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"Vivian!" At the appointed restaurant, Hunter spotted Vivian at a glance, who was seated by the window. He hurried over in excitement and sat across from her.

"It's so rare that you ask me out for lunch. You miss me after so long, don't you. I'm not such a bad guy, am I?" Hunter joked, but Vivian was not in the mood.

"Hunter, the reason why I called you here today was to ask for your help." She decided not to beat around the bush.

"Okay, I'll do it," Hunter said with a smile.

Vivian furrowed her brows. "Hunter, I'm not joking with you. I really need your help on something."

"I'm not joking either," Hunter grinned. "I'm willing to help you out no matter what you ask."

Vivian was taken aback. She wasn't sure if he meant it or he was flirting with her. After a moment's pause, she said, "Is this how you flirt with girls?"

Hunter's smile froze. Does she really think that little of me?

Yes, he flirted with girls often, but he never made promises like that. He had no way of knowing that he would do anything unconditionally for a woman. Plus, the women he'd met were all big talkers.

Vivian was different, he knew. She was different from the rest.

This feeling was hard to describe. He just knew that he was willing to go above and beyond for her, but she didn't believe him. Is this really karma? Hunter recalled the way she jeered at him in the past.

He pulled himself out of his reverie with a bitter laugh. "Vivian, I meant what I said. I've never made empty promises just to get a girl. I am willing to help you with anything you need."

His seriousness startled Vivian. What did he mean by that?

Hunter was dimly aware that he might have frightened Vivian when she did not reply. He reminded himself to slow down. If he scared her off, what good will that do?

“Vivian, what I meant was that we are friends, aren’t we? You promised me that the last time, remember?” Hunter had no choice but to leverage this again. “Since we are friends, shouldn’t we help each other?”

Vivian sighed with relief at Hunter’s words. So that’s what he meant. Her heart raced for a moment as she thought he was leading to a romantic proposition.

Hunter felt terrible when Vivian looked visibly relieved, but he couldn’t show it. “So you’ll tell me? What do you need help for?”

“I need to tell you something first,” Vivian studied Hunter dubiously. “If you would help me, there’s a chance that it would offend Mark Norton. Would you still be willing to?”

“I would.” Hunter nodded seriously, suddenly worried. It’s probably not going to be a small favor. “What is it?”

Vivian’s heart was flooded with gratitude when she saw that Hunter agreed to it without hesitation. She also felt guilty to have doubted her decision to trust him.

She took out her phone and showed Hunter the information that Sarah had sent her. “I need your help to look for evidence pertaining to this.”

“Okay,” Hunter replied without looking up. He studied the information he was shown in silence.

Vivian was prepared for the fact that Hunter might attempt to decline but was surprised to find that he did not put up a shred of resistance. Vivian felt worse. Her trust for Hunter deepened.

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It’s been ten days since Hunter’s promise to Vivian, but he had not been in touch. Vivian felt that it was appropriate to call and rush for her favor to be done. She stewed in her own panic in the meantime.

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Hunter finally called and informed Vivian that he found hard evidence on the issue with Mark.

"Really?" Vivian shouted excitedly. There is finally some evidence to punish this scumbag!

"Yes," replied Hunter. And the evidence is more than sufficient. Enough to put him away for a few years, if you so wish." He was pleased with the effect his news had on Vivian and felt infected by her joy.

"Thank you, Hunter," Vivian said gratefully. "Where are you now? I'll drive to you."

"Let me come to you instead," Hunter replied. "I don't feel good about you driving alone. Let's meet at Hatcher's Tea House next to your magazine company. I'll give you a call when I arrive."

"Alright, see you in a bit," Vivian said and hung up. She rushed over to Hatcher's.

When Hunter arrived, Vivian was already seated and awaited him.

He couldn't help but notice how warm and lovely a sight it was from the way the steam from her piping hot tea framed her face. He felt serene and at peace while he stared at her, who ironically wore a panicked expression.

The tiredness from the exertion he had displaced in this endeavor instantly vanished at the sight of Vivian. My news would calm her and make her smile. With that thought in mind, Hunter had a difficult time hiding his own elation.

