

## NEVER MISTAKE A QUEEN FOR A LAPDOG

Yes-man 11

The next morning, Noreen had barely set foot in the office when Sophia sidled over, looking conspiratorial, and showed her what she'd discovered earlier.

"Looks like Mr. Lowell spent the night at Mr. Harcourt's place," Sophia whispered, her voice barely more than a breath, glancing around to make sure no one else could hear.

On her phone screen was the evidence—a photo she'd snapped on the sly.

"This morning, they arrived in the same car. And Mr. Lowell's wearing the exact same clothes as yesterday."

Noreen glanced at the photo. In it, Seth stood by the car door, half his face lost in shadow as he looked down at Bianca, who was about to step out. Maybe it was the angle, or maybe the moment itself, but there was a subtle intimacy about the scene. Something lingering and soft.

She stared at the image for a few seconds, then looked away, tossing a handful of pills into her mouth. Chasing them down with several gulps of hot water, she felt the liquid course down her throat—no pain, no discomfort.

Truly, nothing at all.

She spent the entire morning sorting through project files, making sure every detail was in order. Somewhere in between, she found the time to draft her resignation letter.

Meanwhile, Bianca made four separate trips to Seth's office, each visit lasting more than half an hour. Noreen guessed Seth was in a good mood with Bianca there; he didn't even mention being stood up by Noreen the night before.

Just before noon, Seth and Bianca finally emerged together. As they passed Noreen's desk, Seth didn't spare her a glance.

Bianca was chatting with him, asking what he wanted for lunch. She said it was her treat—a thank you for helping her out with drinks last night.

Seth suggested a place nearby, a little bistro known for its nourishing broths. Their signature soup, he said, was supposed to be good for the blood—just what she needed right now.

Bianca looked genuinely touched. "Seth, that's so thoughtful."

As the elevator doors closed, Noreen typed her name at the bottom of her  
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resignation letter.

Sophia texted: What do you want for lunch?

Noreen thought for a moment before replying, "Let's go to Bone & Broth."

Sophia agreed.

It was lunchtime, and the place was buzzing with people. The moment Noreen walked in, she spotted Seth and Bianca. It was impossible not to—they were seated right in the middle of the room.

"Seriously?" Sophia muttered under her breath, worried Noreen would be upset.

But Noreen kept her cool, glancing past them as if they were invisible.

"There's a

free table over there.”

One of the servers recognized Noreen and came over with a friendly smile.

“Miss Gilmore, back for our valerian root soup today?”

Noreen shook her head with a smile. “Not today. I’ll have something gentle on the stomach, please.”

“Did your boss finally solve his insomnia problems?” the server asked, almost out

of habit.

After all, every time Noreen came to Bone & Broth, it was to pick up a special sleep remedy for her boss—rain or shine. Over time, she’d become something of a regular, and most of the staff knew her by name.

Noreen’s expression was calm. “Yeah. He won’t be needing it anymore.”

From now on, she just needed to take care of herself.

Sophia piped up, “Do you have anything that’s good for, you know, boosting blood and energy? It’s that time of the month and I keep getting lightheaded.”

“We do, actually!” the server replied, unable to hide her excitement. “There are only three servings of our specialty black chicken and astragalus soup today—you’re lucky, there’s one left. The other two went to that gentleman over there, for his girlfriend.”

There was a hint of envy in the server’s voice. “They’re such a great couple—smart, good-looking, and so elegant. And he’s so attentive! Men like that are hard to find these days.”

Sophia nearly reached out to cover the server’s mouth.

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She was talking about Seth and Bianca, of course.

So Seth had brought Bianca here for the nourishing soup because she needed it this time of the month.