

The Billionaire's Hidden Obsession by Hikikomori Chapter 31

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Chapter 31

There's warning mention of suicide

THE DEAFENING SILENCE made the atmosphere in the room feel heavy and oppressive, in stark contrast to the bright moonlight streaming through Primo's windows. "Should we sit?" he asked, still bitterly smiling. Sera nodded, and they both walked toward the corner of the bed, where they in silence, waiting for each other to say something.

However, neither of them did. Like the air in the room, the silence was palpable. It was uncomfortable. Sera attempted to break the silence, but nothing came out when she opened her mouth to speak. Fortunately, Primo spoke first.

"This is quite a heavy topic, will you be okay hearing it?" he asked, not wanting Sera to feel burdened by the story of his sister's death. As much as possible, he didn't want to share that traumatic experience, but he knew it had to be told someday. After all, it was his sister's death that brought them together seven years ago.

"I'm fine, but will you? It sounds like a painful thing to tell," Sera replied, knowing exactly how hard it is to tell a difficult-to- recall story, especially one that caused trauma.

"You shared your painful experience, so I think it's only fair that I share mine," he said, and she nodded, understanding his reason. Their gazes locked, but it didn't last long before Primo looked down, trying to calm himself.

"My sister's name is Mica. She was three years younger than me. She was a bright child, cheerful and full of dreams. My parents wanted her to study political science or business management, but she chose education instead because she wanted to be a teacher." he began speaking, his voice calm but his eyes filled with sadness as he remembered how Mica could brighten his day just by her being around him.

"She was a ball of sunshine; you could never see her being gloomy, unhappy, or sad, which is why her sudden death caught me off guard, no one, including me, predicted that she would commit suicide," He continued, his voice breaking slightly at the memory. He looked up again into Sera's amber eyes and saw how sad they were. She reached out and gently squeezed his hand, making him smile slightly before moving on.

"It happened on her birthday, at midnight, I had just returned from work and went

straight to her room because I wanted to greet her first, but as soon as I opened the door. "he paused and took a deep breath, his face clouded with sorrow as if reliving the incident. He closed his eyes tightly and shook his head, hoping to erase the dreadful image from his mind

Sera couldn't help but squeeze his hand even tighter, sympathizing with him.

"As I entered her bedroom, I found her lying on the bed, bloodied and unconscious, and she wasn't breathing any longer," his voice broke, "But we still took her to the hospital, hoping she could be revived, but... She wouldn't wake up no matter what

"The doctors told us that the cuts on her wrists were pretty deep. He asked us what led her to unalive herself, but we couldn't think of anything. We were all devastated. It wasn't until after her wake that I saw the letter she wrote his voice trembled. trying his best not to shed a tear because he thought that would be lame.

"She was apologizing to us for doing something horrible, she was sorry she couldn't have the courage to seek help when she was struggling because she didn't want to burden us. We had no idea she was being bullied or suffering from depression because she was always smiling and cheerful. I hate myself for not noticing something was wrong, for failing to protect my own sister," he gritted his teeth, tears welling up in his eyes, but he refused to let them fall until Sera hugged him.

Primo bit his lips and hugged her back as he began to cry, silently but intensely; he thought he wouldn't cry again after his mental breakdown, but now he's crying in her arms again, just as he did seven years ago.

Sera rubbed his back to comfort him but didn't say anything because she felt a sense of déjà vu. She could swear something similar had happened before, but she couldn't recall any details... It was a hazy memory that, no matter how hard she tried, was slipping away.

about five minutes, he pulled away and she put her hand on his face, forcing him to look at her. His green eyes were

breaking mother side of him to her. She felt like with this story, she became closer to harm. Both of them were now verifying each other's painful memories

"I don't know what kind of brother you are to Mica, but I can tell you really treasure her, you loved her dearly, and she knew that right?" she asked softly, stroking his cheek.

Primo nodded and closed his eyes, allowing Sera to comfort him further.

Once he calmed down, he excused himself to go to the bathroom and wash his face,

Remembering what happened to his sisters only reminded him of how much he missed her, and he hoped that one day he'd be able to give her the justice she deserved. He has already punished some of her bullies, and he will not stop until every single one of them bears the consequences of their actions, especially the mastermind behind it.

"Do you want me to sleep here tonight?" she asked, hoping to alleviate his loneliness because she was certain that he needed it badly after talking about such a sad and heartbreaking event. Primo gave her a nod, glad for the offer.

"I'd love that." He smiled and kissed her hand, grateful that she listened to his story.

"Thank you,"

Chapter 32

"LORRY, DID I WAKE YOU UP!" Primo asked when he heard Sera groan shortly after speaking with his friend on the phone

"Mintin, tro, was that work?" she sat up slowly, still drowsy as she looked at him. He was sitting on the couch, holding a folder. She assumed he had gotten up early to check paperwork.

"No, I told my friend to meet us later to discuss the interior design of the café, we'll be returning to office work tomorrow, so it would be ideal if you could decide on a plan now and begin the renovation tomorrow," he explained. He then stood up and placed the folder on the table before approaching her.

"Go freshen up, I'll prepare the breakfast," he said, fixing her hair, and she just nodded while smiling. Primo chuckled because she was cute even in the morning

When he left the room, Sera got out of bed and went to the bathroom to wash her face and brushed her teeth with the toothbrush Primo had given her the first time she stayed here. She then went downstairs, where he had already begun preparing breakfast for both of them.

"I didn't know you could cook," she remarked as she drew a chair from the dining table and sat, watching him cook in the kitchen.

"I can, but only for frying," he shrugged while looking at her over his shoulder

"I started learning cooking with just frying as well, but when I got married. I tried my hardest to learn everything else," she said, recalling how many times she cut her fingers while cutting vegetables and meat, or burned herself while trying to do anything just so she could make Sebastian a good meal. Now that she thinks about it, he never once thanked her or even appreciated her efforts in cooking for him.

He once noticed the bandages on her fingers and inquired as to what had happened. When she told him she had cut herself while preparing dinner, he nagged her to leave the cooking to Anji because she wasn't very good in the kitchen. Even so, she couldn't stop cooking for him because it was one of her responsibilities as his wife.

"Sera," Primo called, jolting her out of her thoughts.

"Sorry, what were you saying?" she said, returning her gaze to him. He set some eggs and toast bread on the table and looked at her; it was clear she was thinking about her ex-husband, but he chose not to bring it up.

"I asked you if you wanted milk or coffee.

"I'll have coffee, please" she smiled, and he nodded before returning to the kitchen and continuing to cook "Anyway, is it okay if we meet the interior decorator at my parents' cafe?"

"Sure, you don't mind if I come along?" he inquired.

"Well, not really; I could just use that opportunity to introduce you to them since they were very grateful for the generous offer you made for us, she said, circling her index finger on the table.

"All right, I'll tell Alden to meet us at your parents' cafe, just give me the address later so I can send it to him." Primo returned and placed another food on the table, this time it was bacon and ham, typical food for breakfast. He also took a strawberry jam and the plates before placing the coffee in front of her. She smiled as she was experiencing an act of service her ex-husband had never done for her.

"Wow, it's surprising none of them were burned," she remarked, making him chuckle as he sat across from her.

"Is that a compliment or an insult?" he joked, a playful smile on his face.

"It's a compliment because honestly, you look like someone who'll burn food easily," she admitted, and he laughed again.

Well, it took me years to master the art of frying," he smiled before they began eating. All of this seemed natural to them, sleeping together, waking up in the same room, and conversing over breakfast like a real couple. It felt good, but Sera knew fall in 2 last forever, sooner or later, they'd have to go back to their normal lives and pretend that none of this had ever happened. The thought made her lonely, but she couldn't do anything about it. After all, this setup is only temporary.

Can ask you something! Primo looked at her with his fork in his hand, waiting for her permission before continuing to

Mm, sure, Sera replied while taking a sip of her coffee.

The guy you were dancing with at the clubs, what's your relationship with him?" he inquired, eager to learn what was going on between them and why they were together yesterday.

"Nothing, he and his friend just approached me and Lara," she shrugged, recalling what Isaac had said to him the day before. She looks at Primo, debating whether or not to ask if he really threatened him. But in the end, she realized she didn't care either way.

"I see, I thought you'd found yourself a love interest," he muttered, but she still heard him loud and clear

"Don't worry, I'll let you know if I find one; I want this relationship to end on a positive note, even if we don't have a label," she said which made Primo smile, but deep down he hated how easy it is for her to say that as if the idea didn't bother her in the least.

"You should tell me too if you've found the woman you've been looking for after all these years, though, Sera added, and he stopped for a moment before continuing to eat. He's itching to tell her it was her, but he's afraid she'll react negatively. He simply dismissed the thought and resolved to tell her the truth when the time was right.

