

Love beyond the mask (Whitney) Chapter 156-159

Chapter 156

Tears streamed down Whitney's cheeks as she numbly slid the engagement ring onto her ring finger, only to jerk it off as if it burned her skin.

Over and over, she repeated the torturous ritual until her finger bled, but she could not feel the pain; the pain in her heart was much more immense.

"Whitney? A deep, mellow voice called from outside the door, accompanied by a gentle knocking.

Startled, she clasped a trembling hand over her mouth to stifle her sobs.

"Is the baby okay?" He asked with concern.

Biting her lip, Whitney shook her head, remaining silent.

"Why are you locking yourself in there? Is that ring bothering you that much? Are you so against accepting me because of Elaine?" He rested his weight against the door, his heavy frame almost causing it to creak.

Inside, Whitney vigorously shook her head; it was not about Elaine; it was something else entirely.

He sighed, his voice turning cold, a chill that seemed to echo the death of his hope.

After a while, he walked away.

Clutching the ring to her chest, Whitney collapsed against the door. If she told him everything, what would he do to Uncle Keegan?

In the end, he would probably throw her into the abyss alongside him. After all, she had unwittingly been complicit in hurting him twice.

Whitney did not know how long she stayed in the bathroom, staring at her ghostly reflection, her face as pale as a specter.

Natalie knocked on the door, her voice laced with worry, "Whitney, are you still feeling unwell? I'm about to call the family doctor."

“I’m fine, Mom...” Whitney quickly stood, splashing her face with cold water to reduce the swelling around her eyes before hastily opening the door.

Natalie looked at her daughter-in-law’s swollen belly and lovingly stroked it. “Little baby is being so good.”

Whitney’s gaze flickered to the empty dining table, her voice barely above a whisper, “Did he leave?”

Natalie shook her head, gesturing towards the living room. “When you locked yourself in the bathroom with that ring and wouldn’t answer him, he started drinking. He’s been sick since yesterday, you know. Three bottles of red wine in, and now he’s practically comatose.”

Whitney saw the slumped silhouette on the couch, his brow furrowed in distress.

The crisis at United Realty Corporation had been enough to trouble him, but her behavior had only added to his gloom.

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“Whitney, dear...” Natalie led her to the dining table to talk, looking at her closely. “I might be forgetful, but I’m not blind I see the love you have for him. Are you rejecting his proposal because of his difficult nature?”

“No, Mom, it’s not that...”

Natalie glanced at her son with a pained expression. “You don’t know what he’s been through. He has a half-brother from his father’s side who was always the golden boy. I was ill, so I couldn’t stand up for him. He was often mistreated by his stepmother, going hungry, and locked in the basement.

A wealthy heir with nothing to his name, he once stole money for my medication and got beaten by the servants publicly, even taken to the police. He was just eight years old when he developed mental issues and was constantly irritable, and his father had him committed to a psychiatric ward for two years.

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When he came out, he was different, cald. I blame myself, my illness made his life miserable. But he fought hard, stood his ground, and outshone all the other family members, earning his father's respect.

I've watched him struggle every step of the way. My memory may fail me sometimes, but I vividly remember his hardships."

Whitney felt a twinge in her heart; she had heard whispers about the Lippert family patriarch favoring the younger son, but she had not realized how much Ludwik had suffered.

Seeing her lost in thought, Natalie patted her hand and said, "Don't be afraid. I'm telling you this so you can understand why he's so easily angry. But that's all in the past, and he's healthy now. He never let the darkness of his childhood affect his business dealings. Whitney, your man has integrity. His nobility is in his bones, and he's worthy of you.

If he were a man who would use any means necessary to reach his goal, he would not just be the tycoon he is today but even more powerful."

Natalie smiled reassuringly.

Whitney was taken aback. Natalie, of course, knew her son best, and she said he had integrity and was not the type to use any means necessary to reach his goal.

Yesterday, he had refused to take advantage of Braxton, willingly giving up a lucrative deal. His principles and restraint had struck her.

