

TALES FROM THE TILE

Written by

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Based on, If Any

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FADE IN.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

A woman floats in a pool with her eyes closed. Serene.

She's Monica Elaine Elyes, (30), mixed, big curly hair frames her face and shoulders.

MONICA (V.O.)  
Communication is the single-most  
needed thing for the vast majority  
of the living population - animals  
included. And yet, most human  
beings lack the ability to  
communicate their most basic needs -  
touch me, talk to me, look at me...

The camera ZOOMS in a bit closer to her.

MONICA (V.O.)  
I like to think of myself as a  
masterful communicator, and,  
randomly enough, I've learned  
everything that I know at an  
exclusive, high-stakes, underground  
BDSM showroom called The Tile.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

She shuffles towards the exit, grabbing shoes, an overcoat  
and a purse along the way -- almost robotic-like.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Monica sits at a desk across from an impatient looking man.  
He's Kayo Maclin (36), undeniably handsome.

KAYO  
Okay, well do you want to explain  
the gap or just remove it because  
I've been struggling to find time  
for your couple from last week's  
couple's therapy session who  
canceled because they were "doing  
fine" now they're begging to get  
time on your calendar again.

MONICA

Why am I not shocked about that?  
Leave the calendar block alone,  
I'll be out of the office.KAYO  
Of course.

He eyes her as if he's waiting for her to say more.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Why are you looking at me like  
that?

He crosses the desk and closes the space between them. He  
cups her chin with familiarity.

KAYO

Because there's something on your  
mind... Something bothering you and  
you're attempting to take that out  
on me again.

MONICA

Kayo, when I need you to read my  
mind, I'll put it on my calendar  
with a note for you not to ask me  
follow-up questions about it.

She pushes his hand away from her face.

MONICA (CONT'D)

And don't do that.

KAYO

Whatever's going on with you right  
now has nothing to do with me. It  
would do you well to remember that,  
Ms. Elyse.

He walks towards the exit.

KAYO (CONT'D)

... You should also remember that  
I'm not really your assistant.

MONICA (V.O.)

You want to know what he was  
communicating there? A simple  
reminder: you were mine and you  
still are mine. You also owe me  
your life. Ugh!

Her phone RINGS.

MONICA  
(into phone)  
Hello, this is Monica Elyse.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HARLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Harley Fallon (33), bright colors catch your attention before her beauty does but both hold your attention either way. She's a ball of energy no matter the hour.

HARLEY  
How is it only 9? And quit being formal. Coffee?INTERCUT WITH:

MONICA  
Yes, please. It's already been a shitshow here.CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Harley violently swipes on her phone in line next to Monica.

HARLEY  
I've used every excuse on my excuse list already! How the hell am I going to get out of dinner tomorrow night?

MONICA  
One: I thought you got rid of that stupid excuse list once your divorce was finalized, and two: just tell them that you guys are not a group of married friends anymore because you and Hadden divorced and if they want to hang out with you then they should suggest things that don't require three couples but instead 6 friends. Also, stop making lists for everything.

HARLEY  
That was a lot of words coming at me right there and I followed two of them.

(MORE)

HARLEY (CONT'D)

I couldn't keep up, but here, what do you think of this: 'I can't make it because I heard that Zendaya is staying at a nearby hotel while filming and it's always been on my 'going to die but not dying' list to see her'?

Harley shoves her phone in Monica's face.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

Here... What do you think of this: 'I can't make it because I heard that Zendaya is staying at a nearby hotel while filming and it's always been on my 'going to die but not dying yet' list to go see her'?

Monica stares at Harley at beat.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

You're right. We'll keep that on the excuse list but try another. That one doesn't feel right anyway.

Harley approaches the barista, Kyle (38), an Englishman and owner of the shop.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

(to barista)

Hey Kyle! We'll have two dark chocolate croissants and two vanilla lattes with caramel, almond milk, and no foam, please.

