

# Secret Admiration Finding True Love After Prison

## Chapter 21 – 30

Chapter 21 Let's Get Married

1/5

Chandler said softly, "I've already taken care of the discharge procedures." His voice was as gentle as the first ray of sunlight in the morning that effortlessly cleared the forest mist.

"So..." he began, lowering his gaze and locking eyes with Meryl. "Have you made up your mind about the offer?" He meant the one about getting married.

She noticed that Chandler was still wearing the same shirt from the last time they met, but the third button, which she had ripped off, had been sewn back on.

Meryl squeezed her palm into a fist and then let go, looking obviously nervous.

"I can marry you, but..." she replied, looking down and reaching for her phone. "I drew up a prenuptial agreement last night. Do you want to take a look?"

Chandler was at a loss for words and fell silent.

Meryl observed him intently, trying to gauge his reaction.

Seeing Chandler's furrowed brows, she asked in confusion, "Did I say something I shouldn't have?"

Meryl couldn't sleep last night and had stayed up thinking it through long and hard. She had nothing to her name, but

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2/5

Chandler was good-looking and ran a small business. Marrying him seemed like a good deal for her.

She thought it over and wrote up a prenuptial agreement. It wasn't too detailed, mainly just about their assets.

The agreement stated that they would split expenses equally after marriage, and if they divorced someday, Meryl could leave with nothing.

After all, she currently had nothing and was counting on Chandler to provide her with a place to stay.

“I’ll send it to you first.” Meryl said, swiping her phone screen to unlock it.

Just then, Chandler suddenly leaned closer to her, catching her off guard, and then he grabbed her wrist. “We don’t need a prenup.”

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He had a faint minty scent mixed with the smell of aftershave, a refreshing aroma.

The sudden physical contact left Meryl stunned. Her eyes went to Chandler’s hand gripping her wrist, and her face began to blush.

“You get half of everything I have,” he said, noticing a hint of red spreading to the back of her ears.

Chandler then wondered if it was the sun causing the redness.

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He angled his body to give her some shade. “I’ll take care of all the household expenses too.”

Meryl blinked innocently, finding it hard to believe. “But if we end up divorcing, won’t you get the short end of the stick?”

Chandler raised an eyebrow. “Divorce?”

Meryl took a deep breath and nodded in response.

She gently pulled her wrist back from Chandler’s grasp, her voice becoming quieter. “I’ve done time. Your family might mind. If we don’t get along after we’re married, or if…”

Upon hearing that, he narrowed his eyes slightly, and for a moment, his expression turned dark as if something had crossed his mind.

When Meryl looked up at Chandler, she saw the corners of his mouth lift into a smile again.

He said, “We won’t get divorced. As long as you want this, it’ll be forever.”

Meryl had never been this close to Chandler before.

Right then, a gentle breeze blew through the window. He was partly bathed in sunlight, the rays casting an angle on his face.

His deep eyes were fixed on Meryl, and his calm gaze gave off an unusual sense of determination.

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Meryl paused, suddenly struck by how incredibly captivating Chandler's eyes were.

When she realized she had been staring at him for a good ten seconds, she quickly averted her gaze awkwardly.

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Trying to steady her racing heart, Meryl murmured, "But I was engaged before, I..."

"Didn't you say the engagement was called off?" Chandler interrupted.

She nodded. "It was. But he's rich and powerful. I worry that you..."

"Don't worry about it," Chandler assured her.

Meryl was taken aback and thought to herself, "But he's Dalton, the crown prince of Kingdom!"

She asked again, "But what if my ex-fiancé tries to get revenge on you?"

Chandler chuckled, "He won't."

Meryl stayed quiet for a moment, somehow feeling that he genuinely wasn't afraid when she saw the determination in his

eyes.

Chandler's presence was overwhelming. She took a deep breath, thinking that this was exactly the kind of husband she needed.

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Meryl believed that it was her right to marry whoever she wanted. Since she had decided to start over, she wouldn't regret

1. it.

She then said firmly, "Okay. Let's get married."

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Chapter 22 New Beginnings Old Doubts

1/5

"Okay," Chandler murmured, giving a slight nod before walking out of the ward.

When he looked back and saw that Meryl was still standing there, frozen, he walked back to her and grabbed her wrist.

"What are you waiting for?" Chandler asked with a smile tugging at his lips, his deep voice carrying a hint of cheerfulness. "Come on. Let's go to City Hall."

"Wait, what?" Meryl was caught off guard. She then found herself going along with him, though her brain was struggling to process it all.

"We're going now?" she asked, clearly taken aback. She felt like everything was moving a little too fast.

"Uh—

huh. Is something wrong?" Chandler asked, looking back and locking eyes with Meryl.

She hesitated, "I...don't have my documents with me! I need to go back and get them."

As Meryl thought of that home in question, her gaze dropped to the floor.

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2/5

She reflected, "I've been gone for two days, and no one at home bothered to call to check on me. I guess I'm really just a nobody."

