

"Wanda Lane, you cruel woman! You don't deserve to be Theowy's wife." After hearing what I had to say, Cindy interrupted hastily.

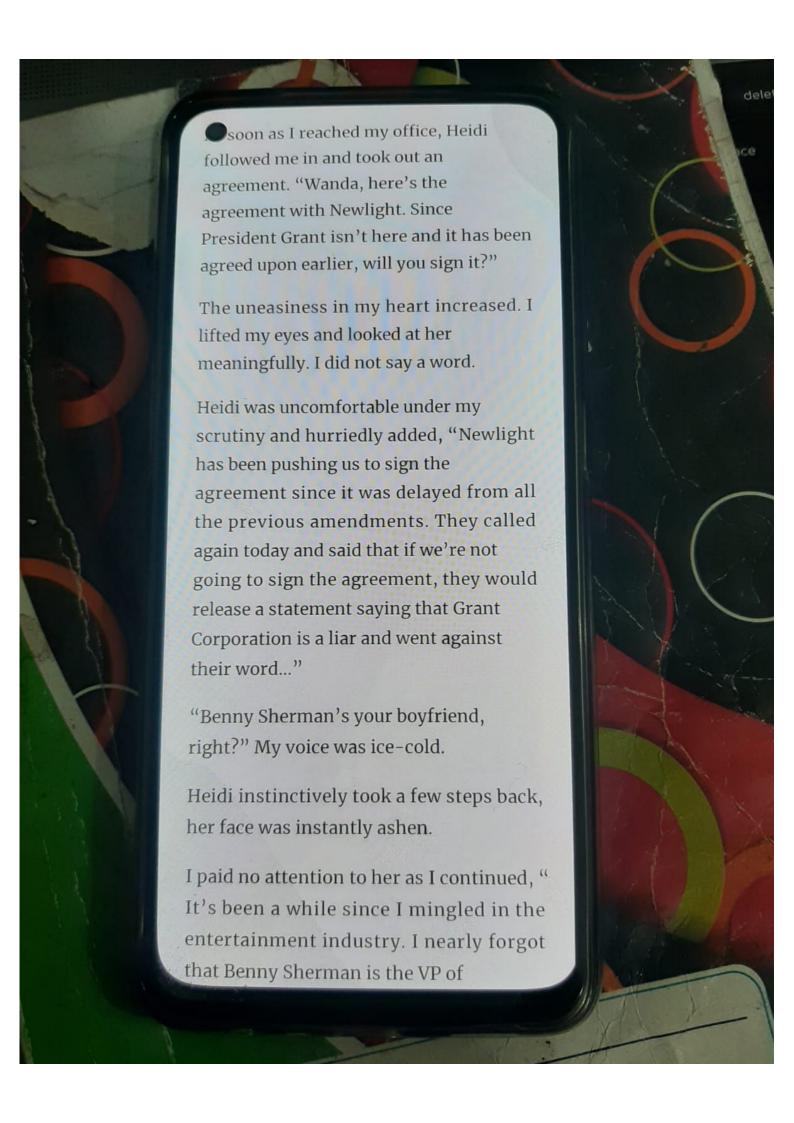
I looked at her and saw how upset she was at the injustice. I nodded and said, "You're right, I am cruel, but not cruel enough, I reckon. I shouldn't have come here. I should be at home, praying for you star-crossed lovers to make your journey to heaven together."

