

Blind Date 341

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Not That Simple

Josie's hand froze as she dared not move. She pulled her hand back awkwardly. "That... I wasn't doing anything. There was something on your neck. I was cleaning it..."

It was evidently a lie.

Dexter bore his eyes into her.

She felt on edge and instinctively moved back, away from him. He snatched her arm and flipped it palm-side up.

"It looks like you're so bored that you not only went to nurse him but even donated your blood," he scoffed. A trace of anger was heard in his voice.

Josie could not argue back as she turned her head away. "Saving a life has far more value than building memorials for the dead."

"You're just hell-bent on going against me, isn't it?" His response was swift as he forcibly turned her head to face him.

"Is it wrong for me to find my own means to survive, Dexter?"

She stared back and replied calmly. She would face him if that was what he wanted.

The man's eyebrows quirked.

She tried to get away from him. "You told me you thought of Summer as your sister. Tell me, Dexter, is it still the same now?"

It took a lot of courage for her to ask the question, as it meant that she still had expectations of him.

Dexter noticed it, and the darkness behind his eyes dissipated. He released his grip. "It's not that simple about Summer. Not only me but even Arnold does not have the liberty to make a choice."

Josie nodded silently as she understood him. She crawled into the bed and buried her face into the pillow. "I want to sleep. Do whatever you want."

A deafening silence fell upon the place.

She drifted in and out of her sleep. Her heart sank when she woke up and felt the coldness next to her. She stepped out of the bed and headed to the door.

She did not like wearing slippers indoors. Her bare feet made no sound on the floor. She nudged the door open slightly, vaguely hearing Dexter's voice. It seemed even colder in the night.

"Not laying hands on women and children, prioritizing morality in everything you do. Even Hades would want to help you..."

“Is it not embarrassing with me guiding your people in the things you do? How useless. Aren’t you just wasting my time with these so-called ethics and morals wasting away in you?”

He spoke slowly with sharp words.

A shiver ran down Josie’s spine. Not wanting to be involved in Dexter’s world, she turned to leave.

But her legs refused to move as they were rooted to the spot.

“Have I not told you who you can and cannot touch in my family? It’s been a while since I’ve made a move. Don’t make me do it because of one woman. It will be ugly for everyone involved.”

Dexter was the president of Russell Group, but he had countless other identities.

There was a time when he did not appear much in public. As a result, some believed he had kicked the bucket.

Some of his enemies targeted Dexter’s people. They kidnapped the person to Spain, thinking that they were safe. They never expected Dexter’s man to chase them down throughout the night. Some of the most skilled in the world were even willing to risk themselves for Dexter as they relentlessly pursued the kidnappers. The incident served as a deterrent.

When they saved the kidnapped person, the kidnappers disappeared from the ends of the earth.

The news traveled all over the world. From then on, no one dared to make a move against Dexter’s people.

Josie could have left without alerting him, but she knocked into something while walking away. Immediately, Dexter turned in her direction.

“Who is it?”

Exasperated, she shut her eyes.

She pushed the door open with a blank expression. “I can’t sleep and wanted to go for a walk. Are you not going to bed yet?”

Dexter hardly slumbered as he had trouble falling asleep.

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Don’t Venture into It

Josie felt a wave of nervousness wash over her as his eyes bore into her. “I didn’t mean to eavesdrop. I woke up and didn’t see you. I thought you had left, so I came looking for you.”

Freshly awakened, dressed in a nightgown, and with a hoarse voice, Josie emitted an innocent aura that effortlessly pacified one’s guard.

Dexter grabbed her around the waist and leaned in for a kiss, but Josie evaded, as she still felt a lingering fear. “I don’t want you to kiss me.”

The excessive sweet talk felt overwhelming, and Josie couldn't tell if this deliberate coquettishness was a way to mask her own uneasiness.

Smitten by her coquettishness, Dexter let go of his stern demeanor and said, "Hmm, I'll join you in bed."

Josie rarely indulged in coquettishness, but when she did, Dexter couldn't resist, just as she couldn't escape when Dexter was upset.

Dexter settled her onto the bed, tucked her in with a blanket, and positioned himself beside her. He had no intention of leaving.

Noticing her quivering eyelashes, he took the initiative to break the silence. "Did you hear a lot of what I said?"

Josie didn't hear the entire conversation but heard enough to peer into his realm. It was a domain of decisive actions, choices that left no room for negotiation. Unlike the business world, where there was space for discussion and maneuvering, his realm had no ambiguity. Everything was clearly defined, and specific rules were adhered to.

