

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

Chapter 81

"Who are you people?" Martha demanded again.

Vivienne offered a provocative smirk. "Why don't you ask Willow who we are? I seriously doubt she hasn't recognized us."

Willow had zero interest in taking the bait. Her only priority was getting Martha out of there. She was terrified of what Vivienne might blurt out, or worse, that Julian might suddenly appear and trigger a fatal shock to Martha's system.

But fate had a cruel sense of humor.

Just as she was trying to drag Martha away, a familiar silhouette emerged from the promenade. It was Julian. He was striding right toward them, clearly having accompanied Susannah and Vivienne on their shopping trip.

As he approached, his eyes landed on Willow. He paused for a fraction of a second, but his gaze quickly shifted away, utterly devoid of emotion. He didn't even acknowledge Martha's existence. Walking straight up to Susannah and Vivienne, he asked softly, "Did you find what you were looking for? I'll handle the bill."

Vivienne smoothly linked her arm through his, her tone dripping with saccharine sweetness. "We did. We want that one." She pointed at the coat in the associate's hands. "Let's buy it for Mom, okay?"

She was doing it on purpose, putting on a show entirely for Willow's benefit.

She hadn't missed the way Julian's eyes lingered on Willow's face for those two seconds. She had to admit, Willow had slimmed down and looked far more striking than before, but so what? She still wasn't half as beautiful as Vivienne. And at the end of the day, Vivienne was the one standing by Julian's side.

She was establishing her dominance, making it crystal clear who the real leading lady of the Sinclair family was.

"Alright," Julian replied without a moment's hesitation, already pulling out his card.

In the past, a stunt like this wouldn't have caused so much as a ripple of emotion in Willow; she would have just found it pathetic. But today was different. Martha was

standing right next to her, and Willow was terrified she wouldn't be able to handle the heartbreak.

After all, in Martha's eyes, Willow and Julian still had a perfect, happy marriage. Having the ugly truth ripped open in such a public, humiliating way was a catastrophic risk to her heart.

"Mom..."

Willow anxiously checked Martha's face. To her surprise, her mother's complexion and breathing seemed stable, though her eyes were blazing with unadulterated hatred.

"Mom, please, let's just go."

Willow tried once more to guide her away, but to her absolute shock, Martha lunged forward and unleashed a furious tirade right in the faces of all three of them.

"Julian Sinclair! Are you even human? Willow loved you! She poured her heart and soul into you. When you told her to go to Seattle, she packed up without a single complaint and stayed there for three years! She made you money, ran your operations, and you pay her back by screwing around behind her back? You ungrateful bastard! You cheating scum! Aren't you afraid karma will strike you dead?"

She then whirled on Vivienne. "And you! Too young to know better, so you decide to play the homewrecker? Have you no shame? Do you even know what self-respect is? If I were you, I'd crawl into a hole and die of embarrassment. How dare you even show your face in public? And for the record, you couldn't hold a candle to Willow's beauty if you tried. Julian must be blind to pick a piece of trash like you!"

Hearing her precious Julian and Vivienne getting verbally destroyed, Susannah couldn't take it anymore and jumped into the fray. "How dare you..."

But she barely got three words out before Martha cut her down. "How dare I what? And you, you bitter old woman! You've lived this long and still know nothing about basic decency. I heard these two were raised as siblings, and you just sit back and let them act like this? It's downright sickening!"

Having delivered her scorching monologue, Martha finally seemed to calm down. She grabbed Willow's hand tightly. "Let's go. We need to stay as far away from toxic garbage like them as possible!"

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Willow allowed herself to be pulled along, her mind completely reeling.

In all her memories, she had never seen Martha act like this. The argument with Vivienne in the store had been shocking enough, but watching her mother unleash a fiery, public rant made Willow question if she was even looking at the same woman.

"Mom, are you okay?" Once they were out of the boutique and safely tucked away in a quiet corner of the mall, Willow immediately began checking her over. "How do you feel? Anything hurts? Are you dizzy? Does your chest hurt?"

These were all the critical warning signs the doctors had warned her about before leaving the hospital.

Martha didn't say a word; instead, tears began to spill down her cheeks. Panic seized Willow's chest. "Are you in pain? Just hold on, I'm calling an ambulance right now. We'll be at the hospital in no time."

