

Plotting the Future

ANGELA

I arrived at the Plaza, feeling more than a little nervous.

What was Brad talking about? Could we really stop Mr. Lemor?

This time I didn't need the concierge's help finding the dining room, nor did he stop me before I could get there myself. I walked through the dining room, politely smiling at the ladies and gentlemen—and they were ladies and gentlemen—that I passed on the way.

When I arrived at Brad's table, he was standing.

"Hi, darling," he said, and he walked over to kiss my cheek.

"Hi, Brad," I said, actually feeling a little more at ease in his presence.

"Sit, please." I took a seat in the chair across from him.

I exhaled.

Here we go.

"So about what you said on the phone ," I began.

"Mr. Lemor hasn't done anything else, Angela, don't worry. More so that ...well, he won't be someone you need to worry about after today."

I had told Brad everything about Mr. Lemor in the Town Car outside his office, right after the picture was leaked. I'd told him about the grueling eleven and a half months I'd spent working for him, how he'd stalked me and threatened me until I couldn't take it anymore.

Brad promised he'd do everything he could to stop him. I just didn't believe it could happen this fast.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"My team has put a little plan together to make sure justice is served. Lemor is going to behave in the manner he's continuously behaved, but this time he'll be caught. And the New York Justice Department will have a say in the consequences."

"I'm not ... I'm not following," I said, just as one server brought a tiered display of finger sandwiches and scones and another poured champagne into our flutes and tea into our cups.

"We've found a woman who's also worked near Lemor, a woman who's been subjected to the same harassment you've known yourself. She's willing to help us," he explained.

"That way, when the story uncoils, you'll be far away from it. A distant side-note, not the main heroine."

"Who is she?" I whispered.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that," he said, biting into a lemon poppy seed scone. A bit of icing rubbed onto his upper lip.

"We promised the young lady anonymity, to the best of our control. She'll be at one of my hotels this evening, the hotel that Lemor frequents. He'll see her at the bar and ... Well, as they say, the rest will be history."

"How ...how will you catch him?"

"I've had cameras installed," he said, washing the scone down with a gulp of champagne.

My mind was running in circles. It was like something out of a Bond movie.

"I want to see it," I said. I couldn't believe I had the guts to speak so assuredly, to Brad Knight in the Plaza Hotel, no less.

But I needed to see the man who'd tormented me fall.

"Can you handle it?" He looked at me, every bit the father figure. I knew what my own dad would say—absolutely not. I was too delicate to see something like that.

But deep down, I knew that wasn't true. I could handle it. I needed to handle it. Watching Lemor get caught was the only way I could move on from everything he'd put me through. And it was now or never.

So I took a sip of champagne, immediately feeling a buzz of confidence circle through my mind.

And as I looked at Brad Knight, the most powerful man in New York, said, in my most confident voice, "Yes."

Brad
7pm.

Brad
Room 913.

Unknown
I've been thinking ...

Unknown
I'm not sure this is a good idea

Brad
Think of the other women. If you don't stop him, more will get hurt.

Brad
Men like this don't stop unless they're forced to. You have the power now.

Unknown
You're right...

Unknown
Let's do it

BRAD

I wasn't sure that bringing Angela along was the right thing to do. I could tell she was a sensitive young lady, and this man had humiliated and belittled her for a substantial period of time.

I wanted to kill the bastard myself, but the board wouldn't have liked that.

The young lady who had agreed to help us came to us through one of my assistants, who had found her complaints against Lemor filed with Gelsa's HR department two years ago. They'd been swept under the rug, of course.

"Reviewed and dismissed," in technical terms. But she was still working for Gelsa as a freelancer, and while she wasn't in the building with Lemor on a daily basis anymore, I was certain he was still tormenting her.

I reached out to the woman myself and explained the situation, that another woman, dear to me, had been affected by the same man in the same ways and he wouldn't hesitate to ruin other lives if he wasn't stopped.

I'd wanted to offer her something more, something like money, but knew that wouldn't do well in court when the sonofabitch was tried.

So instead I played on her heartstrings, and it worked. Like any humane person with a conscience, the woman had agreed to stop the monster who'd put her, and others after her, through pain.

I told her to come to the hotel at 7 p.m. to a suite and gave her the whole royal treatment. Hair, makeup, even a massage to calm her nerves. It felt like the least I could do.

