

A Favor 611

Chapter 611

“Relax.” I smiled, and she frowned. “I already have a plan for that. We’re a team in this now. I’ll still handle the paperwork, and if he calls for you, you go. If he wants you at meetings, you go to the meetings. I’ll take care of everything you need for it—including his schedule. I’ll just give you a copy.”

“Fine. Just make sure I don’t end up losing my job over this.”

“You won’t. I promise.”

We went back to eating. If he wanted to play games, then fine—we could play too. Two against one was always better odds. He might be our boss, and yes, an arrogant idiot of a boss, even if he was undeniably handsome and charming—but we were his PAs, his secretaries, women with looks, brains, and plenty of nerve of our own. We’d just have to see who came out on top of this ridiculous little game of his.

Madi’s point of view

These past few days have been hectic for us—well, especially for Sandy. She’s had to make Mr. Wilsons’ coffee, not just once, but three times a day.

She’s also had to sit in on some of his meetings, since he’s really outdone himself this week proving just how much of an idiot he can be.

But you know the funny part? He keeps slipping and calling Sandy “Miss Davis” without noticing. She’s never bothered correcting him, and when she told me, we laughed about it together.

I haven’t gone near his office in days. I’ve just been helping Sandy manage the double workload she’s stuck with now. I haven’t bothered stopping by to say goodbye before heading home either, the way I used to every single afternoon.

Hmph. If that’s what he wants, then fine—I’m just following his lead.

It’s Friday afternoon, and since we’re off tomorrow, I decided to stop by the restaurant to see Noelle. I’d already told her everything about my conversation with Mr. Wilsons.

Her reaction wasn’t what I expected at all. She actually wants me to accept his deal.

“Wow. Last I checked, you were still ranting about me the day I signed on with WEC. Now you want me to take his offer? What’s going on in that brain of yours?”

We were back at the office, still going in circles about his life-changing proposal.

“Cute. You said ‘brain’—why not throw in ‘mind’ too, complete the set.”

I rolled my eyes and sighed.

“You love a challenge, don’t you? So why not actually think it through? Why not take his offer? Come on, Madi, he’s a catch. A freaking billionaire, a hot, sexy billionaire. If he’d offered me a deal like that, there’s no way I’d say no.”

“Then go tell him to offer it to you instead.”

“Hmph, like it’s that simple,” she scoffed.

“And what exactly are you talking about—that I should take his money?”

“No! Not the money—damn it, his sinful body!”

She clutched at her throat and chest, as if imagining my boss’s hands there.

“My God, gross,” I said, disgusted, but she just stared right back at me.

“Sure, say that now, Madi, but I’m telling you—once you get a taste of what they call ‘God’s special recipe,’ you’ll never forget it!”

I laughed at her choice of words despite myself.

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“God’s special recipe? What is that supposed to mean?”

She raised her eyebrows, giving me a wicked little grin.

“My God, you’re so innocent.”

And that’s when I turned the conversation back on her.

“You know, your boss is clearly plotting something.”

“Obviously. What do you think about his whole revenge scheme against his ex?”

“Maybe he still loves her and just can’t let go of what she did to him.”

“Yeah, but instead of trying to actually win her back, he comes up with this ridiculous plan.”

“Maybe because seeing her again brought back more pain than love. I mean, who wouldn’t feel that? If someone you loved and adored your whole life betrayed you and left?”

I didn't say anything—just pressed my palm to her forehead.

“Why'd you do that?” she asked, confused.

“Nothing, just checking for a fever. It's not like sincere, thoughtful things usually come out of that unpleasant mouth of yours.”

She was speechless for a second, then narrowed her eyes at me, fighting back a smile.

“Did you really just call my mouth ‘unpleasant’?”

“Well, yeah,” I said, shrugging. “You and Sandy have the exact same mouth, honestly. Full of unpleasant words and dirty jokes.”

I laughed at the way she scrunched up her face at that.

“Excuse me, we have the same sexy, delicious mouth.”

She pouted.

“But, honestly, I actually agree with you on something.”

“Yeah? That’s probably why he turned cold and distant, like you said.”

“You know, I haven’t seen him smile once since all this started.”

“Really?” she asked, surprised.

“Really.”

“So why didn’t you make him smile?”