In her frantic state, Willow began blaming herself. "This is all my fault. I never should have brought you here. If we hadn't come, we never would have run into them. You even said you didn't want to go out, but I forced it. It's my fault. Just hold on a little longer."

"I'm fine, really. Don't worry," Martha said, catching Willow's hands and sitting down on a nearby bench. "Just sit with me for a minute."

"No, you shouldn't sit. I need to call the hospital."

"Willow, I'm genuinely okay." Martha gently took the phone from her daughter's grip. "I don't feel sick at all. My body feels perfectly fine."

Willow forced herself to take a breath and look closely. She realized that despite the emotional outburst, Martha's color was normal. She wasn't swaying, and there were no signs of physical distress. Only then did the sheer panic begin to subside.

But the tears wouldn't stop falling from Martha's eyes. Willow reached out and wiped them away. "What is it? Does something still hurt?"

Martha grabbed Willow's hand, her eyes filled with a heavy mix of heartbreak and guilt. "Why didn't you tell me something this huge was happening?" The thought of Willow enduring all that betrayal and abuse entirely on her own made her chest ache with sorrow. "That Julian is a monster, and his whole family is nothing but trash!"

Hearing this, Willow's first instinct was still to downplay everything. Protecting Martha's health was far more important than venting about the Sinclair family. "It's... it's not really what it looked like..."

"Are you still trying to hide it from me, even now?" Martha interrupted softly, before finally confessing to Willow about the phone call she had made to Julian days earlier.

As Willow listened, a fresh wave of anxiety hit her. She was terrified that reliving the memory would trigger a medical episode.

But then, all the strange little signs suddenly made sense. It explained why Martha had been speaking so cryptically in the car earlier. She had known all along, but had been trying to comfort and guide Willow in her own subtle way.

"Mom, there's actually something else I haven't told you." Since everything was out in the open, Willow saw no point in keeping the rest a secret. "I've already resigned from the firm, and I gave Julian the divorce papers."

As the words hung in the air, she braced herself for Martha's reaction. She expected tears, or at least a gentle attempt to talk her out of it. Instead, Martha didn't hesitate for a second. She backed her up one hundred percent.

"Divorce him! I fully support it. The sooner you cut ties with a man like that, the better. My daughter is brilliant, beautiful, and fiercely capable. You'll find someone so much better once you're free of him. And to hell with that garbage job, too! We don't need them!"

Whether she would find someone better or not, Willow didn't know, and she hadn't given much thought to the future yet. But her current goal was crystal clear: she was divorcing Julian Sinclair.

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"So where are you in the divorce process? Are you waiting on the paperwork to clear?"

"Not yet," Willow said, finally sitting down on the bench beside her mother once she was certain Martha was physically stable. "But I've already handed him the divorce agreement. I'm sure he'll reach out once he's reviewed it."

"And in a little over a week, my notice period will be up. Then I can walk away from Sinclair Group for good."

"Willow, whatever you decide to do, I will always support you. But on one condition," Martha said, squeezing her hand with absolute solemnity. "From now on, no more hiding things from me."

"I promise."

Back at the boutique, after Willow and Martha had left, Susannah ended up refusing the coat. Not only did she leave it behind, but she threw a massive temper tantrum, brutally dressing down every staff member in the store. She demanded absolute secrecy about the incident and ordered the manager to permanently ban Willow and Martha from the premises.

Terrified of the Sinclair influence, the staff had no choice but to agree. But Susannah's rage wasn't entirely spent. On the ride back, she directed her venom at Julian. "Look at the kind of trash you brought into our lives! Absolutely classless, both of them! Screaming like feral animals in a high-end public space. The apple really doesn't fall far from the tree. Make sure she never shows her face in front of me again!"

Julian was just as furious. He hadn't expected Willow to pull a stunt like that. Furthermore, hadn't she claimed she was completely broke? Yet here she was, browsing in luxury boutiques. It seemed she was just a compulsive liar.

"She won't. She won't be around much longer."

He had meticulously severed every single lifeline she had in both her career and personal life. He refused to believe she wouldn't come crawling back to beg for his mercy soon.

Having finally gotten out of the hospital for a few hours, Martha wasn't eager to rush back. Mostly, she just wanted to spend a little more time with Willow. She asked to see where Willow was currently staying, having been told earlier that she was crashing at Jade's place.