KYLE

You two order the same thing every other day. You're about as predictable as my alarm. You guys can just ask for "the usual" by now.

HARLEY

Well, maybe I do this every other morning because I want to prolong our interactions to hear more of your accent. You ever think of that Barista Kyle?

KYLE

Only in my sweetest of dreams. But assuming this is hypothetically true, I would offer lunch or morning coffee with me next time so that you can hear it even longer.

HARLEY

Well then, hypothetically, I'd definitely have to accept.

MONICA

Are you guys done holding up everyone's morning, or should we all just leave?

Harley and Monica move down the counter.

MONICA (CONT'D)

See, dating isn't that hard and you don't even need a million lists to do it. Date him already? Or at least take him for a test drive.

HARLEY

Please, he was just being polite. He's not actually interested. If he were, he'd be on my "GMI" list.

MONICA

What's a "gimme" list?

HARLEY

Duh, my "Genitals Meeting Imminently" list, hello, G-M-I!

MONICA

Stop making lists. The lists are stupid and the names of the lists are worse than that.

Hard side-eyes all around.

KYLE

Harley! Your chocolate croissants and vanilla lattes with caramel are ready!

Harley does her best attempt at a sexy walk towards the counter.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Awkward but cute and effective.

HARLEY

Thank you, Kyle. I'll see you soon.

KYLE

Yes, you will.CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

MONICA

Are you actually going to give something possible a try or are you wasting my time every other morning at this overpriced coffee shop?

HARLEY

Shut it already. You love this coffee shop! How's it going though? And by "it", I only mean that ever-so-secret life that you *just* told me the bare minimum about.

MONICA

I have no idea what you're talking about and I asked you a question first.

HARLEY

When? And am I only good to share with when you need to complain about how Kayo acted when you took *him* there? You at least took him! Me, I don't even get to know what it's like or where it is! And you *know* the phase of life that I'm *deeply* exploring right now.

MONICA

You wouldn't even like it. And it doesn't match your current "phase" - - yours is about no control just lists and vibes, *this* is about ceding full control.

HARLEY

And how do you figure this?

MONICA

Well... there are no lists there. Now, let's go. I've got so much work to do. Plus, you're avoiding my questions, so we're done here.

HARLEY

You know, normal people just get multiple boyfriends when they're bored, but you had to be different and just get multiple jobs. Is that biting you in the ass yet? You know, the way that multiple boyfriends would if you had them?

MONICA

(dramatic emphasis)

Do you ever tire of being annoying?

HARLEY

I just want you to live a robust and satisfying life.

MONICA

What am I, tomato sauce? Relax.

HARLEY

I'm serious.

MONICA

You must mean "robust and satisfying" like you and your couple-friends? How robust and satisfying is it for a group of you to sit down once a week and talk about how greatly boring your relationships are?

HARLEY

Hey, having a group of couple-friends isn't bad when you're dealing with a group as *free* as mine. If you can get past your biases long enough, I'll have to introduce you. You never know, they may be into your Tile activities too.

She winks.

MONICA

Now I really need to know what goes on at these dinners of yours. I'm just imagining a bunch of drugs at this point.

HARLEY

Your virgin ears couldn't possibly deal, ma'am.



MONICA  
You're so full of it.

HARLEY  
All jokes aside though. How are you  
and Kayo?

MONICA  
Ugh, it's difficult.

HARLEY  
Say more.

MONICA  
He literally saved me, you know?

HARLEY  
I know, but will you be forever  
indebted to him for it? He did that  
because he wanted to! Look...

She stops Monica from walking.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

HARLEY  
You deserve to be happy. And I know  
that after G broke your heart you  
thought that'd never happened, but  
it can and it doesn't have to  
include Kayo if you don't want it  
to.

MONICA  
I know. And that's the thing.  
Sometimes I look at Kayo and I just  
love him and I want him to hold me  
and to just stay safe in his arms,  
but there are times when I can't  
shake the feeling.

