

His Kickass 253

Chapter 253

“Oh, Abby...” Chloe’s voice is the first to crackle through the speaker. “I’m so sorry we can’t be there. This food poisoning has us all in bed.”

“But we watched the whole show,” Daisy chimes in, her voice hoarse. “You did so well, Abby.”

“I can’t believe you were sabotaged.” John’s voice is stern, even a little angry. “Maybe it’s a good thing I wasn’t there. I would’ve beaten the pulp out of that little shit Daniel. Would’ve gotten myself arrested.”

“Same,” Leah adds. “Trust me, Abby, everyone can tell that he’s a little snake. Just you wait; he’ll get his comeuppance.”

I swallow hard, my raw emotions forming a lump in my throat. “You guys,” I say, my voice wavering more than I would like it to, “you didn’t need to watch all of it. And I lost anyway. It doesn’t matter

“Are you kidding?” Ethan’s voice crackles through, although his face is frozen due to a bad connection. “It does matter, Abby. Everyone was rooting for you. You were

I glance at Karl, who nods slowly. “Abby, if you had checked your phone, you would know,” he says. “Social media is on fire right now. Hashtags about you are already cropping up: #justiceforabby. People loved you, and

Karl’s words send me spiraling. It’s all I can do not to stagger backwards. All I can do is lean my hand on the wall to steady myself, grasping my necklace with my other hand.

Karl nods, and so does everyone else on the screen. “Yes,” he says. “Abby, this sabotage will come to light. I’m sure of it.”

But I’m shaking my head, not able to believe any of this. “I just... I never wanted this. I never should have competed to begin with.”

“That’s ridiculous and you know it.” Karl’s voice is firm. “Of course you should have competed. You belong in that arena, Abby. And besides,” he adds, a twinkle of mischief in his eyes despite the solemn set of his jaw, “Daniel’s lies will catch up with him. If not now, then later. No one pulls stunts like that and gets away with it; not for long, at least.”

I can’t help the snort that escapes me. Karl’s words should be soothing, but they’re not—because he’s wrong. Men get away with this kind of stuff all of the time, especially when it comes to putting women down for their own gain. What makes Daniel so different?

“Hey, Abby.” Anton’s hoarse voice brings me back to the present moment. He’s been silent this whole time, but he’s been there. “You remember what you always say. ‘A true chef never stops.’ Don’t let this

The chorus of agreement from the others brings tears to my eyes. My voice feels caught in my throat as we all say goodbye. When Karl finally ends the call, I feel like I’ve been deflated. The room feels quieter, emptier now, maybe even a little colder. I stumble past Karl and over to my couch, where I sink down and put my head in my

But it’s not long before I hear footsteps approaching, followed by the sound of Karl’s

“Abby,” he says, his voice quieter now than it was before, “do you want some company