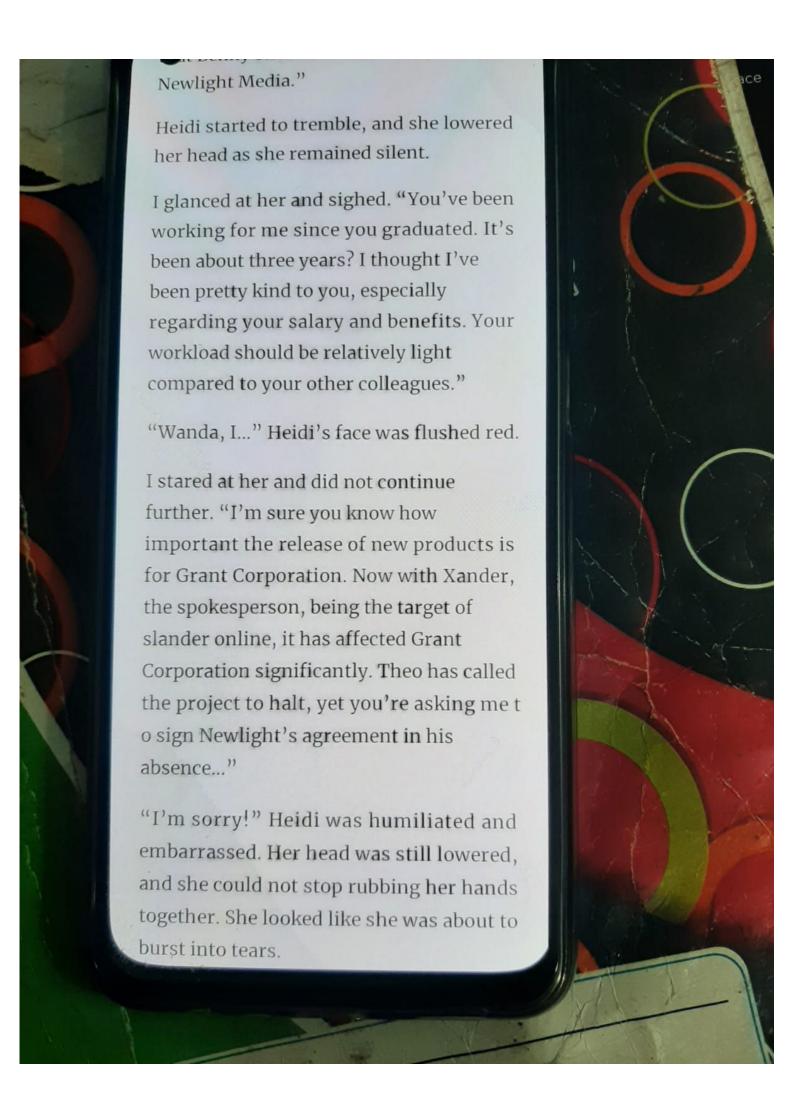
"Shut up, you evil woman! Do you even have a conscience? It's a waste that Theo is so good to you." Zedd could not bear to hear me curse at Cindy, so he stepped up to reprimand me.

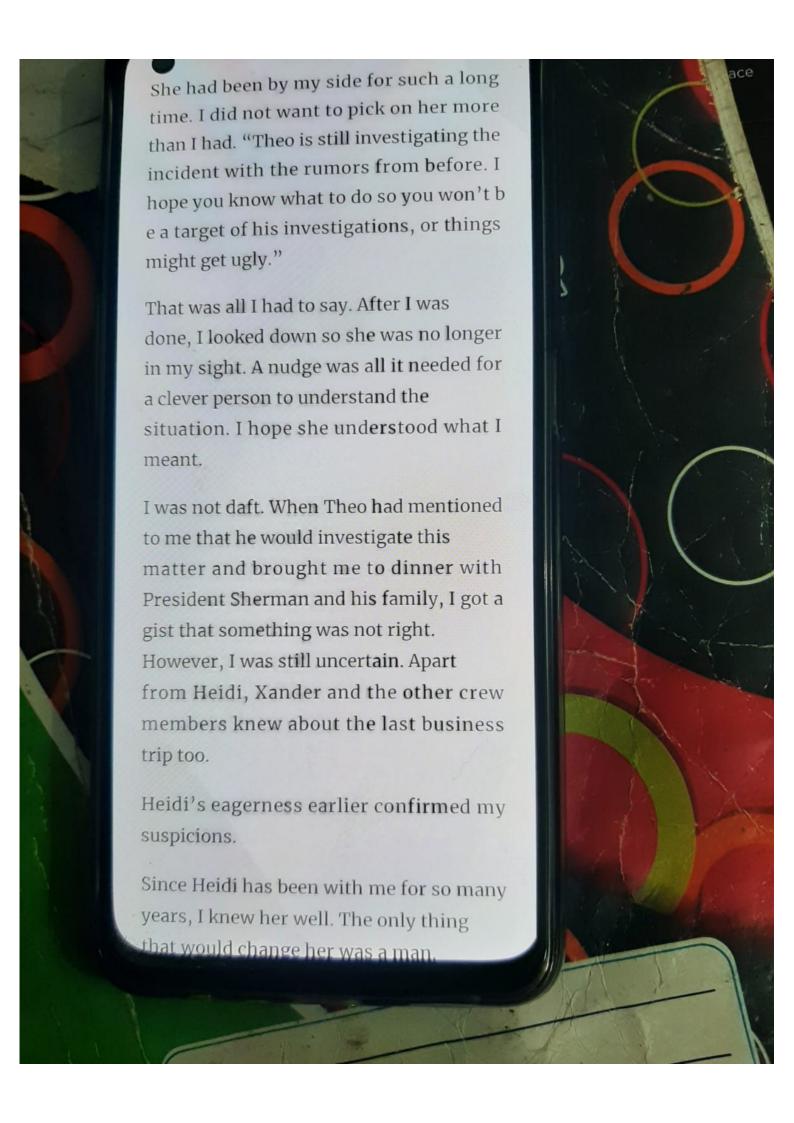
"Just like what you've seen, I don't have a conscience!" I looked at the closed doors of the operating room after I was done speaking. I walked past them and exited the hospital.

