

Chapter 10 I Want You

Judie made her way to the elevator, carrying the package. "Let's drop the curiosity, shall we? I'm not privy to all the details of her life. We're not roommates. There was a time when her stepmother came between my husband's parents, causing a rift in the family. She grew up with her stepmother, and I don't really know anything else."

In just a few sentences, Judie cast a shadow over Ruby, branding her a homewrecker, and by extension, telling everyone that Eileen had been raised by that woman.

Judie was implying that a homewrecker like Ruby couldn't raise anyone better.

Silence filled the elevator as everyone digested Judie's insinuations. By the day's end, the company was buzzing with whispers and rumors.

Back at her desk, Eileen mulled over Judie's behavior and couldn't suppress a sneer.

The property Judie and Roderick wanted was in high demand and pricey, located in a desirable area with excellent schools nearby. Even a modest two-bedroom apartment there was priced over a million dollars.

Roderick's contribution of fifty thousand dollars seemed insignificant. They were practically asking her to buy the place for them.

Eileen received a text from Judie shortly after, apologizing for the mix-up with the delivery, saying it was meant as a gift for Eileen.

It was initially intended to be sent home. Redirecting it to the office was supposed to avoid delivery issues, not to spark a scandal.

This wasn't the first time Judie had engaged in such questionable actions, only to follow up with insincere apologies and rationalizations.

Eileen sent a firm reply. "I'm not in a position to assist with your housing

issue. If you're keen on staying in the company, I advise you to act appropriately. Otherwise, I won't hesitate to take strict measures."

Judie received the message and went quiet, prompting Eileen to focus on her work.

Later that day, around five p.m., Eileen accompanied Bryan to a dinner event. En route, Bryan got a call from Vivian.

He was reviewing some documents, so he opted to put the call on speaker.

"Bryan, will you visit me today?" Vivian inquired.

"I'm pretty busy today. I have a dinner event scheduled," Bryan responded.

A sigh of disappointment came from Vivian. "How about tomorrow?" she asked.

"The company is in the midst of a significant project currently. My schedule might not permit a visit. You should concentrate on your recovery for now. I'll drop by when time allows," Bryan said, his attention still on the documents, leaving no room for Vivian's hopes of a visit anytime soon.

Eileen caught a glimpse of his expression through the rearview mirror. His expression was cold, yet she recalled his lips' hidden softness and warmth.

Her thoughts seldom dwelled on intimacy. She had never initiated such moments with Bryan, but memories of their past encounters lingered.

His hands, now occupied with paperwork, had once explored her with a gentleness that had left her breathless and overwhelmed.

She inhaled deeply, striving to distance herself from these recollections. Unexpectedly, Vivian voiced another query. "Bryan, what do you know about that woman?"

Bryan's focus shifted subtly to his phone's dimmed display, mirroring his distinct features. "What do you want to do?" he asked.

Vivian expressed a desire to learn more about the woman through

investigation, even suggesting a meeting. "If you're unsure of her looks or name, is there anything else you remember about her?" she probed.

As they approached a red light, Eileen applied the brakes, a nervous lump forming in her throat. Bryan's expression tensed, a sign he was sifting through his memories. Eileen's hands grew damp with sweat.

"Southlake Technology University," Bryan finally said, recalling where Eileen had studied. It was the sole detail he could remember about his wife.

After a brief pause, Vivian spoke, her voice tinged with disappointment. "But Southlake Technology University graduates tens of thousands each year. Do you recall her department?"

"I don't," Bryan replied succinctly.

Eileen exhaled in relief as the light shifted to green. She started the car, grateful that Bryan didn't remember the specific details she had once shared about her department and class.

Thereafter, the call ended, and Bryan turned his attention back to the documents, though his glance briefly met Eileen's.

The setting sun cast a warm glow on her profile, illuminating her skin and softening the strands of hair that framed her face.

Eileen focused on the road, seemingly oblivious to Bryan's earlier conversation on the phone.

Upon arriving at the D.V Club, they found the exclusive top-floor room already bustling with guests.

Bryan's presence immediately invigorated the room, drawing everyone's attention. Drinks were poured, and cigarettes were offered, setting the scene for an animated gathering.

Eileen would usually mingle and partake in drinks with them on such occasions. When one of the assistants approached with a bottle of whiskey to pour her a glass, a large hand intervened.

"She's on medication for an injury. No alcohol for her," Bryan stated with a cigarette casually resting between his lips. The smoke framed his eyes,

and his shirt hung loose, adding an unintended charm to his demeanor.

Eileen, having overlooked the doctor's warning against alcohol, offered an apologetic smile to the assistant. "My apologies. I'll just stick to water," she said.

Her position as an assistant meant Bryan's word was final. Besides, everyone was eager to drink and talk with Bryan, not her.

The room buzzed with toasts to Bryan, who managed the situation with ease, steering the discussions towards future collaborations.

As the evening progressed and talks of partnership neared conclusion, only the formalities of contract signing remained.