After they finished breakfast and washed the dishes, Primo took a shower while Sera waited for him. They both agreed that she should go home first, then to her parents' cafe To be honest, she was a little nervous about introducing Primo to them because they might notice something was going on between them. Her boss was young, and the way he offered help to her was suspicious; anyone who knew what Primo did would immediately suspect that he had feelings for her.

She didn't want to assume, but she knew that was what people who were aware of how kind he was treating her would think.

After a few hours, they already arrived at the cafe, and just like yesterday, there were a lot of customers, mostly couples

"S1" Simon

blind dated as soon as he saw his sister, not realizing she was with someone. "Didn't Mom and Dad tell you to go o

Why are you here again!"

"Why? Am I not allowed to?" she asked, smacking his head playfully before turning her head to the back, where Primo was staring at her. She motioned for him to approach so she could introduce him to her brother,

"Hello," Primo said, which made Simon look at the man, puzzled written all over his face "I'm your sister's boss."

"Ah," Sumon exclaimed before slightly bowing. "H-hello, sir. I'm Simon."

"He's my only younger brother, Sera explained before walking to an empty table and taking a seat. "Tell Mom and Dad that my boss is here and that we'll be discussing something with them."

"All right," Simon saluted and ran to the kitchen where their parents were working on more pastry.

The other employees, as well as the customers, couldn't help but notice Primo. Everyone was drawn to him because of his beauty and good looks. Sera had noticed it as well, and she couldn't really blame them. Primo is a true eye candy, after all. and she is fortunate to be so close to him.

"Your brother resembles you much, he seems smart and responsible like you," Primo said, causing Sera to blush slightly. She enjoys it when someone compliments a member of her family; it makes her proud.

"Yeah, she's just like me," she smiled fondly, "He always preferred helping here in the café instead of going out with his friends, which is why I plan on hiring more staff so he can enjoy more of his youth rather than working here during his free dime

" he in college already?" he inquired, and she nodded.

second year, he's an IT student, she replied before turning her head as her parents approached. They both greeted her, and he reciprocated before sending down and conversing with them.

Thank you so much, sir, for the generous offer; we're grateful that our daughter has such a thoughtful boss like you," Bernard said, and Primo simply chuckled, patting Bernard on the shoulder.

Of course, Mr. Rodriguez Sera deserves nothing less than the best. She's a good employee, so I wanted to help her in any way can" Primo smiled, "My friend will be here shortly, you can discuss with him what kind of interior design you want for the cafe. You can think of a new theme or just follow the current one since the interior here was really relaxing

"Ah yes, I talked about it with my wife yesterday because we were both excited, and we decided to just stick with the current design, Bernard explained, referring to the cafe's aesthetic, which was inspired by their province. It's very traditional since the tables and chairs are made of bamboo. The overall vibe gave them the impression that they were in a province.

"Oh, I think he's here." Primo said when he saw the door opening, and Sera turned to face the entrance. Alden walked in and instantly spotted his friend; he approached them and greeted the clients. "I'll excuse myself now so you can discuss more of the planning with him."

Primo tapped Alden on the shoulder, and Sera's parents nodded, thanking him once more.

Yolanda then looked at her. She was certain her parents were perplexed by what was going on because she hadn't informed them that Primo had hired an interior designer for the cafe's new location. She just smiled and pushed back her chair.

"I'll excuse myself too," she said before following Primo to entertain him while he was in their cafe. "Do you want to try our pastries?"

Can I? They really looked delicious," he stated, staring at the displays. The fact that there were so many customers showed that their cafe had potential. He wouldn't be surprised if they opened some branches soon.

"Oh, you can take a seat, I'll go and serve you," Sera said as she led him to an empty table near the counter. "What do you want to try?"

"Hmm. how about the cinn a m o n bun?" he pondered,

"Okay, wait for me here," she said before she entered the counter. Primo simply smiled at her sudden burst of enthusiasm, He could tell how much she valued her family and their business, which is why he would make certain that everything ran smoothly and without a hitch for them. After all, he might become a member of their family in the future.

"Do you like my sister, sir?" Simon asked as he approached Primo. He saw how he looked at his sister and he could tell he adored her.

"Busted huh?" Primo chuckled, "I like her, but that's a secret, so please keep it between the two of us, okay? And don't worry, I'm not a jerk like her ex-husband*

"Really? Because I don't want to see her unhappy again, Simon said, his gaze fixed on his sister as she spoke to Lisa at t
Counter.

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"You can trust me on that, Primo smiled.

"Then please continue to treat my sister well, sir."

"Of course," he said confidently.

"What are you guys talking about?" Sera asked when she returned to the table and saw the two men talking. Primo and Simon exchanged glances before looking at her and shaking their head, smiling.

"It's nothing"

Chapter 33

AFTER THE HOLIDAY, everyone returned to the office and was swamped with work in an attempt to finish all the jobs that up prior to the holiday. All of the departments were oripied; some were in meetings, while others were eparing for the new project.

Sera said, approaching Primo's table. He noticed her handing her a piece of folder as he looked at her. "I've completed three drafts of ad copy."

"Okay, I'll check these later," he said, nodding and returning to his work. Seya bowed slightly and went back to her desk as if nothing had happened. It was as if they hadn't been together for nearly 24 hours yesterday. Not that she was complaining; rather, she was relieved that they could remain professional and that Primo did not disregard the boundaries she had established. During work hours, she was nothing more than an employee to him, and he was nothing more than a superior to her. Nobody would suspect that anything more was going on between them. Even Lara and Jacob didn't suspect something even though she and Primo left the club together. She expected them to question her, but they didn't. Thinking back, she should have asked Emma what kind of excuse she made to them that night.

"Ms. Rodriguez. Primo said, causing her to push her chair slightly backward and turn her head in his direction.

"Yes, sir"

"Can you bring this to the manager of the finance department?" he asked, to which she nodded. She stood up and approached him, taking the folder from him.

"I'll just hand it, sir?"

"Yes," he nodded, and Sera excused herself before leaving the marketing department office and went upstairs where there was the finance department's floor. Once she arrived in the office, she entered inside.

"Lia, where's Mr. Choi?" she inquired, noticing that the manager's desk was empty.

"He's in a meeting, do you need him for something?"

"Ah the director told me to give him this, is it okay for me to just leave it on his table?"

"Sure, I'll inform him about it later, Lia said while nodding since that is what they always do whenever the manager's not around.

"Thank you," Sera smiled before tapping her shoulder and walking over to the manager's desk to leave the folder, but just as she was about to leave, a familiar voice stopped her. She came to a halt and turned around to see the person she had almost forgotten existed

"I heard you were divorced now?" Chelsea asked as she approached Sem, who regarded her with indifference. Sera has at least one or two close colleagues in each department and Chelsea was clearly not one of them. She had completely forgotten that there was someone in the company who despised her for no apparent reason.

"I'm late on the news, though, because I just got back from a business trip, Chelsea explained as she crossed her arms, it was as if she was mocking her. Everyone in the department just shook their heads because it wasn't the first time this had happened.

"Chelsea, you just got back, and you were already looking for a fight." Lia commented from her desk.

"Looking for a fight? Since when did confirming the news make me look for any fight?" Chelsea raised an eyebrow. "I just wanted to know if it was true."

"It's true that we are on the process of divorcing," Sera cut her sentence short, increasing their tension tenfold. "Now that you've confirmed it, are you satisfied?"

"What?" Chelsea asked in disbelief. Usually, Sera would just avoid having an argument with her because she didn't want to

utilize during work, but now, she decided to talk back and give her the same energy

you're satisfied, I'll leave now if you have any further questions about my life, you can visit me in the marketing department," Sera said before leaving her speechless. Chelsea's face flushed with embarrassment as she heard her coworkers

about. She felt humiliated, but that quickly faded when she saw the folder Sera had just placed on the manager's table. Suddenly, an idea popped into her head

right?" Jacob inquired when he noticed Sera's mood had turned soured.

"Well, Chelsea has started picking fights with me again," she said as she sat down.

"Is that witch back!"

"Unfortunately," she sighed, rubbing her temples, Just thinking about having to deal with that bitch again stressed her. Chelsea had been with the company longer than she had, and she had no idea why she was hostile to her. One day, she just started picking on her like a high school bully. Sera tried talking to her about it, asking what she had done to her, but she never got an answer. Since then, she avoided her whenever possible, but that bitch was fucking obsessed with her attention. that she'd pick a fight every chance she got.

A few hours later, Mr. Choi entered the marketing department and looked around.

