

## Heartstrings On Fire Chapter 11 - 20

### Chapter 11

Agnes calmly pulled her hand from Laura's grasp, saying, "Ms. Laura, I won't tell Dad, trust me."

She always addressed Laura formally as Ms. Laura, even though Laura had been part of the family for a decade now. Laura had never been demanding, but ever since she married Agnes' dad, the warmth of the home vanished.

Just as Beatrice had put it, Agnes felt like the odd one out in this supposedly happy trio.

**Laura** suggested, "Your dad's back. Let's go eat in the dining room."

Preston was thrilled to see Agnes. Knowing she'd be home today; he had bought her favorite durian layered cake.

But Beatrice took the chance when Agnes wasn't looking, and tossed the cake into the garbage. When Preston discovered, she innocently said, "Dad, that thing stinks like hell. It gives me a headache. Look, neither you nor mom likes durian, and we shouldn't have to suffer just cause Agnes likes it. I still have homework to **do**."

Just as Preston was about to scold her, Laura intervened, "It's just a cake. We can buy another one tomorrow. I made so many goodies today. It's not worth dampening the mood over a cake. Agnes, you wouldn't mind, right?"

Agnes responded nonchalantly, "It's just a cake."

That was her survival strategy in this family. Not giving a hoot about anything.

Preston felt a pang of guilt seeing Agnes' indifferent demeanor. He remembered her as a lively and adorable kid, not like this. At the end of the day, he felt he had let her down.

During dinner, Beatrice deliberately stirred the pot, "Dad, you probably don't know, Agnes and Elton broke up."

Preston was taken aback, "Agnes, is this true?"

She should thank Beatrice for being nosy, otherwise, she wouldn't know how to break the news..

Agnes confirmed calmly, "Yes, we broke up."

"Why? Weren't you guys all lovey-dovey? I was even discussing with Mr. Taylor about letting you two get married right after graduation. Was there a misunderstanding between you two?"

Agnes replied, "No Dad, there was no misunderstanding. Do you know Jenny? She's pregnant, and Elton is the father."

Preston seethed, "That bastard Elton, how could he do such a thing! Agnes, don't worry. I'll settle this with the Taylors."

Beatrice added fuel to the fire, "Isn't Jenny your good friend? The one from a poor family? You let her snatch Elton from you, how could you be so powerless? Elton chose a girl from a family like that over you. You really dropped the ball.

An angry Preston snapped, "Beatrice, enough."

Defiant Beatrice retorted, "Everything I said is true. Agnes doesn't look like a media mogul's daughter at all. Her attire and manners are so country bumpkin-like. **Elton has** taste, and he was bound to lose interest."

Just as Preston was about to blow his top, Agnes put down her fork, "I'm full. You guys carry on."

With that, Agnes left **for** her room. Mentioning Elton still stung. He was her first love, a boy she had given her heart to for a decade. She could hardly believe Elton would betray her if she hadn't seen it with her own eyes.

After a while, the door opened, and in walked Preston.

"Agnes," Preston called out to her.

## Chapter 12

Preston walked over to Agnes, held her hand and said, “Agnes, why didn’t you tell your old man about something so serious?”

Agnes replied, “There’s not much to tell, really. Just a breakup, it’s all in the past now.”

Despite Agnes’ dismissive words, Preston knew his daughter too well. These two kids had been best friends since childhood, with a bond as thick as thieves. The Pritchard and Taylor families had long considered each other as in-laws, but no one could’ve predicted this turn of events.

Preston sat next to Agnes and said, “Well, what’s done is done. No point crying over spilled milk. Maybe it’s for the best. **You’ve** always been top-notch in your studies, while that Elton kid never took anything seriously. I always thought he wasn’t good enough for you. Only the best man in the world deserves my girl.”

With that, Preston took an invitation out of his pocket and said, “This is an invite to Tim’s 70th birthday bash. All the big families in Willowbrook Town received one, specifically asking to bring a daughter along. It’s pretty clear they’re setting up a dating event for Jared from the Whitfield family. Each family gets only one female spot, and I was thinking of taking you.”

Agnes was surprised to hear Jared’s name at home. She wondered how Preston would react if he knew she was already married to the man he mentioned.

But Agnes didn’t spill the beans,

Preston handed the invitation to Agnes and said, “Agnes, I know I’ve been neglecting you at home, but you have to know that you’re always my favorite.”

