, he did not say anything else and merely rubbed her hair gently before driving off.

A few minutes into the drive, Samantha suddenly thought of something and turned to ask Timothy a question.

Chapter 214: You're Amazing, Hubby!

“Hey Handsome, do you have time to spare tomorrow night?”

She placed her hands gently on her cheek and stared at him with her beautiful jet-black eyes. It was as though there was an entire galaxy contained within those eyes.

Before the working day ended, Carl had sent her an internal email to inform her that the news would be broadcasted at eight o'clock prime time the following night. She had to be fully prepared by then.

That was the reason she had worked overtime—she wanted to finish the manuscript and send it to Carl.

That way, Carl could check it the next morning. If he pointed out any issues with it, she could amend it in due time and finalize the draft before noon. She could also spare some time at noon to read and recite the news to ensure that the broadcast would go without a hitch.

Although she had presented news reports during the competition, the significance of actually presenting it to a national audience was far greater.

She had most certainly hoped that Timothy would be able to watch her at such an important moment.

Timothy glanced at her from beside and asked lazily, “Tomorrow night? I'd probably be signing a contract in Emsteldt by then.”

‘Signing a contract in Emsteldt...’

Samantha sat straight all of a sudden and sounded somewhat surprised. “Have you finally managed to procure that huge project you were talking about, Timothy?”

It was the same important project that Timothy had been busy handling for almost half a year, which formed the key focus of the Barker Group that year.

“Yes. The contract will be officially signed tomorrow.”

Samantha did not dabble in the business world but had some knowledge of its goings-on even though she had never been directly involved with anything. Inking that contract would mean that the Barker Group had finally opened up to the foreign market. It was a significant achievement, and the contract was one of immense value.

Timothy had already expanded the Barker Group's territory to such lengths despite having taken over the company for only a few years. That in itself warranted his inclusion amongst the business world's new generation of giants.

That day turned out to be a double shot of happiness due to her own achievements and that of Timothy's.

It was no surprise that Timothy came over to pick her up that evening. He probably wanted to share that momentous news with her as soon as possible and wanted to spend some time with her because he would soon be going on another business trip.

Samantha was both excited and proud of him. "You're amazing, Timothy!"

She enthusiastically gave him two thumbs up. "As expected of my husband!"

The red light came on and Timothy braked. He lowered his dark eyes on her and could not help but tease her when he saw her smug face, "Are you complimenting me or yourself?"

Samantha raised her chin proudly. "Complimenting you is a compliment to me too! Can't I be proud of the fact that I have such an outstanding husband because of my good judgment?"

Her judgement was so good that she grabbed him during the one-year-old catch game on her first birthday.

Timothy looked at her triumphant expression and a profound tenderness immediately appeared in his eyes. His long fingers tickled her chin in an affectionate manner, as if he was playing with a cat. "You can be as proud as you like."

Samantha did not avoid his gesture and even continued rubbing intimately against his palm.

Timothy pulled his hand back without hesitation and spoke in a semi-hoarse voice. "Be patient. You can do whatever you want with me once we're home."

"It isn't safe to do that kind of stuff on the main road. There are safety hazards everywhere."

Samantha's loving thoughts disappeared in an instant. She felt like taking a needle to his lips and sewing them shut.

Timothy was the most handsome and sexy man when he kept his mouth shut.

The light turned green and Timothy continued driving.

He then remembered her question earlier and asked her in return, "Is there something going on tomorrow night?"

"Ah..."

Since time was of the essence whenever it came to breaking news, the broadcast was slotted in at the last minute and there was no time for them to make announcements and notify the public.

Samantha originally wanted to invite him to watch the news as it came on, but he had to sign a very important contract at the same time. Although she felt somewhat regretful, she did not want him to neglect such a major event.

It was not really that big of a deal anyway. He could always watch the repeat once he was done with the contract.

Samantha immediately held back her expression and shook her head with a smile.

"Nah, I was just asking. I thought maybe you could come home to a dinner that I personally cooked for you if you have nothing going on tomorrow night."

"But it's fine. We'll just do it after you sign the contract. I'll cook you a nice dinner for your glorious return. It'll be a celebratory dinner!"

The happiness in Timothy's eyes increased even more. "Alright, I'll be looking forward to it."

The next day, Samantha woke up an hour early after setting her alarm the night before. She got up to send Timothy off, and Timothy smiled dotingly when he saw her droopy eyelids. "I told you to continue sleeping. You don't have to send me off."

"Don't worry. I'll continue sleeping once I send you off." Samantha opened her eyes as widely as she could.

She was actually a little bit reluctant to see Timothy go, and her clinginess stemmed from the little bit of regret she had because he was unable to watch her during an important moment of hers.

Timothy rubbed her head and lowered his face to kiss her on the lips. "I'm leaving. Go back to sleep."

"I'll go once you leave."

Timothy smiled but did not turn around to get into the car. Rather, he asked, "Are you going back to bed by yourself or shall I carry you back to sleep?"

Samantha was speechless. Her red lips trembled slightly and she whispered, "So bossy! Fine, I'll go back to bed. Be safe on the road."

Samantha turned around one step at a time and went back into the villa.

Once she disappeared behind the door, Timothy stood there for about ten seconds before bending over and getting into the car. He said to Ronald in the front, "You can start driving."

...

At ten in the morning, Samantha walked into Lychee TV and went to her workstation.

She opened her inbox right away but saw no replies from Carl just yet. Then again, she had just clocked in for work. All she could do was wait, because even though she had worked overtime, she could not possibly expect the others to do the same.

Samantha had been sitting idly for less than five minutes when Annabelle walked over and said to her, "Ms. Larsson, the general manager wanted me to call you over to studio one. He wants you to walk you through the process and you to familiarize yourself with it."

Samantha nodded. "Sure, I'll head there now."

Since it was her very first time reporting on television, it was necessary for her to go through the motions in advance so as to avoid any untoward incidents during the broadcast.

Samantha took the elevator down to studio number one.

There were two groups of people inside. One was in charge of Samantha while the other was responsible for the other anchors. Each side insisted that they had reserved the time slot and were arguing with each other because neither refused to give in.

The director's assistant told Samantha to take a break at one side and let the others settle things before going through the process.

Samantha had no right to intervene when it came to matters involving other departments, so she waited patiently on one side. While waiting, she refreshed her inbox from time to time to see if Carl had replied.