"Mrs. Garcia," she said, making everyone in the room whisper, Everyone in the office knew Sera

was divorced, but he continued to address her by her ex-husband's surname.

"I'm Ms. Rodriguez now, sir," Sera said politely, grateful that Primo was in a meeting currently.

"Whatever, did you come to the finance department earlier?" asked the manager, approaching her table. Sera stood up and nodded, puzzled as to what had happened, and he appeared angry.

"Yes, sir," she replied, "I placed the folder that Director Valdemar instructed me to give you since you weren't around earlier."

"Did you take anything out?" he inquired sharply, perplexing Sera. Everyone in the department began to focus on them rather than their work. Lara and Jacob, on the other hand, wanted to intervene but were afraid that doing so would only worsen the situation. The atmosphere was tense enough

"No, sir. Why would I take something out?" Sera asked, irritated that it sounded like she stole something from him, which she hadn't. His eyes narrowed.

"The flash drive containing the financial reports was missing. It was on my desk when I went out to meet with the president about the budget," he stated. Sera couldn't hide the shock of the statement

"Are you saying I took it, sir?" she asked, her calm voice gradually fading.

"Did you? Everyone in the finance department told me that you were the only one who went to my desk while I was gone, so you must have taken it."

"Why would I? Do you have any proof, sir!" Her brows furrowed as she couldn't control her expression anymore. She despises it when she is accused of something, especially when it is something she did not do. If he had a problem, he could have just talked to her privately; why does he need to talk to her in front of the entire marketing department? It was as if he was attempting to publicly humiliate her.

"Do I still need proof when you were the only one who went to my desk?" Mr. Choi scowled, dissatisfied with the way she was speaking to him. Sera just stared at him without saying anything her face becoming increasingly blank by the minute. The manager was clearly annoyed. "Look, just give it back, and I won't report you to the president."

"I have nothing to give back because I didn't steal anything, sir," she replied simply, trying not to sound too irritated as her patience had finally run thin

"I see," he said before approaching her closer and taking her bag. Sera's eyes widened as he opened it and flipped it, causing everything inside to fall to the ground with a loud crash and a crack Everyone gasped, and Jacob thought this was getting out of hand so he tried to intervene, but before he could do so, a cold voice interrupted him.

"What are you doing?" Primo asked as he approached Mr. Choi. He stood beside the two and glanced at the humiliated and shocked by what had happened. She pursed her lips and clenched her fists as she gazed down at her things on the floor

"What are you asking what you think you're doing to my employee?" Primo asked again, his voice so cold and intimidating that everyone in the department got goosebumps. Mr. Choi swallowed hard and unconsciously took a step back.

"What are you not going to answer?" he asked before turning her attention to Sera. "Ms. Rodriguez, tell me what happened."

"Are you not going to answer?" he asked before turning her attention to Sera. "Ms. Rodriguez, tell me what happened."

"Mr. Choi wasn't in his desk when I gave him the folder, so I just left it on his desk, but he came here accusing me of taking the flash drive on his desk that contained the financial report," Sera

responded without hesitation, knowing she wasn't in the wrong

"Do you have proof that she took it?" Primo inquired, turning to face the manager. His fists were clenched inside his pocket, barely holding him back from punching the man who had humiliated Sera.

"Everyone in the finance department told me she was the only one who came to my desk," Mr Choi replied, trying not to appear intimidated by someone younger than him, even though Primo's position was higher.

"You called that proof?" Primo asked, his voice so low that Mr. Choi flinched slightly before responding.

Who else would take it if not her?"

Are you hearing yourself right now?" he asked as he took a step forward. "In the first place, why would you carelessly leave an important flash drive like that on your desk?"

Because I trusted everyone in the finance department, no one from them would ever steal something like that," he argued. Sera was still processing what he was saying. She sighed and returned her gaze to her belongings on the floor.

Do you see any flash drives on my things, sir?" she inquired, her voice trembling but the manager just glared at her.

Why is an employee's asking you, Mr. Choi, do you see a flash drive to the contents of her bag that you threw on the floor?" Primo asks at him, waiting for his response. However, it appeared that he was having difficulty determining how to respond to the question. He swallowed and cleared his throat. Mr. Choi answered.

Well, since you didn't see anything despite making a mess of my employee's things, why don't you start picking everything up and apologizing for the public humiliation that you've done to her?"

Primo said, emphasizing each word that made Sera's eyes widen. What at?

Chapter 34

"IT'S ALL OVER, SIR. I'll do it." Sera said as she bent down to take the contents of her bag from the floor, but Primo grabbed her

arm. He gently pulled her up, stopping her from what she was about to do

"No, Mr. Choi would do it; after all, it was him who messed up your things," he said, his gaze not leaving Manager Choi, who

was already trembling in anger and humiliation. "Those who took advantage of their position should taste their own medicine.

But Sera trailed off. She was grateful that Primo believed in her and took her side, and even though Manager Choi was in the wrong, making him pick up her things on the floor in front of the whole Marketing Department was cruel. It will undoubtedly harm his reputation as a manager.

"What's wrong, Mr. Choi? How does it feel to be publicly humiliated by someone younger and in a higher position than you?" Primo asked as he let go of Sera's arm. "Is it pleasant?"

"N-no," Manager Choi stammered, but still refusing to admit he was wrong. "But I have no choice, she's the only one who came to my desk-

"You're still on about that? You don't even have solid proof that Ms. Rodriguez took it, and if she's your only suspect, can't you talk to her privately? Do you have to make a scene and confront her in front of her colleagues? Primo asked, "Look around, you're already disturbing everyone,"

*Pick up

her belongings and apologize if you don't want this problem to escalate any further than necessary," he added, and Mr. Choi looked at the floor again in defeat

When he began bending down and picking up Sera's belongings on the floor, everyone murmured, and the tension increased dramatically.

"Sorry," he apologized as he handed Sera her bag, which she returned with a nod

"I really didn't take anything from your desk, sir," she explained again..

"Don't worry, I'll take care of everything. I'll make sure to clear this issue; return to your seat, Primo said, and Sera nodded, thanking him before turning around and sitting in her chair.

"Everyone, please get back to work."

Even after Mr. Choi left the department, the awkward and tense atmosphere persisted. Sera tried hard to concentrate on her work, but her thoughts kept returning to what had happened earlier. She couldn't help but steal glances at Primo who was concentrating on the papers in his hand, looking irritated.

When it was time for lunch, he left the office without even looking at her, which bothered her.

"Sera, are you okay?" Lara asked as she approached her and gently rubbed her back

"I'm fine," Sera assured them, knowing they had been worried about her but hadn't had the chance to ask.

"Who do you think took the flash drive?" Jacob wondered as they made their way to the cafeteria

"Well, who else but the people of the finance department? Or maybe Mr. Choi just misplaced it and decided to blame Sera because he didn't want to be held accountable for his mistake, Lara concluded.

"Or what if Chelsea did something to screw you over?" Jacob asked as he stared at Sera, who just shrugged. All of their conclusions could be correct, but her concern was that this issue would quickly spread like wildfire, and she would become the center of attention once more.

"Oh right, Sera's number one hater was back; did she harass you earlier when you went to the finance department?" Lara inquired

"Well, she always picks a fight whenever she sees me, so yeah." she nodded and sighed before entering the elevator. The last thing she wanted now was to be the center of gossip again.

Being accused of stealing was just as bad as being a rumor of having a relationship with Haru while she was married. She felt sick just thinking about how the company's employees

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The moment, they entered the cafeteria, she braced herself for the worst and saw that they were surrounded by many pairs

curious glances. She felt as if she were suffocating, and it took all of her strength to keep her knees from buckling.

"Should we just eat outside!" Jacob suggested seeing how uncomfortable Sera was getting. "I didn't do anything wrong," she said bravely before lining up and ignoring the stares from the other employees.

Lauver was a nice company with good benefits and pay. The layout of the building was clean and very cozy, with plenty of lounge areas where employees could relax during breaks. The only drawback was how quickly the news and rumors spread, causing a lot of drama in some departments and making the person involved life hard.

"Well, if it wasn't the kleptomaniac, Chelsea remarked as she blocked Sera's path as she was about to look for a table while holding a tray full of food.

"Hey, watch your mouth. Lara warned. "Didn't you hear what happened to your manager If you

don't want to experience the same thing, then shut your trap and stop your stupid accusation."

"Accusation, you say? Sera was the only person who went to Mr. Choi's desk. Chelsea crossed her arms, drawing everyone's attention to them. "Who else would have been able to take the damn flash drive if it wasn't her?"

"She didn't take it," Jacob said, glancing at Chelsea's friend behind her who chuckled lightly.