As to why Willow was staying with a friend instead of going back to her childhood home, Martha didn't even need to ask. It was undoubtedly because of Benedict Horgan, her deadbeat, gambling-addicted husband. He had likely pawned off everything of value in the house, making it uninhabitable and emotionally draining. By silent, mutual agreement, neither woman mentioned his name.

Willow didn't object. They needed to eat lunch anyway, and cooking at the apartment felt infinitely safer than dining out.

As soon as they walked through the door, Martha spotted Cooper. Compared to the energetic, bouncy puppy from three years ago, he was a shell of his former self. When Willow first left for Seattle, Martha had thought about taking the dog in, but her grueling work schedule simply hadn't allowed for it.

Given her compromised immune system and high risk of infection, Martha couldn't risk holding him. She simply stood at a safe distance, watching him with a heavy heart.

They decided on something light for lunch. Martha absolutely insisted on cooking, claiming that Willow had been back in the city for weeks and hadn't had a single home-cooked meal from her yet.

Willow had tried to stop her from exerting herself but eventually caved to her stubbornness. She prepped all the ingredients beforehand, only letting Martha step in for the final, crucial steps of the cooking process.

After lunch, Willow escorted her back to the hospital. As they walked down the corridor toward her room, Willow spotted Martha's attending physician. She had planned to stop and ask him a few questions, but noticing he was on the phone, she decided against it.

Just as they brushed past each other, Willow caught snippets of his conversation. He was speaking in a low, deferential tone, softly mentioning the Seattle office.

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The doctor was indeed giving his report to the Seattle team.

Every few days, he provided Arthur Vance with a meticulous update on Martha's condition, and naturally, if Willow happened to visit, those details were included in the briefing as well.

He didn't understand the full picture, and he knew better than to ask. He simply followed orders.

However, today's report included a minor deviation from the usual medical stats. Someone else had come to visit them.

After hanging up, Arthur immediately relayed the information to Silas Thorne.

Silas was in the middle of signing a stack of documents. He didn't even look up. "Her husband?"

"No, the doctor mentioned it was a gentleman by the name of Hayes."

"Oh?" Silas's pen paused. He lifted his gaze to meet Arthur's.

His eyes were dark and predatory. Behind the lenses of his glasses, his gaze narrowed slightly, exuding an eerie, absolute calm.

Unable to read his boss's mind, Arthur opted for the direct approach. "Mr. Thorne, would you like me to run a background check on this Mr. Hayes?"

"No need," Silas finally replied after a long silence, his eyes returning to the paperwork. "Just ask her about the status of her resignation."

The 'her', of course, referred to Willow. Arthur wasted no time and immediately dialed her number.

Willow was deep into a newly published international journal on genetic engineering when the call came through. She was slightly surprised. "Mr. Vance."

"Ms. Horgan, I hope I'm not interrupting anything?"

"Not at all. Is there something you needed?"

"Nothing critical. I was just hoping to confirm the exact date of your departure from your current firm, so our team can finalize the preparations on our end."

"I have one week and three days left," Willow answered without missing a beat.

She had been counting down the days meticulously. But hearing Arthur ask made her a little anxious. "Has the project timeline moved up on your end? If I stick to my current notice period, will it cause any delays for you?"

"Not at all." The truth was, the project's timeline revolved entirely around her availability, but Arthur wasn't about to tell her that.

"I just wanted to make sure there wouldn't be any unexpected complications on your end."

"There won't be, I promise," Willow assured him firmly. "Everything is proceeding exactly by the book." Besides, Julian was probably counting the seconds until she was gone anyway.

"Excellent. We'll keep in touch."

"Sounds good."

After hanging up, Willow finished reading the rest of the research paper, packed her things, and headed straight to the gym.

Her gym sessions were becoming more frequent and far more intense. She was determined to regain her pre-marriage strength and stamina, wanting to step into her new life in the best physical and mental shape possible.

Occasionally, she would run into the young employee from her first visit. Since their brief confrontation, the girl had learned her lesson and kept her distance. When they did cross paths, they merely exchanged polite nods.

It was the perfect dynamic for two strangers.

Today, Willow changed into her workout gear as usual, but her luck had run out. She crossed paths with Vivienne and her clique.

Willow ignored them, but the group had a very visceral reaction to seeing her.

She had slimmed down considerably. The tight athletic wear no longer looked stretched; instead, it highlighted her stunning curves. Paired with her luminous, radiant complexion, she exuded an effortless, breathtaking elegance.

