

Love Slave 299

299 Contagious Optimism

"Ace..." I called his name softly as I approached him.

I stood up on my tiptoes and placed a sweet little kiss on his lips. Ace seemed slightly surprised, but he did end up smiling charmingly my way. That felt like one of the best rewards that I could ever have asked for.

"Good luck at work. I'll be seeing you soon..." I told him with a smile.

"No need to rush yourself too much. There's still time," he replied.

"Should I get you coffee or something when I get in?" I asked.

"No need. Let's hope that we can get some proper lunch instead..." he replied as he headed for the door.

I watched as Ace left and the door closed behind him. Being left alone in his place felt slightly lonely and for a moment I had the urge to quickly get dressed and rush to the office. Instead, I took Ace's advice to take my time and relax a little. I did wake up too early in the morning so I did happen to have some time on my hands. I wondered how Julianna and her team were fairing after what appeared to be quite a heavy night of drinking and partying at that bar. If Ace was going to be in the office early, then Julianna and her team better get there earlier.

Suddenly, I felt the urge to stretch and raised my arms over my head before twisting my waist to enjoy a good round of stretching. I didn't want to admit it, but things were going to get busier at work. In fact, I suspected that Ace and the team would be busy all the way until the official end of the project and the announcement of the Ashford competition winner. Hopefully that winner would be none other than us but to make sure that that would turn out to be the case, everyone probably had to keep pushing up until the last minute.

While taking a quick shower and dressing up, I began thinking about what I could possibly do to help Ace and the team. My role was quite limited now because the scope had progressed out of my hands. I was sure that there would be many things that I could learn just from observing and being present. I could learn many things from Julianna and her team on marketing and also many things from Ace on how he managed a project of this scale.

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The weather outside was decently nice when I finally stepped out of the building. Although Ace had told me that he didn't want anything and hoped that we would have time for a proper lunch together instead, I suspected that a proper lunch or a lunch of any form my not be coming out way. To be safe rather than sorry, I decided to drop by a café to get us coffee and something that we could munch on for lunch. I had a hunch that things would get very busy for Ace today and didn't want him to skip out on his meal.

Despite the little detour, I still arrived a little earlier than the official start of the workday. Many large groups of people had gathered in front of our office building and also in the lobby as well. I didn't need

to hear the conversations that they were having to know that they were talking about the launch of our commercial. Project Alpha really was a big thing every year and this year the project received even more attention from the staff probably because of Ace's announcement to step down after its completion.

I was sure that everyone who was paying any attention has seen our commercial from at least one of the many channels where it was being displayed. In case anyone is able to miss out on that, the company had made sure that all employees stepping into the office would see the commercial at least once by having it play on the large screen in the lobby on repeat all day long.

The overall mood was cheerful and festive. It felt as if we had already won the competition although the last and final phase had just started. As I walked along in the lobby, I could catch various parts of the other employee's conversations. Most were compliments and overly optimistic things. It felt great to hear that our commercial could motivate the rest of the people working at the company as well.

"We should book out a place to celebrate our victory way in advance..." a woman who seemed to be around my age said to her colleagues.

"That's right. We're definitely winning again this year," another replied.

"How can we not win with a commercial like that. I heard that Ace has been working on it himself every single step of the way too..." a man chimed in followed by a loud laugh.

I found myself smiling a little as I silently walked past them towards the elevators. The mood would only get more festive when we actually win the competition. Suddenly, their optimism made me feel so certain of the result of the competition. The elevator quickly brought me up to the CEO's office where I knew that Julianna and Ace must be manning the war room in case something were to happen.

If I had anything to fear about the effects of last night's party on Julianna or any of her team members, all my fears were all unnecessary. I entered the war room to find Julianna and her team in perfectly functioning condition. In fact, they seemed even more focused on the work at hand than ever before. Julianna sat in front of many large monitors as she seemed to be monitoring the performance of the commercial. She looked perfectly sober and had a slight frown in between her brows as she focused.

"Good morning..." I greeted everyone politely.

"Good morning. Are you feeling better?" Julianna asked without tearing her eyes away from the monitor that she was staring at.