If Agnes were still a little girl, she would have believed him. But now, she just nodded and said, “I know.”

Preston sighed at Agnes' indifference and then left the room.

Agnes just stared **at** the invitation blankly. The Whitfield family was setting up public dates for Jared?

Agnes looked at the date on the invitation. It turned out that Tim's birthday was in a week, but she had never heard Jared mention it. She felt a little sad, but even if Jared **had** mentioned it, what difference would it make? Their marriage was a secret, and Jared wouldn't really bring her home.

Sometimes, when Agnes had quiet moments to herself, she **felt** that her marriage to Jared was nothing but a farce.

While she was lost in her thoughts, the door was pushed open, and in strutted Beatrice.

Agnes frowned and asked, "What do you want?"

Beatrice blurted out, "I heard everything Dad just said to you, Agnes. The idea of you catching Jared's eye is laughable. Hand over the invite."

Agnes hadn't decided whether to attend or not, but seeing Beatrice's attitude, she didn't want to give it to her. So, hiding the invitation behind her, she said, "Beatrice, you're underage. You want to go on a date?"

Beatrice retorted, "In two months I'll be 18. Even though I'm still underage, my chances of becoming his wife are much higher than yours. Elton doesn't even give you a second look, and Jared is even less likely to fancy you. You're just chasing rainbows. You might as well give me the invite. At least our family would stand a chance to tre the knot with them."

Agnes replied coldly, "You **can** leave now. I'm not giving you the invite."

Seeing that words were ineffective, Beatrice decided to physically take the invite, pinning Agnes to the bed in an attempt to snatch it from **her**.

Agnes didn't expect Beatrice to be so brutish. With a quick judo move, Agnes had Beatrice pinned down instead. She had been studying Taekwondo since she was a child and had reached the level of a fifth-degree black belt.

Beatrice's wrist hurt so much that she yelled, "Agnes, how dare you do this to me! I'm telling Dad, let me go now!"

Agnes let Beatrice go, "Go ahead, tell him. I'm not afraid."

Beatrice left with a face full of resentment. She knew about Agnes' martial arts skills, so she usually stuck to verbal attacks. Just as she was about to leave, she **noticed** a hickey on Agnes' neck.

## Chapter 13

Agnes never fancied high-collar shirts, and Beatrice knew this well. Today **she** felt weird somehow, and it turned **out to** be a bombshell discovery.

Beatrice stepped up and yanked down Agnes' collar, "Agnes, I'm gonna tell Dad about you messing around with some dude! You've got a hickey, but you broke up with Elton, so it must have been the guy who dropped you off today!"

Beatrice looked at her with scorn, "Agnes, I never thought you'd be such a floozy. Bet you stabbed Elton in the back, and that's why he dumped you, right?"

"Beatrice, zip it."

"I hit the nail on the head, didn't I? If you want me to keep mum, hand me the invite and tell Dad yourself that you don't wanna go. Or else, Dad will hear it from me, as well as Elton and his folks."

Agnes handed over the invite, not because she was scared of Beatrice's threat, but because she was fed up with hearing Elton's name.

After Beatrice took the invite and left with a smug grin, Agnes felt like the world was finally quiet.

The next day, Agnes got up early skipped breakfast, and headed back to school with her luggage.

Agnes was a junior journalism major at Lakeside College.

Just as she entered the school gate, she received a distress message from her roommate, Kerri. The 5 Bitches had trapped her in the medical lab.

Upon seeing the message, Agnes immediately tossed her suitcase and bolted towards the lab building.

Agnes was in a hurry because she knew this was serious. She had done research on bullying at school, and these five mean girls were the main perps. They had formed a group called the Ice Cream Club and 90% of the bullying incidents at Lakeside College were related to this group.

All the violence was caused by a guy, Ryder Whitfield, a hotshot and a medical student at Lakeside College. Some said a pretty woman was a ticking time bomb, but a good-looking guy could stir up just as much trouble.

Ryder was a case **in** point. He was a straight-A student, attractive, and had a lot of female admirers at school. Because he was icy and aloof, his fans nicknamed him Prince Frost and formed a group called the Ice Cream Club. The five ringleaders called themselves Ice Cream Princesses, but everyone else knew them as the 5 Bitches.

