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Chapter 71

The first thing they had to do was make it past the first obstacle. Only then would the journey get smoother.

"In that case, don't ask her about it and just get her something," Ben suggested. "You should get her some jewelry. All women love jewelry."

"She doesn't. I've never seen her wear any," Elliot said.

"How about beauty products? All women use that stuff, right?" Chad proposed. "She doesn't use any. When I went into her room, I didn't find anything but a cleanser." He could not just give her a measly face cleanser as a gift, could he? Ben did not expect Avery to be so different from all the other women he had met. What was even more unexpected was the fact that the great president of Sterling Group, Elliot Foster, actually snuck into a girl's room to observe things like this!

"Buy her that cleanser, then!" Ben said.

"It was covered in dust. It didn't look like she uses it much," Elliot responded. Ben and Chad were at a loss for words.

– "Clothes, Shoes, bags! She obviously wears clothes and shoes. She must use bags, right?" Ben continued to throw out ideas. "I bet she's devastated after your mother hit her. She won't talk to you until you take some action."

"Actually, I think Miss Tate is different from most women," Chad said. "She's still in college, so she probably isn't very materialistic. Gifts might not do much for her."

"You have a point," Ben said as a thought popped into his head. "Gifts might help, but what's more crucial here is the man being proactive with his body."

"Meaning?" Elliot asked.

"Giving hugs and kisses?" Chad suggested.

"Exactly!" Ben exclaimed.

Elliot's face instantly turned glum.

Seeing his change in expression, Ben offered up his assistance, "We can help you if you don't feel like doing it!"

"You want to give her hugs and kisses?!" Elliot roared.

Ben choked and clarified, "I mean we can help get her gifts for you! The rest is up to you." "Forget it," Elliot said coldly. He did not want to depend on others to help him in his love life. "It's not like she's the only one for me," he added. "Why did you sneak into her room to check out her dusty face cleanser, then?" Ben teased. "Stop it, Ben. Give the boss some face," Chad said.

"Get out, both of you!" Elliot snapped.

Chad grabbed Ben and yanked him towards the door.

"Chad," Elliot said as they were walking away, "Get me an appointment with Charlie Tierney."

"Yes, Sir. When would you like to meet him?"

"Tonight."

"Okay."

That evening, Avery decided to take a walk outside after dinner.

She had been cooped up indoors for a week and was feeling restless.

The bruise on her cheek had worsened after the day she covered it in makeup for her checkup.

She also was not using any medication, so it was taking a while for the bruise to

heal.

Even now, even though it was not as bad as before, you could still notice traces of a purplish bruise if you looked closely.

Avery put on a face mask and walked out of the neighborhood.

She had barely taken a few steps before a motorcycle rode past her. It had already sped away before she realized that the phone in her hand had vanished!

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Avery froze in her tracks.

When she realized that her phone had just been snatched away, she began to run in the direction that the thief had sped off.

However, she stopped running when she remembered that she was pregnant and made her way back toward the house.

Mrs. Cooper was on the phone with Elliot about an hour later.

"Master Elliot, Madam Avery's phone was stolen when she was out on a walk earlier. I took her to the station to file a report, but we were told that it was nearly impossible to get the phone back. Madam Avery's eyes were so red when we got home. She said that there was a lot of important information on her phone. She's crying by herself in her room right now."

She could not allow things to remain as they are, and she thought that if Elliot knew about the matter, he might be able to use his connections to retrieve Elliot's phone.

In truth, she had never confirmed if Avery was actually crying in her room, but she said it on purpose in hopes that Elliot might feel bad and help her. Elliot had an appointment with Charlier Tiernev that night.

He was already at the restaurant where they were supposed to meet in, and Charlie was expected to arrive at any moment.

After receiving Mrs. Cooper's call, he came to a decision after less than a minute's consideration.

When Charlie arrived at the restaurant and saw nobody but Chad, he raised his brows and asked, "Where's your boss?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Tierney, but Mr. Foster just left. Something happened at home, so he asked me to wait for you here and explain things to you," Chad explained apologetically.

