

Chapter Eleven

When Mr. Orlando, Blake, and Rome arrived at Mr. Jeffrey's office, his secretary gazed away from the computer and stared at them with an unbothered expression.

“Mr. Jeffrey is busy. So expect you have an appointment, you guys should come another time.” He said, placing his focus back on the keyboard.

Anger settled on Mr. Orlando's face, but when he gazed at Rome calm expression, he knew not to act without an order for his young master, so he kept silent.

“Hi, I know we don't have an appointment with Mr. Jeffrey, but I have something urgent to tell him. So can you inform him that Lady Catherine's husband is here to see him?” Rome said with a half-smile.

“Seriously, I'm not going to repeat myself. So you guys should leave.” The secretary said, typing aggressively on the keyboard without staring at Rome.

A soft sigh escaped Rome's lips as he gazed at Mr. Orlando and slightly nodded his head.

“Excuse me, Tell Mr. Jeffrey that Mr. Orlando is here to see him.” Mr. Orlando said with a frown.

The secretary immediately stopped typing and gazed wide-eyed at him with a shaky smile on his lips.

“Mr. Ford's right-hand man is you?” He asked, hastily standing from his seat.

Then he slightly bowed and said, “I am sorry, Mr. Orlando. This is my first time meeting you. I'm sorry for my ignorance.”

A look of disbelief crossed Blake's face a

As he slightly shook his head, pitying the secretary for his arrogance and ignorance.

“Inform your boss about our presence.” Mr. Orlando said with a frown.

“Yes, sir. Please wait a moment.” The secretary said.

Then he hastily sat down, picked up the phone, and made a call.

Mr. Jeffrey's gaze swayed away from his documents and focused on his phone. Then he sighed and answered the call.

“What is it, Lucas?” Mr. Jeffrey asked, twirling his pen.

“Sir, Miss Catherine's husband is here to see you,” Lucas mumbled, staring at Mr. Orlando's angry eyes.

“How bold of him! He's just a worthless nobody. Does he think his presence will sway my decision and give his wife the

project? Hah, what a joker. Send him home!”

“But sir, he's with Mr. Orlando.”

“Mr. Who! Why didn't you say that sooner? Let them in now!”

A bright smile surfaced on Lucas's lips as he set the phone down and stared at Mr. Orlando.

“Please go in. My boss is expecting you guys.” He said, widening his smile.

But his smile quickly faded when he saw the cold stare Rome gave him as he walked past the desk.

“Hah, Mr. Orlando! How lovely it is to see you! Please sit down.” Mr. Jeffrey said, clapping his hands together.

Ignoring his remark, Mr. Orlando remained standing and ushered Rome to a couch.

‘What’s going on? Why is Mr. Ford's

right-hand man paying respect to this loser?’ Mr. Jeffrey thought, staring at Rome as he sat down.

When their eyes met, he smirked and said, “Hello, Mr. Jeffrey. This is our first time meeting, so let me introduce myself. I'm Rome, Rome Ford.”

“Yo-u a-re wh-o...? Mr. Ford's son? I thought you went missing years ago?” Mr. Jeffrey said, wiping his palm on his trouser to dry the sweat.

“I'm back. But I'm not here to play catch up. I came on behalf of my wife.”

“Right! Yes, Lady Catherine. Haha, she's a very talented woman. T-he project! Hahaha, what I said last night, those words were out of anger, I didn't mean it. She can have the project.”

Staring at the shaky smile on Mr. Jeffrey's face, Rome sat down and rested back on the couch, rubbing his index finger against his lip.

“I don't want you to give my wife the project because of me, I need you to give it to her because she worked hard for that contract and got cheated out of it,” Rome stated, sounding a bit agitated.

“Cheated?” Mr. Jeffrey dumbfoundedly mumbling.

Silence fell in the room, and Blake suddenly dropped to his knees. He then looked at Rome for a moment, before gazing at Mr. Jeffrey.

“I am Miss Catherine's secretary. The one you spoke to yesterday. I lied to you about everything. Lady Catherine did not go on a date with her husband, instead, she was at hotel Oscar waiting for you!” Blake shouted, resting his palm against his thighs.

“What?” Mr. Jeffrey mumbled in dismay.

“I gave lady Catherine the wrong address, so she wouldn't get the contract. It was all Miss Chloe's idea. She paid me to do it. I need the money for my mother's hospital bills.”

“How could you do such a thing to your boss for money! You made me get angry at Miss Catherine for your self-gain! Shameless!”

A look of annoyance settled on Rome's. Then he narrowed his eyes and mumbled, “hypocrite,”

“Did you say something, Sir?” Mr. Jeffrey humbly asked, staring at Rome.

“I have said everything that I wanted to say. I should be taking my leave.”

“So soon? You know my son came from out of the country the other day, and he brought some great wine! Please let me pull you a glass.”

The sudden change in Mr. Jeffrey's behavior wasn't strange to Rome, and he didn't wish to keep such deceitful company around him.

So with a straight face, he stood from the couch and said, "I will pass. I hope you make a sound decision, Mr. Jeffrey."

"Haha, I understand. Now that I know Lady Catherine was tricked, it's only fair that she gets the project." Mr. Jeffrey said, extending his hand out towards Rome.

But he ignored it and walked past Mr. Jeffrey, heading for the door.

"My young master doesn't want his identity out. Except if you want to be an enemy to the Ford family, I advise that what you have learned today should remain a secret." Mr. Orlando said, staring at Mr. Jeffrey, then at Blake.

"My lips are sealed!" Both of them said i

n unison.

When the office door opened, Lucas hurried to his feet as he watched Mr. Jeffrey, Rome, Mr. Orlando, and Blake walked out.