Such a uniquely noble man, had he truly been so villainous when he started from nothing, seizing the Tennyson family's assets?

Whitney questioned herself silently.

Her nerves taut, she asked, "Mom, in all his years in business, has he ever done anything reprehensible?"

"Never. Even at his lowest, he got through it with honesty."

Natalie stated confidently, pride shining in her eyes, "So, Whitney, you can't give up on him."

She led

Whitney to the sofa, her voice heavy with emotion, "If there's anyone he truly despises and hates, it's his brother who took everything from him. Despite my detachment from worldly matters, I've heard people praise your beauty and intelligence. You should stand by his side; don't let him fight alone anymore."

Natalie placed Whitney's hand gently *on* the man's shoulder.

Sensing her

touch, Ludwik gripped it tightly. His drunken eyes, clouded with alcohol, seemed to swallow her whole.

"Whitney..." he mumbled in his drunken stupor, "I'm sick; did you know?"

His voice was hoarse, breaking her heart, his features flushed with fever.

Whitney could no longer bear it. She touched his forehead, which was burning up.

Taryn could not stand *to* see him suffer and urged, "He's fallen severely ill and refuses to take his medicine. Please, Madam, tell him *to* go upstairs *to* rest."

Whitney followed Taryn's advice

with a heavy heart, helping him to the bedroom.

In the bedroom, the tall man collapsed onto the bed.

Whitney placed a thermometer under his arm, but he squirmed, his brow furrowed in discomfort, exhaling hot, fevered breaths as if he could scorch the air.

Whitney sighed and looked down at him, his face uncovered due to their struggle, revealing his strikingly handsome features.

He was Ludwik, the man Natalie claimed had never stooped to dishonorable means in business.. Whitney looked at this extraordinary man, remembering how he had risked his life to save her.

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Could that have been an act? Was he the conniving man her uncle had depicted, a ruthless predator, a murderer?

But she refused to believe it. In their five months together, he had always been a well-mannered and graceful gentleman. He might be temperamental, sure, but she could not sense any maliciousness in him.

So, where had everything gone wrong?

There was one more thing. If Ludwik was the man who killed her grandfather and mother, how could he not realize that her uncle was the very culprit who had caused his deal to go sour? Instead, he still thought Elaine was why she wanted to leave him.

Whitney's heart hammered against her chest, a relentless drumbeat echoing her turmoil. Could it be possible that Keegan had accused the wrong person all along? But then, there was the broken half of that mask...

Lost in her thoughts, she did not notice that the man before her had stirred awake.

His eyes were as enigmatic as ever.

Spotting the delicate figure hovering above him, Ludwik suddenly pulled her in to his embrace and captured her lips with a fierce, domineering kiss that carried a tumult of sorrow and rage.

Overwhelmed by the scent of alcohol, Whitney struggled for air, her emotions shattering like a jar of mixed

spices.

She pushed him away.

His gaze, deep as a forest pool, seemed to drown her. "Can't I? Have you grown so distant from me?"

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Her heart shattered like a delicate wine glass dropped on a stone floor, and she could barely muster the strength to keep her trembling fingers still.

He cradled the back of her head, wishing he could merge her into his very being. If it were not for the child they were expecting, he would have pinned her down and never let go.

Whitney felt the storm raging within him, and her tears cascaded down her cheeks, glistening like pearls, tapping softly against his skin.

Her small hands clenched into fists against his chest and neck, only to unfurl, powerlessly relaxing.

Eyes closed, she mourned silently, "Mom, Grandpa, forgive me for this betrayal, this shame. It's the last time, I swear. Maybe... Maybe it's all a mistake? Maybe it's not him?"

Soon, the fever and the drunken haze pulled him into the void, and his lips loosened.

Whitney slumped next to the bed, her mind a whirlwind. She hastily rummaged through her bag and pulled out her grandfather's contact book.

Skimming through it desperately, she stumbled upon a torn page with a single name: Bartels.

Bartels?

The following pages were all missing.

If her grandpa had not torn them out, then who did, and why were the pages with Ludwik's name still intact?