"Isn't that too much of a coincidence?" Charlie scoffed. "Could it be that he decided not to meet with me and came up with some lame excuse?"

"Even if Mr. Foster didn't want to see you, he wouldn't escape at the last minute," Chad said. "He's not afraid of anyone."

Charlie took a seat, then stared calmly at Chad and said, "From what I recall, he doesn't have the best relationship with his family. Who exactly is in trouble for him to ditch me like this?"

"His wife," answered Chad. Charlie did not have anything to say to that. "I'm guessing Mr. Foster asked to meet you to discuss your dealings with Miss Avery Tate. I may be speaking out of turn, but I have to inform you that Mr. Foster is very fond of Miss Avery. You would be better off keeping your distance from her."

After considering it for a moment, Charlie responded, "Have you ever thought of jumping ship, Chad? can offer a significant pay raise."

Chad was flustered.

"Thank you for the kind offer, Mr. Tierney, but I have no intention of leaving Sterling Group anytime soon. A s long as Mr. Foster doesn't fire me, I won't leave his side."

"Why's that?" Charlie asked, puzzled.

"You can ask Chelsea her reason for not leaving the company."

"She won't leave because she's in love with Elliot Foster. Don't tell me you're in love with him too?!" Charlie chuckled.

"I like him, but out of respect," Chad answered honestly. "Everyone always talks about his temper, but there are many facets to a human being. Someone who never smiles isn't necessarily a bad person, and someone who is always friendly isn't necessarily pure of heart."

"Are you talking about me?" Charlie asked. "Of course not," Chad replied. "There is no hidden meaning. You're a formidable man, but I would never betray Mr. Foster."

Chad knew very well that Charlie wanted to poach him so he could use him against Elliot.

As his trusty right-hand man, nobody would know Elliot as well as Chad did. "If I decide to turn my back on Mr. Foster today, I could very well do the same thing to you in the future. I'm sure you won't be able to trust someone like that," Chad said.

When Elliot arrived at the police station, the whole station fell into an anxious frenzy.

The captain rushed over when he received the call.

"Your phone was stolen? That thief must be out of his mind! I'll get my men on it right away! You have my word that I will get your phone back within the next twenty-four hours!" said the captain as he placed his hand on his chest and promised Elliot.

"It's not my phone that was stolen," Elliot said.

"Oh! You scared me! I thought it was yours,"

"It was my wife's," Elliot said, then took a sip of water and asked, "Can you get it back in twenty-four hours?"

The captain was taken aback, then said, "Yes! Absolutely! We have surveillance cameras everywhere now, so we will definitely get it back! We'll start a full-fledged investigation right now!"

Elliot nodded and said, "I appreciate it."

"Don't mention it! We're just doing our jobs!" The captain flipped through the report, then asked, "Is your wife's name Avery Tate?"

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"That's her," answered Elliot.

"Got it! I'll remember her name!" responded the captain.

Back at the Foster mansion, Avery was sitting at her desk and using her laptop to sign into her social media accounts so she could post a status update about her stolen phone.

She continued to sit at the desk in a daze after that.

Maybe it was a good thing if the thief wiped out everything in her phone and sold it off.

What she dreaded was a stranger invading her privacy and going through her phone.

She placed her hand on her spinning head and sighed heavily. If she knew this was going to happen, she would never have left the neighborhood.

She could have just taken her walk in the neighborhood itself!

Avery got up from her desk and went into the bathroom.

After her shower, she climbed into bed and lay down.

She had to get a new phone and number the next day.

She tossed and turned in bed, unable to fall asleep.

The sound of frantic footsteps came from the hallway outside, followed by a knock on her door.

"Are you awake, Madam?" Mrs. Cooper called. "Master Elliot just called to say that he got your phone back. You just need to go sign some release documents at the station. If you don't want to go yourself, he can do it for you."

Avery leaped out of bed and opened the door.

"They found my phone?"

"Yes! Master Elliot made sure they did," Mrs. Cooper said, making sure to emphasize the key point. "I was the one who called him and told him about the whole thing. You're not mad, are you?"

