

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 18

Willow didn't have a permanent desk at headquarters, but thankfully, there were plenty of hot desks available. She picked one at random and booted up her laptop.

Even though she had officially submitted her resignation, she was still technically on the clock, which meant she had a mountain of work to get through. She had built the Seattle project team from the ground up, and she cared deeply for every single person on it. Even though she was leaving, she wanted to set them up for success one last time.

The four hours of the morning flew by. Aside from shooting Julian a quick text asking what time he was free to meet, she poured every ounce of her focus into her work.

At exactly noon, the floor began to empty out as people headed to lunch. Willow checked her phone—still no reply from Julian. She closed her laptop and decided to grab food as well.

The moment she stepped out of the lobby, she spotted Julian getting out of a sleek car a short distance away. Following right behind him were Vivienne and a small group of familiar faces.

Willow recognized every single one of them. They were all part of Julian's elite inner circle, the very people who had ruthlessly ostracized her in the past. She despised them.

Not wanting to deal with the confrontation, she turned to walk away. But before she could slip off, a loud voice rang out across the plaza. "Willow!"

Willow frowned, fully intending to ignore him, but before she could make her escape, the man jogged right up to her.

"It really is you! I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me. How the hell did you let yourself go like this?" The voice belonged to Seth Sterling, a guy who had practically grown up attached to Julian's hip. His family ran a lucrative furniture empire—not quite Sinclair money, but rich enough to buy his way into the circle.

Willow didn't even want to look at him. In the past, desperate to please Julian, she had bent over backward to accommodate his friends. No matter how vicious their insults were or how humiliating their 'pranks' got, she had always swallowed her pride and forced a smile. But things were different now. She was divorcing Julian; she didn't owe these entitled brats a damn thing.

Giving him a freezing glare, she side-stepped him to leave.

But just as she took a step, Seth blocked her path again. "What's your problem? Are you deaf? Didn't you hear me talking to you?"

By now, the rest of the group had sauntered over.

Julian and Vivienne walked shoulder-to-shoulder at the front, flanked by Lucas Lane and Hugo Harrington.

Lucas came from a massively wealthy hospitality dynasty. Rumor had it he wasn't biologically a Lane—he had taken the name when his mother married into the family—but that hadn't stopped him from inheriting a massive fortune.

As for Hugo, he rarely spoke. Willow didn't know much about his background, but she assumed he was loaded. You didn't get a seat at Julian's table without serious generational wealth.

Seeing his audience assemble, Seth cranked up the cruelty. He had always been the main instigator when it came to bullying Willow, practically begging for Vivienne's approval. "Three years away, and wow, look at the downgrade. You were already leagues below Vivienne back then, but now? You aren't even on the same planet."

He looked back and forth between Vivienne and Willow, making loud, exaggerated clicking noises with his tongue. "Man, the Plain Jane and the swan aren't even in the same league. Putting a heavyweight like you next to our Goddess is just insulting."

Lucas immediately chimed in to back him up. "Come on, Seth, why are you comparing Vivienne to just anybody? Vivienne holds a legitimate doctorate in biotech. She's the pride of the Sinclair family and the princess we all fiercely protect. Can we please stop comparing her to random nobodies?"

As they laughed and hurled insults, a sickening wave of déjà vu washed over Willow.

She used to place Julian on such a high pedestal that she was terrified of causing even the slightest ripple of displeasure. Whenever his friends degraded her, she would internalize their venom, immediately apologizing to them for ruining their mood, only to be sneered at and chased away like a dog.

It was an endless, exhausting cycle of public humiliation, and they had reveled in every second of it.

But why? She had never done anything to them. She hadn't made a single mistake. All she had done was fall in love with Julian, and for that 'crime,' she was forced to endure the endless torment of his entitled court.