And Dexter was the ruler.

With her eyes cast downward, Josie confided, "I heard you mention that you haven't done it in a long time."

Dexter smiled, appreciating Josie's intelligence and sharpness in understanding the boundaries of their conversation. With just a bedside lamp casting a soft glow, he pulled her close and asked gently. "Have you ever seen the true extent of my pluck and willpower?"

Josie shook her head, sensing the underlying warning.

"Dexter's authority wasn't solely derived from brute force; he had a de-facto ability to command the respect and obedience of his talented associates.

So, what did it truly signify when Dexter asserted his dominance? It undoubtedly went beyond mere mercilessness and brutality.

In a calm tone, Dexter said, "You're familiar with the Russell family, right?"

Of course! She had even been to their family estate.

"The Russell family, with a significant portion of both water and land territory under their belt, couldn't afford to have no one at the helm."

These intricacies were always beyond Josie's comprehension.

The Russell family operated on the razor's edge of the business world, where countless lives hung in the balance as mere pawns. They were skilled, highly trained, and operated with utmost secrecy.

Currently, Dexter has seized control of half of the Russell family.

He shared that he had dealt with his fair share of unreasonable people in the business world, and only one incident went awry. The other party had acted all two-faced, undermining Dexter's young age and lack of experience, and attempted to overpower him.

Caught off guard, Dexter's instincts kicked in, compelling him to take control of the situation. He unsheathed his sword, resulting in blood being spilled. The other party's arm became impaled and lodged in the table, with the skin torn and the bone pierced, rendering it immobile.

That guy's arm was likely wrecked.

Dexter's approach to using violence to counter violence was undeniably ruthless, reflecting someone who had traversed the world without desires or demands, showcasing his sharpness.

Since that incident, Dexter hadn't encountered anyone as insolent. The woman in his arms trembled as she listened intently. Although she had long been aware of his unique identity, Josie couldn't quite come to terms with this inhumane side of him.

However, she had always avoided that aspect, making him feel unfamiliar.

Dexter comforted Josie as if coaxing a child, saying, "I think we'll stop here. But Josie, don't venture into such a world. Stay away from Arnold. I can assure your safety as long as you're my wife,"

Josie believed that he was more than capable of doing so. Yet, he could also protect numerous other women, making her insignificant except for being his legitimate wife.

Josie simply nodded and didn't dwell on it, saying. I'm feeling a little tired. I want to take a nap."

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Deceitful Woman

Dexter momentarily stepped away to answer a phone call. Meanwhile, Josie closed her eyes, overwhelmed by sadness. His words had shattered her illusions. When she woke again, it was already dawn, and Dexter was nowhere to be found. She rubbed her eyes, never liking to be left alone in such a situation, but she understood that he wouldn't spend the night in a place like this.

After freshening up, she turned on the television and stumbled upon a reality show. It reminded her that she had to go to work that day. She packed her things and prepared to leave. To her surprise, she noticed a figure outside the room. At the same time, Dexter entered the empty room, placing a packed meal box on the table. He called out. Josie?"

There was no response.

Standing in the center of the room, Dexter felt an inexplicable loneliness akin to an abandoned child. Josie, hiding behind the windowsill, furrowed her brow, struggling to reconcile this side of Dexter with her perception of him.

Realizing his demeanor was turning cold before he turned away, Josie quickly revealed herself and declared. "I'm here; I haven't left yet."

Dexter pivoted, casting his gaze upon her. The whirlwind of emotions that had flickered in his eyes a moment ago dissipated, replaced by an emotionless stare that sent shivers down her spine. Josie felt a surge of panic, fearing Dexter might lose control again, as he had the previous night.

“Calm down. I was just joking with you,” she uttered, mustering her courage to reach out and grasp his hand, attempting to quell his wrath.

Dexter remained stoic, his face wearing a grave expression. Furrowing her brow, Josie gauged his reaction and inquired, “Do I need to keep apologizing for you to forgive me?”

This time, a smile tugged at Dexter’s lips. This woman had a knack for melting his heart, knowing just the right words to say. Josie noticed the softening of his expression and said, “Unlike you, I won’t leave without warning.

Dexter arched an eyebrow, unconvinced, “Such a deceitful woman.”

The television continued playing in the background as he reached out and pulled her into his embrace. Josie locked eyes with Dexter, his gaze unusually tender. She felt a weight settle in her heart, creating serendipity within her. For some reason, tears welled up in her eyes, but she couldn’t pinpoint the exact cause.

Sensing her gaze, Dexter leaned back slightly and whispered, “Do I need to remind you to close your eyes when we kiss?”