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The two lackeys flanking Vivienne couldn't help but whisper.

"How did she lose the weight so fast? We just saw her a little while ago, and she was a total heavyweight. How could she drop that much in just a few days?"

"Right? We've been coming here for over a year with zero results, and she pulls this off in a matter of days? It's freaky."

"Have you noticed how pretty she looks now? Especially her skin—it's practically glowing. I don't think I've ever seen skin that flawless in real life."

One of them accidentally let her honest thoughts slip. Her friend immediately pinched her arm, snapping her back to reality. Turning around, they saw Vivienne's face had darkened like a thundercloud. They instantly started backpedaling.

"She definitely took weight-loss pills, or maybe even got lipo. There's no physical way she could drop that much weight naturally in such a short time."

"Exactly. And no matter how much weight she loses, she'll never be in Vivienne's league."

But their frantic damage control did nothing to soothe Vivienne's bruised ego. Her expression only grew uglier. She knew the truth: Willow was getting thinner and undeniably more beautiful. If these girls noticed it, it was only a matter of time before Julian noticed it, too.

Fuelled by insecurity, Vivienne purposely stepped forward, blocking Willow's path.

Willow stared at her with icy indifference. "Move."

"Move?" The girl who had just misspoken immediately jumped in front of Vivienne, glaring fiercely at Willow to prove her loyalty. "Who the hell do you think you're talking to? Do you own this hallway? You think people just move because you tell them to?"

Willow couldn't be bothered to engage. She simply turned, intending to take another route, but the girl chased after her. "What's with the attitude? Didn't you hear us? Don't think dropping a few pounds is going to make Mr. Sinclair look your way. You better give up that delusion right now. I'll have you know, Mr. Sinclair likes capable, stunning women like Vivienne, not a useless loser like you!"

"Yeah, so what if you're skinny now? You're still just an empty-headed bimbo."

Willow let her gaze sweep over them with cold amusement. "If that's the case, why are you all wasting your breath on me?"

Her eyes drifted past the lackeys and landed squarely on Vivienne. "What's the matter? Are you scared?"

Honestly, Willow couldn't fathom what Vivienne had to be afraid of. She was pregnant with Julian's child and had the public completely fooled with her 'perfect goddess' persona. By all accounts, she had already won.

But looking into Vivienne's eyes, Willow could read the undeniable panic lurking beneath the surface.

Struck a little too close to home, Vivienne's face flushed with nervous anger. "What kind of garbage are you spouting? What do I have to be scared of? Julian's heart belongs entirely to me. What exactly do you have to fight me with?"

Willow had zero intention of fighting for anything. Her only desire was to sever all ties with them. She let out a dry laugh. "You'd better keep a very close eye on him then."

With that, she pushed past them and walked away.

Staring at Willow's retreating back, the anger and dread twisting in Vivienne's gut continued to swell.

Although she had run into the last people she wanted to see, Willow didn't let it ruin her mood. Not only did she complete her usual routine, but she also added a few extra sets of cardio.

However, when she finally returned to the locker room to change, she was stopped dead in her tracks by the sight before her.

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Her locker had been pried open. All her clothes and belongings had been violently yanked out, tossed haphazardly across the dirty floor, and drenched in some sticky, unidentified liquid.

Standing just a few feet away were Vivienne and her clique, watching Willow with smug, gloating smiles. It didn't take a genius to figure out who was behind it.

"Pick them up, and wash them clean." Willow's voice was dangerously calm.

"Why should we? How do you know we did it? Got any proof?" The lackey standing next to Vivienne sneered, looking utterly unbothered. "You have zero witnesses and there are no cameras in here. On what grounds are you accusing us? You'd better watch your mouth, or we'll sue you for defamation!"

"No witnesses. No cameras." Willow repeated their words coolly. Then, she began walking slowly toward them.

The group faltered, suddenly intimidated by the sheer intensity radiating from her. Panic flashed in their eyes. "What... what do you think you're doing?"

"Doing?" Willow locked eyes with them. "Giving you a taste of your own medicine."

In a flash, Willow moved. She grabbed their gym bags, dumped their pristine clothes onto the floor, and methodically poured half-empty sports drinks and protein shakes all over them.

The girls completely lost their minds. They were the ones used to terrorizing others; no one had ever dared to retaliate against them like this.

"Are you out of your mind?!"

"You fucking psycho!"

