

## **Bennett**

Hook, line, and sinker.

The moment I made my offer and saw Henley's face go blank I knew I'd won her over. Money could buy anything, after all.

"So what are the terms?" she asked and I found myself grinning widely.

"Let's discuss them, shall we?" I suggested. I unlocked my phone, pulling up the agreement I'd constructed over the week.

Sebastian stood up from the table, deciding to give us some privacy. He went over to the counter to keep the other girl company as she stared wistfully over at us, obviously curious, but not wanting to invade our privacy.

Henley watched me warily and I could almost see the inner struggle she was having. While I didn't blame her for having trouble agreeing to this, I didn't see as much wrong with it as she did. We were using each other. It's how all business deals worked.

"Don't you think ten grand is a bit much?" she asked.

"Not at all," I responded truthfully. If I was completely honest, I doubt I'd even notice the money missing from my account. Not wanting to be too immodest, I kept that little tidbit to myself.

Henley let out a little laugh that sounded more like a sigh. "Alright..."

"I have the basics laid out here," I started, setting my phone down on the table and pushing it over to her. "Read through it and let me know if you'd like to change something."

She pushed a lock of her blonde hair out of her face, inspecting my phone. "You wrote up an agreement?"

"This is a business deal," I reiterated. "We might as well do it the right way. I've outlined what we will have to do together. We'll be seeing each other multiple times per week. I want to be as convincing as possible. All monetary needs will be handled by me, i.e meals, travel, attire."

Her head snapped back up. "Attire?"

I nodded. "I will purchase the required attire for you."

"Um, what's wrong with my clothes?"

"If you have dresses, I'll check them out, but if I don't find them suitable I will buy you something else."

Her expression became defensive and I fought a smile. I figured it would be like that. Why people had such a problem with other people buying them stuff, I had no idea. "What? Do I not look *rich* enough to be with you?" she said sarcastically.

"Yes," I answered because it was the truth. Then before she could speak I added, "I'm not trying to offend you, but we need to fool my mother into thinking you're of a higher class. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with you, Henley. As you said I know nothing about you. However, I do know my mom and she won't hesitate to stick her nose into our business if she doesn't believe you make a good figure a year."

Henley pursed her lips together, looking a little embarrassed. I didn't know why she felt embarrassed. "I don't know."

Was she planning on changing her mind again? "We won't have to interact with my mother often." I planned to keep that very limited. Even I didn't want to interact with my mother often.

"If I have to, I'll buy my own things," she told me.

I frowned a little. "I'm sure you don't have the money to waste, so don't worry about it."

Her cheeks became tinged with pink. "If you're going to make comments about how *poor* I am, I'm not going to go through with this. It's not like I'm homeless and starving."

"You work two jobs though," I said.

"Yeah, so I'm *not* homeless and starving," she snapped back at me. "I make enough money to live by. Just not enough to live as lavishly as you."

I sat back in my seat a little, watching her. She was quite the spirited girl. I liked it. "How old are you?"

Her mouth almost dropped. "That's right! You don't even know my age! What if I'm under-aged? You didn't even think about that, did you?"

"I know Michelangelo's doesn't hire anyone underage, so I know you're at least twenty-one." She looked young, so I figured she couldn't be much older than twenty-one.

"How old are you?"

"I'm twenty-five, turning twenty-six this year," I answered.

"On Christmas," she said.

I was surprised she remembered. It sent a little bit of warmth through my body. Usually, the only person who remembered was my mother's secretary. "At most our age gap is four years, which is a pretty common difference."

She pressed her lips to one side of her face and looked away from me. I took a sip of my coffee, enjoying the acidic taste on my tongue. "Do we have to kiss?" she suddenly asked, turning back to me.

"As it's a common thing for couples to do, yes."

Her eyes grew round. "Maybe this isn't a good idea."

Was she that worried about a kiss? Kisses were nothing. I grabbed her hand—noting how soft it was—and swiftly pressed a kiss to it. "That wasn't so bad was it?" I asked with a grin.

She seemed to be in shock for a moment, her cheeks coloring slightly. She then wiped her hand off on her apron.

I raised an eyebrow. Why did she need to go as far as wiping it off? Many people were dying for a kiss from me. "I won't kiss you any more than what's necessary," I promised. I wouldn't mind kissing her more though. She was cute and seemed hygienic enough. "Mainly around my relatives if we happen across them."

"You've thought this out very precisely," she muttered.

"I don't want to marry someone I don't love," I said. Partial truth. I also didn't want to get married period, but might as well go for the romantic facet.

Nodding slowly, she pushed my phone back at me. I knew she hadn't read all of it, but I didn't say anything. "I don't know what your life is like, but I don't think anyone should be forced to marry someone else. I also need the money, so I'll help you."