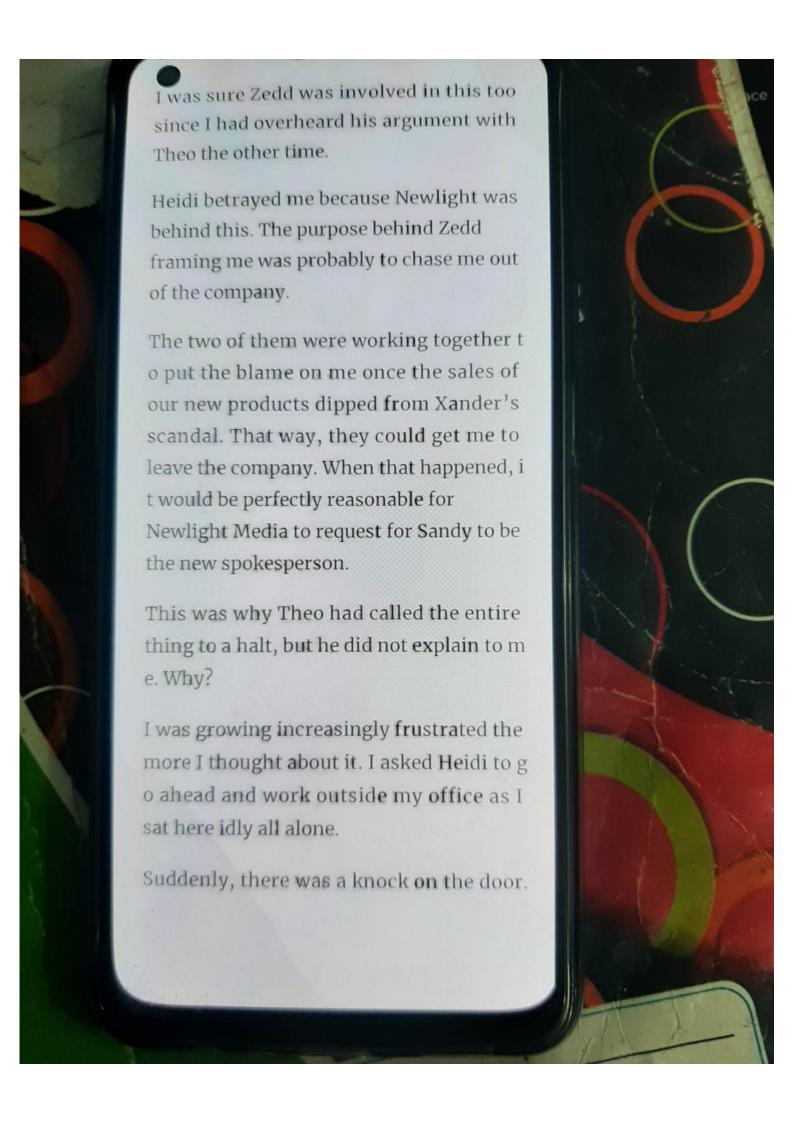
It felt like there was a lump in my throat, so I wandered on the streets until about three in the afternoon before I went back to the office.

