

He Craved My Love When I stopped Serving Him

Chapter 03

Ever since Preston and I started dating, I'd been making him a birthday cake every single year—always manually.

When I glanced at the screen of his phone, I knew right then who it was for again.

I'd seen that little cartoon avatar on his phone—it was Penelope's profile picture.

I didn't say a thing, making the living room feel unnervingly quiet.

But Preston was completely unaware of how unreasonable his request had been. He looked at me, waiting for a yes.

Eventually, I just nodded, keeping my expression neutral. "Send me the picture," I said, standing up. "I'll head out now to buy the ingredients."

I thought back to that dinner seven years ago. If Preston hadn't been there... I wouldn't have made it out of my first job unscathed.

I glanced at him one last time, thinking, 'Once I finish this cake, I'll finally be done with him.'

I headed for the door, feeling the heaviness in my steps.

Before I could reach the doorway, Preston's voice, surprised, cut through the silence behind me.

"Olivia..." he started, his voice unsure.

I didn't bother turning around. "Anything else?" I asked, my tone flat.

There was a pause before he spoke again. "...I'll Venmo you for the ingredients."

I continued on my tracks without a word.

When I stepped into the elevator, I pulled out my phone. Opening up our chat history, I stared at the numbers.

5,363—that's how many messages I sent him.

He'd replied to only 25.

It was draining to care, so I could only smirk.

Upstairs, in the living room, Preston's phone would buzz with the notification of the \$100 transfer being rejected. I could imagine his hand clenched around the phone as he read the alert.

Later that night, around 8 p.m., my phone rang. Preston's name flashed on the screen.

"Hey, where are you?" he asked, sounding almost... concerned.

I was sitting in a booth at a diner near my place, picking at my food. "What's up?" I asked, sidestepping his question.

"Nothing much," Preston replied, his voice softer now. "I just wanted to say... the cake you made was delicious. As always."

There was a brief silence on the line, then he added in a lower voice, "Thanks. I know it was a lot of effort."

Before I could respond, I heard Penelope's sugary voice in the background.

"Olivia!" she called out, her tone light and overly sweet. "I heard from Preston that you made my birthday cake today. Wow, you're so talented! I wish I could do that..., but I'm so clumsy, Preston's always calling me his little dummy."

I could picture her pouting as she spoke.

Before I could even process her words, she invited me to the party.

But I didn't get a chance to respond before Preston's voice returned to the line. "Well, you don't need to come," he said, a bit firmer this time, before hanging up.

But just a few minutes later, my phone buzzed again. It was a message from him, with his location pinned and a note attached: [If you do stop by, grab a bag of tomato-flavored chips for Penelope from the convenience store.]

I sighed and couldn't help but let out a sarcastic faint smile.

When I pushed the door open to the private room, I spotted Preston immediately. He was feeding Penelope a slice of cake, her eyes wide and doe-like as she looked up at him

The moment he saw me, his expression shifted into one of irritation. His gaze darkened, and I knew what he was thinking.

Why did I show up?

I knew already that Penelope had been the one to send the message, not him.

But I'd come anyway.

"Olivia!" Penelope greeted me with a wide smile, her voice as sugary as ever.

Preston's eyes narrowed at me, and I could feel the tension rise in the room.

"Didn't I tell you not to come?" Preston snapped, his irritation breaking through.

I opened my mouth to respond, but Penelope quickly jumped in, pouting dramatically. "I'm sorry, Preston. I just wanted some chips, so I tricked her into coming," she said, her voice dripping with superficial innocence.

Preston's hard expression softened as he reached out, ruffling Penelope's hair affectionately. "You little munchkin," he muttered with a fond smile.

Watching him, I knew this was my moment. I reached into my bag and pulled out my resignation letter.

"Preston," I said, stepping forward, "one of my colleagues has a family emergency and needs to leave. I'll need you to approve this."

Technically, HR should've handled it. But since it was me, manager had sent the letter back to me directly.

The lighting in the room was dim, casting shadows across Preston's face. He didn't even glance at the letter as he scribbled his signature, his attention focused entirely on the birthday celebrant.

Just as I was about to take the letter back, Preston's hand shot out, grabbing mine. His expression shifted, his brow furrowing as he stared at my hand.

"You... You came here just for this?" he asked, his tone low and unreadable.

I nodded.

His face darkened again, and for a second, I thought he was going to say something. But then he flinched, pulling his hand back like he'd been burned.

I realized his fingers had brushed the burn marks on my palm, the ones from making the cake.

He must've been disgusted.

From the corner of my eye, I saw Penelope's eyes light up with sudden interest. "Oh! Olivia! That red bracelet you're wearing... It looks quite familiar," she said, leaning in. Her smile widened. "I just remembered, a few days ago, I saw something just like that in

Preston's trash can." I watched Preston subtly move his hand to cover his wrist, but I pretended not to notice. Keeping my voice calm, I replied, "These bracelets are pretty common. If you like it, I can give this one to you."

Penelope didn't respond.

When I walked out of the room, I headed straight for the nearest trash can and threw away the bracelet. I'd worn it for the past seven years, but it no longer meant anything. Just trash.