A memory flashed in her mind of her uncle mentioning that before coming to Banyan City, her Grandpa had been pushed out of the medical field by unscrupulous competition.

The only Bartels she knew was Elaine, and the Bartels were a dynasty in the medical field of Emperor City!

Could it be a coincidence? Was it the Bartels who forced her Grandpa to leave, leading him to Banyan City?

As her head spun with these thoughts, Whitney suddenly considered that maybe the name Ludwik in the address book was a red herring.

She looked up at the feverish man before her, her heart pounding on hot coals. “Ludwik, it wasn’t you, was it?” She whispered hoarsely, clutching the ring in her hand as everything began to heat up.

Downstairs, Natalie was relieved to see Whitney had not come down. But as dizziness took hold of her, Taryn suggested they call the family doctor to stay with her.

Just then, the house phone rang. Taryn answered it and hesitated before speaking, “Ms. Natalie, it’s Ms. Elaine. She wants to visit for New Year’s Eve. Shall I invite her?”

Natalie frowned, the thought of that girl sending shivers down her spine, and fear bloomed within her.

With Ludwik and Whitney upstairs, she shook her head. “Decline her. Tell her we’re having a family reunion.”

Taryn relayed the message as asked.

Halfway to the mansion, Elaine’s face fell when her assistant relayed Taryn’s words. She had planned to use this New Year’s Eve to get closer to Ludwik, especially since Whitney would not be back because of her blunder with the company’s project. It would be the perfect opportunity to get closer to Ludwik!

However, hearing what her assistant had said, her fingers clutched with resentment. “What? A family reunion? No way Ludwik called Whitney back.”

It had to be Natalie.

Resentment boiled within Elaine as she gritted her teeth. She had not even returned to Emperor City because

she wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate New Year’s Eve with Ludwik. Yet, Natalie was way too protective over Whitney, which was getting on Elaine’s nerves!

With Natalie in the picture, Elaine was almost certain she would not be able to achieve her goal. Her eyes narrowed with malicious intent.

Turn back!" She snapped. "Even if they're having their so-called reunion, it will be their last." She snickered as if certain of Whitney's doom.

At 5 am, close to dawn, Ludwik finally opened his eyes, still feverish and dizzy from the alcohol. His throat felt scorched, but he caught sight of the soft figure slumped by his bedside who seemed to be sleeping.

Despite the temperature-controlled room, she lay uncovered, and with their child growing inside her, Ludwik's brows furrowed with concern. He reached out to lift her into bed.

She woke at his touch.

The gaunt woman's pale face was etched with exhaustion. As she met his gaze, he saw a flicker of complex emotions, a softening from the icy distance of the past few days.

"Don't move. You're too weak," Whitney advised in a raspy voice.

"Have you been crying?" His voice was even more hoarse, his energy sapped.

Whitney's eyes froze, then dropped to the snowy dawn breaking outside the window.

"There's a crack in the ice," she thought, hope mingling with the raw vulnerability of the past days. Without hatred, perhaps they still had a future.

Her voice quivered as she spoke, "Take your medicine."

He was too weak even to lift his arm.

Gently, Whitney placed the pill in his mouth and said, "You had a fever. You need to rest, or even walking will be a problem. Don't rush back to work..."

She hesitated momentarily before finally asking, "What about the five-star hotel project? The investors are bound to make a fuss. What's your plan?"

Ludwik lay still, his face flushed with fever. "It's manageable. I have other companies. I'll reallocate funds to cover the breach of contract penalties."

He did not mention Imperial Gem Corporation, his other global enterprise, which was more famous than United Realty Corporation.

He had no idea Whitney already knew who he was.

She tucked him in, and he feebly reached for her hand, "The real issue is, you want to leave me. Don't, Whitney.

Put the ring on."

Head bowed/tears streaming, she instead grasped his burning hand.

"I won't leave you. Look." She sobbed softly, showing him the diamond ring on her finger.

Ludwik's eyes widened in surprise, then softened into a smile.

Whitney mirrored his smile, intertwining her fingers with his. "I'll try again. To stay by your side. I love you, L."

