

Chapter 21

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[Vivienne]

"Madam, you'll have to come with us," one of the guards says, pointing to a room in the back, but I don't dare budge from where I stand.

This is insane. I can't help but snap at this idiotic woman. "What the hell is your problem?"

Sasha gasps, hand on her chest. "I'm just telling everyone the truth. I saw you trying to keep it in your purse."

The customers around us start whispering again, louder this time, and I close my eyes, praying for some patience.

The guard turns to me again. "It won't take long, madam. We will just do a quick search."

"But I don't have the rings," I tell him, glaring at Sasha. "I never stole anything. You can check the display; the rings should be where they are meant to be. This is ridiculous. I'm not letting anyone touch me."

The guard seems to be hesitating, but before he can make up his mind, I turn back around to face Sasha.

"Look, I understand we have issues, but you don't have to be such a bitch about it. Why are you making a scene here? What are you trying to prove? Don't you think I've been humiliated enough in my life? Do I look like someone who needs this much attention?"

Sasha steps closer and sneers at me, making sure no one hears her but me. "You don't know anything about humiliation. I should have been Mrs. Caden Lawrence by now. He should've married me, but because of your stupid tricks, I've lost everything. Now he's divorcing you, and you deserve to be miserable."

Then, she turns to the store manager who has just arrived. "Check her purse. She stole those rings from the display, I know it. You'll find them in her bag."

My whole face heats up as I glance around. Everyone's watching with suspicion and pity in their eyes, including the guard who is still waiting for me to make a move.

Shit. I hate this woman.

Before I can even think about what I'm doing, I take my purse, unzip the main pocket, and dump everything onto the floor, including the cash and some makeup, right at her feet.

Sasha gasps at the sight, probably not expecting me to react the way I did. But I'm so done with this woman and her bullshit. If she wants a fight, she's got it.

Just then, one of the staff comes running and whispers something into the manager's ear. The man nods, frowning, and then turns to face me.

"I have just been informed that a pair of rings are indeed missing."

My head whips around. "What?"

"This woman," he points at Sasha, "is right. A pair of rings seems to be missing, and it has to be here. Every piece is tagged."

Sasha's face morphs into a smug grin, which I so desperately want to slap right off. "Check her bag."

The manager sighs and signals a security guard to pick up the items off the floor. "Madam, if you wouldn't mind."

The guard bends down to retrieve my things and search them while he's at it. He goes through the bag and finally shakes his head. "It's not in the purse."

Sasha turns to face the crowd. "You heard him, it's not in her bag. That means she must have hidden it somewhere else. Check the woman!"

This has to be a joke. "You can't be serious."

Sasha shrugs her shoulders. "It's a precaution. For the safety of everyone and the property, you should be searched. Otherwise, how can you expect anyone to believe you're not the culprit?"

"I'm sorry," the manager cuts in. "But we have no choice but to search you. Now, you can either cooperate with us and follow me to the search room willingly or I'll have no choice but to involve the police. The choice is yours."

I let out an exasperated breath. The man makes it sound like he actually believes me when he really doesn't.

I shake my head. "There has to be another way to prove that I'm

innocent.”

He tilts his head. “If there is one, we are listening. Otherwise, you can let the security here help you get through the search or you can choose the police and have this done in the precinct.”

I look around at all the people around us. It feels like all of them are watching me and waiting for me to do something. And when I don’t, the whispers start again.

It reminds me of the incident that happened at Rosita’s store. How that woman tried to put the blame on me for being careless but Rosita saw through her scam and banned her from the store. The only reason she was able to prove my innocence was because of the CCTV footage. The woman never saw the footage but she caved in as soon as Rosita brought it up. What I am trying to say is that everyone around me might be convinced I stole the rings, but Sasha will not be able to prove anything. She might have played dirty this time, but I will have the last laugh. I just need to keep calm and have a little bit of faith that I can do this.

“There is one,” I look around and point at all the cameras around us. My brother would never open a store without the best security measures installed, especially one with the priciest collections on display. “There’s a reason your store has a CCTV for every nook and corner, right? So, why don’t we check the footage instead of me subjecting myself to humiliation?”

The manager looks at Sasha for a long second, and something weird passes between the two before he looks at me again. If I’m being honest, he looks a little pale now.



"There's no need. Miss Clarkson is one of our esteemed customers and we trust her judgement. If she says you stole the ring, then that's the truth."

Of course, that's how it is. The man is clearly biased. I won't be surprised if Sasha has paid him to take her side.

I laugh at the irony. Thankfully, I know what needs to be done now.

"Fine. Let's call the cops." I say and watch as the manager's eyes widen.

He probably didn't expect me to agree. Not that I care anymore. I have nothing to hide.

"What's going on here?" A deep voice rings throughout the store, tearing everyone's attention to the man who just joined us.



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