The sudden entrance of a man in a silver-gray suit interrupted the flow. He walked in with a confident smile, stopping behind Bryan to rest a hand on his shoulder.

"Mr. Dawson, it's been a while. You're making quick decisions. We have an interest in this project as well. But it seems like you're nearly done here?" the man said.

Eileen's expression tightened at the sight of Jonathan Mueller. In the business realm, where rivalries were as common as partnerships, the Mueller family stood as Bryan's most formidable challenge.

The history of competition between their families was long and fraught with tension, making Jonathan's sudden appearance no less than a calculated move.

Jonathan eyed the individual next to Bryan, who promptly rose and vacated his seat for him. His movement necessitated a slight rearrangement within the room to accommodate Jonathan's presence.

Taking his place beside Bryan, Jonathan casually draped an arm over the chair's back, offering Bryan a smile. "Today, I'm not here to challenge you for the project. What do you say to a partnership? I'm interested in a piece of the pie, too."

Bryan, cigarette in hand, gestured towards the spread of food on the table. "If it's the pie you're after, there are plenty right here."

His response left no room for ambiguity regarding other ventures.

"Come on, Mr. Dawson. I'm talking about the project you're discussing tonight," Jonathan clarified.

Bryan cut straight to the point. "That's out of the question. What you proposed isn't sharing; it's spoiling the whole thing."

Jonathan's ability to match Bryan's business acumen was questionable at best. Without the support of his family, most of his ventures likely would have failed. A collaboration with Jonathan promised more risk than reward.

While Bryan typically maintained a veneer of diplomacy, the evening's libations might have inspired a more forthright approach.

Jonathan's smile evaporated, his annoyance palpable as he processed Bryan's candid refusal.

He then shifted his attention to Eileen. "Miss Curtis, it appears Mr. Dawson may have indulged a bit much. Would you say it's fair for me to claim a portion of this deal?"

Jonathan's lack of subtlety extended beyond business negotiations, resorting to pressuring Bryan's associates in a bid to save face.

Eileen, caught in his attempt to create discomfort, responded with a courteous smile, "That wouldn't be appropriate."

"How dare you, a mere assistant, speak to me this way?" Jonathan said. He stood up and walked toward Eileen, intending to place his hand on her shoulder.

However, Bryan caught his wrist and pulled him back with so much force that Jonathan stumbled back to his chair. Looking up, Jonathan saw Bryan's cold and firm gaze.

"If you wish to stay for dinner, feel free. But if you're here to cause trouble, I suggest you leave," Bryan stated, his eyebrows slightly raised in disdain.

It took a moment for Jonathan to collect himself. "Really? You were calm

when I attempted to take your project, but you're defending an assistant with such fervor now. Are you having an affair with her or something?"

Bryan kicked Jonathan's chair. The chair tipped backward, and Jonathan found himself on the floor beside Eileen's feet.

"Even your dad wouldn't dare challenge me over a project. Who do you think you are?" Bryan stood, looking at Jonathan coldly.

Jonathan had only a nominal role within his family business, with his father holding the real power. Bryan couldn't be bothered to deal with him.

Eileen considered that Bryan's intolerance for Jonathan's behavior might have been heightened by alcohol. However, she also understood that this altercation could lead to a serious conflict with the Mueller family.

After standing up and dusting himself off, Jonathan made a cutting remark. "All right, you've shown your bravery. Provoking the Mueller family for an assistant. You should think if she's worth it. Soon, you'll understand what I mean."

Jonathan's words focused not on his failed attempt at the project but on Bryan's defense of Eileen, evading his own wrongdoings.

Eileen sensed the complexity of the situation, knowing it would be difficult to clear her name.

With those final words, Jonathan left.

Bryan and his companions moved to a different private room. There, after indulging in a meal and enjoying some drinks, they began to engage in games.

Eileen noticed that Bryan's eyes had taken on a reddish hue, a clear indicator he had perhaps indulged a bit too much, yet he continued to drink as he participated in a card game.

Eileen was contemplating whether to caution him when, unexpectedly, he placed his cards down, left his seat, and approached her.

He chose to sit right beside her, draping his arm around her waist in a manner that caught her off guard.

Fortunately, the merry atmosphere captured the attention of everyone else, ensuring that their secluded corner remained unnoticed. Nonetheless, Eileen felt a need to adjust her position.

But suddenly, Bryan spoke. His voice was barely above a whisper and close to her ear. "I want you."

His words jumbled Eileen's thoughts, leaving her to grapple with a surge of emotions.

"Let's leave. Settle the bill and head home," Bryan suggested, his tone soft yet roughened by the effects of alcohol, his breath carrying a hint of tobacco.

Gathering her composure, Eileen stood and assisted Bryan to his feet, guiding him out of the room. She asked a waiter to inform their friends they were departing early and escorted Bryan to the elevator. The moment the doors closed, Bryan's actions became more pronounced. He positioned her against the wall of the elevator, her hands secured by his, compelling her to look up at him. Then, he kissed her with a passion that was both immediate and demanding.