When Rome and the others walked up to him, and his icy gaze met with Lucas's stare, he looked at Mr. Jeffrey and said, "Your secretary is an eyesore."

"I will have him fired right away!" Mr. Jeffrey hastily said, bowing slightly.

Within a split second, Lucas's expression revealed nothing but shock.

A minute after Rome, Blake, and Mr. Orlando had left, he recovered from his state of shock and stared at Mr. Jeffrey.

"Sir, what wrong have I done to get fired?" Lucas cried.

"You looked down on the wrong person. Now clear your desk and leave."

Mr. Jeffrey replied.

Then he turned around and headed into his office.

The moment he sat down behind his desk, his phone started ringing, so he picked it up from the desk and answered the call.

“Mr. Jeffrey, I am glad you answered.” Chloe's voice echoed into his ears as he leaned back in his chair.

“What is it, miss Barlow?” Mr. Jeffrey mumbled with a frown.

“I know my cousin messed up, but that shouldn't stop you from doing business with our company. That's why I want us to meet and discuss the project.”

“There's no need for that, Miss Chloe. Lady Catherine seems like the perfect person to handle this project.”

“But... I...,”

“Goodbye,”

The limousine stopped in front of a tiny house, and Rome's gaze swayed from the windshield and focused on Blake.

"Thank you for the ride. I should get going. My mom will be waiting on me." He said, hanging his head low.

“You know what to do, right?” Rome said with calmness in his eyes.

“Yes, boss. I won't let you down!”

"Good. See you later."



Gazing up at Rome, Blake nodded his hand. Then he pushed the car door open and got out.

“Can we trust him?” Mr. Orlando asked, gazing at Rome through the V-mirror.

“We can,” Rome mumbled, turning his focus from the house and placed back o

n the windshield.

 **Comments**

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Chapter Twelve

The evening at the Barlow mansion was calm, but there was so much tension around the table as the family sat down for dinner.

“Grandpa,” Catherine said, barely able to contain her excitement.

“What is so important that you can't wait for dinner to be over? Can't you see that father is eating?” Dana, Chloe's mother said, glaring at Catherine.

Gazing at Dana and her daughter, Rome faintly smiled when he saw the rage in their expression.

It was clear to him that Mr. Jeffrey had turned Chloe down and given the contract back to his wife.

“I just wanted to tell grandfather that Mr. Jeffrey came to my office today, and we signed the contract for the five

million dollars projects,” Catherine mumbled, sighing softly.

The fork fell from Mr. Barlow's hand and he gazed at his granddaughter, smiling with his eyes.

“But how? He sounded so mad yesterday when he called me.” Mr. Barlow mumbled.

“I guess it's because I have been calling him all morning and when he finally answered my call, he offered to bring the papers over to my office so we could sign it,” Catherine said, beaming at her grandfather.

“Good for you! That's amazing. My granddaughter is truly hardworking.”

“Thanks, grandpa.”

Suddenly, Madam Rosey stared away from her plate, focused on Catherine, and said, “I'm proud of you.”

Everyone other than Rome, Catherine, Mr. Balow, and Madam Rosey were deeply unhappy about the news, and even though they tried to hide the fact that they were, none of them could bring themselves to smile.

“My wife is amazing,” Rome mumbled, smiling brightly at Catherine, and she couldn't help but blush as she gazed into his eyes.

Silence settled in the room for a moment, then Chloe banged her spoon on the table and said, “Cousin, are you sure that you didn't use some dirty trick to change Mr. Jeffrey's mind?”

“What are you saying?” Catherine asked, giving her cousin a cold stare.

“How can a man change his mind in a split second just because a woman called him countless times?”

“What are you getting at?”

It got quiet, and Chloe noticed everyone's gaze on her. Then she saw her mother slightly shaking her head.

“Slandering your cousin's name! Are you trying to bring shame to this family!” Mr. Barlow shouted, banging his hand on the table.

“Father, please forgive her. She's just a child.” Elijah said, eyeing his daughter from across the table.

“She's your child, so teach her some manners!”

“I will, father!”

The look of disappointment she got from her parents caused Chloe to burn with rage.

Then she suddenly burst into tears and said, “When I called to schedule a meeting with Mr. Jeffrey, he said Catherine already asked him to a bar for

them to discuss the contract. That's why I assumed such a thing!”

Hearing those words caused Rome's heart to pump with rage as he watched Chloe cry her eyes out. Then he softly sighed to relieve himself of the tension he felt.

“Catherine, is that true?” Madam Rosey asked, frowning at her granddaughter.

“What? No! I didn't meet Mr. Jeffrey at a bar. He came to my office, and all we did was sign the contract then he left.”

“Your cousin won't be this upset if it wasn't true.”

The words in Catherine's head seemed to have deserted her as she stared at her uncles and their wife's judgmental faces.

Then she became speechless when she noticed her grandmother scowling at

her and her grandfather didn't utter a word.

“My wife is not that kind of woman!” Rome said, unable to contain his anger any longer.

“Then why did Mr. Jeffrey gave her the contract the next day after he denied her the project because of her negligence,” Chloe shouted, sobbing loudly.

Suddenly, Blake walked into the dining room, then his eyes focused on Rome for a second before his gaze rested on Chloe's shocked expression, and she then suddenly stopped sobbing.

“I visited Mr. Jeffrey this morning and told him the truth. That's why he gave Lady Catherine the contract back.” Blake said.

“What are you talking about?” Catherine asked with a look of confusion on her face.

“I gave you the wrong address on purpose. It was because Miss Chloe asked me to.”

“What?”