"And you honestly believed that? Everyone knows how messed up and unruly Sera is. She got involved in a rumor once. She got lucky that she managed to clear it, but you know what they say? There's no smoke without fire." Chelsea scoffed mockingly and looked at her as if she had said something offensive to her.

"Are you finished?" Sera inquired, "If so, please stop blocking our path; I'm hungry"

"What?" Chelsea asked, watching Sera walk away. It irritates her for being disrespectful and grabs her tray, causing Sera to drop the tray she was holding.

"Aw! She winced as the hot soup spilled onto her hands. Jacob immediately put his tray down and pulled Sera gently away from the mess on the floor.

"What's your problem?" Lara snapped, pushing Chelsea's shoulder and causing her to stumble back a few steps.

"What? I just stopped her from leaving. She's exaggerating, she argued. "She just wants to make me look bad"

"Hah! You're crazy!" Lara exclaimed as she placed her tray on the nearby table before joining Jacob in checking on their friend's well-being.

"Shit! Let's go to the restroom, she said as she led Sera, who was clearly in pain, into the restroom and quickly ran her hands under the faucet to cool off the burn. "Why doesn't that woman leave you alone? She's even worse now that you're seeing each other again after a long time"

"Relax, I'm fine," Sera assured her while smiling, "Go take your break. I'll go to the pantry to get some ointment for these burns, and then I'll follow you back to the cafeteria."

"What? No, I'll come with you," Lara insisted, but Sera refused to budge.

"It's fine, Lara, you can just get me another food so I can join you after I finish my business,

"Are you sure?" she asked, concerned.

"Yes, I'm sure." Sera nodded, and Lara sighed in defeat before letting her friend go without her.

MEANWHILE, Lauver's president stiffened as Primo sat in front of him with a solemn expression. He was the only person in the company who knew Primo's true identity, and after learning why he paid him a visit in his office today, he felt bad for Mr. Choi. In a few minutes of dreadful silence, the President's secretary knocked on the door.

"Mr. Choi has arrived",

Let him in President Smith said, and the door opened, allowing Mr. Choi to enter. His gaze was immediately drawn to Primo, who was sitting on the opposite side of the couch. He clenched his fist, not expecting that to bring the issue to the president's attention. "Sit down."

"Yes, President," Mr. Choi said as he sat next to Primo. "I heard what happened; did you find the flash drive?"

"Not quite yet sir."

"Did you double-check the CCTV?"

"Unfortunately, the CCTV in the office has not yet been changed, I requested that someone install the new system last week, but there seemed to be delays."

"Hnum." President Smith hummed, glancing at Primo, who was slightly frowning. He didn't know what his relationship with the employee he was protecting was like, but he could tell it was serious. "Are you sure you didn't misplace it? Don't you think an important item like that

shouldn't be left lying around the desk?"

"Yes, sir, but everyone in the finance department is trustworthy; there was no way they would steal the drive, especially when the entire department would be in trouble," Mr. Choi defended.

"I confronted Ms. Rodriguez because she was the only one who came to my desk while I was in a meeting with you earlier."

"I know, Mr. Valdermar already explained that to me, and he also told me that you publicly humiliated Ms. Rodriguez without any solid proof that it was really her who took it," President Smith sighed. "Because we need to resolve this issue as soon as possible, I'll pay a visit to your department and inspect everyone's desk and belongings."

"How about Ms. Rodriguez? I didn't check her desk; it was also possible that the drive was in her clothes' pocket."

Primo's jaw clenched when he heard that statement. The man's pi s s i n g him off that he wanted to get rid of him right away, he wanted to fire him this instant as the CEO of VM corporation but that would blow his cover

"Everyone's on break, let's go check her desk," he said as he stood up, and the president followed suit, perplexing Mr. Choi as to how the new director could be so arrogant as if he was above everything around him. He just didn't say anything and followed them to the Marketing department, where they ran into Sera, who was about to return to the cafeteria.

"Why are you her

here?" Mr. Choi asked, frowning because she was the only person inside. It gave him another reason to suspect

"I took an ointment to the pantry, sir," Sera replied, puzzled.

"Ointment for what?"

"There was a bit of an accident in the cafeteria, and my hands got burned by the soup," she explained, glancing at Primo, who was frowning while looking at her bandaged hand.

"You're a copywriter, right? How would you work with that condition?" asked the president.

"Yes, president," she responds, "But I can still work with my other hand?"

"Is that correct? Can we check your desk? We're solving the issue regarding the missing flash drive."

"Oh, yes, sir. Go ahead." Sera nodded, stepping aside to allow the three men to search her desk. She just stands there watching them and when they haven't found anything, Mr. Choi comes up to her.

"Your pocket, empty them," he ordered, and Sera did as he said, revealing her phone and purse. Mr. Choi was still unsatisfied and attempted to search her other pocket, but even before he could do so. Primo grabbed his wrist and gripped it tightly, haking him wince.

What on earth do you think you're doing?"

leavened to prevent further trouble. "Mr. Choi, did you realize you were about to commit hat he uttered, yanking his arm away from Primo, who was restraining himself to punch him. "I was just trying to

Hough, President Smith rubbed his temple; he was certain Mr. Choi would be fired the next day, given how angry Prima

You're free to go, Ms. Rodriguez

eur. Sera nodded and glanced at them before leaving, concerned that the situation was more serious than she had Anticipated

SEND GIFT

Chapter 35

TET DUT A SICH as she waits in line at the train station. She felt like not going to work because of the issue and her still aching from the burn yesterday. Her life was so peaceful and happy before the holiday, but then everything panned upside down.

after searching the desks and bags of the people from the finance department, they couldn't find the missing flash drive. Now, the problem is becoming more serious and widespread, not to mention that the president himself was working to resolve it. She had no idea what would happen now, especially since she was the main suspect in the stealing of the drive.

She sighed again and tucked a few strands of hair behind her ears.

"That was a long sigh, a familiar voice said, prompting her to turn around and look at Isaac. Her eyes widened as she noticed the bruises and hand-aids on his face as if he had been beaten up by a thug; he even had a cast on his right hand.

"What happened" she inquired, concerned. He had a terrible appearance. "How did you even get here with that condition?"

"Oh, some drunk beat up on me last night," he replied, scratching his neck with his left hand. What happened last night was scary, he thought he would die but he managed to get away. He didn't even know why the man was so mad at him.

"And you're still planning on going to work?"

"Yeah, I can't miss today because I have a presentation, Isaac explained, shrugging, and Sera nodded. "How about you? What happened? Why is your hand bandaged?"

"Oh, I got burned from the soup yesterday," she replied, and she was about to say something else when the train arrived. They both boarded and took seats near the door, then continued talking until Sera's stop. Before exiting the train, she smiled and waved goodbye to him. She couldn't believe they'd run into each other again, but Isaac wasn't a bad person, as she expected.

She let out another deep sigh as she approached Lauver and went inside. She was preparing to be the subject of gossip ONCE more, but instead of hearing gossipy comments like yesterday, she heard another piece of news.

"Sel" Haru called as he caught up to her just as she was about to enter the elevator.

"What's wrong?"

"Did you hear the news?" he inquired, closing the bottle in his hand. He appeared to have come from the convenience store next to the building.

"No, I just got here; what's the news!"

"The flash drive was found under Mr. Choi's desk," he replied, making her turn her head at him. They were already inside the elevator, and since his voice was loud, the other employee behind them heard it.

"Really?" she inquired, "What's going to happen now?"

"I don't know, but someone said he could get fired for lack of professionalism," Haru responded.

"His handling of the issue yesterday was extremely reckless, and almost losing the company's financial reports would be disastrous."

"But it was still a relief that your name was cleared; why would he even accuse you without evidence?" he added, and Sera pursed her lips. She didn't know how to react or even say anything anymore.

She just absentmindedly nodded and when she arrived at the marketing department, she went straight to her desk and had a brief conversation with her colleagues about the issue. And because her hand was injured, she only did minor tasks. Lara and Jacob were assisting her in any way they could, and she was grateful

"I wonder if the director will show up today" Jacob said, causing Sera to turn her head at him.

"He was terrifying yesterday, but who wouldn't be?"

"Ms. Rodriguez? The director wants you to come to his office as soon as possible," the director's secretary said, peering

ugh the door. Sere looked at Jacob before standing up.

line; he'll just probably discusé what happened tomorrow," he reassured, and she nodded before following the secretary, purpleted as to why Primo wanted her in his office.

Sir Ma, Rodriguez is here," said the secretary when arrived in front of the director's office.

her in." Primo said, and Sera went inside, a little nervous because they hadn't talked much yesterday, the door closed behind her, and heard a click sound, indicating that it automatically locked. "Come on over here."