But Meryl had already made peace with it because she was going to have a new home soon.

She suggested, "How about we get the marriage license tomorrow instead?"

Chandler considered it for a couple of seconds and nodded. "That works."

As they spoke, Meryl's stomach rumbled loudly. She froze and quickly covered it with her hand, a blush of embarrassment crossing her face.

She peeked at Chandler from the corner of her eye, worrying that he found her behavior embarrassing.

Meryl was mortified, but then she heard him say, "I'm hungry too."

Chandler's voice was gentle as he opened the passenger door, gesturing for her to get in. "Would you like to eat out or at home?"

Meryl then instinctively turned to look at him and saw that he seemed perfectly normal, not the slightest bit bothered.

She was somewhat reassured but didn't dare to decide on her own, worried he might get annoyed. "I'll go with whatever you

Chapter **22** New Beginnings Old Doubts decide."

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Chandler saw that Meryl was a bit wound up. Instead of saying anything, he simply nodded and slid into the driver's seat.

He then drove through the busiest streets of Kingsdom and finally stopped outside an unassuming alley.

Down at the end of the alley was a small restaurant, but what it lacked in size, it made up for in cleanliness.

After placing their order, Chandler stepped out to take a phone call. When he returned, the food had just been served.

They hadn't ordered much, but each dish was **light** and delicate, perfect **for** someone like Meryl, who was recovering.

"I come here all the time. The food here is pretty good. Try it," Chandler urged as he moved the plates in front of her.

Meryl blinked and thought, "There's so much food. I can't finish it all by myself."

She pushed one of the dishes back toward Chandler and said, "You should have some too."

Just then, the owner came out from the back and was surprised to see Chandler. "Well, look who's back! Didn't you already stop by this morning?" she asked.

Upon hearing that, Meryl turned to look at him skeptically.

Chapter 22 New Beginnings Old Doubts

4/5

Chandler cleared his throat, a rare touch of embarrassment crossing his usually calm and aloof face, "You must have me mixed up with someone else, ma'am. Business must be booming, huh?"

The owner scratched her head in confusion and wondered, "Did I really? Wasn't he the first customer who came in at six this morning, before the sun was even up? We even closed for a bit."

At that time, she had asked, "Going to work this early?"

Chandler had replied, "Uh-huh. I'm off to see someone important later."

The owner then wondered again if she really had mistaken him for someone else. Though she found it odd, she didn't say anything else.

Beside him, Meryl pressed her lips together and stopped moving the dishes toward Chandler, feeling something she couldn't quite put into words.

Chandler had said he was hungry just to avoid making her feel awkward, and it made her think, "Could someone actually care about my feelings?"

Meryl twisted the fabric of her dress in her fingers, suddenly thinking that he might not make such a lousy husband after all.

Right then, Chandler turned to look at her intently and asked, "How about I go with you to grab your documents after we

Chapter 22 New Beginnings Old Doubts

finish eating?" His voice was as smooth and pleasant as ever.

5/5

Write your comment

Gifts

Secret Admirer: Finding True Love After... 1/5

Chapter 23 The Scarf and the Past

Meryl **was** shocked to hear Chandler, and her hand holding the spoon paused.

Thinking about her parents' attitude toward her, she lowered her eyes and replied, "No. I can go back by myself."

Meryl didn't get along with her family, and for some reason, she didn't want Chandler to know.

Chandler's gaze lingered on her face for a moment, but he didn't say anything else.

At that moment, the TV in the restaurant suddenly started broadcasting entertainment gossip news.

The volume was too loud, and Meryl instinctively turned her head to look.

The gossip news showed that Dalton and Lydia were being surrounded by reporters outside a room.

With her face buried in her hands, she hid behind Dalton as cameras and flashes swarmed them. At one point, the camera even panned to the massive bed behind them. That was one giant bed.

Meryl could also see that there were security guards maintaining order at the scene. She then froze when she noticed the word

## Chapter 23 The Scarf and the Past

"live" at the top right corner of the TV screen.

She thought incredulously, "Are they really still stuck **in** the hotel?"

Chandler looked in the direction of Meryl was staring, and glanced over at the TV.

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Just then, his phone rang again. As he picked it up and walked out, he waved his hand and turned off the TV.

Meryl looked over **in** confusion, and Chandler tilted his head, shaking the phone in his hand. "It's too loud. It's bothering me."

She didn't say anything more. She finished the food on her plate, and when she walked out, Chandler was just wrapping up the phone call.

He asked, "Are you sure you don't need me to you?"

go

home with

Chandler knew Meryl wasn't having an easy time at the Stone Villa. He thought that if he accompanied her back, things might be different.

She shook her head and refused outright. "No need."

Chandler didn't insist. "Alright. I have some things to take care of now. After you get your documents, go back to my place."

Meryl nodded and noted the address he gave. Later, she looked it up on her phone and found it was a high-end apartment

Chapter **23** The Scarf and the Past complex in the city center.

She had thought Chandler was just a regular small business owner, but it seemed his business was doing pretty well.