Without waiting for her response, he sealed her lips and kissed her passionately.

Downstairs, Ivy had been waiting for a while and was growing impatient. Feeling curious, she went upstairs and was met with this awkward scene. Ivy caught her breath, silently retreated, and purposely cleared her throat.

It was evident to anyone with keen observation that Dexter had a soft spot for Josie. He disregarded the dangers of speeding on the road. He compromised his usual standards to spend the night with her in such

a place, all for this seemingly ordinary woman.

However, something puzzled Ivy. While Dexter cared for Summer, his concern for Josie seemed even more significant. So, who held the key to his heart? In this world, a conclusion or absolute rationality was not always necessary.

Subsequently, Josie decided to accompany Dexter to the Russell Mansion.

“Mr. Russell, Arnold’s associates have secured the shipment at the harbor. It appears they plan to transport it to Rivodia. Should we send someone to intercept it at the highway exit?” Aware of Josie’s presence, Ivy reported cautiously.

Dexter’s gaze lingered on the documents. “No need; it will be some time before he takes action again.”

Josie glanced at them and asked, “What shipment?”

Dexter remained silent while Ivy answered, “Mrs. Russell, it’s a shipment of alcohol.”

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Overlooked Ivy

Alcohol? What kind of alcohol would require Arnold to go through all this trouble?

“Arnold is heavily entrenched in the nightlife scene, and with his connections and influence, it wouldn’t be difficult for him to generate that amount of money. No?”

Dexter gestured casually and responded, “When it comes to alcohol, there’s a whole spectrum to consider. Some of the finest quality, others just average, and let’s not forget the shady side of things. Any thoughts. on which category of alcohol Arnold has found himself entangled with?”

Josie pressed her lips together and asked, puzzled, “What will happen if he gets caught?”

Taken aback by her question, Dexter paused momentarily before mocking her, “Feeling sorry for your boyfriend already?”

Ignoring his sarcastic tone, Josie remained unfazed as he held her hand, idly toying with it, “Isn’t it a little too coincidental that the car accident happened just when it did? Even if I were to deal with him, I couldn’t because he has a witness in his aid. So, does that mean I’m supposed to surrender my wife to him?”

Dexter spoke slowly. His words were infused with grim, Josie, he has me in a bind. It’s impossible for me to attempt anything against him. Do you know what that means?”

Josie trembled slightly. It was a little too late for her to finally understand why Andy insisted on guarding the hospital. It was because of Dexter.

“Like I’ve told you before, Arnold is no kind soul,” Dexter let go of her.

Josie exited the car as soon as they arrived at the Russell Group. She was dazed during the entire journey, and Dexter’s warning wasn’t entirely baseless; it had triggered a sense of vigilance never had before.

“Ms. Warren,” somebody called out to her.

Josie turned around and saw Wyatt. He was dressed in a sharp suit, looking professional and charming.

“Hey, Wyatt.”

Wyatt walked up to her and smiled. “I saw you getting out of Dex’s car just now, but I didn’t want to get caught, so I didn’t dare call out.”

Josie forced a smile and asked, “How’s work been treating you lately?”

“Not too bad,” the two walked side by side, passing through the gate.

“We’ve been pulling long hours to meet the demanding deadlines set by Dex. On the bright side, our collaboration with Auntie Xanthe is going great,” Wyatt purposely brought up Xanthe, leaving Josie to piece together his hidden message.

“She... Has her son returned?”

Wyatt nodded, understanding her concern. "Don't worry. He's not back yet."

He stopped there and didn't say anything more.

As they passed the front desk, a greeting sounded, "Good morning, Ms. Warren. You have a package."

Josie went forward to claim it. It was a package sent by a collaborator.

She thanked the front desk and suddenly remembered something. "If I recall correctly, you've been working the night shift recently, right?"

The front desk hesitated for a moment. "You have a good memory."

+5 Bonus

Josie had a sudden realization. She mentioned a specific date. "During those days, besides the night-owls stayed for over-time. Did you come across anyone suspicious entering or leaving the design department at night?"

"At night....." The front desk frowned as she searched her memory. "Not that I remember... Only employees who were given the ID could access Russell Group. It's unlikely for anyone to trespass the security,"

Unable to uncover any leads, Josie felt a sense of anguish.

To her surprise. Wyatt stood beside her, saying, "I have some recollection of the time you mentioned. I remember that night, I had work to tend to, so I stayed until the wee hours of the night. When I left the office, I bumped into Ivy in the elevator. She was wearing a mask and a hat, and it didn't seem like she was coming to work."

