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I couldn't hold in my laugh. "You're getting really good at this. I don't think I'll be able to catch you when you lie to me from now on!"

Ashton curled his lips, tightened his hold on me, and said, "We're married. You can't call that a lie. It's more like a tease."

"So you're actually thinking of lying to me?" I pulled a hand out and pinched his nose, stopping him from breathing.

Rather than getting upset, Ashton broke into a laugh and eventually reversed the situation after some hassle, where he pinched my cheeks instead.

"You done?" Ashton subdued me and gave me a rather meek warning.

"No." I did not know why, but I just wanted to rebel against him.

Ashton did not know how to deal with me. So, he casually tightened his pinch hold, which prompted me to yell, "Woah! This is domestic violence! I'm crying..."

He was at a loss and let go. So, I took the opportunity to tackle and pin him down.

That made Ashton admit defeat and carefully lay there. His hands were on my waist because he was worried I might get hurt. "Alright, Ms. Stovall. You win. What's my punishment?" he said after letting out a deep sigh.

"That's no fun." I got down of him and lay beside him.

It was less of a high since the win was too easy.

With that, Ashton turned to the side and looked at me enthusiastically with his chin on his hand. "Aren't you still upset at the thing with Nathaniel?"

“What can that do?” I questioned, suddenly feeling more carefree about the matter.

Be it money laundering or Nathaniel. There was no escape for me. I only acted weird because my emotions got the better of me. There was nothing to be afraid of once it was over.

Being married was such a peculiar thing. One simple banter and all that negative emotions would instantly disappear. It felt better than talking to a psychiatrist.

When I snapped out of it, I realized Ashton did not answer. So, I turned around to find him with his eyes closed.

“Why aren’t you talking?” I asked him.

Hearing me, Ashton came to and said, “I think we need to get Audrey’s enrolment application done as soon as possible in case she feels disconnected from her peers and can’t get used to living in a society.”

“You’re worried that she might not get enough human interactions and actually fall for Shaun, aren’t you? Tell me, do you not like Shaun?” I pursed my lips into a smile and exposed him.

“I don’t like anyone!” Ashton replied with a hint of disdain in his eyes and a smug tone.

When he finished, he pounced onto me, leaving me no time to react, and pulled the cover over us.

“What are you doing?!” I held him off by the chest, astonished. How is it possible for men to think of doing that all the time!

“I lost. You need to punish me.” Ashton knitted his brow. The look on his face was actually so sincere.

“You’re the one that’s getting punished. Why are you squishing...”

My attempt to reason failed terrifically.

Emery was now a big deal within the domestic investment scene since she owned shares from many companies. Even if half of those bankrupted, she would still be able to live a life of luxury with just the other half. So, she was the best choice for a company as people get way too much time on their hands the richer they get.

Summer wanted to be more involved with Gregory and Audrey's lives, so she tagged along to help us out.

For the sake of convenience, Audrey and Shaun were both transferred to Gregory's school. That said, I did manage to secretly put in a word with the principal, asking for them to be in separate classes.

First of all, I did not want them to have too many interactions. And secondly, the Fullers would only be taking care of Shaun until adulthood, not forever. Therefore, he should live his life like how an average child would.

After we left the school, we went to the largest mall in the area and started acquiring things they would need for school.

After a round of shopping, we passed the toy shop, where Audrey broke free from Summer and dived into the ball pit. Thus, we sat on the side and waited for her.

Not long after, I felt something pulling at my sleeve, so I turned around and saw a little girl with a flower basket.

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"Flowers, Ma'am?" the girl asked with her big round eyes and puffy cheeks. She looked the same age as Audrey, and the clothes she wore were old but still clean, even though there were some random smudges on her face.

I noticed it and quickly took out some tissue, wanting to help her clean it. However, as soon as I reached out, the girl backed away.

She tried to take a huge step back, but kids do not make much distance with those short legs of theirs.

“Don’t be scared,” I told her, trying my best to smile and make myself more approachable. I waved the tissue in my hand to indicate that I meant no harm. “You have something on your nose. Let me wipe that off for you, my dear. Okay?”

The girl was still naive, so she let down her guard in no time and got closer, quietly letting me clean her face without even making a sound.

