

My CEO Ex: Let Me Go. Chapter 10 - Chapter 10

Alex's POV

The meeting ended, and I leaned back in my chair, massaging my temples as a wave of exhaustion washed over me. Just as I was about to organize some documents, my phone rang unexpectedly.

I picked it up and glanced at the screen before answering, "Hello?"

It was Isabella's voice on the other end. "Alexander, are you at the office? I'm coming over to see you."

I glanced at the clock on my desk, confused. "Did the shoot end early today?"

"There wasn't any shoot today," Isabella hesitated, her voice laced with uncertainty, as if she were struggling to say something.

"No shoot? Why?" I frowned, unease creeping in. When I left earlier, I'd noticed Vivienne's office was locked, which clearly meant she had left. Vivienne was always present during a brand endorsement shoot, so why was there no shoot today?

"When we arrived at the studio, Vivienne suddenly told us there was an urgent matter, and the shoot was canceled. She left right after, and we don't know what happened," Isabella explained, her voice still soft but tinged with dissatisfaction.

"There must have been an emergency," I said, trying to reassure her. "Since there's no shoot, come over to the office to see me." I trusted Vivienne's work ethic and found it hard to believe she would cancel a shoot without a valid reason.

On the other end, Isabella gave a short, cold laugh, though her tone remained gentle. "Guess it must have been something urgent. By the way, Alexander, there's something I want to ask you."

"What is it?"

"For this shoot, I'd like to bring my own makeup artist. I've been abroad recently, and since coming back, my skin hasn't been in great shape. I'm worried the local makeup artists won't understand my skin properly and might not get the look I want. My makeup artist knows my skin the best and will do a much better job," Isabella said, her voice tinged with frustration.

I didn't think much of it at first and brushed it off. "You need to report something like that to me?"

"This isn't a small matter," she replied. "Every detail, no matter how small, should be communicated. The sincerity of our collaboration matters most, Alexander. I care about this endorsement, and I want to make sure everything goes smoothly. If I don't tell you in advance, someone might say I'm being difficult."

"You're right," I said, nodding, though I didn't dwell on it.

Isabella was meticulous about reporting even the smallest things, while Vivienne hadn't notified me in advance about the shoot cancellation. The difference between the two was obvious. But I trusted Vivienne's judgment completely. Over the past three years, I'd hardly interfered with V&R's development, giving her full autonomy. Whatever happened today didn't seem like something I needed to address immediately.

Vivienne's POV

The next day, Isabella and her team arrived on time, just as expected. The setup from yesterday's shoot hadn't been cleared, and once Isabella finished her makeup and got into her outfit, she was ready to begin.

But then, another issue came up.

"Director Vivienne, you should check the makeup room," the assistant hurried over, her voice tinged with nervousness.

"What's going on?" I asked, looking up.

"Miss Blackwood brought her own makeup artist, and it seems they had a disagreement with Miss Sophie about the makeup and styling," the assistant explained quickly.

I put the magazine down and headed toward the makeup room.

As soon as I entered, Sophie stormed out, visibly upset. "Vivienne, you're just in time. Miss Blackwood brought her own makeup artist, and the look is a disaster. You need to see it for yourself!"

I stepped inside, and Eliza smiled at me as she greeted me. "Director Vivienne, let me introduce you. This is Isabella's makeup artist, Miss Mira. You've probably heard of her; she's the official makeup artist for international beauty pageants."

Sophie rolled her eyes from the corner, clearly displeased with the situation.

"Hello," Mira greeted me politely.

"Hi, Miss Mira," I nodded, then turned to Eliza. "I understand Miss Blackwood prefers to work with her own makeup artist, but why wasn't the makeup and styling done according to our agreed plan?"

Eliza quickly reassured me, "Director Vivienne, please don't be upset. Miss Mira said the style and makeup you provided weren't suitable for Isabella. She thinks her designs would match your outfits better."

Before I could respond, Sophie couldn't hold back any longer and cut in, "Eliza, this isn't about what matches! Miss Mira's styling and makeup don't fit today's shoot theme at all! How are we supposed to get the right look for the endorsement ad?"

Eliza laughed lightly. "Miss Sophie, you're being a bit dramatic. Endorsement ads are all about fan influence these days. Everyone knows Isabella's fanbase, and as long as she looks good, her fans will follow. How much could the styling really matter?"

Sophie opened her mouth to argue further, but I spoke first, cutting her off. I turned to Eliza and said, "Eliza, I hope you understand that what matters here isn't which makeup style fits better, but the relationship between our teams! According to the contract, Miss Blackwood is supposed to cooperate with us during the endorsement shoot. You changed the makeup and styling without consulting us first."

Just then, Isabella spoke up, "Vivienne, I'm so sorry, I forgot to let you know. Actually, I talked to Alexander yesterday, and he already approved this change."

I froze.

