

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 16

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Shaun suddenly curled a smile and raised his eyebrows. "You can leave, but you have to leave in the same way as they were dragged out just now."

Catherine was stunned as her eyes settled on Shaun. She was caught in a moment of contrasting emotions.

She did not expect him to stand up for her. Somehow, she could not help but find him rather attractive.

At that moment, Rebecca and the women could no longer keep their cool.

Janet roared, "Who do you think you are? Do you know who we are?"

Shaun kept still, throwing a glance at Chase.

Chase looked sideways at the group of servers with a smile. "Should I personally give your boss a call? The strongest person to drag them will be rewarded."

Everyone in the restaurant was aware of Chase's identity. Even the servers' boss would treat him courteously.

The group of servers immediately rushed to drag Rebecca and the two other women out with one server treating them crueler than the previous one.

All of the three women had come well-dressed. However, their hair soon became messy while their shoes dropped to the floor when they were being dragged. Even Rebecca's long dress was torn after it got hooked on the flower bed.

Catherine and Freya watched the situation with their mouths agape.

Kneeling in front of the two of them, Manager Lorenz begged, "I must've been blind just now, Miss Jones and Miss Lynch. It was very careless of me. I hope the two of you will be generous enough to forgive me. Don't sink to my level."

Catherine secretly glanced at Shaun. Upon realizing that he was not uttering a word, she then said, "How lucky we are to come across Young Master Harrison here. Otherwise, we would've been the ones who got dragged out. In that case, I wouldn't have forgiven you and complained about you guys to your boss in person."

Chase said with a smile, "You don't have to do it in person. I'll call their boss in a minute and make him get lost."

Manager Lorenz plopped down on the floor in pain.

Freya was indeed delighted by the situation. Coincidentally, she saw Catherine standing frozen by Shaun's side without saying a word. Struck by a sudden thought, she used her shoulder to hit her best friend violently.

With a sudden push, Catherine, who had been spacing out, missed her footing and subsequently fell into Shaun's arms.

She had never been so close to him. A soft scent then filled her nose.

She had a brain fart at that instant. Never did she expect that the man would smell so lovely. It was completely different from his aura.

Catherine sensed that Shaun's eyes were sweeping over her. Hit with a realization, she got out of his arms in a hurry. "I'm sorry, it was an accident."

"Stop explaining. It's not the first time you've done such a thing," Shaun replied knowingly.

Catherine was speechless.

Had she really done such a thing?

Why was she unaware of it?

Furious at being falsely accused, she turned her gaze to the instigator. She noticed that Freya and Chase were staring at her curiously.

Chase gave a light cough. "It must be fate that brought us together. Let's have a meal together, okay?"

Freya's eyes sparkled. "Sure. I was just planning to have a toast with you to thank you for the help."

"Let's go."

As Freya and Chase were chatting, they entered the restaurant first.

Catherine was dazed. How dare Freya act so without asking Catherine for her opinion?

Catherine hesitantly looked at Shaun, yet he did not bother to even take a glimpse at her. He shoved his hand into the pocket of his trousers and went straight into the restaurant.

She quickly went after him as she wanted to find out about Fudge's condition as well. She was quite anxious about it, considering that she had casually left the house the day before.

A server led the four of them to a private room. Once Catherine stepped into the room, she gasped at the luxurious atmosphere.

Freya approached Catherine excitedly and whispered in her ear, "Sure enough, it's your husband who booked it. This is Calia Pavilion, it's the most luxurious private room in the entire restaurant. Even my dad wasn't qualified to book it last time."

"..."

Freya said, "Only people with a net worth of at least 50 billion dollars are eligible to book the private room."

Catherine was at a loss for words.

Freya pinched Catherine's waist out of jealousy. "Actually, your husband is pretty good. Although you had hurt his dearest cat, all he did was kick you out of the house. Look, he has forgiven and forgotten what you did. He even helped you just now. How awesome he is!"

Catherine said disdainfully, "Let me remind you who's the one who kept criticizing him earlier."

“Oh well, I only looked at him from afar back then. Little did I know that he’d turn out to be a very attractive man upon a closer look. The point is, he’s Ethan’s uncle. Think about the man’s wealth, status, and appearance which put your ex-boyfriend in the shade. Ethan will lose his cool if he appears in front of him, and this will also make Rebecca feel very jealous.”

Catherine suddenly became eager at the thought of Rebecca’s pretentious manner.

“What are the two of you whispering in each other’s ears?” Chase asked, amused.

Only then did Catherine notice that the two men in the private room had shifted their gazes to her. She was instantly embarrassed. “Thanks to the both of you, I have the privilege to enter this luxurious private room.”

“I thought both of you were talking about Shaun’s attractiveness,” Chase replied with a grimace.

“...”

His sharp words left Catherine feeling ashamed. “You must be joking, Young Master Harrison.”

“Let’s start ordering food.”

Shaun flipped open the menu, his eyes revealing coldness. After casually ordering two dishes, he placed the menu on the table.

Chase spun the lazy Susan with his fingers until the menu reached Catherine. “Order some food, Sister-in-law.”

Catherine, who was drinking coffee, nearly choked upon hearing it.

She coughed violently a few times. From Chase's mocking eyes, it dawned on her that Chase had already learned about her marriage with Shaun. Apparently, Shaun and Chase had a close relationship.

"Don't call me that. I'll lose my identity anytime."

She took the menu embarrassingly. She noticed that the dishes Shaun had ordered were quite bland, so she chose some bland dishes as well.

Without much thought, Freya said, "The signature grilled lamb chop here tastes good and is quite spicy. Don't you like spicy food?"

A few seconds of eerie silence befell the private room.

After a while, Chase gave a chuckle. "She knows that Shaun's on a bland diet and that's why she's being considerate toward her husband."

Freya was momentarily stunned. She then shot a flirtatious glance at her best friend.

Catherine blushed with shame. Although she was thick-skinned when dealing with Shaun privately, she could not help feeling embarrassed when such a matter was discussed in public.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 17

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 17

"That... You guys have misunderstood me. My stomach hasn't been feeling well recently, so I'm opting for blander food..."

“You don’t have to explain further. I understand.” Freya patted Catherine on the back of her hand while chuckling.

Catherine was dejected. Sure enough, her friend turned out to be her betrayer.

Shaun, who had been quiet, raised his long, thick eyelashes and glanced at the woman opposite him.

She was wearing a pink knitted top today. The skin on her neck was milky, yet her face had reddened. The redness had even spread to the delicate skin around her ear lobes.

His eyes sparkled without him realizing it. However, he soon stifled the look, then took a sip of coffee.

Struck with an idea, Freya took out her phone and pretended to discuss something with her best friend. “Which place are you planning to rent? I think this apartment is pretty good. It only costs 800 dollars per month.”

Chase said, “What kind of a good apartment are you able to rent with 800 dollars? Who’s planning to rent a place?”

Freya sighed. “It’s Cathy. She has no choice but to rent a place since she has been kicked out of the Jones family. She has nowhere to stay at the moment and is left with very little money. She stayed at a budget hotel last night. There weren’t any windows in the room, and what’s more, the bed linen didn’t get changed. Also, there were always people sliding little cards under the door. How dangerous.”

Lowering her head, Catherine drank her coffee quietly. Freya, who was a fantastic drama queen, was indeed her best friend.

Shaun frowned imperceptibly.

Chase turned his head to look at him, then moaned. "Shaun, how could you let your pretty wife stay at such a dangerous place? How incompetent you are at taking care of her!"

Catherine immediately turned into a drama queen. "It's my fault. I fed Fudge with chips, causing her to vomit. Shaun was right in kicking me out. By the way, how's Fudge now? Is she fine?"

Chase responded while smiling, "Don't blame yourself. Fudge is—"

"Not in a good condition." Before Chase could continue, Shaun interrupted his speech. "Your apology is useless."

With a strange expression, Chase felt sympathetic toward Catherine whom he felt did not deserve the blame. This was very cruel of Shaun.

Catherine turned pale all of a sudden. She was under the impression that Fudge's condition had gotten better and that Shaun gave her a hand because his anger had subsided.

"Tell me how you're going to make up for it," Shaun suddenly spoke again.

Catherine was in a daze. "With money? I don't have any."

"..."

Shaun's brows furrowed. This woman was usually quite shrewd, yet why was she so foolish at this crucial point?

“The doctor said that Fudge needs some rest. Her diet and living habits need to be managed well too. If you really feel guilty, you can take care of her meals three times a day during this period. Don’t let her take oily food. Instead, prepare more fresh and nutritious food that’s easy for her to digest.”

“Cough, cough.” Chase choked upon hearing the man’s shameless remarks.

Tsk. It finally dawned on him that Shaun wanted to get a pretty sitter for free.

Clever. How clever.

Catherine was momentarily stunned. She then probed him by asking, “You mean I can return to your place and live there?”

Shaun flatly reminded, “Put aside all your other thoughts. From today onward, you’re going to serve as Fudge’s sitter.”

“Sure, no problem.”

Catherine was so excited that her eyes sparkled. By the look of things, she still stood a chance of being Ethan’s aunt.

After all, she managed to serve as the cat’s sitter for the time being. This would mean that she could become Shaun’s personal sitter in the future.

Shaun’s eyes flashed with satisfaction. Not only did he not have to apologize for what happened the previous night, but he had also gotten Fudge a sitter. This way, he managed to kill two birds with one stone. After the meal, Chase went to settle the bill while Catherine stood beside Shaun.

All of a sudden, a card was flung into her arms. "Go and get some food in the mall for Fudge's dinner later."

"What does she eat?"

Catherine held the card with a dazed look as she had never reared a cat.

Shaun threw a contemptuous glance at her. "I've told you earlier. Something nutritious, clean, and fresh."

"Oh."

What a headache. These days, a cat's life was better than a human's. Was the food meant to nurture her pregnancy or soothe her stomach?

"So are you coming home tonight? What do you feel like eating? I'll prepare it for you."

"Anything."

After saying this, Shaun left with Chase.

Watching the two of them walk away, Freya said with a chuckle, "I wonder how much money there is in the card? With this card, you probably won't be strapped."

"I'm not sure. I won't spend the money since it's his." Catherine shook her head. "I have to search for a job as soon as possible within these two days."

"Alright then. Keep it up. Since you won't be looking for a place to rent anymore, I'm going to watch a

movie with Patrick. He just came to pick me up.”

After Freya got into her boyfriend’s car, Catherine walked toward her car.

The moment she caught sight of Ethan leaning against her car door with his tall figure, she was filled with coldness.

They said one loved someone as much as one hated him or her. That was exactly how she felt at that point.

“Was it Rebecca who told you I’m here?”

She lifted her head and stared at Ethan’s stunning face.

At that instant, Ethan’s familiar eyes displayed a hint of frustration.

“Cathy, no matter how angry and jealous you are, you shouldn’t have done that to your sister.”

Catherine was astonished, yet she soon smiled and said, “She told you about it, didn’t she?”

“I found out about it even without her telling me. Someone posted today’s incident on Snapchat,” Ethan replied with a reproaching tone. “You got someone to tear your sister’s long dress in public and drag her out of the restaurant in an embarrassing manner. Besides your sister, Janet and your best friend, Cindy, were also put into trouble. Your awful behavior is indeed upsetting.”

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 18

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 18

Ethan's thin lips opened and closed elegantly.

Catherine had heard him saying sweet words countless times. This time, however, she was heartbroken.

"Yeah, I'm awful. So are you here to take revenge against me on behalf of your fiancée?"

"You still haven't realized your mistake at this point," Ethan furiously added, "Mr. and Mrs. Jones are already upset with you. Why can't you behave yourself? People out there are calling you small-minded."

"Yeah, I'm small-minded," Catherine admitted it openly. "I'm not a saint either."

"Catherine!"

Ethan could not help but knock on the car with his fist.

"You've really let me down. I've been trying hard to endure for the sake of our future, hoping that I'll be able to take over Lowe Corporation soon. What about you? Look at what you've done. Not only did you leave Summit and end up being jobless, but your reputation has also been ruined. Can't you push yourself a little harder?"

"I'm working hard."

'I'm working hard to consolidate my identity as your aunt, you scumbag.'

Ethan sneered with rage, "You're just working hard to bully Rebecca, aren't you? If you go on doing this, Rebecca is going to surpass you. Yes, she might have lower educational qualifications and she may have grown up in the countryside, but she's smart, diligent, and always burns the midnight oil..."

"Oh, you've actually noticed so many plus points in her," Catherine mocked.

Upon hearing that, Ethan thought that she was jealous. With that, he displayed a helpless expression.

"Now isn't the time to feel jealous, Cathy. You should understand the concept of the tortoise and the hare—"

"Who's jealous? Ethan, you ditched me and got engaged to her. What gives you the right to force me into working hard for you? Does it mean that you'll give up on me if I stop working hard? Actually, do you want a woman you love or a woman who matches your status and is capable of helping you?"

"If I'm not into you, would I waste my time meeting you here? Listen to me. Go home and apologize to Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, and Rebecca so that you can return to Summit soon," Ethan answered impatiently.

"What's the point of returning to Summit? No matter how hard I work, Rebecca is capable of ruining my achievements at any time." Catherine suddenly scoffed. "Actually, in your eyes, those achievements don't belong to me but to you who fought for them."

Her aggressive words made Ethan boil with rage. "If it hadn't been for me, could you have won the hotel project? Why won't you reflect on your weaknesses? No wonder you can't get along with everyone."

“You’re right. You’d better stay away from me, then.”

Catherine was so furious that her teeth chattered. Upon pulling open the door violently, she said fiercely, “Don’t come and meet me anymore. I’m disgusted by your face right now.”

“What are you saying?”

Ethan showed a grim expression arrogantly. “Haven’t you looked at yourself in the mirror before telling me off?”

“Yes, I look terrible. I don’t deserve to be with a noble person like you, Young Master Lowe.”

Catherine gave a cold smile, then closed the door forcefully. She started the car which quickly drove out of view.

Ethan, who was left there, lifted his leg and kicked the tree beside him.

At that moment, Rebecca called him while speaking with an anxious tone.

“Ethan, you went to meet Cathy, didn’t you? Just advise her nicely. Be easy on her.”

At the thought of Catherine’s unkind expression, Ethan could not help but say, “She treated you so badly, yet you’re putting in a good word for her.”

“I just have to help her. I empathize with her, actually.” Dejected and aggrieved, Rebecca added, “From her point of view, I do seem like a robber who snatched her things away from her. Having said that, I’m not the one who can make decisions regarding the company’s matters. It’s my dad who decides it all. As for you, I’m truly in love with you. Despite knowing that you have feelings for her, I can’t help competing for your love. Will you blame me for being too selfish, Ethan?”

If this had happened earlier, Ethan would have actually blamed her.

However, when he recalled Catherine's lack of effort to work toward their future together, he suddenly felt that Rebecca loved him more than Catherine did.

There was nothing wrong with loving someone.

All of a sudden, he felt a twinge of guilt. "No, I've never blamed you. Don't think too much."