Hunter strode towards Vivian with broad steps and sat down across from her. As he handed her a thick folder, he said, "It's all in here. Take a look."

She accepted it with gratitude in her eyes and hastily extracted the documents within.

The longer she examined them, the more worked up she became. With these, Mark would be at her mercy.

"Hunter, I can't thank you enough," Vivian said as she stuffed them back into the folder. "Tell me, how can I repay you for this?" She looked up to him joyously.

"Anything I want?" Hunter joked, unaware that he had alerted the alarm bells in Vivian's head from the way he responded.

"Anything within reason, I will try to get it done for you."

Hunter had a lump in his throat at that. "Reason", "try". She seemed to have a lot of restrictions toward what she was willing to do for him.

However, he recollected Vivian's attitude to him in the past and couldn't help feeling hopeful. This is much better, isn't it? You can't rush into this. One step at a time.

"Why are you so serious? I was joking." Hunter laughed. "We are friends, and we should help each other. There's no need for such formality as repaying me."

Vivian's suspicion relaxed. "All the same, I want you to know that I am very thankful to you. If you ever need anything in the future, do not hesitate to ask me for help."

"Will do. I won't hold back when the time comes," Hunter said with a smile. "Oh, by the way, why are you gathering evidence against Mark?"

He gathered from these past few days that Mark was Finnick's older brother. But he did not hear of any conflict between Mark and Vivian. Unless she was sabotaging Finnick through his brother?

This was not her style, from what he knew of her. He was unable to draw any reasonable conclusion from inferring himself, so he decided to just ask her.

It was no small favor that Hunter did Vivian. She felt like he at least deserved the truth.

"He had intentions to harm Larry before," Vivian said with distaste. "Not to mention he helped Evelyn kidnap me. This is a slight that cannot go unpunished." She clenched her fist as she spoke.

"You've never asked me whose child Larry was," Vivian said after a thought. "Aren't you curious?"

She had not forgotten about the time on the cruise ship when she asked for Hunter's help to lie to Finnick about Larry. He didn't seem very interested back then and did not ask too many questions. Perhaps he had already guessed?

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"Why do I need to? Isn't it obvious? You've only been married once." Hunter shrugged.

Vivian smiled to herself. Maybe she really was overthinking.

"Will you keep this secret for me? I don't want Finnick to know about Larry's existence," Vivian pleaded. Larry was her whole world. She could not allow Finnick to take him from her!

"Of course I will. I've already promised you once before on the ship, don't you remember?" Hunter said plainly. "Don't worry," he added when he saw the pain in her eyes. "I always keep my promises. I wouldn't forget, even if you do someday."

He seemed to hint at something as he said that. Vivian's alarm bells rang faintly again, as she sensed that he was about to reveal something.

"Thank you," she said, not daring to meet his eyes.

"Don't be so formal with me," Hunter replied somewhat affectionately.

His impression of Vivian changed completely after this encounter. She was stronger and more fearless than he could ever imagine.

Mark was a difficult individual to topple. Even with the might of Morrison Group on Vivian's side, it was no easy feat. But Vivian did not give up. She was still tirelessly searching for leads against Mark.

Her independence and strength only served to attract him even more. What should he do? Hunter didn't think he could tear his eyes off her.

Vivian sensed Hunter's incessant gaze on her and felt deeply uncomfortable. Why isn't he talking and why is he staring at me like that? This feels like an inappropriate way to look at a friend.

Unable to bear the borderline romantic tension between them, Vivian attempted to break the silence.

"You..." she started, but was interrupted by Hunter's phone.

Hunter shot Vivian an apologetic glance and took the call. To his surprise and amusement, he saw that it was Evelyn who was calling him.

He answered the call without hesitation in front of Vivian. "Yes, what is it? I'm with Vivian now... would you like to join us?"

"Alright then, I'll send you the address. See you in a bit." Hunter ended the call and looked up at her.

Hunter sent Evelyn a text and turned back to Vivian. "It was Evelyn," he explained. "She wants to meet me."