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After he drove away, Meryl was still a bit dazed as she realized she might have forgotten to ask his name all this time.

She decided it didn't matter. After all, they were getting married, so there was plenty of time to ask later.

Afterward, Meryl hailed a taxi and made her way back to the Stone Villa.

The main gate was tightly shut. She rang the doorbell twice, and soon, a servant opened the door just a crack before peering out.

Upon seeing that it was Meryl, the servant was visibly shocked. "Ms. Stone, you're back?"

She hummed in response and nodded slightly before stepping inside.

"Ms. Stone..." The servant hesitated. "Are you looking for Mrs. Bianca Stone? She has a headache and is resting in her room. She said she wouldn't see anyone." The servant looked at Meryl with pity.

The servant mused, "Who would have thought that the rightful heiress of the Stone family would be sent to prison for three years of correction? Just look at her, all skin and bones. She must have suffered a lot in there."



## Chapter 23 The Scarf and the Past

Meryl replied, "I'm not here for her. Where are my things? Where did they put them?"

Upon hearing that, the servant paused and hurriedly replied, "In the storeroom."

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Meryl expressed her thanks and made her way to the storeroom.

Everything she owned was stuffed into a small box in the corner of the storeroom.

The box was covered in a thick layer of dust, making Meryl cough twice. She waved away the dust and soon found her documents inside.

She didn't plan to stay long, so she closed the box and was ready to leave.

Just then, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed something in the corner of the box.

It was a neatly folded men's scarf, a gray knitted scarf that had lost its original luster with age. She stared at it, feeling a bit dazed.

Meryl slowly crouched down and gently touched it. The soft texture felt the same as before, but her feelings were no longer the same.

She took out the scarf, draped it over her arm, and decided to throw it away in the trash bin outside.

## Chapter 23 The Scarf and the Past

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Meryl realized she had no reason to hold onto the scarf since it belonged to Dalton, just like how she no longer had any feelings for him.

To her surprise, she hadn't taken more than two steps out of the storage room when she bumped into a frantic-looking Lydia returning from outside.

Lydia ran in such a hurry as if she were being chased by something.

She lost her balance and fell to the ground, crying out in pain. When she saw it was Meryl standing there, she was stunned. "Huh? Why are you here?"

Write your comment

## Chapter 24 Confrontation at Stone Villa

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Meryl shot Lydia a cold glance. "This is my home. It's perfectly normal for me to be here ."

Lydia's expression froze as soon as she noticed the scarf Meryl was holding.

Lydia, of course, knew that scarf belonged to Dalton. Meryl had kept it like a treasure for the last ten years.

"Are you planning to apologize to Dalton with that? Are you trying to win him back?" Lydia asked.

Meryl didn't want to get caught up in too much back-and-forth, so she replied softly, "You're reading too much into it. I never planned on that."

"You've probably seen the news, haven't you?" Lydia asked out of the blue.

The news about her and Dalton from that morning must have caused quite a stir by now .

The paparazzi were hired by Lydia herself. Her original plan was to take the photos they snapped and cry to Dalton, saying their affair was about to be exposed.

## Chapter 24 Confrontation at Stone **Villa**

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Obviously, she had no real intention **of** exposing it. She was just putting on **a** show in front of Dalton.

Lydia assumed Dalton would rush home to plead with his mother to switch his fiancée to her, hoping to keep the gossip down.

She was sure the Aniston family wouldn't object to protecting their reputation. After all, if the scandal got out, the Aniston family would also be thrust into the spotlight, facing far more severe consequences than **simply** marrying her.

This was the only way Lydia could think of to marry Dalton.

However, despite all her careful planning, something had gone wrong. **The** paparazzi turned out to be TV reporters.

Lydia was shocked when she stepped out of the hotel room this morning and was confronted by dozens of cameras.

The situation blew up and even made it to the morning news, making it difficult to manage.

By now, the entire nation was aware of Lydia and Dalton's fling and that she had snagged her sister's man.

She had no idea what the Aniston family's stance was, but rumors were that Galaxy Holdings Group's stock price had plummeted at the opening bell this morning.

What could have been solved with a few intimate photos got blown wide open by the reporters, leaving Lydia irritated and

Chapter **24** Confrontation at Stone Villa her reputation **in** shambles.

**3/4**

She regretted being too impulsive and was furious, wondering who had called the TV reporters and completely messed up her plan.

"Meryl, you must have seen Dalton protecting me in front of the camera, right? He only cares about me." Lydia pulled herself together, her gaze dripping with sarcasm as she stared at Meryl. "Do you really think Dalton would give you the time of day if you apologized now?"

Meryl didn't want to waste any more breath on Lydia and

replied, "Since you enjoy picking men out of the trash, Dalton is all yours. I couldn't care less." With that, she moved past Lydia, ready to leave.

Meryl's expression remained utterly indifferent when Dalton was brought up.

