

MARCH

Heather

From: Heather Hall <heather.hall@flash.com>

Sent: Mon. 3/2 5:17 a.m.

To: Elizabeth Smith <esmith@gmail.com>

Subject: Girls' Weekend

So I got your message about doing our annual girls' weekend in June. I'd love to do it, but this year I have to pass. I can't tell you all the details, but I have a project in the works that may completely transform my career. I know that sounds melodramatic (even for me), but this project is really special. It should be ready in September if everything goes to plan.

I feel really bad that I can't get away this year. Would you let me treat you, Carmen, Martha, and Sara to a week at my Carmel cottage? You know what, I'm not letting you guys say no. The tickets are on their way.

Love and kisses,

Heather

P.S. Any news on the baby front? I have my fingers crossed for you. I know that this will be the year you get everything you want! No one deserves it more than you.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth's fingers hovered over her keyboard as she considered whether to reply to Heather's message. She was really disappointed that Heather was backing out of their girls' weekend. Heather was one of her oldest friends, and Elizabeth had spent the whole winter looking forward to their getaway with their other three college friends, Carmen, Martha, and Sara.

She would e-mail Heather later. She needed to get her head in the game today. The Old Man and Joe had invited her to lunch, and she suspected something was in the works. It felt like it was one of those days, a day when something happened that changed the arc of things. Elizabeth's world as a big firm attorney was characterized by long stretches of tedious, hard work punctuated by the rare day that brought a big win (or loss). A new client. A big deal. A breakup. A promotion.

Elizabeth had taken the time this morning to pick out her most flattering suit, straighten her fine, brown hair that she kept cut in a sharp bob, and apply a little more than her normal five-minute makeup. She hated that how she looked was an integral part of her success, but that's the ways things were, and she didn't see it changing anytime soon. She felt she was doing well enough in that department, though. The baby weight was nearly all off after months of coffee for breakfast, a salad for lunch, and the promise of a half bottle of wine on Friday if she kept it together during the week.

Elizabeth pushed back from her desk and headed for the elevator. Walking down the hall, she mentally prepared for the conversation that was to come. As she closed in on the elevator bank, Kenny strode out of his office and sidled up next to her.

"Hey, lucky," he said with a smile. "Nice break on the office. I thought they would give it to me, but I'm happy with my spot. And I'm sure it makes them look good to have a woman in the corner office. I don't mean that as an insult at all. You understand."

"No offense taken," Elizabeth replied, doing her best to mask her mild annoyance. She had developed an incredibly thick skin over the years, and it took way more than a comment like that to insult her. Getting the Old Man's corner office was no guarantee that she would be getting the Old Man's work or responsibility. It was just an office, after all.

Elizabeth added, "Sorry, I actually don't have time to chat. I'm late to lunch with the Old Man and Joe."

"Oh, didn't he tell you? I'm tagging along. I wonder if they've decided to pick a new co-chair."

Hmm, thought Elizabeth. She had expected that the lunch would be an opportunity for the Old Man to dispense some of his famous "wisdom" on his way out, but it was equally plausible that with his departure they might decide to elevate someone to co-chair the corporate transactions team with Joe. *But surely they would be speaking to us privately on something that important*, thought Elizabeth. If Kenny was coming along, it must be something else. And she doubted Kenny was in the running, a guy five years her junior, no matter how good everyone thought he was.

"I think it's just a friendly lunch, Kenny," replied Elizabeth calmly. "I wouldn't make too much of it." As they walked together toward the elevators, Elizabeth decided that she actually felt a little bad for Kenny. If they were really promoting someone, it was going to be her, and Kenny would be disappointed.

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