Avery shook her head.

She was ecstatic that her phone had been found, how could she possibly be angry? She arrived at the police station with Mrs. Cooper half an hour later.

When Avery noticed that Elliot was holding her phone in his hand, she broke into a cold sweat.

"Give that to me!" she snapped, then rushed forward and tried to snatch her phone out of his hand.

Elliot raised his arm over his head before she could grab it.

"Are you that afraid of me looking through your phone?" he mocked.

"Did you?" Avery asked as her eyes reddened. "Who gave you permission? Do you have no regard for other people's privacy at all?! I'm not your toy! You always do this! You never respect me!"

Everyone around them watched their altercation in stunned silence.

Elliot had stayed at the station the whole time to pressure them into getting the phone back.

Now that the phone was found in record timing, not only was Avery not grateful, but she was snapping at

him.

This was the mighty Elliot Foster that put fear in the eyes of all those around him! Where did Avery find the courage to raise her voice at him?

The thief was watching them fight, and could not help but interject, "It's just a bunch of photos of a belly in there!"

His words turned Avery's eyes red with rage and made her body tremble. It was as if she was stripped naked for all to see.

When she entered her second trimester, she would take a photo of her belly after every shower to check the progress of her baby bump.

Elliot did not check her phone, so hearing the thief's words made him glance at Avery with a bewildered look on his face.

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Holding back tears, Avery turned in anger and stormed out of the station. She did not sign the release paper, nor did she take her phone back from Elliot. Elliot signed the papers and left the station. On the car ride home, he passed her phone to her and said in a low voice, "I didn't go through it."

Avery took her phone and her breathing was heavy as she said, "But you already know what's inside."

"Are they important? Those photos..."

Avery gritted her teeth and warned herself not to lose her temper with Elliot. He was the one who had helped get her phone back after all. Her hand clenched around her phone as she asked, "If I told you that the baby you had forced me to abort wasn't Cole's but yours... Would you feel guilty at all?"

Elliot turned his head and glanced at her.

Avery's expression was serious, and it did not seem like she was kidding. He gulped and responded in a hoarse voice, "From the IVF treatments?" "Yes," Avery answered. She met his gaze and said, "You killed your own child with your own hands. Do you feel any guilt?"

She hoped to see even the slightest hint of remorse on his face to make herself feel better.

She prayed that he was a man of flesh and blood and not a cold-blooded money-making machine.

The expression on Elliot's face puzzled her. He knew that he would be breaking her heart, but he still replied indifferently, "I don't. It was never meant to be born in the first place."

Avery chuckled coldly and asked, "Would you be so calm if your own parents said that about you?" "I would thank them if they never gave birth to me," he answered. "Not everyone wishes to be born into this world, Avery."

Avery raised her brows.

Did he not wish to be born?

How come?

Elliot's mother loved him unconditionally, he had a successful career, and there were plenty of people around him who treated him like he was the center of their universe...

Why was he so pessimistic?

What exactly did he have to go through?

"Are you depressed?" Avery asked as she could not help but analyze his words from a medical perspective. "There are treatments for depression. If you're sick, you should go see a doctor as soon as possible."

The expression on Elliot's face relaxed slightly.

"If being sick could make you dwell on me, then go ahead and treat me like a sick person!"

It was close to midnight when they arrived at the mansion.

Once Avery was in her room, she was so tired that she did not have the energy to think about anything.

She got into bed and fell asleep soon after.

That night, she had a dream.

She dreamt of the reason behind Elliot's pessimism.

In her dream, she saw a young Elliot and his father.

His father was an impossibly strict man that had no patience for his playful son.

Young Elliot had to endure the wrath of his father's ruthless belt until he bled... His howling cries were heartbreaking.

The bloody images in her nightmare made her wake up in horror.

Outside the window, dawn had broken, and the sky was getting brighter.

Avery got up on her arms and began to mumble to herself, trying to make herself feel better, "There's no way his father would hit him like that. Even if he did, his mother would stop it... Dreams are almost always the opposite of reality. There's no way he was abused."