Lydia was stunned, unable to believe it. "You're really not going to marry Dalton? Then what's the scarf for? Aren't you planning to use it to remind Dalton of the past and win him back?"

Meryl looked down at the scarf in her hand and said, "I was planning to throw it away." With that, she casually tossed it into the trash can beside her.

Lydia was shocked and was about to say something when a loud yell came from upstairs, "Meryl! What did you do to your sister? Why is she on the floor?"

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Chapter 24 Confrontation at Stone Villa Bianca hurried downstairs, seeing Lydia on the floor, practically fuming with anger.

“Did you push your sister?” She helped Lydia up and angrily confronted Meryl. “How can you be so cruel, causing trouble as soon as you get home? Are you trying to drive me crazy?”

Bianca carefully checked Lydia over, only relaxing once she confirmed Lydia wasn't hurt

Meryl, on the other hand, felt completely calm as she had already lost faith in her family that night. “I didn't push her. If you don't believe me, ask her yourself.”

Bianca looked at Lydia, who quickly explained, “I tripped and fell on my own, Mom.”

Bianca was taken aback. “Lydia, you don't need to cover for Meryl. If you're wronged, just tell me.”

“I really did fall on my own.” Lydia then glanced at Meryl. “Meryl, don't be mad at Mom. She only misunderstood because she didn't know.”

With her eyes cast down and a smirk on her lips, Meryl, who was ready to step away, sneered, “Did you see the news this morning, Mom?”

## Chapter 25 Betrayal and Blame

When Lydia heard Meryl's words, her face stiffened, and a hint of guilt flashed across her expression.

moment

Just as expected, Bianca's expression turned grim the n Meryl brought up the incident.

Bianca always thought that her well-behaved eldest daughter would never commit such a disgraceful act.

But the live TV broadcast had detailed accounts, and she had been troubled by it all morning.

With her lips pressed together, Bianca asked, “Lydia, did you and Dalton really...”

Tears welled up in Lydia's eyes, and they started to fall before she could even get a word out. “I'm sorry, Mom. Dalton had too much to drink last night. He took me to the hotel, and I was too weak to fight back.”

Upon hearing that, Bianca frowned and grumbled, “That Dalton! He's already engaged to Meryl. How could he force himself on you?!”

Lydia gently wiped her reddened eyes and continued, "Dalton was drunk, Mom. It's not entirely his fault. And Meryl is a victim in this, too."

## Chapter 25 Betrayal and Blame

It was only then that Bianca remembered Meryl was still standing there.

**2/5**

She figured that since Meryl loved Dalton so much, she must be feeling awful right now.

Bianca, however, snorted, "She couldn't keep an eye on her

own man, so who else is to blame? If Meryl hadn't made Dalton angry that night, you wouldn't have had to plead on her behalf and ruin your reputation!"

She then turned to Meryl, glaring at her. "Now look at what's happened. Lydia lost her dignity to Dalton because of you and now she's bearing the blame for it."

Upon hearing that, Meryl stopped abruptly in her tracks. "Are you kidding me? They're the ones who messed around and you're blaming it on me?"

She sometimes really wondered who the biological daughter was actually.

Meryl wondered, "Why does my family always pin the root of every problem on me without knowing the whole story?"

Lydia is one thing. She's always been vying for my place and my parents' love.

But seriously, are my parents blind?

They can't tell right from wrong. It's shameful!"

## Chapter 25 Betrayal and Blame

**3/5**

Meryl then raised an eyebrow mockingly, asking, "Did I force them to get a room in the hotel? Your bias has to stop! If you keep pushing me, I'll tell the reporters they've been messing around for ages! Lydia even had two abortions for Dalton! You want to mess with me? Fine. Let's all be miserable then!"

Bianca gasped. "You! What are you babbling about? You're utterly reckless!"

Without another word, Meryl turned, slammed the door shut, and stormed out, leaving Bianca and Lydia in chaos in the living

room.

Bianca took a good while to process it, her eyes wide with disbelief. "Lydia? Did you really have an abortion? Were you seeing Dalton this whole time?"

Lydia's expression flickered with a hint of guilt but was quickly replaced by a look of grievance. "Mom, Meryl's lying. She was just desperate and trying to stir things up between us. I'm innocent. There's no way I'd do that."

Bianca breathed a sigh of relief after hearing that. Then, she commented with a thoughtful expression, "Meryl was indeed raised in a gambler's family, lying without batting an eye. If she were half as well-behaved as you."

Lydia, feeling pleased with herself, added, "It's okay. Meryl can learn slowly. She was actually wronged today. You shouldn't say that about her."

Bianca was dismissive. "Wronged? It's your reputation on the

## Chapter 25 Betrayal and Blame

line, not hers. What's there for her to be wronged about? She spent three years in prison and is still like this."

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The more Bianca thought about it, the angrier she got, and she exclaimed, "This daughter of mine is really a lost cause!"

Lydia then seemed to be reminded of something sad and said, "What happened last night had blew up so much. I can't show my face anymore."