Seeing what was going on, Emery pulled out a budded flower from the girl’s basket and fiddled it. “It’s a hot day, little girl. Why are you here doing business instead of staying at home? Are you that materialistic?”

‘What are you saying?’ Emery always had a sharp tongue when it came to strangers.

But the girl did not understand what she meant and merely blinked at Emery innocently.

I was a little amazed by her reaction, so I asked, “Aren’t you afraid of her?”

“I’m not. She’s a pretty lady.” The girl did not even blink as she said that right at Emery’s face.

“Ahem...” Emery blushed instantly, but she kept up her act. “That won’t work, kid. I’m not going to cough up my money just because you gave me some compliments. I’m a businesswoman too. I don’t do deals that aren’t beneficial to me, understand?”

“I understand.” The girl nodded. “So, that one you have will only cost you two bucks. I won’t be making any profit from you.”

“Not making any profit? If that’s the case, why don’t you give it to me for free?” Emery teased. “You cheeky girl. I bet the supply cost is at most half of that. You’re just trying to trick me from another angle, aren’t you?”

Hearing what Emery said, the girl shook her head violently. “That’s not true. My flowers are the best and freshest flowers.

They usually cost two fifty each, but I figured you won't have fifty cents, so I gave you a discount."

All of a sudden, it looked like Emery got serious as she turned her whole body around toward the little girl. "Let me educate you on what for free means. It means presenting an item to someone without subjecting it to payment, little girl. So, you give this to me for free, and I don't have to pay for it, understand?"

The girl might not be able to understand all the technical terms, but she understood that she was not going to get the flower's cost. So, her eyes turned red in an instant as she dropped her basket to the floor.

"Alright now, don't worry. The lady here is just joking with you. We'll definitely pay for it." I comforted the child and pulled Emery in for an apology. "What is wrong with you today? Why are you bullying a little girl? Quick, she's about to cry..."

Emery did not seem thrilled about it. "You're being too innocent here. In this day and age, little con artists like her are everywhere! They exploit the sympathy of mothers like you and hike up the price of each flower. They make hundreds in one day! It's way better than those labor work. I'm not the only one that's heartless. Everyone else is doing the same thing! Look, you see anyone showing their concern for what's happening here?"

With that, the little girl's eyes got watery, and tears welled up, looking like they would burst in any second.

Nevertheless, I could not refute Emery's claim. People only took care of themselves even during the olden days, let alone now.

"She's not lying." Summer's voice interrupted my thoughts. I turned around and saw that she was picking up something from the little girl's basket on the floor.

Soon enough, she passed me a piece of paper. "That's the receipt for the flowers. She's not lying."

I took a look, and it was indeed, as the little girl said, two fifty each. She had a total of thirty flowers in her basket.

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Consequently, Emery was speechless, and her demeanor immediately softened up as she said, "I was joking! I had intended to buy all of them from the start. I asked her to give me one for free because I wanted to let her learn that sometimes you need to make sacrifices to gain more benefits. Alas, our little angel here's not that smart. It doesn't look like she's suited for business."

She picked up her bag as she said that, most probably to get some cash to pay the little girl.

At that moment, the child could not hold in her tears any longer as I felt those burning droplets on the back of my hand.

"Wait! She's buying your flowers! Don't cry!"

"I don't want you to buy all my flowers." The little girl started sobbing. "I only want to sell you one each. Mommy has been sick in the hospital for so long! Daddy told me that each sold flower is another prayer for Mommy so she could get well soon. I don't want money. I just want Mommy to get better."

They really were not wrong when they said women were like water. In only a few seconds, the tissue was totally soaked.

Audrey and Gregory had milder personalities and were my own, so they were easier to handle. Even with Summer, this type of situation had never occurred with me. So, I was at a loss and could only watch as the girl cried.

It was true that people were cruel and selfish, but they loved drama. Once the girl started crying, all those unconcerned passersby were surprisingly like-minded as they all looked toward our direction.

That feeling of being stared at by the entire world was not great at all.

Therefore, I signaled to Emery. "You made this mess! Handle it!"

But Emery acted like she was deaf, leaving me speechless.

So this is what good friends do? Do you leave the others behind to clean up your mess?

Right then, Summer spoke. "If you can hold it in and stop crying, I have an idea that could help you earn a lot more money and acquire more prayers for your mommy at the same time. If you accept, wipe off those tears and come with me. You only have one chance, okay?"