However, she was strangely certain that Elliot must have gone through something dark to hate the world a s much as he did.

Not only did he hate the world, but he also did not want to bring the next generation into it.

Nobody was born to be bad.

Her loathing for him suddenly lessened slightly.

He was not at fault, and neither was she. Fate was the only one to blame for entangling their lives together.

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At breakfast the next morning, Avery and Elliot sat at the dining table in silence. She was having eggs and toast, while he was eating cereal. "Thanks for getting my phone back last night," Avery said, shattering the silence between them. "I'm sorry about my mother," Elliot said, finally expressing the apology that had been bothering him. Avery's cheeks flushed as she said, "You weren't the one who hit me. Why are you apologizing?"

"She shouldn't have slapped your face," Elliot said in a stiff voice. "If anyone touched my face, I would,"

Before he could finish his sentence, Avery lifted her hand and gently caressed his cheek.

His skin was surprisingly smooth and felt good against her fingers. Elliot's eyes were smoldering as his Adam's apple rolled in his throat, while his hand trembled slightly around his glass of milk.

"Okay, we're even," Avery said as she withdrew her hand and lowered her head to have a sip of her tea. Her heart was thumping wildly in her chest, and the skin on the fingers that touched his cheek felt like they were on fire.

She hurriedly finished her breakfast and returned to her room.

The bruise on her face was lighter than the day before, and it did not hurt as much.

Avery put on a light layer of makeup to cover up the bruise.

She could no longer stay cooped up in the house.

The office had called her multiple times throughout the week, and Trust Capital was sending inquiries every other day.

She emerged from the room after she got dressed. Elliot had already left. "Are you going to the office, Madam? Let me get the driver," Mrs. Cooper said then went off to call for the driver.

Avery was waiting at the front door when her phone rang.

"Do you have time to spare today, Miss Tate?" Ben's voice came through the phone speaker. "I have a favor to ask."

"What is it?" Avery asked sounding puzzled. "Are you sure I could help?" "I'm sure," Ben answered assuredly. "Are you at home? I'll come pick you up. We can talk more when we meet."

"Okay," Avery responded hesitantly. Ben arrived at the gates of the mansion half an hour later. Apart from the color, which was white instead of black, he had the exact same car model as Elliot.

"Aren't you going to the office today, Mr. Schaffer?" Avery asked as she hopped into the passenger seat and fastened her seat belt.

"I don't need to clock in at the office," Ben grinned. "We need your help picking out a present."

"What do you mean by "we"? Who else are we talking about?"

"The other managers at the office. Elliot's birthday is coming up. We need to get him something, but we're not sure what to buy. That's where you come in." "When's his birthday?" Avery asked bashfully.

"Do you not care about your husband at all?" Ben chuckled as he felt some pity for Elliot.

Chelsea worshiped him like a god while Avery treated him like garbage. Even so, he willingly chose to be garbage.

Avery's cheeks reddened with embarrassment. She simply came up with an excuse and said, "I'm pretty busy."

"Of course, you are. Your company's going through a rough patch, and you're working on your thesis. I'm sure you're even busier than Elliot," Ben said. "You're making fun of me," Avery said as she noticed the teasing tone in his voice, but she was not angered by it. "I don't know what he likes. I'm afraid I won't be of much help."

"Of course, you can help," Ben said as he drove the car onto the freeway. "Let's head to the mall." It was not long before the car came to a halt in front of the city's largest shopping mall.

There was not much of a crowd on a weekday morning.

Avery and Ben walked into the department store and went straight to the jewelry section on the first floor.

Avery raised her brows in confusion and asked, "Does he like jewelry? I've never seen him wear any..."

Was jewelry not a more suitable gift for women?

Ben had no choice but to be honest with her.

"Elliot has never accepted any gifts from us," he said. "But now that he has you, you can accept a gift from us on his behalf."

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If Ben had mentioned this when he arrived at the house, Avery never would have gotten into his car.

"Mr. Schaffer, I know that all of you want to get on Elliot's good side-"Avery began to say.