"Okay, Ethan. I'll work hard so that you can take over Lowe Corporation. I know you're planning to work on a project with the Campbell family these days, which is why I'm in frequent contact with Janet..."

Ethan finally saw why she did that. Deep down, he was rather sympathetic toward Rebecca as he knew that it was not easy to get along with Janet. "Thank you."

"Don't mention it. I'm willing to do anything for you."

It was the first time Ethan went blank. He wondered if it was worth going to great lengths to win Catherine's heart back.

...

A Maserati moved along the wide road.

Throughout the journey, Catherine shivered as she felt both physically and mentally icy.

Never did she expect that she and Ethan would one day end up being so harsh to each other. It left her wondering whether he was the one she used to love. Why would he lose faith in her, have a bad impression of her, and act selfishly?

It could be because she had never penetrated his mind.

Shortly afterward, her phone rang.

It was a call from Sally. It was the first time Catherine received a call from Sally since she left the house.

Catherine knew for sure that the call was not about letting her return home, yet she answered the call in spite of herself. “Mom—”

“Don’t call me ‘Mom’. I don’t have such a cruel daughter!” Sally’s angry voice came from the other end. “Come back and apologize to your sister right now!”

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 19

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 19

Kneeling down...

Catherine was extremely aggrieved. “Why don’t you ask Rebecca what she did to me? She—”

“Your sister is kind-hearted, unlike you. All you’ve done is have a falling-out with Janet. The Campbell family is one of the wealthiest families. Your sister deliberately established a rapport with Janet to ensure that the Jones and Campbell families would get along well.

“What about you? You did so many evil things and even hurt your sister. How did I end up raising such an ill-bred daughter like you?”

“I won’t go back.” Catherine gritted her teeth.

Sally roared, “Don’t ever come back, then. I won’t treat you as my daughter anymore!”

Catherine inhaled deeply. “Have you ever been concerned about me? Before she returned, you always thought that I wasn’t as good as others no matter how hard I worked. You wouldn’t talk to me apart from telling me off. Am I really your daughter?”

After she howled in pain, her tears gushed out.

Indeed, she was overwhelmed by frustration. She did not feel like returning to that home anymore.

She then pulled herself together and headed to a pet shop to ask about matters related to soothing a cat’s stomach.

It was the first time that the owner who reared a cat heard about soothing a cat’s stomach. He eventually handed her a book entitled ‘Food Recipes for Pregnant Cats’.

“Anyway, the recipes in here incorporate all the nutrients that a pregnant cat needs. There shouldn’t be any problem if you prepare food for your cat based on this book.”

After some thought, Catherine bought the book and headed to the supermarket to buy some ingredients.

...

At 4 P.M., she returned to Jadeite Bay.

When Fudge noticed her return, she meowed sluggishly and snuggled in her corner without moving.

The sight made Catherine even more heartbroken. With that, she decided to go the extra mile for Fudge to make things up to her.

Considering that the cat needed to take light food, she prepared a few salmon balls and included carrots and steamed vegetables in them.

In addition, she made the cat a few puddings as a snack.

Shaun got off from work and returned home in the evening.

Through the glass door of the kitchen, he saw Catherine busy cooking vegetables. One minute she was cutting vegetables and the next minute she was cooking them.

The delicious smell of the vegetables wafted through the crack of the glass door and stimulated his stomach. He was slightly hungry all of a sudden.

As Shaun glanced sideways at the table, he noticed the puddings, which were shaped like Hello Kitty, on a white porcelain platter. With their bright colors, the puddings looked quite appetizing.

He casually took a spoon to eat some pudding. It tasted quite different from the puddings he had eaten overseas in a Western restaurant back then.

The taste was strange. It appeared that the pudding contained chicken and some unknown ingredients, yet it was not too greasy. It was probably fine to have a few more mouthfuls of the pudding.

He had long since known that Catherine was good at making breakfast. However, little did he know that she could make creative desserts as well.

“You’re back, Shaunny.”

When Catherine slid open the door to come out of the kitchen with a platter filled with freshly cooked food, she was astonished to see Shaun who had almost finished the pudding that he was holding.

Gosh, that was cat food!

Her stare made Shaun feel a little uncomfortable. He reckoned that she was inwardly elated to see him eating the dessert she made.

At this thought, he coughed lightly and cleared his throat. “The dessert you made... tastes quite great.”

“...”

Catherine quivered, seriously wondering whether he would kill himself after she told him that the dessert was meant for the cat.

After flipping between her conscience and life for some time, she eventually forced a smile. “I purposely made it for you. Good to know that you find it delicious.”

Shaun glanced at her arrogantly. "You just need to focus on Fudge."

"I know, I know." Catherine nodded with a loving expression. "I just can't help myself."

Shaun continued to stare at her icily.

Catherine could hardly maintain her loving expression. How could he be unmoved? Was he even a man?

Luckily, Shaun carried Fudge and put her in his arms before changing the subject.

"What did she eat tonight?"

"Salmon balls. She doesn't like vegetables, so I added some carrots to the salmon balls. She has finished all six salmon balls."

As soon as Catherine finished her sentence, she began to have suspicions regarding Fudge's appetite. She was told that cats ate very little, yet Fudge had such a big appetite.

"Alright."

"I'm done preparing dinner. You can start eating."

Catherine placed forks and spoons on the table. She had prepared Caesar salad with boiled eggs, lettuce, and butter croutons for dinner.

Looking at the salad, Shaun felt that it was comparable with the quality of food served in restaurants.

“It’s better to avoid eating meat and take lighter food at night,” Catherine explained.

Shaun was surprised. “You’re already quite health-conscious at this age.”

“My dad has gastric pain as he drank a lot for business back then, so I know a little about taking care of one’s stomach.”

At the mention of this matter, Catherine became upset in spite of herself. Unfortunately, Jeffrey had never seen her in a positive light.

Shaun, who was unbothered by matters related to the Jones family, lowered his head and continued to eat.

It was undeniable that Catherine’s cooking was wonderful. The meal that she made might seem ordinary, but it tasted much better compared to the food served at restaurants out there.

Even the ordinary boiled eggs tasted good while the lettuce and croutons were crunchy. The salad was very appetizing overall.

With a great appetite, Shaun finished the meal in several gulps.

After he was done eating, he praised her, “Great cooking.”

“Thanks.”

Catherine acted shy and felt flattered for a while.

“Since young, I’ve been determined to be wife material for the sake of my future husband. All I hope is to provide him with good food every day after he gets off work.”

She glanced in the opposite direction as soon as she finished speaking.

The man looked downward, patting the cat on his lap. His thick eyelashes that resembled a crow’s fur had obscured the emotion within his eyes.

All of a sudden, Catherine felt nervous. The man then lifted his head and opened his eyes lazily. “What are you waiting for? Do the dishes now.”

“...”

Where did this stubborn man actually come from? He was such a wet blanket.

After bringing the dishes to the kitchen, Catherine kept badmouthing him with gritted teeth. At that moment, she even began to seriously doubt her beauty.

When Shaun stood up and got ready to head to the study, he suddenly caught sight of a book entitled ‘Food Recipes for Pregnant Cats’ on the living room’s couch.

He frowned, wondering if Catherine had found out that Fudge was pregnant.

Coincidentally, Catherine came out of the kitchen after doing the dishes. When she saw him holding the book, she explained, “I went to the pet shop today. The owner told me that the recipes for soothing a cat’s stomach are actually similar to the ones for pregnant cats, so I bought this book.”

Shaun's eyes relaxed. It seemed that she was still unaware of it...

As he casually flipped through the book, he noticed a familiar recipe all of a sudden. His handsome face froze.

After a while, Shaun lifted the book and showed Catherine the picture above. "So this is the pudding you purposely made for me, is it?"

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 20

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 20

A shiver ran through Catherine's body. She seemed to have forgotten that she made the cat pudding earlier based on the recipe in the book.

"Uh... That was actually..."

"You can make anything for me as long as I find it tasty."

Shaun reminded her with a grim expression. At that moment, he began to feel nauseous upon realizing that he had consumed cat food.

Catherine felt helpless. "Actually, I made it for Fudge, but you ate it and even commented that it was tasty. At that moment... I was too afraid to tell you the truth."

"Catherine."

Shaun gnashed his teeth. Having lived through 28 years of life, this was the first time he had ever wanted to kill a woman so badly.

She shrunk her neck upon being shouted at. "In fact, the ingredients... are quite nutritious."

"Since the food's nutritious, why don't you eat it yourself?"

"Uh, I don't find it tasty."

"Well done."

While pointing at her, Shaun recalled praising the taste of the food. He became so furious that his face darkened.

Catherine wanted to explain further, yet Shaun had already entered his study and slammed the door violently.

Oh no, he was really pissed.

Catherine was at her wits' end.

She initially planned to please him during her stay here this time. However, she had already offended him when he only returned home for less than an hour.

Why did she have a long way to go before she could consolidate her identity as Ethan's aunt?

Ten minutes later, she shamelessly knocked on his study's door.

"Get lost."

A violent voice was heard.

Catherine closed her eyes in frustration. Since he was still fuming at that point, she should just wait before she spoke to him again.

She went to take a bath first. She changed into a set of lovely pajamas, letting her long black hair fall on her shoulders.

When she looked into the mirror and winked at herself, she was attracted to her own beauty. With fair skin and large eyes, she found herself pure and attractive indeed.

She believed that her appearance would make Shaun treat her with care.

"What are you doing?"

A man's voice suddenly rang beside her.

Catherine trembled with fear. She cocked her head and noticed that Shaun was staring mockingly at her with a cup of coffee in his right hand.

When did he come? Why did she not hear any footsteps?

"I..."

'Obviously, I'm secretly practicing how to flirt with you.'

"I got attracted to my own beauty while looking at myself in the mirror," she replied in embarrassment after stuttering for a while.

Shaun was at a loss for words.

Indeed, her shamelessness had reached yet another new level.

Nevertheless, he had to admit that the woman's bare face was indeed fresh and elegant. Even in Canberra, a city teeming with beautiful women, there were hardly any women who looked naturally beautiful like she did.

"All I can see is your pretense." Once he finished his sentence with a contemptuous expression, he turned around to pour himself some water.

Catherine went after him. "Are you still pissed? What should I do to quench your anger? I'll eat some cat pudding as well, okay?"

Shaun suddenly curled his lips and took a packet of cat food from the cabinet. "I won't be able to quench my anger until you have a bowl of cat food."

Catherine was shocked to find him so cruel.

"This is... different. The cat pudding I made consists of nutrients, and you even found it tasty—"

“Shut up.”

Shaun’s face darkened at the mention of the incident. “Don’t worry, you won’t die from eating cat food. Its ingredients include fish and beef that have been carefully selected. Oh, by the way, there’s also prebiotics that can improve your digestive system as well as taurine, calcium, iron, and zinc that can strengthen your body. How nutritious!”

“...”

‘If it’s nutritious, why don’t you eat the cat food with me? Ugh, what a childish man.’

She tolerated his behavior so that she could become Ethan’s aunt.

After taking the cat food, she poured a bowl of it for herself. She had a few bites straight away and found the taste indescribable.

Shaun did not expect that she would really eat it and his anger faded partially. “How’s the taste?”

“Quite tasty. Do you want to eat it with me?” Catherine said out of annoyance. The surrounding atmosphere turned cool the minute she finished speaking.

With a discreet smile, Shaun added more cat food to her bowl. “Really? Since you find it tasty, you can have more.”

“...”

Ugh, the man was doomed to be alone forever.

Ultimately, Catherine was forced to have so much cat food under his stare that night.

“Great job.” Shaun shoved his hand into his pocket and returned to his room with satisfaction. When he entered his room, he turned his head to look at Catherine who had turned around and rushed to the toilet. His dark eyes flashed with a sense of sarcasm when he heard her brushing her teeth.

Disgusted at the cat food, Catherine was unable to sleep well the whole night. When she woke up bright and early the next day, she still noticed a fishy smell in her mouth.

Unfortunately, she had to get up early to prepare breakfast for Shaun.

She swore to make the scumbag fall in love with her. Then, she would trample him underfoot and take revenge on him.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 22

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 22

Catherine blushed in embarrassment.

“I was involved in the designing of Melbourne theater and airport. Besides, I also have experience in project management, but people don’t believe me because of my age. I can’t possibly reveal my identity as the young lady of the Jones family as well because people might form their own opinions on my motive. That’s why I can only choose from being an assistant in a big company or being a designer in a small business,” she explained while quickly gathering the leaflets.

“I don’t want to be an assistant because that’s basically doing odd administrative jobs. Someone higher up will undoubtedly take advantage of me and claim my design concepts as their own. I’d rather start building my profile in a small company. Not only can I share a percentage of profit when

closing deals, but managing a project also gives out a handsome paycheck. After a year of doing this, I can probably save enough money, build a team, and start my own business. This hardship is only temporary.”

“Don’t you want to return to Summit Group?” Shaun asked.

She shook her head quietly. “One shouldn’t depend on handouts from others. It’s more practical to be self-reliant.”

The man was genuinely astonished. Due to the environment he grew up in, he had seen many people constantly fighting over fame and wealth. Not many people shared the same view on life as her.

He looked at the woman who had bent over to pick up the leaflets. For the first time, he had a whole new level of respect for this person.

“Leave them.”

“I can’t.” She shook her head from left to right without a moment of hesitation. “I’ll be in trouble if the boss finds out the stash of leaflets is scattered across the floor. The office is not doing particularly well and I shouldn’t goof off. Besides, leaving them on the floor makes it difficult for the janitor too.”

Then, a beautiful hand picked up one of the leaflets in front of her with slender fingers.

“Let me help you.” Shaun offered and bent over. A watch peeked from beneath his sleeve as he extended his hand. It was a brand she had not seen before.

The minimally designed watch had a sapphire exhibition case back paired with a brown watch band. It gave out an elegance more sophisticated than the branded watches worn on the wrists of celebrities

on the posters.

She took another peek at the man's long legs. The navy blue casual pants were wrapped tightly against his muscles as he bent over.

Without warning, the image from when he dropped the towel that night popped into her mind. She could feel the warmth as color invaded her cheeks.

Ahhh. What was she thinking? She should be ashamed for having this thought.

"What's wrong? Your cheeks are burning." Shaun lifted his eyes to steal a quick glimpse at the woman.

"I... I... It's too hot. I might be sunburned," Catherine stuttered. She averted her gaze immediately by lowering her head to the floor.

He frowned. "Go rest under the shade."

"It's fine."

She shook her head violently.

It was out of her expectation that the devil could be gentle too. In fact, apart from having the tendency to speak bluntly and maybe being a little petty, he was not that bad of a person.

It took them around five minutes to gather all the leaflets.

Catherine felt her head spinning when she rose to her feet. She could not stop her body from suddenly leaning forward.

She thought she was going to land face down on the floor when a strong hand pulled her up from the back.

She staggered a little before regaining balance. Her eyes were met by his curious gaze.