Noise arose around the table, and it took a while for everyone to settle down.

“How dare you throw accusations at my daughter!” Elijah yelled, standing from his chair in a state of rage. ¹

“Why can't he if it's the truth! You and your daughter can slander my child's name, but she can't be accused of something she did!” Catherine's father shouted, tightening his fists.

It grew noisy again with arguments between Dana and Catherine's mother and Elijah and Catherine's father.

However, Andrew and William keep their silence along with their family.

Finally, Mr. Barlow banged his hands o

n the table and it grew quiet.

“Young man, what proof do you have concerning your accusation?” He asked, coldly staring at Blake.

“I record all my calls,” Blake said, taking his phone out of his pocket.

Fear took over Chloe's expression as she stared at her grandfather and softly cried, “Grandpa.”

But Mr. Barlow ignored her, stared at Blake, and said, “Play the recording, young man.”

With trembling hands, Blake hit play, and it grew awfully silent as everyone listened attentively.

After a few minutes, the recording came to an end and the silence dragged on for a while.

Then Mr. Barlow stared at Blake and said, “Bring me the phone.”

In hesitation, Blake gazed at Rome, and when he slightly nodded, Blake approached Mr. Barlow and handed the phone over to him. Then he watched as he dropped the phone in the wine glass.

“The truth is out, so you don't need this. Also, starting from tomorrow, you don't work for the company. You can stop by to get your salary and the money for Your phone. Now get out!” Mr. Barlow coldly said.

A look of confusion crossed Blake's face as he stared at Rome, then at Catherine before he lefted the dining room.

“Grandpa, I only did that because you gave the project to Catherine and not me! I am always the one cleaning up her mess and yet you give her such a good opportunity.” Chloe said, tearing up again.

“Who knows if you are the reason that I keep on messing up,” Catherine

mumbled beneath her breath.

Those words caused another commotion to stir up again.

“Do not put your past failure on my daughter just because she made this one bad decision,” Dana said, scowling at Catherine.

“If she's capable of making this bad decision, then she is also capable of committing past ones.” Catherine's mother lashed out.

Within a matter of second, another argument aroused, and the dining room became extremely noisy with everyone throwing their opinions across the table.

The argument lasted for a while, then Mr. Barlow banged the table twice before it could become quiet again.

Then he gazed at everyone's faces and said, “Chloe, even if you were mad,

sabotaging your cousin's work is very wrong, and your behavior will not go unpunished.

‘Punish? I have never been punished by my grandfather before.’ Chloe thought, glaring at Catherine.

“You are laid off from work for two months and during that time, you wouldn't get paid. Also, your black card will be confiscated.” ¹

“What, grandfather? Please, no. I'm sorry!”

“My word is final!”

No one spoke at the table afterward, but the tension was still in the atmosphere.

After dinner was over, Rome left the dining room and headed upstairs, leaving Catherine and her family downstairs.

Once he was in their bedroom, he shut

the door behind him and made a call.

“Young master, Blake's mother's hospital bill has been paid for and she will be prep for surgery tomorrow.” Mr. Orlando's voice flowed out of the phone speakers.

“Good,” Rome said.

The moment he ended the call, Catherine walked into the room, and when her eyes met with his, she smiled.

Without taking his sight of her, Rome reached into his pocket and pulled out a chain with a tiny heart locket.

“What's that?” Catherine mumbled, beaming at him. ¹

“I got my first payment today from my part-time job, and I thought to get you something,” Rome said, holding her hand and putting the necklace onto her palm.

Her eyes lit up as she stared at it and said, “I love it. How much did it cost you?”

“Two hundred thousand dollars,” Rome mumbled, knowing that she wasn't going to believe him even though it was the truth and the little stones in the heart locket were actual diamonds.

With a look of disbelief on Catherine's face, she stared at him, he softly chuckled and said, “I am just kidding. It was twenty bucks. You don't mind that it's not expensive?”

“Not at all. It's the thought that counts.” Catherine said, giving Rome a peck kiss on his cheek.

Then she turned around, and he helped her to put the necklace around her neck.

‘Don't worry. I will definitely make all of them pay for their sins.’ Rome

thought when Catherine faced him, and he gazed at the locket resting on her chest. ¹

 Comments

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Chapter thirteen

Two months went by naturally and during that time, Rome had watched Catherine's cousins avoid her, treating her like an outsider just as their parents did to her.

But she found a new friendship with him, and both of them became a bit closer than before.

Although they were far from acting like a married couple, she felt a bit at ease around him and that was more than he could ask for. ¹

That morning when Rome rolled over in bed, his hand touched Catherine's arm, and he slowly raised his eyelids and stared at her.

‘I can't believe we've been sleeping in the same bed for a week now. All thanks to that cold I caught last week.’ Rome

thought, staring at her long lashes.

Suddenly, Catherine's eyes opened, and they stared at each other for a while. Then she got out of bed without saying a word to him.

“Good morning, wife,” Rome shouted, staring at her back.

Without replying, Catherine rushed into the bathroom and slammed the door shut.

“She's cute when she blushes,” Rome mumbled, pushing the blanket off him.

Suddenly, the bedroom door opened and Chloe marched in, glaring at Rome.

“Where's Catherine?” She said, rolling her eyes at him.

“In the bathroom,” Rome said, gazing away from her.

Both of them waited awkwardly for a while, then Catherine came out of the

bathroom, and a frown surface on her face when she saw her cousin.

“What do you want?” Catherine asked, letting out a harsh breath.

“Grandpa called for a meeting in his study,” Chloe said with a frown.

Then she walked out of the room and slammed the door shut.

“I wondered what it could be about?” Catherine mumbled, gazing at Rome with worry in her eyes.