The two sides continued to argue for more than an hour with nothing to show for it, and Samantha frowned because her time had been wasted just like that.

Fortunately, Carl had finally replied to her email. Samantha opened it, read through it quickly, and spotted several minor changes.

She decided to make use of her time in order to go over it in more detail and memorize it, but the director's assistant called her as soon as she scanned through it. "We can start now, Ms. Larsson."

Samantha decided to put her phone away and walk over.

She had to go through the process for several hours before it finally ended. She did not even have time to catch her breath, as she was immediately whisked away once more. After she was given some instructions and told to watch out for certain things, it was time for her to put on makeup and change her clothes.

She had to eat while putting on makeup and only managed a couple of quick bites.

It was already five minutes to eight by the time she had finished everything, and Samantha had to sit on the studio desk to make the final preparations and camera adjustments.

Although there were only a few minutes left, it was more than enough time for her to memorize the manuscript. Besides, she did not have to worry about forgetting anything because she could always sneak a peek at the manuscript in the middle of the broadcast.

Since cell phones were not allowed in the studio, someone had already typed out the manuscript in advance and put it on the table. She glanced at it and her expression changed immediately from the third line onward.

Only the initial part of the manuscript was comprehensible: the remainder was a complete mess of jumbled-up words!

It was obvious that someone had maliciously replaced her manuscript.

She had to change it right away!

Samantha opened her mouth and was about to speak, but the director had already raised his hand and yelled at Samantha, "We're going live in, three, two, one!"

As soon as the count ended, the camera lens was aimed at Samantha.. Everything switched on and the live broadcast began.

Chapter 215: Do Your Best, Sammy

It was already too late...

Samantha lowered her gaze and clenched her hands unconsciously, but a second later, she looked up once more and smiled professionally at the camera.

She opened her lips to speak in a calm and natural tone. "Hello everyone..."

Her delivery was smooth at the start, but when it came to the third line, her speech had obviously slowed down and there was a barely noticeable stutter.

The director quickly realized that something was wrong and questioned through the earpiece, "Ms. Larsson? What's going on? Get a hold of yourself. We're live now!"

Plenty of people were paying attention to that news, and if any errors happened during the broadcast, she would never be allowed to go near a studio table again!

Samantha was well aware of how grave the matter was. She took a deep breath and rid her mind of any disorderly thoughts, then tried her best to keep the broadcast going while recalling the manuscript she wrote.

Unfortunately, it was all too human for her to struggle in her attempt to remember everything, especially when she became increasingly anxious at a critical juncture. Samantha's speech began slowing down again.

It was not just the director who noticed that something was off. Even the staff who were standing at one side exchanged glances with each other.

What was going on?

Could Samantha have been so nervous on her first official broadcast that she had forgotten her lines?

It would be disastrous if that was the extent of her abilities...

One could easily imagine the hell that Lychee TV would raise if she screwed up!

Beads of sweat began trickling down Samantha's back.

She did not need to look at everyone's expressions to know that her performance was already at the limits of their patience. If she could not resume the smooth broadcast, she would be done for!

The director could not hold himself back any longer and lambasted, "Why the hell are you going live if you can't even read fluently, Samantha? That's the most basic thing! Useless!"

He took a deep breath and was so angry that he immediately ordered, "You can get off the stage once we cut to the commercial break in another minute!"

Being told to get off the stage was no different from being told that her broadcast had failed miserably.

"Get the backup anchor to come over immediately!" The director said to his assistant.

The assistant nodded right away. "I'll call Harmony over right now!"

He picked up the phone and dialed a number.

The director gestured to the cameraman, "Get ready folks, the commercial break will come in thirty seconds."

The cameraman responded with an OK gesture.

The director began counting down, "Ten, nine, eight..."

As the countdown was about to end, Samantha's heart sank bit by bit to rock bottom. Not even the smallest mistakes were tolerated in such a setting.

The light in her eyes had dimmed completely.

"Three, two..."

"Sammy."

Rather than having her cold hard judgement handed to her through the earpiece, a voice that penetrated right into her bones appeared out of nowhere.

Samantha was taken aback for a moment then looked up slightly.

Standing in place of the director was Timothy. He stood below the stage at a spot where she could easily see him as long as he looked up.

Timothy's lips curled into a smile and his dark eyes stared deeply at her. He continued and said, "Do your best."

'Do your best.'

She made mistakes during her two years abroad, and a great number of them were when she started working part-time as an anchor.

During that period, she was either scolded brutally and had her wages withheld, or had her pay cruelly deducted. She worked hard for days on end, did not get paid a single cent, and had to spend her own money to seek treatment whenever she got injured.

No one forgave her or encouraged her.

No one could be bothered to tell her a simple: 'Do your best.'

Samantha did not know whether it was those words of encouragement or Timothy's precious, but her flustered state of mind and chaotic emotions had somehow calmed down.

The manuscript suddenly appeared in her mind.

Although she did not have Timothy's photographic memory, her powers of recall were impressive in and of itself and she had honed them considerably through her hard work over the years. As a result, she could still string her thoughts together even though she had only gone through it a couple of times.

Each word began appearing clearly in her mind.

Samantha's speech speed gradually returned to normal and the broadcast continued smoothly.

Upon seeing that, the director immediately gestured to the cameraman to keep the cameras rolling instead of cutting to the advertisement!

The assistant chanced upon the scene when he hurried over with Harmony. He was a little stunned, but Harmony's expression sank.

The assistant told Harmony to wait a moment and ran over to the director, asking, "What's happening here? Would you still like to get Ms. Johnson on?"

The director waved his hand and said, "I don't need Harmony anymore. Samantha's quite something. She recovered her composure with a snap of the finger and she's doing well. There's no reason to swap her out for Harmony."

The assistant nodded. He trotted back to Harmony and said, "We don't need you anymore, Ms. Johnson. You may go ahead and rest."

Harmony was speechless.

She quelled her anger and responded, "Are you just stringing me along? I'm busy too, you know!"

The assistant shrugged his shoulders. "You should bring up your dissatisfaction with the director, Ms. Johnson. I'm just doing as he tells me to. I have matters to attend to as well, so goodbye for now."

He went off as soon as he finished his words.

Harmony gritted her teeth angrily.

Her plan was supposed to be perfect. Why did it end up like that?