Juy?!

Josie's eyes widened, and a realization struck her. How could she have possibly forgotten about Ivy?

"Do you remember the exact time?" Josie grabbed his hand.

"I'm not entirely sure, but it was likely around dawn. Strangely, she ended up on the same floor as the design department."

Josie couldn't help but let out a chuckle. She nodded in realization and exclaimed, "Ah, now it all makes sense! Thanks a bunch!"

Despite searching everywhere, she had somehow overlooked Ivy.

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Kidnapped

Seated at her desk, Josie scrolled through the company's internal system, searching for Ivy's contact details.

As a special assistant to Dexter, Ivy had special privileges, including unrestricted access throughout the company and the power to remove any surveillance traces.

Furthermore, Ivy's connection with Claire added another layer of complexity to the situation.

Josie blamed herself for overthinking and getting caught up in intricate possibilities, leading her to miss out on Ivy. But did Dexter take the recording pen away just to protect her?

After finding Ivy's address, Josie swiftly jotted it down.

When it was time to leave work, she hastened outside and flagged down a taxi, only to realize she was being followed. It became apparent that the person tailing her was a pair of undercover bodyguards.

Josie tried to ignore them. She even attempted to shake them off by taking a detour but to no avail. Eventually, she had no choice but to confront them, "Did Dexter send you to follow me?" she asked.

The two men exchanged glances, and one responded, "Mr. Russell doesn't want you wandering around."

"I'm not wandering around. Can't I go back to Mason Garden?"

"Let us escort you," the bodyguards said, followed by a tense atmosphere descending upon them, punctuated by a heavy silence.

Josie quickly scanned the area, noticing their car conveniently stationed nearby. Understanding the potential dangers of resisting and trying to escape, she nodded in acquiescence, reluctantly falling in step behind them as they made their way toward the awaiting vehicle.

However, as they neared the car door, armed individuals suddenly appeared from behind, swiftly attacking the two bodyguards on their heads with weapons.

Amidst their agonizing struggle, Josie was dragged away. "You're coming with us, Mrs. Russell! Stop resisting!" One of them ordered.

Josie was shoved into a van with her eyes blindfolded. Fear gripped her heart as she exclaimed. "Who are you?"

"Take a guess, Mrs. Russell."

"You know who I am, yet you have the nerve to offend me?"

Someone chuckled, "There aren't many in this city who could go head-to-head with you. Why not hazard a guess?"

"Was it Arnold?" Josie blurted out involuntarily.

"Well, thanks to Mr. Carter, we were able to locate you, they admitted.

Upon hearing that, Josie couldn't help but express her disgust, "You b*stards! Don't try to sow discord.

Arnold is in the hospital. There's no reason for him to plot against me."

No matter how rough or deranged he might seem, he wouldn't dare harm the person who had rescued him. But in Wavery, who else could be her enemy? At that moment, a name sprung out, "Ivy? Did Ivy send you?!"

It had to be Ivy, then. She must have resorted to sneaky means since she couldn't openly confront me.

"Shut up! Enough with the gibberish!" Someone yelled at Josie.

The van drove for what seemed like an eternity, causing Josie to lose track of their location. Finally, it came to a stop. The blindfold was removed, revealing a dilapidated unfinished building before her.

They brought Josie inside and ensured her hands were tied. Looking around, she was astonished to see Ivy sitting on a broken chair on the second floor, with a computer in front of her, typing away.

Josie was taken aback, realizing there was another woman bound before her. It was none other than the fragile and helpless Summer, with blood at the corner of her lips, seemingly unconscious.

"Ivy! What's wrong with you?! You must have gone crazy to do this to us!" Josie shouted, incredulous at the scene before her. She never expected Ivy to go to such extremes!

Upon hearing her voice, Ivy finally gazed at Josie and said, "So, you've come."

It had been a long time since they last saw each other, and Josie couldn't help but notice that Ivy had lost considerable weight. Her facial features had sharpened, emanating a colder and more ruthless demeanor.

Ivy turned off the computer and stared at Josie with a gaze filled with hatred. She then asked, "Has anyone found out about us?"

Assured and relieved, Ivy descended the stairs and approached Josie.

Through clenched teeth, she chided, "Weren't you planning to divorce? Why haven't you gone through with it? None of this would have happened if you had!!

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Who Would He Choose?

Fear gripped Josie as she instinctively stepped back, "So, it was you all along! You conspired with Claire to smear my name!"

"Took you long enough to realize. Tsk. I wonder why Dexter would fall for an idiot like you!"