HARLEY  
What feeling? You never explain  
what's going on!

MONICA  
I don't know what happened with G.  
I know that I was completely broken  
after him. I know that Kayo came  
along and literally got me a new  
life -- I have my job because of  
him, I have my house set up the way  
that it is because of him.

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

He's still keeping me afloat to this day like he my fucking assistant and he's a partner for God's sake!

HARLEY

This sounds like you're defending him, so what's the problem?

MONICA

There are times when I love him and there are times when I can't manage to be anything but cold and I can't figure out why. I can't shake it.

HARLEY

My advice: try, or lose him. Now, let's go to work. INT. THERAPY OFFICE - DAY

Monica sits in front of a couple, clearly in distress.

MONICA

And, how would you respond to what your wife just expressed to you?

The male in the room begins to talk as:

MONICA (V.O.)

What's most odd today is that people are filled with a confidence that tells them that they already know everything that they need to know - about love, about life, and about communication. So, they come and sit on the couch and talk about problems that each of them "already know the answer to" mainly because Instagram told them. The session becomes a play-by-play of each party trying to out-psych the therapist all while talking in absolute circles and using trigger words that they've learned from Tiktok. It's an annoyingly vicious cycle of no one getting the help that they need and of no one's needs being communicated in a way that will actually yield the results that they seek. Some days I have the energy for this, but today, I just don't.

MAN

I-i don't know what to say. She wants me to tell her that I love her so I tell her. I do everything that she asks but it's just never enough for her. What's the point?

MONICA

And what about everything else that she just expressed to you? It might be helpful to first reflect on what your wife is communicating to you and then work towards a response together.

MAN

Look, I don't know what to tell you... We're married, so... haven't I given her everything that she wanted already? She cried for a ring, I give her one. Then she cried for a baby, I give her one. Now she cries because she can't connect with the baby so wants to smother me, but how much more can I give? I'm married, I'm in therapy, I go to work, I come home, I talk to her, I take care of our baby... I do my part. What else does she think that she deserves? That's the problem with people today, they just take and they're never satisfied. Feeding into that is just keeping the perpetual wheel rolling on that terrible behavior. I refuse to keep rewarding that behavior. It's soul-sucking!

Monica leans forward before:

MONICA

(to male)

Just so that I understand: is your mind so made up that you're completely unwilling to hear the emotional turmoil that your wife is expressing here?

MALE CLIENT

How about you tell me? What do you think? Do you think that I have to keep giving up more and more parts of me just to make her happy? What about my happiness?

MONICA

That's not up to me. It's not my relationship. There's a connection that your wife is searching for here. And there are needs that you're communicating here too. Are you both aware of that? Because it's your relationship and therefore your jobs to ensure that these needs are communicated and then met or compromised upon.

MALE CLIENT

Sure, but I'm not going to try and be everything to her anymore because it's never appreciated when I do. There's no point.

MONICA

And, the same way that I am asking you to at least hear that your wife is hurting, I'm also asking her to acknowledge the effort that you do put in and your feelings of being unappreciated. You both seem to have forgotten that a relationship takes two people to work and that couples therapy is not about you, it's about your relationship.

The couple sits in silence and looking in opposite directions. Monica taps a black Mont Blanc pen against her lower lip.

MONICA (V.O.)

Communication and relations:  
Everything that I've learned in The Tile has helped me in other parts of my life up until now. There was not an emotion, a connection and even a thought that I couldn't read between two people. In moments like these, that place calls to me but I can't help but to think that I'd just be running there for G and not for me.CUT TO:

INT. THE TILE YELLOW ROOM - DAY

There are two males kneeling near a chaise. They take in the sight of Monica and respond as if in a trance.

MONICA

Speak.

Jake Barnem, 31, White, muscular with blonde hair and blue eyes that are glued Monica. He is wearing nothing but black satin shorts and his hands are bound by leather ties in front of him.

