

Chapter 107

NOAH

I drew back the sleeve of my shirt to check the time, almost tearing the fabric in the process. Was it only five minutes I had been waiting in this damned reception area? It felt more like twenty. And what the hell was the mayor still doing in there anyway? Didn't his secretary communicate to him how urgent my business with him was?

I shook back my sleeve. Sitting was not an option. I could not have managed it even if I tried. With every second I spent here, my building remained under threat of demolition. I couldn't trust that Amelia bitch not to bring the whole place down even before the twenty-four hours were up. The mayor would help me. I knew he would. When Amelia's stupid decisions were questioned, that would take her down a peg or two. I resumed pacing. I had not taken more than a couple of steps when I heard my name.

"Mr Allen, the mayor will see you now."

About time! I nearly growled at the secretary. With a curt nod in her direction, I marched into the mayor's office. I found him pushing around some papers on his desk.

"Ah. Noah," he said. "Please take a seat."

"I have a problem. You have to help me," I said at once.

His brow furrowed. "A problem? What is the nature of this problem?" He glanced again at the unoccupied chair in front of him. "The seat, Noah, if you please."

I dropped into the chair, but perched on the very edge of it. "I received a call from the manager of one of my branch office at the Milkirk Avenue. I got there and found that Amelia was going to demolish the place in twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours, mayor! Who gives anyone that ridiculous time frame to vacate not a house, but an entire building? A large one for that matter? She claimed my company was in the path of the land she had mapped out for her amusement park project and that it had to go down. I told her the very idea was ridiculous, of course, but she insisted." I placed my hands on the table, and leaned forward. "You have to help me stop this madness, because madness is what it is. My company cannot be demolished. Please instruct Amelia to find another suitable location for her... project. I can't stand to see all I have worked for destroyed because of a woman who knows nothing about business or projects."

The mayor sighed, and shook his head slowly from side to side. "I commiserate with you on your plight, Noah, but I'm afraid that there is nothing I can do in this particular situation. If it was something I could help you with, I would. But it isn't. So..."

I gaped, not sure I had heard correctly. Had he just said there was nothing he could do? "There has to be something you can do. Amelia is just... Amelia. You are the mayor of this city."

"That I am, but even a mayor has his limitations."

"I- I don't understand. Surely, if you give Amelia an order, she will be forced to obey."

"The execution of this yearly project is bigger than the office of the mayor. There are other parties involved in this so I cannot simply do as I please. Remember that I am an elected official too so my power is not absolute. I would have thought that you of all people knew how this thing worked, seeing as you have won this award for more times than I can count. In previous years, when you were in charge of other projects, remember that you were given absolute liberty to demolish any building of your choice which you thought was in the way of development. No one stopped or questioned your decisions."

"That is different," I protested. "Completely different."

He raised one greying brow. "It is? How so?"

I opened my mouth to explain how, but I could not think of anything to say. Yet. All I knew was that it was complete madness for anyone to even think of bringing down my building, especially when there were other sites where stretches of her damned amusement park could be built.

"My company can't be demolished," I insisted. "There has to be something that can be done. You can't just expect me to sit back and watch what I have worked for get destroyed, do you?"

"Again, I'm sorry but what you must understand is that Amelia wields all the power here. I will advise you though. Talk with her. Plead with her to leave your building standing and site her project somewhere else. There is no way you'll be able to stop her by ranting or demanding for help. She might listen to you if you calmly talk to her."

Just the thought of begging Amelia for a favour set my blood boiling. Begging her was an aberration and I wouldn't, couldn't do it. "I won't plead with her. Even if I did, she would never listen to me because she is bent on punishing me for some perceived wrong. She is using the platform of executing the project to carry out a personal vendetta on me. Don't you see what I'm saying? She's just a bitter ex wife who has finally seen a way to get back at me."

The mayor shrugged. "Well, that is your problem, not mine. In my opinion, I still stand by asking you to settle whatever issues you have with her. I have given all the advice I can give."

One look at the mayor's face and I knew it was completely pointless appealing to him. I felt disappointment, like lead in my stomach. I shot to my feet and without another word stormed out of his office.

I had not taken more than a few steps towards the door when he stopped me.

"One more piece of advice before you go, Noah," he said. "Pray that Amelia doesn't intend to destroy every structure you own because the truth is if that is her intention, she will be able to do it. This may just be the tip of the iceberg for her and I'm sure you don't want to lose everything to your 'bitter ex wife.' Do you?"

"Wouldn't you be able to stop her? It will be complete madness if she comes after me. Don't you have any power to stop her as a mayor?" I asked through gritted teeth.

"That will be highly unlikely, Noah, especially when it has to do with anything concerning this project. Like it or not, Amelia has become one of the most powerful women in this city. Do everything to be in her good books. I am trying too because I do not want to get in the way of such a woman. She wields grace and strength."

AMELIA

I stirred the food in the pot, then tasted it. It was perfect. I covered it up and left it to boil. Damian knocked and pocketed his phone. He sniffed the air appreciatively.

"Dinner smells really nice," he said.

"Thank you. It will be ready soon."

"You have outdone yourself again. You are a good cook, you know. A good baker too. Ever thought of expanding your business... your bakery, I mean?"

"I have. In fact, I plan on doing that very soon. I have just been looking for a suitable location so I will kickstart the process."

"A location? That is not a problem at all. I will keep an eye out for a good location which I am sure I will find in no time and then whenever you are ready, I will help you with whatever amount you need for the expansion. How's that?"

I grinned. "Thank you but I can handle the expansion myself. I have been saving a lot of money from the bakery and the mall. The money I have put by will be enough to handle the expansion. I'm sure."

I saw the pride in Damian's eyes as he looked at me.

"You mean you were able to save that amount of money within this short period of time?"

"Yes, I did. The mall and bakery have been churning out huge profits."

"Don't be so modest, Amelia. Even though you have been making a lot of sales and profits, it takes a lot of discipline to save so much money in so little time. I must say, I am impressed, Amelia. Very impressed. You are a natural at business."

I beamed at his compliment. It was good to know that I was doing something right, and that someone so successful in the business world thought so too.

"Thank you," I said.

He pushed back from the kitchen counter, approached me with a lopsided grin on his face and a teasing light in his eyes.

"A simple 'thank you' won't do," he murmured. "How about giving me a kiss instead. Huh?"

He enfolded me in his arms, and pulled me to him. As he brought his lips to mine, the oddest thing happened. Out of nowhere, bile rose in my throat and I had the overwhelming urge to throw up.

"Amelia, what's wrong?" he said.

I could not answer. Making gagging noises, I clapped my hand to my mouth and began to struggle to break free of Damian's arms. Eventually, he let go and just in time too. I felt the puke making its way past my mouth.

I ran from the kitchen to the nearest bathroom, praying that I would make it before making a mess on the floor. I wrenched the door open, bent over the sink and threw up.