

Kickass 260

Chapter 260

Abby

As soon as the door opens and Mr. Thompson's figure appears in the doorway, my heart jumps into my throat.

A palpable wave of embarrassment washes over me; I'm suddenly painfully aware of my disheveled appearance.

My hair is pulled back into a messy bun, a few stray locks defiantly escaping, and my clothes are not the crisp, chef whites that once defined my professional persona but rather a loose sweater and jeans combo that screams "I've given up on the kitchen."

"Mr. Thompson, uh, hello," I stammer, standing up from my chair so abruptly it screeches against the floor.

"Hello, Abby," Mr. Thompson says.

I swallow. What is he doing here? "Please, come in." I gesture towards the chair opposite my cluttered desk, hastily shoving papers into piles to create a semblance of order.

He steps inside, his gaze sweeping the room—the piles of paperwork, the empty coffee cups, the trash can overflowing with discarded papers and junk mail—with an unreadable expression on his face.

"I hope I'm not interrupting, am I?" he asks, his gaze finally settling on me once more.

I shake my head vehemently. "No, I..." I pause, clearing my throat as my gaze falls onto a particular spot on my desk where I spilled coffee yesterday and never cleaned it up; it's sticky and sweet-smelling, with rings on the papers where I set the cup down. "I was just doing some paperwork."

Mr. Thompson holds my gaze for a moment. There's a knowing look in his eyes, but there's something else there, too. Something that almost borders on regret.

"Well," he says, "there's something I need to speak to you about. It's actually quite urgent, so I hope you don't mind that I decided to come here in person rather than call or send an email."

His seriousness takes me by surprise. Mr. Thompson was always professional, but typically jovial at the same time aside from the reporter incident. Now, though, his face is an unreadable mask.

A twist of anxiety knots in my stomach, and I find myself motioning to the seat again. "Of course. Please, sit."

He does, and the air between us is charged with a quiet intensity. He's holding something, I notice: a DVD case. It's unmarked.

I try to smooth down my sweater, a futile attempt at pulling myself together, as I settle back into my own chair. "Is that for me?" I ask, nodding toward the DVD.

"It is," he confirms. "There's something you need to see."

My curiosity peaks. "What is it?"

He hands me the DVD, and I notice that his hands are shaking ever so slightly. "It's footage from the night of the competition. From the security cameras."

I feel a chill, despite the warmth of the office. "Security cameras?" My voice echoes a mix of confusion and a touch of fear. "Why? What's on them?"

He doesn't answer right away, instead looking at me with a solemn expression that makes my hands involuntarily tighten around the plastic case. "I think it's best if you watch it."