"Yes, sir," she said as she approached his table.

"No, not there," he beckoned her closer, and despite her hesitation, Sera moved in front of him, where he turned his swivel chair slightly so he could face her properly. "How's your hand?*

"It still hurts, but I can keep working" she said as he took her hand in his. "What exactly are you doing, sir?"

"We're in my private office, why are you calling me sir?"

"We're still in the company, what if someone barged in and saw us this close?" she questioned.

"Who would dare to barge into my office? Besides, the door's locked." Primo retorted, and Sera blinked twice before responding.

"Right, no one, but still..." she paused before sighing deflatingly, "All right, are you touch-deprived?"

"I do," he said, pulling her in and making her sit on his lap. "I'm sorry; I know I'm overstepping your boundaries, but this is the first and last time I'll be intimate during work hours."

Sera gave him a slight smile; she was relieved that he was aware that he was overstepping her boundaries, so she'd let it slide this time. After all, the overall feeling wasn't all that bad. It was a nice change of pace after the chaos that happened yesterday.

"What exactly happened yesterday? Why did you burn your hand?" he asked, his hand resting her waist.

"Hmm," she hummed, debating whether she should rant about what happened or just keep quiet about her and Chelsea's feud. However, even before she could make a decision. Primo spoke again.

"Is there someone in the company who is harassing you? She stared at him, surprised by how perceptive he was. The more she learned about him, the more she compared him to his ex-husband. She really did settle for less when he married Sebastian and now, and she couldn't help but be envious of the woman Primo was going to marry in the future. She was indeed a lucky girl..

"Your silence confirms that I'm not in the wrong," he said, cupping her cheeks. "Who is it?"

"Why?" she asked, trying her best not to show how it was giving her butterflies that way he caressed her cheek lovingly.

"I'll deal with whoever harassing you," he said, "Not only are you in my department, but I'm also acting asa manager, and I don't want anyone bothering my staff, especially if the other person is from another department.

"I appreciate your concern, but it's fine; Ill handle it myself, she smiled, "I don't want to continue relying on you because I might get used to it."

"What's wrong if you get used to it? You can keep relying on me."

"No, you know this relationship would end sooner or later, and it won't do me any good if I get

used to how nice you were to me,” she said as she tried to stand up, but Primo stopped her by pulling her waist closer to him. They locked eyes and, to her surprise, he kissed her... She didn't respond right away because she was taken aback by his sudden action. She thought he was mad because of how roughly he pressed his lips against hers, but she slowly started melting while her brain told her to pull back. But then Pin, her body couldn't agree, so she let herself enjoy the kiss while Primo took control of the situation. She wrapped his neck, feeling his fingers caress her waist as he deepened the kiss. He held her tightly, deepening it with each vinent, and when she ran out of breath, she reluctantly pulled hack Die say something wrong!” she inquired, causing Primo to snap out of whatever trance he was in. He shook his head, he couldn't hide his feelings of dissatisfaction. He really disliked is when she talked about the possibility of ending their relationship. It made him think that he was making no progress in his attempt to win her heart and that she still hadn't developed any ounce of feelings for him, “No, sorry, I just had a sudden urge to kiss you and it happened,” he admitted, trying to hide his feelings. She paused for a heat before smiling and shaking her head. It's fine, she said. “Anyway, I heard from Haru that Mr. Choi might be fired, is that true?” “Yeah, the president was really disappointed with how he handled things when it was his mistake to lose the flash drive,” Primo replied, despite the fact that he was the one who decided to fire him. “Who is Haru, anyway? Only a few people knew about Mr. Choi's firing “Ah,” Sera exclaimed, realizing she didn't address Haru professionally, “He's from the production department. He's a college friend and Emma's ex. He was there at the club, but he was too busy dancing, so I guessed you didn't see each other, She explained, not wanting to have any misunderstanding like what happened to Isaac She wasn't required to explain his relationship with other men because they weren't lovers, but she did so out of respect. So long as he didn't interfere with her relationship with others, she doesn't mind explaining. “I see, he nodded before muttering, “I thought I needed to send one of my men again to beat a pest that was lurking around you. “Huh?” Sera asked, unable to hear what he was mumbling just now. Primo rubbed his chin and shook his head while smiling “Nothing” ched his table. “No, not there,” he beckoned her closer, and despite her hesitation, Sera moved in front of him, where he turned his swivel chair slightly so he could face her properly. “How's your hand? * “It still hurts, but I can keep working” she said as he took her hand in his. “What exactly are you doing, sir?” “We're in my private office, why are you calling me sir?” “We're still in the company, what if someone barged in and saw us this close?” she questioned. “Who would dare to barge into my office? Besides, the door's locked.” Primo retorted, and Sera blinked twice before responding. “Right, no one, but still...” she paused before sighing deflatingly, “All right, are you touch-deprived?” “I do,” he said, pulling her in and making her sit on his lap. “I'm sorry; I know I'm overstepping your boundaries, but this is the first and last time I'll be intimate during work hours.” Sera gave him a slight smile; she was relieved that he was aware that he was overstepping her

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"Huh?" Sera asked, unable to hear what he was mumbling just now. Primo rubbed his chin and shook his head while smiling

"Nothing"

Chapter 36

HOW WAS E Jacob asked as soon as Sera returned to her desk after speaking with the director. "tri fine, as you said; he just talked to me about the problem yesterday, and it was already resolved"

Really? Did they find the flash drive! Who took it?" Lara asked while taking a coffee break inside the office. She was leaning against Sera's cubicle, holding a cup, "It was found beneath Manager Choi's desk," she shrugged. She had no idea how he had missed it if it was just under his desk, but the important thing was that her name had already been cleared and she would be free of the gossip. She is sorry for what happened to Mr. Choi, and she thought firing him was a bit extreme, but she guessed Karma had its way of getting things done.

"Oh my, I wonder what would happen to him now," Lara wondered, while Sera remained silent. She didn't want to spread the word yet because, sooner or later, everyone in the company would hear about the news anyway.

"Well, I hope he gets punished," Jacob murmured, "Along with Chelsea who harassed you yesterday. The finance department had a lot of problematic people."

"Ugh! I swear! That bitch needs some serious help," Lara sighed, recalling what had happened yesterday. "I still don't understand why she despises you so much."

"Right," Sera chuckled, her gaze fixed on her hands. She needed to stop allowing Chelsea to bother her, especially since it was already interfering with her work. She used to be able to ignore her, but not this time, not when it came to her safety and her job. She had just gotten away from dealing with insane people, and she didn't want to go through another one.

"Anyway, remember the blonde guy I was dancing with at the club? Lara inquired, and Sera nodded, "We're going on a date next week, and he wanted to invite you so we can have a double date with his friend being your partner."

"Isaac?" she asked, and Lara nodded enthusiastically

"Yeah, him. Jeremy told me his friend was really serious and into you. That's why he wanted to play cupid"

"Does Jeremy still don't know what happened to Isaac? We saw each other at the station earlier, he had a cast on his hand and was pretty beaten up. I don't think Isaac can go on a date," Sera explained, "And besides, going on a date when my divorce isn't finalized was a bit..."

"What's wrong

with that? You've already broken up with your ex-husband, and even though we don't know what caused your divorce, you deserve to have fun and meet someone new!" Jacob encouraged his friend because he was aware of what had happened to her and her ex-husband. He saw Sebastian with a woman the other day and assumed that cheating was the reason for their breakup. He wanted to share this with Sera, but he decided to keep it to himself.

Jacob's right, we're not getting any younger; we need to make our lives exciting and interesting." Lara agreed.

"Well, I understand what you both are saying and of course, I wanted that as well, but I have things I need to focus on next week. Maybe next time Sera smiled, grateful for their support, but she was content with Primo's company for the time being. Sure, Isaac appears to be a good person, and they have some sort of friendship going on, but dating is out of the question right now. She wasn't ready for anything serious yet, at least not until she divorced Sebastian completely.

"All right, I won't force you, but tell me if you're already up for it, okay? Jeremy and I will play cupid for you and Isaac- Lara came to a halt as she noticed the director walking past them. She pursed her lips and returned to her table, having not expected him to work at the manager's table today.

The three continued to work, and Sera cast a glance at Primo, recalling what they had done in his office earlier. She set some boundaries not to be intimate during work hours, but she never imagined how much she would enjoy having some alone time with him in the company. It was exciting and new for her, and she wouldn't mind doing it again. However, she didn't want to risk being discovered as having a fling with the director, so she dropped the idea.

