

## Take My Breath Away by Rabbit

### Chapter 27

#### Headquarters Of ZL Group

"Yeah, I'm here," Debbie replied on the phone. The worried lady was too distracted to pay attention to her conversation with Jared. All she wanted to know was whether she would be berated by Carlos for getting drunk. Would he punish her for it? The man, after all, had been poking his nose in everything these days. Lifting the covers off her, Debbie jumped out of the bed, and said, "I'm sorry, Jar. I have to go. Talk to you later." Then she hung up the phone without waiting for Jared to reply, running to the bathroom with her head feeling as though it were being split in half. 'What should I do next? Revolt? Apologize?' Debbie pondered in the tub. If she revolted, would she end up being buried alive? That did not sound tempting at all. So... what if she apologized instead? Would that authoritative aristocrat be merciful? Did he even know how to forgive people? The lady continued to mull over the idea, and considered giving it a try. What was there to lose? Apologizing certainly felt like the easier choice. If it worked, she would no longer have to look over her shoulder anymore. Having made up her mind, she finished her bath quickly and went downstairs. Julie, who was considering going upstairs to wake her up, was glad to see her coming down. With a pleased look, the servant asked Debbie to take a seat while she brought out her lunch. At the dining table, just as she was about to take a bite of her food, an idea suddenly came to her mind. 'How about I cook dinner for him tonight and take it to his office myself? Maybe he'll be so touched by the gesture that he won't have any choice but to forgive me! Hmm...' Grinning, the girl gripped her spoon tightly, and thought to herself, 'That's brilliant, Deb!' The idea just made more sense to her. Come to think of it, Debbie's current priority was not the divorce, but to avoid cutting her life short due to her aristocrat husband. Now that it was clear to her, she contemplated how to appease her angry husband. It was time to put the plan into action. Or so she thought. The more she thought about it, however, the more challenges crossed her mind. 'Umm...' Debbie thought, frowning a bit. 'The thing is...' Looking down on her lap in embarrassment, she closed her eyes and bit her lip. Cooking seemed like a great idea until she realized a small hiccup which could completely influence the results. How could she overlook the key to her plan? That, in order to feed Carlos food delicious enough to make him forget his name, the first thing she needed to know... was how to cook. Luckily, she just thought of the best teacher anyone could ask for. For a moment, the inexperienced chef-for-a-day hesitated while standing in a corner. Watching Julie in her element in the kitchen, Debbie realized how fortunate she was to have someone help her accomplish her goal. At the same time, everything felt unfamiliar, and yet exciting, to her. The whole afternoon, sounds of clanging and banging kept coming from the kitchen. Sizzling oil flew in every direction. Up until that point, Julie never imagined that pans, plates, and ladles could be so noisy. It was as though a war were taking place in the kitchen. By the time it was half past five in the afternoon, the noise in the kitchen finally quieted down. To Julie's relief, the house appeared to be at peace once again. Watching Debbie put the food into a meal box, Julie could not help but wipe beads of sweat off her forehead as she prayed, 'Please, let it not be poisonous. Please...' When Debbie was done with packing everything, she wore a triumphant look. 'That wasn't so hard now, was it?' she thought proudly. The girl put her hands on her hips and took a deep breath. It was time for the final step of her foolproof plan. Next stop: the headquarters of ZL Group. Situated in the busiest area of the city, ZL Group's astonishing 88-floor main office building towered into the sky, linked with the neighboring 66-floor skyscraper by ten-odd aerial arch bridges. Apart from ZL Group, more than one thousand companies from all parts of the world were based there as well. Debbie had passed by the building so many times, which was one of the landmarks of Y City. Even so, had it not been for Emmett sharing the company address with her, she would not have remembered that it was where Carlos worked. As far as she knew, ZL Group had businesses in many industries such as high-technology, real estate, cosmetics, clothing, and entertainment. As the boss of such a colossal group, despite his age, Carlos was highly respected. His success and competence spoke for itself. Somewhat in awe, Debbie could only imagine the pressure and responsibilities that came with his work. When she entered the building while holding the meal box, she ran into some people who had finished their work and were on their way out. The young lady wore a white shirt underneath her coat, partnered with a pair of jeans and white sneakers while her purple hair was in a bun. A single glance at her was all it took to guess that she was a college student. Her young and vigorous vibe even convinced some onlookers that she might still be in high school. Such a lovely girl did not often frequent their building, and hence, she was hard to miss. As more and more people stepped out of their offices, some of them began to wonder whom the girl was visiting there. "Excuse me, miss, how can I help you?" Rhonda Wang, who was a secretary, asked at the front desk when she noticed that Debbie was looking around like a lost child. The more mature woman warily sized her up and down. "I'm here for Carlos Huo," Debbie answered nonchalantly. As soon as that name came out of her mouth, everyone who was within earshot turned to gaze at her in bewilderment. 'Who is this girl? What's the nature of her relationship with Boss? Nobody has dared to call him by his full name, ' Rhonda Wang wondered. Wherever Carlos was concerned, people addressed him as respectfully as they could. Therefore, it was always either Mr. Huo or Sir... never Carlos Huo. "Are you a fan of Mr. Huo's?" Rhonda Wang asked, her chin raised. There was a hint of contempt in her smile. Before the young university student could reply, she spoke again. "I'm sorry. Mr. Huo is very busy. I'm afraid he does not have time to meet fans today." Tens, sometimes even hundreds of people, came to see the influential man every day. But as their boss' status was beyond average people's dreams, not everyone was fortunate enough to be graced with his presence. 'And certainly, not a university student like this girl, ' Rhonda Wang thought to herself. "I'm not his fan," Debbie was quick to answer. "I'm his... family." Few people were aware that she was married to Carlos. And with divorce on the table at any given moment, she did not see the point in having to disclose that information. This time, Rhonda Wang burst into laughter. Sarcasm and scorn were written all over her face, and she did not even bother to conceal them. "Young girl, it's wrong to lie. Mr. Huo's family is in the U.S. taking care of the company over there. Everybody knows it." The secretary sneered, and continued, "Next time you come up with a lie, be prepared." After deriding Debbie, the older woman cast an impatient glance at her and waved her hand as though she were telling her to leave. Debbie could not help but narrow her eyes at the woman. "I'm not lying," she said. "Why don't you just call him if you don't believe?" The contempt on Rhonda Wang's face provoked Debbie, and she was not about to let it go. She thought, 'Is everyone here so judgmental?' Crossing her arms over her chest, Rhonda Wang stared at Debbie coldly and questioned, "Family? If you truly are Mr. Huo's family, why don't you give him a call?" Despite Debbie's insistence, the secretary still did not believe her. She was, therefore, left with no choice but to find another way to convince Rhonda Wang. Gritting her teeth, Debbie dialed Philip's number. The secretary's expression shifted as she watched Debbie with a raised eyebrow. 'Oh, she's really calling someone, ' Rhonda Wang thought to herself. 'I wonder who it is. She better not be pulling my leg or else.' As soon as Philip answered her call, Debbie said, "Philip, I'm at Carlos' company right now, but there is this old lady who wouldn't let me go upstairs." Without having to look at Rhonda Wang, she could anticipate how twisted her face was at that moment when she heard Debbie call her "old lady". 'Serves her right, ' Debbie thought. This was her sweet revenge for Rhonda Wang looking down on her. The moment Debbie hung up the phone, the shocked secretary bawled, "Whom did you call old lady? I'm under thirty. You really need to work on your people skills, little girl!" A brazen glint appeared in her eyes. "You might be under thirty," Debbie agreed, "but the way you talk to people make you sound like you're over forty." 'Maybe you are lucky to work in such a big company, but it doesn't make you better than anyone else. Someone has to tell you that. It might as well be me, ' Debbie thought as she watched Rhonda Wang sputter an incoherent response. Blinking furiously, Rhonda Wang sneered, "Didn't you call someone? Well, nothing has happened so far. From where I stand, no one cares." The moment she finished talking, however, the phone on the front desk rang. Her heart started racing nervously; her face turned as pale as a ghost. "Does she really know Mr. Huo?" she thought.

