

HOLIDAY SWITCH-UP

Writing Sample by Jenna Baker

Readers Note: Prior to these pages, our protagonist Avery Stone, 30, has just pulled off the biggest win of her career. Her style has always been to wine and dine clients on the company's dime to earn their business. In fact, Avery has made a habit of using her corporate expense account as a way to live a lifestyle beyond her means. On this occasion, Avery takes things to the extreme when she invites her clients and her eye-candy boyfriend Chase to an extravagant dinner auction serving the most expensive wines in the world. Driven by her unbending will to succeed, she doesn't notice Chase bidding on a high-priced auction item which she later signs for and subsequently breaks in the parking lot. She also costs her waiter his job after requesting that James, a struggling divorcee with two kids, be "removed" after he spills her water. We catch up with Avery the next morning as she struts into the office, ready to be named the next CEO of the company, oblivious to her shortcomings from the night prior.

INT. LADY FAIR - 10TH FLOOR ELEVATOR BANK - MONDAY MORNING

The elevator opens and Avery steps out.

Moments later another elevator opens and James steps out, carrying a bag of food.

INT. TRACY'S DESK - MORNING

Avery turns the corner and walks up to her assistance Tracy at her assistant desk.

Tracy hands her a stack of messages.

TRACY

Mr. Larrabee wants to see you.

AVERY

To name me president no doubt.

Avery puts her shoulder bag on Tracy's desk and opens it up.

James turns the corner wearing grubby jeans and a white apron.

JAMES

Did somebody order takeout?

TRACY

Yeah, that's me.

Tracy smiles, noticing James' good looks as he hands her the lunch bag.

JAMES

It's six-fifty.

Avery looks at James, not realizing he's the server she had fired the night before.

AVERY

Excuse me, we're in the middle of something. You'll have to wait.

James' eyes widen - he recognizes her.

AVERY (CONT'D)

(to Tracy)

Here's the Vino receipt.

Avery grabs a strip of bacon from Tracy's take-out. She takes a bite, then throws the half-eaten piece back in the box.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Oh, that's awful.

JAMES

You don't recognize me, do you?

Avery eyes him, then grits her teeth as she recognizes him.

AVERY

You're the sommelier from last night.

JAMES

That you had fired.

AVERY

I didn't have you fired. I simply requested someone else serve me.

JAMES

That's why they fired me!

AVERY

It looks like you're working now.

JAMES

Yeah at a crappy diner for six bucks an hour. You know not everyone can drop forty thousand dollars on a bottle of wine, okay? I needed that money to pay my rent.

Confused, Tracy looks down at Avery's \$51,089 receipt.

TRACY

Holy crap!

Avery shoves a twenty-dollar bill in James' hand.

AVERY

Thank you, you can go now.

TRACY

Wow, thanks Avery.

JAMES

You think money can get you out of everything, don't you?

AVERY

It's worked for me so far.

James grabs a glass of orange juice off Tracy's desk and dumps it on Avery's suit jacket. She looks horrified.

James grabs a five from his pocket and throws it at Avery.

JAMES

That should cover it.

James turns and storms out. Tracy tries to hide her grin.

AVERY

Maniac!

(to Tracy)

Get this dry-cleaned, would you?

Avery storms off. Tracy LAUGHS.

INT. LADY FAIR - TOM LARRABEE'S OFFICE - DAY

Avery KNOCKS and peeks her head in the door, smiling.
Larrabee is at his desk, stone-faced.

AVERY

I am so thrilled about this promotion-

LARRABEE

-Sit down Avery.

Vivian sits on the couch, looking rather comfortable. Avery looks confused as she sits down in a juice-stained shirt.

AVERY

I had a little accident on the way over.
What's going on?

LARRABEE

I spoke with Lauren Englewood. Seems you treated her to some meal.

AVERY

I thought the chef was a little heavy-handed with the saffron, but she seemed to like it.

LARRABEE

She was raving about the wine.

AVERY

Lauren has exquisite taste.

LARRABEE

Expensive taste.

(looks at Vivian)

We've seen your dinner bill.

Avery's face turns white.

EVERY

Well...the restaurant is famous for its wine. I let the clients order the bottle. I thought it would be rude to ask what it cost.

LARRABEE

That's interesting. Lauren told me YOU chose the wine.

EVERY

Her memory is probably just foggy. She had a lot to drink.

LARRABEE

Did Lauren also ask you to buy her a dinosaur fossil?

EVERY

Fossil? Oh, you mean the one Chase...

LARRABEE

You expensed something for Chase!?

EVERY

No! I mean, Chase picked it out, but I have every intention of paying the company back.

LARRABEE

You'll pay me back for the whole night. The dinner and the skull.

EVERY

Tom, you're overreacting. Besides, when you think about the amount of money that account is going to bring in, this is really just a drop in the bucket.

LARRABEE

You call two-hundred and fifty grand a drop in the bucket?!

EVERY

Wait, what? The dinner was fifty and the skull was two.

VIVIAN

Hundred thousand.

Avery looks lost. Larrabee stands up.

LARRABEE

The skull was two hundred thousand!

Avery may faint.

AVERY

Uh, I think there's been a mistake.

LARRABEE

It's a dinosaur head Avery. Did you really think it was two thousand bucks?

AVERY

Uh, I...

LARRABEE

I'm giving Vivian the promotion.

AVERY

What?

LARRABEE

You treat this company like it's your personal bank. How could I possibly trust you to run it?