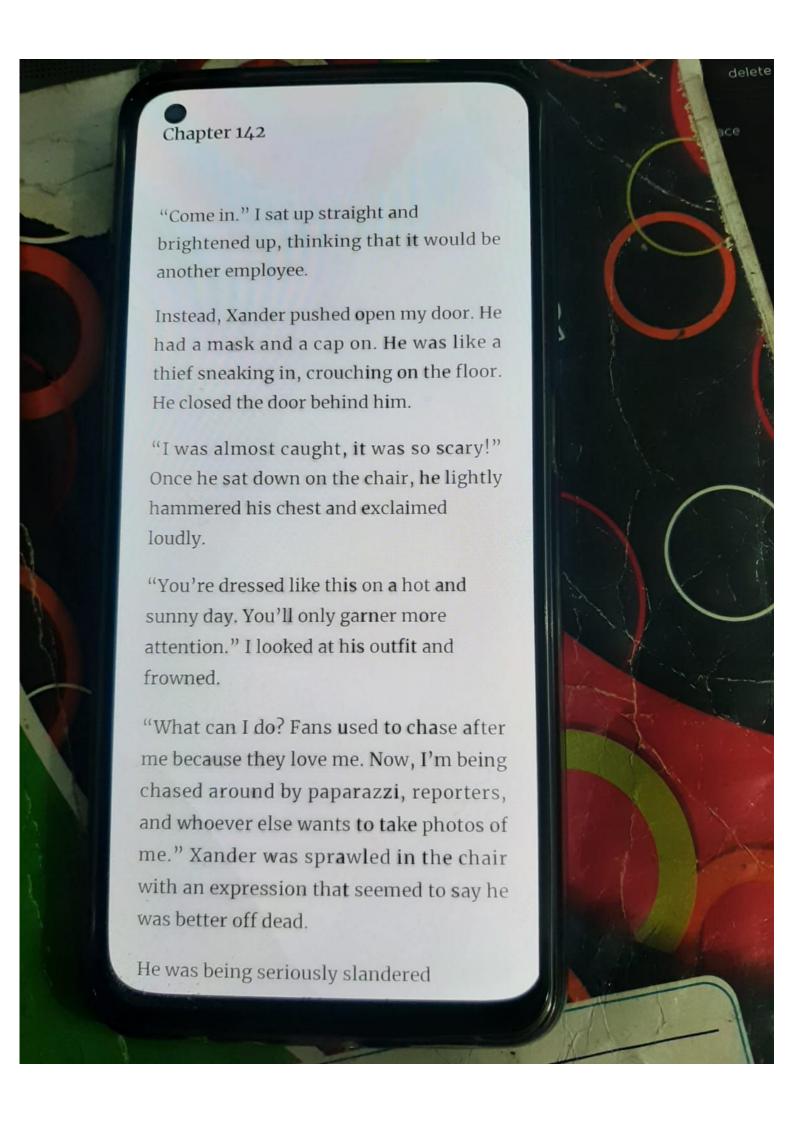
As soon as I reached my office, Heidi











recently, causing all his work to come to a screeching halt. He had stopped showing his face in public settings as well. People were desperate to take his photos. The paparazzi were hoping to take scandalous photos, while his fans who were concerned about his well-being hired people to take his photos—regardless if it was in secret or not—to know how he was doing.