“It’s probably the low blood pressure from bending over too long.” She wiped the perspiration off her forehead. “It could also be the heat.”

“Get in the car.” Shaun turned around and opened the car door. “I’ll send you home.”

“No, no. I haven’t finished handing out the leaflets. I’ll take a short rest and resume in a bit.” She quickly shook her head.

Frustration filled him as he looked at the silly woman. Was she hoping to be attacked by a heatstroke?

“It’s almost lunchtime for Fudge. You promised not to let your work get between her meal times.”

“I made her lunch before leaving the house.” Her lips formed a pout grudgingly. She almost thought he had finally found his conscience.

He raised an eyebrow. “How dare you make her eat food that has already cooled down?”

“...”

She was speechless.

Was it wrong for cats to eat food that had cooled down? Was it his cat or his daughter that they were talking about? Perhaps Fudge did not care as much.

Left with no other choice, she got into the car.

Halfway through the ride, she received a phone call from the boss. "There wasn't much traffic over there, so I've changed to a new location," she lied.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 23

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 23

"Alright Jones, keep up with the good work. Perhaps the traffic will increase after lunch hour. Seize the opportunity to hand out the leaflets as quickly as you can. I agreed to hire you because I think your pretty appearance might attract clients. You must work hard. A great designer is useless if she can't close deals."

"I will."

Catherine ended the call quietly.

Shaun stole a glimpse of her out of the corners of his eyes. The car was not spacious, thus he overheard the entire conversation with her boss. "You should work somewhere else."

She twitched her lips into a bitter smile. "It doesn't matter which company I work for. Everything will be difficult in the beginning."

He tapped his fingers on the steering wheel without commenting further.

Coincidentally, they drove past an unusual-looking building with a unique style. "What's that place?" he asked casually.

"Melbourne Culture and Technology Center." Something came into her mind out of the blue. "The construction has just recently been completed. Summit wanted to take on the design project but lost the opportunity to another company. Not long ago, I was thinking of taking on the design project myself but there's no point even thinking about it now."

"Why?"

"They're doing an open bidding process. A small company like ours isn't even qualified to join the bidding process."

"Even so, your company will not be able to secure the bid."

"That's not true." The confidence was evident in her tone. "I was crowned champion in the AM Award in the United States. Countless companies offered me a chance to work with them. Back then, as I was certain that I would inherit the family business, I rejected the offers and returned to Summit. I dare say no one else in the whole of Melbourne is better in designing than me."

Shaun twitched his lips. Unexpectedly, the thick-skinned woman was confident in herself too.

"Alright, I can give you a chance to join the bidding."

Catherine straightened up in the seat, her eyes widening in surprise. Her jelly-like luscious lips parted slightly as if she could not believe her ears. "Are you serious?"

"It's up to you if you'll emerge the winner. Show me if you're actually as capable as you claim to be." He raised his eyebrows, still keeping his eyes on the road.

"I'm certainly not boasting. I'm confident I can win this." She felt her brain bubbling with excitement.

"Shaunny, you're the best..."

She always called him by that name—sometimes gently, sometimes simply trying to bootlick him. However, this was the first time she sounded genuinely delighted. She did not even realize the flirtatious tone in her voice.

The man could not help turning sideways to catch a glimpse of the woman. Her bright round eyes twinkled above her sun-kissed cheeks. It was difficult to put into words the charm and allure written all over her face.

He averted his gaze immediately. His fingers awkwardly flew to undo the buttons near his neckline as he suddenly felt the heat rising in his body.

"If you really think so, then make me a delicious meal later."

"No problem at all. I can cook anything you request."

After living together for quite some time, he already knew that she was great at cooking. Upon thinking of that particular dish she made before, he felt a pang of hunger.

However, he cared too much about saving his own dignity to make the request.

“Stop here for a while. I’ll go buy some streaky pork,” she suddenly said when they drove near the neighborhood.

A light flashed across his dark eyes. She caught that although it happened for less than a second.

She pursed her lips to suppress a smile while getting out of the car. The devil looked like a hungry kitten waiting to be fed.

Hmm, there was even a little resemblance between him and Fudge when it came to their eyes. How adorable!

Shaun had not mentioned it before but Catherine somehow knew roast pork was his favorite dish.

Upon looking at her receding silhouette that was heading toward the butcher, he reached for his phone with a faint smile and made a phone call to Chase. “Pull some strings so that Catherine Jones from Imperial Design can participate in the bidding event of Melbourne Culture and Technology Center.”

This took Chase by surprise. “I’ve never heard of that sh*t company. Are you trying to help Catherine? This is out of your character.”

“What kind of character?”

“ ... ”

Chase remained silent but thought to himself, ‘The character of a cold-hearted and callous man.’

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 23

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 23

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Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 24

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 24

Of course, Chase dared not voice out his opinion. "I know the person in charge of the center quite well. Should I just pull some strings to give her company the project? As far as I know, many other big companies, Summit included, are participating in the bidding too. It's a fierce competition."

"There's no need for that. The chance is already presented to her. If she fails to acquire the project, it simply means that she's not capable. Just ensure it's a fair competition."

Chase was impressed. This man really showed no mercy even to his own wife. "Right, I'll do as you

say.”

Five minutes later, Catherine returned with a bag of streaky pork. “It’s sorted,” he said casually.

She appeared startled. Was that all it took? This uncle of Ethan must be a powerful man.

“Thank you,” she said sincerely.

The corners of his lips curled into a smile. “Now, let’s head home for roast pork.”

A look of mock surprise washed over her face. “I wasn’t going to make that. I’m thinking of making pork and potatoes stew.”

“...”

He was speechless.

His face changed as a whole range of emotions flashed across it. “Pfft.” She chuckled. “I’m messing with you. I’m planning to make roast pork.”

“Catherine Jones,” he enunciated each word carefully. How dare this woman tease him?! Was she taking advantage of him after he displayed a hint of kindness?

Upon realizing he was getting upset, she quickly stuck out her tongue and said in a playful manner, "Is it that difficult to admit you like roast pork? There's no shame in admitting one's guilty pleasure."

He gave a snort of disdain.

She questioned with a grin, "Do you know what I like to eat?"

"Cat food," he said.

"..."

She did not know what to say.

What the hell? She should stop cooking for him.

"I like to eat you the most." She pouted her lips adorably and winked flirtatiously.

Shaun threw her a sideways glance. "Did no one warn you about flirting with a man in the car?"

Catherine became nervous. What about flirting in the car? Could it be possible that he wanted to...

Cough, thinking about that made her blush. She was not that open-minded.

"It'll lead to a rollover accident."

His tone was as cold as a bucket of ice water.

“...”

She kept quiet.

He smiled slightly upon seeing the embarrassment written all over her face. “We’re here.”

Once home, she made him a delicious lunch. He did not return to work until his stomach was full and satisfied.

...

Meeting room.

President Yates had already received news from the center. Like a child bubbling with excitement over a popsicle, he ordered for an emergency meeting.

The ones participating in the meeting included Catherine, President Yates, the project manager, and another designer, Henry Moore.

“Jones, I didn’t think a young woman like you could be this capable. You actually got us the chance to participate in the bidding. This is the mega project that Melbourne has been building for the past five years. It’s going to be one of Melbourne’s landmarks in the future.”

President Yates could not stop showering her with compliments. “Even if we can’t get this project, being able to participate in the bidding is also a tremendous push for our company’s future.”

“President Yates, I’m sure we can win the bid with a great concept. We need to have faith in ourselves. Although the size of our company is small, perhaps we can subcontract to other designers. This is no

small feat, but we can take it on," Catherine said earnestly.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 25

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 25

The project manager exclaimed, "It's not that easy. Among the bidders are two listed companies, not to mention the several other companies with decades of experience in the field and numerous branches. I think Summit is probably going to be the winner of this competition."

Catherine felt a tightening feeling in her chest.

It was not unusual that Summit was participating too. After all, big projects like this not only brought lots of profit but also honor. She had no idea which designer would represent them for this project. However, she was not concerned anyway. No one knew the designers working at Summit better than she did. Those people had plenty of experience but lacked creativity.

After a brief consideration, she said, "President Yates, we should be courageous and take on the challenge. The Culture and Technology Center will be open to the public in the future. I think we can combine both cultural aspects and science concepts into the design to give users a different experience of the future advancement."

"Good point," President Yates complimented. "Well, you and Henry can collaborate to work on the design. We have half a month left until the deadline. Leave the other projects aside and focus on refining this idea."

Catherine was concerned upon hearing this.

Although they had not spent much time together, she noticed that Henry could be quite an impulsive person. He was always using the fact that he was two years her senior to criticize or give her orders when he did not have the capability to do those tasks well himself.

More often than not, he simply imitated the designs from available images. This style of working could work for common interior designs, but he was not at all qualified to handle big projects like this one.

She suggested politely after giving this some thought. "President Yates, I think it's better if Henry and I work independently. After all, every designer has different ideas and working together might create conflicts. Besides, we're still young, thus a friendly competition might give us new inspiration."

President Yates remained silent as if considering the proposal. On the other hand, Henry took this as a personal insult. "What do you mean? You think you're better than me—"

"No, I'm suggesting a fair competition."

"You're a few years younger than me and lacking experience. Instead of learning from your senior, you aim too high and are overconfident in your abilities."

Henry's tone was harsh. "15 days isn't enough for a big project like this. Not only do you refuse to assist me, but you're also wishing to create a design of your own. Is showing off more important to you than the company's success?"

President Yates's impression of the woman evidently changed upon hearing this.

Catherine took a deep inhale. "It's true that I'm a few years younger, but I've participated in several large-scale projects like this before. Not to mention that I studied abroad—"

The corners of Henry's lips twitched into a sarcastic smile. "So what if you've studied abroad? Does speaking an additional language somehow make you more special? You wouldn't have joined our small company if you're as capable as you claim. Show us evidence instead of blowing your own trumpet. I can also claim to have taken part in designing the queen's palace."

"I've said that this should be a fair competition based on abilities."

Catherine turned to face the boss. "President Yates, I was the one who secured us a place to participate in the bidding. Anyway, 15 days later, you can pick the design sketch you prefer more. I trust your judgment and will not have any objections to it."

The last sentence that was said with genuine respect pleased President Yates.

"Alright, that settles it. Moore, watch your tone. Jones is not your assistant, after all."

The meeting ended on that note. President Yates then left the room.

After this incident, Henry took it as a personal mission to mock and ridicule Catherine at every possible chance.

She was not bothered by the man at all. His ability could never compare to hers in a million years.

In the next 15 days, she completely immersed herself in the designing process for the center.

Sometimes, Shaun would wake up in the middle of the night to see her room still brightly lit. The dark circles beneath her eyes every morning also became more prominent.

He did not comment on that. After all, it was good that the young woman had the will to fight.

It was that fighting spirit that made him who he was today too.

The deadline arrived in the twinkling of an eye. Shaun returned home after spending a day disputing a lawsuit. He noticed the radiant smile that lit up Catherine's face.

"Is it done?" he asked with a raised eyebrow.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 26

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 26

"Yup, this is my sketch. Let me know what you think."

Catherine opened the laptop and handed it over.

A mysterious dark blue color spread across Shaun's eyes. At first glance, he felt as if he was traveling through a space-time tunnel surrounded by dazzling starlight.

She began explaining the concept behind the design. "This sketch is titled 'Cosmic Eye'. Look, don't you think the countless nebulae here resemble pairs of twinkling eyes? I believe the main focus of our future expedition lies in the universe. Over here is the Fourth Dimensional World, designed using Escher style..."

He listened attentively as she explained the details with assurance. His eyes remained as still as water although he was secretly overwhelmed with astonishment on the inside.

This creativity with a touch of exploration was perfectly suitable for the interior design of a technology center.

Indeed, he had underestimated her in the past. He did not expect a young lady born with a silver spoon in the mouth would know much about designing. However, her performance far exceeded his expectations.

She was even better than numerous popular designers whom he had worked with before.

This woman was extremely talented in this field.

There was this inexplicable charm when she was engrossed in work.

“What do you think?”

Catherine blinked eagerly at him after introducing the design. The sparkle in her eyes showed that she was definitely fishing for compliments.

“Satisfactory,” Shaun said simply, pretending not to see the excitement in her eyes.

She pouted at the man’s remark as she thought her idea was brilliant. “Do you think I stand a chance?”

“Don’t be so full of yourself. There’s always someone more talented out there.” He dampened her enthusiasm.

“ ... ”

She was frustrated for not receiving the praise she anticipated. It seemed like the end of the conversation.

“I’ll definitely win this.”

She closed the laptop with an affirmative nod before turning around and walking away, swinging her ponytail proudly in the air. She did not know that the man behind her had his lips in a faint smile.

...

The following day, President Yates could not stop smiling when Catherine showed him her sketch. He decided to proceed with her sketch right there and then.

Henry’s face reddened with anger. He lowered his head to the ground so that others would not notice his grimace.

The day of the bidding. Catherine hurried over to the location.

Upon arriving, she noticed Rebecca and her team getting out of the company car.

A lump formed in her throat. It was a strange feeling to see the familiar faces with their new leader.

Those people who used to work alongside her were now closely trailing after Rebecca. They threw glances filled with disdain and ridicule at her.

“Hey, look, it’s the great designer, Catherine Jones. You’ve been fired from your post but still show up for the bidding? What cheek,” James said in mockery.

“I’m here as a representative of the company I’m currently working for,” she replied coldly. “Laugh all you want, but you should know my ability.”

“Ability?” He scoffed. “You only secured a place at ours because of the president. You’re nobody after leaving Summit.”

“Cousin, don’t say that. She’s our sister, after all,” Rebecca said jokingly, “Cathy, which company are you representing today? We might be rivals, then.”

“You’re the designer for Summit?” Catherine was rendered speechless. Jeffery really spoiled this daughter enough to pass on the project to her. Rebecca only started learning designing less than half a year ago. How capable could she really be?

“That’s right. I designed the entire sketch by myself.”

A strange feeling materialized in Catherine’s heart upon sensing the meaningful smile that was spread across Rebecca’s face.

“I don’t have faith in your moral standing.” She scoffed as she presumed Rebecca probably took credit for someone else’s work.

“Cathy, I know you’re jealous that Ethan and I got together, but you shouldn’t be humiliating me in such a situation,” she said in a voice full of grievances.

“Catherine, you really are vicious to the core,” James insulted her.

“You’re a sick bunch.” Catherine could not be bothered to continue arguing with them. She turned around with the intention to leave.

“Stand right there. You can’t leave without apologizing to Rebecca,” he shouted behind her.

“Let it go. She didn’t mean that,” Rebecca pleaded.

Catherine quickened her pace. She was about to lose her mind dealing with that hypocritical woman. Rebecca should have joined the entertainment industry given her natural talent in acting. She certainly stepped foot into the wrong industry.

She gathered with President Yates and the others on the second floor.

He drew lots for their team. “Our slot is right after Summit Group.”