JAKE

We've been waiting to please you,  
"Marie".

Monica approaches Jake and grabs his face. She places her foot on a dresser near his shoulder so his face meets the leather strap covering her clit. He inhales deeply - mesmerized.

MONICA

Show me.

CUT TO:

INT. GAVIN'S HOME - DAY

**Superimpose: Flashback - Two years ago**

A man cups the chin of a younger Monica who is kneeling before him and says: "Show me."

He's Gavin Rooney, (late 20's), tall, dominant and muscular as he stands above her. A smile on his face.

GAVIN

You've learned to anticipate my every need. You know my wants, my desires and my limits. Is there anything more freeing... a more powerful feeling than that?

MONICA

(as if in a trance)  
Not even close.

She smiles up at him. He reaches down and picks her up to place her on the nearby bed.

GAVIN

... and I know yours. Observe:

He traced a hand over her clenched jawline.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

You tense up in your mouth and jaw area when you're biting your tongue but have something to say. You punish yourself instead of expressing yourself, why? Communication, eh?

He runs two possessive hands through her hair.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

Of course, it's the chase that you enjoy, so you'd want me to work for answers but you know that that's not my style so you'll remain quiet and keep whatever is bothering you to yourself. That's too bad because...

He grabs her right ankle and walks it to one side of the bed spreading her leg open to an 'L' shape.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

... Well,...

He does the same on the other side until she's in a near-split while staring down at her the entire time.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

... when you're tense, you're way less limber. You wear every issue in your body: Your hips, your neck, your...

He stands directly at her center and looks down in-between her legs.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

... Well, you know.

He smirks. They both smile and he mounts her.

CUT TO:

INT. GAVIN'S HOME - DAY

Gavin and Monica lay in bed. She is laying on his chest as he strokes her hair.

MONICA

(laughing)

So, you're still drawing out our world domination plans, I see?

GAVIN

Ah, our future plans: taking over The Tile, making partner at the firm, the beautiful house with icy-white everything and floor-to-ceiling glass? Oh, and a pool that frames it all because our kids must swim as much as we like to? Absolutely... What would have changed?

She perches herself up onto her elbow and looks directly at him with a raised eyebrow.

MONICA

I mean, with me, Gavin? Fully... with me?

GAVIN

Why would my mind have changed?

MONICA

I don't know. You know that I'm all in here but sometimes you're a bit distant. Every time that I think I've got you figured out or that I can read you, you disappear a little bit and then the spark's gone. Like, there's something that you're keeping from me or something...

GAVIN

I swear, you love to let the stuff that your clients tell you come between what we have.

MONICA

How is that? Just because I voice a concern doesn't mean that it's something from therapy. It's just a concern! My thoughts are my own, you know?

GAVIN

Well, sometimes, I don't feel like they are.

MONICA

Yeah, just when I question you, huh?

Monica gets up and grabs her robe.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Because God-forbid I ask you a difficult question, Gavin. What are we doing here?

GAVIN

I thought we were happily having a relationship but I truly question if there is a "happy" with you when you constantly do this.

MONICA

Look, I'm trying here, but this isn't The Tile! You can't just expect me to submit to you and never ask you a question in the real world. *That's* not a relationship.

GAVIN

It's the relationship that we've had for the past two years and now, all of a sudden it's a problem?

MONICA

I guess so, Gavin.

GAVIN

Just because you're ready to change doesn't mean that you can expect that of me, Money.

MONICA

Right. Whatever.

Monica leaves the room.

**END OF FLASHBACK**

INT. THE TILE YELLOW ROOM - DAY

Monica and the two males have just finished with each other and Monica runs her fingers through Jake's hair as they lay.

JAKE

Aren't you happy that you chose to explore the Yellow with us instead of playing in whatever color Gavin's in now? Relationships in The Tile are doomed. We all warned you of that.



MONICA

The rooms are not just for browsing, they're for determining skill level. When I'm ready, I'll move freely through the Orange and the Black Rooms and you'll be none-the-wiser, Jake. I've learned to never share anything with you.