“How could I? He won’t even let me do my job! He handed half my work to Sandy. I haven’t even shown up to his office in days!”

She laughed.

“I’m telling you, Madi, he’s definitely up to something.”

"I don't know. I still can't wrap my head around someone like him. You'd do anything for your ex, apparently—even come up with something this stupid. Why?"

"Maybe it's not really about revenge."

"Then what is it?"

"Winning her back?"

That familiar ache hit my chest again.

"What if I just quit?"

The words slipped out before I could stop them.

"What? No!" She shook her head.

"Why not? I applied for that job. I applied to be his personal assistant, and look what he's doing to me. He said, in no uncertain terms, that his little agreement had nothing to do with work, with our jobs at the office. And yet here he is, handing half my responsibilities to Sandy without even telling me, the

second I turned him down! And when I asked him why—you know what he said? Know your place. I'm the CEO, you're just my assistant. Argh!"

The irritation was rising in me all over again.

"And ever since, he doesn't even want me around, so what's the point of staying?"

"Oh, honey, don't do that. Don't you get it?"

"Get what?"

"Maybe he's just doing all this to challenge you!"

"Challenge me?"

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"To make you accept the deal."

"That's absurd."

“Come on, think about it!”

“Except it hasn’t crossed his mind that I could just as easily hand him a resignation letter.”

“Uh-huh...” She gave me a sly smile, and I looked at her.

“What?”

“Trust me, he’s testing you.”

“It’s a stupid test, if that’s even what this is.”

“Yes, and it’s honestly kind of exciting. Why don’t you rise to the challenge? You love a challenge, don’t you?” She winked at me.

“What are you talking about?”

A wicked little smile spread across her lips.

“I have an idea. A brilliant, extremely useful idea.”

Madi's perspective

"What is this?"

I shot to my feet the moment the fool himself burst into my office, tossing a folded white sheet of paper onto my desk. It was my resignation letter—Noelle's idea.

Just like she'd suggested, I'd decided to rise to the challenge. So I'd listened to her and drafted a fake resignation letter, since she was convinced this was exactly what I needed to test his reaction after turning down his deal.

I'd left it on his desk that morning, and now, standing here, I could hardly believe what I was seeing—his face twisted into an absolutely sour expression. I bit back a smile and looked him straight in the eye.

"Good morning, Mr. Wilsons. That's my resignation letter," I said, with more than a little pride.

See? You just can't stomach it, can you? my mind gloated.

His expression, already sour, darkened even further. His eyes narrowed into thin lines as he glared at me.

“I’m not foolish enough not to recognize a resignation letter, Miss Davis!”

Oops, no, you’re not, my mind screamed.

“Why are you resigning?” He slammed both palms down on my desk.

I really had to fight the urge to raise an eyebrow.

“Because I assumed that’s what you wanted from me.”

He let out an exasperated breath, anger flaring in his eyes.

“What are you talking about, Miss Davis? Did I tell you to quit? Did I ask you to do this?”

Ah, so you remember my name again. Do I need your permission for this now?

“Because you clearly don’t want me doing my job anymore. So I assumed you no longer needed my services and just couldn’t come out and say it directly. That’s why I resigned—so I could find another position as quickly as possible,” I said calmly.

Without warning, he snatched the paper back up and tore it in half. Then quarters. Then eighths. I lost count of how many pieces it ended up in.

I put on a look of mock horror, staring back at him.

“You are not resigning!”

His voice filled every corner of my office.

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I let out a short, dry laugh through my teeth. “But why, sir? I barely have any work left to do, since you handed half of it to your secretary, which wasn’t even her job to begin with. And I refuse to take home a salary that high without earning it. That’s not fair to everyone else who works themselves to the bone for what I make.”

“Then accept the agreement! Then you won’t need to worry about drawing a salary without breaking a sweat. I’ll give you plenty to do. You can cook for me—” My eyes went wide, mouth already dropping open. “—choose which suit I wear, clean my things, carry my bags, shine my shoes—”

“Wow—wow, wait! You don’t need a wife for any of that, sir! What you need is a housekeeper. A personal servant!”

This time, the horror on my face was completely real. My God.

“So all you want is for me to accept your deal so I can become your personal employee? Wow. Absolutely not.”