Her brows twitched into a frown at the coincidence. However, she did not give much thought to it. After all, she was well confident with her ability.

The bidding commenced soon after.

The first person who showcased their concept was a representative from a household furniture company. Catherine noticed that President Sawyer of the organizing committee only nodded without showing much interest.

Five other interior design companies presented after that. Their sketches were not bad but not attractive in any particular way.

Soon, Rebecca’s turn was up as the representative of Summit. She was wearing a neat yet somber brown business suit. She was by far the youngest designer out of all who had presented their ideas up on the podium.

The audience showed contempt on their faces because of her young age. However, by the time she displayed her design, everyone was stunned.

Catherine leaped out of her seat, overwhelmed by astonishment. This was the piece of work that she produced after half a month of sleepless nights.

How did it fall into Rebecca's hands?

She clenched her fists into balls, her eyes glowing with savage fire.

"Hey, the one at the front, can you sit down, please? You're blocking our view." Someone from another company shouted behind her, annoyed.

It was as if she could not hear any of that. Her eyes remained glaring at Rebecca murderously.

The latter flashed a smug smile at her from the podium before continuing to explain the concept. "This is the Fourth Dimensional World that I designed. It's a mysterious, undiscovered world..."

President Sawyer's eyes were now twinkling with brilliance, and even the others among the audience began giving their compliments. "This young designer from Summit is pretty impressive. Not bad."

"I heard she's Jeffery Jones' daughter. The young lady of Summit Group."

"Really? She's really talented and knowledgeable. There's certainly a bright future awaiting her."

Catherine interrupted loudly as she could not hear more of it. "Are you going to mention Cosmis Eye and Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea? As well as academic research areas and artistic exchange spaces using high-end technologies like photoelectric curtain walls, cool river water, and LED

new light systems?”

A pin-drop silence enveloped the hall. Rebecca paused her speech to look at her with a frown and a shocked expression.

“How do you know the details of my concept?”

Catherine scoffed, her blood now boiling beneath her skin. “These are my designs and concepts. You’ve literally stolen every detail of my ideas. Is this how your large-scale company gets to the top of the industry, by stealing other people’s work?”

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 27

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 27

“You’re saying she stole your concept?” President Sawyer frowned.

“That’s right. I have evidence on my laptop too. I’ve spent a tremendous amount of time and effort putting these ideas into drawings, even starting the 2D sketch from scratch. I have the rough drawing with me as well.”

“Show me.”

Catherine immediately retrieved her laptop, but to her utter shock, all the documents had vanished. She failed to locate the initial sketches she kept in her purse too.

At the speed of lightning, she snapped her head toward Henry who was standing nearby. “Did you delete my documents?”

She could not think of anyone else apart from this man.

“Have you lost your mind? I’m your colleague.” Henry sprung to his feet in rage.

Rebecca, who was still standing on the podium, said in a stern voice, “Cathy, that’s enough. We can solve our personal dispute some other time, but this is a huge moment for Summit. Must you accuse me in front of the public simply to embarrass me?”

President Sawyer appeared dismayed. “You two know each other.”

Rebecca replied before Catherine had the chance, “She’s my younger sister. Things have been tense between us because of some personal matters...”

James slammed his fist on the table as he sprung to his feet. “Rebecca, you don’t have to be so nice to her. She’s trying to ruin your reputation so that she can inherit the Jones family’s business. This vicious woman must’ve had a peek at your design plans.”

“I did not.” The rage inside Catherine burned furiously.

“Then show us your proof. You’re now accusing others without concrete evidence. Do you know how much blood and sweat Rebecca has poured into this project? Yet you have the cheeks to blame her.”

Henry suddenly rose to his feet. “Oh, no wonder the sketches you showed us were better than mine. It’s because you copied someone else’s work. Apparently, you’re still working for Summit. President Yates, this woman is tricking us.”

President Yates was evidently displeased. "Catherine Jones, are they telling the truth?"

In all honesty, he did not believe Catherine could come up with this spectacular piece of work alone, given her young age.

"President Yates, can you not see that Henry has been bribed?" She defended helplessly.

Henry quickly explained himself, "I don't know a single person working at Summit. President Yates, I've been working with you for many years now. Don't you know what kind of person I am?"

"Alright, I've heard enough. I can't afford to lose more of my dignity here." President Yates stood to his full height looking dejected. "We're not qualified to participate in this bidding. Catherine Jones, you're no longer an employee of our company."

Then, he left alongside Henry.

Disdain filled James' eyes. "Even the people from your company are not taking your side. Your reputation must be terrible."

"James, Rebecca, remember that what goes around comes back around."

Catherine lost her cool. She picked up the mineral bottle and threw it at them.

President Sawyer was truly upset. "Get her out of here. How did they allow this kind of person into the bidding this year?"

Soon, two security guards rushed in and took her away by force.

It was pouring outside. Catherine was pushed to the rain by the guards. Rainwater mercilessly poured on her from above, drenching her completely from head to toe.

The burning fire inside her was extinguished by the rain within seconds. What replaced it was grievance and sorrow.

She did not understand. Did she somehow wrong Rebecca in their past lives?

Catherine had spent so much effort to start over again.

However, Rebecca kept targeting her repeatedly, even ruining her reputation in the interior design industry. Who else still dared to hire her in the future?

Right at this moment, she felt that her life was miserable.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 28

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 28

The gates gradually opened after some time.

Rebecca approached her while shielding herself from the rain under an umbrella. A smug look washed over her face. "Cathy, thanks a lot. Your design earned me the right to this project. You really are talented."

Catherine lifted her head, her eyes glowing with fire.

The other woman smiled. "Don't get too upset. The project would've belonged to me with or without your design. Ethan had already pulled the strings for me. Perhaps you have no idea that his uncle is a good friend of President Sawyer? Your design was just a prop to the plan."

Uncle... Shaun?

Catherine felt as if a wild animal was tearing her heart into pieces with its sharp claws. Her breathing became erratic.

She had genuinely felt grateful to him for giving her a chance.

Little did she know that he had already decided the ending beforehand. Why did he lie? He knew how much effort she had poured into this project.

Her eyes glistened, but she could not tell if it was the rain or her own tears.

Rebecca naturally took pride in the woman's suffering.

"It's a shame no one in the industry will hire you again after learning about your terrible personality. Poor thing. But don't worry, I'll take care of our parents well. Leave it to me to look after Summit and Ethan.

"To be honest, Ethan thinks poorly of you. He's ashamed after seeing you handing out leaflets on the streets. He told me you're not a good match for him."

“Rebecca, did I wrong you or something?”

Devastated, Catherine lost the last ounce of self-control. She pounced at Rebecca, throwing the latter to the ground and seizing her by the throat.

Rebecca did not appear flustered but simply revealed an enigmatic smile.

Before Catherine could register the meaning of it, a strong force peeled her back and threw her into the muddy puddle.

She lifted her head only to see Ethan hurrying over to help Rebecca to her feet. He then removed his coat and draped it over the woman.

“I’m fine, but quickly check on Cathy. She’s disheartened from losing the bidding.” Rebecca trembled in Ethan’s embrace.

“Why are you still caring for her?” Ethan glared at the woman on the ground with his teeth clenched. “Look what you’ve turned into. You’re so heartless that you’re even bullying your own sister. I really can’t believe I used to like you.”

The relationship they built since childhood was completely shattered at this point.

Catherine stared hard at his face. She could not even recognize those unfamiliar features anymore. “That’s right, I regret that I used to like you too. I must’ve been blind.”

“I dare you to say that again.” Ethan was incensed by her words.

“Not only have you broken the bidding rules but you also can’t tell right from wrong!” Catherine shouted at the top of her lungs. “Do you think she could come up with that design, given her limited ability? Perhaps you knew it from the beginning but decided to shield her anyway. I don’t care if you

love her, but why must you bring me down in order to gain success? You lowly couple!”

“Watch your mouth.” Ethan slapped her across the face, sending the staggering woman to the ground once again.

Catherine’s cheek was burning, but the pain was nothing compared to what she was feeling deep inside her heart.

Where was the man who promised to take care of her forever?

Where was the man who said he had no feelings for Rebecca?

Where was the man who begged her to wait for him just a few days ago?

Fortunately, she had not believed his words. She did not have the courage to.

Ethan narrowed his eyes. Looking at the battered woman, he said bitterly, “Don’t think that everyone is vile like you. I know for a fact that Rebecca had stayed up countless nights to come up with this design. Yes, she started learning late, but she’s talented. Everything that happened today is a misfortune you invited upon yourself. Realize your mistake and start over before it’s too late.”

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 29

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 29

With that, Ethan picked Rebecca up into his arms and walked toward the Lamborghini.

When his car sped into the distance, leaving her behind for the second time, Catherine truly lost all

hope in this man.

Starting from this moment, any love she felt for him before was replaced by hatred and despise.

“Oh, you poor thing.” James walked toward her while holding an umbrella, smiling with his eyes narrowed. “The young lady of the Jones family who was once above everyone else has now lost all her power.”

Exhausted, she could not be bothered to deal with the man. She started walking toward her car in silence.

His voice rang behind her. “Uncle Jeffery and Aunt Sally will definitely be informed of today’s incident. It’s obvious that they favor Rebecca over you. Don’t dream of heading back to the Jones family anymore because no one there welcomes your presence.”

Slam! She shut the door and drove away.

His words were not news to her, but it did not matter. Her life was miserable enough. No one really loved or cared for her.

...

6.00 P.M.

Shaun came home from work.

In the past, even if Catherine was occupied at that moment, the house was always brightly lit and filled with a delicious aroma. He could always catch a glimpse of her silhouette as she moved across the kitchen diligently, preparing dinner.

Today, however, there was only darkness.

He turned on the lights only to find Catherine curled up on the couch. Her hair was disheveled and her eyes appeared sorrowful. She rested her chin above Fudge's head as she held the cat close in her arms. She looked lifeless and defeated.

She had always appeared energetic and radiant in front of him. It felt slightly strange seeing this unprecedented side of her.

"The bidding didn't go well?"

He removed his coat and threw it on the couch casually. "Failing once isn't a big deal. You're still young—"

"I'm allowed to be deceived like a fool because I'm young?" She shot him an angry look. "People like you who are at the top of society don't even care about other people's feelings, right?"

A hint of annoyance flashed across his face. He assumed the upset woman was projecting her rage at him. "With this behavior, failure serves you right."

"That's right, I'm a failure. My biggest failure is having trusted you."

Catherine clenched her fists. Although it was clear that he did not love her, she was his wife by law at the very least. Even so, he had tricked her like a fool.

“Don’t bite the hand that feeds you.” Shaun was irritated by her remark. “You wouldn’t even have had the chance to participate in the bidding if I hadn’t lent you a hand. If I knew this was how you were going to behave, then I definitely wouldn’t have bothered.”

“Thank you very much. I beg you to stay out of my affairs in the future.”

She scoffed while getting to her feet. Fudge leaped up from her embrace. The cat felt the tense situation between her two owners and scratched the woman’s shirt helplessly.

He was not only furious with her attitude but also truly disappointed.

Initially, after seeing her designs, he thought she was really talented. However, plenty of people in this world were born with talent, thus there would always be someone better and stronger out there. One failure was enough for him to see her true colors.

Honestly, he despised people like this.

“Remember what you said. Starting from today, apart from looking after Fudge, I don’t want anything to do with you. You don’t have to cook for me either. It’s only going to make me sick.”

Then, he picked up the cat with one hand, grabbed his coat with another, and left the house.

An eerie silence enveloped the room. She had a warm cat to comfort her cold heart earlier but that was now gone too.

Catherine’s mind went blank. The sun slowly faded into the darkness.

She left the house and headed to the bar.

The server brought her several bottles of beer. She popped the cap off one of them and started taking big gulps.

She had never liked drinking before. It was only now that she discovered the benefit of drowning one's sorrow with alcohol.

She glanced at the young people dancing on the stage nearby as she drank.

How easy her life was in the past.

A life without worries with everyone by her side.

Gradually, her vision began to blur.

She did not notice the person watching her closely from a corner. A brief moment later, the person made a phone call. "Janet, guess who I saw?"

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 30

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 30

"Who?"

"Catherine Jones! She's drinking alone at the bar. Ah, she's still as beautiful as ever."

Janet instantly became agitated. "That b*tch."

She would never forget the humiliation she suffered from being thrown out of the restaurant last time. That incident made her the laughing stock among the elites of Melbourne.

She was pleased to hear about what happened in the bidding event today.

However, that was not enough. She wanted to destroy her completely. Little did she expect the opportunity to fall upon her so soon.

“Zayn Larson, are you still interested in her?”

“Well, not really, but she has always looked down on me back when we were in school. I’m quite curious to see what it’s like,” Zayn said crudely, “for her to beg for my forgiveness.”

“Sure, I’ll give you the opportunity.”

Janet told him the plan. A surge of passion washed through him like waves. “Are you sure about this—”

“Don’t worry, I’ll back you up. Catherine has no one on her side now. If something like this happens, the Jones family will be even more eager to cut off ties with her.”

“Alright, then I’ll perform well tonight.”

The corners of Zayn's lips curled into a malicious smile as he watched the silhouette of that beautiful woman.

...

Catherine was pretty drunk at this point. She vaguely remembered seeing a server approaching her with another cocktail.

She could not recall if she had ordered it, but her glass was empty so she drank the cocktail without hesitation.

Not long later, she fell onto the couch with her eyes closed.

...

Inside the clubhouse.

Fudge was curled up next to the stool. Shaun filled her bowl with small fishes. The cat munched on it a couple of times before turning away in disdain.

Chase scoffed. "Your cat is so picky. This fish is the specialty of my clubhouse."

"It means your chefs are not up to standard."

Shaun helped himself to a piece of chicken but lost interest to continue eating.

He was accustomed to eating Catherine's home-cooked meals. These dishes placed in front of him tasted like trash compared to the food she made.

“You should head home for dinner, then,” Chase commented angrily, “Your home-cooked meals are the best. Go home and get Catherine to prepare a feast for you.”

“Don’t mention that woman again.” Shaun’s face fell.

“How did she offend you this time?” Chase was suddenly reminded of something. “Today was the day of bidding, right?”

“I said, don’t bring her up,” Shaun warned.

Chase pursed his lips without commenting further.

He spoke on the phone briefly a while later. “Wesley Lyons from Golden Corporation is in the private room next door. He wants to discuss the business project we mentioned last time.”

“You go ahead. I’m not interested in cases that don’t require brainwork.”

“...”

Chase was speechless.

‘Of course, you’re better than everyone else because you’re so smart,’ he thought silently.

He went to the room next door, frustrated.

When he returned 20 minutes later, the dishes on the table remained pretty much untouched.

Chase pulled the chair back and sat down. "Guess who was in the room earlier? President Sawyer, the person in charge of the technology center, and also Ethan Lowe from Lowe Corporation. I heard he used to go out with Catherine."

"Will you stop?" Shaun was evidently annoyed. Hearing that woman's name sent his blood boiling.

