

### Chapter 35

The following morning, Lisa was checking her wristwatch as she headed down the hallway to join the waiting family members for breakfast, a smile plastered on her face. Then she stopped when Marcus came out of his room and walked up to her.

"Good morning, Lisa," he greeted with a half grin, showing his awful set of teeth.

Lisa was a bit surprised that he greeted her first because Marcus usually commands to be greeted first most times. With puffing shoulders, she nodded, acknowledging his greeting before responding, "Good morning, Marcus."

"You look happy this beautiful morning."

"It's indeed a beautiful morning for me. I am going to blow everyone's mind away at the dining table by announcing the readiness of my presentation and I am going to rub it in on Zinnia."

Marcus nodded, unbuttoning one of his vest's buttons, saying, "Hm, good. I can't wait. But, first, let me see." He stretched out his hand, making Lisa narrow her eyes at him.

"What do you mean?"

"I am talking about your presentation. Let me see it and go through it."

"Oh, if I am not mistaken, I guess I remembered telling you clearly last night that I don't need your opinion regarding the presentation."

"Yes, I know. Still, I don't want you to risk losing to Zinnia."



"Gone are those times, I won't lose to that egocentric sister of yours."

"Look, I think we are partners now, so let me see your presentation."

Lisa sighed and her jaw tightened as she stared at him, not uttering another word more. She knew that if Marcus goes through her presentation he's likely to detect that she didn't make the presentation herself and he might not accuse her until when she'll show it to her grandmother. She didn't want to risk getting caught by him.

"Please, Lisa?"

"Sorry, I can't give it to you to go through."

"We are partners and I need to see it."

"I am not showing my presentation to you, Marcus."

"But I need to see it and..."

Getting infuriated by his persistence, she interrupted aggressively, "I said NO! What's your problem, Marcus?"

Marcus smirked. He suspected her. "We are partners and..."

Lisa held up her index finger. "Enough. We won't be partners anymore."

"You accepted my offer last night."

"And now I am rejecting it. I do not want to have anything to do with you."  
"

"You need me, Lisa. You need my help."

"Ah ah ah, you're joking. You are the one who needs me because you're about to crash for good. I don't need a soon-to-be loser, Marcus. Get it?"

"You know, this is the truth, you won't be able to get to anywhere higher than where you are without me."

Lisa smiled in a mocking manner and shook her head. "Watch me then." She eyed him and walked past him, pushing him slightly with her shoulder.

Some minutes later, everyone was seated around the dining table. As usual, Duncan was serving them breakfast. Bella signaled at Lisa sitting next to her and Lisa nodded her head slightly as she gently cleared her throat to speak.

"Um, grandmother, about the presentation, I already have it ready since yesterday," Lisa informed, causing Zinnia's eyes to widen a bit.

Ma'am Luna was astonished. "Wow, really?"

"Yes, grandmother."

"Great, my dear. And what about you, Zinnia?"

"Uh, I have mine ready too, grandmother," Zinnia said, managing to smile despite feeling upset that Lisa was competing with her. Though she tried to hide her annoyance.

"This is good. Later today, by 3 pm at the company, we should all be at the private c

meeting room, I would see both of your presentations there."

Zinnia and Lisa nodded before staring at each other. They locked eyes

until Lisa smiled broadened and Zinnia looked away, sneering as she continued her food. Meanwhile, Duncan who has been observing them noticed that his wife was not feeling happy. He could see through Zinnia that she was so determined to get rid of Lisa who was like a growing weed in her field. And when Lisa caught his gaze she seemed a bit nervous as a smile danced on his lips before he looked away. Lisa hoped that he was not up to something. She recalled his accusation last night in the kitchen and shrugged it off.

"He doesn't know that I took the flash drive. If the fool knew, he would have exposed me by now," she thought. "I am sure he is just messing with my head." She concluded and exhaled.

"I don't think you need to see both of their presentations, Mother," Laila uttered, receiving a bad look from Bella. "Honestly, Zinnia's presentation is going to be better. She or Marcus has always been the one representing the company with great presentations. Lisa doesn't know much."

"With all due respect, Aunt Laila, I would appreciate you not to look down on me," Lisa mentioned, faking a calm expression.

"Oh, sweetheart, I am not doing that, I'm just stating facts now. You're inexperienced. It's only been a year since you've been working in the company," Laila reminded.

"And should I remind you that Zinnia has only been working at the company for a couple of years. What's the big difference between one and two?"

"Come on, Bella, there's a difference. We shouldn't ignore the fact that Lisa is inexperienced. My son, Marcus, and my daughter, Zinnia have great experiences."

"Quit talking, Laila, let Mother decide," George said.

"Hey, brother, not to disrespect you, but it would be better if you don't interfere in matters related to the company as you always do," Laila stated.

"Watch what you say, Laila," Bella warned.

"What, sister-in-law? Was I wrong?"

"I will prove that you have been wrong all this while when Mother decides that Lisa would represent the company. Till then, I will do well to reserve my comment. I am so sure my daughter will beat Zinnia this time."  
"

Laila giggled and shrugged. "Let's watch. But..." She abruptly paused when Ma'am Luna shot a glare at her and everywhere became serene as they went on eating.