They ruled the school with an iron fist, picking on any girl who had contact with Ryder. Any girl who had written him a love letter, given him a gift, or even talked to him a few times would be targeted.

Agnes remembered when she was working on a news project, a girl had her hair chopped off by the 5 Bitches for giving Ryder a love letter. They forced her to strip and posted the photos on the school forum. The girl couldn't take the humiliation and almost committed suicide.

Although this caused a huge stir, the school only issued severe warnings to the girls involved.

This was mainly because the ringleader, Cecile Higgins, was the mayor's daughter, and the other girls also came from wealthy families.

Faced with money and power, the principal chose to turn a blind eye.

## Chapter 14

When Agnes rushed in, Kerri was being pinned down on the lab bench by a few people

Cecile was holding a scalpel, lightly tracing it across Kerri's face, "So you had the audacity to seduce Prince, huh? I'm going to ruin your pretty face. Let's see if Prince will even glance at you after that!"

Kerri kept trying to explain, "I really did not seduce him We're both medical students in the same research group. Talking is normal. I spoke to him and you are accusing me of seducing him. If you occasionally chew a bone, should I call you a dog? Would you accept that?"

Cecile angrily shot back, "How dare you insult me? You're really too big for your boots. I think it's about time someone taught you a lesson."

The scalpel in her hand was about to slash down.

"Stop" Agnes shouted from the doorway.

Everyone turned to look at the door, Cecile also froze when she saw Agnes.

Agnes was well-known at school. Not only because of her pretty face, but also because of her family background. She was the daughter of Preston, a big shot in the entertainment industry, who controlled Starlight International Group, one of the biggest talent agencies in the country.

Cecile had always wanted to befriend Agnes at school because she was studying acting. But Agnes didn't give her the time of day, and even **reported** the bullying incident that nearly got Cecile expelled. This created a deep-seated animosity between them.

Cecile warned, "Agnes, you better keep your nose out of my business, or we'll settle old scores today."

Agnes had already walked over, snatching the scalpel from Cecile's hand, "I'm stepping in. Don't you remember what the principal said last time? It doesn't matter if you're the mayor's daughter; if there was another bullying incident, you would be expelled."

A smug smile played on Cecile's lips, "Don't worry, that won't happen. The principal is running for Director of Education. He won't lose my dad's political support over this petty stuff."

"What if I post everything that just happened online?"

Agnes held up her phone, "I've recorded it all. If I use my dad's resources, your violent bullying will be known nationwide. Maybe your dad will cut ties with you under pressure, and your path to stardom will definitely be over."

Before Agnes could finish, Cecile lunged for her phone.

Agnes stepped back, holding the phone high, "Save your energy, I've already saved it to the cloud. Even if you smash my phone, you'll still be tomorrow's hot news." Cecile was trembling with rage, but she was always arrogant and cold-hearted. She grabbed another razor blade from the lab bench and aimed at Kerri's face, "Agnès, you should know how much I hate being threatened. Delete all the videos now, or your friend is going to get hurt. If you dare to ruin my future, I'll ruin your friend's face."

"What the hell is going on here?" A cold voice echoed from behind.

Amid the standoff, a tall figure appeared at the lab door.

"It's Prince!" A girl beside Cecile squealed.

Agnes turned around. Standing in the doorway was the main reason behind all the bullying incidents at school – the so-called Prince Frost, Ryder!

## **Chapter 15**

No doubt about it, Ryder had a hell of a handsome face. You could tell just by the way Cecile, who was mad as hell a moment ago, was now blushing like a ripe tomato. And the girls around her were practically shooting heart eyes.

Agnes was quick off the mark, and blurted out, “Good timing, handsome. How can you sit back and watch your crazy fans bully other students in your name? Sure, it’s not directly your fault, but it’s happening because of you. Can’t you rein in your fans a bit? Or do you actually enjoy being put on a pedestal?”

Agnes knew her words were a bit harsh, and she knew none of this was really Ryder’s fault. But his hands-off attitude was basically that of a bystander, and he was the only one who could get these people to cool their jets.

Ryder shot Agnes a look, furrowing his brow. She was momentarily dazed, his frown reminding her of someone she knew.

Meanwhile, Cecile had already strutted up to them. “Agnes, who do you think you are, yelling at Prince like that? You’re just a crafty little minx, trying to catch his eye, aren’t you?”