When it was time for lunch. Sera headed straight to the cafeteria with Jacob and Lara. She was sitting at the table as the two insisted on getting her food for her because her hand was injured. She was waiting for them to come back when Chelsea and

Triends approached her.

be now! Sera inquired

Don't you have any conscience" Chelsea asked, raising her brow to conceal her guilt. She was irritated that Manager Choi had been fired when it was supposed to be Sera who was fired. If she had just shipped the flash drive into the pocket of her coat yesterday, she could have perfectly framed her, but because she ignored her and walked away, her plan was ruined. She wanted to put the flash drive on her desk, but the marketing department had CCTV. She was just glad that she managed to throw the drive under Mr. Choi's table yesterday when she heard the president was going to inspect everyone's desks and bags from the finance department. And just this morning, the janitor who cleaned the office last night informed the president that he had discovered the flash drive hidden in the far t h e s t part of the underside of Mr. Choi's desk which led him to be fired.

She crossed her arms and looked down as Sera, she would not allow her name to be clear just yet. She needs to do something.

"Because of you, Manager Choi will be fired."

SEND GIFT

Chapter 37

AT: Sera frowned as Chelsea nearly yelled the words back at her, drawing everyone's attention to them. They began

which gave her a sense of déjà vu

Where did you go yesterday when you left the cafeteria? Did you throw the flash drive under Mr. Choi's desk while

very one was on lunch break?"

"Are you crazy?" Sera asked in disbelief, she couldn't believe how Chelsea dared to insinuate that she would do something Fampid like that. "I got a burn from the soup since you pulled me yesterday, so, I went to our department's pantry to put

some ointment on it.”

“She’s telling the truth! What are you on about?” Lara slammed the tray onto the table, glaring at the three finance department women. She was perplexed as to why Chelsea was still accusing and blaming Sera when the matter had already been resolved. “Don’t you feel any shame? You were the cause of Sera’s hand burning yesterday, you didn’t even apologize, and now you’re accusing her of something stupid again?”

“Something stupid? Was Mr. Choi getting fired stupid to you?” Chelsea asked, her voice rising. Sera sighed and rose to her feet before turning to face Chelsea. All she wants is a peaceful lunch; she doesn’t want an unnecessary argument in the middle of everyone again.

“Should I ask the director, president, and Mr. Choi then?” she asked, raising a brow at Chelsea. “Ask what?”

“I ran into them after I put an ointment on my hand, and I even watched them check my desk.” Sera took a step forward, forcing the three nuisances to take a step back. Sera’s remark heightened the murmurs in the room. They admire her bravery in suggesting that she’d ask the higher prove her claim.

“Let’s go, come with me to their office one by one. Sera grabbed Chelsea’s wrist with her other hand and dragged her away, but she resisted, pulling away with each step. She knew that her plan would backfire if ever Sera were telling the truth.

“Shouldn’t we stop them? They might get physical.” Jacob wondered.

“No, you know Sera despises fighting. She will try to avoid it as much as possible, but if she’s had enough, she’ll fight back no matter what,” Lara replied, watching Sera stop dragging Chelsea and face her again.

“What? Are you scared?” she asked. “Are you afraid that your plan frame won’t work?”

“F-frame? What are you talking about?” Chelsea frowned, sweating profusely. She looked around when the other employees started to stare at her and whisper in groups.

“You know, I didn’t want to believe it at first, but the way you kept pinning the blame on me, it was obvious that you tried to frame me,” she said, Sera said, ignoring the attention she was getting from the crowd. She wanted to get this over with quickly, so they’d leave her alone.

“Think about it you work in finance, so you have easy access to Mr. Choi’s desk, especially since it is close to yours.”

“Are you serious? Are you seriously accusing me-

“Yes, I am accusing you. You kept pushing the blame on me, why? So, you could fuck me over? Tell me, Chelsea, what did I do wrong for you to keep picking fights with me?” Sera asked, her voice calm but aggressive in tone. She has had enough of people making her the bad person just to save themselves. This fuck situation just reminded her of what Samantha and Sebastian did to her during his father’s birthday. It was ridiculous and dumb.

“What? Cat got your tongue?” she sarcastically asked, but everyone gasped when Chelsea slapped her. Lara and Jacob rushed toward them, but they were stopped when Sera slapped back, hard enough for Chelsea to stumble back a few steps. The cafeteria fell silent, and everyone’s eyes widened in shock.

“Did you just fuck in g slap me?” Chelsea scowled.

“What? Did you not expect me to fight back? You did it first, I just gave you a taste of your own medicine.” Sera shrugged,

TUE, 26 Dea GED

Chapter 37

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wiping the blood from the corner of her mouth. Chelsea clenched her fist and was about to grab her hair, but Haru stopped her arm.

“That’s enough!” he exclaimed, “The director and president were watching!”

Chelsea and Sera’s hearts skipped a beat as they turned to the side where the two executives were standing. Sera met Primo’s gaze but quickly averted her, embarrassed for displaying such barbaric behavior. She wiped her mouth again, and Primo tried not to show any signs of rage on his face; he knew someone was harassing her at work, but he had no idea it was this bad.

“What are you two doing?” the president inquired as he took a step forward, He was embarrassed that the CEO had witnessed something shameful between his employees, but he needed to calm things down.

“Ms. Rodriguez started it first, sir, Chelsea began crying, perplexing Sera, She’s accusing me of trying to frame her.”

“Is it true, Ms. Rodriguez?” The president looked at her with serious eyes. His voice was firm and devoid of emotion.

“Yes, sir,” Sera replied calmly, avoiding Primo’s gaze. “But that was because she kept pushing the blame that Mr. Choi was fired because of me; she claims I threw the flash drive back to the manager’s desk during break time yesterday.”

“And Chelsea slapped her first, sir,” Lara added, causing the president to sigh and rub his temples. He was pleased that the CEO invited him to join him for lunch, and tried eating in the cafeteria, but this is what they had to witness.

“We ran into Ms. Rodriguez during break time yesterday, can you prove your claim that she threw the flash drive back to Manager Choi’s desk?” Primo asked, looking down at Chelsea, who gulped nervously. The way he looked at her made her feel as if she’d been eaten alive.

“N-no, sir,” she stammered, clutching the side of her skirt tightly.

“I want you both to come to my office after lunch,” the president said as he turned around, and Primo followed to avoid suspicion. Sera and Chelsea exchanged glances before parting ways and continuing their lunch as if nothing had happened.

“F u c k, that woman was getting on my nerves; I hope she gets fired as well!” Lara gritted her teeth.

“I lost

my appetite, Sera stated before turning to face her friend, “Sorry, I’ll go to the rooftop to get some fresh air.”

“What? We’ll go with you,” Jacob offered, but she shook her head.

“It’s fine, I want to go alone,” she smiled as she pushed her chair back and exited the cafeteria, Primo, who was talking to the president, looked at her and wondered where she was going. He then cast a glance at the woman who slapped Sera, planning a way to get rid of her for hurting his woman.

Chapter 38

“HI, MOM,” Sera said as she sat on the wooden chair, closing her eyes and feeling the afternoon breeze. She was relieved that the rooftop was empty and that she could simply relax and enjoy the silence after what happened at the cafeteria. Are you going to go to the cafe’s new location?”

"Virs, your father and I were already on our way there," Yolanda replied, nodding; the renovation had already begun the day before and, according to Alden, it would only be a week before they could begin moving. Her parents were overjoyed with how things were going after receiving the devastating news that the property they had purchased was a fraud. They expected it to take months or years for them to recover, but not only did they get a new property, but it was even better than before.

"OK, call me if you need anything," she replied.

"Are you taking a break?"

"Yes, Mom, why?"

"I didn't get to ask you the other day, what's your relationship with your boss?" Sera flinched. She knew the question would come up soon, but she didn't expect her mother to be so blunt about it.

"Nothing," she said, looking around to make sure no one was listening in on their conversation. When she was certain she was alone, she leaned against the wooden chair. "What made you ask about that?"

"It's obvious something is going on between you two; do you think I wouldn't notice the way he stares at you?" her mother asked, and she couldn't help but wonder what kind of stare Primo was giving her.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Mom. He has another woman in his life-she turned around when she heard footsteps approaching. Her eyes widened as she thought to speak of the devil. "I'll call you later, Mom. Take care."

"Sorry, did I disturb you?" Primo inquired after she hang up the phone.

"No, why are you here, sir?" she stood up, acting professionally because they were in a public place. She was afraid that someone would come in and see them together. That would undoubtedly raise suspicion, which was the last thing she needed right now. She's had enough of being the subject of office gossip, and if she gets involved in another story, she'll have no choice but to quit. She doesn't know what face she's going to put on when the company learns that she and her boss have something intimate going on.

