

Chapter 9 A Shellshocked Best Friend

When Erin went to work on Monday, she heard about their studio being acquired by Frost Corporation and that they had to report to headquarters by today. Four of them were in this company besides the boss, and they'd all been surrendered to Frost Corporation. Erin was the only one who was stunned by this, and in a bad way. The three other designers were so excited they could barely contain themselves.

"God, joining this company was the only right choice I've made in my life! Now that Frost Corporation has acquired our company, I feel like it's my time to shine. I'm going to marry someone tall, dark, handsome, and rich after working there!"

One of the designers, Milly Thornton, looked dreamy as she packed her things. Erin packed up silently. She didn't think this was such a good thing. To her, it was better to be the cream of an average crop than to be the worst crop in an outstanding harvest. She hoped she wouldn't end up being assigned to handle all sorts of errands once they joined Frost Corporation. At noon, the four of them had already finished their lunch when their boss, Ben Tate, arrived, looking like he'd won the lottery.

"Babes, Frost Corporation's acquisition of our company is a one-in-a-million opportunity! We were fortunate enough to work together, but all good things must come to an end. I'm migrating to Endalie next month, so I'll treat you guys to some fun at the Royal Chamber tonight at 8 pm. Be there or be square!"

Everyone agreed readily since he was so enthusiastic about it. Then, he dropped them off at Frost Corporation's headquarters.

As they looked at the building, which rose high into the sky, Dana Sawyer, one of the designers with whom Erin got along well, bellowed, "This will be our battlefield from now on!"

As they started to make their way into the building, Ben pulled Erin aside and said, "Erin, you signed a five-year contract with me, and you have three years to go. Whatever happens, remember not to resign, or you'll be paying the fee for breach of contract through your nose."

Erin was a little confused as she watched him leave. Why had he specifically spoken to her about this? She shook her head to disperse her thoughts as Dana called out to her.

"Erin, hurry up! We're waiting for you!"

She ran over to them, and they filed into the staff elevator. It was two hours from the end of the workday; they had to report to their new superiors before then. Their first stop was at the HR department, where everything proceeded smoothly. They were assigned to Frost Corporation's design department. Back when it was just the four of them, they'd all been the main designers and had their own portfolios. Now, they had to act as assistants for the designers. There were a total of ten designers in the department, three of which were head designers.

Milly, Dana, and Ella Snow were assigned to assist the three head designers, while Erin was the only one assigned to the logistics team. The logistics team was in charge of making coffee, ordering meals, signing for parcels...And when the need arose, she'd have to help amend drafts and conduct research. In other words, she ran errands for the designers.

Erin was in a bad mood as she rearranged the things on her desk. She knew nothing good would come out of this—So what if Frost Corporation was the largest corporation in Azores? She'd been relegated to the sidelines! Not only had she not gotten a pay rise, but she'd had to take a pay cut of 800 dollars! She was extremely frustrated and couldn't wait to get off work. Holly called her when it was finally time to leave.

"Erin, I'm downstairs. Let's go celebrate getting rid of our husbands and your new job. It's a double celebration!"

Hearing a familiar voice was heartwarming, especially when one was in an unfamiliar environment.

"Hold on. I'll be right there!" Erin grabbed her bag and headed for the elevator.

Behind her, Dana called, "Don't forget about the Royal Chamber at 8 pm!"

"Alright, got it!"

She got into Holly's red Porsche after leaving the building. One of her fellow designers saw this and immediately snapped a photo.

In the car, Holly asked, "Alright, spit it out—who were you in such a rush to meet that you had to abandon me? You refused to let anything slip when I asked you last night! Do you think of me as your friend or not?"

Erin sighed. She knew she couldn't get out of this, so she said, "Promise not to mock me when I tell you the truth. And don't judge me."

Holly drove with one hand and held a cigarette with the other. She glanced at Erin in surprise and said, "My, look at how serious you are. I promise not to mock or judge you, okay?"

Erin took a deep breath before telling her the truth.

"The day I found out about Ian's affair, I was down in the dumps...so I went to Twilight."

"Holy shit!" Holly was stunned. "Wait, don't tell me—you went and got yourself a man to destress!"

"Holly, you promised not to judge me."

Holly stubbed out her cigarette in the car's ashtray and held up her free hand.

"Sorry, sorry! I swear I won't interrupt anymore. Go on..."

She would gladly pay Erin to continue telling such a juicy story. Erin turned to look out the window as Chandler's gorgeous face flashed in her mind.

"Do you remember the five million dollars I got as a bonus when Ian's company became listed? I spent it all on a male escort."

The brakes screeched as Holly abruptly pulled over.

Then, she pressed a hand to Erin's forehead and said, "Are you out of your mind, Erin? You spent five million dollars on a male escort! Do you realize you've ruined the market for the rest of us? How are we supposed to entertain ourselves from now on?"

Erin couldn't help laughing at this half-assed joke.

"You already tried it out, didn't you?"

"Whoever told you that? Did you think I slept with another man when Eugene cheated on me? You had to leave halfway because your cousin had been admitted to the hospital for appendicitis, right? I took a taxi home after that," Holly explained.

Erin flushed. She thought she and Holly had done the same thing, but it turned out she was the only one who'd crossed the line. Regret washed over her, but it was mostly because Chandler wouldn't stop harassing her.

"God, why didn't you tell me that earlier? I probably wouldn't have acted so rashly if I'd known..."

Holly unbuckled her seatbelt at the regret on Erin's face and held her hands.

"Don't be upset, okay? What's done is done. Besides, all the men at Twilight are gorgeous, so you're not exactly losing out. I just think the five million was a little...over the top."

Erin sighed.

"I know five million is a lot, alright? Ian gave it to me as a bonus, but I've always considered the money his. I didn't want to let him off the hook so easily—who knew where the money would end up if I were to return it to him? Perhaps he would've transferred it to Tracy in the next second! The only thing I could think of at the moment was that I'd rather give the money away than have it end up in Tracy's pocket."

Her eyes would still turn red at the mention of Ian, and Holly patted her on the shoulder in consolation.

"There, there. It's not worth our while getting sad over these scumbags. I'll take you out for a wonderful meal, and then we can go shopping. I'll pay for everything!"

"I'd love that, but I already have something on tonight. My former boss is taking us out to the Royal Chamber—it's supposed to be like a farewell of sorts."

Holly's eyes crinkled as she smiled.

"Can I tag along?"