However, those were his exact thoughts too.

The past months have been going so well, but Rome knew that that didn't mean the storm was over yet.

He had his best men watching Charles, Chloe, Jeff, and Richard's every move, and the fact that they had done nothing wrong had only made Rome more

suspicious of them.

“I should go and see what the meeting is about,” Catherine said, staring at Rome.

He nodded his head, but she didn't move or take her sight of him.

“Do you want me to tag along?” Rome mumbled, noticing the stress in her expression.

For someone who had lived with the Barlow family for months and had seen their awful ways, he knew Catherine was afraid to walk into that room because she is constantly looked down upon more often than the other cousins.

“It's okay. They might just find a reason to humiliate you.” Catherine said with worry still beaming in her eyes.

“I'm going to support my wife, so I don't care what they say about me?”

Rome said, smiling at Catherine.

But she rolled her eyes at him, yet she couldn't help but faintly smile back.

“Fine. But don't say or do anything. My cousins are like bloodthirsty sharks waiting for the right time to strike. Give them an opportunity and they will use it to their advantage.” Catherine mumbled.

“Okay, I won't,” Rome replied.

A few minutes later, both of them arrived in the study room and it seemed like the entire family was already there.

“You successfully managed a project, and now you think you are above others, making everyone wait on you,” Dana mumbled, glaring at Catherine and Rome.

“Why are you late? Didn't your cousin call for you a while ago?” Mr. Barlow said with a frown.

Staring at her grandfather, Catherine softly exhaled and said, “She did. I'm sorry, grandpa. It won't happen again.”

But Mr. Barlow ignored her apology and gazed away from her.

“Are you two not going to sit down, or you guys are waiting for some special treatment. Also, why did you bring your worthless man with you, he got nothing to offer to this meeting.” Elijah said, scowling at Rome.

“I beg her to tag along because I want to learn,” Rome mumbled without meeting Elijah's eyes.

No one spoke for a while as Rome and Catherine took their seat on the couch.

“Well, now that everyone is here. Chloe, your punishment has been lifted. You can return to work.” Mr. Barlow said, clearing his throat.

“Thank you, grandfather. I promise that I have learned my lesson.” Chloe said, staring at Charles, Jeff, and Richard, but they all avoided her gaze.

Although the four of them worked together, they weren't afraid to take each other down because the only thing they all cared about was being the top inheritor of the family wealth.

“There are four huge accounts available. I heard, MC group, Roadland INC, Skylight company, and the Fine wine industry are looking for a company to manage their projects.” Mr. Barlow said with a straight face.

The Barlow family is well known for gaining their wealth from their company, “DreamTeam Serviceable” which delivers projects for their customers, and it is about running projects as their business.

“Skylight company? I am friends with

the chairman's son. I can handle getting the account.” Charles said.

“Roadland INC and I have worked together before and the CEO was satisfied with my work, so I can take over getting the account,” Jeff said, eyeing Charles's cold gaze.

The tension in the study intensifies within a matter of seconds.

“I can get the MC group's account if grandfather would allow me,” Catherine mumbled, avoiding staring at her family's faces.

“Haha, do you think MC group is a small corporation like Greenfield company? Just because you manage to handle such a small project, doesn't mean that you are ready for a incorporation like MC.” Elijah said, staring at his father.

It fell silent for a minute, then Mr. Barlow stared at his wife, cleared his

throat, and said, “Catherine, you can sit this want out. Chloe will have the MC group, and Richard will handle the Fine wine industry.”

“But, grandfather.” Catherine cried, holding in her tears.

This was not the first time she had got overlooked and belittled and it was frustrating her, and when Rome gazed at her, he could see hurt in her eyes, and it enraged him.

“How can you be so selfish? You had just worked on a project and your cousin had to stay home for two months. Do you know how depressed she was? Can you feel pity towards your cousin?” Dana said, scowling at Catherine.

“It was not my daughter's fault that your child had to stay home for such a long time, so why does she have to feel pity towards her?” Catherine’s mother

mumbled.

A frown settled on Mr. Barlow's face. Then he scowled at both women and gazed at Catherine's father.

“Edward, your wife seems to be crossing the line. Get her in order!”

“Sorry, father. It won't happen again.” Catherine's father said, giving his wife an icy stare.

In the Company, Elijah had the highest accounts registered under him, and his connection in the business world is wild, compared to his oldest brother, Edward was nothing but a mere shadow of his brother's image.

“Mr. Ford will be having a party this weekend, and all the top-notch in the business circle are going to be there. We got invited, and it's a perfect opportunity for us to get those accounts.” Mr. Barlow said.

At that moment, Madame Rosey's gaze met Rome's unbothered eyes, and she scowled at him.

“Don't embarrass our family. We all know your history with Mr. Ford, so behave yourself when we get there.” Madame Rosey harshly said.

However, all Rome did was beam at her and nodded his head.

“Mother, he's just a fool with nothing to contribute to this family, so remind me why he's going again?” William said, faintly chuckling.

“The entire family got an invitation, including him, that's why. If not, he would have stayed home with the servants since there's no use in bringing him with us!” Madame Rosey said, rolling her eyes at Rome.

When Catherine gazed at Rome, she couldn't help but feel bad that she was

the reason he's getting scolded by her family.

“Grandma, Rome is trying to be better. He's been doing some part-time jobs these past months, and he's been making a few dollars.” Catherine softly said, staring at her wedding ring as she twisted it on her finger.

“Do you hear yourself, grandchild? The Barlow family son-in-law is a part-time worker? That's so disgraceful! Keep your husband in check at the party.” Madam Rosey said.