She raised her hand to slap Agnes. But her hand was stopped mid-air by Ryder. His voice was cold as ice, “When are you going to stop this nonsense?”

Cecile stared at him with love-struck eyes, “Prince...”

“Don’t call me Prince. For your father’s sake, I won’t make a fuss. But disband this ridiculous fan club of yours, or I’ll report you for harassment.”

Cecile bargained, “I will stop if you make me your girlfriend. I’ve liked you for a long time.”

“I don’t like you” Ryder said flatly.

“As long as you don’t have a girlfriend, I have every right to like you and pursue you. Everything I do, I do it for you.”

Ryder replied, “I already have a girlfriend.”

His words stunned everyone, including Agnes.

Agnes didn’t know much about him, but as a journalism student, she heard plenty of gossip from her Ryder-loving roommates. But she never heard anything about him having a girlfriend.

Whoever his girlfriend was, she would be in for a rough ride, Agnes thought.

Cecile was in total denial, “Who is she? Tell me who she is!”

Ryder glanced at Agnes, then calmly replied, “Her. Agnes.”

Agnes was dumbstruck. First, she was shocked that Ryder even knew her name. Second, what the hell was this ice-cold dude talking about? Did he know he was signing her death warrant?

Cecile shook her head, gritting her teeth, “I don’t believe it. When did you start dating? You’re lying, aren’t you!”

Ryder’s voice was cold and indifferent, “From this moment on.”

With that, he cupped Agnes’ head, leaned in, and his icy lips met

hers...

Agnes never thought she’d be kissed against her will. Her mind went blank; all she could hear were the collective gasps around her.

But it was just a peck, a brief touch before Ryder released Agnes. He then said to Cecile, “Now, you can give up. Don’t cause any more trouble in school, or don’t blame me for not considering the relationship between the Higgins and Whitfield families anymore.”

With that, he took Agnes by the hand and left the lab, with Kerri hurrying after them.

## **Chapter 16**

Agnes felt like she was in a dream, being led out of the lab building by Ryder.

It wasn’t until they were outside that she snapped back to reality, yanking her hand back from his and demanding, “Ryder, what the hell are you doing?”

Agnes was pissed. Not just because Ryder had kissed her, but because she hadn’t pushed him away immediately when he did. Because in that moment, looking at his **face**, she had mistaken him for Jared.

What a mindfuck.

Ryder paused, his face still calm as he said, "Sorry."

Agnes got it instantly, "You used me as a human shield, why me?"

"Because you're Preston's daughter, Cecile wouldn't dare touch you, right?"

Agnes had suspected as much. In this school, she was the one person Cecile wouldn't dare to cross. Even when she exposed Cecile's dirty deeds, Cecile hadn't come after her.

Agnes clenched her fists, and finally spat out, "You're such a jerk."

With that, she turned and bolted.

Kerri shot Ryder a glance and quickly followed.

Agnes' suitcase, carelessly left by the side of the road, was now missing. But it only contained some clothes, nothing important, so she didn't bother to look for it. Agnes and Kerri made their way back to their dorm.

Kerri was full of guilt, "Agnes, I'm so sorry. If I hadn't come to you for help, none of this would've happened. Elton will hate me if he finds out you got kissed because of this." They had reached the door of the dorm.

Agnes said, "This has nothing to do with you. Besides, Elton and I are over."

Kerri was shocked, "How come? He was so good to you!"

Elton really had been good to Agnes. On the first day of school, he escorted her and moved all her luggage to the fifth floor. He was constantly showering her with treats and gifts and the other dorm residents benefited too.

Word was they were childhood friends, a perfect match, and to everyone else, they were the ideal 'couple. Why would they just break up?

Agnes didn't answer, just took out her keys and opened the dorm door.

Their other two roommates were already there, one was Amelia who was a stellar student, and the other was Jenny.

Amelia, books in hand, was preparing to head to the library. She greeted them at the door.

Kerri said, “Amelia, it’s only the first day of school, and you’re already hitting the library. You’re such a nerd.”

Amelia responded, “Time’s meant to be used effectively, not wasted Gotta go.

Amelia was juggling two majors, finance, and business management. She spent most of her time in the library outside of class.

Among the four roommates, only Agnes and Jenny were journalism majors and since they had also been classmates in high school, they were particularly close.