From the corner of her eye, Harmony saw Timothy standing at the centermost position below the stage. He stood straight and stared intently at Samantha.

It was as though Samantha was his everything.

Harmony stared blankly at the scene while dark undercurrents began swelling in her eyes.

Samantha's crisp and mellifluous voice rang throughout the studio, "Professor Selby Cornell has no relationship whatsoever with his student Ms. Linda Willoughby. Her accusations are nonexistent. Ms. Willoughby had some conflict with Professor Cornell because her graduation thesis failed to meet his standards. She held that against him and fabricated those rumors. Professor Cornell wishes to appeal to the public not to believe or spread those rumors. At the same time, he understands that Ms. Willoughby's mindset wasn't mature enough. On account of the fact that she was his former student, he does not want her future to be affected by this matter and hopes that she would stop this slander. He will not pursue this matter any further and wants all of this to come to an end..."

"That concludes the news. Thank you everyone..."

The director raised his hand, did a countdown from three, and said, "Cut! Onto the commercial!"

The camera lens shifted away.

Samantha closed her eyes and let out a long sigh.

The staff below the stage could not help but clap their hands.

Everyone thought that there would be a mistake during the broadcast, but it came as a surprise that Samantha could pull off such a feat when everything was hanging by a thread.

The ability to stay calm in the face of chaos and turn the tables on an unfavorable situation could only be achieved by a particularly experienced anchor. It was all the

more spectacular when a newcomer like her could demonstrate that ability during her debut!

However, it appeared as though Samantha neither noticed everyone's admiration nor heard their applause. At that moment, her eyes and heart were focused solely on one man in the audience.

She got up instinctively and ran down quickly.

Samantha then threw herself into Timothy's arms and hugged him tightly.

Chapter 216: Men Should Take the Initiative in Matters Like This

Samantha was someone who paid great attention to decorum in front of others.

She did not want to hog the entertainment news headlines with Timothy for two reasons: firstly, she did not want to be the subject of other people's after-dinner gossip. Secondly, she wanted to maintain Timothy's image because he was intrinsically connected to the Barker Group.

It would be detrimental to Timothy's image, as well as that of the Barker group, if he made the entertainment news headlines time and time again.

On that day however, she found it a little difficult to control herself and did not really feel like exercising that level of self-restraint.

Samantha bit her lower lip gently, then looked up at Timothy before asking in a very, very low voice, "I want to kiss you, Honey."

Words were no longer sufficient to express how touched and loved she felt right then.

Timothy cocked his eyebrows. "Here? Now?"

Samantha nodded repeatedly. "May I?"

"No." The man replied unhesitatingly.

"Oh..."

Samantha's disappointment was obvious, but she understood that Timothy had always been a very low-profile person. Doing so on such an occasion was indeed very inappropriate.

The next second, however, she heard the man's low and sweet voice ringing in her ears. "When it comes to stuff like this, men are the ones who should take the initiative."

At the end of his sentence, Timothy wrapped his long arms around Samantha's slender waist and held her tightly before him. He then lowered his head and planted his thin lips on hers.

Samantha's dark eyes widened all of a sudden and her mind went blank for a second. That surprise soon turned to joy. She closed her eyes slowly and tiptoed so she could hook her arms around his neck.

She kissed him back without a care in the world.

The staff, who were all watching from one side, gasped one after another. They scarcely expected to lay eyes on such a spectacle. Samantha and Timothy were a bona fide couple after all, and since the both of them were attractive individuals, the staff members began applauding loudly while watching them.

The female staff members were getting progressively more animated and could not contain themselves from screaming with excitement.

One of them commented, "Oh my God! I can't believe I'd live to see this! Mr. Barker is handsome and a good kisser! I can't take it anymore. I feel like I'm losing my breath soon!"

The second woman said, "I feel like I'm watching the live version of those romance dramas, or rather, the version that transcends all other versions. Ms. Larsson is much prettier than those female leads, and don't even get me started on Mr. Barker! His handsomeness is making me dizzy!"

A third remarked, "I wish my soul could inhabit Ms. Larsson's body!"

The fourth exclaimed, "I couldn't agree more!"

Everyone else was either cheering them on or gushing at them, but Harmony was the only one who watched angrily and resentfully at the two people kissing in front of her.

She did not know how she managed to exit the studio. All she knew was that she would have gone up and ripped Samantha's face to shreds if she did not come out!

Samantha did not deserve all that because she was a b*tch who stole Harmony's life and happiness!

Harmony stood by the window and strained to take a deep breath, and then another. She needed a considerable amount of time to force herself into calming down.

She was too impulsive earlier.

In fact, she had been too impulsive ever since she returned to the country.

That was why she was always engaged in petty little fights rather than actually getting down to business.

For that reason, Samantha gained the upper hand time and time again.

It was all about to come to an end though.

Samantha was her rival after all, and there was no point being lenient.

Harmony took out her cell phone and dialed a number swiftly. Once the call was connected, she coldly ordered, "My plan...can officially begin."

...

Once Samantha and Timothy were done kissing, she immediately buried her head in Timothy's arms. Her cheeks had turned red and she could not bring herself to face anyone.

Her emotions had gotten the better of her rationality, but that rationality has since returned. She started fretting over how she was going to face people, especially her colleagues, in the future...

Impulsiveness really was a bane!

Timothy lowered his eyes and could only see the lush black hair covering the top of her head. He smirked and teased her unceremoniously, "What's wrong? Are you finally feeling shy now?"

"Where was all that eagerness to kiss me? Hmm?"

He deliberately whispered into her ears and caused them to redden even more.

Samantha gritted her teeth. "Hush. Let's leave already."

She felt as though she had died of embarrassment

"A husband is bound to obey her wife's commands."

Samantha instantly had a bad feeling when she heard that sentence, that feeling came true because she felt her entire body rising into the air the very next second.

Timothy lifted Samantha up in a bridal carry and strode out of the studio.

Samantha was speechless.

'I said we should leave. I didn't ask you to carry me out!'

Samantha thought for a moment. Between the choice of struggling and giving up, she eventually chose the latter.

Like it or not, she had already put on a public display of affection, so she might as well just continue all the way to the end.

At most, she could wear a hood or something when she came for work the next day.

Timothy carried Samantha into the car before putting her down.