“Yes, grandmother.”

“Good! This family has had enough humiliation for you too.”

After the meeting was over, Rome went back to the room, and at that moment, his phone rang, and he answered the call.

“Young Master, your father wants to

have a brunch with you at the BlackStar golf courtyard.” Mr. Orlando’s voice echoed out of the phone speakers.

“What is this breakfast date about?” Rome asked, massaging the back of his neck.

Every interaction with the Barlow family had him feeling tense and excited at the same time.

“It's about your birthday party.”

“Okay. Pick me up at our usual meeting spot.”

 Comments

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Chapter fourteen

The taxi stopped at the old railway on lane street, and Rome got out of the car. Then he waited for the driver to drive off before he approached the black Land Rover Defender and got in.

“Good morning, young master.” Mr. Orlando said, gazing at Rome from the front seat.

“Morning,” Rome absentmindedly replied because his entire thought was on getting Catherine those accounts and figuring out a way to go about it.

The driver drove off, and a few minutes later, they made a stop at “Entourage Men Wear,” and Mr. Orlando and Rome headed into the building.

The clerk rushed over to them and slightly bowed. Then he raised his head and said, “Your father had already

made a call to us. Your outfit is in the VIP room. Please follow me, sir.”

“This is Jerry. He has been responsible for master wearing for a long time, including yours, when you were little.” Mr. Orlando said, staring at Rome.

“I can remember.” He replied, smiling at Jerry.

Then Rome followed him, and he led him into a luxury room in the back of the boutique.

After a few minutes had passed, Rome came out wearing a dapper grey suit with a black t-shirt, and designer shoes without socks.

“Why is that old man making me dress up?” Rome mumbled, staring at his reflection in the mirror in the corner of the room.

“I don't know, young master. But we should get going.” Mr. Orlando said,

gazing at his watch.

They said their goodbyes to Jerry, left the store, and got back into the car.

A few minutes later, Land Rover drove into the BlackStar's parking lot and Rome got out.

Then he followed Orlando into the building, and without speaking to the fellow at the counter, they marched directly into the VIP area and entered a room.

The moment Rome's gaze met with his father's eyes, he smiled, but all he got was an icy stare.

“You can leave the room.” Mr. Ford said, glaring at Mr. Orlando.

He slightly bowed and hurried out the door, shutting it close behind him.

“Son!” Mr. Ford said, beaming at Rome.

Feeling speechless, all he did was stare a

t his father's face with confusion in his eyes.

“Why have you abandoned your old man? I barely see you these days. Do I need to schedule a meeting before seeing my son?” Mr. Ford mumbled, frowning at Rome for a second.

“I am sorry, father. But I can't be seen with you just yet.” Rome said, taking a seat on the couch.

“Why, is it because of your wife's family and the way they treat you?”

“How did you know?”

“I'm Mr. Ford. There's no secret hidden from me in this country. Say the word and I can have the entire Barlow family crumbling to dust.”

Staring at his father's serious expression, Rome drew in a long breath, slowly exhaled, and said, “It will hurt her, and I don't want that. I

have my plans, and that doesn't include her losing everything, instead, it's about her gaining it all.”

“Do you love her that much?” Mr. Ford mumbled, stroking his beard.

“It's not about love. It's because she deserves it. After all, she's the only Barlow with an innocent soul and pure heart. Our first encounter made me understand that.”

“Wow, my son is so wise. You takes after your mother. She had a better judgment of people. Ahah, I miss her so much.”

“Me too.”

The two of them sat in silence for a while, then Rome huffed and said, “So, breakfast? I'm starving.”

“Do the Barlows not feed you? You sure you don't want me to destroy them!” Mr. Ford said, slamming his hand on the

table.

“Yes, I'm sure. I am only hungry because I was looking forward to having brunch with you, and I didn't want to be full when I arrived.”

“Really?”

“Yes, dad.”

After doubtfully staring at Rome, Mr. Ford tittered, and said, “I was looking forward to us having breakfast too. But this is not only a father and son brunch.”

“What do you mean?” Rome asked.

“I have a few guys that I want you to meet.”

“Father, I...”

“I know what you about to say, but all these guys owe me huge debts and are hungry to offer services for the new 2.5 billion resort that I'm planning on

building. So they are under my control.”

“Fine. Since that's the case. Let's meet your buddies.”

In excitement, Mr. Ford clapped his hands together and said, “Great, I can wait to rub the fact that I have an heir in the faces of those old geese!”

“Is this about you showing me off?”

“Since I can't celebrate your birthday openly and the party has a secret theme, I think it's only best that some top-notch know that I'm not just celebrating, but I'm celebrating my son.”

Standing from the couch, Rome faintly smiled at his father, and said, “Let's go then. We don't want to keep your guys waiting.”

A few minutes later, Mr. Ford and Rome arrived in a huge, fancy dinner hall and every eye focused on them.

All the twenty-five men around the table looked older and filthy rich.

“Hey, isn't this Lady Catherine worthless husband? Mr. Ford, why are you hanging out with such a loser? From what I heard, he's less than the servant in the Barlow household because of how useless he is.” One of them said.

“Robert, it seems like you a chattering bird who likes to spit out garbage. Well, I hope you can be able to explain to the media why your construction company suddenly lost millions of dollars investment.” Mr. Ford said with a frown.

“But... What did are do?”

“You can leave now. Also, I will be collecting my Fifty million dollars debt tomorrow. Your deadline had been up two months ago.”

When Rome gazed at Mr. Ford, pure anger was the only thing he saw in his eyes, and he finally understood what he meant to his father and why everyone fears him.