JAKE

Am I sensing a plan to dominate The Tile here? We know that those never go well either. Just enjoy being here and being around us. I know that we certainly enjoy you.

MONICA

Some people want more, Jake.  
There's nothing wrong with that.

Monica gets up, grabs her clothes and leaves the room.

JAKE

Based on how little Gavin even acknowledges her these days, I'd say that there is.

MALE #2

What happened between those two anyway?

JAKE

There are rumors that she wanted more than what life at The Tile offered in terms of a relationship, but that doesn't make sense because she's still here and they still communicate, so I have no clue and lord knows that woman won't talk.

MALE #2

Everybody needs somebody. Maybe you just need to try harder to be her shoulder.

JAKE

I don't need problems with Gavin. Not that it looks like he cares, but I am trying to move up here. Can't stay in the Yellow forever.

MALE #2

It's not bad here, but that's true.  
Let's get out of here. We gotta get  
back to the office.

JAKE

Right.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE TILE - DAY

Monica steps outside of the building in a huff. The brightness of the day compared to the complete darkness of The Tile is an apparent shock.

MONICA

(to herself)

Every time...

She looks back at the building before walking away.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Monica types on a computer with the pool illuminated behind her. The room is white with floor-to-ceiling windows.

She stops typing and touches her lips and neck as if remembering something.

MONICA (V.O.)

Now, I said that The Tile has taught me a world's bank worth of knowledge and, I mean it, it truly has! But, the one area that I can't seem to apply that knowledge is to my dating, social, or outside-of-work life. That door seems to have been sealed shut. In therapy, I tell my clients constantly to express their needs and their wants. As a mediator, I read body language to assist in negotiations, mediations, and other meetings. But, in love, I fail. Gavin was a fail. And although Kayo has been a beautiful rebound, he was a fail as well.

She types on while:

MONICA (V.O.)  
Understanding how people connect to  
each other, to the world, is  
tantamount to being a good  
clinician, mediator and lover, so I  
think it's time that I find a way  
to do that without relying so  
heavily on The Tile... Or G. CUT  
TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Monica grabs a green iPhone from the island of the kitchen.  
NOTHING. She goes over to the french press and pours herself  
a cup of old coffee. A graphite iPhone sits next to her  
coffee cup, continuously lighting and buzzing. She ignores  
this one.

She sits at the kitchen bar and looks out of the floor-to-  
ceiling kitchen windows which span the entire dining area and  
connecting living room. She glares at the pool.

MONICA  
(to herself)  
Oh, the choices I've made.

There's a knock on the door which startles her.

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

MONICA  
(Yells)  
No one's home!

KAYO  
Open the door!

MONICA  
Who is it?

KAYO  
Kayo. You know, the one whose phone  
calls and texts you've been  
actively ignoring today?

She sighs but opens the door and walks away.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

MONICA

I have not been ignoring you today.  
Stop being dramatic. You were  
annoying at the office.

KAYO

Your phone's notifications say  
differently. And what's up with  
you? Or did you just not work  
today?

MONICA

Yeah, I certainly got work done, I  
just didn't want to get completely  
caught up in it and stay at an  
office all day and night. I just  
wanted a day, you know?

KAYO

I get it, but both of our lives  
would be so much easier if you just  
communicated with me. I know you  
very well but not well enough to  
read your mind, especially when I'm  
not around you.

He closes the gap between them on the kitchen island.

MONICA

Well, I was going to email you.  
That's got to be worth something.

He stares at her but she averts her eyes.

KAYO

What's on your mind? It's not work.  
Did you at least swim today?

MONICA

Nothing's on my mind and yes, I  
swam today. I'm fine. Relax.

Monica's body seemingly does an exhale in exasperation and  
she walks away from Kayo.

KAYO

I'm waiting for you to decide that  
you'll stop lying to me here.  
Again, I know you. I mean, I *know*  
*you*.