Bianca felt a headache coming on at the mention of this but still patted Lydia's shoulder reassuringly. "This is Dalton's fault. I'll have your father ask him what he plans to do. He ruined your reputation. He must take responsibility."

Hearing this, Lydia breathed a sigh of relief. She wasn't worried about Dalton at all. It seemed she would soon marry into the Aniston family.

Meanwhile, Meryl left the Stone Villa and took a long time to

calm herself.

When she was a teenager, she had come back here with high hopes, but now, every second she stayed made her feel

nauseous.

Meryl told herself it was okay, thinking that one shouldn't always be haunted by the past. She hailed a taxi by the roadside, and after about a forty-minute drive, she arrived outside a residential area in the city center.

## Chapter 25 Betrayal and Blame

The neighborhood was in a prime location with easy access to public transport, making it a quiet spot amid the hustle and bustle. It wasn't a new development, probably around a decade old, but the surroundings and security system were well-maintained.

Meryl paid the cab fare and stepped into the community. As soon as she entered the elevator, her phone rang.

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## Chapter 26 Our Marriage License

Seeing it was Anne calling, she quickly tapped the button.

answer

"Dear, I almost forgot. Are you being discharged from the hospital today?"

There was background noise over the phone. She felt Anne must have called during a break in her shooting.

"If you don't want to go back to the Stone Villa, you can stay at my place for now. I'll give you the address and the door lock

code..."

Meryl responded, "No need. You and Dante are married. It wouldn't be appropriate for me to stay there."

Although Anne and Dante's marriage was one of convenience and they shared little affection, they were legally a married couple.

It would be inappropriate for Meryl to stay at their home, especially since Anne was currently traveling.

She needed to avoid any impropriety.

Anne asked worriedly, "Then where will you go?"

Meryl replied, "To my fiancé's place."

Chapter 26 Our Marriage License

Hearing this, Anne exploded on the other end of the line, sounding quite frustrated.

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"Meryl, didn't **you** say you had moved on from clinging

the

wrong guy like Dalton? Why are you going back to him now? That's so spineless! I really want to knock some sense into you!"

Anne had seen the morning news on the plane and was infuriated by it.

She thought those two despicable men and women, making a scandalous scene in a hotel and everyone knowing about it, were truly disgusting.

Anne had intended to comfort Meryl with this call, but to her dismay, Meryl had turned to Dalton again.

"You're not going back to plead with Dalton to get back with you, are you? He has already cuckolded you, and you're still putting up with it?"

Meryl realized Anne had misunderstood.

She quickly explained, "The fiancé I mentioned isn't Dalton."

There was a long pause from Anne, lasting several seconds. "Not Dalton? Then who is it? Wait, Meryl. When did you get involved with someone else? What's his name? What does he do?"

Meryl couldn't answer any of those questions.

Chapter 26 Our Marriage License

She knew as little about her supposed fiancé as Anne did.

"I'll tell you more about it later. I've just arrived at his place. Gotta go now."

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Meryl entered the house using the door code. No one was there.



The house wasn't very large, but it was brightly lit by the sun, casting a serene glow on the floor, giving a sense of peaceful times.

It looked like the house bore few traces of being lived in, and she wondered, "Does he really live here?"

Meryl changed into slippers and walked around the house. Just as she finished her tour, her phone beeped with a new message.

[There **are** groceries in the fridge, and if you don't feel like cooking, feel free to dine out. The bank card is on top of the shoe cabinet. There's no spending limit. Use it as you wish.]

[I'll be working late tonight, so don't wait for me. Try to get some rest. We'll go get our marriage license tomorrow morning.]

Upon reading the message, Meryl immediately went to the shoe cabinet to take the card.

She didn't plan on spending freely.

After all, his generosity stemmed from gratitude for her once saving his life. It wasn't right to take advantage of someone's kindness.

## Chapter 26 Our Marriage License

As for his promise of a lifetime, she didn't believe it.

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She knew that sincerity would be fleeting, and having been let down before, she had learned her lesson.

Meanwhile, Chandler waited a few minutes without a reply from Meryl. He showed a hint of disappointment.

He pressed his lips slightly and turned off his phone.

"Mr. Aniston, the stock price of Galaxy Holdings Group has plummeted this morning, causing even Sir Aniston to be alerted." Walter placed two documents in front of Chandler. "The morning's news had a significant impact, and the PR department has drafted a response plan. Would you like to review it first?"

Given the matter involved the Aniston family, the PR department was also very cautious and sought Chandler's opinion first.

Chandler did not even glance up, his response cold. "Tell the PR department to stay **out** of it. Whoever caused the mess can deal with it themselves!"

Walter nodded and exited the office, closing the door behind him.

Half an hour later, Dalton stormed in, agitated. "Chandler, what are you thinking? Such a big issue, and you won't let PR step in? Do you want others to laugh at our family?"

## Chapter 26 Our Marriage License

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Chandler continued to focus on the documents in front of him, seemingly oblivious, without looking up.