Ronald could not help but lament to himself in the driver's seat. No wonder everyone used to say that people who were in love were spoiled to the extreme. The textbook scenario was playing out right before his very eyes.

Samantha slowly reverted back to calmness and finally remembered something. She immediately asked, "Hey, Timothy, shouldn't you be signing a contract in Emsteldt right now? Why did you show up here all of a sudden?"

Timothy replied curtly, "I'm heading there right now."

'Right now?'

Did he...postpone the contract signing for her sake?

Although she was both extremely touched and happy that his presence allowed her to successfully complete her debut, she felt somewhat dismayed that he had to delay his work because of her.

"Will this affect your work, Timothy?" Samantha was a little uneasy.

He rubbed her head gently, as if he knew exactly what she was thinking. "Don't worry."

Although he was unwilling to say anything further, those two words alone carried a strong comforting aura. Samantha did not doubt his abilities either.

Timothy was confident in everything he did.

"I'll send you to the airport then."

Timothy did not refuse. "Okay."

The car drove slowly into traffic and headed right for the airport.

Harmony placed her phone down and watched the car gradually drive away from upstairs. Her eyes stared intently at the car through the floor-to-ceiling windows until it finally disappeared from her line of sight.

She smirked but there was no joy in her eyes.

'Enjoy the last of your happy moments, Samantha, because you'll soon be sent right into hell. You...will...lose...everything! And Timothy...will come back to me. The two of us will love each other, like we always have, and be together until the end of time.'

Euphoria rose from the depths of her eyes as she gradually allowed herself to let loose.

...

Samantha stood outside the airport and watched as Timothy's flight took to the air. She turned to leave only after the plane glided across the sky and left behind a line in the clouds.

Back at the villa, Old Madam Barker and Aunt Julia held a special celebration for her debut.

Once Samantha ate the celebration dinner they cooked for her, she went back to the room and lay on the bed after taking a shower.

She could not help but smile when she recalled the scene where Timothy appeared below the stage and cheered her on.

It was as if her affection for Timothy grew a bit more as compared to the previous day.

The defence in her heart was starting to crumble.

She felt that it was only a matter of time before she fell in love with Timothy again, and she wondered if she could finally start loving him.

Samantha had sweet dreams that night and went to work the next day in a buoyant mood.

Unfortunately, everyone cast angry glances at her as soon as she stepped foot into the office!

Chapter 217: Nothing More Than a Sacrificial Lamb

Samantha's smile disappeared immediately.

Staring angrily at Samantha was the most anyone could do, because they had practically no time to do anything else.

Phones were ringing continuously throughout the entire office lobby so they had to keep on answering calls.

Samantha walked silently to her work station, just in time for the landline on her desk to ring. She pursed her lower lip slightly and picked up the handset to answer it.

A scathingly unpleasant remark filled her ears.

Samantha immediately understood what had happened after hearing that.

She received lavish praise from netizens when she did the news report the previous night. Most of the comments were optimistic, but her reputation had taken a big hit the following morning.

The praises she had received were replaced by a sea of negative comments.

She did not have time to look at Waybo, but she was almost certain that the negativity would plague her Waybo comments and private messages. Had that not been the case, the public would not be so angry that they would call the station just to berate and complain about her.

The reason was because Linda, at eight in the morning, had posted a statement that could be suspected of being a suicide note. She spoke about how she had neither power nor influence, hence why no one believed her even though Selby committed such a heinous act towards her. During that period of time, her personal life had been exposed and she received countless death threats. With the addition of the previous night's news broadcast, everyone accused her of planning and instigating the whole thing. Even her parents suspected her of having mental issues, and she became incredibly depressed because she felt that there was nothing for her to live for anymore. She finally decided that the best way to clear her name was by taking her life.

The post immediately attracted the attention of netizens as soon as it was uploaded. Everyone started to worry that something had happened to her and they actively tried to contact her. At the same time, they were also helping the internet police locate her. Policemen were promptly dispatched to search for her and she was found at a motel nearby the university.

She was lying unconscious on the bed after swallowing a large number of sleeping pills.

The police immediately sent her to the hospital to get her stomach pumped. Her life had been saved, but she was still unconscious.

It was Linda's friend and roommate who came forth to inform the public of the situation. Her words were ruthless and cutting due to the sheer anger and sadness that she was experiencing.

She posed a few questions on Waybo.

The first was directed to Professor Cornell. If he really was as innocent as he said he was, she questioned why he would call Linda to his office on a certain night and spend two hours alone inside with her. She also asked why Linda came out teary-eyed and disheveled.

Her second question was directed to Lychee TV, asking why they would broadcast the news without getting to the bottom of the truth. Lychee TV was influential enough to convince everyone that the professor was innocent and that Linda was the villain, when clearly it was Linda who had suffered!

Finally, she asked Samantha whether the latter had been too eager to climb up the ranks and make a name for herself, further questioning whether that motivated Samantha to join hands with the professor and humiliate Linda. Perhaps it was just a case of powerful people helping each other because they shared mutual interests and believed that they could achieve their goals through unethical means.

Those questions stirred netizens' thoughts as soon as it was posted.

As if unsatisfied at the magnitude at which things were developing, they heartily began commenting and reposting, causing it to go viral in an instant. It appeared on the trending searches and continued to climb to the top.

However, the netizens' last straw was when an official account broke the news that it was Selby's second time committing such an act.

It implied that he was a serial offender!

The first time was said to have happened five years ago, where something similar happened between him and a female student of his. At the time, the incident was swept under the rug in the exact same manner, with the female student disappearing after being driven mad.

Only a few people knew about it because the Cornells had deliberately covered it up, but the truth was bound to come out sooner or later.

At the end of the post was a comment [Bad things never stay hidden for long. I knew the truth was going to come out sooner or later. See? It's happening right now, isn't it? Those who enabled the assaulter are even more despicable. Lychee TV and Samantha are all enablers!]

Netizens had become increasingly resourceful and were able to dig up all sorts of information.

The post spurred everyone into becoming detectives and a plethora of information was dug up within a short period of time.

It was discovered that such an incident did happen in the past, but no one could locate the student who was driven mad because it had been deliberately covered up.

On the other hand, Selby, Lychee TV, and Samantha were three clear entities, and everyone's anger was concentrated upon them.