“Call it whatever you like, but you are not resigning. I don’t care how many of these you put on my desk, I won’t allow it. Push this any further, and I’ll pull your signed contract straight from HR and make sure you pay the penalty for breaking it early. You’ve only been here two months, and per your contract, you owe the company a full year of employment to cover what we spent bringing you on and covering your taxes.”

Wow. Like I don’t already know that, I wanted to shout, but held my tongue.

“Fine! I won’t resign. But give me back my normal workload.”

I sighed when he didn’t respond, just stood there watching me. When he finally moved toward the door, I assumed he was heading back to his own office—but instead, he closed mine.

I stepped forward, about to ask why, but before I could get a word out, he crossed the room in three long strides and was suddenly right in front of me. He caught my arm, our noses nearly touching, our breath mingling. I could feel the faint mint of his breath ghosting across my face.

I’m not the type to blush, not some giddy schoolgirl—yet somehow, heaven help me, I could feel the heat rushing to my cheeks with him standing that close.

Oh, God.

My stomach flipped, twisting itself into knots.

“Resigning, Miss Davis, isn’t the best way to escape me.” He pulled me closer by the arm, bringing his mouth right beside my ear, his voice dropping to a whisper. “Accept my offer. If I have to double it, triple it, whatever it takes to convince you, I will. But let me make one thing clear—I don’t take no for an answer easily.”

His warm breath brushed against my neck, sending a shiver straight down my spine. I swallowed hard, forcing myself to keep my eyes open.

My God. What was this feeling?

I asked myself silently as he finally let go of my arm.

When I met his gaze, something unfamiliar flickered in his eyes—an emotion I’d never seen from him before. But, as always, it vanished behind his usual mask in under a second.

“Keep that in mind, Miss Davis.”

With a mischievous smile, he turned and walked out the door without a backward glance.

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The moment he disappeared from view, my knees buckled beneath me, and I had to drop into the nearest chair before they gave out completely.

Wow.

I let out a heavy breath, pressing my hand against my racing heart.

So that was his real reaction.

Ugh.

Madi's perspective

The following morning, the intercom connected to the CEO's office buzzed. I couldn't help but raise my eyebrows in surprise. Had he actually decided to call for me now?

"Mrs. Davis, where are you?" I heard his voice come through the device.

“Huh?” I asked, on instinct.

“Where is my planner, and my coffee?”

“Ahh! Already on my way, sir.” My smile spread wide as I hurried to the pantry. I’d won this round.

After preparing his coffee and grabbing my notepad, I knocked on his office door.

“Come in.”

Oops, welcome back to my services, I thought, smiling as I pushed the door open. His familiar scent hit me the moment I stepped inside.

So it really was true—there’s always a first time for everything. Whenever I entered his office, my boss was always buried in documents or glued to his computer screen. But this time, he wasn’t doing anything at all. It almost seemed like he was waiting for me. He sat leaning back in his chair, arms crossed over his chest, lost in thought.

The instant I walked in, his eyes locked onto me and stayed there through the short walk to his desk, tracking every movement, as if he wanted to say something but couldn’t quite get the words out.

He smiled at me as I set the coffee down in front of him.

The way he looked at me left me a little unsteady, but I did my best to ignore it. I took a breath and offered him a professional smile.

“Would you like your schedule now, Mr. Wilsons?” I asked, flipping open my notepad.

“You still haven’t said good morning to me, Mrs. Davis.”

Ahh! I mentally smacked my own forehead for the oversight. “My apologies, sir. Good morning!” How had I forgotten to greet him? At least this was the first time I’d slipped up on that particular morning ritual.

“Good morning to you too, Mrs. Davis.”

My eyes widened, caught off guard by his words. Had he actually greeted me back? Wow.

I was even more startled when he picked up his coffee, a smile still lingering on his lips.

“Damn,” I muttered under my breath, without meaning to.

He smiled! He still remembered how to smile! Thank God.

“Did you just curse?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“What? Did I... did I say that out loud? I mean... darn.” My eyes went wide. I couldn’t believe those words had actually left my mouth. “Uh, my apologies, sir. That wasn’t meant for you to hear. It just slipped out. I’m a little flustered, is all—you know how it is, right? I just discovered there’s a first time for everything... uh, sorry again.”

When had I started rambling like this? When had I turned into someone who couldn’t string a coherent sentence together? Wow, what an embarrassing mess.