"Who the hell gave you the nerve to do this?!"

When people lose their composure, their vocabulary usually devolves into the same pathetic, repetitive insults.

Willow tuned out the screaming, calmly packing up the rest of her ruined belongings to leave. When dealing with bullies, striking back was the only language they understood. Otherwise, they'd never grasp just how vile their actions truly were.

Throughout the entire chaotic exchange, Vivienne hadn't lifted a finger. Instead, she had retreated to a corner, furiously typing on her phone. But just as Willow finished packing and turned to leave, Vivienne suddenly lunged forward, blocking the exit.

She didn't say a word. She just stood there, constantly glancing toward the door as if waiting for a cue.

Willow had absolutely no patience for her theatrics. She reached out, preparing to shove her aside, when Vivienne suddenly clutched her own cheek, stumbling backward with a dramatic shriek. "Why did you hit me?!"

"What kind of act is this?" Willow snapped, annoyed. "I didn't even touch—"

Before she could finish her sentence, a figure exploded from the hallway and charged straight at Vivienne. The sheer force of the collision knocked Willow completely off balance. She slammed hard into the floor, a sharp spike of pain shooting up her wrist as she tried to catch herself.

Scrambling to her feet, Willow realized the human battering ram was Julian. He was now holding a whimpering Vivienne against his chest, glaring at Willow with a look of pure, venomous hatred.

It was the same tired trick. Willow already knew exactly how this script was going to play out.

She couldn't even be bothered to defend herself. Ignoring Julian completely, she grabbed her bag and turned toward the door.

Julian's furious voice echoed through the room. "Stop right there! You think you can assault someone and just walk away?"

Willow was profoundly exhausted by the drama, but seeing that he was physically blocking her exit, she forced herself to state the facts one last time. "I didn't touch her."

Julian scoffed coldly. "You expect me to believe that? I saw it with my own eyes."

"Yeah, we all saw it! You slapped Vivienne!" the lackeys chimed in, eager to fuel the fire. "You have to pay for this!"

Willow stared blankly at the pathetic theatrical display in front of her. Between the incident at the boutique that morning and this orchestrated circus, the rage boiling in her chest reached a tipping point. She realized there was absolutely no reason to hold back anymore.

"Well, since you insist..."

She closed the distance between them. Soon, she was mere inches away from Vivienne. Thinking Willow was finally caving in to apologize, Vivienne lifted her head from Julian's chest, a triumphant smirk playing on her lips.

Then, the crisp, explosive crack of a slap echoed through the room.

It was swift, merciless, and brutally clean.

"You..." Vivienne was so stunned by the blow that she couldn't form a coherent sentence.

Julian found his voice first. "Willow, have you lost your damn mind?"

Willow just looked at them with icy indifference. "Didn't you just accuse me of hitting her? If my memory serves me right, that makes twice you've tried this setup. Since you're so obsessed with framing me, I figured I might as well make it real. It'd be a shame to take the blame for something I didn't even do."

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Julian wasn't listening to a word she said. "You will apologize to Vivienne right now and beg for her forgiveness. If you don't, I swear to God you will regret it. You'll never set foot in Sinclair Group again."

The lackeys instantly jumped in to back him up. "What's the matter, scared now? If Mr. Sinclair fires you, your career at the firm is over!"

"If you're scared, then grovel! Beg Vivienne to forgive you, and maybe Mr. Sinclair will do her a favor and let you keep your pathetic job. Because with your complete lack of talent, you'd never find another job if Sinclair Group dumps you!"

Hearing their threats, Willow actually wanted to laugh. She couldn't wrap her head around how Julian thought this was still leverage over her.

If she didn't know for a fact that she had already handed in her resignation and received his official approval, she might have actually been intimidated by his overbearing display.

"You don't need to fire me. I've already—"

Before she could finish, something slammed hard into her legs, followed instantly by a flurry of vicious kicks and punches.

Willow looked down to see Toby. He had charged out of nowhere, swinging wildly as he screamed, "Die, you bad woman! I won't let you bully my mommy!"

The little boy was putting his entire body weight into the assault. While he was just a child, the sheer force behind his kicks genuinely hurt.

Willow grabbed him by the collar, pulling him back, fully intending to give him a harsh lesson in manners. But before she could speak, Vivienne—who had just been playing the frail, injured victim in Julian's arms—lunged forward. She snatched Toby away and hugged him protectively, looking at Willow with exaggerated horror. "Wasn't hitting me enough? Now you're attacking a child?"