Carl walked out of the office and headed straight to Samantha's workstation. His expression was extremely sour but he said calmly, "The general manager wants you to go to his office."

His view of her had changed somewhat but it took only one night for her to cause trouble, and a very huge one at that.

He lamented the regrettable nature of his recent recruits.

Each one of them gave him a headache!

Samantha nodded without saying anything and got up to walk outside.

Harmony looked at her straight posture and sneered disdainfully. Samantha's career was on borrowed time from that moment onward.

When Samantha's figure disappeared from her line of sight, her gaze turned to the nameplate on Samantha's workstation and smiled even more proudly.

...

As Samantha got to the door of the general manager's office, she took a deep breath and tidied her appearance before knocking on the door.

"Come in."

Samantha pushed the door open and walked in.

The general manager got up from behind the large desk and said to her, "Let's go to the sofa."

Samantha nodded and followed him there. She took her seat opposite him only after he had sat down.

The general manager had been through numerous trials before and his face remained calm at that point in time. He looked at Samantha and asked insipidly, "I'm sure you're aware of what had happened?"

"Yes," Samantha responded softly.

The general manager looked at her composure and wondered if she was simply pretending or whether she had something in mind.

He knew she was a bright woman and did not beat around the bush with her. He spoke bluntly, "This has swelled into such a huge issue that no one can bear to withstand the surge of public opinion."

"I was the one who brought you in, and I have constantly been very optimistic about you. I certainly hope to keep you around in Lychee TV, but...if you can't deal with this properly for me, I'm afraid that you'll have to be sacrificed when push comes to shove."

The general manager was a kind-hearted man but he also had a decisive and ruthless side.

Samantha understood what he meant. If she failed to handle the matter well, she would be discarded in the same way Walter was.

In addition to having to resign, her name would be tainted in infamy and she would no longer be able to continue down that career path!

The general manager even smiled at her and said, "I hope you don't let me down, Ms. Larsson."

...

After leaving the general manager's office, Samantha went to the bathroom and washed her face.

Once her mind had sobered up, she held her cell phone and dialed Selby's number.

The call was immediately answered as if the other side had been waiting for her call.

Before Samantha could even begin speaking, Selby spoke ahead of her.

Chapter 218: I'm Sorry, Samantha

"I've been waiting for you to call, Ms. Larsson." The man's voice lacked the unusual calmness and warmth. Its hoarseness belied his exhaustion.

Samantha pursed her lips and had a bad feeling.

Sure enough, Selby said solemnly the very next second, "I'm sorry, Ms. Larsson."

He hung up as soon as he said that.

All Samantha could hear was the dial tone. Her eyes widened slightly and she calmly dialed the professor's number again. Unfortunately, she was greeted by a robotic notification that said, 'The phone number you have dialed has been switched off!'

Samantha clenched her phone tightly and decided to call Selby's secretary, only to receive the same notification...

She did not try to make any further calls and the light in her eyes dimmed suddenly.

Did he apologize because he had deceived her, or did he apologize because he regretted implicating her in all that?

Finding out the answer to that was the first order of business as only then could she figure out how to solve the issue. After all, the end results would be completely different.

However, Selby's distinctly negative response more or less made her feel that a crisis was in the offing.

The general manager had enunciated the situation very clearly to her and the netizens were all attacking her too. She could already foresee just how terrible the consequences would be if she failed to handle it properly.

Samantha closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

Such things would not have happened for no reason. With the news going viral so quickly and information being revealed by coincidence, it was clear that someone was trying to push the public opinion in a certain direction. Not even a three-year-old child would believe the claim that there was no one orchestrating the incident from the shadows.

If her guess was right, then Harmony was probably the one behind it.

Harmony's goal...might not just stop at destroying Samantha's career.

Therefore, Samantha could not afford to yield, not even a single step!

Samantha took her cell phone out and called Rochelle. As soon as Rochelle picked up, Samantha asked bluntly, "Hey, Chelle, could you help me find Professor Cornell's home?"

Since all the media companies were unable to find his address, Samantha could only hope that Rochelle would be able to lend her some assistance. After all, Rochelle was the one who managed to obtain Selby's private email before, and the reason she succeeded was because she and Selby were from the same upper-class circle.

Rochelle agreed but expressed her concern, "I already heard what happened, Sammy. I'm not in the country right now, so I'll take the first flight back."

Samantha's heart felt warm. "You should go ahead and do what you need to do. I just need you to find his address for me. Don't worry, I can still handle everything for now."

Ten minutes later, Samantha received the address from Rochelle.

Samantha returned to her workstation, put on her sunglasses and a mask then grabbed her bag and left.

After getting in a taxi, the driver drove her to the destination after she gave him the address.

Selby's private house was located in a high-end villa area in the suburbs, a place known for its excellent security. The residential area was an extremely private one, and it was the preferred choice of villas for many rich and famous individuals.

The taxi stopped as soon as it got to the gate. Outsiders were barred from entering unless they had prior appointments or were given permission by the house owners.

Samantha had no choice but to get down there.

She called Selby once more but the phone was still turned off.

A row of security guards was guarding the entrance up ahead, in addition to the various barriers and cameras that were littered all over the place. Not even a fly could squeeze through such tight security, much less a grown human.

Time was of the essence and she could not afford to drag her feet because every second of every minute was vital.

Samantha quickly tried to think of a surefire way to get in.

Since she could no longer just barge in, her only recourse was to make sure that they had no reason to stop her, or better yet, they would welcome her with open arms.

Her eyes lit up slightly.

She walked to the security guard, raised her chin slightly, then said to what looked like their leader, "I'd like to visit the sales office please."

The security guard was amused.

Many people had requested to come to the sales office, but the kind of customers who could afford to buy a house there dressed lavishly and drove luxury cars.

On the other hand, the security guard clearly saw her arriving in a taxi.

Worse still, none of her clothes seemed to be worth anything and she probably could not even afford to fork out the cost of a single tile in those houses.

Where did she get the confidence to request a visit to the sales office?

At a glance, she looked like the kind of person who came up with all sorts of excuses just to sneak in.

Her ploy was so much more outrageous than those who tried to impersonate as mailmen and pizza delivery guys.

“Alright, little miss. Go and play your little games elsewhere.” The security guard waved her off.

Samantha could not be bothered to waste her breath and opened her backpack to get her purse. From it, she took the black card that Timothy had given her before and waved it right in front of the security guard’s face.

