

## Chapter 38 Need Help Changing

Somewhere else, Alexia had already reached the building where her friend who streamed the show worked.

After getting no answer on the phone, she decided to head upstairs and look for her in person.

A look of surprise crossed her friend's face when Alexia appeared.

Tia Parry, stepping out of her office, greeted her. "Hey, Alexia, what brings you here?"

"There's something I need to talk to you about," Alexia replied, casting a glance toward the others in the room before tugging Tia outside.

Tia looked at her curiously. "What's with all the secrecy?"

"I sent you a message last night. Why didn't you respond?" Alexia asked right away.

Tia let out a sigh, shaking her head. "It's actually a little crazy. Everyone who worked the live Heavenly Melody broadcast had to hand over their phones yesterday."

Alexia's stomach dropped. "Why? What happened?"

The timing made her uneasy, especially since Millie's performance had been sabotaged right then.

It was even stranger that the crew was now asked to hand over their phones.

Tia shrugged. "Honestly, I'm not sure. They still haven't given our phones back. I had to use an outside line just to call my mom and let her know I'm okay."

She continued, "The company said the matter was serious. When I passed by the conference room earlier, I overheard them talking about confidentiality contracts."

Spotting Alexia's concern, Tia squeezed her hand. "Are you alright? Tell me what's going on. Maybe I can help."

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Back at the hospital, Millie scrunched up her nose. "If it smells that good, why don't you bring it over to my table already?"

While she spoke, Millie moved the small table closer, tapped it with her hand, and glanced at Giffard.

Giffard looked at her with a raised eyebrow, taken aback by her request.

Around Alexia, Millie always put on a sweet and gentle act, but when it was just the two of them, her clever humor showed itself.

Truthfully, that was exactly what Giffard found so appealing about her.

If her feelings for Brandon had not been so obvious, he might have tried his luck with her long ago.

Thinking about this, Giffard pulled up a chair beside her, set the lunchbox down, and neatly arranged her meal on the table.

He flashed a grin. "Everything's ready, Millie. Go ahead and dig in."

Not bothered in the slightest, Millie reached for her fork and took a bite.

Today's meal tasted wonderful—it reminded her of the comforting chicken soup Alexia had brought her recently.

She glanced at Giffard and asked, "Where did you get this from? I want to remember the place."

A knowing smile spread across Giffard's face. "So you like it?"

Millie nodded without hesitation. "I do."

"If you ever want it again, just say the word and I'll bring it for you," Giffard remarked, still smiling.

The unexpected offer caught Millie off guard, and she started coughing hard. Her elbow knocked into a plate, splashing the sauce onto her clothes.

Quick to react, Giffard handed her a tissue and gently patted her back.

"Are my words really that hard to swallow?" Giffard said, sounding a bit amused and a little frustrated.

Once Millie had calmed down, she wiped at the mess and said, "Let's not

do that, Giffard. I only ate your food today because Alexia's unable to bring me my lunch. Normally, I wouldn't dare try anything you bring."

Giffard tapped her lightly on the forehead. "You know, that hurts my feelings."

Millie just gave him a look, unable to come up with a good reply.

When she noticed the spill, she decided it was time to head to the bathroom and change her clothes.

Giffard moved to offer his help as she stood up.

After pushing his hand away a couple of times, Millie realized he would never give up. Since he wouldn't actually come into the bathroom with her, she gave in and let him help her up.

Her hospital room was split in two—a space for her bed, and a small balcony beyond a frosted glass door, providing a bit of sunlight and some privacy.

The bathroom was tucked away on that balcony.

Millie slipped inside while Giffard stayed just outside the door.

Standing in front of the mirror, she studied the stain on her clothes, hesitating before speaking up. "Giffard, you know Alexia and I have been friends forever. Since you're her brother, I've always thought of you like family too."

She found the courage to say this only with the bathroom door between them.

"So, about all the things Alexia jokes about us—please don't take any of it to heart," she added.

On the other side of the door, Giffard's grin faded.

The sunlight coming through the window cast long shadows by his feet, and a quiet seriousness settled over him.

After a short pause, he replied with an easy tone, "Yeah, I know. Alexia's always been that way. She never thinks before she acts."

Millie breathed a soft sigh of relief when she heard him sounding just the same as always.

That worry that he might take things the wrong way eased from her mind.

In her heart, Giffard had always been just a friend—nothing else.

Lately, Alexia had gone out of her way to try and pair them up, and no matter how many times Millie refused, Alexia just laughed it off and kept meddling.

Clearing things up today felt right. Maybe now it would save them both from feeling awkward later on.

Thinking that, Millie quickly started to change.

A moment later, Giffard's voice came through the door again. "What's the matter, did Alexia's little match-making game really scare you? Relax! You think you can make it out on your own, or should I call in backup? Need a hand getting dressed?"

His playful joking finally made Millie relax.

With that familiar mischievous tone, she knew everything was back to normal between them.

She answered, "I can handle it myself, thanks. You don't need to worry!"

After changing in a hurry, Millie gathered up her soiled clothes and swung open the bathroom door, throwing a pointed look at Giffard, who stood there with an amused grin.

With his signature relaxed manner, he offered his arm and said, "Your Majesty, allow me the honor."

Millie gave him an exaggerated eye roll but rested her hand on his arm, letting him escort her back into the room.

On the other side of the frosted glass, she caught a hazy glimpse of someone lingering by the hospital room entrance. But she couldn't see clearly.

Together, they pushed open the frosted glass door and moved back into the room.

A chilly breeze swept in, causing Millie to shiver for a moment.

Her attention went to the hospital room door, which hung slightly ajar and drifted back and forth, most likely stirred by the wind.

"Was that door open before?" Millie asked.

Giffard shrugged, barely interested. "I really don't remember."

He wandered over and pushed the door shut.

Millie just nodded, brushing off her worries. She figured it was probably her imagination or someone just passing through. Hospitals always had people coming and going.

Out in the hallway, Brandon paced to the end of the corridor, his face clouded with anger.

He pressed himself against the wall, lips set in a hard, straight line.

Even from the balcony, he could hear the sound of their playful banter, and the sight of their silhouettes close together through the frosted glass gnawed at him. ❶

He wondered if Millie was up to her old games again. Was she trying to get a rise out of him by letting him see her so close to another man? ❷

Ever since he asked the front desk for Millie's room, things felt off.

The nurse had claimed it would take a while to check her room number. Had the nurse tipped Millie off while he waited downstairs? ❸

He wondered if they had timed everything so he would arrive just in time to see this scene. ❹

A deep scowl cut across Brandon's face as he squeezed his fists so tightly that his knuckles paled. ❺