As soon as Summer finished, a mere one second was all it took for the crying to stop.

Immediately after, Summer took the girl by the hand, right in front of me, and headed downstairs after picking up the flowers and basket.

I was in awe. It was like watching Gregory tame Audrey all over again.

"In the end, Summer's still the best. Unlike you, who can't even handle a kid." Emery started attacking me after things calmed down.

"Why don't you handle the girl if you're so great? You're the one that made her cry! I have to say. We're both mothers now. It's about time you changed that attitude of yours. Don't just bear your fangs at anyone the moment you see them. Who would want to be near you after you scare them off like that?" I turned it around and lectured her instead, wanting her to be better.

Emery was like a porcupine right now, covered in sharp spines and quills. Anyone who got near her would get hurt easily. That said, she actually had the softest heart out of everyone and insisted on hiding it.

The truth was, I never even thought of buying all those flowers from the girl to free her up, but Emery did. Nevertheless, the girl would most likely only remember how ruthless Emery was and that she did not want to pay.

“Who cares?” Emery shrugged. “I only need to ensure that I can always enjoy the life of a single woman. That’s all. Why would I want to meet new people and start playing the stupid guessing game of what are they thinking? I’m not interested and cannot be bothered. Those that would stay will stay. Those that won’t, so be it. Why should I change? I am me. I’m just built different, you know?”

The atmosphere was getting heavy. It was clear that our Queen Emery did not want to dwell on the subject any longer. Things were not going to change even if we did.

About twenty minutes after, Summer came back, but the girl was gone.

“Did you help her sell all her flowers?” I asked. I was confident Summer could do it since she was eloquent, but twenty minutes was still an astonishing speed.

“They’re all sold, but not by me. Just know that everything’s settled.” Summer told us and went back to accompany Audrey and the others.

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How did she do it? I was curious.

And eventually, when we were leaving the mall, I got my answer.

At the entrance, there was a setup that was not there when we first arrived that read Charity Points. Beside it was a shiny signboard with simple details on it.

Fresh flower for ten bucks. Eighty percent of the proceeds will go to people in need. Leave a scent.

This was a high-class mall, so people that visited the place would not mind the mere ten bucks. Moreover, a self-service QR code scan was utilized for making payment, so it was less of a hassle. Women usually picked one up as they walked by. Some even made the payment but left the flower there.

While we stood there and watched, Summer gave us an explanation.

“If the customers buy the flower, the mall will track the payment to the customer’s member profile and award them points that could be used to redeem gifts from the mall. With this, not only does the mall fulfill some customers’ wish to do charity, but it also becomes an extra source of income. The little girl won’t have to make her pitch one at a time anymore because we’ve already made a preliminary agreement with the mall. This will be the girl’s kiosk from now on, so she should see some improvements in terms of income. I hope this helps with her mother’s illness.”

Emery nodded her head in satisfaction after hearing that. “You did great, but I’m quite curious about how you convinced the manager of the mall to do this.”

I had that same question in mind, knowing that an agreement would only get accepted if the terms were mutually beneficial to both parties. To malls like this, profit from these acts of charity was just spare change. On top of that, their partner was a little girl. With so many variables to consider, it was obvious that the risk outweighed the reward. As the manager, they did not need to let the mall go through the hassle.

“About that...” Summer calmly put up the side-eye and showed us her phone that she took out of nowhere. “This is my Facebook account. I promised the mall that I would write an article promoting their good deeds every month for the coming six months, so they agreed. There were some other conditions, but we don’t have to talk about that.”

We squinted our eyes to take a look and instantly understood everything.

ForeverAutumn. One million and more followers.

Advertisements on Facebook accounts of that caliber usually cost around fifty thousand per post. That meant that the mall saved three hundred thousand in terms of advertisement expenditure by just utilizing a small section of the wide-open space at the entrance. It’s a deal with no downsides. Why wouldn’t they?

Indeed, amassing such a following at such a young age would be considered a momentous feat if it was anyone else. But, not Summer. She was a genius that received early admission into a university overseas that made an exception just for her. It was almost expected of her to accomplish this much.

That said, I was still a little surprised. "Did you make this account on your own?"