The reason she kept that card with her, even though she never considered spending Timothy’s money, was because it was a ‘token of love’ from him.

It finally seemed to come in handy.

The security guard’s mocking smile froze as soon as he saw this card.

Since many of the house owners he interacted with on a daily basis were all powerful and wealthy people, he knew what that card was and could tell at a glance that the black card was not a fake.

It was the most premium version too.

The number of people who owned a card like that could be counted on one hand.

He stared wide-eyed at Samantha and finally got a closer look at her after not paying much attention to her earlier.

Was she not the famous Samantha Larsson, wife of Timothy Barker?

No wonder she spoke in such a haughty and overbearing manner.

The security guard's attitude changed 180 degrees. He was all smiles as he bowed down slightly as a show of respect. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Barker. I erred in my judgement. I'll bring you to the sales office right now."

Samantha put on her 'Mrs. Barker' personality and raised her head slightly. "Please lead the way."

The security guard walked while calling the manager of the sales office to inform him of the situation. By the time they had reached the sales office, the manager was already waiting at the door.

After leaving her in the manager's hands, the security guard left respectfully.

The manager said very enthusiastically, "Mrs. Barker! Please come in. I've already gotten someone to prepare tea for you."

"That won't be necessary." Samantha spoke in a calm and faint tone, "I'm interested to have a look at the environment here, if that's alright?"

"Of course, of course."

Customers were the manager's top priority, more so when the customer came from such a distinguished background. The manager immediately said, "One moment, Mrs. Barker. I'll get the car to bring you around."

Samantha answered, "Sure."

However, she was nowhere to be seen when the manager finally came back with the car.

...

Samantha had gone to the ninth villa, which was none other than Selby's residence. She took a deep breath and pressed the doorbell.

She heard footsteps coming from behind the door about half a minute later and the door swung open after that.

Selby looked surprised when he saw Samantha standing at the door, as if he did not expect her to find him there.. In spite of his shock, he managed to react quickly and immediately shut the door.

Chapter 219: It's Too Late

Samantha, however, seemed to have expected that sort of reaction from him. She pressed her hand to the door to prevent Selby from moving it.

Selby applied more force but was taken aback when he realized that Samantha had great strength despite her delicate and gentle appearance. The door did not budge at all.

He could not help but gaze up at Samantha.

Samantha's eyes were calm as she remarked straightforwardly, "The least you can do is give me an explanation, Professor Cornell."

She was not going to let herself be waved off with a mere apology after such a serious incident had happened.

Selby pursed his lips and seemed adamant on resisting.

Samantha was not anxious at all and added bluntly, "I won't leave even if you stop me from coming in, Professor Cornell. I'll just keep waiting outside here until you're willing to give me an explanation."

Selby remained silent.

He looked at Samantha's determined expression and knew she meant what she said.

That was the exact same reason he admired her before.

Selby closed his eyes, let out a deep sigh, then finally released his grip from the doorknob. He took a step back and said hoarsely, "Let's talk inside."

Samantha set foot into the house.

Selby took her to the living room and said, "Please just sit wherever, Ms. Larsson. I'll get you a glass of water."

She nodded and sat on the sofa. Although time was of the essence, she had no qualms being patient for a few more moments.

After half a minute, Selby came over with two glasses of water. He placed one glass in front of her and then sat on the sofa opposite her.

He clasped his fingers, placed his hands on his knees, and leaned forward. One could sense an extremely disheartened and dejected aura from him.

Samantha glanced across the coffee table. There was an ashtray filled with cigarette butts on top of it and a faint smell of smoke seemed to linger in the air.

She picked the glass up and took a slow sip of water. All her other emotions were suppressed, leaving only calmness and composure.

After taking a deep breath, Samantha calmly began, "Professor Cornell, netizens have exposed an accusation regarding you and your former student. I'd like to know what exactly happened."

Selby had been lowering his head until she asked that question. He looked up suddenly and seemed puzzled, shocked even.

He stared at Samantha for a few seconds before finally asking, "Ms. Larsson, why...why are you questioning me about what happened instead of asking me if the accusation is true?"

"Do you really...believe me?"

The first question an average person—or rather 99.9% of people—would ask at that juncture was 'are the accusations true?' or something of the like.

Samantha really was an extraordinary woman.

She looked up and stared right into his eyes. "I don't."

"Then why—"

"I believe in the person I love," Samantha interrupted before he could continue his sentence.

The person Samantha loved...was none other than Timothy.

Selby had some knowledge of the things that happened between Timothy and Samantha. Timothy had once abandoned her and renounced their marriage, but they ended up remarrying and she still believed in him so deeply.

Such feelings really were enviable.

"What did Mr. Barker say?"

"He said that you're a very honorable man."

That remark was the basis on which she fought for the chance to report the news. Furthermore, her interactions with Selby convinced her that he was a good man, and that was the reason she chose to speak on his behalf.

The situation might have come to a junction, but she still held the belief that Timothy would never lie to her and was certain that she had not misjudged Selby.

Selby's expression seemed deeply moved.

At that moment, his eyes had a little sparkle when he looked at Samantha.

Sadly, that sparkle soon disappeared, only to be replaced by a complex set of emotions, including pain, conflict, and regret...

The man curled his lips in a self-deprecating manner and said, "Ms. Larsson, I'm afraid...I've betrayed your trust in me. That incident is true."

He seemed so anxious that he concerned himself with his own thoughts without even giving Samantha a chance to interrupt. "I did...harass my female student back then because I was attracted to her and I couldn't help myself. I... I'm no better than a beast. I'm a disgrace as a professor!"

His fists were tightly clenched and there were veins popping out from the back of his palm.

"Everything they say on the internet is true. People like me... people like me...are truly good-for-nothing in society. I don't deserve to teach and educate others. I... I've let everyone down. I've let you down too."

His eyes turned red as he spoke and he lowered his gaze immediately to avoid making eye contact with Samantha.

"I'll take full responsibility for this. I'm really sorry, Ms. Larsson."

Samantha listened quietly and waited for him to finish speaking. After a few moments of silence, she asked, "Why do you have to lie?"

Selby was taken aback.

He retorted enthusiastically the next second. "I'm telling the truth! Every single word I said is true!"