Ivy said while forcefully pushing Josie, causing her to trip and fall to the ground, leaving a bloody mark on her scraped elbow.

Josie felt a burning sensation in her elbow. She bit her lips and glared at Ivy. "Why did you do this? Even if Dexter has no feelings for you, you can stay by his side as his personal assistant. Isn't that enough?"

"No! No! It's all because of you! It's your fault!" Wielding a hemp rope in her hand, Ivy ruthlessly assaulted Josie.

"If it weren't for you, Dexter wouldn't have sidelined me! Josie Warren, you're good at your deceitful and despicable antics!"

Tears welled up in Josie's eyes as the pain in her wounded elbow intensified. She took a sharp breath, realizing that Dexter had removed Ivy from her role. It now made sense why Ivy had become so unhinged.

"Have you ever thought that your repeated boundary-crossing led him to make that decision? You betrayed his trust, and that's why things turned out like this. No one forced you to make those choices!"

Ivy's fixation and infatuation with Dexter sent chills down Josie's spine.

Josie's confrontation stirred up Ivy's anger. A cruel smirk formed on Ivy's face as she retorted, "We were always in sync, like soulmates. No one in this world understood each other better than us. But ever since you came, everything changed..."

Ivy's demeanor and words revealed her unraveling state, with her head shaking frantically and her body swaying uncontrollably.

"It was you! It was you who took away his love for me!"

Ivy's voice echoed through the room as she relentlessly lashed at Josie with the hemp rope. Beads of sweat rolled down Josie's face from the intense physical torment.

Ivy turned away, her gaze fixed on the lush trees outside. She sighed and reminisced. "I remember I first met Dexter; it was spring. He asked if I wanted to be his assistant with a charming smile."

A tender smile graced Ivy's lips as she recalled that moment. "I know deep in my heart that we would end up with each other if things had gone as planned. But you... Josie Warren! You robbed him away from me!"

Josie's eyes remained cold and unwavering. "You're delusional."

"No, you're the one who's delusional!" Ivy's disheveled hair added to her frenzied appearance as she squatted down, forcefully gripping Josie's face.

"Why do you think he asked you for the recording pen? It was to protect me, Josie. Between you and me, he chose me!"

Who Would He Choose?

"Stop fooling yourself. He would never like you!"

Undoubtedly, this incident left a deep emotional wound in Josie's heart. However, deep down, she knew Dexter didn't do that to protect Ivy.

Ivy simply didn't hold enough significance in Dexter's life.

Josie's words triggered a wave of anger within Ivy. She forcefully pushed Josie away, a sneer forming on her face. Today, I want to see if you truly matter to him!"

Confusion and worry filled Josie's mind. What did Ivy mean? Had she told Dexter about their kidnapping?

Josie turned her gaze towards Summer, who was forced to kneel nearby. A sense of dread washed over her, "What are you going to do to us? Why involve an innocent person in our grievances?"

"Well, she's not just anyone," Ivy remarked, lifting Summer's pale face with the tip of her high-heeled shoe.

"Let's see if Dexter will choose you over her. Or vice versa."

Josie's thoughts raced in chaos. Ivy had gone insane, resorting to extreme measures!

"But she's the only daughter of the Olsen family. You ought to pay with your life if anything happens to her!"

"Do you think I still bother about my life at this point?" Ivy retorted, her voice filled with determination.

Desperate, Josie ignored the pain in her body and shouted, "Wake up! Wake up, Summer!"

But Summer remained motionless. Ivy gloated, saying, "Don't bother. I drugged her. She won't wake up anytime soon."

"Ivy! No!"

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There's Still Time to Change Your Mind

Ivy fixed a piercing gaze on Josie, her expression filled with disdain. "You're quite the cunning one, aren't you? Knowing your time as Mrs. Russell was limited, you seduced Arnold and won him over to your side. Impressive how you managed to maintain that relationship," she taunted. "so, did you sleep with him?"

Josie stood her ground, her voice steady. "Arnold and I have never crossed that line. As she locked eyes with Ivy, a realization dawned on her. "You were aware of the close connection between Arnold and me, which is why you sent those photos to Dexter, pretending they came from Arnold."

Ivy sneered, neither confirming nor denying Josie's accusation. A sense of indifference seemed to wash over her. "You fooled me, keeping me under your control all this time!"