"I saw you didn't eat and just left, and I wanted to check on you," Primo explained as he approached her. He reached for Sera's cheek which looked swollen from the slap, but she smacked his hand away instinctively before he could touch her. They were both stunned when they realized their mistake, but Sera recovered quickly and composed herself

"Sir, I let you overstep my boundaries earlier, but this is different," she said, her voice upset. She was already anxious enough that they were alone in a public area alone, so him casually touching her when there's a hundred percent possible that someone from the company could see them just added unnecessary stress. "Please keep things as professional as possible at work; I don't want to be seen with you alone inside the company premises."

The air was suddenly devoid of sound. Sera felt guilty for lashing out without warning or proper thought, but Primo seemed unfazed, which added to her discomfort. He was doing his best to maintain his cool because he wasn't expecting that kind of reaction from her. He was considering how to respond in a calm, reassuring manner to avoid making her feel even more uncomfortable, but Sera spoke again before he could open his mouth.

"I'm sorry, sir. I appreciate your concern, but I'm fine," she explained before bowing slightly and saying. "I'll excuse myself first"

"Ser-Primo didn't finish calling her by her first name and simply clenched his fist as she walked away from him. It took all of his self-control not to chase after her. There was nothing wrong with

his intention, only that he crossed the line by touching her face without her permission. His actions were wrong, and he was well aware of it.

He tried sending her a message asking if they could meet, but she did not respond. Even when he worked in the manager's office, she barely looked at him or showed any sign that she was aware he was there, and she even ignored his texts. With that, Primo knew he'd messed up big time. He got ahead of himself thinking that because she let him be intimate with her in his office, he could somehow touch her again as long as they were alone.

"AT'S WRONG?" Emma asked as she sat beside the bar stool where Sera was already sipping her favorite drink. As soon as she got home from work, she received a message from Sera asking if they could drink at the bar where they usually hang

They hadn't met in a few days, so she agreed right away.

You came straight here from work, son? Sera inquired, noticing that her friend was still dressed for work.

"No, I already got home but left again after reading your message; did something happen?"

Emma wondered, drawing the attention of Mikhail, the bartender, and ordering her usual drink.

"A lot," Sera replied after finishing her drink. "Do you remember Chelsea, the woman I used to rant about?"

"Yes, that's the bitch who kept picking fights with you, right? Why? Did she do something to you again for you to drink like this?" Emma raised an eyebrow as she studied her friend carefully, trying to find the answer to her questions. Sera noticed it and turned her head to nod, then she told everything that had happened in the past few days.

Chapter 39

WHAT? Emma asked, surprised by Chelsea's actions. "How dare she accuse you of something ridiculous? That bitch seriously needs therapy."

Right, the president reprimanded us earlier, and we're not allowed to talk to each other again, or we'll both be fired," she sighed, remembering how the president expressed his disappointment when they went to his office before leaving work. It was humiliating that her work ethic had been called into question when she did her best to endure Chelsea's constant harassment

"That's all I mean, that's all that bitch got? No punishment for being physical with you?"

"Well, there was no evidence of her framing me, and I got physical with her as well, so the president called it quits, Sera shrugged as she ordered another drink

"Damn! Maybe you should just move to our company. I mean we're both subsidiaries of VM corporation," Emma suggested, but then she remembered something. "Oh right, I heard the news regarding the CEO of VM corporation, I heard he's going to marry a Senator's daughter soon."

"Really? Where did you get the news? The CEO was as mysterious as hell, only a few people knew his face and name." Sera looked at her phone when it vibrated, checking it for a second and turning off the screen when she saw Primo's name, ignoring his messages. She didn't want to deal with him right now; she was aware that she was being harsh, but she needed to stand firm. She needed him to understand that overstepping her boundaries and doing unnecessary things were not acceptable.

She knew that she was making a big deal out of nothing when all he did was reach out to touch her, but doing it in a public place, even without thinking about the consequences, was something she didn't want to tolerate.

"Hey, Sera, are you listening?" Emma asked, waving her hands in front of her face. She shook

her head, realizing she had completely spaced out.

“Sorry, what were you saying!”

“As I mentioned earlier, I overheard my manager, and it appears the CEO of VM corporation will reveal his face to the public soon,” Emma said. “He’ll be at the annual gala in a few months.”

“Really? I wonder what he looked like, do you think he was handsome?” Sera wondered, swirling her drink and attempting to distract herself from thoughts of Primo.

“I have no idea, but I’m sure he is, he is from a conglomerate, after all.”

“Now I’m curious about him; he was the CEO of a large corporation, but he managed to conceal his identity, which is really intriguing.” Sera hummed as she sipped her second drink, then looked at Emma and wondered if she could also rant about Primo, but decided against it because she needed a distraction. Instead, she asked another question. “Anyway, your birthday is approaching, what are your plans!”

“My plan? Haru and I talked about it the other day and he suggested that we do a simple beach party. You know his family has a villa in the province, right? He said I should bring my friends there and enjoy the rest of my weekend there. What do you think?” Emma asked and nodded.

“That sounds great!” Sera exclaimed, her face bright with delight. “Why not do that instead? After all, your birthday is in the summer, and his suggestion was ideal.”

“I know, right? But don’t you think it’s inappropriate? I mean, he’s my ex, and even though we’re friends now, using his villa to celebrate my birthday and invite my friends was too much of an imposition on him.” Emma protested.

“What do you mean? Haru suggested it, so it means he wants it to happen. Besides, you already knew he always made sure you’d be happy on your birthday since your family wasn’t in the country to celebrate with you.” Sera finished her second drink and ordered another, feeling the alcohol hit her bloodstream.

That’s the problem, if he keeps acting like this; how will I get rid of my feelings for him?” It’s nice to be friends with him,

16 Dec. G & D

also scary because I know he’ll find a new girlfriend sooner or later. If that happens, I can’t be friends with him anymore since it would be unfair for his new partner if he’s still in touch with his ex.” Emma explained, making Sera smile.

“Seriously, you guys are both stubborn you still love each other but won’t admit it; Why don’t you just get back together? It’s not like you broke up because of cheating or something unforgivable,” she said, taking her third drink and sipping it again as if it were water. It was nice to relax like this and talk with her best friend; she missed this kind of feeling. It’s definitely unwinding to share each other’s worries and problems over a drink.

“If Haru still loves me, he would have asked me to get back together by now, but it’s been almost a year,” Emma chuckled, clearly enjoying herself talking to Sera and glad she came here tonight as well.

“Why not take the initiative this time? I mean, you guys broke up because you weren’t on the same page. Haru wants to settle down and you aren’t ready yet. Why don’t you try talking with him to see if your feelings are still mutual!” Sera asked as she leaned forward to the counter.

“To be honest, I envy you two. You dated for six years, broke up and then became friends again. That’s very rare since most relationships end in a bad way and become a total stranger”

“I’m not sure what to do anymore; should I swallow my pride and do it? I’m still not ready to settle down,” Emma sighed, conflicted

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“It’s fine if you’re not ready, just talk it out with him again; don’t wait for him to find someone

else. Knowing him, he's probably waiting for you to be ready before asking you to get back together," Sera shrugged. She understands Haru and Emma's perspectives better than anyone else. They love each other, and she is a witness to their relationship. They had ups and downs, but they always overcame it, which is why they lasted six years. It was just unfortunate that they had broken up, she knew they'd get back together eventually. They kept talking and drinking until Emma passed out drunk. Sera was already dizzy and didn't realize her friend had already consumed too much alcohol. They were so engrossed in talking about their current lives, particularly their jobs and everything going else, that they lost control of themselves.

"Phone," she murmured to herself as she was rummaging through her bag and when she found her phone, she looked for Haru's number. Her vision was blurry, and her mind was jumbled, so when her phone rang, she answered it, thinking it was Haru.

"Hello, Haru? Where are you? Come here to the 1965 bar and take Emma home," she said, attempting to sound normal and coherent.

"I'm not Haru, but I'm on my way there," a familiar voice said, causing Sera to frown and remove the phone from her ear to check the screen. When she saw Primo's name, her eyes widened, and she cursed under her breath. She then hung up the phone in a panic and called Haru to ask him to come pick up his ex.

"I want to puke," Emma grumbled, telling Sera to help her as she stood up.

"Do you need help?" Mikhail inquired, noticing the two women struggling to stand straight.

"Oh, sorry. Can you help me take her to the restroom? She said she wants to puke," Sera said, holding Emma tightly.

"Sure, I'll take over from here," Mikhail said, carefully taking Emma into his arms. "Come on Emma,"

Sera followed them to the restroom and when they arrived, she thanked Mikhail before helping Emma inside. She gently

and patted her back, trying to comfort her friend who was puking in the toilet bowl. She then assisted her in cleaning up exiting the restroom while holding her waist for support.

