

It feels like hours have passed by the time I'm finally spent. My cheeks are stiff with dried tears and a throbbing, aching pressure has taken residence behind my eyes. I sprawl on the couch with the cool wet washcloth Erin's given me draped over my face and listen to the dull hum of the TV's low volume and the rush of water in the kitchen sink as my assistant washes my dishes.

"That's not part of your job description," I call. I sit up and rub the cloth over my face, trying to erase any sign of tears. This is ridiculous. I'm not the first woman to be dumped by her fiancé. I won't be the last. But most of all, it's not permanent. A bit of thinking has convinced me. Drew won't be happy with Heidi of the Made in Taiwan wardrobe. Drew likes intelligence, and the few times I spoke to her did little to convince me that Heidi had anything going for her in that department. He likes ambition and drive—how many times has he told me how amazing he thinks it is that I started my own business? Yet Heidi's idea of ambition seems to be sleeping with the boss. That might give her a temporary boost, but it certainly won't hold his interest. Not the way I held it for eight years.

I feel better than I have all day, or at least since Drew made his big confession. I roll off the couch just as Erin shuts the water off and slides the last plate into the overloaded drain board.

"Thank you," I say. "You didn't have to do that."

"Well, it didn't look like you were going to." Erin ventures a small smile, as if to gauge my reaction, and seems relieved when I laugh.

"Someday your teachings will stick," I promise.

"You look a little better. How are you feeling?"

"Better." I think I might even feel hungry, but then I catch sight of the abandoned bag of croissants and know I can't do it. Not yet. "Thank you so much for being here today. You have no idea how much it helped."

“Why wouldn’t I?” Erin finishes drying her hands and hangs the towel on its hook over the sink. “I know you’re my boss, but we’re friends, too. Right?”

Warmth suffuses me. How great is she? “Right.”

“So…” Erin looks down at her feet, points a booted toe. “What about work?”

“Oh.” Right. Work. I’m kind of responsible for her income, aren’t I? Suddenly I feel awful for having her cancel my appointments. The two weddings on my books have already been paid for, the money allocated for certain things. If I’m not bringing in any more money, how am I supposed to pay her? But I don’t know. I don’t know if I’m ready. Oh, I know Drew will come crawling back. But the question is when. Do I have what it takes to plan the amazing wedding I promise each of my clients while waiting for my fiancé to remember me?

I race through the math in my head. The business account has several thousand dollars in it—more than enough to pay Erin’s regular salary and an adequate one for me. Erin’s cleared the next few days for me so I have until Monday to get myself together. I can do that. I’ve already paid November’s rent on the building, so I don’t have to worry about that. And it should only take Drew a few weeks to realize that he’s made the biggest mistake of his life. Silver Bells be fine. A few days off is all I need.

“Okay,” I say slowly. “You go in. Answer the phones and all that stuff. I’m going to keep the next few days for myself, though.”

“Understandable.” Relief relaxes her face. “I can hold down the fort until you’re ready to come back. However long it takes.”

“Monday,” I say with certainty. “If anyone calls, schedule them for after Monday. I’ll be fine by then.”

“If you’re sure.” She smiles.

But by the next morning, the denial stage is already over, and I'm not sure at all. Of anything.

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