

### Chapter 37: Sephora Sandtrack

Amelia had barely been back when there was a knock at the door. She was surprised to see Jonathan, his arms full of boxes.

"What do you have here?" Amelia asked, her eyes wide as he stumbled into the room.

"Oh, you know. Just some clothes and stuff for our meeting tomorrow."

Jonathan set the boxes down on the table and began pulling out beautiful clothes. Amelia eyed the cashmere suit skeptically.


"For me? But I have clothes."

Although that suit really is to die for....She couldn't resist rubbing the fabric between her fingers. There really is nothing quite as exquisite as cashmere.

Jonathan seemed to ignore her comment and instead opened a blue velvet box and proceeded to pull out a drop-dead gorgeous string of pearls.

"Authentic or synthetic?" Amelia asked, reaching for the pearls.

"Authentic," Jonathan said, handing the pearls to her.

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Amelia held them up to her neck. Okay, that cashmere suit with these pearls? Come on. It's a match made in heaven. Jonathan clearly has really good taste in clothing. But still, Amelia didn't understand.

"This is all lovely, but I..."

"Wait!" Jonathan exclaimed. "There's shoes too." He pulled out a pair of shoes wrapped in tissue paper. He slowly unwrapped them and Amelia gasped.

They were the most stunning pair of Jimmy Choos she had ever seen.

"Yes?" Jonathan asked, seeing the look of pure joy on her face.

"No," she said, shaking her head.

"No?" He scratched his head, clearly surprised.

"This is all waaaay too much. It's just a meeting. I don't understand."

Jonathan sighed then. "It's not just a meeting. It's with the chairman of the board. I don't want to give them any opportunity to think we're less than them in any way."

"You don't want them to look down on us?" Amelia asked. "Why would they? Silvermoon is a highly successful company. And believe or not, I do have some pretty nice designer clothes," Amelia teased.

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"Please," Jonathan said, trying not to sound desperate. "I know what this chairman is like. Just, please wear this outfit?"

Jonathan was hard to refuse, but cashmere, real pearls and Jimmy Choos were even harder. Amelia agreed.

Amelia didn't sleep well that night. She tossed and turned, the day's events far too fresh in her mind. She'd spent half the day with Jonathan and half with Gabriel, but it was Gabriel's face that lingered in her mind. She felt Gabriel's hand in hers at the amusement park, saw him smiling as they strolled along. She could sense his aura in a room nearby. Or was it still lingering from the night before? It felt like he was everywhere, at once. She shrugged it off. He was familiar, that was all. She'd moved past her anger towards him and she hoped they could land nicely in the friendship zone now. She groaned when her alarm clock went off. She looked in the mirror at the dark circles under her eyes from lack of sleep.

"That's what make-up's for," she sighed as she started slathering it on. By the time she met Jonathan downstairs in the lobby, she looked fresh and wide awake, as always. They hopped in the car and drove to their meeting.

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Skylit Estates was impressive, to say the least. A massive wrought iron gate swung open for them, and they drove past

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perfectly manicured lawns. When they finally pulled up to the estate, Amelia couldn't hide her surprise. It was a veritable mansion, sprawling and decadent. Clearly, Mandrake was neck and neck with Silvermoon when it came to financial prowess and success. This shocked Amelia a little bit. She knew that Silvermoon was at the top of the list of wealthy companies, but she hadn't known that Mandrake was also up there too.

Inside, they were led through a grand foyer, past a spiral marble staircase, and down a hallway. They came face to face with a young woman. Her hair was in pigtails and she wore a crew neck sweater, plaid skirt, and knee high socks. She smiled at Jonathan and giggled. 'Cute' was the best word to describe her. She tapped Jonathan on the shoulder and said in a voice far too young and girlish for her mature frame:

"SHE is waiting for you inside."

"Thank you, Mercy. This is Amelia. Amelia, this is Mercy. She's the school friend I told you about."

She's a high level executive? Amelia thought to herself. And I had to wear a cashmere suit to impress? But before she could shake hands with Mercy, she was being led into a dining room.