Vivian's heart skipped a beat upon learning that. "Hunter, you haven't told her that I had already learned about her scheme, have you?" she asked tentatively.

"No Vivian, I did not. And do not plan to," Hunter grumbled wearily. When would she learn to trust me unreservedly? "I've promised you once before, and now I'm on your side. Of course, I wouldn't tell her something like this."

On her side? Hunter's words troubled her. Since when did he become her ally? And where did this grumbling come from?

Since the day she had promised to be friends with him, his attitude towards her had been very strange.

Hunter used to try to butter her up, but she had been aware of his motives and consequently kept her distance as a spectator rather than as a participant. But now it seemed like Hunter really cared about her; she could feel it. It was a tangible concern and not at all like how he used to be.

But why? Was it as simple as he said? That they were just friends?

"Vivian, what's wrong? What's on your mind?" Hunter waved a hand in front of her face, confused by her sudden reverie.

"Oh, nothing," Vivian said as she regained control of herself. "Thank you again for keeping my secret safe."

"Vivian, how many times do you want to thank me today?" Hunter reiterated. "We don't have to be this formal with one another." When will she start to understand that he is not a stranger to her?

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"I know," Vivian said as she took a sip of tea. "By the way, when is Evelyn coming?"

"Not long now. She said she's on her way over," Hunter said. He swirled his cup of tea and watched as the leaves ebbed and flowed as if they were mirroring his feelings.

Vivian asked him about the specifics of the process of gathering evidence against Mark. She looked very serious, and Hunter left no detail out as he retold his efforts.

"It shouldn't have been possible to collect all of these in such a short amount of time, and with such little ease too. There's a phrase for this." Hunter frowned. "Ah yes! Divine intervention. That was what happened."

"Coincidentally, Mark had fired an assistant recently for airing his dirty laundry." Hunter shot Vivian a glance; he felt like she didn't need to hear the unsavory details.

Vivian guessed where he was heading from his expression. She furrowed her brows and nodded to encourage him.

"This assistant of his was dealing with the development of his hotel project. I don't think he was too happy for getting fired over a reason like that."

"When I found the assistant and offered him some incentives, he divulged a list of employees to me. It was a breeze to gather the evidence after that by going through the list."

He lifted his cup and took a sip of satisfaction while he watched Vivian's expression as if he was a child expecting praise.

However, Vivian was not looking at him. She looked down and laughed to herself. He got what he deserved! What should she do next to ensure that Mark gets the punishment he deserves?

Hunter did not obtain the reaction he expected, but he was contented to stare at Vivian without her raising objections as usual.

Before he just had to look at her to make her uncomfortable and she would look for excuses to leave his company. This time, she was so deep in thought that she did not notice him staring at her all this time.

Hunter was savoring his moment to stare at her as much as he desired. Come to think of it, he has not taken a good look at her before. Her eyes were huge, her nose was so sharp, her lips so...

Hunter unconsciously swallowed and realized in a panic that his mouth was bone dry. He hurriedly poured himself a cup full of water and gulped it down. He also reminded himself not to stare at where he was not supposed to. He wasn't going to shoot himself in the foot now with all the progress he'd made with her.

This whole debacle went unnoticed by Vivian. Still deep in thought, it allowed for Hunter to resume his indulgence of studying her face.

She has such long lashes! She looks so pretty when she frowns...

Evelyn arrived not long after.

Upon entering Hatcher's, she caught sight of Vivian, head bowed and deep in thought, while Hunter had his chin resting in his hand, with a big smile as he sat and watched her. They looked just like a couple in the budding stages of romance.

That sight pleased Evelyn a great deal. Looks like her plan is moving along nicely.

She looked at Vivian scornfully. What an inexperienced woman to be so easily seduced by Hunter. But Evelyn had no complaints; all of this only helped her plan.

When Hunter cruelly dumps you, let's see how pleased you would look, Evelyn scoffed internally. You took the title of Ms. Morrison from me, but I will make sure that you know that I am superior, now and always.

Evelyn rearranged the malice and jealousy on her face into a big smile, then approached Vivian and Hunter's table.

"Vivian, Hunter, my apologies. I hope I'm not interrupting."