"Yeah." Summer smiled. "We're living in the era of the internet. You'd be amazed at how fast information can travel. I initially did this to amass following in hopes of finding you sooner, Mommy. Even though I no longer need it, it still feels great to be able to use it for a good cause."

"Not bad." Emery applauded as though she was Summer's superior, but she still gave her some sharp critiques. "That name's got to go, though. It's too corny. People would think you're an old granny from hearing that. Change it to something like FourSeasons. With some photo's taken by the company I invest in and your reputation as a teenage genius, I reckon your followers would double in number. Then, you only have to hire someone to manage it for you and wait for the cash to roll in."

Summer pursed her lips and smiled before lowering her head to look at her phone. "It's okay. I like that name. I want to remember how autumn feels, always."

I did not know why, but at that moment, the smile on her face looked a little gloomy, like she had gone through many hardships.

Separated for six years, absent from the most crucial time of her life, it was no wonder I could no longer understand Summer fully.

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The more you learned, the more you hid, they say, and Summer had been very considerate ever since we reunited. Now, seeing her doing things quietly on her own gave me a bad feeling.

Coincidentally, Joseph brought the maid over to carry the things we bought and interrupted the conversation.

We did not bring it up after that, so I thought it was over. However, Emery actually kept it to heart. Not two hours after we got back, she appeared at our doorstep. She took out an entire stack of documents and dumped it on the table, telling us that she wanted to groom Summer.

“We’re all family here, so I’ll cut to the chase. Summer is a diamond in the rough for business. Let her come back and learn how to do business with me. She can take MBA courses too. I’ll fully support whatever project she comes up with in the future and will not intervene. There’s only one condition. I’m not letting a talent like you get snatched away, so we need to sign a contract, so I don’t have to worry.”

Summer clearly did not think about that, so she did not respond and merely looked at Ashton and me.

Suddenly, a lazy voice grew louder from afar. “The Fullers has so many properties waiting to be inherited. It’s still uncertain whether the kids could do it, but how great of you to snatch an heir away to make money for you. That’s quite a plan you got there.”

Holden walked down the stairs with his silk pajamas and messy hair. Anyone would know he just got of bed from a glance.

He’s still here?

“This is family business. Keep out of it.” Emery could not care less about who he was. She was ruthless if someone spoiled her mood. “You, however, are on all the covers of entertainment magazines after just getting back, Mr. Taylor. It looks like you’re very popular no matter where you go. Are two kidneys enough for you?”

“Since when did you care?” Holden tied the drawstring at his waist while coming down. “Would you like to try and see whether two is enough?”

After the incident with Hunter, Emery already detested people like Holden, that went around flirting with girls. So, now that he triggered her, I had to interject immediately, “Things are getting

out of hand, you two. Can we talk about something else in front of the kids, for my sake?"

Before he gave a response, Holden plopped himself down on the sofa and placed one leg on the armrest. "It's a taboo for people like me that work in the grey area of the law to make enemies. And on top of that, I love women. I only replied because she did not sound very polite. I'm a victim here, you know?"

Emery sneered after hearing that and said, "If that's the case, there would be no more criminals left in the world."

Even though things were not friendly between them, at least they stopped arguing and decided to ignore each other completely.

After a while, Holden spoke once again. "Summer, if you really want to come back, I have quite a few great connections. Maybe you can think about it."

At present, Emery just calmed herself down, but what Holden said immediately triggered her again. "I knew something was off! So, you just wanted her for yourself! There's an order for everything, Mr. Taylor. Don't you dare think I, Emery Moore, am like those cheap girls you meet that gets pushed around!"

"I've said nothing of the sort." Holden shrugged nonchalantly. "I had that idea ever since Scarlett came back and told me about the incident with flowers. You only got the chance because I overslept. I'm not sure you'd win if we really talked about the order."

"You..." Emery was at a loss for words because of how mad she was. An eloquent person like her was no match for someone as thick-skinned as Holden. All she ended up doing was gritting her teeth and calling him a shameless bastard.

Holden smirked, unbothered.

"What are you guys talking about?" Ashton came back and asked while handing his coat to the maid.

"You better take good care of your kids. There's already a devious man plotting to use them," Emery said sarcastically.

Hearing what she said, Holden sat up straight and wanted to refute Emery's claim. But before he could do that, Ashton approached and asked as though he heard a funny joke, "Oh? Who has that much guts?"