"I can understand how you feel after I dragged you down, but what I said is the truth. I cannot undo my actions and I can only offer you my deepest apologies."

An evil person might regret their past actions and could still put on a sympathetic act in front of others, but no evil person would be willing to suffer in pain and insist on being condemned for their alleged wrongdoings.

Selby was not upset; he was in pain.

She had experienced such a situation before and could not have been more familiar with the feeling.

It was more painful than bewildering when her marriage was broken off and she was abandoned, because being hurt by someone that one loved was as painful as being stung by a million ants. The suffering was not something that could be easily described.

Samantha did not expect him to answer her and concerned herself with her own thoughts, just as he did to her earlier. "You feel sorry for that girl not because you harassed her, right?"

"Is it because of other external factors? Parents, perhaps?"

"Was it your parents who did something to that girl when she vanished without a trace after the incident?"

"The reason you chose not to speak up now is because you want to protect that girl, yes?"

Selby did not answer a single one of her questions. He even yelled, "That's enough, Ms. Larsson! I'm tired. Could you please leave?"

As soon as he said that, he got up and went straight upstairs without caring whether Samantha left or not.

Samantha looked at his stiff rear figure and asked softly, "You love that girl don't you, Professor Cornell? And she...loves you too, doesn't she?"

Selby froze and turned around. His eyes were red as he shouted at Samantha, "Shut up! You don't know a thing. Quit making up stories!"

Samantha's expression did not change one bit and she stood up calmly to look at him. "I hit the nail on the head, didn't I?"

Selby staggered a few times as if he had crashed suddenly into something.

A few seconds later, Selby laughed depressingly and said, "It doesn't matter if you know the truth, Ms. Larsson.. It's already too late."

Chapter 220: This Is the Only Choice I Have

'It's already too late...'

Samantha picked up on the meaning of his words and a thought suddenly occurred to her. She immediately took her cell phone out and clicked on Waybo.

The hashtag #ProfessorCornellapology had climbed to the top of the trending searches.

Her fingers trembled slightly as she clicked on it.

The most viewed post was by Selby. It had been uploaded 30 minutes ago, which was seconds before Selby opened the door for her.

He had recorded a video of himself.

Selby faced the camera and admitted to all the allegations against him that had been making its rounds on the internet, including the past harassment of his female student as well as the most recent accusation. He apologized to the public, to the female student from the past, and to Linda. He also expressed his remorse to Lychee TV and Samantha. Finally, he stated that he would bear all of Linda's medical expenses and would willingly accept his punishment if Linda wanted to sue him.

Sure enough, he took all the blame himself even though he had done nothing wrong.

When Selby saw Samantha watching the video, he bowed deeply at her again and said painfully, "I'm really sorry, Ms. Larsson. This is my only choice..."

His only choice was to protect the person he loved, and in doing so, he had to betray her trust.

After saying that, he strained to climb up the stairs.

Samantha clenched her phone tightly and watched as Selby's figure drifted away.

She did not bother to go up and stop him because she knew that there was nothing she could say or do that would change Selby's mind.

...

Inside a large conference room at Emsteldt, a horde of media reporters had gathered and were pointing their camera lenses toward the stage.

Timothy was sitting at a long conference table with Michael Holt, CEO of EIA Group. Both men were in the midst of inking their cooperation contract.

They each signed and stamped their own copy of the agreement.

Once that was done, the agreements were handed over to their respective assistants for safekeeping. Timothy and Michael stood up, smiled and shook each other's hands.

The camera shutters clicked away as the important moment was recorded.

The strategic cooperation plan established by Barker Group and EIA Group would further propel a historic development of those two business entities, thus cementing their interests on an even larger scale within the business world.

Michael was almost 60 years old, yet he was still a very spirited man and had high hopes for Timothy.

Companies in Emsteldt have approached him and expressed interest in cooperating with his company, but Timothy—as a potential business partner—stood out the most even though he had only interacted with him for the shortest time compared to all the other people.

Timothy lived up to his name as the country's fastest growing tycoon.

He was a very capable man despite his young age, but Michael never felt the wide age gap between them. There were even times when Timothy was more thorough and mature in terms of thinking.

The newer generation was already surpassing the older one.

Once the contract signing ceremony was over, Michael personally walked to Timothy and warmly offered him an invite, "You must attend tonight's celebration dinner, Mr. Barker. I insist. I'm looking forward to having a good chat with you, since we didn't get the chance to do so the last time around."

Timothy had ended his trip in a hurry when he previously came to survey things, and it was only because of his formidable ability that Michael even considered cooperating with him.

Timothy smiled and opened his mouth to speak, but he caught a glimpse of Ronald's anxious and fidgety expression from the corner of his eyes.

He changed his tone and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Holt. I have to answer an urgent call."

Michael gestured politely to Timothy, as if to tell him, 'Please go ahead.'

Timothy raised his chin towards Ronald, who immediately understood and followed him aside.

He asked bluntly, "Tell me what happened."

Ronald was unsurprised at Timothy's reaction, although he could not help himself from letting out a sigh. He lowered his voice and leaned towards Timothy's ears to inform the latter of what had happened to Samantha back home.

The man frowned and immediately ordered, "Get tickets for the first flight home."

Ronald hesitated and glanced awkwardly at Michael. "Mr. Barker, wouldn't it be...impolite of us to just leave Mr. Holt hanging again?"

After a pause, he suggested, "Maybe...we could wait till evening so you can at least attend the celebration dinner before leaving?"

The Barker Group faced stiff competition that time around, yet Michael stood firm on his rather unconventional course when he chose the Barker Group. More accurately though, Michael had chosen Timothy.

Timothy did not say a single word but merely glanced coldly at Ronald.

Ronald's heart skipped a beat and understood it right away.

His boss could not wait even a second longer.

He nodded and said, "Okay, I'll book the plane tickets now, Mr. Barker."

Michael was in the midst of telling his assistant to head to his winery and get the wine he treasured most so he could treat Timothy to a drink later that evening. When he saw Timothy walking back to him, he smiled and was about to speak.

Timothy, however, spoke ahead of him and said, "My deepest apologies, Mr. Holt. I have an immediate emergency that requires me to return to my country. Let's have that dinner again some other time."

Michael's smile disappeared and he was clearly unhappy.

Timothy nodded apologetically, but then turned around and immediately strode off.

