

## Chapter 25

Everyone arrived, and my boss told me to lock my office door and close his office door when I entered. We sat on the sofas, and Alexander began.

"Here's the thing - you four are the only people I trust right now, so this meeting's topic is confidential, and no one else should know about it. Six months ago, I noticed some small inconsistencies between the financial reports, accounting, and commercial reports. So Patrick and I started looking more carefully. With the last financial report, we were certain something was wrong when we cross-referenced the data. I think someone is stealing from the company."

I felt uneasy; this was very serious. I looked at Rick, who was as focused as I was. Then Patrick spoke:

"Yeah, folks, but it's not just money being diverted - they're diverting other resources too. Plus, some clients are reducing their business frequency with us, and some have simply terminated their contracts." 1

"Then guys, this is even more serious, because if the company is under different types of attacks, we risk having it emptied out and going bankrupt," Mariana said, alarmed.

"Yes, Mari, this is extremely serious. That's why I asked you to go to accounting yesterday and get those documents without giving them advance notice. But the situation seems much bigger, and I think we're going to need a very rigorous audit," Alexander said, running both hands over his face.

"But Alexander, if there's a company-wide plundering happening on multiple fronts, it means it's not just one person - this must be orchestrated by a group," I said, quite worried. "When I worked at the

construction company, I saw something similar happen to a supplier who seemed extremely solid and went bankrupt overnight. He was a friend of Aldo Larson." 1

"Do you know more about what happened?" Patrick asked me.

"Yes, I was a secretary, and Aldo made me available to help his friend for three months with whatever he needed because he had hired an audit that assured everything was fine, and a week later, he went bankrupt – the company was emptied out. So I helped him study the documents to understand what happened."

"Ah, that's such luck for us! So you're very familiar with the situation. Your experience will be crucial, Catherine," Alexander said with a smile. "Where did the audit go wrong?"

"The audit didn't go wrong – it was manipulated. We discovered that the auditors were bought off by the fraud perpetrators as soon as they started working. That's why I think you shouldn't hire an audit firm and let them know we're being audited. This will alert them, and they might destroy documents, sabotage the audit, or bribe the auditors," I said with concern.

"But Cat, without the audit, how will we find the culprits?" Rick asked, confused.

"That's just it – I think we need to hire three or four people, making it look like normal hiring, but people we can trust completely who are capable of doing an independent audit. They would enter the departments as spies, let's call them that, without anyone knowing they're there to audit. And they can blend in, monitor daily activities, and come to the office in the middle of the night to audit freely." 1

Alexander and Patrick exchanged glances as if they understood my suggestion. Then my boss spoke:

"You have a plan, don't you?" I smiled and nodded. I really did have an idea. "Alright then, Catherine, explain what you're thinking."

"It's simple. The building is large, and I believe you could empty one floor under the pretense of renovation and set up an office there for a confidential audit. This floor can be easily sealed off and restricted to trusted people, just like you did here in the executive suite, Alexander. We hire people to infiltrate all departments, not just the problematic ones - people who seem harmless but would be the eyes and ears of the audit team and make copies of all documents. Since it's your company, you can also install recording equipment in all rooms and phones without anyone knowing. This way, the work would be monitored directly from the audit floor, which would have a small team working only during the night shift to conduct the necessary analyses."

"The idea is very good, Cat, but why would they only work during the night?" Patrick asked seriously.

"Because that way they won't have any contact with company employees, reducing the chances of someone discovering the audit and preventing potential bribes. It also avoids raising suspicions about strangers entering the building."

"That's an excellent idea, Catherine. But does anyone know how we can find trustworthy people to do the job?" Mariana asked.

"Well, I can share the contacts of the people who helped Mr. Alan when we did the audit review. They're independent professionals but highly qualified. In fact, Mr. Alan himself would certainly be a great help."

"Wait, Catherine, are you talking about Alberto Alan from City Steel?" Alexander asked me, surprised.

"Yes, that's him. You know him?"

"Of course, he was a close friend of my father's. When his company went bankrupt, it was really strange. I met with him once after that. He told me how things went down and that a friend had helped him by providing a very competent person who helped him set up the scheme to uncover the fraud. So that was you?" Alexander seemed surprised.

"Yes, it was me. Fortunately, Mr. Alan managed to prove that the fraud in his company was a scheme, otherwise he could have been wrongfully imprisoned."

"Man, that's a big case. The lawsuit is still ongoing, several people have been arrested, but Alan hasn't recovered almost anything that was stolen from him," Patrick said with some regret.

"Exactly. I was with him just before coming here. He couldn't get back on his feet, but fortunately, his family had other small businesses, which prevented his complete ruin," I replied sadly. Mr. Alan was a good person. "Alexander, why don't you ask Mr. Alan to lead this audit? He's become quite specialized in this, took several courses to understand how to conduct an audit." 1

"That's exactly what I'm going to do. And I think, Patrick, that Catherine's plan is the ideal solution. What do you think?"

"I think it's perfect. And you, Mari?"

"I agree, it's perfect."

"Great, then let's start putting it into action. But there's one more thing -



from now on, we'll need to work Saturdays at my house, do you mind? Of course, Catherine and Rick will be compensated for this." Alexander looked at us, and we all agreed. "And Mari, I know you're leaving and will be supporting us remotely, but could you come back if we need you?"

"Of course, dear, whatever you need," Mari responded maternally.

"Perfect, then I'll set up a meeting with Alan at my house next Saturday. Mari, as your last task here, I want you to relocate the staff from the floor below the executive suite - that's where we'll install the audit team. And spread the news about the renovation. I'll also meet with the head of security on Saturday, I trust Daniel completely, and he'll help us prepare the monitoring." Alexander spoke with confidence and seriousness. "Alright, everyone, that's it. I just ask that you be more alert than ever and report anything suspicious. Oh, and about this matter, from now on, we only discuss it outside the company in confidential meetings at my house."

Everyone agreed and left the room one by one, with me being the last one.

"Catherine, wait a moment, please," my boss said in a tired voice.



Comments



Support



Share