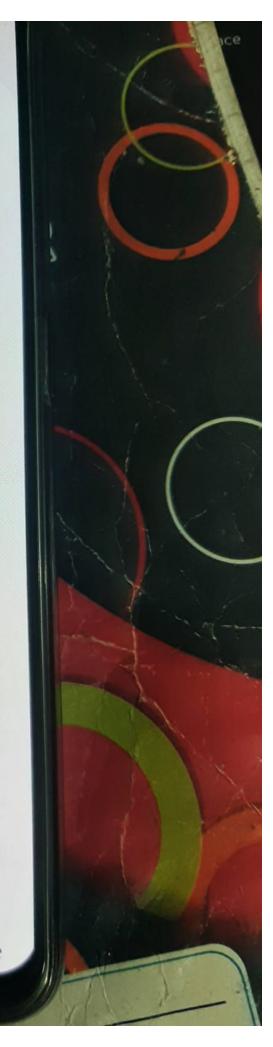
"You know what the situation is like right now, so you should just stay at home. Why are you out and about?" I replied to Xander exasperatedly.

"That's because I miss you... I miss eating with you so I wanna bring you out for a meal!"

He took a sip of the water I handed to him and continued, "I was busy previously, so busy I didn't have time to eat with you. Now that I'm finally free, I gotta grab my chances. Come one, I'll treat you to a feast tonight."

"Not hungry, not interested." I rubbed the space in between my eyes.

He got up and started yanking me out the



door. "Let's go. Look at you, all you do is frown all day looking like you've got the weight of the world on your shoulders. You're pregnant! If this continues, you might have prenatal depression."

He may not have meant what he said, but I felt my heart constrict. Theo's care for me e recently had made me forget all about it. The lump I felt in my throat grew. I really could not afford to let things continue.

"What're we eating?" I took up his offer, grabbed my bag, and was about to leave with him.

Xander's face was full of smiles after I had agreed to eat with him. He exclaimed gleefully, "You said you're gonna treat me to surf and turf. Let's have that today!"

Right after stepping out of the door,

Xander resumed his sneaking around and trailed behind me. It was fortunate that m y office was not too far from the elevator and everyone else was focused on their work. No one paid any attention to Xander and me.

Initially, I did not want to go to the



underground car park, but I went with Xander anyway so we did not garner attention.

I thought that Xander would bring me to somewhere high-class. I was not expecting him to bring me to an old town.

This side of town was old, and the buildings were outmoded. There were a number of newly built factories from the government's decree to expand this area into an economic development zone.

Most of the people residing here were factory workers and their families. The chances of other people coming here were very slim.

Xander saw how shocked I was and said, "Don't judge this area from how it looks. It's a crucial time for me right now so this is the only place I can be now where I won't be recognized. Thing is, there's an alley inside there that's pretty decent. I think you'll like the place. The surf and turf restaurant is right at the end of the alley. The food there tastes really good."

I grew up in a rural farming area, so I would most definitely not despise this



place. On the contrary, I had an odd sense of fondness toward this place.

Xander stopped his car right outside the alley. The walls were very much dated. It was the kind that was made of exposed bricks and stretched all the way into the alley. After a bridge, there was a walkway with newly renovated houses on both sides. Even so, they still looked oldfashioned.

A little stream flowed in the middle of the walkway, and by the shore were flowers o f every kind. It was spring now, so I could smell the flowers as we were walking along the stream.

After I saw what was in front of me, tears rolled down my cheeks unexpectedly. "You..."

"I told you you'd like it, right?" Xander's hands were in his pockets as he stood in front of me, smiling.

"How did you know..." Tears brimmed m y eyes as I tried to register the shock and joy I was feeling.

This place was painfully similar to the



street I grew up in at my old house. I remember back when I followed my mom to go shopping along a street like this, I used to love splashing my feet in the little stream.

"I know more than you think. I found this area by accident during a shoot. I've wanted to bring you here ever since."

Xander looked at me, his eyes glimmering with joy instead of the rebellious streak that had always been there. It seemed that it was laced with a tinge of melancholy too.

I did not bother asking him any more questions since I was still flabbergasted from the familiar scenery before me. I quickened my steps as I walked forward.

"Slowly, be careful. Don't fall." Xander's reminder was loud as it came from behind me.

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I stood by the crystal-clear stream, watching the clear water flow as my thoughts went a thousand miles away...

"Wanda." Xander's voice rang out from behind me. I cocked my head toward him.

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