Scared stiff that the call might be from Carlos, she trotted to the front desk at once. When she saw the caller ID, she almost stumbled backward. Her heart jumped to her mouth; it was from the CEO's office. Throwing a glance at Debbie, she gulped upon seeing the young lady's triumphant look. It seemed she might have messed with the wrong person.

"Hi, Mr. Huo," she greeted, managing a nervous smile.

"Send her up," Carlos uttered, his voice as icy cold as ever. Although it was brief, Rhonda Wang felt a little dizzy. Her legs went numb and she could no longer move from her spot. To prevent herself from falling, she had to cling to the desk hastily.

'Oh my goodness! Mr. Huo has called the reception himself. He rarely does that! I'm screwed, ' the secretary wailed inwardly.

"Yes, sir," she responded, controlling her voice from being shrill. Her hands trembled as she hung up the phone. So nervous she

was, that she had to place the phone several times before doing it right. Then, she took a deep breath. The woman who seemed like she was having a panic attack repeated a breathing exercise which she knew could calm her nerves. In this industry, there

was hardly room for mistakes. Yet it seemed like she might have just committed a grave one. Although Debbie was standing near the front desk, it took Rhonda Wang more than ten seconds

to walk to her. Her shaking legs betrayed her calm facade, but Debbie refrained from voicing out her observation. "Hello, Miss.

Please come with me," Rhonda

Wang said in a respectful manner. All of a sudden, the atmosphere seemed to change and everything was more cheerful than it

had been a few moments ago. This shift in her behavior did not go unnoticed by Debbie, but she let the secretary drown in her

anxieties for a bit more and did not offer anything else but a small nod.

'Crap! Am I going to lose my job?' Rhonda Wang thought as she led Debbie to the elevator.

While waiting for the elevator, she

stole a glance at the mysterious young lady who appeared to be tranquil. "Um," Rhonda Wang began, "I'm so sorry. I didn't know

who you are. Please—"

"You don't need to explain. I understand. So many people come here every day asking to see Mr. Huo," Debbie interrupted her, a

smile playing on her lips. The secretary seemed to have learned her lesson so Debbie decided to stop torturing the woman with

her silence. It was not her fault, after all, that she did not know her. What simply irked Debbie was that the older woman should

not have looked down on people she had never met before.

Her reply surprised Rhonda Wang. When people who had the luxury of meeting Carlos were

offended by those beneath them, they often resorted to dishing out harsher treatments. The secretary looked at Debbie and thought, 'Has she forgiven me so

easily?'

"I'm really sorry. I won't do that again," Rhonda Wang still apologized. For two years, she had

been working as a secretary at the front desk for ZL Group. During this long arduous period, she had learned how to deal with

problems.