However, Kerri noticed that today, both were acting strange. After entering the dorm, no one initiated conversation and they was busy with their own thing, as if everyone else was invisible.

Kerri felt the weird vibe and hesitated before saying, “I’m treating everyone for dinner tonight. Let’s go to Hot N Sizzlin’.”

Hot N Sizzlin’ was a special BBQ place where the dorm mates often gathered for meals.

Agnes replied, “I’m moving out tonight, so I can’t.”

## **Chapter 17**

Kerri asked in surprise, “You’re moving out? You’re not gonna live in the dorm anymore?”

Agnes replied, “I’ve rented a place off campus, and I’m moving out tonight.”

Stunned, Kerri pressed, “Why the move? Isn’t it great with all four of us bunking in the dorm?”

Jenny cut in abruptly. “Kerri, drop it Agnes is Daddy’s little girl, probably not used to living in such a dump”

Kerri was speechless and taken aback by Jenny's sarcastic comment. Weren't they on good terms before? Did they have a fallout?

Ignoring Jenny's jab, Agnes continued packing her stuff, which wasn't much. Her new suitcase was far from full.

Kerri helped Agnes with the move. They rented a car and hauled her stuff to Maplewood Manor. As they pulled up to the community, Kerri was taken aback, "You're living here too?"

"Too?" Agnes was puzzled

Kerri quickly covered up her slip. "Oh, I just heard some celebs live here. If you run into any, snag me an autograph."

The odds of running into a celeb were slim. Each mansion was secluded, hidden behind towering trees with private driveways. The residents probably didn't even know who their neighbors were.

By the time they finished moving, it was already dark. Agnes offered, "Let me treat you to dinner tonight. Let's go to Hot N Sizzlin'."

Kerri quickly retorted, "No, I should be treating you. Without you today, I could've been a real hot mess."

Agnes didn't protest, and they went to Hot N Sizzlin' together.

Kerri had a million questions about Agnes, like why the sudden move, why she broke up with Elton, and what happened between her and Jenny. But those were personal and emotional matters. She felt it was not her place to pry. So, at dinner, she went for a safer question.

“Did you and Jenny have a fight?” Kerri asked.

At the mention of Jenny, Agnes felt a pang in her heart.

“Let’s not talk about that. We might not be friends anymore,” Agnes replied.

Seeing a flicker of pain in Agnes’ eyes, Kerri regretted asking. “Forget it,” Kerri said, “Agnes, if you’re feeling down, let’s have a few drinks.”

After the day’s events, Agnes was feeling pretty low. She agreed, even though she knew she couldn’t handle her booze.

Kerri didn’t expect Agnes to get wasted after just two beers. She had to take Agnes back to Maplewood Manor. Once she was sure Agnes was sound asleep, Kerri left her alone. On the driveway, she spotted a black Bentley.

Was Agnes not living here alone? Could it be her family? Although Kerri was curious, she didn’t give it much thought.

When Jared arrived at the mansion, he noticed the light in the bedroom. Good, it seemed Agnes had moved in, and quite swiftly at that. However, seeing a drunken Agnes sprawled on the bed, he frowned.

She actually drank!

Jared sat by the bed, touching Agnes’ flushed cheek. Agnes woke up at the touch of his cold fingers. Groggily she opened her eyes, and seeing Jared’s furrowed brow, she/ suddenly laughed, “Elton, you’re back!”

## Chapter 18

Upon hearing this, Jared’s frown deepened. His voice turned icier, “What did you just call me?”

Agnes, half-asleep, turned over and mumbled something, “Elton...”

A surge of anger bubbled up in Jared. He grabbed Agnes’ face and said coldly, “Agnes, look at me. Who am I?”

But then Jared noticed his fingertips were cold and damp. Agnes’ eyes were closed, but tears were rolling down from the corners of them.

Agnes was crying.

Jared got up and fetched a warm towel. He sat by the bed and gently wiped away her tears.

Agnes was slowly coming back to consciousness, but it felt like a dream. It reminded her of when she was a child, lying in her mother’s arms, swinging on the swing in the yard, gazing at the stars in the sky.

She opened her eyes, and there was Jared.

He was very careful and gentle, like he was taking care of a treasure. It’d been a long time since Agnes had felt cared for like this, and it was her husband, her family, who was caring for her.