"I love you, Ludwik." She said his real name in her mind.

Content, he closed his eyes for a restful sleep.

"Get some sleep. When you wake up, we'll face it together," she whispered, injecting him with a sedative.

He needed rest.

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She rose once he was sound asleep, taking the contact book from her bag. It was time to confront her uncle to prove that Ludwik might not be the enemy.

There was still time to stop this, she thought as she hurried away.

Whitney stepped out of her room and was about to make a call.

Just then, her phone buzzed with an incoming call from Keegan, his voice unusually tender, "Whitn

ey, I was a bit over the top the other morning. I'm sorry. I know I've been pushing you hard. You didn't even drop by for New Year's Eve dinner. Come over now. Let's welcome the new year together."

Whitney could not fathom why he had suddenly softened.

Without overthinking, she stepped out of the house, saying, "Uncle, I have something really important to tell you!"

"I'll be waiting," Keegan replied and hung up, a smirk fading from his lips as a cold glint flashed in his eyes.

Whitney drove to the apartment only to find Keegan's car parked outside. He was already getting in, his hands clutching a few memorial candles and flowers for offerings.

Frowning, Whitney approached.

"Get in," Keegan said, "we're going to the cemetery to pay our respects to your mom and grandpa."

It was local customary to honor the departed on the first day of the new year, so Whitney nodded silently and climbed into the car.

The assistant pulled the car onto the road.

Whitney opened her purse, reaching for the contact book,

Suddenly, Keegan winced, clutching his right leg, "Whitney, it's acting up again. Get the acupuncture kit."

He suffered from phantom limb pain often.

Whitney hurriedly pulled out the kit, which included some herbs, and was about to position a silver needle.

Abruptly, the assistant slammed on the brakes. Whitney lurched forward, and as she turned back to grab the acupuncture kit again, she found that Keegan had thrown the entire kit out of the window!

Whitney was baffled, but when she looked up, she met Keegan's changed gaze.

“Uncle, why did you do that?”

Keegan remained silent, his eyes complex and unreadable...

The car door flung open, and out of nowhere, the assistant from behind Whitney pressed a chloroform-soaked cloth over her face, covering her mouth and nose.

The drug quickly invaded Whitney’s senses. Her eyes widened in shock and disbelief as she stared at her uncle.

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As Whitney’s consciousness slowly faded, she suddenly understood why Keegan had thrown away her acupuncture kit—it was her only form of defense.

Without the antidote, her eyes fluttered as the surroundings spun around her, and she soon lost all ability to

move.

Keegan’s voice was icy as he commanded, “Drive!”

The assistant whipped the car around, and Whitney, her head swimming, realized they were not heading to the cemetery as planned.

Panic surged within her

What was Keegan plotting?

1

After a disorienting two-hour drive, they pulled up to a secluded suburban mansion. Whitney was hauled inside and unceremoniously dumped onto a chair. Her uncle followed, wheeling himself in.

Surveying the room, which resembled a home office, Whitney’s gaze landed on a sinister figure by the window. He turned, and Keegan announced, “Boss, I’ve brought Whitney.”

Boss? Whitney’s brows knitted together. Who was this man?

The man smirked at her curiosity. "You're wondering who I am? You'll find out soon enough, Ms. Valentine. But first, you have to do something for me."

Fear tightened Whitney's chest as she looked at the sealed door. She rushed to her uncle, her voice laced with desperation as she said, "This man doesn't seem trustworthy, Uncle. Let's leave. We shouldn't be part of whatever he's planning."

"Whitney, you need to behave," Keegan warned, a hint of regret in his voice. "I'd rather not use the methods we did in the car again, especially now that you're with child."

Betrayal twisted in her gut. This was not about paying respects to her mother or grandfather.

When had her uncle become this person?

Keegan's eyes flashed with fervor. "The final step in my revenge is today, Whitney, and you're the key."

Whitney shook her head, her voice trembling. "Uncle, enough with revenge. You might have gotten the wrong man!"