"Don't be ridiculous," Hunter said with a smile. He averted his eyes away from Vivian the instant he caught sight of her, but couldn't help feeling a flash of frustration.

He stood up to help Evelyn with her wheelchair and said, "What can I help you with today?"

"What? Did you forget all about your little matchmaker? Can't I meet you without a motive?" Evelyn laughed as she allowed her gaze to drift between Vivian and Hunter.

Hunter chuckled dryly but did not offer a response.

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Evelyn shot a dissatisfied gaze at Hunter and turned to Vivian. "Vivian, what were you guys talking about? Let me know if Hunter tries to take advantage of you. I will teach him a lesson he won't forget."

She reached out and tried to hold Vivian's wrist, but the latter averted Evelyn's gesture, so subtly that it appeared unintentional.

Vivian had not spoken since Evelyn's arrival, not even to greet her. She was occupied by the incident with Mark and was in no mood for false social niceties with Evelyn.

"There wasn't much going on, we're just having tea together," Vivian replied grudgingly. "I suddenly recall that I have some urgent matter to tend to. Enjoy your day, you guys."

Vivian addressed both of them but directed her farewell towards Hunter. She grabbed her purse and promptly left.

Evelyn clenched her teeth as she watched Vivian's departing silhouette. Who does she think she is to ignore me like that? Is this her way of throwing her tantrum? She must think of herself as some hotshot, doesn't she?

An urgent matter? It's awfully convenient to have an urgent matter just as I arrived. Does Vivian think I'm a fool for coming up with such a pathetic excuse?

Evelyn did not bother to conceal her anger anymore. "How did it go?" she snapped at Hunter. "Any progress with her yet? It's been a long time!"

It was a rare opportunity that Hunter had: to be in Vivian's company for such a long time. Evelyn's interruption and rude interrogation angered Hunter to such a degree that he was tempted to overturn the table in her face.

But at the thought of his promise to Vivian, Hunter struggled to and succeeded in keeping his temper in check. Now that Vivian was busy in preparation to make a move against Mark, and he himself was lying to Evelyn, he had to be very careful to not let Evelyn's interference sabotage Vivian's chance of success.

"I'm getting along fine with her. These things take time," Hunter reported vaguely.

"How good is 'fine'? What stage are you at with her? Does that b*tch like you or not?" Evelyn fired questions unceasingly, as though she was venting her frustration with every forceful question.

"I'm telling you, seduce her as fast as you can. It'll be better if you can take her out of Sunshine City. Take her to A Nation or J Nation, I don't care. Take her far away and then dump her hard. I want that b*tch to suffer."

"I can't just barge my way into her romantic life," Hunter replied as he tried to steady his hand from slapping her for how she was speaking. She is so vulgar. How did I end up being friends with her in the first place?

Evelyn noticed Hunter's anger on his face and realized that she had behaved inappropriately. Hunter was doing her a favor after all. If he decided to abandon it, her whole plan would go up in flames.

Evelyn took a deep breath to steady herself and forced a smile. "Forgive me, I was being too impatient. Please don't get mad. So how is your progress?"

"It should be soon. She's primed to say yes," Hunter replied irritably.

Hunter's irritation somehow satisfied Evelyn. Of course he was irritated at Vivian, and not her!

Hmm, just as well too. She was afraid that Hunter would really fall for Vivian, and wouldn't bear to hurt her when it was time for him to do so. It was best that he was irritated now. Let it build up and when the time is right, he would be able to do a spectacular job of dumping her.

"That's good if it's soon. You just need to keep at it for a little longer. When she's head over heels for you, dump her. Then you'll be free of seeing her b*tchy face day and night." Evelyn's attempt to comfort Hunter only incensed him further. How was it possible for someone to be this wicked!

Evelyn construed Hunter's frown to be intolerance of still having to deal with Vivian for the foreseeable future. But, if it were her who had to look at that d*mn vixen all day, she would be driven mad too. Hunter really was going above and beyond for her to put himself through all that.

"Hunter, just bear with it a little while longer for me. I will thank you properly after it's done," Evelyn said and winked at him suggestively.