Suddenly, Agnes sat up, wrapped her arms around Jared’s neck, and kissed him. This was the first time she had ever taken the initiative. If it had been before, she wouldn’t have dared. But with the help of alcohol, Agnes just wanted to be closer to this man. Her hands even started to wander, teasing him...

Jared froze. He **wasn’t** used to Agnes being so forward.

Agnes’ eyes were hazy, her cheeks were flushed, and there was a faint smell of alcohol on her. She was like an enchanting fairy.

Her teasing was clumsy, but Jared was still turned on. He had to admit that Agnes was very attractive at the moment. But in the end, he grabbed her mischievous hand. His voice was cold but noticeably hoarse.

Jared said, “Agnes, what are you doing?”

At his words, Agnes felt like she'd been doused with a bucket of ice water. She pulled away from Jared, looking at him in disbelief. His face was filled with coldness and disgust she had never seen before.

Jared got up and said, "I'm going to take a shower, you should go to bed early."

The sound of running water came from the bathroom. Agnes was fully awake now. She hid under the covers, clutching a pillow, but she couldn't stop the tears from flowing. The disgust in Jared's eyes had shattered what little self-esteem she had left.

If Jared really loathed her, then why did he marry her? Why had he slept with her so many times?

The **man** in the shower was standing under the cold spray, frustrated. The freezing water didn't extinguish the burning desire within him. He almost lost control, but every time he thought about Agnes mistaking him for Elton, he got furious. The thought that Agnes was seducing him while thinking of another man made him....

With a grunt, Jared's fist slammed into the bathroom wall!

Agnes was wide awake. She knew Jared had been in the bathroom for a long time. When he came out, he went straight to the guest room.

Agnes felt like she was in the depths of despair.

The next day was the school opening ceremony. Agnes woke up early. After freshening up, she planned to go straight to school. But as she passed the dining room, she heard noises.

Unable to help herself, she went in, only to find Jared cooking breakfast in the kitchen.

## Chapter 19

Agnes never thought that a dude like Jared would be caught dead **in** the kitchen. Wasn't a guy like him supposed to be all about takeouts and dining out?

But you had to hand it to him, watching him cook was a sight for sore eyes. Every move he made was like watching a masterpiece in the making.

Turning around, Jared caught Agnes in his' view. "Off to school?" he asked.

Agnes just nodded, almost robotically.

"Breakfast is ready. Eat before you go." Jared suggested in the most nonchalant manner,

Thinking about last night's events, Agnes was still down in the dumps.

She sat down silently and started on her breakfast.

The breakfast was the whole nine yards. Jared's pancakes were to die for. But right now, all Agnes wanted to do was skedaddle out of there. So, she wolfed down her food hastily she burned her tongue.

Just as Jared was about to sit down, Agnes was already done. Dropping her fork, she announced, "I gotta jet. It's the opening ceremony today, can't be late."

Jared could sense that something was off. Frowning, he asked, "Agnes, do you remember anything from last night?"

Acting all innocent, Agnes replied, "What happened last night? I don't remember a thing."

Jared's eyes flickered for a moment before asking, "Do you want me to drop you off at school?"

"No need, it's not far away, I can walk."

With that, Agnes grabbed her backpack and bolted from the dining hall like a bat out of hell. She remembered all too well about last night, but it was too awkward to bring

### 1. up.

The opening ceremony was over in no time and Agnes was officially a sophomore. In the afternoon, she was notified about a meeting at 3 pm by The Journalism Society.

Agnes was majoring in journalism, and Lakeside College was a well-known media university. The Journalism Society was one of the four major clubs in the school.

During the meeting, Agnes bumped into Jenny. She almost forgot that Jenny was now the vice president of The Journalism Society, a position that Agnes had bowed out from.

While the president, Lily, was running the meeting, Agnes was spacing out. She did hear something about The Journalism Society planning to start a new column called Big Shot, and they were discussing ideas for the first interview..

There were all **sorts** of suggestions. Some mentioned the school's most popular med student hottie, Ryder. Some suggested the bad-boy hacker, Javier, an e-commerce student. Some even suggested the budding starlet Ava from the art department.

Amidst the lively discussion, Lily turned to Jenny and asked, "Jenny, any bright ideas?"