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But after setting the cup back down, he started laughing—really laughing. I stood there, stunned, watching him clutch his stomach.

My God, what had I done to deserve seeing him smile, and then laugh like that? He looked so handsome when he smiled. And oh, how much sexier he looked laughing like this—complete with a beautiful little dimple on his left cheek. Adorable.

Once his “laughing at who-knows-what” moment passed, he straightened up in his chair and slipped back into seriousness.

“Is everything alright, sir?” I asked, my eyes fixed on his face without quite realizing it.

"It is. Why do you ask, Mrs. Davis?"

"Are... are you sure everything's fine? This isn't some kind of fever, or illness, causing all this, is it?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, still smiling.

Could he really be alright? Was he actually smiling at me, of all people?

"Because you're smiling today. You even laughed. Wow, I'm just surprised, that's all. I didn't know you still had that in you."

My words wiped the smile clean off his face in an instant, and he was cold and serious again, eyes fixed on me.

What the hell, Madi, you really managed to ruin the moment. I bit down on my lower lip to stop myself from saying anything else out loud. I wanted to smack my own forehead for how stupid I'd just been.

"Excuse me," I murmured, barely audible.

"What's my schedule for today?" He'd already slipped back into zombie mode, and there was no coaxing him out of it now.

I just shook my head as his attention returned to his computer screen, disappointed in myself.

I read through every appointment and its corresponding time from my list, but not a single word of acknowledgment came from him.

“Anything else, sir?”

“No. You can get back to work now,” he said, eyes never leaving the screen.

I let out a sigh, quiet enough that he wouldn’t hear it. I’m not sure what came over me in that moment, but I straightened my back and tried once more to catch his attention.

“You know something, Mr. Wilsons?” I waited until he finally looked up at me before continuing. “You look very handsome when you smile.”

I let the compliment hang there, watching the surprise flicker across his face.

Before he had a chance to respond, I turned and walked straight for the double doors, not looking back, and left the office.

The moment I closed the door behind me, I pressed both palms to my face. I really needed that—I was burning with embarrassment over what I'd just said. I'd told my boss he was handsome and attractive. Damn it. What was he going to think of me now?

At lunch, I couldn't help but tell Sandy everything that had happened in Mr. Wilsons' office. Of course, I left out the part where I'd found him sexy, and the part where I'd complimented him, and definitely the part where I'd blushed afterward.

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I made sure to lead her to the farthest corner of the cafeteria, so no one would overhear what we had to say.

"What's so important that you had to drag me all the way over here, Madi?" she complained, wearing a sour expression.

"We need to sit here, because no one can hear the shocking news I'm about to tell you!"

"Wow, better make sure you actually 'shock' me with your shocking news," she repeated back at me, mocking my tone, but I just smiled.

"Well, he smiled," I said, pausing mid-sentence for effect.

"What? Who smiled? Don't tell me it was Mr. Wilsons, because that would be nothing short of a miracle—"

“It was him. It really was.”

“What?” Sandy’s eyes went wide.

“And there’s more—he actually laughed out loud, Sandy!”

“Wow, are you serious? He smiled and laughed on the same day?!” Her exclamation, far louder than she meant it to be, drew a few curious glances from the nearby tables.

“Shh! Sit down!”

I gave her a pointed look as she’d half-risen from her seat, stunned by the news.

“Are you sure you’re not just messing with me?” Sandy asked, dropping her voice to a whisper now.

“Of course I’m not joking! I’m telling you, I saw him smile and laugh for the first time since I started working here. I can still picture his face, smiling, right now.”

“Wow, you were right, Madi, this really is shocking!” She grabbed a napkin and pressed it over her mouth to muffle her excited squeal.

“See? Told you.”

“What made him smile? When did this even happen? Why didn’t you call me?” She fired off all three questions in one breath, eyebrows knitted together.

So I told her everything, start to finish, exactly what had happened yesterday and this morning.

“Oh, come on! He actually did that? Closed the door just to tell you he wouldn’t let you quit?”

I just nodded.

“Wow, that’s intense.”

“It really was. I think he did it because he wants me to agree to the deal.”

“Ugh,” she sighed. “What if you did agree?”

“Okay, let’s say I did. Then what? I’d be helping him get revenge on someone?”

