

## Get What You Deserve - Part 5

*By TheSpiralledEye*

The office party was in full swing; the merger had been a success, and Ashton's stockholders decided to treat the entire staff to a celebration to remember. Three office floors had been transformed into party central, complete with booming music, drinks and catering. It was the kind of party that would get talked about in the office for years to come, and I wasn't experiencing any of it. Instead, I was in a supply closet, palms pressed against the shelves, rolling my hips as Ashton thrust hard into me. We were both mostly dressed; my dress bunched around my waist as we fucked roughly, moaning and grunting through grit teeth.

Our hate sex had become a routine. At first, all the anger had been on Ashton's part, but after the third time, he'd fucked me over his desk and then insisted it was the last time I'd started to get angry myself. The arrogant, immature prick; every time he lost his temper and saw me, we ended up sleeping together. It was so immature; I hated that I loved it so much. Ashton felt the same way evidently because as he groaned and came deep inside me, I felt his breath hiss against the back of my neck in frustration.

"I hate how good you feel."

"The feeling's mutual."

Still, I moaned as he pulled out. I'd only cum once, and my body desperately wanted more.

Ashton zipped up his fly and pressed his ear to the door in the darkness, clicking his tongue in frustration.

"Too many people outside, I guess we're stuck in here."

"Great." I deadpanned. "This was your idea."

"This time, what about yesterday in the elevator?"

"You started it with those needling comments..."

"You kissed me?"

"So? You started feeling me up tonight. It all balances out."

In the gloom, I could see him glaring at me. Even in shadow and radiating anger, I felt my heart flutter. I wanted to hate him fully, but I just couldn't. I guess, on some level, I knew I deserved it.

"Ready to tell me the truth yet?" Ashton asked, and I rolled my eyes.

"I already have. You know that."

"I know the lie you told me about being a man."

"It's the truth. I told you everything that night in your office. Not my fault you don't believe me."

"Screw this, I don't care if anybody sees me. Stay here for five minutes."

I wanted to spit back that he couldn't tell me what to do, but he was already gone. I huffed and even considered walking out right after him as brazenly as I could but decided against it. For all my frustration and annoyance, I didn't actually want to cause Ashton any more harm. I set about adjusting myself inside. Making sure I was about to slip a nipple or give myself a wedgie with my panties before stepping back out into the party a few minutes later. Nobody seemed to notice me, they were all too busy enjoying all the free drinks and food to care. I sighed; partying didn't feel right. I made my way to the elevator ready to just go home and sleep it off but no matter how many times I pressed the button, the elevator kept going past my floor. Somebody was clearly button-mashing as a joke; great.

"Fine, I could use some exercise anyway."

By the time I'd gone down three flights of stairs, I regretted my impatience. I had several flights to go, and heels weren't the most comfortable walking shoe. Maybe whoever was messing around was done now; I walked out onto an empty office floor to head to the elevator when I heard voices. I strained to listen, recognising the voices of two of Ashton's major stockholders and partners, Davis and Carlson.

"It's time. Ashton has stopped being an asset and started to become a liability. His ideas started this place, but now the line has stopped going up. If he keeps all these sustainable policies, the company will never make it into the Fortune 500." Davis said, his voice low but insistent.

"I agree," Carlson replied. "We need someone who understands the importance of the bottom line. Fortunately for us, the man is still a scientist first and a businessman second. As far as I can tell, he hasn't noticed he's almost bought out. A few more days, and we can finish it and finally get this company on track."

My heart raced as I realised what I was overhearing. They were planning to oust Ashton as CEO.

"But how do we ensure the board sides with us?" Davis asked. "I can count on a few, but we don't want this to go pear-shaped on us."

"Simple," Carlson answered. "We present the numbers. Highlight how his green initiatives are bleeding us dry. Once they see the potential profits, they'll be on our side. We just need to time it right, maybe at the next board meeting."

"And if Ashton catches wind of this?"