Julian immediately stepped in to comfort her. "Don't worry. I'm right here. She wouldn't dare touch either of you."

He shot Willow a look of absolute disgust. "I am not going to repeat myself. Apologize."

Willow would rather die than apologize to them.

But she was outnumbered, and she needed a solid way to shut this down and leave.

Just as she was calculating her next move, her phone pinged with a message notification. Willow unlocked the screen and saw a new friend request. The moment she accepted it, the person sent over a video file.

In the video, Vivienne and her two friends were clearly seen prying open Willow's locker, throwing her clothes onto the dirty floor, and pouring sports drinks all over them.

Every single vicious movement had been captured in perfect high definition.

Having watched the footage, Willow turned the screen toward the group. "Take a good look. Let's see who's really doing things they're afraid of people finding out about, and who actually owes an apology."

Seeing the video, Vivienne and her friends froze in pure terror. Their arrogant, vicious demeanor evaporated instantly, and they snapped their mouths shut, too afraid to utter a single word.

Julian frowned deeply, remaining completely silent throughout the revelation.

Willow coldly observed their panicked reactions. This time, when she turned to leave, no one dared to block her path.

As she made her way down the hallway, she crossed paths with a young girl walking in the opposite direction—the gym employee from earlier.

As their shoulders brushed, Willow murmured a quiet, "Thank you."

The girl kept her eyes forward and whispered back, "You're welcome."

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in Julian's car was suffocatingly tense. The video weighed heavily on Vivienne's mind, and she spent the entire ride anxiously stealing glances at his unreadable expression.

Realizing he had no intention of speaking to her, she leaned weakly against his shoulder and played her trump card. "Julian... I feel dizzy."

Julian gave her a brief look before replying flatly, "Just hold on a little longer. We're almost home."

Seizing the opening, Vivienne immediately started shifting the blame. "I honestly had no idea they were going to trash her locker. My friends acted completely on their own, but... I guess I should have stopped them. That's my fault."

"If it was their mistake, it has nothing to do with you," Julian replied, his voice devoid of warmth. "But you really need to be more careful about who you choose to associate with."

"You're right, I will," Vivienne said softly, lowering her head and gingerly touching her stinging cheek. "But... what are you going to do about Willow?"

Julian wasn't blind to her implications. "Don't worry. I don't go back on my word. Between being forced back to Seattle and being fired in disgrace, I'm sure she'll figure out exactly which option to pick."

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Willow wouldn't be picking either option. From now on, the trajectory of her life was hers alone to decide.

With only one week and three days left on her notice period, factoring out the weekends, it came down to exactly eight working days.

She was going to walk out the front doors of Sinclair Group with her head held high and her conscience completely clear.

On Monday, Willow arrived at the office on time as usual. Stripped of all her active responsibilities, she spent the majority of her day pouring over academic journals and conducting independent research.

Usually, her mere presence in the office was enough to draw a barrage of thinly veiled insults and sarcastic remarks. But today, the atmosphere was different. When her coworkers looked at her, they didn't sneer—they stared. Their eyes raked up and down her figure repeatedly before they finally looked away.

It was undeniable. They had all noticed her dramatic weight loss. And as much as they hated to admit it, the new Willow was breathtaking. She had transformed into a certified, undeniable knockout.

"Seriously, how did she drop the weight that fast? Do you think she secretly got lipo? There's no other way to lose that much mass overnight."

"Duh. It's either lipo or Ozempic. Definitely some kind of medical cheat code. Think about how lazy she used to be when she was a heavyweight. There's no way she pulled off a transformation like this through hard work. If Ms. Sinclair did it, I'd believe it, because she's disciplined. But Willow? Not a chance."

"Do you guys know why she suddenly decided to get thin? I heard she's desperate to get Mr. Sinclair's attention. Since her career here is totally dead, she thought she could use her body to win him back. But she's totally delusional. With a goddess like Ms. Sinclair around, why would Mr. Sinclair ever give her a second look?"

"Exactly. Oh, speaking of which, did you guys hear she pissed Mr. Sinclair off again this weekend? Word is he completely lost his temper and is getting ready to fire her."

"Good. The sooner she's gone, the better. Having to see her depressing face every morning is a total buzzkill."