As they approached, a woman stood to greet them. Amelia was instantly glad for her posh outfit – Jonathan hadn't been kidding – this woman was elegance personified. She

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was much older than them, but her face had clearly seen its fair share of botox and filler; her skin was smooth and flawless. She wore a Chanel pant suit and a simple but stunning sapphire necklace hung around her neck. She smiled as they approached and her smile held both warmth and majesty.

"Amelia Moonstone, this is Alpha Sephora Sandtrack." The woman held out her hand.

"Alpha?" Amelia said out loud. But then wished she hadn't. She blushed a deep crimson.

"Yes. She is Alpha of our, I mean her, pack. As well as the CEO of Mandrake Enterprises."

Amelia shook hands with the stunning woman.

"An absolute pleasure to meet you," Sephora said. "Take a step back. Let me take a look at you."

That's an odd way to meet a potential business partner, Amelia said to herself. But the woman had such an air of authority, who was Amelia to question her ways? Sephora looked Amelia up and down.

"Exquisite." She nodded confirmation at Jonathan. Truth be told, the whole thing was a little strange, but it would have been rude to say so. Amelia only smiled politely.

"Take a seat then? Hope you like gazpacho." Amelia nodded as they all sat down. Within moments, the wait staff came

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with bowls of the cold soup. "And to drink?" Sephora asked.

"Just a sparkling water for me, thank you," Amelia replied.

"I simply can't resist a cold, dry chardonnay with gazpacho. Are you sure you won't join me?"

This is a business luncheon, Amelia thought to herself. It's a little early for wine. Amelia shook her head.

"So let's just address the elephant in the room, shall we?" Sephora said, dipping her spoon into the soup. "I know a female Alpha is not that common, especially in packs around here. But when my husband passed away, I simply took over. Who better, after all? I adore my pack."

"Sephora has many talents and abilities," Jonathan offered. "Leadership is just one."

"I think it's fabulous. There should be more female Alphas. Good on you," Amelia said with sincerity.

"Amelia also has many talents and abilities," Jonathan remarked.

"Such as?" Sephora took a small taste of soup.

"She graduated from business school with honors," Jonathan started.

"That's nice, dear. May I ask how old you are?" Sephora interrupted, dismissing Jonathan's comment.

Amelia was a bit taken aback. "I'm not really sure what my

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age matters.”

“Any children?” Sephora smiled sweetly at Amelia.

Children? These were awfully personal questions.

“No, none,” Amelia stammered.

“And past marriages?” Sephora slurped her soup like the questions were the most natural questions on the planet. 1

“Um, just the one. But it’s over now.”

“And your father is Magnus Moonstone, yes?”

“Yes. But he...”

“Do you play tennis, dear?”

“I. Um. Well...” Amelia looked to Jonathan. What was going on? Sephora seemed genuinely interested in her, but what about her company? “I prefer golf, if I’m to be honest. That’s usually the sport of choice when we entertain clients at Moonstone. Now, I understand that your company is quite experienced with the entertainment industry. Specifically with the development of water parks.”

“Oh yes. Water parks are so fun. Tell me, love. Do you ski?”

“Water ski?” Amelia asked, confused by the change of topic.

“Both. Water and downhill.”

“I grew up downhill skiing.”

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"Wonderful," Sephora said, clapping her hands together. "Such a lovely family sport."

"It is. But I was hoping we could talk about the resort we're building. Now, we're looking for someone to partner with."

"That's marvelous. Partners are a wonderful thing. Just like gazpacho. How is yours, dear? Your soup?"

"It's, uh. Well, I haven't tried it yet."

"Go on then," Sephora encouraged.

Amelia awkwardly dipped her spoon in the soup and tried a taste. It was actually quite delightful. Perhaps the best she'd ever had. "It's really delicious," Amelia smiled.

"Let's enjoy it then, shall we?"

And so they did. They talked pleasantly through the rest of the meal. Sephora was a calm but powerful presence, and Amelia felt comfortable. Jonathan didn't say much and Sephora kept asking Amelia all about herself.

In fact, it wasn't until the end of the meal that Amelia realized that Sephora hadn't asked one single thing about her company and the collaboration, which left Amelia with an inexplicable feeling of anxiety.