"Listen." Chase put on a serious face. "Ethan and Rebecca are to be engaged next month, not to mention that he's Wesley's nephew. Summit Group officially bagged the project from today's bidding. Don't you think something is strange once you connect the three of them together?"

Shaun was unfamiliar with the network in Melbourne, but he kind of understood the picture now. "Summit played dirty?"

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 32

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 32

"Who are you?" In a panic, Zayn got up swiftly.

Shaun felt like vomiting at the sight of his fat body. With a glance at the bed, he noticed Catherine's flushed face and her loose shirt that was torn in half.

In a fit of fury, Shaun punched Zayn violently in the face.

"The person who's sending you to jail."

Given that Shaun was strong and brutal, Zayn was beaten to the ground in no time.

Shaun frantically removed the cameras and threw them at Zayn. After that, he took off his suit and quickly wrapped it around the woman on the bed.

“Catherine, how are you feeling?” He did not dare to touch her swollen face. He just patted her on the back.

“Don’t... Don’t touch me.”

Catherine was still quite dizzy. Upon her realization that someone was trying to touch her, her lips subconsciously quivered as a sign of resistance. Tears began to pour down her face as well.

She had always been arrogant, pretty, and mischievous.

At times, she would cause Shaun to grit his teeth. Nevertheless, seeing the woman’s current situation, Shaun was upset by her foolishness deep down and pitied her encounter at the same time.

“Don’t be afraid. It’s me. No one will hurt you.” He touched her head softly.

Upon smelling a soft masculine scent that was familiar, she naturally felt relaxed.

Her blank eyes slowly showed a sign of understanding. She became conscious of who the person in front of her was. “Shaunny, am I dreaming?”

Someone had actually come to save her in her dream.

“This isn’t a dream. You’ll be fine.”

Shaun gently wiped away the tears at the corners of her eyes. Suddenly, he heard a flurry of activity behind him.

As soon as he turned around, he saw Zayn struggling to get up in an attempt to flee secretly.

“Wait here.” He put Catherine down lightly, then his eyes darkened. “What did you do to her just now?”

Zayn was so frightened that he went weak at the knees. Just as he wanted to run off, a chair hit him from behind. He was unable to get up at all.

Seeing the tall man approaching him, Zayn was gripped by fear. He had no idea why there was a powerful man behind Catherine. “I didn’t touch her. You came when I was tearing her clothes open, really. I swear.”

“You hit her, right?”

Shaun dragged Zayn up, then lifted his hand to slap him.

Soon, Zayn’s fair and chubby face swelled like a ball.

“It’s thanks to you that I slapped someone for the first time.”

Shaun let go of Zayn when a few police officers came to arrest him.

Catherine sat on the bed in a weak condition, watching the situation. When Shaun turned around, she forced a smile. A moment later, she experienced a blackout and subsequently fainted.

Shaun carried her and dashed outside.

Chase, who just rushed here, caught sight of the situation and got a shock. "Is she... okay?"

"Find out what happened tonight. I don't want to see that person anymore." Shaun suppressed his anger and gave Chase an order. With that, he headed to the hospital speedily.

...

The Campbell family's house.

Upon noticing the abrupt pause in the live video, Janet had a sinking feeling.

The figure who suddenly appeared in the live video just now seemed to belong to the mysterious man who was present in Grapefruit Restaurant the other day.

Later, she got someone to look into the man and realized that he was just a lawyer.

She heard that he was a prominent figure among the lawyers these days. However, his identity was still incomparable to that of the Campbell family.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 33

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 33

At that moment, Janet's phone rang. Someone called her and said, "Miss Campbell, Zayn has been arrested by the police."

"Find a way to bail him out."

"Well... I'm afraid that's not possible. Young Master Harrison pulled some strings and requested us to put Zayn in jail forever. We can't afford to provoke the Harrison family."

Janet's heart sank. "Try to tell Zayn to shut his mouth for the sake of his family."

"Alright."

...

In the hospital.

Catherine woke up because of the pain on her face.

She opened her eyes, only to find herself in the hospital. She wondered who sent her here.

While she was in a daze, Shaun's handsome face flashed across her mind.

"You've woken up," the man beside her spoke.

When she turned her head, she saw Shaun rising to his feet from the couch with a reproachful look.

“As a married woman, you actually went to the pub alone for a drink. Catherine, you’re brainless.”

At first, she was slightly touched. Before she could even speak, it felt as if a bucket of cold water was poured on her. She felt deeply ashamed.

“You’re right. I almost forgot that I’m married.”

Shaun’s eyes expressed fury. Back then, she was the one who had confessed to him on her own accord and kept pestering him. Now, she claimed to have forgotten that she was married. She simply wanted to deny everything.

“You still haven’t learned your mistake. If it weren’t for me who managed to come in time, you would’ve been ruined forever. I do care about my dignity even if you don’t.”

“Don’t worry. No one knows I’m married to you.”

Catherine was bitterly disappointed. When he showed up at the last minute, she initially saw a ray of hope, thinking that he cared about her. It turned out that he only cared about his dignity.

Shaun was offended by her attitude. “Well, it seems that I acted superfluously. I shouldn’t have saved you, is that right?”

As she was exhausted, Catherine did not feel like arguing with him anymore.

She dropped her gaze silently. Clutching the blanket, she pulled it closer to her body and snuggled in it like a helpless quail.

Looking at her wounded face, Shaun got restless.

He was not sure what was wrong with himself. When Catherine was unconscious earlier, he had felt like killing Zayn. Now that she was awake, he could not help but target her for failing to protect herself.

Seeing her not uttering a word at that point made Shaun sullen.

The ward remained silent for a while before Chase dashed in. "Zayn has confessed everything... Eh, what happened to the both of you?"

One was sitting on the sofa quietly, while the other was snuggling under the blanket. The atmosphere was bizarre.

"What did he say?" Shaun asked icily.

"He claims that he's Sister-in-law's high school friend. He had fallen for Sister-in-law since then, but she wasn't interested in him because of his ugliness and poor background. As such, he began to hold a grudge against her. Then, he happened to see Sister-in-law drinking alone in the pub. He also heard that she has been kicked out of the Jones family's house and that she has no one to rely on, so he made her unconscious to ruin her..."

Shaun frowned, then turned his gaze to Catherine. "Is that true?"

Catherine nodded with a pale face. "He has had a bad reputation since our school days as he always dallied with the girls in our class and even frequently peeped into the female restroom. I'm disgusted by this kind of person. It has nothing to do with his money or appearance. I didn't know that things have become so distorted to him deep down."

Chase sighed. "This is what happens when one is unlucky. You'll easily meet a crazy person. Don't worry, he'll stay in jail forever."

Catherine moved her dry lips but did not say anything.

Shaun cast a glance at her and said, "During the live video, many people were watching it. Was her face visible?"

Chase nodded bashfully. "However, whatever that has to be removed from the video has been removed. The video won't be circulated online, but... quite a number of people from Melbourne's entertainment industry were watching it at that time. Many must already know about it."

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 34

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 34

Catherine clutched the blanket. Considering that the Jones family already disliked her, she could no longer return to their house for sure.

She laughed while feeling inwardly upset. "It's okay. I'm not bothered."

Anyway, no one really cared about her.

After not speaking for two seconds, Shaun turned around and said to Chase, "Go and pull some strings to get the police to praise Catherine on their public platform for being an undercover agent. If it hadn't been for her who cooperated with the police, the police wouldn't have been able to seize those people who broadcast illegal live videos such as Zayn Larson."

Catherine was momentarily stunned. She gazed at him with a puzzled look.

Was he afraid that she would destroy his reputation or did he really care about her?

She could not seem to figure him out.

Chase raised his thumb. "Awesome. That way, I believe people won't gossip about Sister-in-law but praise her instead. I'm going to settle it now."

After Chase walked away, Catherine was suddenly left at her wits' end in the face of the man. "Thank you... for today."

Shaun bent over calmly and snorted. "You're finally talking like a human being."

Catherine was speechless.

Given that so much had happened these few days, she did not have the strength to talk to him at that point already.

"Do you want to eat something?" Shaun asked.

Now that he mentioned it, it occurred to Catherine that she had not taken her lunch and dinner. She would not feel good if she were to receive an infusion on an empty stomach. Nevertheless, she did not want to trouble Shaun. "I'll just order takeaway using my phone..."

"Fine. If you don't know what to say, you'd better shut up."

Shaun was really pissed. Despite his presence, she would rather get something to eat using her phone than seek help from him. In her eyes, was he actually a cruel person?

“Just lie down and rest. I’m going to get you something.”

After he left, Catherine gave a bitter laugh.

It was not because she did not want to rely on him. In fact, she did not have the audacity to do so.

After all, he was Ethan’s uncle—someone who could abandon her at any time.

20 minutes later, Shaun came in with a food container.

Catherine attempted to get up arduously, yet she failed to support her body after a long while.

“Stop struggling. The doctor mentioned that you need at least two days to recover.”

While speaking, Shaun helped her to sit up by hugging her. His chest stuck to her back through his thin shirt, which passed on some warmth to her. Catherine then began to blush.

Luckily, he was quick enough to stuff a pillow behind her back and let go of her afterward.

When she opened the food container, there were three dishes and some soup.

She stretched out her hand, only to discover that she could not lift the spoon.

“Sit still. Stop moving.” Upon ordering her, Shaun scooped a spoonful of soup to feed her.

Catherine was astonished as he usually gave her the cold shoulder.

However, she was having an upset stomach. Without bothering about it, she lowered her head and sipped the soup. She assumed that the food sold in front of the hospital's gate would taste bad, yet it turned out to be tasty.

Fearing that he would grow impatient, she quickened her eating pace. After having half the bowl of rice, she said, "Okay. I'm done."

"No. Eat a bit more." Shaun frowned and continued to feed her.

Catherine had no choice but to continue eating with her head lowered.

She secretly lifted her eyes to glance at him from time to time.

The man's exquisite face was well-defined, yet not a sense of impatience was visible in his attractive eyes. His dark gaze was fixed intently on her while she was eating.

As she was eating, her face turned even warmer.

Her face was originally swollen, which Shaun did not notice. Later, when he caught sight of the redness at the tips of her ears, he found it amusing deep down.

Normally, her skin was as thick as the defensive wall. He did not expect her to flush when she was being fed. How interesting.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 35

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 35

After finishing a bowl of rice, Catherine lay down with Shaun's help. "That... Have you seen my phone?"

"No, I haven't. Someone probably threw it away after you fainted. I'll buy you one afterward."

Once Shaun was done speaking, his phone rang.

He walked out with his phone and saw Hadley waiting outside.

"Young Master Hill, I've investigated the issue regarding the bidding. I heard that when the designer of Summit, Rebecca Jones, introduced her masterpiece during the bidding event yesterday, Miss Jones claimed in a state of agitation that Rebecca had stolen her masterpiece."

"Was there such a thing?" Shaun's eyes revealed astonishment.

"President Sawyer had asked Miss Jones to provide evidence. Miss Jones claimed that the evidence was stored in the laptop but later said that the evidence has been destroyed. She criticized Henry Moore from Imperial Design, saying that it was his doing despite not having evidence of it. After that, she fell out with Imperial Design in public and was subsequently dragged out of the venue."

"Dragged out?"

Shaun repeated the phrase.

“Yes.” Hadley nodded. Having spent years working for him, Hadley was aware that Young Master Hill was simmering with rage.

“What design did Summit display yesterday?”

“I’ve asked someone to snap a picture of it.” Hadley handed his phone to Shaun. After Shaun glanced at it, his handsome face flashed with coldness.

He had seen Catherine’s design before. It was exactly the same as Rebecca’s.

It was no wonder Catherine did not seem right when she got back yesterday. She was discontented and probably holding a grudge against him.

It was because he had made her participate in an unfair bidding event.

A moment later, Shaun returned the phone to Hadley.

“I’m guessing President Sawyer has done quite a lot of stuff like this in recent years. It’s time to expose them to the world.”

Hadley immediately understood his message. “Got it. Since President Sawyer is going to lose his position, the project that involves the collaboration between Melbourne Culture and Technology Center and Summit...”

“Of course, it’ll be canceled,” Shaun said indifferently, “Block those companies that are planning on working with Summit recently. As for Rebecca... Provoke her verbally.”

“Okay. By the way, if the bidding event is reorganized, is Miss Jones going to handle the project? However, Imperial Design has fired her.”

“Forget the project. She’s capable of designing, but she can’t manage such a challenging task from Imperial Design...” Shaun scoffed twice. “Bring Henry here.”

...

When Shaun returned to the ward, Catherine was struggling on the bed, seemingly trying to get up.

However, she stopped moving the minute she saw him enter.

“What are you trying to do?”

At the thought of her being badly bullied, Shaun spoke in a rarely gentle tone.

Catherine’s eyes lit up. “You... Can you get me a caregiver? I’ll pay her.”

All of a sudden, Shaun raised his eyebrow light-heartedly. “Are you planning to go to the restroom?”

Now that he had seen through her intention, the blood rushed to her face right away.

Shaun walked toward her. Then, he pulled up the blanket and carried her.

She screamed in shock and subconsciously wrapped her arms around his neck. “Put me down now.”

“Fine. You go there on your own, then.” Since she was so stubborn, he decided to put her on the ground straight away.

Catherine lost her balance. She tottered unsteadily and fell into his arms directly as if she could not resist hugging him. She then blushed.

“Shaun.”

“You’re the one who fell into my arms.” Shaun found it interesting to see her rarely embarrassed expression.

How terrible this man was! For the first time, Catherine was so irritated that she became speechless.

After that, Shaun promptly carried her again and headed to the restroom.

She was dejected. “I told you to just get me a caregiver.”

“Do you think I can get you a caregiver immediately?” Shaun asked sarcastically, placing her on the toilet seat.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 36

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 36

What depressed Catherine the most was that she did not even have the strength to take off her pants. Ultimately, she needed Shaun’s help.

By the time she got back onto bed, she was so embarrassed that she snuggled under the blanket.

Deep down, Shaun found it amusing. He was even wondering if she had been feigning shamelessness when she flirted with him back then.

...

An hour later, Shaun found a caregiver for Catherine.

However, Catherine had fallen asleep by then. He had a lawsuit to dispute the next morning, and he had not prepared the documents yet. Therefore, he gave orders to the caregiver and subsequently left.

When Catherine woke up in the middle of the night, she found a gentle-looking woman who looked to be about 40 years old on the edge of the couch.

Upon noticing some activity, the woman woke up and explained, "I'm the caregiver Mr. Hill has hired to take care of you."

"Oh." Catherine was momentarily stunned.

She had previously asked him to get her a caregiver, and he actually did it. For some reason, she felt a twinge of disappointment deep down.

After all, he was the partner stated on her marriage certificate. He could have stayed back and accompanied her.

Nevertheless, she got over it in no time. The two of them were actually not bound by the marriage contract, and moreover, he was not in love with her.

The fact that he sent her to the hospital and even fed her was good enough.