"What do you mean? Haven't you ever gotten presents for your friends?" Ben interjected with a smile. "He always gets us something for our birthdays." "So, you don't get him a gift just because he told you not to? That just shows that you don't see him as a friend at all, but as a boss," Avery said. "I don't think you should drag me into this. If I accept your gift on his behalf, it would be the same as me accepting a gift from him. If that's the case, I won't be able to take pleasure in reprimanding him when he makes me angry in the future." Ben was bewildered.

Take pleasure in reprimanding him? How exactly does Avery treat Elliot every day?

Ben began to suspect that his boss had a masochistic side to him.

"You should think of something else! I'm leaving," Avery said, then turned and began to walk away.

Ben immediately reached out and grabbed her arm.

"Miss Tate, Elliot's birthday this year is different from the ones before," he said. He had already prepared the perfect script, and his professional acting instantly silenced Avery.

"It was after his last birthday that he had gotten into that accident and that rendered him a vegetable. At the time, the doctors said that he didn't have much longer to live... None of us expected him to pull through, but he woke up in the end. It's a good thing he did, too. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to celebrate his birthday this year..."

Avery's heart turned as soft as cotton.

She put herself in his shoes and thought about how painful it would have been if she was the one who was in a coma after getting into a car crash.

All Ben wanted was to celebrate Elliot's birthday and get him a gift to cheer him up. Was that so wrong?

"Don't worry, Miss Tate. We won't give you anything too expensive. I hope you will be able to accept it with ease," added Ben.

Avery gestured at the jewelry counter and said, "Everything here is too expensive. Let's go somewhere

else."

She finally gave in!

"Do you need some beauty products, Miss Tate? I see you've got makeup on. Should we get some new makeup products? You'll need some makeup remover to go along with that, right?"

Ben was in full swing.

"You have slender wrists, Miss Tate. I'm sure a bracelet would look good on you! Let's get one! It's pretty cheap!

"What do you think of these brand's bags, Miss Tate? Let's get something classy! A classic style would go with everything and you can it's big enough to carry a bunch of stuff! It's both stylish and practical!

"Miss Tate... Your shoes are looking worn out. Let's get you a new pair! I know a store that sells flats that

last forever. I'll take you there!"

Avery saw a whole new side to Ben.

It was like he had never-ending spirit and energy.

He also seemed to have a vast knowledge of women's products.

He was able to easily list out everything from the best tampons to the stores with the most comfortable lingerie.

He truly was womankind's best friend.

Avery would have been less cautious with him if it were not for the fact that he was Elliot's CFO.

After spending the whole morning shopping, her entire body began to ache. She spotted a cafe and immediately went in and took a seat. She refused to walk into another store.

"What would you like to eat, Miss Tate? Go ahead and order whatever you want," Ben said as he passed a menu to her.

All Avery could feel was fatigue, so she was not very hungry.

"Don't call me out for things like this again, Mr. Schaffer. I'm only helping you out this once."

There were about twenty to thirty gifts in total.

Avery felt restless and uneasy.

She should not have given in so easily.

However, when she thought of Elliot now, his face was less loathsome to her than

before.

Her head began to ache.

Ben took a sip of water, then said casually, "Sure thing. Thanks for your help today! You haven't gotten back to Charlie Tierney with an answer, have you?" "Not yet," Avery responded. "He sent me an email last night with a revised proposal. I haven't gotten a chance to look at it." "He's really pulling out all the stops for a chance to work with you!" Ben said, then

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Avery was distracted until a thought suddenly popped into her head.

"Did Elliot have anything to do with what happened to Cole Foster?" she asked. Ben was dumbfounded.

"Why do you think he did? Didn't Cole Foster get into trouble himself with his gambling? What does that have to do with Elliot?"

Avery took a sip of water, then said, "He said he was the one who planned it. He even told me to get down on my knees and beg."

Ben was at a loss for words.

He picked up his own glass of water and took a sip, then said, "What are you two doing? What couple is always getting into fights like the two of you... It turns out you both do it on purpose. Do you both find joy in fighting with each other?!" Naturally, Avery refused to admit it.