The office was deathly quiet, and it was then that Dalton realized he had been too impulsive.

He toned down considerably and tentatively called out,

"Chandler?"

## Chapter 27 Bring Her In

Dalton was irritated. Last night, Dante dragged him out for drinks, and after just two glasses of the potent stuff, he was completely out of it.

1/4

He couldn't remember at all how he ended up at the hotel with Lydia.

This morning, he was swarmed by reporters right at his hotel room door, which really frustrated him.

"Chandler, can you say something?"

Only then did Chandler set down his documents. He turned towards Dalton and looked at him.

"Embarrassed now, are you? You messed up. You fix it."

His cold tone sent a chill through Dalton.

"Chandler, we're both Anistons. This scandal embarrasses the entire Aniston family. Besides, even if you don't care about me, would you really just watch as Galaxy Holdings Group's stock continues to plummet?"

Chandler scoffed, unmoved. "If Galaxy Holdings can survive this, so can you. After tarnishing our family's reputation, you still have the audacity to ask for my help? Where do you get the nerve?"

## Chapter 27 Bring Her In

Dalton found Chandler to be excessively heartless.

But then again, he felt it made sense. Galaxy Holdings Group was unnecessarily dragged into his mess, and in just one

### **2/4**

morning, it had lost billions of dollars. Likely, every shareholder in the company despised him now.

At that moment, Walter knocked and entered. He glanced at Dalton before speaking, "Lydia is here to see you, Mr. Aniston."

Just as Dalton was about to go out to meet her, Chandler commanded coldly, "Bring her in."

Lydia said, "Dalton, our affair has gotten too much attention. Celestial Ventures Group's stock is also affected. If this continues, the losses will only grow."

As soon as Lydia entered and saw Chandler was also there, she was stunned and quickly greeted them. "Mr. Aniston."

Dalton noticed a scarf draped over Lydia's arm and quickly recognized it as the one he gave to Meryl ten years ago.

He asked in surprise, "That's..."

"I found it in the trash at the Stone Villa this morning. It must have been thrown out by my sister. I remember this belongs to you, Dalton. Do you still want it?"

A vein throbbed on Dalton's face. "Oh, very nice! Meryl, well!"

## Chapter 27 Bring Her In

### **3/4**

Lydia looked guilty and remorseful. "Maybe this morning's news upset her... Dalton, maybe I should explain it to her..."

Dalton said coldly, "Chandler, I'm calling off my engagement with Meryl. I'm marrying Lydia now!"

He thought, "Since Meryl dared to throw away my stuff, I'll make her regret it for life!"

She only dared because of our engagement.

Let's see who she can turn to once the engagement is off!"

Chandler's eyes darkened with a deep intensity. "Oh?"

Dalton clenched his teeth. "Just say that Meryl has been in prison for three years and doesn't deserve me! I decided to marry Lydia a long time ago. We just haven't announced it. That way, what happened this morning with Lydia and me will be totally justified."

Lydia was thrilled.

The stage was set, and the play was in full swing. She had been wondering how to bring this up to Dalton without seeming obvious, but he had already taken the initiative.

Although in Lydia's original plan, things weren't supposed to blow up this big, and her reputation wasn't supposed to be destroyed, the outcome was the same.

Marrying Dalton was worth losing her reputation.

## Chapter 27 Bring Her In

4/4

Hearing this, Chandler slammed his cup down on the table, creating a harsh sound.

The atmosphere suddenly tensed, causing Dalton and Lydia's hearts to race.

"What did you say? She doesn't deserve you?"

The menace in Chandler's eyes was chilling.

## Chapter 28 What About Meryl

1/4

"Didn't Meryl already make it clear about the prison incident? It was this woman who framed her to get her locked up.

"You're the one who betrayed Meryl, and now you want to pin everything on her?"

“Ending the engagement? Sure, I have no objections. But you should face the consequences alone, not drag women into this to cover your back.

“What did Meryl do wrong? You’re the one who changed. She’s the one who got hurt, and now you want to use your affair to cover up your shame? Blaming her for everything?”

“Dalton, men don’t act as cowardly as you are, doing such heartless and disgraceful things that it’s the Aniston family’s reputation you’re tarnishing!”

Chandler’s tone grew colder with each word, his every utterance striking like a fierce wind.

Dalton scolded, looked increasingly uncomfortable, and his face turned pale and flushed.

Unable to hold back his frustration any longer, he burst out.

“Fine, I’ll take full responsibility! I’ll say it was a falling out between Meryl and me. I’m off to a press conference **with** Lydia

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to calm this mess.”

**2/4**

The more things dragged down, the more trouble. Dalton was eager to sort things out today.

Chandler responded indifferently, “Suit yourself, but does your mother know about this?”

At the mention of his mother, Dalton’s expression stiffened.

Charlotte didn’t like Lydia, always viewing her as a no-good upstart and never really acknowledging her.

Initially, Dalton thought about holding a press conference right away. Once the news was out, there was nothing Charlotte could do about it, whether she liked Lydia or not.