My lips moved, but my throat went dry, as if I had swallowed sand. In that moment, all the reasoning and arguments I'd just made suddenly felt insignificant, as if I were a fool, overly emotional for no reason.

It turned out that Alexander had already agreed.

I suddenly found it utterly ridiculous.

For Isabella, Alexander kept interfering in V&R's affairs.

For Isabella, he kept disrupting my carefully planned projects, only to leave me to clean up the mess.

The marketing plan I had prepared was ready to be executed smoothly, but because he unilaterally changed the brand ambassador, it was rendered useless. He didn't even acknowledge the effort I had put into maintaining the current situation.

He only cared about how to please Isabella.

As for whether that would complicate things further, well, that was my problem.

How could he possibly care?

Sophie was in disbelief when she heard this. "CEO Hawthorne agreed? Why would he care about something so trivial?"

Isabella smiled. "Miss Sophie, you know this is just a small thing, which is why Alexander told me to handle it."

Sophie couldn't help but respond, "Miss Blackwood, when I say 'small thing,' I'm comparing it to CEO Hawthorne. Makeup and styling are crucial for a shoot, and I hope you understand that. I'm just questioning why CEO Hawthorne would involve himself in this matter."

Eliza chimed in, "So you're saying Isabella is lying? Director Vivienne, if you don't believe us, you can always call CEO Hawthorne for confirmation. This decision came straight from him. We'll follow through with the plan, and the rest is up to you. If you can't handle it, we'll terminate the contract. Isabella isn't exactly lacking in brand endorsements."

Isabella stood quietly off to the side.

Sophie was so furious she could barely speak.

Once outside the makeup room, she slammed her palm against her other hand. "After all these years in makeup, working with so many stars, this is the first time I've dealt with someone so shameless. If she didn't need this endorsement, why take it from Lena Ashford? She's trying to have it all—acting like a saint while playing dirty behind the scenes. It's disgusting!"

Sophie Lancaster was a well-known makeup artist in the industry, having worked with countless celebrities.

Last year, after a popular TV drama made its male lead famous, the female lead's popularity also soared. Though her looks were often deemed average, after shooting a session with Sophie, she became an overnight sensation.

Ariana, who had been quietly observing, spoke up to comfort Sophie, "Don't let it get to you. We need to think about how to move forward. If she insists on keeping this makeup, we might have to change the shoot entirely."

Sophie turned to me, asking, "Vivienne, what are you going to do about this?"

"Go to the lounge and wait for me. I'll make a call and we can discuss it when I get back."

"Alright, I'll wait."

I walked to a quieter part of the studio, pulled out my phone, and dialed Alexander's number.

The call connected quickly.

Alexander's steady voice came through the receiver. "Hello?"

"It's me, Vivienne."

"What's going on?"

"CEO Hawthorne, did you approve of Miss Blackwood bringing her own makeup artist and stylist?"

There was a brief pause before Alexander replied, "Hmm. What's the issue?"

"I've confirmed everything for today's shoot—the makeup artist, photographer, props team—and her makeup doesn't match at all. She refuses to change it and is threatening to terminate the cooperation, which could affect the endorsement's outcome."

After I spoke, there was silence on the other end.

I clung to a shred of hope, wishing he might reconsider the decision about Isabella's makeup.

Before Isabella came back, I had always thought of Alexander as someone serious, rational, and meticulous with his work.

Just like when I made mistakes at the company, he never spared me or showed me any leniency.

When I first joined, he publicly criticized me in front of everyone during a meeting. I lost all my dignity and barely stood there.

But ever since Isabella returned, everything seemed to have changed.

It turned out Alexander could also be biased in work matters—and the person he favored wasn't me, but Isabella Blackwood.

This time, though, my disappointment had reached its peak.

On the other end of the line, Alexander's tone became cold. "Is there a misunderstanding here?"

I didn't respond immediately, and Alexander pressed on, "Isabella isn't that kind of person. What would she gain by terminating the cooperation?"

I sighed. "There's no misunderstanding. I've spoken to them, and they're not budging."

Alexander didn't answer right away. Instead, he asked, "I haven't asked you yet—why wasn't yesterday's shoot carried out as planned? Why wasn't Isabella informed?"

At that moment, I was left speechless.

Alexander didn't trust me.

"Hm?" He seemed to think my silence meant I was guilty. "Vivienne, I'm very disappointed in you. Yesterday, Isabella didn't say a single bad word about you, even defended you. And what about you?"

Each of his words felt like a knife stabbing deep into my heart.

I felt cold all over, my body trembling.

I gripped the phone tightly, my fingers shaking uncontrollably. My breath quickened, and my mind went blank.

My mouth tasted bitter, and tears seemed to be swelling in my eyes, but they wouldn't fall.

I felt like a deserter, not wanting to hear another word from Alexander.

In a panic, I slammed my finger on the hang-up button.

"Pa—"

The phone slipped from my hand and hit the ground.