

## Chapter 12 He's Concealing Something

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Eileen harbored a wish to gently alert Vivian about Bryan's infidelity.

But the woman in the elevator had been no one but her.

"Place your faith in Mr. Dawson. It's best to address your concerns with him directly," Eileen said.

Confronted with Vivian's troubled eyes, Eileen found herself evading the truth.

Vivian exhaled a burdened sigh. "He's not being honest with me. Even if that wasn't him in the elevator, he's concealing something. This morning's message had me rushing from the hospital to confront him at Oak Villas, but he was not there. His absence from home and the office left too many questions."

Vivian's car seats are made of leather, emanating warmth for the people sitting on them.

But Eileen felt a chill of anxiety instead, her composure teetering on the edge as Vivian's unsuspecting trust weighed heavily on her.

Eileen eventually suggested, "Miss Warren, it's best to seek clarity directly from Mr. Dawson. Speculating won't do any good."

Vivian's expression was a tangle of hurt and determination. "You know what he's like. If he intends to keep secrets, they'll remain hidden. My asking will only serve to tip him off or, worse, to provoke his anger over my distrust. The risk of confrontation is too great."

Silence hung heavy as Eileen grappled for the right words to reply. Outside, an argument unfolded, granting Eileen a moment's reprieve as she feigned interest in the disturbance.

Vivian, growing impatient for a response, pressed the horn to scatter the quarreling duo.

Before Eileen could gather her thoughts, Vivian's plea was earnest. "Eileen, I'm at my wit's end. You're all I've got. Having been abroad for so long has left me with no friends. Please, you're the only friend I can rely on now." Her voice lowered to a whisper. "My brother cannot know about this, or Bryan will face his wrath."

"What do you want me to do to help you?" Eileen asked.

"Keep tabs on him for me. His comings and goings after he returns each day... Tell me everything," Vivian said.

Eileen's heart sank. "I can't, Miss Warren." Despite the turmoil within, her reply was firm. "My days are already consumed by work with Mr. Dawson. To take on such a task would be daunting... Besides, if he finds out about this, my career will surely end."

Vivian's posture deflated, her hope dissolving. After a while, she conceded defeat. "You can leave now. I need space to think," she said.

Eileen complied, stepping out of the car and navigating the crowd back to her own vehicle. As she departed, she noticed the absence of Vivian's car.

Though uncertain of Vivian's next move, one thing was clear—Vivian would pursue the truth on her own.

Returning to Springvale Lane, Eileen punched in the familiar passcode and paused, pondering how Bryan had managed to enter this morning.

She had told Bryan that the passcode was her birthday, naively believing he wouldn't know.

She hesitated before the keypad, considering a change, but eventually, she let the idea go. After changing into her business attire, she headed for Apex Group.

A handful of reporters, their disguises fooling no one, still lingered outside the company, a testament to the recent scandal.

Their boldness had waned in the face of the Warren family's decisive actions, leaving them to linger from a safe distance.

Exiting the elevator, Eileen sensed the shift in her colleagues' stares—was it her tardiness that drew their attention?

"Greetings, Eileen," came the casual chorus from passing coworkers, to which Eileen responded with a smile before proceeding to Bryan's office with a file in hand.

She stepped inside to find not just Bryan but also Vivian and Kian present, an unexpected gathering that caught her off guard.

"Eileen, you're late today?" Vivian's tone was casual, her demeanor vastly changed from the morning's earlier despair. Her poise and composure made it seem like her earlier doubts about Bryan had vanished, her words hinting to Eileen to keep their earlier encounter a secret.

With a subtle nod and a gracious smile, Eileen acknowledged the Warrens. "Mr. Warren, Miss Warren, I injured my leg. Mr. Dawson's approval for a hospital visit made me late."

Vivian, with a dimpled smile, responded warmly, "Despite your injury, you're here. That's commendable. You and Bryan can go ahead with your work; don't mind me. I left the hospital against advice, and Kian is here to take me back."