The caregiver, who had a similar experience, noticed that she was remaining quiet. Then, she said with a laugh, “Mr. Hill is very concerned about you. He stayed until 11 o’clock at night. He even ordered me not to fall asleep as you’d be awake during the night. Also, he hired the head chef from the hospital to prepare three meals for you and to ensure the dishes are nutritious and clean.”

Catherine blinked her eyes, feeling as if she had not woken up from her dream. The way the caregiver described Shaun was totally different from how he typically acted.

The caregiver added, “I’ve seen all kinds of family members in the hospital. Mr. Hill is hard on the outside but soft on the inside.”

Catherine spaced out a little. Recalling the way Shaun had showed up and saved her last night, she honestly felt that he was rather gentle.

Morning.

When Catherine returned from a check-up, there were two other people in the ward, namely Shaun and Henry.

It was not clear what had happened to Henry that caused him to be badly bruised. He kneeled the minute he saw Catherine.

“Sorry, Miss Jones. I was money-minded. Rebecca paid me 500,000 dollars to steal your design. It was my fault. Forgive me, please. I beg you.”

He was trembling with fear on the ground. Conversely, Catherine was also trembling with rage.

She would have punched him violently if she had the energy to do so.

“Why should I forgive you? Do you know what you’ve ruined? You ruined my reputation and dignity as a designer. A scumbag like you isn’t qualified to be a designer at all.”

“Yes, I’m not qualified,” Without raising his head, he anxiously said, “That’s why I can’t design anymore.”

Catherine was stunned. Only then did she realize that both his hands were hanging downward and his wrists were bandaged. “Your hands...”

Shaun slowly got up and raised his eyebrows with indifference. “Since he has decided to be a thief rather than a designer, he shall never design again.”

Henry shuddered while crawling on the ground.

Catherine had no idea what he experienced last night. Henry was a conceited, arrogant person. It must have been Shaun who made him end up in such circumstances.

She was not sympathetic toward Henry. After all, he had not considered her situation when he did that kind of stuff.

“Well, you got what you deserve. Hopefully, you’ll turn into a better person.”

“Alright. I’ll certainly not do it again. I’ll get out of Melbourne and never appear in front of you guys,” Henry said with a shudder.

“Get lost,” Shaun sneered.

Once Henry left, Shaun tossed a new phone into Catherine’s hand.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 37

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 37

She lifted the phone to take a look. There was a recording inside which recorded what Henry had said just now.

“It’s up to you to handle the recording in the phone I’m giving you.” Shaun shot a glance at her. “Curb your temper next time. You lost in the bidding only because you didn’t take care of your design. Treat this as a lesson. You need to be wary of everyone in the workplace.”

Catherine looked at him with a dazed yet complicated expression.

She had assumed that Rebecca won the bidding because Shaun and President Sawyer pulled some strings. At this moment, she was a little puzzled, not knowing why he would help her.

Was it Rebecca who made false statements and lied to her?

“Why are you spacing out again?” Shaun was dissatisfied. At that moment, she was supposed to feel extremely grateful to him.

“I’m just... Nothing. Anyway, thank you so much,” Catherine said sincerely.

“You should really thank me, but it’s meaningless to thank me verbally like this,” Shaun mocked.

“I’ll make you roast pork once I recover. You can’t eat it every day, though. Otherwise, you’ll have fatty liver disease...”

“Who said I like roast pork? I was willing to eat it only because that was the least unappetizing dish you prepared among many other dishes,” Shaun interrupted out of annoyance.

Catherine had enough. This man enjoyed eating meat that tasted sweet. Was he not afraid of losing his dignity?

Catherine tried to stifle the urge to giggle. Despite being baffled by his refusal to be frank, she nodded in acknowledgment.

“Yes. It’s my fault, and I’ve reflected on myself. By the way, how much is the phone? Also the caregiver and the hospital charges. Let me pay you back.”

She sounded diffident toward the end of her sentence. With only a few thousand dollars altogether, she might not be able to pay him back.

“No need. I’ll treat those fees as your pay for being Fudge’s sitter.”

“But...”

“I’m not desperate for that miserable amount of money,” Shaun interjected. “I’m going to the office now. I’ll ask the caregiver to assist you with the discharge process tomorrow. Get home early to take

care of Fudge.”

“Okay, I will.”

...

11:00 a.m.

Freya came over in a hurry.

At the sight of Catherine, anger welled up inside Freya.

“Are we still friends? You didn’t even inform me about this serious matter. If it weren’t for me asking for Young Master Harrison’s contact number, I wouldn’t have found out that you’re in the hospital.”

“I dropped my phone, and I haven’t gotten my SIM card replaced.”

Freya’s face revealed concern when she clutched Catherine’s hand. “What actually went on last night? Did you really become an undercover agent for the police?”

Catherine immediately figured it out. Apparently, the police had made an official announcement. “What’s being circulating around at the moment?”

Freya averted her eyes which were sparkling. “Some people believe it, while some don’t.”

“That’s normal. Many people have long since been waiting for my embarrassing moments.”

Having experienced the worst, Catherine was composed. She just briefly told Freya what had happened during the bidding event yesterday.

Freya was so furious that she exclaimed, "Ethan's such a b*stard. That's very scummy of him. Is he even a human? He treated you so well back then, and now he has completely changed. How did Rebecca bewitch him into beating you?"

"Perhaps he wasn't really in love with me back then. He only loves the pampered young lady from the wealthy Jones family. To him, it doesn't matter who she is." Catherine shrugged mockingly.

"Don't be mad. The news that I read this morning reported that the person in charge of Melbourne Culture and Technology Center was frequently involved in bribery, so he's currently being suspended and investigated. Yesterday's bidding event is also affected. Based on the comments online, many reckon that Summit gave President Sawyer some benefits in private which contributed to the outcome of the event last night."

Catherine was dumbfounded. "How is that possible?"

"Why would I lie to you? Let me show you the news."

Freya swiftly turned on her phone and searched for the website to show Catherine.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 38

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 38

Catherine was absolutely astounded. She felt that something was strange about the coincidence.

"What goes around comes around," Freya said in great delight, "You see, many large design companies took part in the bidding yesterday, and they spent a long time getting a great deal of manpower and

material resources in preparation for the event. All their efforts have ended up as futile now. I guess the center has offended someone.”

Catherine believed so after thinking it over. Anyway, it came as great news to her that Rebecca’s efforts proved futile. It served her right.

...

Summit Building Design Group.

Jeffrey was so furious that he hurled the ashtray straight away.

It was the first time Rebecca saw Jeffrey flying into a rage. Cowering at one side, she dared not move in the slightest.

The top management of the company had celebrated the success of her bidding at a feast last night, and today she came to work complacently. Little did she know that President Sawyer had been arrested.

What should she do if President Sawyer’s involvement in bribery was exposed?

“Mom...” Rebecca gave Sally an anxious gaze.

Sally patted her on the shoulder and comforted her. “Don’t worry. Considering your dad’s status over the years, he’ll manage to settle it.”

“Even if I can settle it, Summit’s reputation will be largely affected,” Jeffrey replied angrily.

Sally glared at Jeffrey. “This isn’t Rebecca’s doing. She has done her best. Anyone from the company who were to get involved in it would’ve encountered this kind of situation. In fact, someone planned on tricking President Sawyer.”

“I don’t mean to blame her...”

As soon as Jeffrey finished his sentence, the general manager suddenly rushed in and said, “Mr. Jones, regarding the deal on Chelsea Sports Stadium development project, the organizer just called to inform us that they’re not going to work with us. Also, Holmes International Hotel said that they won’t consider working with us.”

Jeffrey felt dizzy while in a fit of fury. These were the two huge projects Summit had been aiming for over the past two years, and he had almost secured them.

The general manager then added, “Besides that, our company has applied to visit the world expo exhibition in Country S earlier, but they’ve now rejected us outright. Mr. Jones, did our company offend anyone? Clearly, someone’s aiming at Summit behind our back.”

Jeffrey began to totter. He was the one who had led Summit to the significant international path, yet everything was now in vain. “I’ve always acted cautiously in this industry over the decades. I’ve never offended anyone.”

“Could it be... Cathy?” Rebecca spoke hesitantly.

“Don’t get me wrong. I’m not trying to bad-mouth her. It wasn’t a big issue when Catherine dragged me out of Grapefruit Restaurant back then. However, Janet and Cindy were very pissed at that time. They said that they were going to do something about it... Janet is the Campbell family’s sweetheart,

and moreover, I heard Cindy is associated with the wealthy.”

“It surely has to do with Catherine. What a menace!” Sally roared. “Casting aside the incident that happened in the restaurant, I can tell that she’s usually very unreasonable.”

“Ask her to come back.” Jeffrey’s expression turned somber.

“Mr. Jones, there’s one thing you’re probably unaware of...” The general manager hesitated before he spoke, “A live video on some platform displayed a few shameful scenes last night, and Second Young Lady happened to be the female character. However, the video was stopped when the police barged in and arrested those people. After the incident, the police removed all those videos that were circulated online and announced that Second Young Lady was an undercover agent for the police...”

Rebecca exclaimed, “That was dangerous! She isn’t even a police officer, so how did she become an undercover agent?”

Sally gritted her teeth. “What undercover agent? It’s very likely that she pretended to be one after she got into trouble. It must be the police who saved her. What a shame.”

The general manager said, “Yes. That’s what has been spreading in the entertainment industry. It’s being widely discussed that Second Young Lady’s personal life is messy. Her reputation has been heavily tarnished.”

“What an evil creature. Because of her, the Jones family’s reputation has been ruined.” Fuming with anger, Jeffrey took the vase on the table and flung it. “Find a way to bring her back. I don’t want her to stay outside and continue being a disgrace to the family.”

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 39

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 39

Hospital.

Catherine was discharged from the hospital after two days.

Shaun personally drove to the hospital to pick her up. Aware of the extraordinary treatment she was receiving, Catherine felt flattered.

After driving a good distance, he did not return to Jadeite Bay. He arrived at the car park of a large mall instead.

With a carefree expression, Shaun said, "Fudge was very picky and had a poor appetite when you weren't around to cook for her the last few days. Buy more ingredients and prepare something great for her."

"..."

Gazing at his elegant face, Catherine seriously wondered whether it was Fudge or him who was picky about food.

"What are you waiting for? Hurry up."

He was fed up with the unappetizing dishes Hadley brought for him over the past two days.

"Oh." Catherine undid the seatbelt and got out of the car. Since he had done her a favor this time, she planned on preparing a good meal for him as a token of her appreciation.

As she walked into the mall, over ten dishes and recipes for Fudge flashed across her mind.

There were quite a lot of ingredients she needed to buy. She also intended to get some yogurt, fresh milk, fruit, and junk food.

After one round of shopping, she realized that the cart was already full. It was definitely going to be a struggle for her to carry so many things.

After some thought, she sent Shaun a WhatsApp message. [Shaunny, I'm buying a lot of stuff, and I don't think I can carry everything. Can you help me carry a few bags?]

After sending the message, she did not hear from him for as long as five minutes.

She sighed and stopped having high expectations of him.

Shaun simply could not be associated with the term 'thoughtful'.

Amid her thoughts, someone suddenly cast a shadow over her. When she lifted her head, Shaun's tall and upright figure appeared in front of her. The windbreaker he was wearing had been removed. At the moment, he was only dressed in a creamy white top which made him give off an aura of coolness and elegance.

Catherine became absent-minded as she stared at him. This man looked perfect from all angles. Regardless of the clothes he wore, he seemed to have the exquisite looks that were typically featured on posters.

The woman showed a blank stare which Shaun had gotten used to since young. Surprisingly, he was not disgusted by her stare. In contrast, he was in a good mood. "I just wanted you to buy some ingredients, but you ended up buying so much."

Reminded of his frugality and low-key lifestyle, Catherine quickly explained, "I was thinking that you and Fudge haven't been able to eat any proper meals the past few days, so I'm buying more..."

Shaun lifted his hand and interrupted her with a frown, "I ate well. It was Fudge who didn't eat well. Don't drag me into it. I'm not picky about food."

Catherine was at a loss for words.

'Are you sure?

'Could you please stop staring at the ingredients and hide your hungry gaze?'

"Yeah, Fudge didn't eat well."

To save him from losing his dignity, Catherine nodded and explained thoughtfully, "The things I'm buying are all necessities. You need to eat yogurt, fresh milk, and fruits every day so that your body receives enough nutrition. You might look healthy now, but you work hard every day and even drink for business at times. Therefore, you have to take care of your body and eat a balanced diet when you're home."

Shaun was momentarily stunned upon hearing that. His eyes revealed conflicting emotions.

Before this, hardly anyone was concerned about his diet. What other people mostly cared about was his ability to bring benefits to the Hill family and whether he had fulfilled the Hill family's needs.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 40

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 40

Catherine then added, "I need these spices in my cooking. Also, I bought some noodles so that I can cook for you when you return late from work. We're running out of toilet paper and rags as well."

At that instant, Shaun was under the delusion that this woman was his wife, given that she took great care of everything in the house.

"By the way..." Pointing to the tissue paper box, Catherine continued, "...this will be placed in your car. This way, you won't always have to use the tissue paper provided at the gas station. This kind of soft tissue paper is quite economical."

"Since when do I use the tissue paper provided at the gas station?"

"It's in your car. It's still there." Afraid that he was concerned about saving his dignity, Catherine feigned admiration. "It doesn't matter. I simply like your capable yet frugal personality. This is the first time I met a man who's living his best life. You're a model of a perfect man. How charming."

Overwhelmed with the sudden compliments, Shaun lowered his head. The way she looked up and stared at him with bright eyes reminded him of the first time they met.

Compared to her dull expression two days ago, her shameless look right now made him feel better.

"You shouldn't be working as a designer. You should be a brown noser."

Catherine giggled. "I just want to be your brown noser."

“Go and pay the bill now.”

As Shaun turned around and walked forward, Catherine did not catch sight of his curled lips.

An enthusiastic salesperson who was promoting some brand hurried to the check-out counter and stopped the two of them.

“Hello, sir and madam. Do you guys want to buy Durex? We’re having a promotion recently where you buy one and get one for free. It’s really economical.”

Catherine blushed at the sight of the little box in the salesperson’s hand.

“No... No need. We don’t need it.”

“Ohhh. Both of you are newlyweds, so are you guys planning to have a child?” the salesperson asked knowingly.

“Uh-huh.” Afraid that the salesperson would continue to pester her, Catherine muttered something and subsequently dragged Shaun forward.

“Do we intend to have a child?” Shaun gave her a long, profound sideways glance.

“I was just lying to her. Are you actually planning to use it?” Catherine asked casually.

“Stop dreaming. Even if I were to use it, I won’t use it with you.” Despite his cruel words, Catherine’s

flirtatious look crossed his mind.

He gnashed his teeth. Damn, why would such a silly thought cross his mind?

Catherine chuckled. Pooh, she made it seem as if she was eager to use it with him.

