

Chapter 9

I settled on a color that I thought would complement my complexion. It was a pretty emerald green tone.

I pulled the jacket out and held it up against myself.

"Are you serious?" Amanda asked with a scoff. "If you want to blend in with the wallpaper, I guess that'll work. You want something that'll have people talking."

I didn't, but I wasn't going to tell her that. If I started acting completely differently too quickly, it would make people suspicious, especially David and Amanda. For the time being, I had to play along.

"This is why I need your help," I said as I put the jacket over my arm and grabbed a matching skirt in my size. "I'll keep this as a backup."

"You're not going to need it," Amanda said. She turned and looked around the store slowly with her hands on her hips. After looking for a moment, she gasped with excitement and rushed off toward the corner.

I followed after her slowly.

I could vaguely remember an outfit she had picked out for me around this time in our original timeline, and it was hideous. I had a bad feeling that I was about to see that dress again.

My sense of dread was correct. A moment later, Amanda was holding a neon pink strapless dress with a flowing skirt and flowers embroidered on the bodice with sparkly gemstones. She waved it at me with a huge grin on her face.

"This is perfect for you," she said.

"It looks like your style," David agreed. I hadn't even realized that he had walked up behind me until he spoke.

I could tell David hated my style, but he was trying to flatter me. I used to think it was because he loved me, but actually it was because he needed to stay on my good side.

I could feel myself struggling to smile. "Are you sure?" I asked.

"Just try it on and you'll see," Amanda said, shoving the dress into my arms.

This isn't the kind of thing I ever would have argued with her about in the past, so I took the dress into the fitting room.

I tried it on, and it was even worse than I remembered. Then I tried the suit on; it complimented my build well and it made me look a little bit older.

I would just buy both—it was a simple solution.

I walked out with the suit, and I could see Amanda disappointed that I didn't step out of the fitting room wearing the dress, but I pretended not to notice.

She was having a very disappointing day, and it seemed it was starting to wear on her. After all, so little of the attention had been solely on her; even David's attention had mostly been focused on me since I met up with them. It must have been driving her crazy.

As I approached the checkout, Amanda grabbed me by the elbow. "Are you really buying that suit?" she demanded.

I carefully pulled away from her grip and set the small pile of clothing next to the register. "I like it," I said simply. "And I'm sure I'll have a

reason to wear it."

"If this is just a whim, don't you think it's a bit wasteful?" she asked in a loud voice. 1

I could see the people around us turn to stare, and I understood immediately what Amanda was trying to do. She was attempting to make me seem like someone who squandered resources and couldn't manage my money. She wanted people to judge me negatively.

David was playing right along with her. He let out a long sigh and reached for his wallet. "It's fine," he said. "My treat."

Here he was, coming into play as the doting fiancé who always went out of his way for his spoiled girlfriend.

The employee had walked up to the register. When she saw David reaching into his wallet, she had a puzzled look on her face. "That won't be necessary," she said.

"What do you mean?" David asked, frowning.

"Don't you know? All purchases for the Rowan family are covered today."

"What?" David asked in shock.

"Why?" my mother asked as she walked up beside me.

"Alpha Alexander left messages with all of the stores this morning," the employee explained. "Whatever you need will be covered as a gift for the bride-to-be."