(MORE)

KAYO (CONT'D)

And frankly, I'm getting annoyed and impatient in waiting for you to decide that you want to treat me like a human being and not your assistant which we keep dancing around the fact that I'm not even that!

MONICA

Must you always remind that you "know me"?

KAYO

Yes, because apparently it's necessary to. Is your problem with The Tile again then?

MONICA

(hesitating)

It's... possibly with The Tile. Or, just people at The Tile. Or...

KAYO

A person at The Tile?

Kayo looks down and away as if already over the conversation.

MONICA

It's not a big deal and I have it under control.

KAYO

Is that why you've completely avoided all responsibility today? And why not even swimming seems to have helped? And why you've decided to start treating me more like shit than usual? And I won't even get started on sex because we certainly haven't been having it.

MONICA

You're really stretching short facts, you know? You have a knack for that.

KAYO

Look, I'm here to help, but if you want to keep up with your subtle jabs, then do it alone.

Kayo grabs his phone off of the island to leave the kitchen before being stopped by Monica.

MONICA  
Wait... I'm sorry.

She grabs him by the arm and he's immediately disarmed. They hover near each other as if waiting for the kinetic energy between them to be realized.

KAYO  
Don't do that.

Monica drops his arm and steps back, annoyed.

MONICA  
Do what?

She pauses before kissing him and he lets her.

KAYO  
You need to be honest with me. Are you still in love with him?

MONICA  
Kayo...

KAYO  
Answer the question.

MONICA  
Yes, I think so. Can you live with that for a little while longer? Please?

He thinks for a moment.

KAYO  
Monica, when he dropped you like you were nothing and you pretty much stopped living, I picked you up. I got you a job at a separate office building from him where I happen to be a very busy therapist, but I take time out of every one of my days to play assistant to you. And along the way, I've gained the role of "Maybe Boyfriend" as well which, don't get me wrong, I'm happy about, but damnit! I'm sick of *barely* existing in your angry world. Stop asking me to give you more time and start showing me that you'll actually do something with the time that you've gotten!

Monica stares at him before grabbing him and hugging him.

KAYO (CONT'D)

I'm not here to constantly disarm you or to break down walls that you're not ready to have broken, but I'm not allowing you to tear me down when I've done nothing but everything for you. You need to do better.

MONICA

Kayo, I'm so sorry.

KAYO

Don't tell me, just act on it.

MONICA

I'll do better, I swear.

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - DAY

Monica's back is to the camera. Her office is pristine. She has a frustrated male and a solemn female seated far away from each other on the couch - on opposite ends.

MONICA

... I mean, usually this couch is a dance floor for you two -- a perfect balance of lead-and-follow. But today, look at you, the couch is an island separating parts of a huge ocean. What's going on?

MALE CLIENT

I feel like-

The CAMERA CIRCLES softly around Monica's right shoulder to focus on the conversation from a vantage point that puts the female client at the forefront and makes the male look like they are far apart.

MONICA (V.O.)

I see couples day in and day out. They express their feelings of loneliness, their needs for attention - sexual and otherwise, and their desires from the person sitting next to them.

I can't help but to picture myself taking my own advice.

(MORE)

MONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sharing the couch with a person who  
has agreed to work at what might  
end up being a pointless  
relationship wherein we both suffer  
until the courts finalize paperwork  
that says that we don't have to  
suffer anymore.

Monica stares at her clients.

MALE CLIENT

... so, I cheated on her. But, it's  
not my fault - I've been through a  
lot.

MONICA (V.O.)

(thinking)

More suffering.

MONICA

(To female client)

And you're feeling what at this  
moment? Because I can see that your  
wheels are turning just by your leg  
shaking and pen clicking, but  
you're not as vocal today.

FEMALE CLIENT

I'm sad and wondering how he could  
do this to me! And I'm frustrated  
because I just feel so stupid,  
like...