What a cold fish. She would not be trying so hard to please him if not for her plan to become Ethan's aunt and take revenge on the scummy couple.

...

After they left the mall, Shaun drove back to Jadeite Bay.

Having made four dishes as well as a soup, Catherine initially thought that she had prepared too much food. Once Shaun began eating though, she thought he seemed to have starved for two days.

The food was all finished in no time.

After lunch, Shaun and Fudge lay on the couch lazily while having a rest. "What are you planning to do next? Continue searching for a job?"

"Let's talk about that later. I'm going to have my SIM card replaced this afternoon."

"Don't worry about it. If you can't get a job, just stay home and cook for me. You won't be strapped for cash." Shaun put on his windbreaker once he finished speaking.

Catherine was stunned for a moment. "Are you going to work now?"

“Yeah, I still have a lot of work to deal with.”

Once he left, Catherine glanced at the time which showed 1:00 p.m.

She actually sympathized with him as being a boss was not easy. He did not even have a set lunch break. He had probably taken time out of his busy schedule to pick her up earlier.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 41

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 41

After Catherine had her SIM card replaced that afternoon, her phone displayed over ten missed calls.

Those calls were made by Freya, Jeffrey, Sally, and many other people.

Could it be that they were concerned about her after finding out what had happened the other day?

She could not help but feel a sense of anticipation deep down. Regardless of the reason, she still called Sally back.

“Mom...”

“You’re finally calling me back.” Sally’s furious voice sounded. “How long more do you intend on staying outside? Come home right now.”

The phrase 'come home' made Catherine feel bitter deep down. "Is that still my home?"

"Catherine, if you still don't come back now, don't come back forever. You don't have to acknowledge your dad and me anymore either."

Sally hung up once she was done speaking.

After some hesitation, Catherine eventually decided to return home.

After all, Jeffrey and Sally were the ones who raised her. She also wanted to bring home the recording containing Henry's words and let them hear it so that they would become aware of Rebecca's true colors.

...

An hour later, she drove to the Jones family's villa.

Although it had only been a little over a month since she last returned, she felt that the people living here had changed.

After parking her car, she entered the villa. Jeffrey, Sally, and Rebecca were all in the living room.

The moment Catherine caught sight of Rebecca's expression, hatred flamed within her. "Dad, Mom, do you know that she stole my design, and she—"

"Cathy, I don't mind you accusing me outside, but how dare you throw mud at me here?" A bitter

smile spread across Rebecca's face. "I already said I didn't."

Sally pulled a long face as well. "Why must you put your sister down every time you come back? Cut it out."

"I have evidence."

Catherine immediately took out her phone and played that recording.

As soon as Rebecca heard Henry's voice, her expression changed slightly. However, she soon regained her composure and spoke in an aggrieved manner, "From where did you get this random person to record this? Who's Henry? I don't even know him."

Catherine turned around and gazed at Jeffrey with slightly red eyes. "Dad, Rebecca transferred tens of thousands of dollars into Henry's account which you can easily check. She grew up in a rural area and only learned to design after you acknowledged her. Considering that she only learned it for a short while, how could she have possibly produced such a brilliant design?"

"Dad and Mom, I really didn't do it." Tears streamed down Rebecca's face.

Sally frowned and stretched out her hand. "Cathy, show me the recording."

It had been a long while since Catherine heard Sally calling her by her pet name. Feeling slightly soft-hearted, Catherine handed the phone to her obediently.

Sally opened the recording file and deleted it straight away.

"Mom, you... Why?" Catherine was staggered at her behavior. As much as she wanted to snatch her phone back, it was too late.

Sally's gaze revealed coldness once again. "I can't let you ruin your sister's reputation and future with this recording that could be fake. You'd better not go too far."

Catherine was so frustrated that she shuddered.

At that instant, she gave a hollow laugh.

"Now I see it. Both of you don't even care if the recording is real or not. All you care about is her. How can you be so cruel? I'm also your daughter."

Jeffrey slapped the table and stood up. "If I had known earlier that you would turn out to be such a menace, I would've abandoned you back then. Look at the great stuff you've done. You lost your reputation by doing something shameful during a live video. Would any decent person want to marry you in the future? Secondly, who on earth did you offend that made Summit lose a few huge projects?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about." Catherine shook her head while sobbing. "As my parents, aren't you worried about me since I had encountered such an incident?"

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 42

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 42

"Serves you right," Sally spoke in an abrasive manner, "No wonder Ethan dumped you."

Catherine was completely at a loss for words. Even the slightest hint of anticipation in her was crushed.

How foolish she was. She should not have come back.

The truth did not matter to Mr. Jones and Mrs. Jones at all. More importantly, Rebecca was irreplaceable.

Dejected, Catherine extended her hand to Sally. "Give me back my phone. I'll leave. A shameful person like me doesn't deserve to come back. I don't deserve to be related to all of you as well."

"Are you planning to continue bringing shame to the family or getting into trouble outside?" Jeffrey scoffed. "You'd better stay home and reflect on your doings. When you decide to be frank, I'll consider letting you go."

Once Jeffrey finished speaking, he clapped his hands. A few bodyguards subsequently came from the entrance and captured Catherine right away.

"What are you guys trying to do? Kidnapping me, huh?" Catherine went mad. Never in her wildest dreams did she think that her family would be so cruel.

"I'm just teaching my daughter a lesson. Bring her upstairs and lock her in the room."

Rebecca quickly advised, "Don't do this, Dad. After all, Cathy is still young and immature. Moreover, there are always guests coming to visit us. It won't be good if she screams from upstairs."

Jeffrey was swayed. "You're right. Why not... Let's lock her in the old house located in Pennington."

Catherine started panicking. Over the past few years, she had returned to Pennington only once for worshipping duties. The house had been passed down for 50 to 60 years by the Jones family. Although the back of the house had been refurbished a little, the surrounding area was desolate and spooky.

It finally dawned on Catherine why Rebecca interceded for her.

“Rebecca, you’re such a b*tch—”

Sally gave Catherine a slap on the face. “Shut up! Your sister is trying to intercede for you, yet you insulted her. You’re very awful indeed!”

“Send her away right now.” Jeffrey waved his hand. Disturbed by the change in Catherine’s character, he wondered what had made her become so awful.

As she was drowsy, Catherine had no idea how long the car ride went on for. She was directly abandoned at the old rural house after that.

A few bodyguards promptly locked the main door. Even the windows were nailed shut.

Worst of all, there was no electricity or water. Not even a blanket was available.

As her phone was with Sally, she was unaware of the time.

The entire two-story old house was pitch-black. When the wind blew and consequently slammed the door and windows, an eerie sound could be heard.

Catherine nearly went insane. Curling up on the cool bed, she did not dare to move at all.

She was afraid of the dark. She was really afraid.

As soon as she noticed that the window was opened, she ran there. An old lady placed a bowl of rice through the window.

Catherine immediately seized her hand and begged, "Madam, I beg you to let me go. If that's not possible, at least switch on the lights and offer me a bed and blanket, please."

"No way. This is an order from sir and madam." The old lady broke free from her grasp brutally. Then, there was a bang on the window.

Standing in the dark, Catherine was hurting so badly that she could hardly breathe.

What had she actually done? Why would everyone hurt her this way?

She had been stripped of her dignity. Even her freedom and life were taken away.

She hated Rebecca, Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, and Ethan to the core.

However, she could not give up on herself.

She wanted to stay alive and take revenge.

She stuffed her mouth with rice. There was nothing else other than rice. What was worse, the rice was stale.

Tears poured down her face. If no one was coming to save her, she probably would not be able to step out of the house alive.

The old lady gave a call some distance away from the main door. "First Young Lady, I've done everything as per your request."

"Alright. Start reducing the temperature tomorrow. I hope... she dies in the house."

"Don't worry. By the look of things, she certainly won't be able to survive for more than four days."

...Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 43

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 43

After Shaun got off from work, he went for a meeting regarding an international financial case at night. Having had some alcohol during the meeting, he felt slightly dizzy.

The moment he switched on the lights after entering the house, Fudge ran to him. She kept meowing while hugging his leg.

"Little one, you missed me so much, huh?"

Shaun rubbed her head gently. After a while, he noticed something wrong with Fudge which he could not figure out until she rubbed her nose against the empty bowl.

Fudge was probably hungry.

Had Catherine not fed her?

He immediately poured some cat food for Fudge who seemed to be starving badly.

Shaun went to the room to search for Catherine, only to discover that she had not returned. His face darkened.

This woman had been causing endless problems. She was previously admitted to the hospital, and now that she was finally back at his house, she left Fudge in such a state.

She still had not returned although it was already so late.

He took out his phone to give her a call, but her phone was off.

Did something happen to her?

After taking out his phone, Shaun tracked Catherine's location. Fortunately, when he handed the phone to her today, he had turned on location tracking in it for fear that incidents like last night would occur again.

Upon tracking her location, Shaun sent Hadley a message. [Check out this location for me.]

A minute later, Hadley called, "This is the Jones family's house where Miss Jones' parents live."

"Got it."

Shaun hung up furiously.

This woman did not know her place. He had only displayed a hint of kindness and she started taking advantage of him. Just like that, she went home without giving him a call first. What was worse, she had turned off her phone.

Was she under the impression that she did not have to return to his house after bringing back the recording and being forgiven by the Jones family?

What did she take him for? How dare she bite the hand that fed her?!

She had better not come back forever if she had the audacity. He would not care about her anymore even if she was in trouble.

Never would he have expected that Catherine could be so heartless. There was no news about her for three solid days. She did not even answer his calls.

What depressed him further was that he did not eat well throughout these three days.

He even visited the restaurant that served the most delicious food in Melbourne as recommended by Chase, yet he found the food unappetizing.

Sometimes, he suspected that something might have happened to Catherine. Nevertheless, every time he turned on his phone to check her location, she was always in the Jones family's house.

Her biological parents could not possibly hurt her. Clearly, she had long since forgotten him.

Throughout the past three days, he was as cold as an iceberg in the office.

When it was time to get off from work, he immediately packed his stuff and left. He then bumped into

Chase at the door. "Are you going home to take care of Fudge? Is Catherine still not back?"

"Don't mention this woman anymore." With an icy expression, Shaun walked forward.

Chase shrugged helplessly. "I had no choice but to ask you since Freya asked me to find out about Catherine. She said that she hasn't been able to contact her, so she's worried that something has happened to her."

"She has always been in the Jones family's house, hasn't she?" Shaun stood frozen to the spot. It was understandable that Catherine did not call him back since both of them had just met each other not long ago, but Freya was her best friend.

"Let me call her back."

Chase tried to make a call.

Shaun got down using the elevator without waiting for him.

On his way home, he felt that things were increasingly strange as he thought it over. However, he was afraid that he might just be overthinking and end up poking his nose into Catherine's affairs.

Unexpectedly, he received a call from Chase shortly after he reached home.

"That's not quite possible. Just now, Freya told me that she visited the Jones family. They told her that Catherine has gone abroad to relax, but they didn't provide me with her contact number. Damn, could something have happened to her?"

Shaun frowned. "I don't think so. After all, she's the Jones family's biological daughter."

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 44

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 44

“Maybe not. Freya said that the Jones family is hopelessly biased.”

“Alright. I’ll check it out.”

Fretful, Shaun then gave Hadley another call. “Find out where Catherine last appeared.”

An hour later, Hadley brought him some news.

“Miss Jones went to the Jones family’s house three days ago. Shortly after she entered the house, the Jones family headed to the old house located in Pennington using their car. She’s probably there.”

“Do you mean that she might be imprisoned?”

“Very likely. The Jones family would not go there except for their family worship. What’s more, that place is remote and desolate.”

Shaun held his phone firmly. “Come and pick me up. I’m going to visit that place in person.”

...

Considering that Pennington was a large distance away, Hadley drove for three hours before they

reached there.

It was already midnight by then. Only when Shaun got out of the car did he realize that the place was eerily desolate. It was surrounded by mountains, and there was no light.

The old house that belonged to the Jones family was constructed in an enclosed style. From the main door, it seemed that the house was a few decades old.

Shaun knocked on the door, yet there was no response. As such, he climbed over the wall straight away.

The minute he stepped on the ground, a ray of light shone on him.

“Who are you? Why are you barging into the house in the middle of the night?”

Shaun turned around and saw an old lady who was holding a torchlight. “I’m looking for someone. I knocked on the door just now, but you didn’t open it.”

“I’m the only one living here. Get out now.” The old lady gave him a push.

Shaun then pushed her back. He took the torchlight and headed to the two-story house. As he glanced around, he got a shock.

He noticed that all the windows were nailed shut on both levels while the door was locked.

“Hurry up and get out now, or I’m going to call the police.” In a panic, the old lady pushed him even

more violently.

“You’d better call the police. Don’t let me catch you imprisoning someone illegally.” Her expression further confirmed his assumption.

He took a big step forward, then kicked the door hard. After a long while, he still failed to kick it open. Upon noticing the ax at the side of the house, he broke one of the windows using it and leaped into the house.

A rotten smell filled his nose. Since there was no electricity in the house, he had to search for Catherine room by room. At last, he found her curled up in a corner of the wooden bed.

She was still dressed in the same thin top that he had seen before he left that afternoon. The material of the top was very thin, while the temperature had reduced by ten degrees over the last two days. However, there were not any blankets and pillows on the bed she was sleeping on. There was not even bed linen.

As he approached her, he could sense the smell emanating from her body. However, he could not be bothered about it.

He dashed toward her and shook her forcefully, but she showed no reaction. Her body was as cold as ice, while her face was as white as a sheet.

Luckily, he found out from the tip of her nose that she was still breathing faintly, or he would have nearly thought she was dead.

He carried her and rushed to the main door. The old lady who was hiding behind the door panicked upon realizing Catherine’s situation. Afraid to stay any longer, she immediately fled using the back door.

Shaun did not have the time to seize her. If he did not send Catherine to the hospital right now, she

would be dead for sure.

On their way to the hospital, the woman remained motionless in his arms.

Shaun lowered his head, gazing at her face. Her originally chubby cheeks had become slim, while her jelly-like lips were dry and chapped.

He found the incident incredulous. Catherine was the Jones family's biological daughter, after all. How inhuman they were!

Deep inside, Catherine must be consumed by frustration and torment.

Shaun was sympathetic toward the woman. At the same time, he kicked himself for not looking for her earlier.

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 45

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 45

Shaun sent Catherine to the nearest hospital.

He clenched his fists while waiting for her outside the emergency room. Around half an hour later, the doctor came out of the emergency room and said, "Was she kidnapped? If she was sent here an hour later, even God wouldn't have been able to rescue her."

"She has been rescued?" Shaun sighed deeply with relief. A weight had finally been lifted off his heart.

"Yes, but her bodily functions have declined. Also, she's having a persistent fever." With furrowed

brows, the doctor added, "She hasn't had any water to drink for at least three days, and she probably didn't eat much rice as well. What's worse, the rice she had was mostly stale. It'll likely take her half a month to recover."

