

## Chapter 70

### Taking Shortcuts

“Zachariah misses you, so instead of going home, he insisted on coming to see you,” Matthew explained.

Stella’s house wasn’t that spacious to begin with, so it was crowded with so many people present at the same time. Meanwhile, there was only a pair of slippers at the foyer. Stella meant to hide it so that nobody could wear it, but Miles entered before she could to put on the slippers as if he were the master of the household. Hence, Stella could only glare at him in discontent, and Matthew could only wear his leather shoes inside the house.

After she poured some tea for both Miles and Matthew, she entered the kitchen to start cooking. Later, Miles came in to lend her a hand. He had taken his jacket off, so he only had his gray shirt on that showed off his tall stature and good looks. However, she couldn’t help but think that his appearance was a mismatch with the simple kitchen in her house. He seemed to fit in better with the top-tier kitchen in his mansion.

Instead of commenting on it, she began cutting the veggies. Having brought her own lunch to work everyday, she had already gotten used to cooking, so it no longer intimidated her. On the contrary, the only time she ever saw Miles cook was during New Year. She already had an impression that he was a good cook back then.

Indeed, judging from his performance now, he wasn’t merely a good cook, but a great cook instead. Although Stella was the one in charge in the beginning, Miles quickly took over her position due to his culinary skills, so Stella ended up being his assistant.

“Put on the apron for me!” Miles ordered while flipping the ingredients in the skillet. Even though Stella was annoyed by his attitude, she decided she should complain less since she was indeed the less capable one, just like when she was at work. Therefore, she stood behind him to help tie the apron on him. When he was flipping the food, his arm pressed on her supple bosom seemingly by accident. Despite being startled by it, Stella didn’t make a fuss out of it.

There were five dishes and a huge serving of soup for dinner, which made for an enjoyable meal. When they were dining, Zachariah’s cheerfulness livened up the mood, or at least it was so until he blurted out in all seriousness, “I’m not going home tonight. I want to sleep here with Stella.”

On the other hand, Stella was startled by the proposition. While she wasn’t averse to the idea, she never shared a bed with a boy Zachariah’s age, nor did she ever sleep with any other man but Miles. She was worried that Matthew might deem her as being difficult if she revealed her reasons, so she decided to keep it to herself while thinking that she should just take it as an opportunity to practice taking care of children.

However, Miles spoke before she could say anything. “But I will be sleeping with Stella tonight, so are you still going to stay?”

It was at that moment Stella noticed that Matthew’s hand paused for a second as if shocked by the revelation. Did he not know that Miles and I had— As soon as she thought of that, her face gradually turned a shade of red.

Meanwhile, Zachariah wasn't sure how he should reply to that, as he didn't understand why Miles would want to sleep with Stella. Tilting his head, he asked Matthew, "Dad, what is Miles' relationship with Stella? Why do they want to sleep together?"

Although the question might sound quite inappropriate, Zachariah didn't actually have any other intentions. Nonetheless, Matthew was silenced by the question. Therefore, Zachariah turned to Stella. "Are you really going to sleep with Miles tonight?"

"Maybe." Stella's reply was vague at best.

"Well, I still want to sleep with you tonight!" Seemingly having mustered up all of his courage, Zachariah finally came to that decision.

Actually, Stella had a feeling that Miles wasn't telling what he said earlier to Zachariah, but his father, Matthew. All this while, she never noticed anything out of the ordinary in Matthew's treatment of her, and it was Miles who informed her of Matthew's possible crush on her. Before this, she used to think that Miles was overthinking things, but now, she couldn't help but think that he might be right when she saw how Matthew's hand paused.

After that, Matthew left Zachariah with them instead of dragging the boy home with him. At night, Stella and Miles lay on both sides of the boy; Stella was lying next to the wall, whereas Miles was on the outer edge, and Zachariah was in between them.

Buzzing with excitement, Zachariah was talking nonstop while Stella listened on in silence. On the other hand, Miles crossed his hands behind his head with his eyes closed. His patience was already wearing thin due to all the chatter. If Zachariah were to stay awake for any longer, he might beat the crap out of him.

Fortunately, the boy eventually fell asleep. Stella was also feeling groggy, but just before she dozed off, Miles moved closer to her from where he lay to whisper into her ear, "Are you feeling sleepy?"

"Yeah."

"Why don't we engage in some activities to wake you up?" Miles nibbled on her ear.

"Zachariah is with us."

"Children sleep soundly, so he won't hear a thing." With that, he was already moving his hands across her body. Due to his waning patience, the foreplay was much shorter than it usually was. When he entered her a little too eagerly and with such vigor that he might actually reach her lungs, she was overcome with pleasure. As Zachariah was sleeping with them, Stella tried her best to keep quiet, so all her moans and yelps ended up never coming out of her mouth.

