

## Chapter 22: Brickroll Holdings

Amelia arrived at the office early the next morning. She was somewhat bothered by Olivia's comments about Rick and the wedding, but the wedding was still a few days away.

Best to focus on business right now, she told herself sternly. She only had one month to prove her worth at the company and the clock was ticking.

Amelia walked down the hall. She had made an effort to be early, but there were already quite a few people there. They avoided eye contact with her, averting their eyes as she walked past. But given the werewolf's sharp hearing, she could hear them whispering about her in the office kitchen.

And they were not saying nice things...

I'm determined to earn your trust and respect, she said quietly to herself. She tried not to let the harsh words and rumors hurt her, but they stung a bit. I deserve to be here. You'll see...

In her office, she took out the document that Jonathan had organized for her. It was a complicated case and she had to get it right. She needed help.

"Come on, Olivia," she said under her breath as she tried to mindlink her. When that didn't work, she tried phoning her. Olivia didn't respond to either. Amelia sighed with frustration. They all went out last night and had a few drinks. Leave it to Olivia to be the only one who overslept...

Just then, Jonathan appeared at her door.

"Knock, knock," he smiled. He was clean shaven, dressed in a freshly-pressed suit with not a wrinkle in sight. He didn't look the slightest bit hung over. His green eyes looked lively and alert. He certainly didn't look like someone who had won a vodka drinking contest with a werewolf the night before. "I've come bearing coffee?" he said, and Amelia saw the two Starbucks coffees in his hands.

She smiled and waved him in. "I've come to help," he said, setting the coffee down on the desk. Relief washed over Amelia.

"Thank you," she said, reaching for the coffee.

"I assume you read over the document?"

Amelia blushed a little. "Not entirely. I've flipped through it, but I was planning on studying it in more detail this morning."

"No worries. I'll brief you. You see, Brickroll Holdings was once the biggest human-run company in the world," Jonathan started. Amelia blew on her coffee and settled back to listen. He explained that they've been in business for a really long time. But when werewolves came into human society, it changed everything for Brickroll Holdings.

"Because we entered the business market and became their competition," Amelia nodded.

"Exactly. Your company, in particular, started taking projects away from them. They took a big hit on their business. You see, your company and Brickroll Holdings were often in

direct competition with one another. They lost a lot of business and now they're facing enormous financial pressure. But they'd rather face that pressure than work with us."

"Is it really that bad?" Amelia asked. "The relationship? Even though it would be beneficial to both of us to work together?"

"I'm afraid so," Jonathan nodded. Amelia sat back and thought about this for a moment. Her mission was to acquire and remodel a vacation estate in an adjoining city. It was a massive project and would require hundreds of millions of dollars in investment. Needless to say, getting that kind of investment wasn't easy. Furthermore, the project would have a waterpark and hospital, and her company didn't have a lot of experience in those areas, so investors might be wary to dole out hundreds of millions of dollars. So, the most logical thing to do was to team with other businesses that specialize in those areas. Both Brickroll Holdings and Mandrake Enterprises have amusement parks in their portfolios, so it made sense to partner with them. It would help her company secure funding, and it would be very lucrative for either company they partner with.

Apparently, though, Brickroll Holdings was so sour about past business dealings that they would rather suffer financially than help her company succeed.

"So how can we possibly strike a deal with them?" Amelia said. Jonathan shrugged.

"I'm not sure that you can," he replied.

Just then, Amaya burst into the office.

Way to knock, Amelia thought, rolling her eyes.

"Good news, Amelia," Amaya said. "I just got off the phone with an old friend of mine. He just happens to work at Brickroll Holdings. I'm having dinner with him and thought – hey, maybe Amelia could join us. Perhaps this would be an opportunity to get your foot in the door with Brickhold. What do you say? Shall I make the rezzie?"

"That oddly nice of you," Jonathan said flatly. Amaya laughed and threw her head back. Then she touched his arm and smiled.

"Just because this isn't my project anymore doesn't mean I don't care about the company, Jonathan." Jonathan pulled his arm away from her hand. "I'll always do what's best for the company. But you should know that. We used to be so close." She fixed her eyes on him and bit her lower lip provocatively.

"We were coworkers," he said flatly again, clearing not amused by her flirting.

"Sure. If you say so. But I know you're assisting Amelia now. So sad. But I still want to help." Then she turned to Amelia. "Dinner? Yes?" Amelia nodded. "Fabulous." She winked at Amelia. "With my help, Miss Moonstone will have this deal closed within a month." She turned to leave but said over her shoulder before she left. "And don't forget to put in a good word for me with Asher."

Amelia and Jonathan sat in uncomfortable silence for a moment.

What did she mean – ‘we used to be so close’. And ‘if you say so’? Amelia thought to herself. There’s something about her tone that’s bothering me. But why? What do I care if Jonathan was close to her. She looks at Jonathan. He’s avoiding eye contact.

“So,” she said, looking away and blushing.

“So,” he replied. The tension was thick. They both looked around the room, anywhere but at each other. “Look,” he finally blurted out. “I don’t know what she was talking about. We were never ‘close,’” he laughed nervously.

“Oh yeah. That,” Amelia giggled, trying to sound casual. “I wasn’t really listening to that.”

“We were just coworkers. Normal coworkers,” he continued.


“You don’t need to explain yourself to me. Honestly. It’s fine,” she said, but her voice was an octave too high.

“Okay. But just so you know,” he reasserted. They made eye contact then. Amelia felt butterflies in her stomach.

What is going on? This is ridiculous. He’s a coworker. Nothing more. She looked away and decided to change the subject.

“I just don’t understand her. Amaya. She hated me from the first day she met me. And for no reason,” Amelia said.

“She’s competitive. But yes, she doesn’t like you. Which is

 +5 BONUS

why this offer for dinner is a little too strange and sudden. I can't help but feel she has an ulterior motive here. I don't think you should go."

Amelia thought for a moment. "But I could get to know her better. Keep your friends close but your enemies closer, right? Plus, it could be a good chance to learn more about Brickroll. At the very least? Don't you think? I think I should go."


Jonathan sighed. Maybe she was right.

"Okay. But on one condition," he said. Then he fixed her again with those bright green eyes.

"What condition?" Amelia asked, her breath caught in her throat.

"I'm coming with you."

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