Eileen noticed Kian's intense stare, his dark eyes seemingly fixated on her despite his polite smile.

Redirecting her attention, Eileen approached Bryan's desk, aware of the siblings' watchful eyes. She had grabbed a random file, coming here to alert Bryan about Vivian's suspicion. But now that Vivian and Kian was here, she couldn't do that anymore.

And Bryan had already signed the file.

Bryan perused it again, eyeing his signature. "Let's discuss this in the conference room shortly, and I'll decide if it requires my final approval," he said.

Relieved, Eileen collected the file. "Sure, Mr. Dawson."

She acknowledged Vivian and Kian with a nod as she exited.

In the solitude of the corridor, her tension melted away.

Back at her desk, she pondered Bryan's astute perception, silently thankful for his tactful reaction.

Eileen rose to fetch herself some coffee from the pantry. Approaching, she caught a murmur of hushed conversation.

"Is it really her place?"

"The ambitious often reach higher. With her looks and ability, it's not tough to attract the elite..."

Upon entering, the chatter ceased. Eileen filled her cup, acknowledged the room with a nod, and made her exit.

Once out of earshot, the whispers resumed, one voice notably louder. "Did anyone else notice the hickeys on Eileen's neck?"

"Really? Are you sure? But Judie mentioned Eileen's single!"

The rumor mill churned anew.

Back at her desk, coffee in hand, Eileen rested for a short while. She then headed to the conference room early to prepare for the meeting.

Inside, the blinds cast shadows, creating a muted ambiance. She flicked the air conditioning and crossed the room to turn on the lights.

As the lights flickered on, the door swung open. Startled, Eileen collided with Bryan, her nose hitting his firm chest.

Bryan's concern was immediate. "What's brought you back so soon?" he inquired as his fingers tenderly met her nose, eliciting a wince.

Eileen cast a wary glance at the door, acutely aware that the emptiness of the meeting room would soon be breached. As she tried to put some space between them, Bryan's grip on her waist remained firm.

"What are you doing? We're at the company," Eileen whispered urgently. "Besides, Ms. and Mr. Warren are still in your office!"

"They're not here. No need to worry," Bryan said casually. "Are you scared?"

It was more than evident, wasn't it? Eileen nearly voiced those very words but held them back, steadying her voice. "Vivian sought me out at the hospital earlier today."

Bryan was toying with her fingers now, bringing them close to his face. "What was the hospital visit for?" he inquired.

"I..." Eileen began, frustration mounting within her. She was astounded by his knack for diverting the conversation from what mattered. He should be focusing on Vivian's visit.

As a shadow darted past the window, Eileen summoned her resolve and pushed Bryan away. She quickly lit the room, and almost on cue, the door swung open.

A stream of attendees flooded the space, dissipating the earlier affectionate atmosphere in the room. Yet, the flutter of anxiety in Eileen's chest didn't subside so easily.

With the room now alight and the meeting imminent, Bryan had already positioned himself at the head of the table, his expression inscrutable, the earlier encounter seemingly erased from the moment.

Bryan and Eileen being early to meetings was the norm, so their simultaneous arrival sparked no curiosity. Soon, the meeting commenced.

Two hours flew by before the meeting adjourned near lunchtime. Eileen had just settled into her chair when Kian emerged from Bryan's office.

Pausing by her desk, Kian peered down. Rising to greet Kian, Eileen said, "Mr. Warren, heading out? Won't you stay for lunch?"

Kian shook his head. "No, with Vivian remaining by Bryan's side, I'll skip lunch here. Would you mind arranging a light meal for them at the hotel? Nothing too rich for Vivian."

Acknowledging his request, Eileen nodded. But Kian remained still. "Is there anything else?" Eileen asked.

"Last night at the D.V Club, I heard the Mueller kid stirred up some drama?"

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 +120 Points at most

Straightening, Kian casually slipped his hands into his pockets. "Did Bryan hit him to defend you?"





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