On the next day, Matthew came to fetch Zachariah early in the morning. He also asked if Zachariah had a good night's sleep, to which he denied. Stella's heart skipped a beat when she heard his response. After all, it was Zachariah's first sleepover at her house, so it reflected poorly on her as the host. Therefore, she crouched down while asking Zachariah, "Why is it that you didn't sleep well?"

“I think I could hear a cat purring some distance away last night. It might have been a stray, as it spent half the night making sounds. Anyway, I didn’t sleep well because of that.” Zachariah was absolutely ignorant of what had actually happened.

Meanwhile, Miles cleared his throat behind Stella. All the grown ups knew what it was that Zachariah actually heard, so Stella regretted asking that question. She had done nothing but humiliate herself, so she stood up in a hurry without prying any further.

After she got into Miles’ car, the first thing he did was calling her, “Pussy Cat.”

Stella was so embarrassed. Why is he always coming up with nicknames for me? First, it was Little Tiger. Then, it’s Pussy Cat.

When they arrived at the company, Miles deliberately made a round. It was time to go to work, and he was driving slowly with the windows down, so Stella’s colleagues saw them both when they passed them by.

She heard one of them saying, “Look! They came to work together.” The woman and her friend smiled knowingly at each other. Stella knew they were thinking that she must have slept with Miles last night since they came to work together in the morning. Even though she had no intention to argue with them, for it was true that they slept together last night, she didn’t plan on flaunting it.

Upon entering the office, her colleagues treated her more courteously since she was now of a different status. When she was working on a blueprint, her phone rang with a text message from Miles. ‘There is an open call for landscape artists for a government project. Are you interested?’

Without a doubt, Stella was interested in joining. It didn’t matter if she worked in retail or as a landscape designer, for she just wanted to be successful. Now that she was longer a housewife, she wanted to establish a career for herself. ‘Of course!’ she replied immediately.

After some thought, she realized that Kevin had yet to know about the project, nor were her colleagues at the design department talking about it. Hence, Miles probably came to her before even announcing it, so she wondered if it counted as cheating. Since everyone in the company already knew of her relationship with Miles, she didn’t want them to think that he was being partial to her. Therefore, she added, ‘Won’t there be people coming after my \*ss if they knew I was given priority?’

‘I’ll be the only one after your \*ss.’

Startled, Stella suddenly recalled what they did last night before she realized what he meant, which caused her to blush. Before this, she used to think he was a stoic person, but now, she came to realize he was in fact quite an \*sshole.

A moment later, he sent another text. ‘I’ve already registered you on the team.’

The design department didn’t get the news until two days later. Kevin asked in their chat group if anybody would like to join the government project. Since it was such an important project, succeeding in it would mean building up one’s fame, and while failing at it didn’t mean it would be the end of the world, it definitely would ruin one’s reputation within the industry.

Kevin informed that there were two spots available, so he would choose the candidates according to their performance. Then, someone asked why there were only two spots available when it was stated on the document that three top designers were needed, and if Kevin already joined the project. However, he merely replied, 'I'm not interested in joining a government project.' He didn't say anything else, nor did he explain the reason behind it.

Therefore, everybody knew that the third spot had to be reserved for Stella by Miles. With his aid, Stella would have nothing to lose even if she failed at it. Therefore, her name ended up on the list alongside two other top designers. Neither her portfolio nor her work experience were on par with the two other designers, so everybody knew what was going on.

Now that things had come to this, Stella asked Miles, "Aren't you worried that I might fail at it?"

Miles merely replied nonchalantly, "It's fine even if you fail. What could happen anyway? All I want to do is to expose you to more opportunities."

After some time, she got a message from Matthew that informed her of a friend of his that worked in that department as a secretary. Therefore, she could have his friend help her out if she needed any materials or feedback, which would make things easier for her. He then sent Stella his friend's contact details.

Of course, Stella was grateful for his help, but when she thought of telling Miles about it, she was reminded of Matthew's feelings for her. Hence, in the end, she decided to keep it to herself to avoid further complications.

Matthew's friend was a woman named Jane North, who was the one who greeted Stella and the other two designers when they arrived at the site. Compared to the other designers who were also working on the government project, they were given much better treatment. Therefore, one of the designers asked, "Stella, is this because of Mr. Grant's help?"

"N-No." Stella denied that statement in embarrassment, but she didn't reveal who was behind it either. Jane was around twenty eight years old, and she majored in language studies. She was a beautiful, well-mannered and polished woman who treated Stella nicely.

After that, Stella began spending all her time working on the government project. Because of Jane's help, she was able to take a few shortcuts that cut down the time needed to reach her goals. In a little more than ten days, she was about to finish the blueprints. However, Miles still managed to catch wind of Matthew's involvement in the matter, perhaps through gossip.