

Chapter 104

AMELIA

I had felt happy before, but it had been a long time since I had felt this. I was literally brimming with joy. I hoped of winning the contract but didn't think it would come so true. The moment I walked through the door, I threw myself into Damian's arms.

My decision to put some distance between us was temporarily gone as he hugged me tightly. For now, I just wanted him to share in my joy. He was still in my embrace for a moment, and then his arms went around me. I was smiling so much my cheeks hurt.

"I take it the meeting with the board went well," he murmured against my hair.

"Oh. Yes. It was-" I paused for breath. "It was surprising."

"Surprising?" He took my hand and led me to the sofa. "Tell me about it. How was it... surprising as you say."

"What I meant was I never expected things to turn out the way they did. So, Noah proposed the building of an art gallery. My proposal was for the building of an-

"-amusement park. Yes." He smiled fondly. "I saw you work all night on it."

"It paid off. Long story short, I got the contract, but he lost it. He threw a tantrum when they told him that. According to him, I could only win because I was fucking a board member. How small-minded is he?"

Damian's grin became a chuckle. "Typical Noah. I would have been surprised if he hadn't thrown a fit. He's like a baby in the body of an overgrown man. The board didn't take it likely, I presume?"

"They sure didn't. Noah was barred from receiving the community impact award ever again. You should have seen the look on his face when they told him that. I really wanted to take a picture."

"That will help to take him down a peg or two. I'm happy, Amelia. I really am. This is a big win for you, for us."

"I know. I can't believe I will handle such a big project." And I honestly didn't. From a hopeless ex-wife with no prospects of success to who I am today. I really didn't see it coming.

"This will definitely boost your bakery's reputation."

My smile slipped a little as I remembered the bakery issue for the first time since meeting with the board this morning.

"What later happened at the bakery? Did you manage to do something?"

"I'm sorry. I did my best, but I couldn't stop them from temporarily closing the place. Monique was involved in this. Noah too. I'm pretty sure."

"She's in league with Noah," I said. "I confronted him about it, and he didn't really seem to deny it."

"She sure is." Damian visibly brightened. "But Monique's days are numbered. It turns out there are a lot of rotting skeletons in her cupboard." I found myself holding Damian's hand tightly, hanging onto his every word. If Damian had got something on Monique, then half our problems would have been solved. "The private detective I employed found everything I need to take her down."

"What's that? What did he find?"

"Come with me. I would rather show you than tell you." I followed him to his bedroom. He unlocked a drawer and pulled out a bulky file. He held it up and waved it in the air like a banner. "This right here is a gold mine of information. This is everything- everything we have been waiting for."

DAMIAN

"Mr Donovan."

Monique's butler looked very surprised to see me. He eyed my briefcase warily for a second.

"Is Monique in?" I asked him when I had been standing at the doorstep for a little more time than was considered polite.

He gave a quick nod. "Yes. Please come with me. No. This way."

He led me around the house to the pool area. Monique was swimming in a bikini that showed her body to perfection. Her movements were lithe and graceful.

"Mr Donovan is here to see you, madam," the butler said.

Monique turned onto her back slowly, lazily and began to swim face up. Her face brightened with a smile when she saw me.

"Well. Well. This is a pleasant surprise," she drawled. "Why don't you join me? It's a hot day, but it's really cool here."

"No. I'm fine." I dropped my briefcase right next to me.

"Oh, come on, Damian. Loosen up a little." She threaded water and ran her hands over her bosom to call my attention to them, no doubt. At this point, she could go stark naked and dance the hula, and I couldn't care less. "If you're concerned about your shorts getting wet, then don't worry." She eyed the part of my anatomy she was most interested in. "I should have something inside the house that will fit you. Join me."

"No, Monique. I'm not swimming."

She lifted her bare shoulders in a shrug. "Alright then. A drink?"

"No."