Later in the day, at 3 pm on the dot, in the spacious private meeting room in Lennart Sky company which was located at the top of the company, the Lennart family is seated around the large table. The room is elegantly decorated, with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a breathtaking view of the city skyline. Ma'am Luna, as the matriarch of the family, is seated at the head of the table, her demeanor reflecting a mix of anticipation and pride.

Ma'am Luna is eager to see what her granddaughters have prepared for the important presentation that could secure a significant deal for the company and help them from suffering the loss Marcus has caused. The atmosphere in the room was filled with a sense of both excitement and tension as the family members awaited the presentations.



"Zinnia, you go first," Ma'am Luna instructed.

Zinnia nodded and arose and she confidently began her presentation. She spoke eloquently, showcasing her thorough research, strategic thinking, and persuasive communication skills. Her presentation flows smoothly, capturing the attention of everyone in the room, but leaving a frown on Bella and Lisa's faces.

When Zinnia was done, she took her seat with a positive smile. Then Lisa arose to make her presentation.

Ma'am Luna, though wasn't sure of Lisa but she was eager to know her presentation and was hopeful because she knew Lisa for her strong work ethic and ability to think on her feet. And although she gave a lesser speech, Lisa surpassed Zinnia with her presentation. Everyone plus Zinnia was surprised by her innovative ideas, her presentation was alluring and Lisa's confidence shone through, leaving a lasting impression.

"How did she prepare such a presentation like a pro?" Zinnia wondered. She glanced at her grandmother who started clapping for Lisa, forcing the others to do the same.

Lisa took her seat, appreciating the gesture, and chuckled when she noticed the tension sprawling on Zinnia's face.

Zinnia decided to put her second plan in motion as she studied Lisa's presentation.

"So, mother, who will present the company?" Bella asked, impatiently.

Noticing a fault in Lisa's presentation, just as Ma'am Luna was about to make a decision, Zinnia pressed the button in front of her, signifying she

wanted to speak. Ma'am Luna glanced at her and gestured at her to go on and talk.

"There's a fault I noticed in Lisa's presentation. The visual aids were less and inappropriate and the presentation style wasn't really great."

"You're in no position to say that," Bella retorted. "I am sure that you just came up with that to lessen Lisa's chance of being chosen to represent the company because her presentation was great."

"Come on, Aunt, I only stated what I noticed."

"But, I'm sure you're wrong..."

"Zinnia is right, Aunt Bella," Marcus interjected, making Lisa glare at him.

"I see what's going on here. Brother and sister want to team up now to topple my daughter, great," Bella scoffed. "Laila, was that what you taught them?"

"You should watch what you say, Bella," Laila warned.

"Grandmother, I am not taking anyone's side. I am just supporting Zinnia because she's right. It's just a little fault in Lisa's presentation."

"But it can be fixed, right?" Lisa asked.

Marcus nodded. "Definitely."

"What's your decision, Mother?" George asked. The room falls into a momentary silence as everyone processes the new information.

Ma'am Luna, being a wise and discerning person, took a pause to consider Zinnia's revelation. She evaluates the situation, weighing the

strengths and weaknesses of both Zinnia and Lisa's presentations. As the family exchange glances, the tension in the room mounts, waiting for Ma'am Luna's decision.

She was impressed by Lisa's presentation which surpassed that of Zinnia in a little way. Ultimately, she makes a thoughtful and informed decision, taking into account all the factors at play. She observed the little fault Zinnia stated, still she knew Lisa could rectify it, and not wanting to throw another opportunity on Zinnia, she chose to give Lisa a chance considering her solid presentation because she felt with the presentation, they could win the potential deal which was hanging in the balance.

While Zinnia prayed silently that she would get the opportunity, Marcus surveyed Lisa's presentation then just as Ma'am Luna was about to announce her decision, Marcus jerked up and said, "This presentation of Lisa wasn't hers."

Everyone darted their eyes at him as he walked over to the front of the table.

"What nonsense are you saying?"

"The truth, Lisa."

"Don't accuse my daughter!" Bella bawled.

"This presentation was made by someone else and Lisa just went through it and made little changes to make it seem like it was what she came up with."

"You're accusing me! I'm sure Zinnia and you planned this and maybe with your mother so you both could overthrow me."



Laila rolled her eyes at Lisa. "How dare you...?"

"And how dare you too, Laila?" Bella arose, pointing at Lisa. "You came up with this plan, right?"

"Enough, please. I have proof to state my claim," Marcus said and took out a flash drive from his pocket. He inserted it into his laptop, played a video, and held up the laptop for everyone to see.

Everyone's eyes widened as they saw Lisa in the video walking to Zinnia's desk and taking the flash drive on it.

Lisa arose. She was shocked and baffled because something was strange about the person in the video. It wasn't her.

"No....L...this is not true. That's not me. I am sure Marcus came up with this," she defended herself.

Ma'am Luna arose and grabbed Lisa's arm, glaring at her. "Listen to me, Lisa, if you dare lie to my face, I will make your life miserable. Did you take the flash drive from Zinnia's desk?"

Lisa, knowing well what could be the worst thing for her if she lied, decided to swallow her pride and admit her deed. She glanced at everyone, ignoring the secret sign Bella gave her to not admit to her deed, she nodded and said, "Yes, I did, but the video..."

Paaa!

Before Lisa finished talking, Ma'am Luna gave her a resounding slap that sent her stumbling as a loud gasp escaped Bella's lips.