Swapping a Broken Heart for a New Start

Chapter 16

“I was delivering some files upstairs this morning, and the secretary on the top floor said she’s the CEO’s new flame. Maybe she’ll be our boss’s wife soon...”

“...”

Camila Davis listened to the gossip swirling around her, unsurprised. Sandra Taylor had barely been here a day, and already Jordan Smith and Lucas Smith were bending over backwards to make her feel welcome.

Camila couldn’t blame people for speculating. Honestly, it wouldn’t shock her if those rumors came true.

She didn’t feel like jumping into the conversation. She waited for the chatter to die down, then finally spoke, “Sorry, guys. Looks like I won’t be working alongside you anymore. From now on, you’ll be reporting to the new manager. Do your best, and maybe we’ll cross paths again someday.”

The group, who had been deep in their gossip just seconds prior, immediately went silent at her words.

Nancy James, the assistant director, stepped forward and grabbed Camila’s arm. “Camila, you’re way too talented to be anyone’s second-in-command. If the lab won’t keep you, at least let us give you a proper send-off before you go. Dinner tonight, all of us together, okay?”

“Yeah, Camila, you’re honestly the best boss I’ve ever had. Please say yes—I’ll really miss you!”

“We don’t know when we’ll get to see you again, so let’s have one last get-together tonight, alright?”

Camila honestly had zero appetite.

But her coworkers kept pleading, and a few even looked like they were about to tear up...

Her heart wasn’t made of stone.

How could she say no to that kind of kindness?

In the end, she gave them a small smile. “Alright, let’s have one last dinner together. A farewell meal, then.”

That evening, at Ember & Vine's private room.

After making sure Lillian was settled, Camila arrived right on time.

By the time she got there, her team had already gathered.

As soon as she walked in, everyone lit up. "Camila! You made it! Come sit over here—we saved you a seat!"

She nodded and sat down in the spot they indicated.

But then she noticed that two seats to her left were still empty.

Camila glanced around the table, then asked, puzzled, "Is someone else coming?"

The mood shifted instantly—everyone froze, their faces awkward.

Just then, the door swung open.

And in walked... Jordan Smith and Sandra Taylor.

Camila blinked, caught completely off guard. Before she could react, Sandra was already beaming at everyone. "Looks like we're all here! Hope we didn't keep you waiting!"

Sandra's gaze landed right on Camila as she added, "Oh, Camila, you came, too? I thought you'd skip out on my welcome party! I'm so glad you could make it!"

Jordan, meanwhile, just shot Camila a cool glance, his face unreadable.

Camila felt her stomach drop.

Sandra's welcome party?

Wasn't this supposed to be her own farewell?

She glanced around at her colleagues; nobody would meet her eyes, everyone suddenly fascinated by their breadsticks or the pattern of the tablecloth.

Trying to keep her voice steady, Camila leaned toward Nancy James and whispered, "Can you please tell me what's going on? Why is she here? Was this send-off... just a lie?"

Nancy immediately dropped her voice, looking guilty. "No, Camila, it's not like that. We had no idea things would turn out this way..."