"I don't have such a weird hobby. He's the one who's always provoking me." "Exactly! I'm sure he feels the same!"

"Which is exactly why we don't get along," Avery said, taking another sip of water. "Disagreements are normal in a relationship. Some people even fall deeper in love the more they fight."

"Most couples break up the more they fight," Avery said. "Don't you think Chelsea Tierney is a better match for him? Nothing's ever gone wrong in the ten years they've known each other..."

"Nothing's gone wrong because there was nothing there. Elliot feels nothing for Chelsea."

"I see... I almost forgot..."

The one he loved was the woman who looked like a princess.

After lunch, Avery took a cab to Tate Industries.

Ben sent the day's winnings back to the Foster mansion, then drove to Sterling Group.

Of course, he did not forget to flaunt his victory in front of Elliot.

"I bought her thirty-one gifts this morning," Ben said. "She was very happy."

Elliot looked up to glance at Ben and said, "Did you force her into it?"

Ben cocked an eyebrow and said, "Could you tell?"

Elliot raised his brows and silently watched his performance.

"When I asked her to pick out a bracelet, she stared at a specific necklace for more than three seconds. I went back to get it after she left."

Ben pulled out a jewelry box and opened it, revealing a diamond necklace.

The diamonds were small, so the necklace was not too expensive.

"Give it to her when you get home tonight," Ben said as he passed the box to Elliot.

Elliot fiddled with the box with his fingers. His sharp eyes were fixed on Ben as

he asked, "How did you

get her to accept the gift?" "I told her that your first birthday after the accident was coming up-"

Elliot frowned, then snapped, "There's still a long way until my birthday!" "I was just helping you cheer her up," Ben said. "She didn't look that happy on the

surface, but I'm sure she was happy on the inside."

"You're no help at all," Elliot said in a low voice.

Ben stayed silent.

"Give me the receipts," Elliot said.

"It's fine! Take it as my birthday gift to you," Ben replied.

"Give me the receipts!" Elliot roared.

Avery returned home in the evening. "I've sent all the gifts to your room,

Madam," said Mrs. Cooper. Avery's cheeks turned pink as she responded, "Thanks... Is Elliot home yet?"

"He got back around four in the afternoon."

Avery's heart suddenly began to race. "I'll come down after he's had dinner... I'm going to my room."

Once she was in her room, Avery began to take out the gifts from their bags. She suddenly noticed a red, square-shaped box.

"I don't think we bought this today," she mumbled to herself, then opened the box.

The necklace in the box was the one that she had noticed and found to be quite lovely at the jewelry store earlier.

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Avery was certain that they did not buy this necklace that morning. How was it now right in front of her?

She walked out of her room and bumped into Elliot who was walking down the stairs.

She tried to calm the nervousness inside of her and asked, "What's up with this necklace?"

On the surface, it might look like this had nothing to do with him, but her instincts told her otherwise.

She was sure that Ben told him about it.

Elliot's expression was slightly uneasy as he answered, "Ben bought it."

After a pause, he added, "I took a look at the price, and it was too cheap. Nobody wanted it so I brought it back to you."

Avery was piecing together the words in her head trying to figure out a way to return the necklace to him, but his words made her mind go blank.

He gave it to her because it was so cheap that nobody else wanted it. Great!

If that was the case, then she will just accept it!

"Let's have dinner together," Elliot called out.

Avery wanted to refuse, but her body was more honest than her mind was.

Perhaps it was because she had accepted a gift from him?

The two of them took their seats at the dining table.

Once Mrs. Cooper was done serving their dinner, she dismissed herself and walked out of the room.

Avery picked at her food and ate slowly.

Elliot had taken the initiative to ask her to join him for dinner. Did that mean that he had something to say to her?

On top of that, he must have given his blessing for Ben to buy all of those gifts for her, right?

A frenzy of thoughts bounced around in her head as the piece of meat at the end of her fork remained suspended in midair without reaching her mouth.

Elliot noticed that she was distracted and asked, "What's on your mind? Did Charlie Tierney contact you?"