AVERY

Because I bring in million-dollar accounts. Because I'm the best person for the job.

LARRABEE

No, you're not. I want that money by tomorrow morning. Your father didn't teach you responsibility, but I'm damn well going to.

Avery looks defeated, while Vivian is smiling ear to ear.

LARRABEE (CONT'D)

You're a great disappointment to me Avery.

AVERY

Okay, look, I'll talk to my accountant. Let me take care of this and then you can decide who becomes president, okay?

LARRABEE

Vivian is president. Give the money to her. Charlotte and I are going to Fiji. I have every confidence that Vivian will do a great job while I'm gone. I'll be back in time for the Christmas party.

VIVIAN

I'll handle things Mr. Larrabee. Don't worry.

Vivian mouths the words "you're mine" to Avery and smiles.

INT. LADY FAIR - TRACY'S DESK - DAY

Avery walks up to Tracy in a rage. She notices the decorations.

AVERY

Didn't I tell you to get rid of this Christmas crap? Get Chase on the phone, now!

INT. AVERY'S OFFICE - DAY

Avery sits at her oversized desk in her elaborately decorated office. The phone RINGS and she picks it up.

AVERY

Chase?

INT. CHASE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chase holds his phone as a MASSEUSE massages him.

INTERCUT BETWEEN LOCATIONS

CHASE

Av, hi.

AVERY

Did you charge a two hundred-thousand-dollar dinosaur head to my corporate account?

CHASE

Yes. You signed for it, remember?

AVERY

Are you insane? You think I can afford that?

CHASE

Just charge it to the company like you always do.

(to the Masseuse)

A little lower.

The Masseuse smiles as she moves her hands down his back.

AVERY

Chase!

CHASE

What? I was planning to resell it. It was an investment piece Babe.

AVERY

You owe me that money!

CHASE

Sorry, you break it, you buy it.

Avery slams down the phone. She dials her accountant.

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

HAROLD SILBENSTEIN, 60, sits at his desk punching keys on his computer. His phone RINGS and he picks up.

INTERCUT BETWEEN LOCATIONS

AVERY

Harold it's Avery Stone. I need you to cut me a check for two hundred fifty G's.

HAROLD

(silence, then...)

Avery you don't have that kind of money. Not even close.

AVERY

What do you mean? What about my stocks?

HAROLD

The market has gone down. If you'd ever read the financial reports I send you, you'd know that.

AVERY

Don't lecture me. How much cash do I have?

HAROLD

A couple thousand.

AVERY

What?

HAROLD

You've been borrowing against your 401k, future earnings, even your credit cards...the

truth is it would probably take two hundred thousand just for you to break even.

AVERY

I don't have time for this. Just do your job and have the money on my desk tomorrow morning.

Avery slams down the phone.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Tracy, I need you to start rolling calls - everyone with money, starting with "A".

EXT. STREET - DAY

James and his kids Abby, and Austin walk down the street. The kids are wearing their backpacks and James is in his delivery uniform. A VOLUNTEER RINGS a bell to collect donations for the poor. James tosses some coins in the bucket.

ABBY

Daddy, Grandma said divorce is a four-letter word, but I counted, and it has seven letters.

James smiles and SIGHS.

JAMES

I guess Grandma isn't very good at spelling. Besides, she doesn't need to worry, we're doing just fine. Right?

AUSTIN

The kids at school said that divorced Dads usually have girlfriends to take care of them. You know when the kids aren't around.

JAMES

I don't think a girlfriend is an option for me.

ABBY

Why not Daddy? You're handsome.

JAMES

Well it's a little bit complicated. I'm trying to be careful about spending money and girls cost a lot of money.

AUSTIN

Not all girls are like that.

JAMES

The ones I've met lately are. I'll tell you what - you find me a woman willing to pick up the tab and I'm in.

The kids smile.

INT. AVERY'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Tracy walks in and hands Avery an envelope. Inside she finds a check inside for \$65,000. A post-it is attached to the check with the words "All I could come up with. Harold."

TRACY

Vivian wants to see you.

INT. LADY FAIR - VIVIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Avery enters Vivian's tiny office holding the check and sits in front of Vivian's tiny desk.

VIVIAN

Is that for me?

Avery throws the check at Vivian who examines it and smiles.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You're a little short.

AVERY

You didn't give me much notice.

VIVIAN

Your rich friends left you high and dry, huh? Didn't your daddy leave you like half-a-mil?

AVERY

That money is no longer available.

VIVIAN

Like father, like daughter.

Vivian stands and paces across her tiny office.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I must admit Avery, I was hoping you wouldn't be able to pay.

AVERY

I can pay, it's just going to take some time.

VIVIAN

So, when can I expect it?

AVERY

(hesitates, then)

With all my commissions you should have it by Christmas Day.

VIVIAN

In four weeks? There's no way.

AVERY

Try me.

VIVIAN

Fine, you have until Christmas. Fail and I'll start legal proceedings.

AVERY

How about I just quit? That's what you really want, right?

Vivian leans towards her, enjoying her power.

VIVIAN

Oh no Avery, I want to watch you squirm. I'm garnishing your wages and commissions. You'll have to live on minimum wage now and I'm taking away your expense account.

Avery looks like she may hyperventilate.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

It will be good for you to see how the other half lives. I'll need your corporate card.

Avery removes it from her wallet and drops it on the desk. Vivian pulls out a scissor and cuts the card in half.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You know you never congratulated me on my promotion.

Avery ignores her, SLAMMING the door as she walks out.