“No, not that part. You could help him move on, help him see past this broken engagement.” She leaned in closer. “We can’t really blame him for being this hurt by what happened. The betrayal, the broken engagement—it clearly changed who he is, how he sees everything.”

A small laugh escaped me. Apparently Sandy shared the exact same opinion as Noelle.

“Don’t be silly, Sandy. You know exactly why he wants me as his wife. We’ve already been over this.”

“I know, but what if agreeing to the deal turned you two into friends? Then maybe you could help him find himself again.”

“Find himself?”

“Madi, I know you’re stuck on his ridiculous plan against his ex, and the ridiculous amount of money he’s willing to throw at it. But I’m right here, Madi. If you don’t want the money, just accept the deal and let me take the cash.”

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She finished the suggestion with a hearty laugh.

I stared at her, stunned. “So you want me to accept the deal just so you can get the money?”

“I’m kidding!” Sandy laughed again.

I just watched her laugh, rolling my eyes at the whole absurd proposal.

“Wait a second. Did he ever actually explain what the deal involves, beyond the millions?”

I straightened up in my chair, paying closer attention now to Sandy’s train of thought.

“Actually, no. Remember, I walked out when he refused to tell me half of the story. And yesterday, he told me that if I accept, he’ll give me plenty to do—cooking for him, polishing his shoes, packing his bags! My God, he just wants a maid! And what about all this beauty and brains I bring to the table? What am I supposed to do with those? No way.”

Sandy ended up choking on her own laughter listening to me.

“I love you, Madi,” she said, once she’d finally gotten herself under control.

“I know,” I replied, rolling my eyes.

“That’s exactly my point, Madi.” Suddenly she’d gone serious.

“What do you mean?” I asked, matching her tone.

“You two have completely different personalities. He’s distant, cold. You’re warm, easy to approach. He’s rude and bossy half the time, but you’re grounded. In the end, he’s isolated, withdrawn—introverted, let’s say. And you, Madi, you’re his complete opposite. Adventurous. You actually love taking on a challenge.”

Wow, what a speech. I was genuinely thinking about how right I’d been telling Noelle that she and Sandy had practically the same personality. But honestly, I loved them both.

“Is that everything you wanted to say?”

“Hmm, thanks for the long speech. But you left something out,” I said, a smile creeping onto my face.

“What?” She looked completely lost.

“You forgot to mention that I’m beautiful,” I said, with total confidence.

She stared at me for a beat before we both broke into laughter.

“Sandy, no matter how long your speech was, my answer is still no.”

“Madi—”

“No. This isn’t some simple, ordinary proposal, Sandy. We’re talking about marriage. It’s an incredibly complicated thing to agree to. And even if I did, how would I ever explain that to my mother?”

Sandy just sighed and shrugged.

“I never wanted to get married this young, not at my age, not without finding the right man first. I’ve never once planned on marrying for convenience, or for money. If I ever do get married, it has to be the wedding of my dreams, to the man of my dreams—the man I’d love for the rest of my life.”

Madi’s perspective

This morning, I got a call from my three best friends and managers—Noelle, George, and Arielle. Well, not exactly all of them, just Noelle, really. They wanted to hit the mall and do some shopping.

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Since it was Saturday, I was supposed to have a day free of work, stress, early mornings, and eye-rolling. You know what I mean, right? Even the eye-rolling counts. I usually roll my eyes “mentally” at the office, whenever I’m near my idiot boss, and sometimes I do it for real when I’m sure he isn’t looking.

But apparently, thanks to these three friends of mine, I had to wake up early, shower, and get ready to go walk around anyway. Unfortunately, I didn’t really have a choice in the matter.

Hmm—have I mentioned how much I love shorts? Denim shorts especially. That’s exactly what I picked out for today: blue denim shorts with a plain white tank top, paired with nude sandals and the lightest touch of makeup.

After checking myself in the mirror one too many times that morning—something I’d promised myself I’d stop doing—I gave myself a wink anyway.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. Why am I so incredibly beautiful?” I asked my reflection, shaking my head.

Seemed like I was complimenting myself again. But if I don’t admire myself, who will? My mother, maybe—she’d obviously do it, since that’s what mothers do. But since she wasn’t around, I figured I’d just cover for her for now.