Despite their vicious gossip, they couldn't stop themselves from stealing envious glances in her direction.

How was her skin so flawlessly luminous?

How did she manage to lose all that weight but still keep those stunning curves?

Even her hair looked incredibly sleek and glossy.

But they comforted themselves with the thought that no matter how good she looked, she was still a talentless loser who was probably going to be fired by the end of the week.

Willow was completely oblivious to their mental gymnastics, and even if she had known, she wouldn't have cared. She was entirely absorbed in a newly published international paper on genetic engineering. The authors had proposed several groundbreaking theories that perfectly aligned with her own private research.

Deep in thought, the shrill ring of her desk phone broke her concentration. Willow picked it up. It was Vivienne's assistant, demanding she come to Vivienne's office immediately.

At this point, Willow had zero desire to be in a room alone with Vivienne. Who knew what kind of trap she was setting up this time? It wasn't that Willow was afraid, but it was tedious and exhausting. Avoiding unnecessary drama was the smartest play.

She rejected the demand outright. "I'm not going."

The assistant instantly flared up. "You're not coming? Do you have any idea how important Ms. Sinclair is to this firm? People line up just for a minute of her time. The fact that she's asking for you is a privilege!"

"I said, I'm not going," Willow repeated flatly. "I wasn't aware of a company policy stating that I have to drop everything the second she snaps her fingers. She is not my direct supervisor, and we have zero overlap in our actual work. I have no obligation to be there."

With that, Willow hung up the phone.

Eight days left. She was done swallowing their disrespect.

When the assistant relayed Willow's response word-for-word, Vivienne nearly flipped her desk in a fit of rage. Since when did Willow have the audacity to disrespect her?

Truth be told, Vivienne hadn't wanted to meet with Willow either. As far as she was concerned, she held all the cards. Julian had already promised to fire her, and even if that fell through, he was going to force her back to Seattle.

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All she had to do was sit back and wait for the good news.

Unfortunately, she had hit a massive, humiliating roadblock.

She couldn't understand a single thing about the project files Willow had handed over to her. Whether it was the intricate data analytics or the advanced project management algorithms, she was completely and utterly lost!

Originally, Vivienne had arrogantly assumed that whatever someone with Willow's background could handle, she could master effortlessly. But after actually diving into the material, Vivienne realized Willow had integrated some kind of cutting-edge methodology. No matter how many times Vivienne read through the documents, the concepts went right over her head.

If she couldn't understand it, she couldn't execute it. And if she couldn't execute it, the entire multi-million dollar project would grind to a halt.

But there was absolutely no way she could ask Julian for help. Doing so would be a direct admission of her own incompetence, shattering the facade she had so carefully constructed for him.

"Director Sinclair, what should we do now?" her assistant pressed, oblivious to the panic spiraling in her boss's head.

With nowhere else to direct her frustration, Vivienne exploded. "Stop nagging me! What is wrong with you? If you can't even get one person to walk into an office, what exactly am I paying you for?"

The assistant shrank back, terrified. "Should... should I try calling her again?"

"Forget it. If calling worked, she'd already be here," Vivienne snapped, slamming her laptop shut. "I'll go get her myself."

By the time she stepped out of her office and entered the main floor, Vivienne had seamlessly slipped her gentle, approachable mask back into place.

She had her assistant organize a round of premium coffees and pastries for the floor—making sure, of course, to conspicuously include a serving for Willow.

Willow kept her eyes glued to her monitor. She didn't spare them a single glance, entirely indifferent to whatever performance they were putting on.

Unable to handle being ignored, Vivienne finally broke the silence. "Willow, do you have a minute? I really need to talk to you about something."

"I'm busy," Willow rejected her without hesitation.

"It's regarding the project,". Vivienne pressed, refusing to give up.

"I am no longer responsible for that project. You have nothing to discuss with me," Willow replied, her tone remaining ice-cold.

Hearing this, Vivienne was practically vibrating with rage. Before she could retaliate, her loyal lackeys stepped in, glaring fiercely at Willow. "Who the hell do you think you are? Director Sinclair came all the way out here to speak to you personally, and you're giving her attitude? Have you forgotten your place?"

"Exactly. You're the one who was running this project before. God only knows how many messes you left behind for Director Sinclair to clean up. Now that things are falling apart, you just want to wash your hands of it? Keep dreaming."