Fumbling through her bag, she pulled out the contact book and turned to a crucial page. "Last night, I found that besides Ludwik, in the companies Grandpa once worked with, there was a Bartels family, a medical dynasty from Emperor City."

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Her gaze was steely. Perhaps the Bartels family had a vendetta against Grandpa, not Ludwik. Maybe Ludwik was just a scapegoat. I've known him for five months. I don't believe he is capable of the vile acts you accuse him of. Maybe there's some kind of a misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding?" Keegan became vivid, tossing the contact book aside. "You're defending him again! How can you doubt your uncle? I can't say I'm sure about much, but that mask penetrating your grandfather's heart is the most solid evidence there is!"

“But that mask is too suspicious. You said you weren’t involved in Grandpa’s business back then, right? You don’t know the details. Maybe it was the Bartels family that held a grudge against Grandpa!”

“You’re defending him based on intuition?” Keegan snarled.

But Whitney stood her ground. “I’m certain he’s not the type of person to kill for money.”

Keegan’s eyes turned icy. “You’re blind, Whitney. I’m disappointed. If you won’t see reason, then I have no need to show you compassion.”

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With a swift signal, two assistants restrained Whitney, binding her to the chair. They positioned her in front of the desk where Keegan dumped out her bag, searching for a particular item – the embossed black card Ludwik had given her.

Seeing this, anxiety started to crawl into Whitney’s heart. “Uncle, what are you planning?”

As the young man took the card from Keegan, a wicked grin spread across his face.

“Boss, is everything ready?” Keegan asked.

The man checked his watch lazily.
“Eleven o’clock, perfect timing for the news.”

He made a call. “Let him jump.”

Let who jump? Whitney’s heart raced, suspecting this was related to United Realty Corporation.

Her fists clenched, she reached for her phone, but Keegan had already turned it off, his frosty gaze fixed on her. “Uncle!” She cried out, her voice tinged with fear.

The news that an investor of the United Realty Corporation’s five–star hotel project had attempted suicide by jumping from a building spread like wildfire. Critically injured, his fate was uncertain.

Ludwik awoke to Felix's call, realizing he had slept unusually heavily. Descending the stairs, he listened to Felix explain the urgent situation. Whitney was nowhere to be found.

"Where's Whitney?" He demanded of Taryn.

Natalie stepped forward. "She left early in the morning to visit her uncle."

Ludwik's worry eased a fraction. She was wearing his ring, professing her love. She would not leave him; it could not have been a dream.

Dressed sharply, he stepped into his car, the concern returning as Félix's anxious voice filled the space. "The man who jumped claims you refused to pay the agreed compensation. Now, nineteen other investing companies are in turmoil, fearing you'll also withhold their dues!"

Ludwik's eyes were cold slits. "Someone set a trap. Find out who bought that man's loyalty."

"Did he survive the fall?" After a pause, he asked, his voice devoid of warmth.

"He jumped from the fourth floor and is critically injured, but the panic he's caused is the real issue. They're all outside United Realty, demanding answers!"

Ludwik remained silent, unaffected by the disaster. However, the situation was far worse than he had anticipated.

Stepping out of the car, he was immediately swarmed by journalists and protesters. They were clamoring for justice, compensation, and answers, accusing him of valuing profits over lives. And amid the chaos, all Ludwik could think of was Whitney, hoping she was safe from the storm he was about to confront.

Felix and his team of bodyguards were on high alert as Ludwik, his body feeling as cold as ice, strode into the corporate headquarters. He commanded the executives with steely resolve, "Bring in the CEOs of the 19 companies. I will hold a meeting to shut them up and tally the total penalties."

Felix reported, "The total comes to 120 billion dollars."

For Ludwik, it was not an unimaginably large sum, but to come up with that kind of cash on the spot might be a challenge.

Ludwik's expression remained impassive, as unshakable as a mountain. "Begin liquidating the assets of Imperial Gem. We need to free up as much cash as possible."

Whitney was tied to a chair, facing a wall where a television flickered to life at Keegan's touch. On the news, the pale outline of Ludwik flashed before her eyes.