Jenny replied, "If we want to make a splash with this column, our first interviewee has to be a big fish. We shouldn't limit ourselves to the campus. I suggest we invite the youngest CEO of the Tim Group, Jared."

The room went dead silent after Jenny's suggestion..

Everyone knew who Jared was. He was this untouchable, big-shot figure. Reportedly, no media had ever successfully interviewed him.

Even Lily thought Jenny was shooting for the moon. Lily responded, “That’s a pipe dream, **Jenny**. Though Jared is one of the most influential figures in Willowbrook Town and a great fit for our magazine, he’s notoriously hard to get in touch with. Even mainstream media **can’t** land an interview with him, let alone us.”

Jenny retorted, “That’s exactly why we should try. What if we pulled it off? If we managed **to** get an exclusive interview with Jared, our Journalism Society would become the bee’s knees. Plus, we wouldn’t have to chase after people anymore, **they** would be lining up for us.”

Another member chimed in, “Easier said than done. Why on earth would Jared agree to our interview

Jenny, with a glint in her eyes, responded, “I think this task should be given to Agnes.”

## **Chapter 20**

Suddenly, **all** eyes were on Agnes. She wasn’t sure what Jenny was up to, but she was sure that Jenny had a goal in mind. Before Agnes could say anything, Jenny continued, “Seems like Agnes and Mr. Whitfield are more than just friends, eh?” Jenny purposely made her statement sound vague, causing everyone to look at Agnes with a strange look in their eyes. Lily asked, “Agnes, do you know Jared?”

Everyone knew Agnes’ family background – her father was a media mogul. Therefore, it wasn’t completely out of the question for someone of Agnes’ social standing to know someone important like Jared.

Agnes glanced at Jenny and said, “I did meet Jared during my internship with the Tim Group over the winter break, but he’s super busy all the time. I don’t think he’ll agree to an interview”

Everyone else was thinking along the same lines as Agnes, but Jenny was still persistent.

Jenny said, “How will we know if we don’t give it a shot? Since we’ve got this chance, why not take a stab at it? I propose I do the first special interview. With Agnes’ help, I believe we can pull it off.”

Lily thought for a moment and said, “Okay, you two handle the first interview. Do your best. I’m about to graduate. If you guys can really score an exclusive with Jared, the club president position is yours.”

After the meeting. Agnes left the classroom, but Jenny followed her. “Agnes, wait up.”

Agnes stopped and turned around, her tone icy, “What do you want?”

Jenny suddenly changed her previous attitude and looked at Agnes pitifully, “Agnes, about Elton... I know I messed up. I don’t want to lose you as a friend. Can you forgive me? Can we be like before?”

As she spoke, she grabbed Agnes’ arm and shook it, whining like a spoiled child.

Agnes was regretful. She had been fooled by Jenny’s innocent act before, always trying to please her no matter what she asked. Like when they were both running for vice president of the club, Jenny begged her to step down. But this time was different.

Agnes stepped back, shook off Jenny’s hand, and said, “If you want me to forgive you, then break up with Elton and abort your child. Then we can go back to how things were and pick up from where we left off. How about that?”

Jenny didn’t expect the usually docile Agnes to say such a thing. Jenny immediately retorted angrily, “Agnes, how can you be so cruel? You want me to get rid of my child with Elton?”

—Agnes said, “If you can’t do that, then don’t bring up the past again. Jenny, let’s pretend we never knew each other. Now, I just want to ask one question. Why are you so

insistent on interviewing Jared? What’s your real goal?”

Jenny’s expression had changed, a hint of mockery on her face, “I’m just thinking about the club, and besides, isn’t Jared your boyfriend? He should be willing to help with such a small thing, right?”

Agnes looked at Jenny calmly.

Jenny chuckled, “Or is he not really your boyfriend? Was that scene in the meeting room just an act?”

Jenny had suspected this for a while.

The last incident was too coincidental, and she had thought that Agnes’ reaction at the time was a bit forced. It could just be Jared being spontaneous and playing the hero. More compelling evidence came from Yolanda, who was interning with her at the Tim Group’s secretarial department. Yolanda said that Agnes was the least favored intern by the CEO and faced many difficulties during her internship.

If Jared really was Agnes’ boyfriend, there should have been some rumors.

So Jenny was convinced that Jared’s appearance in the meeting room last time was purely coincidental!