Dalton didn’t respond, but Chandler seemed to read his mind.

He waved his hand, signaling they could leave.

As they left, Lydia felt a **mix** of relief and anxiety.

“Dalton, are you sure we shouldn’t inform your mother first? And what about Meryl? What if she clings to you, begging you to get back together with her?”

This was Lydia’s biggest worry.

Taking action without prior consent, she hadn’t even officially become a part of the family and had already offended Charlotte.

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And then there was Meryl. She thought that Dalton seemed to favor her now, but she felt that during their seven years together, his feelings for Meryl hadn’t been entirely absent...

3/4

She worried about what she should do if Meryl truly regretted it and begged Dalton to come back to her.

Dalton seemed unconcerned, leaning down to kiss Lydia on the forehead.

“Why worry about that? Why would I change my mind? She’s nowhere near as wonderful as you.

“As for my mother, I’m the one getting married, not her.”

As Dalton and Lydia weren’t far off, Walter called out.

“Ms. Stone, please wait.”

Lydia turned around, puzzled. “Mr. Adams, does Mr. Aniston need something else?”

Walter’s gaze was meaningful as he looked at Lydia.

“Mr. Aniston said that you act decisively, Ms. Stone. He gave three days, yet you used just one to finish everything and change the game. But Ms. Stone, this move was rather harsh, causing Galaxy Holdings Group’s stock to plummet. He’ll overlook this since it’s the first time, but once you’re part of the Aniston family, you’ll need to learn some rules.”

Lydia’s expression froze, her face turning even grimmer as she

## Chapter 28 What About Meryl

listened.

She wondered **if** he was openly telling Dalton that she had orchestrated last night's events.

She turned away, guiltily glancing at Dalton.

Dalton was a little suspicious. "What three days?"

**4/4**

Walter acted as though he had misspoken, hesitating. "Oh? I forgot that Mr. Aniston asked me to speak privately with Ms. Stone. Sorry, Ms. Stone, this is something between you and Mr. Dalton Aniston. You should explain it to him yourself."

After saying this, Walter walked away without looking back.

After a moment of silence, Dalton pieced things together, vaguely understood.

"So, the reporters at the TV station this morning were arranged by you in advance? Was this all your doing?"

**B**

Chapter 29 What Had I Just Done

Lydia clenched her fists and pressed her lips.

She knew all too well that with Dalton's personality, the suspicion would only deepen once he started doubting if she didn't come clean.

"Dalton, I just wanted to get some photos taken by the paparazzi. I had no idea it would escalate to TV reporters and blow up like this."

Dalton was fond of Lydia and had even considered marrying her despite his family's objections.

But feeling manipulated into this situation forced him, which was something Dalton found hard to accept.

Being pushed forward against his will inevitably made him rebellious.

Seeing the grim look on Dalton's face, Lydia reached for his hand. "Dalton, I just really want to be with you."

Dalton didn't respond and kept walking.

“Dalton?” When Lydia saw him avoid her touch, her eyes quickly reddened.

Only then did Dalton turn to look at her, his voice tinged with

2/4

Chapter 29 What Had I Just Done helplessness. “Aren’t we supposed to hold supposed to hold a press conference?

The reporters are ready. You better wipe away those tears!”

Hearing that, Lydia was finally relieved.

She ran up to him and threw herself into his arms, wrapping her arms around his waist, her voice soft and pleading.

“Love is selfish. I want to stand by your side, Dalton. I’ll take the blame, but Chandler on ly gave me three days. If I can’t win you over, he’ll deal with me.

“I don’t care about myself, but I can’t bear to leave you, so I had no choice.”

Thinking of the years Lydia had spent with him, enduring silently, Dalton suddenly felt a deep sympathy for her.

Love, indeed, was selfish. All because Lydia loved him too much.

But Meryl had never schemed against him...

He looked down, his eyes filled with sadness.

Perhaps it was the change of environment, or maybe because they were going to get a marriage license the next morning, Meryl couldn’t sleep.

Tossing and turning in bed, she suddenly heard the sound of the door lock.

Chapter 29 What Had I Just Done

She looked at the time. It was already half past midnight. She wondered, “Was it him?”

3/4

Meryl slipped on her slippers and had just reached the hallway when the door opened fr om the outside.



A man in a **suit**, thoroughly drunk, stumbled over the threshold and unexpectedly fell into her arms.

Meryl staggered backward, unprepared for his embrace.

Her eyes widened in surprise.

The scent of masculine hormones filled her as his nose brushed against her cheek, making her cheeks flush.

The door shut behind them with a thud, stopping the light from the hallway.

In the dim space, the only sounds were his heavy breathing and the subtle brushing of his nose against her cheek.

Meryl turned her head slightly, and her lips accidentally brushed against his cheek..

She felt a shock through her body, her heartbeat pounding wildly.

She thought, "What had I just done?"

Had I kissed him?"