Avery took a bite of her food and said, "Do you know him well?"

"We were classmates," Elliot answered calmly, then said something that took Avery by surprise. "Do you want to see his ex-girlfriends?"

Avery choked on her food and coughed violently.

She put down her knife and fork, then took a large gulp of water.

Elliot produced a file out of nowhere and slid it across the table to her.

Avery glanced at the file and then turned her gaze to him. She stared deeply at him.

She found his behavior to be extremely strange.

Her relationship with Charlie Tierney was purely one of business.

Why did he want to show her information about Charlie's exes?

He even printed out all of their details for her... His actions were beyond her comprehension.

Elliot did not expect her to stare at him so daringly.

"Didn't you know that he's trying to date you?" he asked.

Avery's jaw dropped.

"Does he not know that I'm your wife?"

"He does, but marriages end and people cheat."

Judging by her astonishment, Elliot could confirm that she had no knowledge of Charlie's ulterior motives.

"I see..." Avery said as she picked up the file and flipped through the pages. "All of his exes are so sexy! Look at those hourglass figures! They all have gorgeous full lips too. Red lipstick looks especially good on lips like that... You men'must all love women like this, huh?"

Elliot's lips pressed into a thin line.

He had shown the file to Avery so that she would realize that she was not Charlie Tierney's cup of tea, not to discuss the matters of men and women with her.

"You said he wants to date me, but it doesn't look like I'm his type at all. Why would he even bother?"

As Avery asked her question, the answer popped into her head almost immediately.

"To take revenge for his sister?"

"You're not as dumb as I thought," Elliot mocked.

Avery glared at him and said, "Wouldn't this ruin your relationship with him, though? With your temper, you would go after someone even if they took a grain of salt from you."

Elliot's face turned solemn as he said, "We haven't had a relationship for a long time."

"I see.." Avery responded, then picked up her knife and fork and continued with her meal. "So, do you know what you need to do now?" Elliot asked. He needed an answer from her.

"I had a meeting with the executives at the office earlier today. All of them are in favor of working with Trust Capital."

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"You have the power to reject," Elliot said.

"Just eat your food!" Avery snapped. "Even if I decide to work with Charlie Tierney, it doesn't mean that I will fall in love with him. Why do you think that I'll give in to his advances? Do I seem that easy to you?" Elliot fell silent. Avery returned to her room after dinner, opened Charlie's email, and looked through its contents.

A wave of uneasiness washed over her after she finished reading it.

She did not know a thing about running a company, but she understood Charlie's proposal very well. " If they go in the direction that he suggested, Tate Industries might just be able to come back from the dead.

If it were not for the fact that Charlie was Chelsea Tierney's brother, she would have immediately agreed t o work with him.

Avery shut her laptop and lay down on her bed.

She picked up her phone and saw a text from Tammy.

[I slept with Jun Hertz! Ugh! I think I'm in love with him!

Avery did not expect things to turn out the way they did.

However, apart from being a little strange, Jun Hertz was not a bad catch at all. Avery: (Work things out with him if you're in love. This is your fate!

Tammy: (He said he wants me to meet someone important tomorrow but won't tell me who it is. I'm so nervous!)

Avery: (Maybe he wants to surprise you.) Tammy: (A surprise is fine, but I don't need a fright. Let's talk about your husband! Do you sleep in the same room?) Avery's cheeks flushed as she replied: (I'm in the guest bedroom. There's nothing much to talk about him. Stop asking.)

Tammy: (Is he good looking?)

Avery did not want to answer at first, but Elliot's handsome face popped into her mind and she could not help herself from texting back: [Yes.]

Tammy: [Damn, Avery! You sure are lucky! How old is he?] Avery: [He's up there. He's pretty much an old man to us.)

Tammy: (Older men have their advantages. They're gentle, thoughtful, and know how to treat you well.]

Avery: (I think you've been watching too many romantic dramas.)

Tammy: [Didn't you say he was good looking? That's all you need! A handsome face can make up for all a man's shortcomings!]

At breakfast the next day, Avery deliberately stared at Elliot for longer than usual.

