

Cyrus blinked, his eyes lingering on me before shifting toward the VIP entrance. His expression was unreadable, but something in his gaze unsettled me.

"Another round of the tangy dragon prawns," he ordered the waiter, wiping his hands with a napkin, his movements deliberate and controlled.

"There's no need." I raised a hand, stopping the waiter in his tracks as I reached for the glass of water beside me. The coolness of the glass steadied my nerves. "I'm not in the mood for prawns."

Cyrus's brows furrowed, a hint of frustration flickering in his eyes. "We can try something else. How about the fish?"

"No need," I repeated.

His brows knitted together as he studied me. "What about beef then? It's your favorite."

"No," I said, my voice firm, leaving no room for negotiation.

Cyrus froze for a moment, clearly taken aback by my tone. The tension between us thickened, almost palpable.

I broke eye contact, focusing on the napkin as I calmly wiped my mouth, forcing myself to remain composed.

I turned to Patrick, my voice steady despite the lingering effects of the alcohol. "Sorry, Patrick. I've got to hit the office early tomorrow to wrap up a project. My head editor would have my head if I showed up late."

I rose from my seat, my steps unsteady but manageable. "I'll be heading home now. Can't afford to be behind schedule."

Lilith's voice, laced with concern, cut through the conversation. "Andrea, is this because of me? Are you upset?" Her eyes were downcast, the guilt evident. "You can have the prawns on my plate if you'd like. Cyrus was just trying to help me with them. Please, don't be mad at him."

Her tone made it seem like I was the villain in this scenario. I raised an eyebrow, incredulous.

"Me? Upset? No, no, no! It's not like that." I waved her concern away with a dismissive gesture, trying to bite back sarcasm. I wasn't angry—I was simply

exhausted with all these. "I just really need to get some rest is all! I'll be heading out now. Enjoy the rest of your meal."

With a calm smile, I slid out of my chair and pushed it back under the desk.

Suddenly, a firm grip tightened around my wrist. Startled, I looked up to find Patrick's intense gaze fixed on me.

"You really need to chill, Andrea," he said, his scowl deepening. "Are you still mad at Cyrus? Is this about him attending the meeting with Lily yesterday?"

Patrick's directness and the underlying aggression in his tone took me by surprise. The last time he spoke to me, his demeanor had been much more measured.

"Patrick," Cyrus interjected sharply, his eyes narrowing at the confrontation.

Before Patrick could respond, Lilith's voice cut through the tension. "I'm so sorry, Andrea. I realize the mood turned sour because of me." She paused, her expression sincere. "I should've asked you to invite Cyrus instead of assuming. And Cyrus, you owe Andrea an apology as well."

Cyrus raised an eyebrow at Lilith's suggestion.

"Apologize?" He glanced between Lilith and me, confusion clouding his features.

I noticed Lilith leaning back in her seat, a smirk playing on her lips from an angle Cyrus couldn't see. She seemed oddly pleased with the turn of events.

Cyrus turned back to Lilith, his expression serious. "Yesterday was a crucial meeting. You needed my help to secure the bid, right? Your company is a valuable asset to Braveclaws. I came to assist, to smooth things over. What's—"

His words hit me like a punch to the gut. The anniversary he'd promised to be present for was forgotten, buried under business concerns.

"Yeah, you're right!" I cut him off, my voice edged with forced cheerfulness. I wrenched my wrist free from Patrick's grip and faced the room. "No need for apologies, Cyrus!" I forced a smile that didn't reach my eyes. "I really need to go and get ready for work tomorrow."

Without waiting for a response, I turned and walked out of the VIP room trying to remain as calm as possible. The moment the VIP room was closed, I heard a bit of their talk.

"Cyrus, she's clearly upset. You should apologize,"

Lilith's voice was firm, cutting through the tension.

"But she said herself that no apology was needed!"

Patrick's interruption was sharp, his frustration evident.

"Patrick—"

"What?"

"Enough, both of you," Cyrus cut in decisively. "She just needs more time to calm down."

I gritted my teeth, the words stinging more than I cared to admit. Ignoring the heated exchange behind me, I stormed out of the restaurant. I flagged down a taxi, my heart pounding with a mix of anger and hurt.

As the car sped towards my apartment, my mind raced.

Ridiculous.

How could Cyrus dismiss my feelings so easily?

Why did they treat me like I was the villainess here?

The frustration was suffocating.

I was beyond frustrated. I felt the air alone was choking me.

Had I really become that person? Constantly angry at Cyrus for spending time with Lilith? Was that why he could speak so dismissively? So confidently?

Commented [Ma1]:

But my pain is real too! The way Cyrus seemed to prioritize Lilith over everything else was clearly happening, day to day! I had seen him drop everything to be by her side, leaving me feeling neglected and unimportant.

As I struggled to contain my emotions, tears slipped down my cheeks. I tried to stifle my sobs, but the pain was simply too raw, too real.

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Cyrus: [Are you home yet?]

I closed my phone the moment I saw his message flash on the notification bubble.

With a frustrated sigh, I set my phone aside on the study desk I had just cleaned. Few hours ago, my old apartment room felt cold and unwelcoming due to the dust that had accumulated during two years.

I let out another sigh of relief as I looked around at the much cleaner environment.

"Finally," I muttered to myself, tossing the dirty rug into a corner just outside the bedroom. I washed my hands, scrubbing away the day's grime, before collapsing onto the now pristine bed.

As if on cue, my phone vibrated insistently.

Cyrus: [The dinner tonight didn't end well because of how you acted. Let's make it up to them soon. We will invite them to another dinner.]

I closed the messaging app, leaving Cyrus's message marked as [read] and stared at the ceiling.

Just as I was about to surrender to the comfort of sleep, my phone rang again, vibrating steadily. I glanced at the caller ID: [Cyrus].

"Sure, Cyrus. Sure." I let his caller ID popping on the top part my phone's screen.

I then open up my InstaPic and the first post I saw belonged to @Lilith.Dicelore.

It was a picture of them at the backseat of Cyrus' LuxVan. Cyrus was looking somewhere distant, holding onto a phone, while Lilith was leaning onto his shoulder with a wide smile.

The caption under that picture read: [Thank you Mr. Alpha Prince for always making me your number one :)]

At the very bottom of the post section was the time the post was uploaded [120 seconds ago] and the note [closefriends only post].

I scoffed at the sight. So, Lilith had finally decided to be direct about her intentions?

to be direct about her intentions.

Fine. Go ahead and take Cyrus away. It no longer mattered to me!

I let out a mocking smile and tapped out a comment on the post, my fingers moving with deliberate detachment.

[Congratulations on being number 1!]

I hit send and decided to call it a night.