A subtle tremor passed through Ivy's body, her gaze wandering as if lost in distant memories, "The first time I laid eyes on Dexter was at an airport overseas. I had lost my luggage during the check-in process, and I was in despair, unable to speak Spanish or receive proper assistance. That's when he appeared and offered his help

"I'm not lying. I had no idea about his high status and identity then. Yet, I was attracted to him. It was love at first sight, Ivy confessed, her voice tinged with nostalgia and bitterness.

"We were only together briefly, but he lifted me out of despair, giving me a glimpse of a better life, teaching me elegance and grace."

"I knew I didn't deserve someone like him, but I couldn't help but hope. And then, within just a couple of days, he offered me the position of his special assistant. These past few years by his side have felt like a dream, fulfilling beyond words."

"But... he was heartless... He discovered my feelings for him and fired me." Ivy showed no hint of remorse. She slowly lowered herself to a squatting position, her voice wavering with a chilling tone. "He was unbelievably heartless..."

As Josie observed her, Ivy had manifested signs of obsession with Dexter.

Josie's words were blunt, yet they hit the mark with unwavering truth. "You knew from the start he wouldn't have feelings for you..."

Tears streamed down Ivy's face uncontrollably, smudging her makeup into a messy blur.

"You're right. But why? I'm an exceptional woman. Why doesn't he like me? Josie, it's all because of you. Everything is because of you!"

Despite facing Ivy's frenzied screaming, Josie remained composed. She spoke slowly, deliberately. "You can't hold onto someone like him."

Ivy glared at her.

Josie continued, "I can't hold onto him either."

"As his special assistant, you should know that women would flock to him with his status and attractiveness. Don't you know that he could easily date multiple girlfriends simultaneously?"

Ivy momentarily contemplated Josie's words before letting out a cold, disdainful laugh. "Are you trying to

lecture me? How presumptuous of you. Just because you're Mrs. Russell, you think you're above everyone else and your life is secure. Dexter understands what goes in your mind. Even if you hold the title of his wife, it won't guarantee you any special treatment."

Blood trickled from Josie's mouth as she trembled with fear and anger. "At least I'm the rightful Mrs. Russell. Dexter still acknowledges me as his wife. We have no prenuptial agreement, so if we divorce, I have a claim to his assets. But what about you?"

Aware of Ivy's plan and hoping to buy some time, Josie attempted to distract her.

Ivy tightly clenched the hemp rope, causing her fingertips to turn white.

"Ivy, just think about it. You've got credentials from the Russell Group that can take you places. Why settle

for this crumbling place and waste your youth? There's still time for you to change your mind."

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Had Suspicions Early on

Ivy's scream reverberated through the air. "No! There's no turning back for me, Josie! It's too late!"

With those words, she forcefully yanked Josie off the ground and flung her beside Summer. “Now, let’s see who Dexter chooses!”

Just then, the guard stationed by the door notified Ivy, “Ms. Miller, Mr. Russell has arrived.”

Ivy lifted her head, her eyes brimming with anticipation, “Did he bring anyone with him?”

The guard surveyed the surroundings before responding. “No, he came alone.”

Josie summoned every ounce of strength to move her aching body and strained to look outside. The glaring sunlight made her squint and feel uneasy.

As the iron gate swung open, a man stepped in, bathed in a radiant halo of sunlight. But his presence exuded a dark and solemn aura.

Each of his footsteps bore down on Josie’s heart, making it difficult to catch her breath.

Ivy’s gaze locked onto Dexter, her expression bordering on madness, and she choked back tears, “Mr. Russell... you came.”

Dexter halted his steps at a distance, eyes scanning over Josie before briefly lingering.

“Weren’t you the one who asked me to come?”

He reached out to unbutton his cuff, his eyes filled with menacing intent.

“But did you come for me?” Ivy cautiously inquired, fully aware that it wasn’t the case, yet clinging to a foolish glimmer of hope.

Dexter remained silent, nonchalantly removing his coat and tossing it onto a nearby stack of wood. He then slipped the ring off his finger and stashed it in his pants pocket.

Ivy’s smile faded, and her attention turned to the two women beside her, “So, Mr. Russell, which of them. did you come for?”

Josie recoiled, a tinge of anxiety creeping in. She knew better than to place high expectations on Dexter, as she wouldn’t be the one he chose.

Dexter locked eyes with Ivy with a poker face, “What do you want?”

“I’m curious; when did you start suspecting I was behind all this?” Ivy asked with a gentle tone.

“Quite some time ago. I noticed you deleted the incoming call on my personal phone.” Though he didn’t mention explicitly whose call it was, they both knew.

Ivy shook her head in disbelief. “After all these years of serving you, you doubt me over one small mistake?”