(To male client)

I'm your wife!

MALE CLIENT

You haven't been the same since the  
baby. You've been sad, you don't go  
out with me anymore... It's like  
you stopped caring completely and  
you know that feeds into my fears  
from the past!

FEMALE CLIENT

Well, shouldn't our priority be our  
child? I'm raising our child alone  
while you're out cheating!

MALE CLIENT

No.



Monica reaches out a hand to stop them from continuing their back and forth. She begins talking to them further while:

CUT TO:

**SUPERIMPOSE: FLASHBACK**

INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL - DAY

Gavin gathers his belongings as Monica sits solemnly in the background.

MONICA

Really? You're just going to leave?

GAVIN

We can't do this. There's no way that we're ready for this and you know that!

MONICA

I don't even know if it's positive yet and you're already out of the door, Gavin. What does that say about us?

GAVIN

I can't think about that, Monica. I live in a world where us having a baby right now is *not* okay!

Monica puts her head down into her lap.

MONICA

Every time that things get serious with us, you run. What are you running for? You act so comfortable with me when we're together. Where do you go when we're not?

GAVIN

You're asking too many questions.

MONICA

Stop acting like I'm not allowed to.

GAVIN

Are you?

They stare at each other. Each not backing down.

**END FLASHBACK.**

INT. MONICA'S OFFICE - DAY

Monica is on the phone with Harley.

HARLEY

Wait, you told him that you're still in love with Gavin? Why on earth would you do that?

MONICA

Because Harley, I have no reason to lie to him. The man's seen me at my worse and maybe we're both realizing that I'm still there.

HARLEY

Maybe you're putting yourself there.

MONICA

I don't know.

HARLEY

Look, you can't play this role of this hard-ass one day and then completely switch it up because he decided to drop a couple of rules on you. You told me to warn you if you were falling into that submissive-Gavin Rooney-type-shit and this is me doing that. This is your warning!

MONICA

I know, Harls. But I don't think that it was like that. He's just asking for fairness. How could I argue with that? I can't be a bitch forever and still survive.

HARLEY

Correction, you could, but it would truly suck eating dinner alone every single night for the duration of your upset life.

MONICA

Point.

Harley shuffles on the other end of the phone.

MONICA (CONT'D)

What are you doing anyway?

HARLEY

Trying to get ready for this dinner. I am, of course, running late because I was counting on one of my golden excuses up until the last minute and then just decided to suck it up and go.

MONICA

Well, I think that it'll be fun! Definitely throw some feelers out about adding one, me of course, to these dinners. I'm curious about this persistent meeting of the minds that you guys have.

HARLEY

Ay, ay boss! I'll do what I can. I'll chat with ya tomorrow at work!

MONICA

Alright, girl. Have fun! Do everything that I would and wouldn't do.

The two laugh and then hang up.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Harley rushes into the restaurant, spots her group and runs towards them. At the table Hadden (30s), Grace (30s), Mark (40s), Thomas (40s), "G" (30s). They all wave and yell greetings to Harley as she arrives.

HARLEY

Hey guys. Sorry, sorry, sorry!

"G"

It's fine! Sit, sit! We were just listening to Mark and Tom complain about the ease of a relationship where they own a booming interior design company together and date and still have social lives.

GRACE

Oh, don't hate them because they are happy, G. We're happy too!

"G"

Don't I know it, baby.

G winks at Grace and kisses her forehead.

HADDEN

Ugh, how do you guys live with yourselves?

Everyone laughs.

HADDEN (CONT'D)

Lay it on me, G, how's the law been treating you?

"G"

It's fucking painful, bro! It's weird. We eat, sleep and breathe this shit and still it slaps us in the face in the form of a shitty opposing counsel who is fine with "bending the rules". I've been buried in work for the past 6 months! No air.

GRACE

(chuckling)

I told him to go into investment banking but he didn't listen.