"He won't. He trusts us. Besides, he's too busy with his eco-projects and whatever is going on with that clerk to notice anything amiss."

My face turned red, realising that people had caught wind of our little game, but now wasn't the time to focus on myself. I had to warn Ashton, even if he hated me. Sore feet forgotten, I flew up the stairs, not even bothering to waste time waiting for the elevator. I skipped the party and went right to the top floor where Ashton's office was; I knew him, there was no way that after our little spat, he would be mingling. I breathed a ragged sigh of relief to see his office light was on. I pushed the door open without knocking and stepped inside. Ashton looked up from his desk, surprise flickering in his eyes before his expression hardened.

"Dahlia. What do you want?" he asked, his tone cold and distant. "I've had enough of you tonight."

"I need to talk to you," I said, closing the door behind me. "It's important."

"Make it quick. I'm busy."

"I overheard Davis and Carlson. They're planning to take over the company and oust you. They want to increase profits by cutting your sustainability projects," I blurted out.

Ashton's brow furrowed.

"And why should I believe you?"

"What? Seriously? Why would I lie about this?"

"How convenient that you overheard this just when you needed something to regain my trust." He rolled his eyes.

"It's not about that," I insisted. "I know you don't trust me, but believe it or not I still care about you, Ashton. I know I fucked up, okay? I'll be paying for it for the rest of my life stuck in this body! Just...look into it, okay?"

He stared at me, his expression softening ever so slightly.

"Fine. I'll look into it. But if this turns out to be a wild goose chase, Dahlia, we're done. Completely. I don't care if it's an HR nightmare; I am firing you."

"Fine." I bit the inside of my cheek. "You know what? Don't bother, I quit. And you'll regret it if you don't listen."

I turned on my heels and stormed out of the office, my eyes burned with frustrated tears as I ran all the way to the bottom floor and out into the night. This was for the best, we needed a clean break. If I was going to find peace in this new life as a woman, I needed to be away from Ashton and all the guilty memories. Despite knowing it was the right choice, my heart still ached. I looked back at the office tower; Ashton's light was still on on the top floor. I wondered if he was looking into the claims I'd made. I hoped so.

"Good luck, Ashton," I whispered before turning to face the road and future ahead without him.

Despite my best efforts, I constantly checked the business news online in the coming days. Each morning, I held my breath, worried that I would see a huge article detailing how Ashton's company had been stolen from under him. Or worse, a small article about it. But thankfully, nothing like that happened. Instead, two weeks after that final talk at the office, I saw a slight change in stocks and a tiny mention of the shareholders and board members at the company being shuffled around. A small smile graced my lips; he'd listened.

I'd hoped saving his company would dissuade my guilt somewhat, and it did, but I still found myself thinking about him every day, no matter how hard I tried. It didn't help that my new job was either mind-numbingly dull. Being a waitress was about the only entry-level job I could find; the pay was crap, and the tips were even worse until I started showing a bit more chest. It felt wrong, having to rely on my body to sell coffee and cheesecake at a diner, but my funds were getting low enough that pride wasn't my biggest concern.

Still, I finally understood why women complained constantly about being hit on. I'd always thought it would be nice to have everybody pursue me rather than the other way around. It turns out that in reality, it's a lot more annoying. It seemed like every other night I had men trying to slip their numbers into my apron or cop a feel as I leaned over the table.

"You wouldn't dress like that if you didn't want it." One taunted after I'd slapped his hands away. I wished I had a better response, but the truth was I needed the tips my tits got me, so I didn't have a ledge to stand on. Still, the ones who were upfront were at least easy to handle, a swift kick to the curb it was the lurkers who really pissed me off.

"Heads up, he's back." My co-worker Emily sighed.

"The creep?"

"Yeah, want me to take the table?"

"Nah, I'm a big girl. I can take care of myself."