“Not only that,” Dexter continued, “only a few people knew about the incident at the construction site, and

even the company’s senior executives were kept in the dark. Yet, you quickly blamed Josie when you knew we had a strained relationship. Doesn’t that seem suspicious?”

Dexter was always vigilant and had a keen eye for deception. He had a knack for seeing through facades and uncovering what appeared flawless and random.

"Ivy. I wish it didn't have to come to this," Dexter said, his gaze unwavering. "you were someone I mentored and considered a confidante."

The weight of Dexter's words made it clear that Ivy held significance in his life. Tears filled Ivy's eyes. "But just because I threatened Josie, you sidelined me! Dexter, I've always been loyal to you!"

"Really?" Dexter's tone turned firm. "What about the photos of Arnold and Josie? Can you explain that? Who is your accomplice? You tell me!"

As it turned out. Dexter had been fully aware of everything all along.

Avoiding eye contact, Ivy's guilt weighed heavily on her. "No! It wasn't me!"

"What is it that you want?" Dexter's patience wore thin, unable to tolerate the seemingly endless confrontation.

Wiping the tears from the corners of her eyes, Ivy stealthily signaled a cryptic glance at the guard.

The guard wasted no time, dragging Summer towards the suspended area. He fastened her hands with a hemp rope to the steel bars, leaving her fragile form teetering by the edge, a mere step away from a fatal plunge from the second floor.

A single misstep would result in either her untimely demise or a life plagued by crippling injuries.

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Making Him Choose

Ivy brandished a knife, pressing it against Josie's throat with a maniacal grin on her face.

"Dexter, you have to make a choice," Ivy taunted. "save Summer, and I'll slit Josie's throat right now. Choose Josie, and Summer's rope will be cut, sending her tumbling."

"So, what's it going to be? An easy decision?"

The knife's edge pressed against Josie's throat, causing her to wince in pain. She gasped for breath and looked at the man before her, his cold eyes gleaming, unsure of what to say.

Dexter locked eyes with her, his thoughts a tangled web.

"I know what you're made of, Mr. Russell. Let's see who's quicker, you or my knife," the guard standing by Summer taunted Dexter.

Dexter found himself in a stalemate, unable to handle both situations simultaneously.

"You said you love me." Dexter suddenly spoke, his words causing Ivy to flinch instinctively.

"I'm asking you to choose between them!" Ivy's voice quivered with anxiety, swaying under the influence of Dexter's hidden agenda.

"Are you sure you really love me?" He chuckled lightly, exuding a sinister charm in the midst of this twisted situation.

"If you had confessed your feelings earlier, you could have become Mrs. Russell. But you didn't; how was I supposed to know?"

Ivy locked eyes with him, her gaze filled with unmistakable affection, her hand trembling as the knife sliced into Josie's skin, causing her pain.

"Are you insinuating that you would have chosen me over Josie?"

"Of course, when I decided to marry, I simply needed a woman for the role. It could have been anyone,"

Dexter took a subtle step forward, his words carrying a convincing tone.

Ivy grew wary, "But you said something different before..."

"We were simply boss and employee. I had to maintain that professional boundary, of course. But things have changed now. I honestly don't have any romantic feelings for her. If you had confessed your feelings for me earlier, you would have had the upper hand, Dexter explained.

So, Ivy was right. Dexter had no feelings for me. Josie's heart trembled, realizing Dexter was really skilled in manipulation.

Ivy cautiously backed away while keeping Josie close, her suspicion still lingering, "You're lying! The Dexter I know wouldn't come unprepared. Did you call someone? Did you inform the police?"

She immediately gestured for someone to check outside, shouting loudly, and tightened her grip on the knife, "Aren't you afraid that I'll kill them?"

His expression grew grim. Dexter remained still, no longer advancing.

"I didn't call anyone."

The guard returned from checking and confirmed that no one followed them.

Ivy felt slightly relieved, saying, "Now, it's time for you to choose. On one side is your lawful Mrs. Russell, and on the other is Summer, the daughter of the Olsen family. I wonder who will be your pick. If something were to happen to Mrs. Russell, the entire Wavery would know that you, Dexter, are a widower. And if any harm befalls Summer, the Olsen family will never let you and the Russell family go unscathed."

"For a guy like you, who always puts your own interests first, this is no doubt a tough call. Oh, Mr. Russell, I've really made things complicated for you."

Dexter arched an eyebrow in response, pointing towards Josie.

Amidst Josie's burning and terrified gaze, a hoarse voice suddenly emerged, "Dex!"