“Good morning, Jaime,” I greeted my roommate as I found her in the living room.

“Oh my—who are you, Madi? Up early on a Saturday morning?” she asked with a smile, setting her teacup down on the table.

I bit back a groan. I truly can’t stand tea. I might hate mornings, but tea’s up there too. Well—maybe not hate, exactly. Let’s just say it’s not my favorite thing in the world.

“Still the same old me. You know mornings and I don’t get along.” I grabbed my favorite mug and filled it with coffee from the pot.

“Yeah, but then what? Where are you off to?”

“Hmm... going out with friends,” I shrugged.

“Wow, that’s great news.”

“Want to come with us?” I asked, stirring milk and sugar into my coffee.

“Oh, I’d love to, but I can’t today,” she said, sighing. “Actually, speaking of which, Madi—I’ll be moving out. Maybe in a few days.”

“What? What do you mean?” I couldn’t hide my shock. I walked over and dropped into the empty chair beside her.

“Andrew proposed.”

She held up her hand, showing off the diamond ring on her finger. I could see the love and happiness practically shining out of her.

“Oh my God, that’s amazing! Congratulations, Jaime!”

I pulled her into a tight hug. “Ahh, I’m going to miss you so much.”

“Me too. I hope you find your own prince charming soon.”

I laughed at that.

“Okay... prince charming? Are you being serious right now, Jaime?”

“Yes. You’re not exactly young anymore. You need to start thinking about your own family before time stops being so generous with you.”

I couldn’t stop laughing.

“Why does everyone keep pushing me to settle down and find someone at this age? I’m only twenty-six. I’ve got five whole years before I even catch up to you.”

“It’s just that you don’t even have a boyfriend! And besides, you’re still a vir—”

“I’m a virgin,” I cut in, finishing the sentence for her. Yeah, I already knew.

“Yes. You are.”

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I rolled my eyes, and she just laughed at me.

“You can come visit me whenever you have free time.”

“Of course.”

“And promise me I get to be godmother to your first baby.”

She laughed again.

“Okay, I promise.”

After chatting with Jaime for a bit, I found myself driving to the mall to track down the three girls responsible for interrupting my well-earned beauty sleep. At this hour I should’ve still been in dreamland, kissing my own charming prince. Argh.

After parking, I grabbed my phone and purse and headed straight for the entrance. I spent a while people-watching, glancing over the shops, some customers browsing seriously, others just idly messing with the displays.

My eyes landed on a tall woman who hadn't bought a single thing in the store she was in. I watched, curious, as she stepped out and wandered into the next one. Since it had a glass storefront, I could still see her from outside. Same story there—nothing purchased.

I couldn't place it, but her face looked familiar somehow. I didn't know if I actually knew her, but I was fairly sure I'd seen her face before, somewhere.

I was about to walk toward her when my eyes locked onto a painfully familiar man not far from where I stood.

Mr. Wilsons? My eyebrows shot up in disbelief. What was he doing here?

He was in a plain, sharp white T-shirt and jeans, dark shades on. I swallowed hard, catching a glimpse of the defined chest beneath that shirt. Thank God the girls weren't here to see this yet.

I was sure he couldn't spot me from where I was standing, tucked behind a perfume display in front of the store, while the tall woman kept rearranging things inside. And Mr. Wilsons was... wait. Was he looking into the store too? At the same woman?

My eyes flicked back and forth between the two of them, and it slowly dawned on me what was going on.

“That’s the woman I saw on his phone,” I said, a little louder than I meant to.

“Everything alright, miss?” a saleswoman asked from inside the booth.

I just smiled and nodded at her.

“Yes, everything’s fine. Just browsing,” I said, smiling again. She raised an eyebrow and shook her head, unconvinced.

Ahh, I grumbled internally, glancing back toward the two of them.

So it was true. She was really back. I couldn’t believe Mr. Wilsons was out here personally trailing this woman. What had happened to that investigator he’d hired? Poor guy—probably got fired, because that stubborn man couldn’t let go of the past and wasn’t satisfied with whatever reports he’d been getting, so now he’d decided to take matters into his own hands. Argh. Tsk, tsk.

I’m not entirely sure what happened next. But then, out of nowhere, a man appeared and kissed the woman—deeply, right on the lips.