“B-ut Mr. Ford, you say that you were going to give me additional time to pay up the loan. You know how tight money is for my company right!” Robert cried, lifting his shoulder in a half shrug.

“Don't worry. After tomorrow, when your company becomes mine, money will not be its problem.” Mr. Ford coldly said, jamming his hands in his front pockets.

“Please, Mr. Ford. Give me other chance and I promise that I wouldn't be a chattering bird who spit garbage.”

“Now leave! My mind is already made up! Now get out, or you will get dragged out!”

The dinner hall became extremely quiet as everyone watched Robert walk out of the room with his head hung low.

When the door shut, Mr. Ford looked at the faces of everyone around the table and asked, “Does anyone have anything else to say about my son!”

A loud noise quickly aroused around the table, and the fact that the lost heir of the Ford family was the useless son-in-law of the Barlow family shocked everyone, and it took a while for them to come to terms with it.

“You found your son?” One of the men asked, gazing wide-eyed at Rome.

The sudden attention, he was getting from his father’s associates was a bit overwhelming because he could already tell from their expressions that they were ready to suck up to him.

“Yes. Actually, we found each other. But

he's not really to acknowledge me, so I hope his identity can remain in this room.” Mr. Ford said, maintaining eye contact with his associates.

None of them uttered a word, but he knew from their expression that their lips were sealed.

Then his gaze swayed away from them and stared at Rome, and he patted him on his back, pulling him closer.

“Let me introduce you to my colleagues.” Mr. Ford said, staring at the faces around the table.

As Rome listen to his father called out the names of the twenty-four men and their company, four particular names caught his attention.

“Bill, chairman of MC group, Elon, chairman of Roadland INC, Francis, chairman of Skylight company, and Benjamin, chairman of Fine wine industry.” Rome said out loud, staring a

t the faces of the four men.

Their attention got drawn to him as they waited on him to say something, but Rome maintained his silence. Yet he could see the curiosity in their expression.

“As you all know, I am hosting a party this weekend. But what I didn't state in the invitation is that it's my son's birthday.” Mr. Ford said.

It grew noisy again as everyone tried to congratulate Mr. Ford and offer their birthday greeting to Rome.

It took a while before total silence fell in the hall and everyone settled down.

“He might not be ready to openly take over my business, but as my heir, his words and judgment are mines, and anyone who messes with him will find fault with me.” Mr. Ford intoned.

Then he coldly gazed at everyone's

faces and said, “Now that that's said, let's feast!”

A few minutes later, the table was crowded with exquisite cuisine, and everyone focused on their foods.

After breakfast was over, they all indulged in conversations about business while sipping on the finest wines.

Then Bill, Elon, Francis, and Benjamin approached Rome with smiles on their faces.

“Hello, fellows.” He mumbled, adjusting the lapels of his coat.

“Well, you mentioned our names a while ago and we were wondering if there's anything you need of us,” Elon said, gazing at Bill, then Francis and Benjamin.

“I heard that you guys are interested in my father's new resort, and it is turned

out that my wife is interested in you guys' accounts. Am I making sense?" Rome intoned, casually staring at the four of them.

"Well, yes, we do understand what you are saying." Bill uttered, eyeing the others.

"But we need to know how you want us to go about it," Benjamin mumbled.

A smirk surfaced on Rome's lips. Then he threaded his hand through his hair, and said, "Stay put and wait on my order." ¹

 Comments

 Vote (15.0K) 

Chapter Fifteen

The weekend finally arrived, and it was Saturday.

A day such as this was a time for the Barlow cousins to relax and spend their dollars on clubbing, shopping, and other stuff.

But today, the four of them spend the morning in the old-fashioned chamber in the east wing, wallowing in depression as they sat on the couch.

“So, have any of you landed the account yet?” Chloe said, staring at her cousins and hoping for a negative response from them.

The four of them had kept speech from each other as they worked all week to land the accounts.

“Well, no. The people in 'Fine wine industry wouldn't even talk to me about

the account. It's like it doesn't exist.”
Richard said, letting out a harsh breath.

“The same thing happened to me. The CEO of Road land INC refused to see me on several occasions.” Jeff said with a frown.

“Seriously?”

“Yeah, I had to stalk him for days. When I finally got the chance to talk to him, he blew me off and said that he was busy.”

Surprise, then disbelief, crossed their features as they stared at each other.

Then Chloe gazed at Charles and slyly said, “I am sure you got the Skylight company's account because you and Leo are best buddies.”

“Well, no. He said that his father told him to let the account be and that he will decide on who to give the account to.” Charles mumbled, tightening his

hand into fist.

For a moment she stared at him in disbelief, and then her eyes flared with renewed anger.

“It's the same for me. No one from the MC group would tell me anything about the account.” Chloe said, running her hand through her hair.

They sat in silence for a while deep in their thoughts.

Then Charles unclenched his fists, and he gave a mirthless laugh and stated, “We still have tonight. Remember, all the top-notch individuals will be there, and among those people, the Chairmans of MC group, Roadland INC, Skylight company, and Fine wine industry will be there.”

“Right. Tonight we get those accounts by any means necessary.” Jeff said, gazing at his cousins.

Suddenly anger and fear crossed Chloe's face as she stared at the other and softly intoned, "If grandfather has to make our father get those accounts, we will all be looked down upon, and that would be the worst thing that can happen to any of us."

"It's not the worst thing that can happen, but Catherine getting those accounts is." Richard absentmindedly mumbled.

Silence settled in the atmosphere for a while, then the four of them burst into laughter.

"Yeah, right. Like she can." Chloe mumbled, inspecting her fingernails.

"If she can, I will go bald," Charles said with a smirk.