The more she glanced at his thick brows, smoldering eyes, chiseled nose, and seductive lips, the more attractive he seemed.

She recalled what Tammy had said the night before, and began to believe that a handsome face might just be able to make up for all of a man's faults. Elliot ignored her blatant observation of him and asked, "Do you have time tonight?"

Avery's heart skipped a beat.

Was he asking her out?

"I think so," Avery said as she lowered her gaze and took a bite of toast.

"I'll get the driver to pick you up in the afternoon." "Where are we going?"

"You'll find out when we get there."

This was a vast improvement from the time Elliot had taken her to a recital without previously asking her about it.

He was at least giving her a heads up this time.

At 5p.m. that evening, Jun brought Tammy to a high-end restaurant. "Do you remember that friend I mentioned before?" Jun asked as he held Tammy's hand like he did not want to be apart from her for a second. "The one who suddenly got a wife."

Tammy thought about it and the memory popped back into her mind.

"Do you mean the one who had a shotgun marriage? The one who got you to help out his wife when she got in trouble but got mad when she actually came out to meet you?

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Jun nodded and said, "That's him! I met him when I was abroad. He's eight years older than I am. We were neighbors when he was in college. I was always following him around back then."

"You kept in touch with him despite the huge age gap?" Tammy asked.

"Yes! I always go to him when I'm troubled," Jun answered.

Tammy glanced at his face and teased, "What kind of troubles could a young man like you possibly have?"

"I want to start my own business, but my family is against it. He has a successful career. Even my dad admires him, so I need him to help me convince him." Tammy was suddenly filled with excitement.

"What's his name? I'm sure I've heard of him before if he's a successful businessman."

"You probably have heard of him," Jun said as he took a sip of water. "It's Elliot Foster."

Tammy's eyes widened in astonishment.

She let go of Jun's hand and exclaimed, "He's married?! Oh my god! I have a friend who worships him... She'll be devastated if she finds out about this!" "Your friend isn't the only one who looks up to him. With his net worth and status, plenty of women would have their eyes on him. His wife is way out of his league." "Huh? Who's his wife? I'm so jealous!"

Tammy pouted as she turned green with envy.

Jun wanted to continue to keep her guessing on purpose.

"She's a nobody. You wouldn't know her even if I told you. You'll see when they arrive," he said, then added, "By the way, don't mention anything about how Elliot got me to help her out before, okay?"

Tammy nodded eagerly.

She was curious to see what kind of a "nobody" managed to snag the formidable business tycoon, Elliot Foster.

Avery put on a new dress for the evening.

However, she felt that it looked too solemn and decided to wear an old jacket over it.

When the driver arrived at Tate Industries to pick her up, he said, "You look beautiful today, Madam."

Avery's cheeks turned crimson red.

All she did was put on some foundation and lipstick.

Did she really look that different from usual?

Once she was in the car, Avery pulled out a small mirror from her back and observed her face.

Perhaps it was due to her good mood, but her rosy cheeks made her look exceptionally lovely.

Elliot and Avery arrived at the restaurant at six in the evening.

When they stepped onto the second floor, Tammy instantly recognized the woman standing next to Elliot

as... Avery!

Tammy felt her soul escape her body.

The whole world stood still as everything before her eyes began to twist out of shape, then suddenly return to normal.

The wife that Elliot Foster married in a flash was none other than her best friend, Avery Tate!

She was close to tears from the thrill of it all.

When Avery noticed Tammy and Jun, she raised her brows and asked Elliot, "Do you know Jun Hertz?"

A strong sense of foreboding began to rise inside of her.

Elliot fook in her sudden change in emotion and answered, "We were neighbors when I was studying abroad."

They walked over to their table where the waiter pulled back their chairs and helped them into their seats.

Avery lowered her gaze as her chest began to rise and fall rapidly.

She had no idea that Elliot and Jun knew each other.

From the looks of it, their relationship was not bad at all.

Otherwise, they would not have a private meeting like this. Why exactly did Elliot bring her here to meet Jun Hertz?