Vivienne gently held them back, playing the benevolent peacemaker. "It's okay, let it go. Why don't you guys head back to your desks for a minute? I just want to have a quiet word with Willow."

Hearing their cue, the crowd dispersed, though not without shooting Willow several venomous glares over their shoulders.

The second they were alone, Vivienne dropped the sweet act. Her face twisted into a haughty sneer. "We both know exactly how much blood, sweat, and tears you poured into this project. I don't need to spell it out for you. If you don't want to watch your life's work turn into garbage, you'd better march into my office right now."

Willow turned her head, her gaze freezing over. It seemed she had still overestimated Vivienne's moral bottom line.

She couldn't care less about the petty insults the cronies had hurled at her, but Vivienne's final threat hit a nerve. It forced her to pause and calculate the stakes.

The project was still in its absolute infancy. There were countless variables and massive hidden risks. One wrong move, and the entire thing could implode.

And if it went down, it wouldn't just be her effort erased. It would destroy the hard work of Leo Yardley, her entire former technical team, and betray their dedicated clients in Seattle...

Vivienne caught the subtle shift in Willow's expression and smiled triumphantly. "I'll be waiting in my office."

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

Chapter 90

After a moment of consideration, Willow finally decided to pay a visit to Vivienne's office.

Upon arriving, she cut straight to the chase. "What is it?"

Instead of stating the issue directly, Vivienne beat around the bush and harshly criticized all of Willow's projects from top to bottom.

From project initiation and biotech investments to the final implementation phases, she picked everything apart, raising a barrage of complaints.

But as Willow listened, none of Vivienne's critiques hit on anything crucial. It was all just empty, irrelevant nitpicking.

So, she spoke up bluntly. "You're the project lead now. If you have ideas, you can pitch them directly to the project team. If everyone discusses it and finds no issues, they can implement things your way."

Willow only suggested this because she knew the project team too well. She knew for a fact they would never agree to Vivienne's absurd suggestions.

"You think I wouldn't dare?" Vivienne glared at her, fuming. On her very first day taking over the projects, she had already brought these issues up with the team.

She just hadn't expected Leo's crew to give her absolutely zero respect. Not only did they reject her ideas, but they also flat-out told her that her suggestions lacked any practical value and wouldn't help the project's core progress at all.

She had been so infuriated she could hardly breathe, but she was entirely powerless against them. If she started firing legacy employees the moment she took over, it would completely ruin the gentle, approachable image she was trying to build.

"Then go right ahead and try," Willow said. Her tone was completely indifferent, perfectly matching her demeanor.

Vivienne scoffed. "You don't honestly think everyone is like me, right? Graduating from a top-tier Ivy League university, mentored by world-class masters? Most of them are narrow-minded nobodies like you who haven't even stepped foot outside the country. You expect me to discuss these high-level concepts with them? Would they even understand?"

Willow despised hearing her degrade other people. "Knowledge knows no borders, and information isn't restricted by geography. If you truly have the capability, I refuse to believe that in a company as massive as Sinclair Group, you can't find a single person who understands you."

Vivienne caught the sarcasm. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Willow couldn't be bothered to entertain her any longer. "Did you call me here just to say all this? If so, I think I'll be leaving."

"Wait, don't go just yet." A rare flash of panic crossed Vivienne's face. She had gone through so much trouble to get her here. If Willow left, who was she supposed to ask about all those damn complicated project issues?

To avoid letting Willow realize she was completely out of her depth, Vivienne had played it smart. She had written the questions down in advance, pretending they were from her confused assistant.

"Look at this. Just these."

A long, rambling list of questions filled the computer screen. After scanning them, Willow found it downright laughable. These questions couldn't even be described as amateur; they were the ramblings of a complete outsider.

Not only did they show zero comprehension of the genetic experimental data, but they also lacked the most basic project management logic. It was clearly the work of someone with zero professional experience.

"Are you absolutely sure your assistant came up with these?"

Vivienne, assuming Willow was the one who didn't understand, smiled smugly. "Of course. Why? Do you find them incredibly difficult? Are you completely at a loss on how to solve them? If that's the case, you don't need to be embarrassed. After all, my assistant has been with me for a couple of years now. She's highly capable and very experienced. It's completely normal for an average person to struggle with her inquiries. If you really don't get it..."

Unable to tolerate it a second longer, Willow cut her off. "If everything you just said is true, I highly suggest you fire her."