"I want to see you hairless, but I know that Catherine can't get those accounts," Jeff mumbled with a hint of

sadness in his voice.

After a brief moment of silence, Chloe stood from the couch and smoothed down her skirt. Then she smiled and said, “Well, I have plans to make.

Excuse me.”

Raising their eyebrows in disbelief, the three of them watched as Chloe walked out of the room.

Then Richard turned to Charles and asked, “What do you think her plans are?”

But Charles ignored his question, got up from his seat, and left the chamber.

“Knowing Chloe, whatever her plans are, it is going to be trouble,” Jeff said, standing from the couch.

Then he briefly gazed at his cousin before walking away.

“I guess we are all not on speaking

terms again,” Richard mumbled.

As Rome laid in bed, staring at Catherine's reflection in the mirror, the sadness he saw in her eyes, ache his heart a bit.

Since both of them woke up, he had caught her sulking several times, and each time she looked sadder.

“Are you going to brush your hair?”
Rome mumbled, sitting up.

Softly exhaling, Catherine rested her chin on her palm, eyeing the brush from the corner of her eyes.

“I don't feel like it.” She mumbled, letting out another sigh.

A yawn escaped Rome's lips as he got out of bed. Then he picked up the brush and gently ran it through Catherine's hair.

“Talk to me, wife? What's bothering

you?” Rome mumbled, taking a huge lock of her hair in his hand and brushing through it.

“Well, I want to prove to my grandfather and grandmother that I can get at least one of those accounts,” Catherine mumbled, staring at Rome's reflection.

“Okay, then get it. If you are confident enough that you can get those accounts, then go for it.”

“But grandpa said...”

“Forget what he said. What do you want?”

Hesitation clouded Catherine's expression then she took in a deep breath, slowly exhaled, and said with confidence, “I want to sign the contracts for all four of those accounts.”

“Ambitious, that's my wife! Go for it! Tonight, walk up to those chairmen and

page your proposal to them.” Rome said with excitement in his eyes.

“Should I?”

“You should!”

The daylight faded naturally, and at nine o'clock, everyone in the Barlow household was dressed for the party.

When they grabbed in the living room at nine-fifteen, Madam Rosey glared at Rome and said, “Stay away from Mr. Ford and don't talk to anyone at the party because everyone there is out of your league. So make yourself invisible if you have to.” ¹

But the only response she got from Rome was a faint smile and no words.

However, her mind was too occupied to remark on his behavior, so she scowled at him and they all left the mansion.

Then at nine-thirty-five, their cars

drove out of the fence, and at ten o'clock, they arrived at the Paradise Hotel.

Catherine's Mercedes came to a stop and she and Rome stepped onto the red carpet.

Her silver backless long elegant gown tail dragged on the carpet as she held onto Rome's arm, and felt glad that she bought him a nice designer suit that matches with her dress because there were cameras everywhere. And their lights kept flashing in their faces when he led her into the building.

When they entered the grand hall, Rome gasped in disbelief at how much effort his father put into The decoration for a party that had no theme.

The entire hall was glowing in blue LED lighting with fancy chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. The tables were occupied with fancy champagne

towels, expensive wines, appetizers, cocktails, savory cuisine.

After staring around for a bit, Rome escorted Catherine to the other end of the hall, where Mr. Ford was interacting with a few of his business buddies.

When his gaze met with his father's calm eyes, he slightly bowed and said, “Hello, Mr. Ford. My wife and I want to pay our humble respect to you and extend our gratitude to you for inviting us to your event. I must say, the decoration is to my liking.”

“Your gratitude is appreciated.” Mr. Ford said, keeping a straight face.

Then he gazed at Catherine softly smiling at him, so he faintly smiled and said, “So this is the lovely lady Catherine? It's nice to meet you.”

“Thank you, sir. It is an honor to meet you.” Catherine said, slightly bowing.

“Let us forget about the formality. Mr. Ford is just fine.”

“Yes, sir... I mean, Mr. Ford.”

Noticing Catherine's hand slightly trembling, Rome entangled his fingers with hers and beamed at her when she gazed at him.

“I heard from Mr. Jeffrey about how well you managed his project, and that the result was impeccable. We might just work together in the future if I need a project manager.” Mr. Ford said without losing his smile.

“Really! I will be forever indebted to you if that happens. Thank you. Thank you!” Catherine said, struggling to breathe because of excitement.

Having his father boost his wife's confidence was only the first step to the plans Rome had for tonight.

Now that she had been praised by the wealthiest man in the country, he could see the change in Catherine's mood and that her eyes had lit up, and it was time for the next step of his plan.

The rest of the Barlow family arrived in the hall and Elijah was the first to spot Rome and Catherine talking with Mr. Ford.

“The night had just begun, and those two have already started causing problems for our family.” He said, staring at his father.

“Tonight, we can't afford to offend Mr. Ford. We need to get those two idiots away from him right this instant.” Madam Rosey said, squeezing her hands into fists. ¹

Chapter Sixteen

The smile on Catherine's face kept widening as she and Mr. Ford engaged in further discussions while Rome stood by, maintaining his silence.

“What is going on here?” Mr. Barlow calmly asked with a hint of anger in his tone when he met up with Catherine and Rome.

The instant her gaze met with her grandfather's angry eyes, Catherine's self-confidence dropped back to zero and panic was the only thing she felt.

Inside, Rome was enraged, seeing traces of fear in his wife's expression, yet he kept a calm face.

The rest of the Barlow family met up with Mr. Barlow, and when Chloe's and Catherine's eyes met, she threw her cousin a hard look then slyly smiled.

None of them said a word as they waited eagerly for Madam Rosey and Mr. Barlow to lash out and humiliate the couple.