She looked incredulously at her uncle, realizing it was all a setup—the fall of the investor was orchestrated!

Her uncle and this young man were setting Ludwik up.

The compensation payments should have been manageable, and United Realty Corporation would not have been under such stress. But now, one orchestrated fall, and Ludwik was in hot water.

Other investors were causing trouble, the press was on his back, and he had to come up with billions in a flash. Whitney's heart ached as she saw Ludwik's fever still had not broken.

Suddenly, her uncle approached her.

Keegan's eyes were alight with a twisted excitement, a mix of hatred and greed swirling within. He was holding a contract.

Whitney scrutinized it, recognizing the overseas partnership with United Realty Corporation that her uncle had forced her to stamp.

Just then, the young man escorted in a blond, blue-eyed man dressed in a banker's suit.

"Is this the bank president?" Keegan asked the young man.

The charming man nodded, casting a sly glance at Whitney, and picked up her black credit card from the table, saying, "Your uncle says your card could bankrupt Ludwik?"

Whitney shuddered violently,

She turned to her uncle instantly.

Keegan advanced towards her, forcibly freeing her hand from the ropes.

“Uncle, what are you doing?” She asked, still in disbelief.

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“I overheard you talking **the** other day, and I couldn’t believe it – Ludwik really spoils you, doesn’t he? You’ve got access to all his liquid assets, and you can spend without limits, as long as it’s for something that looks legit. If you were to transfer funds to my account, Ludwik could trace it and take it back. But if you funnel it into one **of** the companies he’s already set to invest in, then it’s all above board.”

Whitney’s eyes widened in sheer panic, and her face drained of all color.

When had her uncle started scheming this?

Was it from the moment they first met and he heard about her having a black card? So that was why he insisted on a partnership with Ludwik using an offshore company.

Looking back and realizing the gist of it, she felt chilled to the bone.

With her signed contract in hand, and then redirecting Ludwik’s assets into an offshore company...

“No, Uncle. You can’t do this!”

But there was Keegan, sliding the card through the reader, with the bank manager overseeing the transaction..

“No!” Whitney’s eyes turned bloodshot as she stared at the frozen image of Ludwik’s handsome face on the TV screen, her scream tearing through the room. “You can’t swipe his funds now! He needs that money to get through this tough time. Uncle, this is robbery!”

Yet, the bank manager processed the transaction.

Keegan grabbed her hand to scan her fingerprint.

Whitney clenched her fingers tight, her body thrashing in the chair. Her heart felt as if it were being cleaved in two. She could not give her fingerprint; she could not sign her name, and she could not be the cause of Ludwik's downfall. They had a future. They could still make it...

But her uncle forced her finger onto the fingerprint scanner.

The transaction was complete.

Dozens of receipts were printed out, each requiring her signature.

"Uncle, stop! This is theft! I'm begging you, I love him, I don't want to harm him, please, no...!"

But Keegan held her trembling hand, forcing her to scribble her name on each slip.

She resisted with all her might, but she was pinned down, signing her name through tears.

Each signature felt like a blade, knowing it would soon cut into Ludwik.

Why was this happening?

This morning, she thought they had clarity and could be in love.

She was overjoyed, filled with ironclad hope.

And now, her uncle was crushing that hope in his hands.

That black card, given to her as a sign of his sincerity, a token of his affection.

How could this be used to break his heart?

Whitney's tears flowed freely as she shook her head in despair. "Uncle, you might as well kill me now."

"Wake up and see you'll never be with him! This is what you should do! This is all our family's money!" Keegan could no longer hear reason and forced her to sign her name,

The young man approached, calculating the amount, and laughed. “Over 400 billion dollars and that’s just liquid assets, My brother’s really loaded.”

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Whitney froze, her face ashen, veins standing out starkly,

She seemed not to comprehend. What was this man talking about?

Brother?

At United Realty Corporation, Ludwik wrapped up a meeting that had successfully silenced the investors. He frowned as he entered his office.

The PR department sought his opinion. “Mr. Lippert, the press is still buzzing. Do you want to visit the family of the man who jumped from the building?”