Grace and Hadden high-five each other over the table.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I'm kidding, i'm kidding. I've been married to this man for 7 1/2 years now and I've never seen him this unnerved by any case, so I hear you baby.

She kisses him on the cheek.

HADDEN

I'm just stuck on the fact that Thee Gavin Mason Rooney is being brought to his knees by a little case. I always thought it'd take much more than that.

They smirk and cheers each other before bursting with laughter.

HARLEY

Wait, wait, wait! In all of our time together, I never knew your actual name beyond "G"! I must say, you do not look like a Gavin.

GAVIN

Oh no? And what do I look like?

HARLEY

A Geopold maybe, but Gavin just sounds too cool for you!

Everyone laughs, just when it hits Harley that this Gavin Mason Rooney is *Monica's* Gavin Rooney.

Harley's face goes pale and she sits back in her seat as the rest of the group continues to joke around her. Her night is certainly ruined.

MARK

... Am I right, Harley?

Harley jumps back into the conversation and out of her trance.

HARLEY

(nervously)

When are you ever wrong?

The night continues in laughter.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Harley briskly walks down the street while searching her purse for her phone. She finds it and dials Monica.

MONICA

Hey! How'd it go? Did your profound group of divine individuals discover all of the secrets of the universe because I'm looking for a good skincare regimen made from greens and superfoods that's free and magically appears when I need it to?

HARLEY

I have to tell you something.

MONICA

Wait, this sounds serious. Are you okay?

HARLEY

I don't know. I think that I just found something out...

MONICA

About what? Tell me. What's up, Harls?

HARLEY

I think that Gavin is married... And has been for the past 7 or 8 years... to a blonde named Grace.

Monica is completely silent on the other end of the phone.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

Monica?

MONICA

Yeah, I'm here... That's-That's just not possible. We were together for years. That doesn't make sense.

HARLEY

I had no idea that he was who he was until tonight, I swear. His wife was there and mentioned how long they'd been together and then Hadden finally said his whole name in jest and it hit me like a ton of bricks about 5 minutes later... I'd never called the man by his full name! Nothing past "G".

MONICA

I seriously don't even know what to say. I... I don't believe that he could lie like that for that long. I don't believe any of that. How could I? We were together...

HARLEY

Is it something that you're going to ask him?

Monica sighs.

MONICA

He hasn't exactly been open to my questions in the past why would he be now? I doubt that much has changed especially with how we are now versus how we were then.

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

Besides, Kayo is here again tonight. It's just not a conversation that I can have right now.

HARLEY

And you have decided that you were going to try to be better to Kayo, so I guess that begs the question -- what's the point of addressing it?

MONICA

Ugh, I don't know. I-i... I think I'm going to scream..

HARLEY

Uh... what?

MONICA

Yeah, gotta scream.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MONICA'S HOME - NIGHT

Monica SCREAMS holding the phone away from her face.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

HARLEY

Uhm, all good?

INT. MONICA'S HOME - NIGHT

MONICA

I think that it's time that I shared more information about The Tile with you though. Our coffee chat tomorrow is going to be all tea, no brakes. I need you to understand just how tied my hands are with Gavin. I have to go though, Kayo will be out of the shower soon and I don't want to get into anything with him again.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

HARLEY

Alright. Try to have a good night.  
See you tomorrow.

INT. MONICA'S HOME - NIGHT

Monica hangs up, takes a deep breath, and leaves her phone on the kitchen island before heading back in the room to Kayo. As Monica walks, time moves at a snails pace while:

MONICA (V.O.)

Could it be the case that I'd spent years thinking that I was learning communication on every level with this man who was misleading me the whole time for his own pleasures? Could I have been so dumb? So blind? So easily manipulated? In all the ways that I've worked to communicate with him, how could I have missed this? How could he have hid this? I thought that I could read him... I thought that I could read everyone. All I know is that Gavin won't know what hit him and there's no way that he can sweet-talk or storm his way out of this.

FADE OUT