'Trenchcoat', as I had taken to calling him, was a man who came in every day for my entire shift. He tried to time it so that he arrived a few minutes before or after me so he wasn't so suspicious, and on the days he didn't come in, he sat in the car park thinking he was discreet. The annoying thing was he barely spoke to me. I kept waiting for the inevitable awkward invitation to dinner. Hell, after a few weeks, I was clutching the pepper spray in my purse every time I left the restaurant, expecting him to jump out of the bushes and kidnap me. As I approached the table, I noticed a little notebook that he had quickly pocketed as soon as I got close. Enough was enough.

"Just coffee and-"

"A bagel. I know." I replied harshly. "You order the same thing every time. How about we cut the crap."

"E-excuse me?"

“I know you’re watching me, perv.”

I watched as a cold sweat broke out on the man’s neck, and I smirked, catching him dead to rights.

“Ah, well, in that case, I guess I’ll just be going.”

“Oh no, you don’t.” I hissed, “Give me that notebook first, I don’t want you to have any weird notes to get off on later.”

“It’s not like that.” The man squeaked. “P-please, just let me go. I really need this job.”

“Job?”

“Look, he didn’t want me to do anything creepy, he just asked me to make sure you were doing okay and look into a few things.” The man said, “Look, I have a business card and everything!”

He reached into his coat and pulled out a little cardboard square that read ‘Phil Jon, Private Investigator.’ and my jaw hit the proverbial floor. There was only one person who would hire a private investigator. I didn’t give Phil another thought, instead ripping off my apron and throwing it at the bench.

“I’m leaving early; the boss can deal with it,” I told Emily as she watched in shock. Ashton owed me some answers.

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I stormed into Ashton’s apartment building, not even pausing to speak with the flustered footman as he ran after me.

“Ma’am! You can’t just walk in here-”

“Can. Did.”

“No, but, you must have permission from one of the residents to visit!”

I reached the elevator and cursed; stupid fancy apartment building with its passcode elevator. I rounded on the doorman, who jumped back in fright.

“You tell Ashton to invite me up to talk now. Or else I will sit in this lobby until he comes down!” I seethed.

It didn’t take long for him to scurry off and return sheepishly with a keyboard to let me into the elevator. The entire time sat there stewing in my frustration. Had I fucked up with my plan? Yes, absolutely. I had been the villain in this story, but now Ashton was making it impossible for me to move on with my life and had the gall to get upset about it. Well, no more Mrs. Pushover. I was done being nice. When the elevator doors opened into Ashton’s penthouse, he was waiting for me, but I didn’t give him a chance to get a word out before storming in.

“You hired an investigator to follow me?” I cried, “What the actual hell, Ashton? You keep saying you're done with me, that you're not like other rich people, and then you do shit like this!”

“I can explain.”

I crossed my arms and raised my eyebrows.

“Well?”

“You were right about Davis and Carlson. They'd been secretly buying up shares, ready to oust me.” Ashton sighed, “I took care of it, and then I wanted to thank you. I figured you'd come back to work, but you didn't, and I realised that even after everything that happened, everything I did and said to you, you still saved me.”

“And this led to hiring a guy to follow me because...?”

“I wanted the truth about you, where you come from, and what you were doing. And a part of me, I guess, just...wanted to know you were safe.” Ashton blushed. “I was actually planning on coming to see you soon to apologise.”

That surprised me.

“Apologise?”

“You were telling the truth, the investigator dug into Dahlia and discovered...”

“My old name and life?”

“Yes.”

Silence stretched out between us. At first, it was tense, then it just became awkward. A single minute of silence can seem like a lot more in real life than it does on the page. I'd been trying to convince Ashton that I was telling the truth for so long, and yet now that he knew and believed me, it was slightly embarrassing. It certainly took the wind out of my sails rage wise.

“Well...you know now so...I guess I will just go.” I shuffled awkwardly. “Clean break and all that, for real this time.”

“You didn't think about me at all in the time we've been apart?” Ashton asked.