Chapter **29** What Had I Just Done

Her fingertips trembled slightly, and Meryl instinctively clutched his shirt to prevent him from falling.

At the same time, she looked down, checking his expression.

**4/4**

Fortunately, heavily intoxicated, he rested his forehead on her shoulder, seemingly unaware of her abrupt move.

Meryl breathed a sigh of relief and asked softly, "Are you okay?"

She wondered, "How much had he drunk to be this intoxicated?"

It's tough being a boss these days."

Chandler didn't respond, but his eyes narrowed when Meryl accidentally kissed him.

He swept his arms around her waist with one move, his breath heavy with the scent of alcohol, his voice deep and slightly

hoarse. "Honey, haven't you gone to bed yet?"

She thought, "Honey?"

### Chapter 30 Lying on My Bed

Meryl pressed her lips, startled by the address as **if** struck by lightning.

Were

But then again, she recalled they going to get their marriage license tomorrow, so **it** seemed appropriate.

Perhaps because he had drunk too much, Chandler spoke slowly, "Are you staying up late waiting for me?"

Meryl didn't respond, helping him to sit down on the sofa.

1/6

Perhaps due to the alcohol, the normally reserved man seemed less aggressive and oddly puppy-like.

She thought, "*Puppy-like?*"

The thought had barely formed before Meryl dismissed it.

"Want some water?" Meryl crouched **in** front of him, looking up at him. "Shall I get you one?"

He closed his eyes, unresponsive, as if about to fall asleep.

After waiting a moment without a reply, Meryl turned to leave, but suddenly, he reached out his hand from behind, gripping her neck and pulling her back.

Caught off guard, Meryl fell to her one knee on his lap.

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Then, before she could react, he pressed his forehead **against** hers.

2/6

Their eyes met, and Meryl's heart raced, pounding as if it would burst from her chest.

The drunken Chandler exuded an aggressive demeanor.

His breath, laced with the scent of alcohol, washed over her face.

As time ticked by, just when Meryl began to relax, the next second, he pressed his burning lips against hers.

Meryl felt as if she were in a dream.

She thought, "Otherwise, why would I now find myself held close in his arms, being kissed?"

Her legs parted as she sat on his lap, his hand supporting her waist, pulling her tightly against him.

Meryl was so surprised that she momentarily forgot to push him away.

By the time she gathered her wits, her lips had been parted, and his shirt under her hands was crumpled beyond recognition.

Feeling like she had been startled, Meryl didn't even glance at him on the sofa. She pushed him away and ran into her room.

The moment the door shut, the seemingly drunk Chandler

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opened his eyes.

3/6

He touched his lips with his fingers, still relishing the moment.

Just then, he got Dante's text: [Got home now?]

Chandler replied: [Yeah.]

Dante texted: [Replying so fast? Are you

Really drunk?]

Chandler turned to glance at the closed door of the room.

His smile grew wider, and after a few seconds, he began typing: [I'm getting married to morrow.]

The sudden shift in topic took Dante a moment to process.

After he caught on, he couldn't help but throw in a tease: [You kidding? Drunk and dreaming about the government assigning you a wife?]

Chandler's message oozed smugness: [You're right. My bride is currently in my room, lying on my bed.]

Dante silenced for a full minute.

He texted: [Meryl?]

Chandler replied: [Yeah.]

Dante texted: [What were you two doing in the room?]

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4/6

Chandler replied: [A man and a woman alone at night, drunk, what do you think happened? Can I even tell you?]

Dante felt Chandler was wicked, not saying much but implying a lot.

Chandler texted: [No other intention, just reminding you to get a gift for my bride.]

Dante was speechless.

He had guessed Chandler, up in the middle of the night, wasn't just chatting without a reason.

He thought, "Turns out he was eyeing the gift."

Meanwhile, having closed her door, Meryl felt her heart pounding wildly.

She lay in bed, taking deep breaths for a long while, trying to

calm down.

Who would have thought her first kiss would be with a man she had only met a few times?

More bizarrely, she was about to get a marriage license with him. the next day, but she was still not even sure of his name.

Meryl had never felt this way about any man other than Dalton, let alone had such intimate contact.

In fact, her reason for this whirlwind marriage wasn't just **to**

Chapter 30 Lying on My Bed find a place to settle down.

5/6

She was tired, weary.

After experiencing the cruelest abandonment and witnessing the darkest of human hearts, she wanted someone to spend her life with.

She was clear in her heart that she and Dalton were a thing of the past. Since she had decided to marry, she was ready to start anew with another man.

She thought, "But was this going too fast?

Our first night together, and we already kissed?"

The more Meryl thought about it, the redder her cheeks became.

As inappropriate images flashed through her mind, she wrapped herself in the quilt, tossing and turning.

She slapped her cheeks, forcing herself to stop thinking about it.

She drifted off into a restless sleep, and when she opened her eyes again, it was already broad daylight.

After freshening up **in** her room, Meryl looked down and fidgeted with her fingers, debating whether to go out.

Just then, someone knocked on the door.

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B