Perfect. I knew she wouldn't be able to resist for very long. My offer was more than gracious. I could've probably found someone else and paid them way less than what I offered her. But I didn't want anyone else. She was the perfect candidate. I didn't mind spending the extra money.

"On a condition though."

This was unsurprising. There were always conditions.

She leaned toward me a bit, a tactic I used to appeal to someone. "When all this is said and done you tell everyone I broke up with you, not the other way around," she presented.

I caught myself leaning toward her too, but quickly straightened my back. "Why?"

"Hmm, something about the poor girl breaking the rich man's heart appeals to me," she responded, a playful smile crossing her face.

I nodded. "I think I can agree to that term." It also would be easier to explain why I was so heart-broken to my mother if she was the one to "break up" with me. "But you have to agree to one of my conditions."

"What's that?"

"You most definitely can *not* fall in love with me," I said, holding her gaze.

Her pretty eyes widened slightly at my words but they quickly narrowed. "Trust me, that won't be a problem. You're not my type. I should be the one telling you not to fall for *me*." She flipped her hair over her shoulder on the last word, holding her chin up high.

I wasn't her type? I was everyone's type. Why was she getting so arrogant? I found myself folding my arms over my chest. "You're not to my standards."

She raised an eyebrow and smiled a little. "Then good. There won't be any problems."

Why did she sound so confident? She didn't find me charming at all?

*That's a good thing*, I told myself.

But still, I wanted her to find me a *little* bit charming.

"Sign the agreement," I said, pushing the phone back at her. "Right at the bottom."

"Is this really necessary?" she asked but swiped her finger across it anyway.

Satisfied, I took my phone back. "Only as a precaution. I doubt you'll back out anyway. Believe it or not, I make a pretty good boyfriend. Pretend or not."

"I'll be the judge of that," she replied.



"Put my number in your phone and save it. The number on the receipt is my cell phone and that's where I can be reached. I want you to send me your work schedule so I can work around it. I also want you to write down your address, bank account number, and your body measurements," I listed, trying to remember everything important.

She watched me with an apprehensive expression and I paused, waiting for her to comment. I knew she wanted to. "Body measurements?" she said slowly.

"So I can find the right size clothing for you," I replied. My eyes scanned over her body. She looked to be five feet and maybe four or five inches tall. Medium build and breasts that were perhaps a bit too ample for her form. I wouldn't be able to estimate her size.

She shifted and my eyes snapped right back to her face. "I don't want any clothes that are like, made for my exact size if that's what you mean. Clothing from Target is fine."

Clothing from a *chain* store? Is that what she wore? Maybe that was why her breasts pushed against her white button-up so tightly. "You cannot be seen with me in clothing from Target. And if you got your clothing tailored to your custom measurement, your breasts wouldn't be trying to escape your top like they are now. They are a bit larger than normal for your frame," I informed her wisely.

Her mouth dropped and her cheeks turned red. She opened and closed her mouth for a moment as if she was at a loss for words. "Get out," she finally said.

"Excuse me?"

"Get out!" she repeated, her voice rising a few pitches.

I winced a little. "Why—"

"Leave," she interjected, standing up from the table and grabbing me by the collar of my shirt and pulling it.

A little dumbfounded, I quickly grabbed my phone and allowed her to pull me out of my seat. Then I remembered how much the shirt I was wearing cost and I made her release it. She then decided to shove on my back, pushing me toward the door. "What?" I asked, turning my head back to look at her.

She was glaring at me. "Just leave. We're done for today."

Sebastian came up to us, looking just as confused as I felt. Henley blew out an angry huff of air at me and pointed at the door. "Out."

"Why?" I repeated, a hint of indignity in my voice.

Sebastian put a hand on my shoulder. "Let's take our leave for today."

"But *why*?" I tried again, but he was already pushing me out the door. It closed behind us with a slam and a tinkle of the bell.

Once outside, I smoothed down my shirt, muttering under my breath. No one had ever pushed me around so much in my life. Where did Henley think she got off with the right to do so?

"What did you say to her?" Sebastian asked.

I turned to look at him. He thought this was my fault? "I didn't say anything bad. I just said that she shouldn't shop at Target and that her breasts were too large for her shirt and it was too tight."

He almost immediately burst out into laughter.

"What?" I asked.

Shaking his head, he placed a hand over his mouth, trying to smother it.

"*What?*" I said again, now irritated.

"I knew there was a reason you were my best friend," he responded, clapping a hand onto my shoulder. "Let's leave for today."

Still wondering what I did wrong, I walked to my car, the sound Sebastian's laughter following in my wake.

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