"Sorry, Mikhail. Can you please give me a glass of water?" she asked as she approached the counter, her gaze drawn to the couch where Emma was resting.

"Sure," he nodded before fetching her the water and handing it to her.

"Thank you," Sera smiled, trying to keep her composure.

"Anytime, just call me if you need anything," he said before excusing himself to attend to another customer. She nodded and returned to Emma, handing her the water and looking at the door as it opened. When she noticed Haru looking around for them, she waved her hand.

pt 39

"You're here fast Sera said.

"I was at a nearby restaurant," he explained before taking a seat beside Emma on the couch.

"Why did she drink so much?"

Just ask her when she's already sober." She smiled, but it faded when she remembered that Primo would also come here to pick her up. It would be troublesome if they met, especially since Haru was unaware of her relationship with the director of their company. "Go and take her home, she needed to rest"

"Okay, but how about you?"

"I'm fine, I'll just rest for a while and then go home; I've already sobered up a little anyway."

“Are you sure?” Haru asked, gently lifting Emma off the couch.

“Yeah, just send me a message if Emma’s already home,” Sera said, as Haru nodded and exited the bar with her friend. She leaned against the couch, closed her eyes, and relaxed for a moment before noticing someone approaching her. She frowned lightly and opened her eyes to see Primo in front of her.

“Let’s go,” he said.

“Where?”

“What do you mean! I’ll take you home.” he said, reaching for her but stopping himself because he didn’t want to upset her any further.

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“No, let’s go to yours,” she said, standing up and looking at him. She felt bad for acting rudely towards him and also guilty for ignoring his messages, seeing as he was here and ready to pick her up when she hadn’t even told him to.

All right,”

Chapter 40

SERA RELAXED as she felt the warmth of the water on her skin. She leaned back in the tub and stared at the massive ceiling of Primo’s bathroom, trying to figure out how she’d talk to him after ignoring him for the majority of the day. Also, they haven’t been able to have a conversation since she fell asleep in the car. He showed nothing but kindness to her and that was making her more guilty.

“Sera,” Primo’s voice startled her out of thought as he knocked on the door. “May I come in? I bought you water to keep you hydrated.”

“Oh, yes. Thank you,” she said as she sat up a little because it was awkward if she kept lying in the tub as if it were hers. Sera couldn’t help but stare at him when he walked in. He had removed his suit and was only wearing the white shirt with the sleeve rolled up and the pants he wore to work. He was supposed to be resting after a long day, and yet he was here, taking care of her even though he wasn’t obligated to

“Did you have dinner before drinking?” he asked as he handed her the glass of water, making her stare at his snake tattoo. It wasn’t her first time seeing it, but it made her wonder if there was a deeper meaning to it.

“Yes, I had a light meal before going to the bar,” she replied, sipping her water. It was surprising how she didn’t feel awkward that he was inside while she was bathing, and it made her realize how at ease she was with his presence

“I see, that’s good.” He nodded, “Call me if you need anything, and I’ll leave the clothes-”

“Are you not going to join me!” she blurted out, which surprised Primo, Sera pursed her lips as she placed the empty glass on the side of the bathtub. “I didn’t mean anything by it; I just...

“It’s fine, you don’t have to explain,” he said as he patted her wet hair. He could tell she was feeling bad for ignoring his messages, and he’d be lying if he said he wasn’t enjoying watching her squirm a little. “I actually wanted to join you earlier, but I knew you were mad, so I dismissed the idea.”

“I’m not mad, and even if I felt guilty. I wouldn’t apologize for ignoring your messages,” Sera said, not looking away from Primo, who was still standing beside the tub and staring at her with fascination “Boundaries are boundaries; just because I let you overstep once doesn’t mean you can do it again.”

“I know, I’m sorry,” he said before sitting down on the corner and smiling at her.

“Now that we’re in private space, am I allowed to touch you?”

Sera nodded, and Primo reached for the spot on her cheek where Chelsea had slapped her. He caressed it gently, giving her butterflies, he was so affectionate that she had already decided to forgive him.

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“I was just really worried earlier, I wanted to soothe your cheek because it was swollen, I didn’t mean to overstep, please forgive me,” Primo said sincerely, prompting Sera to purse her lips and nod. He smiled and leaned in to kiss her on the cheek. It took her by surprise, but when he pulled away, she found herself smiling.

“Are you sure it’s okay for me to join you in the bath?” he asked.

“Of course, it was yours anyway.” she shrugged, and he stood up, slowly snapping his buttons open, and undid his trousers, allowing them to fall to the floor. Sera stared at him in awe until he was completely naked. She gulped and averted her gaze when she realized she had been staring for too long. Before she knew it, the water was splashing, indicating that he had already stepped into the tub.

“What’s wrong” Primo asked, drawing her attention to him. Despite their combined body size, the tub was large enough to be comfortable. He leaned back and rested his arms on the corners while she was in front of him, hugging her knee in front of her chest. Since he poured a bath bomb before she stepped in earlier, the water was a little cloudy.

“Nothing,” she said, shaking her head. “Are you on your way home when I accidentally called you!”

Yes, I just got in the car after the dinner meeting I had earlier,” he replied. “Anyway, where’s your friend? She wasn’t with you when I arrived at the bar.”

Sera looked at her home, and it was a relief that they didn’t run into each other because he wasn’t aware of our relationship,” she explained as she played with her hand in the water. When Primo took her hands, she flinched, forcing her to look at him.

She thought he must be really touch-deprived given how he always wanted to touch her. She didn’t say anything and stared at how carefully he held her hands as if they were delicate, especially the injured one from the burn.

Primo clenched his teeth; he wanted to get rid of the bitch who had hurt her, but he decided to postpone it because it would be suspicious if she left the company after what had happened. He had to be careful about taking care of the that

pests bothered Sera in private because she’d probably be wary of him if she found out what he was doing behind her back.

“Oh right,” Sera exclaimed, recalling what she and Emma had discussed earlier at the bar,

“Have you seen the CEO of VM corporation yet?”

Primo flinched at the sudden interest but tried not to show it. He shook his head while keeping one hand holding hers.

“No, I haven’t. Why?” he inquired, perplexed as to why she had developed an interest in him. He had kept his identity as the CEO of VM Corporation hidden from everyone. Only a few people and executives knew who he truly was since he never wanted to reveal it. Even at large gatherings where his presence was required, he never showed up.

“I heard from Emma that he’ll reveal his face soon,” she replied, her interest piqued. She wasn’t particularly interested in the CEO before, but since he was mentioned earlier, she couldn’t help but wonder who he was.

“Are you curious about the CEO!” he asked, gently pulling her and Sera instinctively changed position. She moved closer to him, her back against his chest, and shuddered as he began

kissing her shoulder.

"I wasn't before, but when Emma mentioned him marrying a senator's daughter and revealing his face, I couldn't help but be intrigued," Sera admitted, and a silence fell between them. She waited for him to say something, but Primo was so stunned that even the supposed marriage with Chloe had spread far enough to cause rumors. It made him want to kill anyone who was the source of information about their personal affairs.

"What's wrong? Did I say something I shouldn't?" Sera wondered, turning her head to notice the tense atmosphere around him. He didn't seem to be paying attention to her, and his thoughts were elsewhere. She pursed her lips and touched his jaw before kissing him, hoping to distract him from whatever he was thinking.

Primo blinked a few times, not quite understanding what had just happened until Sera kissed him again, this time on his lips, sending tingles up his spine. He kissed her back, but it didn't last because their position made it difficult for them to keep it going.

"What got you distracted?" she asked, unsure why she wanted his attention all to herself.

"Nothing, sorry," he said as he gave her a peck on the cheek. "Can you face me?"

"Why?"

"I want to keep going," he said, and she pursed her lips before switched positions again. She slowly turned to face him as he grabbed her waist and drew her closer until she was sitting on his lap. She swallowed hard when she felt his member between her legs, but her thoughts were diverted when he kissed her lips. She reciprocated and wrapped her arms around his neck as he deepened the kiss.

"Mmhn," she moaned as his hand moved to her breast and began teasing her nipple, which instantly hardened. He put his mouth on her breast, sucking and licking her erect nipple while her nails ran across his back. As they continued to make out in the tub, his erection brushed against her sensitive skin.

"Can we do it here?" he asked, and she nodded, allowing him to proceed. He smirked and kissed her lips.

"Stand up," he ordered, sending shivers down her spine. She stood up reluctantly, watching him with interest, wondering what he planned to do next. "Face the wall and bend over."