Unexpectedly, at that moment.

Summer regained consciousness, swaying violently in mid-air, consumed by sheer terror. "How did I end up here? Dex, help me!"

Her once cold and beautiful face displayed intense fear as she gazed wide-eyed at her surroundings, trembling, crying, and desperately calling out to Dex. pleading for help.

Her cries were so heart-wrenching that even Josie was moved.

“Summer!” Dexter’s hand clenched, veins bulging with tension, as he hurried a few steps toward her in a state of anxiety.

Witnessing that scene, Josie closed her eyes and flashed a bitter smile.

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In This Together

Ivy grinned with satisfaction, loosening her grip slightly. But just then, Dexter, facing the other way, abruptly turned around and charged toward them.

He swung his leg, landing a powerful kick right in Ivy’s vulnerable spot.

Ivy’s face instantly paled, and in that moment of pain. Dexter swiftly seized the opportunity. overpowering her and pinning her to the ground.

The knife clattered to the ground.

His movements were fluid and precise. On this hand, Josie was relieved. She quickly crawled away, gasping for breath as she observed the unfolding scene.

Dexter firmly restrained Ivy, catching her off guard with agility and speed. In a panic, Ivy shouted to the guard. “Push her down!”

The guard, hearing her command, promptly moved to cut the rope. Fearing for her life, Summer cried out, “Dex!”

Josie’s instinct kicked in, and despite her injuries weighing her down, she leaned forward, desperately wanting to save Summer.

Fortunately, the rope was too thick to be severed immediately. Dexter’s expression shifted dramatically. and he swiftly rose to his feet, rushing towards Summer. Josie could only watch helplessly as he decisively left her side.

Suddenly, a commotion erupted outside.

Arnold had arrived, wielding a gun from his wheelchair. In one swift motion, he disabled the guard by shooting his leg, preventing him from cutting the rope that held Summer.

However, she was already teetering on the edge, ready to fall with the slightest movement.

Josie fixated her gaze on the unfolding scene.

Just as Summer was about to plummet, Dexter lunged forward, grasping her wrist. Gravity pulled against them, his body scraping against the rough ground, nearly being dragged down.

Summer looked up at Dexter, her voice shaky. “Dex.”

“Hang on!” Dexter clenched his teeth, veins bulging on his neck. “Summer, you have to hold on.”

Amid the chaos, Arnold’s men were still locked in combat with the remaining guards, leaving Dexter without immediate assistance.

Following Ivy’s command, the injured guard grabbed a wooden stick and mercilessly swung it toward Dexter’s shoulder and neck, aiming to kill him.

“Dodge!” Josie cried out, her voice reaching Dexter’s ears. He swiftly turned his head, narrowly avoiding the deadly strike.

However, the guard showed no mercy. Relentlessly, he unleashed a barrage of brutal strikes upon Dexter’s immobile leg, each piercing Josie’s heart like a knife.

Sweat dripped down Dexter’s forehead as the pain surged through his body. His strength was depleting

Even Summer, trembling beside him, shook her head. “Let go, Dex. Just let go of me.”

Dexter emitted a furious roar without uttering a word in response.

“Just let go!” Summer pleaded, her voice filled with anguish.

“I’ve been nothing but a burden all this time. I’ve loved you wholeheartedly, but my love was never reciprocated. Dex, all I ever wanted was to see you happy. So, even if I die, don’t blame yourself, and please live a fulfilling life.

“Quit with the doomsday talk, Summer! We’re in this together, okay?” Dexter’s words strained through his gritted teeth.

“No...”

Dexter and Summer looked like a couple on the brink of separation in life or death. Josie couldn’t help but feel anxious and moved by their intense emotions.

“Hold on tight!” Dexter grabbed onto the rough wall, leaving bloody smears behind.

“Quick!” Arnold shielded his wound, propelling the wheelchair with one hand while gripping the gun, his gaze fixed on the guard behind Dexter. He squinted and sidlined a shot at the hand holding the wooden stick.

The guard went down in a tumble, completely immobilized.

With no more obstacles, Dexter breathed a small sigh of relief. Clenching his teeth, he mustered every ounce of his strength to haul Summer up.

Eventually, they both collapsed on the ground, gasping for air, and everyone around breathed a sigh of relief.

Summer clung to Dexter at that moment, a mix of anxiety and joy in her voice, “Dex, I thought I was going to die...”

The disheveled and breathless man grinned in relief, having escaped the clutches of death, as he gently caressed her head, “We made it. We’re safe now.”

Josie's smile slowly faded, and a somber expression replaced it.