

NEVER MISTAKE A QUEEN FOR A LAPDOG

Yes-man 9

Victor Chase couldn't help a touch of envy as he listened to her. "Mr. Harcourt is a lucky man, having someone as talented as Secretary Gilmore *on* his team. No wonder his business is thriving."

"You flatter me, Mr. Chase. If anything, I admire you more—building your company from the ground up is no small feat."

They were exchanging the kind of pleasantries people always tossed around at these dinners, but Noreen's words still managed to put Victor in a thoroughly good mood.

"I always enjoy working with you, Secretary Gilmore. You have a way of making negotiations feel so pleasant. Here, let me raise a glass to you."

"Your doctor told you to stay away from alcohol," Noreen replied with a smile. "Let me drink this one for you. I'll finish it—you do as you please."

Victor genuinely liked people who were straightforward, and Noreen's easygoing manner only made him appreciate her more.

As soon as she downed the glass, he leaned in, lowering his voice in concern. "Don't push yourself too hard. This project? I'm only signing with you. Doesn't matter who else comes knocking."

"Thank you, Mr. Chase." Noreen poured him another drink herself.

Victor suddenly noticed a pallor creeping over her features. "Are you unwell, Secretary Gilmore? You don't look so good."

"I'm fine, really."

"Let me call my driver to take you to the hospital, just in case."

Noreen was about to reassure him when a knock sounded at the door.

A waiter entered. "Mr. Chase, Mr. Harcourt heard you were dining here and asked me to bring you this wine."

Victor glanced at the bottle in the waiter's hands.

Romanée–Conti. Impressive.

But what puzzled him more was, if Seth was here at the Grand Oak, why wasn't he

with Noreen?

Before Victor could ask, Seth arrived–Bianca on his arm.

11:56 M

"Mr. Chase, do you like the wine?" Seth's gaze slid past Noreen as he greeted Victor. He wore only a crisp white shirt, tailored perfectly to his lean frame, making him look both refined and unapproachably elegant.

As for his jacket...

It was draped over Bianca's shoulders, a gesture of intimacy that left nothing to the imagination.

The irony wasn't lost on Noreen–she was the one who'd picked out that jacket for

Seth.

"A thoughtful gift from Mr. Harcourt–how could I not appreciate it? And this is...?" Victor's eyes landed on Bianca, instantly sizing up the situation.

A man giving his jacket to another woman–no further explanation needed.

Victor glanced at Noreen, almost reflexively.

She seemed composed enough, but her face was even paler than before.

“Let me introduce you,” Seth said smoothly. “This is Bianca Lowell, Director of Investment Division III at Aurelion Group. Bianca, this is Victor Chase, from Valiant Capital Group—an old friend of ours.”

Bianca stepped forward, extending her hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Chase. I look forward to working together.”

“The pleasure’s mine, Ms. Lowell.”

Valiant Capital and Aurelion Group had partnered on several projects, so Victor was well aware of the company’s inner workings.

Division III had only been established within the past year, and the director’s seat – had remained conspicuously vacant—everyone assumed it was reserved for

Noreen.

After all, she’d been managing Division III’s projects all this time, juggling two jobs and propelling the division to the top of Aurelion Group’s rankings within a year. No one could deny she’d gone above and beyond.

No one expected, though, that after all her hard work, someone else would step in to reap the rewards.

Even Victor, an outsider, couldn’t help but feel a pang of sympathy for her.

“By the way, Mr. Chase,” Seth continued, “from now on, Ms. Lowell will be your main

11:56

contact for the joint project between Aurelion Group and Valiant Capital. I brought her over to introduce you two.”

Victor frowned, unable to hide his surprise. “But I’ve always coordinated with Secretary Gilmore. This sudden change...”

Seth shrugged, unbothered. “Noreen is just a secretary. Mr. Lowell was away, so she temporarily handled the project. Now that the director is back, it’s only right the responsibility returns to her.”

He added, as if to reassure Victor, “Don’t worry—Bianca holds a PhD in Finance from Meritania WT Business School and has worked at some of the world’s top banks. I personally recruited her for Aurelion Group. Her expertise is second to none.”

Victor’s real concern wasn’t about Bianca’s qualifications. He just couldn’t help feeling sorry for Noreen.