“No need.” Ludwik’s eyes were sharp as a hawk’s. “Call Felix in.”

At the door, however, Felix rushed in, followed by the CFO of Imperial Gem Corporation. Both were pale as ghosts.

Ludwik

was about to ask about the man who had jumped, his gaze icy, as he started to speak, “What’s wrong?”

“Mr. Lippert! There’s been a breach at Imperial Gem Corporation. I was just consolidating all the cash assets when suddenly, over 400 billion dollars in liquid assets were swiped! The funds have been transferred overseas. We tried to freeze the account, but because it’s through Citibank, we couldn’t stop it in time, and now the funds have entered the other company’s account!”

Ludwik’s Adam’s apple stopped momentarily. He knew exactly how much 400 billion dollars meant – it was all the liquid assets of Imperial Gem Corporation.

“Who stole it?” His expression turned to ice, his aura terrifying.

Felix, shaking, could hardly speak.

Ludwik stood tall, his presence in the office overwhelming Nolan.

He swept the papers off his desk.

Felix seemed to collapse, shaking uncontrollably, and never had he found it so difficult to speak, his entire body frozen.

“It was... Madam.”

Ludwik paused, his lips curling slightly. “Nonsense. Call her back from her uncle’s place.”

Felix watched the disbelief on his boss’s face and the indifference that suddenly made his heart scrape with pain. He trembled as he laid down the bank receipt, saying, “It’s true... Mr. Lippert, the black card could bankrupt you. It requires her fingerprint and signature, dozens of them. They’re all here!”

Ludwik glanced at the documents, speechless. His striking features were suddenly as rigid as stone.

His fierce gaze cut through the air like countless arrows.

He remained motionless, his chill seeping into his bones.

Felix felt unbearable discomfort.

Ludwik had to pay 120 billion dollars because of Whitney, but because of how much he doted on her, he did not say a word.

Yet, Whitney had transferred all of Ludwik’s liquid assets, which were 400 billion dollars,

Felix could not believe it.

It was like knives falling from the sky!

Ludwik regained composure, his face emotionless as he asked, “Who paid the jumper?”

Felix felt Ludwik knew the answer.

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He gave it, “Orion. Mr. Lippert, the overseas company where your 400 billion went, the legal representative is..

Ludwik's face was devoid of any expression.

Felix struggled to say, "Also Orion. And Keegan is the second-largest shareholder."

"Keegan?" Ludwik muttered the name, pausing a long while, then smiled.

His elegant hands were cold as marble as they pressed against the desk. He bowed his head, his profile so handsome it could take one's breath away.

His voice showed a hint of weariness. "Call Whitney."

"I already did. No answer."

"Then find her!" The man's roar echoed through the room, silencing all other sounds.

Felix could hear the deadly chill in his words. Whitney being entangled with Orion must feel like a knife tearing his boss apart.

And what about her uncle Keegan? What role did he play in all of this?

The weather was gloomy and depressing, mirroring the mounting troubles faced by United Realty Corporation.

Nineteen investment firms had waited until evening, trusting Ludwik's reputation for keeping his word, a titan who held Banyan City's economy in his iron grip. He had promised compensation, and they had no doubt he would deliver.

But as night fell, there was still no compensation contract from United Realty Corporation.

The executives were growing restless and anxious when suddenly, someone leaked a bombshell: Imperial Gem Corporation had transferred a staggering 400 billion in liquid assets, and Mr. Lippert might be staring down the barrel of bankruptcy for both Imperial Gem and United Realty!

Four hundred billion in cash an astronomical amount!

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Only a truly wealthy consortium could muster such liquid assets.

But where had it all gone?

Was Ludwik now unable to make good on his promises?

Feeling played, the enraged executives stormed the CEO's office floor, hurling accusations and demanding compensation.

United Realty Corporation's offices were besieged by staff from these companies, packed to the gills, while reporters barged in to cover the scandal. The news of Imperial Gem's transferred cash and the potential insolvency spread like wildfire, causing a public uproar.