“Is that hope I detect in your voice?” I asked, a wry smile on my lips. I couldn't help it, it felt good to know I was missed.

“Maybe a little. I keep thinking about those dates we had before everything went to shit. They were good, weren't they?”

“Yeah...”

“Now that everything is out in the open...did you want to do it again?”

“A date?”

“Just one.” Ashton held up his finger “to see if there is a genuine spark between us. Without you lying.”

“Harsh.”

“Fair, though.”

“Yeah, fair.”

The awkwardness returned, and I shuffled back into the elevator.

“So, dinner tonight at some nice place?” I suggested. “You can pick me up?”

“Sounds good.”

God, we sounded like a pair of stilted teenagers, both of us sounded so wooden. And yet, hope fluttered in my chest. Deep down, I wanted this to work between us, I’d grown to admire Ashton so much that his money meant nothing anymore. If I could somehow convince him that it was true that he wasn’t some means to an end, maybe we could have a happy ending. The elevator doors closed, and I let out a nervous breath I didn’t realise I’d been holding. I had one shot, one chance to get a proper happily ever after and prove I’d changed my ways. No pressure.

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I stared at myself in the mirror; the dress was stunning. Silky, form-fitting with an open back and faux pearls sewn into the neckline. My eyes slid from my reflection to the empty jar sitting on my bedside table; this had cost me a full paycheque plus every tip I’d earned at the diner. Weeks of work, down the drain in an instant and replaced with fabric and jewels. I just had to hope it was worth it. I’d spent two hours getting my make-up and hair just right, and now I stood there, in my tiny apartment, waiting with bated breath for the date that could define the rest of my life.

My purse contained the rest of the money I had left, which amounted to a little under a hundred dollars. Even if Ashton took me somewhere fancy, it would at least pay for a drink and a main. I would insist on paying my share. Maybe I could even pay some of his as well. I had enough instant noodles in the cupboard to last me until the next pay day.

When the car finally arrived I felt myself break out in a cold sweat which I quickly held back through sheer force of will; I did not spend all that time getting my make up just right so that it would be ruined. Ashton opened the door, his eyes were guarded, and I watched his Adam’s apple bob as his eyes quickly looked me over.

“You look lovely.”

“Thank you.” I smiled, only just able to hold back my nerves. He was dressed in a simple button-up shirt and pants, which was smart casual at best. I felt my cheeks go red; I was so overdressed.

“I got us a reservation at a place I think you’ll like.” He grinned. “Let’s go.”

We slipped into the car and I bounced my toes against the floor anxiously.

“Before you say anything,” I started, “I need you to know that no matter where we are going, I will pay.”

Ashton blinked in surprise.

“And if I earn another date, I’ll pay for that too! I promise, and if you want, we can skip all gift-giving holidays. Hell, if we ever get serious, I will sign a prenup if that’s what it takes I, fuck, that’s probably a bit weird to bring up on a first date, isn’t it?”

“A little.” Ashton chuckled, covering his mouth.

“So forget that! But I mean it, I don’t want your money, Ashton, I just want to spend time with you, and I will prove it! Even if it means I have to go wash dishes out the back of wherever we eat tonight to afford it!”

Ashton was shaking now, trying and failing to contain his laughter, I felt my shoulders slump.

“No, I-I’m sorry it’s just, you’re so intense!” He chuckled. “I think you need a drink, you’re wound up tighter than a spring.”

“I just wanted tonight to go well, things were so awkward.”

“Even more reason to have a drink.” He grinned, “Here, have a glass of chardonnay, I don’t think they sell it where we’re going.”

“They don’t sell wine?” I gaped, gratefully taking the glass and downing it for liquid courage and to stop my traitorous mouth from talking any more.

“I doubt it.”

We finished our drinks as the car pulled up and Ashton got out first, opening my door and taking my hand like a gentleman. I looked up and was immediately blinded by the dazzling neon lights. They flashed red and yellow as a far, moustached man mimed eating a piece of pizza.