When I walked into the suite an hour and a half later, I had to admit the young lady looked radiant. The dress the stylist had picked out was perfect.

It was alluring in its sophistication, and I knew the bastard wouldn't stand a chance.

"You can do this," I said to her by the door. "You're the difference between him getting away with his actions and him having to pay."

She nodded at me, looking calm and collected. "I know. I have this."

I put a hand on her shoulder and kissed her on the cheek. "I'm proud of you," I said. "Thank you."

She nodded at me, and then she opened the door and walked down the hall, about to take on what would surely be the scariest evening of her life.

ANGELA

Brad had told me to meet him in Room 913 at eight forty-five, but I was so anxious I got to the Tribeca Hotel an hour early and walked circles around it. It was the hotel I'd gotten married in, but tonight, I was nervous about being there for a whole other reason.

Finally, at eight thirty-five, I let myself enter the lobby. I walked to the elevator bank, trying to casually peer into the hotel bar to my left. But I didn't see any familiar faces.

I rode the elevator to the ninth floor and walked to the room. I knocked on the door, and it opened on the second knock.

"You ready?" Brad asked. I gave a swift nod, and he let me in.

Inside there was a buzz of activity. The suite comfortably fit all the screens set up to display different angles of two different places: the hotel bar and an empty hotel room.

Behind the screens were three men, each wearing black and wearing an earpiece. One sat behind a laptop, where it looked like he had some sort of audio control.

Now it really felt like a Bond movie.

"Are they cops?" I asked Brad quietly.

He just shook his head. "My go-to security team," he explained. "They do intel work too."

I nodded again, at a loss for words. I couldn't believe he'd done all of this for me, to destroy the man who had tried so hard to destroy me.

"Thank you," I said earnestly. He took my hand in his, and I could see the softness in his eyes.

"We're ready," one of the men in black all but shouted to the room.

Everyone's eyes were focused on one of the screens, where a woman in a black dress had just sat down at the bar. The bartender walked over to her, and she said something he couldn't hear.

A few moments later, he brought her a martini.

"Don't worry, she's not drinking," Brad said to me. "She and the bartender both know she'll only be drinking virgin drinks tonight."

Smart, I thought. I was amazed at how much thought had gone into this. I squinted my eyes at all the screens, trying to find one that showed her face. But all I saw was her back and her curly brown hair.

"Here we go!" a different man in black hollered, and all eyes again went back to the screen.

And my heart stopped. There he was.

Mr. Lemor, all five-feet-nine inches of him, dressed in a suit that did its best to conceal his soft figure. He walked with his chin so high I always wondered how he didn't trip.

And he was making a straight beeline to where the mystery woman sat.

I shuddered, thinking about the fear she must've been enduring, the fear we were watching on camera. It didn't seem fair.

"But we can't hear anything," I said to Brad, my eyes glued to the screen as Lemor tapped the woman on the shoulder and smiled.

"We can," he said, motioning to the earpiece hidden in his right ear. I was the only one in the room without one. "I thought it'd be best if you didn't hear his voice."

"I want one."

Brad's eyebrows went up again. "I don't want you to relive—"

"No. I need to see and hear everything. If she's going through it, I don't want her to be alone."

After a second, he nodded. He walked over to the table and picked up another earpiece, helping me put it on. And then he pressed the ON button.

Instantly I heard the whir of noise in the bar. But it all disappeared when I heard the first words Lemor spoke. "Do you mind if I join you?"

He asked the question like the woman saying no would be all it took for him to walk away. But I knew better. He never just walked away.

"Of course," she said, and I was immediately struck with how familiar she sounded.

"That's quite the dress," Lemor said, and I watched him lift a piece of the woman's hair off her shoulder. I watched her whole body tense up and the smile envelop his face.

And in that moment, she turned to the side, to see if anyone in the bar had noticed his boldness. The camera caught a clear image of her face, and my breath hitched.

Her voice sounded familiar because she was familiar.

That was Betty, the woman who'd met me for coffee, who'd warned me about Lemor's interference in my life.

My mouth went dry as I imagined myself in her position. She was so brave. So strong. And all I was doing was sitting here, watching as Brad and Betty did all of this.

There must be something I can do to help ...