Not only was Shaun shocked, but Hadley was also dumbfounded. "Are the Joneses even human?"

Shaun's handsome face fell. "Tell the reporters what happened today so that the world knows the Jones family's true colors."

"Alright."

...

Catherine had a dream where she was almost dead. However, she received a warm hug from someone reluctant to let her go.

It was because of the warmth that she felt as if she had met a knight in shining armor.

It dawned on her that she was actually... still alive.

This was the thought that first struck Catherine when she opened her eyes.

At that moment, her body was covered with a warm blanket. There was a small lamp lighting up the ward, and the air conditioner was on. She was not in the old dark house.

“Catherine, you’re finally awake, you damned woman!” Freya leaped up to her with red eyes and said in a sobbing voice, “You keep being admitted to the hospital, and it’s always more serious than the previous admission. You really scared the hell out of me.”

“Was it you who found me?”

All Catherine could recall was that she felt dizzy and seemed to be burning. Her stomach had also been hurting very badly. She really thought that she would die.

At that time, she thought she might as well die since she was greatly tormented by hunger, coldness, and thirst.

“No, it was Shaun who saved you. I had gone to the Jones family’s house to look for you, but you weren’t there. I immediately contacted Shaun, and he saved you that night. Previously, you had been staying in Adelaide for treatment. You’ve been in a stable condition since yesterday, so Shaun transferred you to Melbourne Hospital. He hasn’t been sleeping well in the past few days as he was taking care of you all the time. I’ve just asked him to go home and rest.”

“It was him...”

Catherine muttered, her eyes turning red.

Against her expectations, he had saved her from trouble again and again. In fact, she had not done anything else for him aside from cooking for him and Fudge a few times.

She owed him quite a lot.

“Back then, you always claimed that he’s cold-blooded. I think he’s quite nice, though.” Freya added, “He even told the media the news about you being imprisoned and abused by the Jones family.

Summit's shares have been dropping since yesterday, and many are criticizing your dad and mom online. You won't be at odds with his idea, right?"

"I won't!" At the mention of the Jones family, Catherine's eyes expressed a deep sense of hatred. "Since they planned to kill me, I won't let them get away with it. I'll take revenge on them sooner or later!"

Freya sighed. "Don't worry, Summit has been hurt badly this time. Its market value has dropped by at least several billion dollars."

Unaffected by Summit's situation, Catherine said indifferently, "Freya, I'll make those who bullied me pay the price someday."

Freya was stunned as she sensed the change in Catherine's attitude.

"Actually, you can ask Shaun to help you. Don't you think... he has fallen for you?"

...

Shaun and Chase came over in the evening.

Chase placed the fruit basket on the coffee table, then greeted Catherine with a smile. "Sister-in-law, are you feeling better?"

"Much better." Catherine secretly glanced sideways at Shaun who was dressed in a black windbreaker. Paired with the dark colors of the windbreaker, his extraordinary features seemed like an ice sculpture. Even his eyes were filled with grimness.

Catherine dropped her gaze obediently. "Sorry for causing you trouble again." Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 47

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 47

Ethan appeared startled. However, his heart turned cold upon remembering everything that Catherine had done.

He admitted that he used to love her, but this woman did not deserve his continuous sacrifices anymore.

"I'll think of something," Jeffery said.

...

Catherine was hospitalized for three days. She could not stay for another day longer after spending so much time here recently.

Upon returning to Jadeite Bay, she was surprised to see that Fudge had put on some weight. She thought that the cat would naturally become weaker without someone properly looking after it the past few days.

When Shaun came home later that night, he overheard her murmuring while feeding the cat. "Fudge, you've got to stop eating so much. Look at the size of your belly. It's as if you're pregnant with kittens."

The corners of his lips twitched. Fudge's pregnant belly was getting larger as days passed. He could not keep this a secret for much longer.

Anyway, it was still nice to have someone to return home to.

He reappeared wearing casual loungewear. Catherine had already set up the dinner table.

She prepared him a feast consisting of all his favorite dishes to express her gratitude.

Shaun's eyes darkened after glancing at the dishes spread out across the table. "I'm bored eating steamed and stir-fried dishes. Make soup or stew sometimes," he simply said.

This took her by surprise. She had made him soup before but he did not seem to like it that much, hence she made it less often now. It appeared she was mistaken. "Sure, what kind of soup would you like?"

"Pumpkin soup, chicken soup, or even sweet potato soup. Get some herbs and nourishing ingredients that are good for health with my card."

The doctor had mentioned at the hospital that she should maintain her health or she might suffer from side effects. This woman was not paying any attention at all.

Did she think she could do as she wished simply because she was still young?

"Oh."

Catherine nodded obediently.

Most of the dishes he mentioned were for invigorating the body's vitality. It seemed like rich people loved nourishing their health. However, something felt rather strange.

It was not until he finished eating everything off the table that she came to realize, he was not bored of eating these dishes at all.

Oh right, it was her who needed to invigorate her body's vitality...

The doctor had mentioned earlier that her body had taken a huge toll because of this incident. She was instructed to eat less fatty foods and consume more food that was good at rejuvenating health.

Her heart began pounding beneath the skin as she studied the handsome man's features.

...

After dinner, Shaun retreated to the study to continue working.

He was still in there around 10 p.m. Catherine prepared a warm, hearty oatmeal porridge and delivered it to the study.

The man was sitting at the desk, scanning through documents beneath the bright downlight while referring to the laptop simultaneously. A pair of golden-framed glasses sat quietly on his nose bridge. He exuded a scholarly, cultured aura that she had never seen before.

She used to think Ethan looked exceptionally attractive while occupied with work. In comparison, however, Shaun was undoubtedly way more charming.

"How long are you going to keep staring?" He shut his laptop and turned to look at her calmly.

“I’ve never seen you wearing glasses before. I almost fainted because of your overwhelming charm,” she said with a smile.

“Still not used to it?” He raised his eyebrow slightly.

“...”

For the first time, Catherine was at a loss for words.

Finally, several moments later, she spoke again, “Your good looks enchant me in different ways every day. The more I look at you, the deeper I’m falling for you. It never gets old...”Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 48

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 48

Before Catherine could finish her sentence, a massive hand suddenly appeared to cover her mouth.

Shaun’s hand smelled like dry pine. The faint fragrance was surprisingly soothing.

More importantly, his hand was so warm!

“Shut up.” The man’s eyes twinkled beneath the lenses of his glasses.

She felt her own cheeks burning too. After he removed his hand, she placed the bowl of oat porridge on the desk. “I bet you must be hungry after working all night.”

He looked at the oat porridge topped with cinnamon. It certainly looked appetizing.

“Catherine, you’re trying to fatten me up, huh?”

“No, your body is still in top shape.” She pouted. “I wouldn’t mind even if you’re fat. Perhaps you might consider me if no other woman likes you anymore.”

He looked at her, the corners of his lips twitching into a sneer. “Forget it. I can’t afford a woman who frequents the hospital every other day.”

“Don’t worry. Soon, I’ll be out there working to provide for you,” she promised.

“I dare not rely on that. I might die before that even happens.”

Shaun stirred the oat porridge with the spoon.

Catherine, who had just been ridiculed, walked out of the study feeling annoyed. She swore to prove to him that she could achieve something!

...

1 a.m.

Catherine was jolted awake by her nightmares, only to realize she was sweating all over on her forehead.

Immediately, she switched on the lights. A calmness came over her body gradually as the light took over the darkness.

She had dreamt about being locked up inside that dark manor again. That place was filled with all sorts of horrifying noises at night.

Terrified, she curled into a ball. It had become a problem for her to sleep alone now.

After moments of consideration, she wrapped herself in the blanket and knocked fearfully at the master bedroom's door.

"Who's there?"

Shaun, who had been woken up in the middle of the night, said with a voice reeking of rage.

"It's me."

Half a minute passed by in complete silence. Just when she was about to give up, the door was opened abruptly from the inside.

He appeared on the other side of the door. His hair was disheveled and his dark eyes looked intimidating. "You'd better have a good reason for this."

She blinked blankly at the buttons in front of his pajamas. He must have just put this on in a rush.

"I'm scared..."

She lifted her eyes slowly. Colors had drained off her face because of fear. However, he was baffled by the blanket she was holding in her hands.

“Is this another one of your tactics to seduce me?”

Shaun admitted she looked especially vulnerable right now. However, he had been exhausted all day and still needed to wake up early for a court case tomorrow. “It’s late. I need to sleep even if you don’t need to.”

“It’s not that.”

Catherine genuinely did not want to stay in her room alone. She mustered her strength and tugged the corner of his sleeve. “Ever since being locked up in the old manor, I don’t dare to sleep alone at night anymore. I’m haunted by terrifying nightmares. Please let me sleep on the floor of your bedroom. I’m being serious.”

“Weren’t you sleeping just fine in the hospital?”

“I was accompanied by the carer then.” Her eyelashes trembled. She was biting on her lower lip firmly.

He frowned upon seeing that.

It was him who had rescued her out of that old manor. That place was indeed eerily silent and dark as the night. Even a man would be traumatized after being locked up in there for three days.

She noticed his hesitation and quickly made a promise. “I swear I won’t disturb you.” Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 49

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 49

“Remember your promise.” Shaun returned to his bed nonchalantly.

Upon getting his approval, Catherine quickly laid out the blanket on the floor next to his bed.

The man stayed attentive for a brief moment but soon drifted into sleep.

However, sometime later, the woman’s crying woke him up.

“Open the door... Please... It’s cold... So dark... I’m scared.”

He straightened up from the bed. The moonlight that poured through the window illuminated the silhouette on the ground. The woman who had curled up into a ball was covering her ears firmly. Her entire body was trembling in fear.

“Catherine, wake up. It’s just a nightmare.” Shaun stepped out of the bed to peel her hands away.

However, she was completely absorbed in the terrible dream. Her terrified face was as pale as a sheet.

Left with no other alternative, he pulled her into his chest and gently patted her back.

“It’s alright. You’re safe now...”

The man’s voice had a calming effect that slowly relaxed the tension in her body.

Her small face was pushed against his chest. Her shiny dark hair was draped loosely over her shoulders with some strands plastered along the edge of her pitiful yet beautiful face. She also exuded a faint soothing fragrance.

This was not the smell of perfume. Instead, it was the scent of her shampoo.

He never realized how nice her shampoo smelled until this moment.

The fragrance slowly enveloped him until he closed his eyes eventually.

He thought of letting her go once she calmed down completely. However, it was already the next morning when he opened his eyes again.

The two of them were sharing the same pillow. Her left arm and left leg were draped over his body. There was a lingering smile on the corners of her lips. It appeared she had a good night's sleep.

Shaun did not feel uncomfortable either. He even felt for a quick second that they were like a newly-wed couple.

He thought absent-mindedly for a few seconds before carefully lifting the blanket to get to his feet.

Unexpectedly, the view beneath the blanket took him by surprise.

Almost all of the buttons on this stupid woman's pajamas were undone.

At this moment, Catherine also slowly opened her eyes.

Their eyes met, and her pupils dilated gradually.

She screamed in shock the second she realized she was lying in his arms. She scrambled to her feet and kept a distance from the man. "Why... Why are you sleeping next to me?"

"..."

The man scoffed in disbelief.

"You wrapped yourself around me crying while you had nightmares last night. I was being kind and comforted you..."

"You... Comforted me?" She found this hard to believe.

His face fell. "What are you trying to say? Catherine, come clean right now. Was last night a deliberate act? You really went all out to get my attention, huh?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. I slept pretty well." She vaguely recalled having nightmares in the beginning, but she felt at peace when a gentle voice had whispered softly into her ears.

Hang on, did that gentle voice belong to Shaun?

She looked at him blankly, but he was reaching his limit. His eyes darkened as he rose to his feet. "Before you continue speaking, take a look at the state of your pajamas."

Confused, she lowered her gaze. A look of shock and embarrassment flashed across her face. Her

hands flew to cover her chest immediately.

The man smirked. "Good acting. I'm sure you secretly undid those buttons to seduce me."

"I'm innocent." She felt like crying at this point. "Brother, the buttons opened themselves. It's not my fault I have big breasts."

"..."

He did not know what else to say. Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 50

July 21, 2021 by gamanovel

Let me go, Mr. Hill [by Shallow South] Chapter 50

"That's enough. You can attack me but not all women."

"So what if I am?" Shaun replied, looking at Catherine with disdain.

"You..." Agitated, she dashed forward to wrap her arms around his neck.

He was genuinely shocked by her unexpected and sudden action.

Was this woman trying to force a kiss on him? The image of her supple lips popped into his mind. He hesitated for a couple of seconds before he felt a pang of pain on his cheeks.

She had just bitten him.

He pushed her away forcefully while his hand flew to cover the spot bitten by her.

Was she a dog? It freaking hurt.

“Catherine, how dare you? Don’t think I’m not going to punish you for this.”

The man’s eyes were like flames of fire. Catherine quivered after realizing how ridiculous she acted earlier.

“Um... I can explain this. It’s because I... I love you too much,” she said in an exaggerated voice, “Have you not seen it in the movies before? Lead actresses always bite the man they love so much. I was just trying to leave an imprint on you.”

Shaun took a few steps forward, his teeth clenched in anger. “Do you take me as a fool?”

“Well, you can bite me back.” Catherine braced herself and inched her face closer to the man. “Bite as hard as you love me. The deeper the love, the stronger the force.”

“...”

He had not felt like swearing at this moment than at any point in his life.

Did she really think he would let her off the hook?

He sandwiched her head between his palms and bit her hard on the cheek.

The woman's soft cheek was bouncy and supple like jelly. He did not want to move his lips away.

"Ouch!" She yelled in pain.

Finally, after seeing the teeth prints on her chubby cheeks, he let go of his grip.

"Remember this punishment."

Catherine pretended to be shy despite the pain. "No, this is the proof of your love."

"Dream on."

Shaun laughed sarcastically before walking into the bathroom, slamming the door shut behind him.

The reflection on the mirror showed evident teeth prints on his own cheek. He felt like rushing through the door to shred that woman into pieces.

Damn it.

He could wear a mask, but he had to be at court today.

No attorney showed up at the court wearing masks.

Annoyed, he only had a few bites of breakfast before leaving home.

She sighed internally upon seeing the leftovers.

Oh no, she had infuriated the devil again. Why was he so angry anyway? The teeth prints on her cheek were more prominent than his!

...

Melbourne Court.

9 a.m.

Ding. The elevator door opened. Shaun walked out of it wearing a mask. Hadley trailed behind him closely.

Mr. Smith, the plaintiff, hurried forward to greet them. "Attorney Hill, this is the last day of trial. The current situation is not looking favorable to me. Will I lose—"

"I've never lost." Shaun's tone was distant and impatient. "Don't keep repeating the same question. Get yourself a new lawyer if you don't trust me."

Mr. Smith had no words to reply to that man's indifference. He was the country's best attorney, after all.

"Now, now, have faith in Attorney Hill. No one other than him can bring victory to your side."

More Chapter