“Welcome to the best little hole in the wall pizza place in town.” Ashton laughed as I stared in shock at the little diner. It was crumbling and old, but had a sort of character to it. It was the sort of place that let itself get run down because everybody in the area knew the food was good and that was all that mattered. A genuine, delighted smile split across my face.

“Ashton...this is perfect.”

“You don’t want champagne and caviar?” He asked, only half joking and I playfully swatted at his arm.

“Not at all, come on, I’m getting onions and anchovies, so if you want to get kissed tonight, you’d better hurry up.”

Ashton threw back his head and laughed; and just like that, the tension was gone. I was extremely overdressed in my silk and pearls, to the point that everybody was staring but I didn’t care. We ordered at the counter and carried out a greasy cardboard box to a corner

table before opening it and savouring the thick scent of cheese and tomatoes. I ate, forgetting about my make-up entirely and focusing all my attention on making sure the cheese didn't slide onto my fingers while we laughed and talked. It was like being a high schooler again. We toasted the pizza with cheap soda in cans, and Ashton's smile made my heart flutter in my chest.

"You know, some big hedge fund manager is having a private party out at the casino tonight." He said eventually. "White tie event, the whole nine yards, I hear he even got some famous Michelin chef to come and cook a ten course meal."

"Yeah, but will any of those courses have pizza this good?" I asked, "No. I don't think so."

"Not even a little tempted?"

"Ashton, I would rather spend a hundred dates in little dive bars and have your full attention than be anywhere else," I said honestly, giggling when his cheeks dusted pink.

"It's crazy, but I actually believe you." He said softly.

"I swear, I will prove it to you every day if I have to," I whispered.

The moment was ruined by a meaty hand slamming down on the table, making us both jump. A tall, muscular man with smooth skin and an arrogant smile grinned down at us, his eyes looking me up and down.

"Sweetheart, is this a date?"

"Yes," I replied shortly. "A date you are interrupting."

"That was a rhetorical question, sweetheart. This is no date." He said arrogantly, "A lady like you shouldn't be slumming it in a pizza joint. How about you let a real man show you a night on the town, eh? My treat?"

I sneered, looking the man up and down. He was fit and handsome, with a gold chain around his neck. He clearly had money and was exactly the sort of person I would have set my sights on a few months back. Now, the idea made my stomach churn.

"How about you go mind your own business, you rude asshat."

Ashton snorted.

"You're going to let her talk to me that way?" The man gaped at Ashton, who just laughed.

"Let her? I am beginning to see why you're struggling to get a date, pal."

The man puffed up his chest and I had to hold back a laugh, he looked like an angry ape.

"You wanna go, man?"

"Yeah, actually. I do." Ashton said, standing calmly and offering me his hand. "Shall we?"

I took it, and we walked right past the wanna be alpha male, leaving him opening and closing his mouth in shock as we walked out into the night and immediately burst into giggles.

“Well...”

“Wow, holy shit, I didn't think guys like that actually existed.” Ashton snorted. “Shall we continue our cheap date with an equally cheap walk through the park?”

“You do spoil me.” I grinned, threading my arm through his and holding him close.

The walk was casual, we talked about everything and nothing, mud-stained the tips of my heels and the dress. It would probably take forever to get clean but I didn't care. When we reached the other side of the park, Ashton gave me a look; it was the natural stopping point of our date, but neither of us wanted it to be over so soon. He leaned in and pressed a gentle kiss to my lips.

“Another date tomorrow? We could go to McDonalds.” He teased, and I giggled.

“That sounds perfect.”

Things weren't entirely mended between us yet, but I could feel the wounds closing. My heart fluttered excitedly as I pictured more 'cheap' dates with him. Maybe it was silly to say so soon, but I was sure we had a future together now. I reached up and claimed his lips one more time and felt at home.