

## Perfect Match: Irresistible Desire For You - Chapter 5

After the taxi stopped at an apartment building, Ashley dragged her tired, sore body into her spacious apartment. Once inside, the neat, comfortable interior of her own space calmed her down somewhat, with its light-colored accessories and common furniture that were selected for function rather than form. Ashley found this apartment after she had persuaded her family to let her work in another company instead of the family business. It was conveniently located close to the city center and a mere thirty-minute drive from Synder Group. Ashley entered her bedroom and headed straight to the bathroom to take a shower. One look in the mirror showed her the bruises and traces of sex last night. Then, she proceeded to scrub every inch of her body, as if that would erase the shame of last night. When her family agreed to let her work for another company, she gave them her word that she would take good care of herself. For her self-protection, she enrolled in classes teaching Taekwondo and other martial arts. Still, she inexplicably lost her virginity in such a manner. How could she explain this to her family?

All throughout the cab ride home, Ashley thought about the events of the previous night and was convinced that it was Charlie who set her up. Even so, last night had happened, and there was nothing she could do to change her situation. Thus, she had resolved to treat the experience as if a dog had bitten her. One thing was for sure: she would never give Charlie another chance. A man like him wasn't worth it. Despite her resolve, that twinge of sadness in her heart was inescapable. Ashley thought that she had finally found the person she would spend the rest of her life with, but last night's incident happened. Although she belonged to the upper class, she never put on any airs of superiority, nor did she care about money or status. She had always thought that as long as she met someone who treated her well and she had feelings for him too, then she could marry that man. With those considerations in mind, Charlie seemed like the ideal man for Ashley. However, contrary to what she had expected, he was not the right man for her. It was a terrible feeling, really—to be treated like that by somebody she had always trusted.

After the shower that ended up lasting for an hour, Ashley put on her pajamas and threw herself on her soft bed. Her exhaustion went bone deep, and so she ended up passing out soon after her head touched her pillow. Everything that needed to be solved could wait until she woke up.

At noon, Ashley was pulled from her deep sleep by the sound of her phone's vibration.

Without looking at the screen, she accepted the call and heard Yasmin on the other end. Before she could say anything, the other woman yelled, "Ashley, why didn't you come to work?" The agitation in Yasmin's voice made her sit up. Her friend continued, "Besides, why are you picking up the call just now? I've been calling you all morning! I was starting to think that aliens had abducted you and taken you to Mars or something."

With her mind now wide awake, the problems she had left behind when she slept suddenly came flooding back.

"Why don't you say anything? Is there really something wrong? Hello?" Yasmin began to ramble when she heard no response from her.

"I'm fine. I had a few shots last night and felt tired so I went home to sleep. I didn't hear your phone calls. That's it. Don't think too much," Ashley replied in a placating voice, rubbing a hand across her face to wipe the sleep from her eyes.

"Really? Then why didn't you come to work?"

"Well, I forgot to ask for a leave." Nobody spoke for a moment. "But..." Ashley didn't want Yasmin to know what had happened to her, so the best way was to keep her explanation simple. Before her friend could ask another question, she hastily chimed in, "I'll go to work later. I have to go and prepare lunch now. See you later." Without another word, she ended the call.

Yasmin stared at the phone in her hand, filled with an odd sense of disquiet. She could tell there was something going on with Ashley, but she didn't know what exactly it was. Ashley was known in the company for having a remarkable work ethic. She had never reported to work late, nor did she skip work or leave early. Today, she skipped work without asking for a leave. That in itself was so uncharacteristic of Ashley that Yasmin urgently tried to contact her. Maybe she wanted to give the matter a rest, so Yasmin took her friend's explanation at face value. Thus, she dismissed the matter to the back of her mind.

After lunch, Ashley took a taxi to the company. Yasmin was waiting for her, so she greeted her friend and headed straight to her office to work. However, less than half an hour after she sat down, a call from the general manager's secretary, pushed through. The secretary asked her to report to the general manager's office immediately.

The thought of facing Charlie again was unbearable, but Ashley was a professional. She would let her emotions interfere with her work. After hanging up the phone, Ashley made her way upstairs to Charlie's office. After her three perfunctory raps on the door, Charlie's voice responded from inside. "Come in, please."