

Chapter 58

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[Vivienne]

I return to my desk, and after a few long minutes, I head to Kim's cabin, knocking gently on the door.

Kim looks up, a relieved grin spreading across her face. "Hey, Vivienne. What brings you here? Is Claire bullying you again?"

I can't believe how genuine she seems with her concern, as if she actually cares about me. Maybe that's why I missed seeing her true colors. But now, I know what she's capable of, and I'm not falling for this "I'm a good person" act.

"No, just wanted to see how you're doing. I was wondering if you need—"

She doesn't even let me finish. Kim jumps right out of her chair, grabs my arm, and drags me over to her desk. "I sure as hell do. I mean, fifty designs in one night? You know that's impossible, right? I don't know what's gotten into Harvey. He's never been this unreasonable."

Well, maybe you should've thought about that before messing with his sister...

I force a smile, nodding sympathetically as if I'm on her side.

"Yeah, that does sound like a lot. But you know the boss—when he's set on something, there's no changing his mind. Maybe he's just feeling the pressure with all the deadlines coming up."



"I guess so. But still, it's not fair. I've been busting my ass for this company, and now he's acting like I'm some kind of machine. Fifty designs, Vivienne! It's like he wants me to fail."

I lean in slightly, lowering my voice. "You think he's setting you up?"

Her eyes widen a bit, and she hesitates. "I...I don't know. You think?"

I shrug, letting out a chuckle. "How would I know? I'm still new around here. Remember?"

Her shoulders drop, and her eyes return to their earlier ease. "Right. You're new. You don't know. Of course."

"But still," I push a little more, leaning on the desk. "I feel like something is off around here."

Her eyebrows snap together. "Off? Like what?"

"I don't know. It's just a feeling. Or maybe it's something I overheard this morning while I was at my desk."

"Overheard? About me? What were they saying? Who was it?"

"I couldn't see who it was, and I didn't recognize the voice either. I was so busy refining my designs before the meeting, I didn't pay much attention. But you know how it is—sometimes your subconscious picks up on things even when you're not focused on them."

She nods, as if she knows what I'm talking about.

"Exactly," I say. "That's what I was thinking after today's incident. And it all came to me like WHOA, and I was like... you know what? Someone really has it out for you. Imagine if they've already gotten to the boss and said not-so-good things about you. What if the boss thinks it's all true?" My hand flies to my heart. "Kim, you really need to take care of yourself. If someone is really trying to sabotage you like this, you might be in more trouble than you realize."

Her face pales slightly. "But why would anyone want to do that to me? I've never had problems with anyone here."

"That's the thing," I say. "You might not even know who's behind it. It could be someone you least expect. People can be sneaky when they're threatened or jealous."

Kim stares at me. "You really think someone's out to get me?"

"It's better to be safe than sorry, right?"

"I never thought I'd have to watch my back like this," she whispers, her voice laced with tension. "I always figured that if I just kept my head down and did my job, no one would bother me. But if someone's really trying to screw me over..."

She trails off, her eyes narrowing as though she's already plotting her next move. I can see the gears turning in her head, and I can't help but feel a twisted sense of satisfaction. She's starting to doubt everything and everyone around her, just like I wanted.

"Kim," I say, keeping my tone low and conspiratorial, "you have to be smart about this. If they're targeting you, they might try to push you

into making a mistake, something they can use against you. Don't give them the chance. Be careful about who you trust, and don't let anyone know what you're thinking or planning. Especially not Claire."

"Claire? You think she's involved?"

I shrug, pretending to be uncertain. "I don't know, but I've noticed how she's been acting lately. She's been a little too friendly with the higher-ups, don't you think?"

"You're right." She scoffs, placing her hands on her hips. "I wouldn't even be surprised if it turns out to be Claire. She's always been a troublemaker. It's like she gets a paycheck for causing problems for others."

I nod sympathetically, leaning in just a bit closer. "Exactly. And that's why you need to stay one step ahead. If Claire's really behind this, she's probably trying to bait you into doing something you'll regret—something that could make you look bad in front of the boss—"

"Like she did this morning... it all makes so much sense now."

She starts pacing her office, clearly relieved to have figured it all out. But little does she know, she's in for another surprise.

"Okay then, I should get going," I say, heading for the door.

She turns sharply. "Wait. I thought you were here to help me?"

"Help?" I reply awkwardly. "Oh, no. The boss specifically asked me to visit the storehouse and check the quality of the gems that arrived last night. I just came to ask if you needed COFFEE before I leave."