Ronald could only apologize once more and said, "I'm really sorry, Mr. Holt."

He then turned around and caught up to Timothy.

Michael's expression had soured completely as he turned to his assistant to ask, "What emergency could Mr. Barker have that made him that anxious to fly home?"

That was already the second time something similar had happened.

It was quite unbecoming of an important business partner.

His assistant had been in charge of investigating the background of Michael's partners, so it was only natural for him to pay attention to Timothy's affairs. He thought for a while and said, "If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Barker's wife might have run into some trouble in the country. It's pretty serious, apparently."

“What trouble?” Michael’s expression darkened. “Tell me the full details.”

The assistant began, “Well, it all started when...”

...

Samantha walked out of Selby’s residence and heard a muffled sound on the other side of the door behind her.

On Selby’s end, there was nothing she could do to exonerate herself.

Furthermore, the attacks were concentrated on Lychee TV and herself after Selby came forth to apologize and bear the responsibility.

After watching Selby’s apology video, she glanced at the comments on her Waybo profile and saw many horrible remarks.

The sight of it could give anyone a heart attack.

If her guess was right, then Lychee TV would soon issue their own statement to apologize and punish her.

In the end, the blame would all fall squarely on her alone.

She would become the perfect scapegoat.

Since she was at a villa area with no taxis nearby, the ride request Samantha made through the ride-hailing app was accepted only after she offered a little extra money.

Her ride finally arrived after she waited for almost 20 minutes.

Samantha opened the car door and sat in, but the driver was slow to start driving. She could not help but look up at him and ask, “What’s wrong?”

To her surprise, the driver turned around abruptly and stared angrily at her.

The atmosphere inside the vehicle suddenly became tense.

Samantha clenched her hand unconsciously while keeping a calm face. “May I ask what’s going on?”

Chapter 221: Surrounded

“You’re that heartless anchor who acted in cahoots with rich people to help them oppress ordinary civilians, right?”

In order to confirm his suspicions, the driver even used his cell phone to search up photos of Samantha to compare them with the woman sitting in his car.

“You are her! You’re Samantha Larsson! How shameless!”

He sounded agitated as he yelled angrily, “Get off my car right now. I don’t take passengers like you!”

Samantha’s expression sank.

She did not get down right away but said in a calm tone, “Sir, please don’t make accusations if you don’t know the whole picture.”

Unfortunately, the driver became more and more irritable when he heard what she had said. “The facts are right before you and you still have the audacity to argue! I mean it when I said I won’t take passengers like you. I won’t do it even if you lodge a complaint against me. Get off on your own and don’t make me force you!”

Samantha did not try to persuade him any further and pushed the door open to get off.

He was not going to listen to any of her explanations anyway, and having one less conflict under such circumstances was much better than having one more.

The car sped off quickly.

Even so, the driver’s anger still remained and he became increasingly angry. As he drove, he sent a voice message to his taxi driver WeTalk chat group.

He remarked angrily, “Down on my luck today! I just received a ride request from that crooked anchor Samantha. I firmly told her that I refused to have her as a passenger!”

The whole nation was gossiping over Selby and Samantha, so everyone knew just who she was.

A flurry of voice messages appeared in the WeTalk chat group.

One asked, “You actually met her, huh? Where did that happen? I’d avoid the place like the plague so I wouldn’t have to receive her ride request.”

The driver who had picked up Samantha earlier said, “Springhill Villas.”

Another driver answered, “Gotcha. I was just about to head that way. Gotta do a U-turn then.”

A third said, "So was I! Thanks for the reminder!"

A fourth remarked, "We should all just avoid there for now! Let her walk out to the main road from there!"

...

Samantha requested another ride, but no one accepted it even though she had waited longer and added even more money. There was nothing else she could do but walk away from the villa while continuing to request a ride.

The afternoon sun was rather strong, so her cheeks were starting to warm up and she was beginning to sweat too.

Luckily for Samantha, she was no longer that easily affected by such conditions after enduring much worse conditions in the past two years abroad. Walking under the hot sun was nothing compared to what she had gone through.

After walking for about 40 minutes, she finally got out of the huge villa area and reached the side of the main road.

She caught her breath for a moment and scanned the area. There was a convenience store up ahead and she slowly made her way there.

After entering, she took a bottle of mineral water from the refrigerator and went to the cashier to pay for it.

The female cashier was busy playing with her cell phone, but as soon as she looked up and saw Samantha, she blinked her eyes a couple of times and stared at Samantha for several seconds before scanning the barcode on the water bottle.

Samantha knew that the cashier had recognized her but remained indifferent about it. She did not need to click into Waybo to know that the public opinion was already going against her.

She had become a villain through and through.

Samantha made payment and walked out of the convenience store with the mineral water in hand.

When the cashier saw Samantha leave, she immediately took out her cell phone and typed away on the virtual keyboard.

Samantha managed to cool herself slightly after taking a few big gulps of water and drinking half the bottle in one go.

She took her cell phone out and considered requesting another ride, but she soon discarded that idea because it would be such a waste of time if she was rejected again.

She went into the map on her phone to take a look at the area and discovered that there was a subway station at the street ahead. It might be better for her to take the subway back.

Samantha walked forward according to the directions given and saw the subway entrance five minutes later. She was about to walk over when a group of people suddenly appeared out of thin air and charged aggressively toward her.

She keenly sensed that something was wrong and turned to leave, but the group of people had already surrounded her, blocking her from every direction and preventing her from leaving.

Everyone's expressions were that of extreme anger and disgust. If looks could kill, she would have died on the spot.

She glanced quickly across everyone and saw that they were all students...

The leader of the group was rather familiar, and she seemed to be Linda's good friend Opal Talbot, the one who came forth and posted those three questions on the internet.

Samantha did not even get the chance to speak when Opal pointed at her and roared, "She's the cruel anchor who drove Linda to attempt suicide!"

"That b*stard Selby has already acknowledged his crimes and Lychee TV has also issued an apology. She's the only one who hasn't shown any remorse, and she still has the decency to show herself in public. Why are you being such a terrible person? I used to think you were a good anchor, but I was blinded by all those lies! To think you could bring yourself to push a human over the edge for the sake of advancing in your career!"

"What happened to Linda was tragic, so we—as her friends—must get justice for her!"

As soon as Opal said that, she clenched her fists and took the lead in charging toward Samantha.