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[Vivienne]

The man hands me the phone with a smirk and waves his hand dismissively. "You've got one hour. Make it count."

I take the phone and nod, trying to keep my composure as he and his men retreat to a corner of the warehouse, leaving me alone.

Well, not exactly. Maria still sits on the floor where she fell, her eyes burning with hatred.

"I know you don't have shit," she hisses, her face twisted with rage. "But Tony's too greedy to see through your pathetic lies. I'm not stupid. I know you're trying to play games. But that's fine. He'll see what a fool he was when your time's up and your bullshit is exposed. Until then, enjoy your little victory. But remember this: even if you get out of here, I won't stop coming after you. You turned my husband against me, and I won't ever forgive you for that."

I don't pay attention to her. There's no point.

Instead, I turn away and dial a number.

He picks up in the second ring. "Hello?"

"Hey, it's me."

"Miss Sinclair. Long time no see. But anyway, how may I serve you today."

I swallow the lump in my throat. "I know. Look, I don't have much time. I need you to do something for me."

An hour later, Tony returns with his minions following him and stands in front of me.

"So, where is it?" he asks.

"On its way."

Maria scoffs. "I told you she's bluffing."

Tony nods, hands on his hips. "Yes. I can see that. But no worries, it was a long shot, but I couldn't just let an opportunity like this pass me by. I'm a businessman, you see. Now, we can proceed with the original plan. Let's get on with it."

As his men move toward me, I take a step back.

"Wait! Just give me five more minutes. I promise you'll get your money."

"We already gave you an hour, and you failed to deliver. There's nothing else to discuss. Time is money, you see. And right now, you're wasting my time."

He gestures to his men and they start moving forward again.

"No. Wait. Let me make another call. I'm sure the money is on its way."

"Nope!" he exclaims. "I'm a man of my word. The deal was, an hour,

and you didn't deliver. End of story. I don't like wasting time, and I don't appreciate being made a fool of."

I watch as his men draw closer, and I can feel my heart racing in my chest. I look around frantically, searching for a way out. But there's none. I'm trapped.

They grab me from each side, and I struggle against them, kicking and screaming.

"You're making a mistake!"

The man chuckles, shaking his head. "No, darling. You're the one who made a mistake. You thought you could outsmart me, but you were wrong."

His men drag me over to the center of the room, where there is a metal operating table with straps. I struggle and fight as they tie me down, but it's no use. They're too strong.

"I don't think you wanna do that."

Everyone stops, and then, they all turn around to face the man standing at the door.

He's alone, carrying a briefcase in one hand while the other resting comfortably in his pocket. He's donned his usual business suits, his posture as confident as ever. "What? Not interested in the money anymore?" he quips.

Tony raises a brow. "And who exactly are you?"

The man at the door smirks slightly. "Let's just say I'm someone who

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values keeping promises. But seems like you're about to break your end of the bargain. I came here to deliver what was promised, and now you're messing up the arrangements. I don't know. Maybe I should go back..."

"No! Wait!"

He stops, a knowing look on his face.

Tony steps forward. "Let me see that."

The man nods, handing the briefcase to one of Tony's goons, while Maria looks too stunned to react. She just stands there, watching everything unfold, disbelief in her eyes.

The man opens the briefcase, revealing a large stack of cash inside.

"Is this...is this for real?" the man asks.

Tony looks at the money, a smile spreading across his face. "Holy shit. She was right."

He turns to me, shaking his head in disbelief. "I have to say, I'm impressed. I thought for sure you were bluffing. But it seems like you've proven me wrong. Good job, darling."

He snaps his fingers, and his men immediately untie me.

I get off the table and walk up to the man at the door.

"Come on," he says. "Let's get you out of here."

"Not yet," I turn around once more. "You promised to let Marcus go

too.”

Tony smiles, busy counting the money with the rest of his men. “Oh, right. Of course. How could I forget? Let the boy go.”

One of the men follows us and when we get down the spiral stairs and towards where some old and new cars are parked, Marcus is walking towards us, looking more confused than ever. But when his gaze meets mine, he immediately runs up to me.

“Ms Richardson, are you okay?”

“Yes, yes. I’m fine.”

“Thank God. I was worried about you. When they took you upstairs, I thought...”

“I know, but don’t worry. We’re fine.”

I turn to the man beside me. I still haven’t thanked him for his help. But maybe I should wait a little longer. “What about these men? Are you sure it’s a good idea to let them go?”

The man smirks, his face breaking into a half-grin that exudes both charm and authority. “Of course, not. But you don’t need to concern yourself with that. We have exactly five minutes to make our exit. After that, my men will handle the situation.”

Marcus frowns. I nod, not expecting anything less from the man.

“Now,” he says with a flourish, opening the door of his luxurious car for me, “shall we?”