She nodded to the butler, who took himself off. "I have been expecting you to visit for a while now. I'm sure you have come to your senses and now want to work with me. Fortunately, I'm quite understanding. I can make your little media problem vanish just like that." She opened her hand and let water drip through her fingers and into the pool. "All you have to do is sign the contract. Luck for you, it's in my study. Shall we go and get it?"

I chuckled and took a step closer to the pool.

"There will be no need for that, Lisa Evans." The expression of shock on her face almost made the days of being hounded by the media worth it. Her jaw went slack with shock, and her eyes widened like she'd seen a ghost.

The next second, she managed to regain her composure, but I had already seen what I had hoped to see. If there was ever an admittance of guilt on a human countenance, it had been on Monique's.

"What are you talking about?" she said with an unconvincing return to her earlier manner. "Who is... what's her name? Why did you call me that?"

"Lisa Evans," I said, carefully enunciating each syllable. "Yes. I know who you are. I know all about how you were a pickpocket, how you became the maid of a very wealthy man, Thomas Finch, the man you claimed as your husband who left all his wealth just before conveniently dying."

She licked her lips nervously. "Conveniently?"

"Yes. Conveniently. I know you poisoned Thomas Finch and then his butler, who would have exposed you. When they were out of the way, you made sure you got your hands on all his wealth. He didn't have a family, so it was easier for you to steal everything. And you have been on a roll ever since, haven't you?"

She shook her head. "I honestly don't know what you are talking about, Damian. Di—did you drink something before coming here?"

"Still trying to bluff your way out of this?" I nodded. "Hold on a moment." I went through through the briefcase I had brought along with me until I found the file I had shown to Amelia. I indicated the file. "It's all in here, the evidence I need to support my claim." She climbed out of the pool and made a snatch at the file. I laughed with genuine amusement at this.

"Give me some credit, Lisa. Did you think I'd be that stupid to bring the only copies of my evidence here? You can take this if you want, but I have plenty more where that came from."

"All you said. Lies... All lies," she gasped, her bosom heaving. "I don't know who Lisa Evans is, and I have never been a maid. Do you really think a woman like me could ever be a maid? You're hilarious, and everyone who listens to your petty story will laugh at you."

"Lies. Is it a lie that you are on the FBI's watchlist? You're wanted for murder and theft. You came into the city because no one here knew who you really were, and so you took up the name Monique. Do you know what the police would do to you if they found you now?"

She went as white as a sheet, and her lips started to quiver.

"I-" But the following words got stuck in her throat.

"Your time is up," I said. "You should have never come to this city. It's over now."

I raised a hand to give a signal to the police officers who were watching from their established perimeters. Before she could run, she was surrounded by police officers. I chuckled and shook my head. I couldn't have timed the whole thing more perfectly.

"Very smart," I said when she didn't try to struggle as the policemen handcuffed and read her rights.

"Officers," I called loudly, and several of them came to my side. "Remember the camera room? You need to see it."

"Can you take us there?"

"Sure. Follow me."

I led them to the automated door of Lisa's spy room. I was about to suggest someone send for her to unlock the door, but a tech guy attached to the force stepped forward and unlocked it after a few seconds of trying.

"Oh shit!" he swore the moment he got a good look at the room's contents. "This is really some messed up shit. I can't believe she has been watching the entire city for some time now. She's a psychopath."

"Confiscate everything," the officer leading the team barked to the others standing around.

The room was sealed off in no time, and its contents confiscated.

I went back outside. Monique had been allowed to put on a robe over her skimpy bikini. She sat huddled in on herself in the back seat of the cruiser. In the front seat, a policeman sat, scowling at her. I knocked on the glass, and she glared at me.

Already, she looked years older. I wondered what years in prison would do to her. I knew one thing, though. She would have a terrible time adjusting to the life there.

"Are you enjoying your new accommodation?" I mocked. "Enjoy this while it lasts because you will go straight from here into your cell. This may be the last car ride you will have in a while. Enjoy it while it lasts. You should never have messed with me. Never."

I straightened as the policeman driving quickly got in. I stood there and watched them drive her away.

"Good riddance, Monique," I muttered. "Good riddance."