I turned to the elevator, and while waiting, my phone buzzed. It was Mom calling. "Did you buy your ticket home yet?" she asked.

"Not yet," I replied, my voice steady. "I'll book it in a few days." Before I could hang up, I heard Preston's voice behind me. "You're booking a ticket?" he asked, his voice sounding confused.

I quickly ended the call, turning around with a blank expression.

Yeah, there's a restaurant nearby that's super popular," I lied smoothly. "You have to reserve it days in advance if you want to try the menu."

Preston didn't press the matter any further. He just pulled me along to a nearby hotel and booked us a suite

He quickly got to work on his laptop, handling some urgent business. There was a wordless understanding between us as we worked side by side until the early morning, waiting for a client overseas to respond.

Eventually, I couldn't fight off the exhaustion any longer and fell asleep.

The next morning, I woke up in bed, surprised to find myself tucked in.

Preston sat beside me, casually leaning against the headboard, flipping through the financial section of the newspaper. He glanced at me as I stirred.

"Breakfast's on its way," he said, already picking up his phone to call room service.

Halfway through breakfast, Preston suddenly asked, "Why'd you change your phone password?"

I didn't even look up from my plate. "Felt like changing it," I replied casually.

The truth was, the old password was a combination of our birthdays. Since I was planning to leave, it didn't make sense to keep it.

I heard him set down his knife and fork, his tone shifting. “You were always asking me to go to the movies with you, weren’t you? There’s a theater nearby.”

I knew there wasn’t an option to say no, not with the CEO skipping work. So, I just nodded.

Sitting in the quiet, almost empty theater, the image I’d once dreamed of played out before me—the two of us, snuggled close, sharing -popcorn while watching a rom-com.

It was a scene that had once felt so romantic to me.

But when it was already happening for real, though, I was struggling to stay awake, yawning every few minutes.

Preston must’ve noticed. “This is the movie you picked,” he said. “You don’t like it?”

“It’s fine. It’s good,” I said, not even bothering to fake enthusiasm.

He pressed his lips into a thin line, clearly not convinced. Just as he was about to say something, his phone buzzed.

Without a word to me, he stood up and walked out of the theater.

The movie ended, and Preston still hadn’t returned.

Annoyed, I was about to call him when I heard a familiar, sickly sweet voice from a distance.

“Oh, Preston! You’re so amazing!” Penelope squealed.

I turned and saw her practically bouncing up and down, clutching a massive stuffed toy as she leaped into Preston’s arms, planting a kiss on his cheek. He held her by the legs, laughing softly, but the moment his eyes landed on me, his smile vanished.

“Olivia! I didn’t know you were here too,” Penelope exclaimed, wide-eyed and pretending to be innocent. A few seconds later, she gasped dramatically, covering her mouth. “Oh no! Don’t get the wrong idea! I just got a little excited, that’s all...”

Preston lightly tapped her on the nose, his tone playful. “What are you apologizing for?” he said, then turned to me, acting as if nothing was wrong. “The movie’s already over?”

Before I could respond, the shrill sound of a fire alarm rang through the mall.

In an instant, panic spread as people rushed toward the exits.

In the chaos, Preston immediately grabbed Penelope's hand, shielding her as they ran toward the emergency exit.

Five minutes later, the alarm was cleared—it had been a false alarm.

Preston returned to where we had been standing, looking around. His eyes scanned the area, but I was nowhere in sight.

Two hours later, I was at the train station, my suitcase in hand, waiting for my departure.

My phone kept buzzing nonstop. Preston's name flashed on the screen again and again, but I didn't bother answering. Instead, I set my phone to silent.

Right before boarding the train, I sent him one final message: [We're done.]

As soon as it was sent, I pulled out my SIM card and tossed it in the nearest trash can.

It was nearly midnight when I arrived at the station in my hometown. As I stepped off the train, I saw Dad waiting for me. He smiled the moment he saw me and led me to the car.

Sitting in the passenger seat, I noticed a large bag of my favorite snacks and yogurt waiting for me.

Before starting the car, Dad chuckled softly, grabbing one of the yogurts and poking a straw through the lid, handing it to me. "Here, drink this," he said warmly.

As I took it from him, I noticed the gray hairs at his temples, and something inside me broke.

Without warning, I burst into tears, sobbing uncontrollably.

"Dad, I'm home for good this time," I choked out between sobs. "I'm never leaving again. I'm going to stay here with you and Mom. Forever."

Dad chuckled again, this time a little more tenderly. "You silly girl. Whether you stay or not, you'll always be our precious Olive."

He could tell I wasn't in the best place, but he didn't ask me to explain. He just drove, respecting my silence.

When we got home, I showered and ate a simple dinner my parents had prepared.

By 10 p.m., I was lying in bed, staring at my phone. I opened my music app, hoping to find something relaxing to help me sleep. That's when I noticed several unread private messages.

They were from Ava, one of my closest colleagues. She seemed shocked by my sudden resignation. Her message was full of concern, asking if everything was okay and if there was anything she could do to help.

Just as I was trying to figure out how to reply, another message from her came in—a video file this time.

It came with a note.

[Olivia, this video's blowing up in the company group chat. It's about Penelope and Preston.]