

Chapter 26

Chapter 26

[Vivienne]

As the security guards drag Arthur out, his threats echo through the hallway, growing fainter with each step he is pulled away. The office falls silent, the tension lingering like a thick fog.

Harvey watches him go, his expression unreadable. He turns back to me with a faint, almost amused smile. "Well, that was a dramatic turn of events."

I nod, trying to process everything that just happened. "What was that about? Is it true? The thing that you said about the Clarksons?"

Harvey shrugs, returning to his office. "It's not my place to air out their dirty laundry, but yes, the Clarksons are having financial issues. I guess that explains their desperate behavior, always using different tactics to gain attention. But enough about that." He turns to face me, back to his smiling self. "How about I take you out for dinner? It's been really long since I had dinner with my favorite little sister."

I give him a playful glare. "That's because you only have one sister."

"Yeah," he laughs. "So what do you say?"

I smile at him, feeling far better than I did in a while. "That sounds really nice."

I've had more than my share of drama this weekend, and I'm eager to get some real peace of mind.

Harvey has his own limo parked outside the office, and we head straight for the best steakhouse in town, a place where he used to

take me every time he felt the urge to celebrate.

As we arrive at the steakhouse, the ambience immediately shifts from the tension of the office to the cozy, upscale setting of the restaurant. The maître d' greets us warmly and leads us to a private table near the window, where the city lights create a beautiful backdrop.

Harvey orders a bottle of wine as we settle in, and I can't help but feel a sense of relief wash over me. It's nice to be away from the chaos and surrounded by the familiar comfort of my brother's company.

"So," Harvey says, leaning back in his chair with a relaxed smile, "tell me more about what's going on with you. It's been ages since we had a proper catch-up."

I take a sip of wine, savoring its rich flavor. "Well, I already told you about my divorce from Caden and my decision to be on my own. Aside from that, there are a few more things, but they are still new and not mature enough to have a discussion over. Speaking of which, I do have something to tell you. I meant to tell you before, but then the whole thing with Arthur Clarkson happened and it kind of got derailed."

He leans forward, giving me his undivided attention. "Sure. Go ahead. I'm listening."

"That thing about Jasper Sterling."

"What about him? I told you I can talk to him. He won't be able to deny my request."

"I don't want that. I don't want to work for Jasper Sterling," I say with a firmness that surprises me. "I am Jasper Sterling."

Harvey's eyes widen in shock, and he nearly drops his glass of wine. For a moment, he simply stares at me, his mouth hanging open as if he's trying to process what I've just said.

"What do you mean, you are Jasper Sterling?" he finally manages to stammer, his voice a mix of disbelief and confusion. He puts the glass down, really wanting to hear this one out.

I nod. "It's true. I've been hiding behind that name and persona for a while now. Jasper Sterling is my pen name, my professional identity. And I can prove it if you don't believe me."

He blinks a few times, clearly struggling to wrap his mind around what I've just revealed. He takes a deep breath, trying to regain his composure. "No need for that. But are you serious? !You're Jasper Sterling? The designer everyone's been raving about? This is...I don't know what to say. You have truly rendered me speechless."

"I know it's a lot to take in, but it's true. I've been using that name for my work, and it's been my way of separating my personal life from my professional one." I smirked to him. I know it's hard to accept but I wanted to tell the truth to my brother.

Harvey seems to process the information slowly. "But why? Why keep it a secret? You're an incredibly talented designer. If anyone knew you were Jasper Sterling, it could've changed everything."

He's right. Maybe if Caden's family had known, they would have been kinder to me. But I wonder if it's really that important to be wealthy to gain someone's approval. For the last three years, I did everything to make them happy. Was my honesty and loyalty not enough to earn their respect, even a little? Why is it that people who come from money always think those without have to earn it? I mean, look at

Caden. I did everything I could for him, and he still didn't even respect me enough to remain loyal.

"You're right; maybe it could've made a difference. But that wasn't my intention. I kept it a secret because I wanted to accomplish it on my own, without relying on my family name. I know that might sound stupid to some, but it means something to me. I've come a long way since I started."

I pause, trying to collect my thoughts.

"And to be honest, I didn't tell anyone because I didn't want anyone to find out that Jasper Sterling is really me. I didn't want any biased opinions, that's all. If people knew the truth, they might judge my designs based on who I really am rather than on their merit. So, that's the main reason for keeping it a secret."

Harvey sits quietly for a moment, absorbing what I've just told him. His expression is a mix of surprise and admiration. "I get it now. It's about maintaining the integrity of your work and proving yourself on your own terms. I can respect that."

I sigh, relieved.

But before I say another word, I hear someone yelling.

"What the hell is this? You call it a steak? It doesn't even taste like steak. This is nothing but a piece of leather!"