But as Mr. Barlow moved his lips to utter a word, his eyes rested on Mr. Ford cold stare, and his entire expression softened. Then he focused his attention on him and said, "Mr. Ford, a pleasant greeting to you."

"Ahh, Greeting me like a friend, but you have been deceiving me this entire time." Mr. Ford said with a frown.

Fear crossed Madam Rosey and her husband's faces as they gazed at each other, then back at Mr. Ford with a pleading look on their faces.

"I didn't know my good-for-nothing son-in-law was indebted to you until he married my granddaughter. He and his scheming father tricked us!" Mr. Barlow said, scowling when his gaze

fell upon Rome.

“Yes. He's just a nobody who took advantage of our family name and lied to us. He's nothing but a liability to us. If you don't want him here we can send him home.” Madam Rosey said, throwing Rome a hard look.

A frown flickered across Mr. Ford's face, hearing them speak of his only heir in such a manner. But he stared at his son's calmed expression, sighed, and said, “I'm talking about the hidden gem you have among your grandkids.”

It grew silent between all of them. Then a faint smile surfaced on Charles, Chloe, Jeff, Richard, and their parents' lips as they all wallowed in self-proud.

But Catherine hung her head low to avoid the dirty look they were giving her and her parents.

“You have good eyes, Mr. Ford. But which one of our grandchildren are you

referring to? Chloe, Charles, Jeff, Richard...” Madam Rosey said, smiling brightly.

“No, Catherine.” Mr. Ford said with a straight face.

Shock took over the expressions of the Barlow family, including Catherine as they stared wide-eyed at him.

For a moment, he glanced at his son, then he smirked and said, “She's a diamond in the rust. Why have you been hiding such great talent all this time?” 1

No one from the Barlow family spoke for a while as they all eyed each other with a look of disbelief on their faces.

“Well, I'm honored that my granddaughter caught your attention. To be honest, I haven't been hiding her, she just hasn't been doing much around the company.” Mr. Barlow said, feeling a bit embarrassed.

“Nonsense, I have heard how successful Mr. Jeffrey's project turned out, how can she not be doing much with such great skills. Is it that you are not giving her the chance to prove herself?” Mr. Ford said, frowning at him.

“How can that be? Catherine is our precious granddaughter.” Madam Rosey said, grabbing onto Catherine's hand as she smiled brightly at her.

Feeling lost for words, Elijah gazed at his wife and she whispered to him, “What's going on.”

With a frown, he lifted his shoulder in a half shrug and gazed away from her. Then his eyes rested on Andrew and William and they and their wives seemed just as shocked as him.

Hate, anger, and jealousy were the only emotions the four cousins felt, and as Mr. Ford continued praising Catherine,

their rage only seemed to intensify, yet they kept their silence.

The frown on Chloe's face softened when she felt a hand on her shoulder. Then she turned, gazing at the man standing behind her, and her lips curved into a smile.

“Grandmother, grandfather, please meet, Kremlin. He's my date.” Chloe said, taking his hand in hers.

A smile surfaced on Madam Rosey and her husband's faces, staring at their granddaughter and her date with pride in their expressions.

A frown flickered across Charles's forehead as he stared at his cousin and thought, ‘The mayor's son. So this was your plan, you sly fox! Having a man from a powerful background as your backing for tonight.’

Staring away from Catherine and focusing his eyes on Chloe, Mr. Ford

scowled and said, “How rude! Is she your granddaughter, Mr. Barlow?”

The smile on Mr. Barlow's face quickly faded as he eyed Chloe and said, “Yes, she is.”

“Did you raise her to interrupt her elders when they are having a discussion?”

“Not at all. Chloe, apologize to Mr. Ford right now!”

Anger shot through her when she stared at her parents and didn't get a reaction from them. ¹

Feeling helpless, Chloe gazed at her date, but he looked the other way, and she realized that she had to bear the humiliation and apologize.

“I'm sorry,” Chloe mumbled, staring at the floor.

“Kremlin, you should be careful about

the people you date, or else your father might just lose my support because of that.” Mr. Ford said, giving the Mayor's son an icy stare.

“I understand, sir,” Kremlin said with a humble expression.

Then he gazed at Chloe and mumbled, “Thank you for inviting me to be your date, but I got somewhere to be right now, so I'm gonna take my leave.”

Words deserted Chloe as she watched Kremlin softly smiled, then walked away. ¹

“What just happened?” Jeff whispered to Richard, striving not to laugh.

“I think Chloe's plan just blew up in her face,” Richard mumbled with a slight smile.

“How did she get on Mr. Ford's bad side?”

“How should I know?”

Anger stirred within Elijah, but he forced a smile as he stared at Mr. Ford, and said, “I'm sorry that my daughter offended you.”

“If she was half as virtuous as Catherine, she wouldn't be so ill-bred. I'm highly disappointed.” Mr. Ford stated, gazing away from Elijah.

Then he frowned at Mr. Barlow and Madam Rosey, slightly shook his head, and walked away.

“I have never felt so humiliated in my entire life, and for Mr. Ford to look down on our family upbringing, a total shame!” Mr. Barlow firmly intoned, glaring at his son.

“Father...” Elijah uttered, lowering his head.

A look of disappointment flared across

Mr. Barlow's face as he stared at Chloe.

Then he sighed and said, "Getting the account for the MC group will be handled by Catherine. Chloe is banned from interfering with the account."

"Grandfather," Chloe cried, crackling with anger.

"Shut up!" Madam Rosey said with a frown.

Tears welled up in Chloe's eyes as she stared at her family member's faces. Then she stormed away, sniffing softly.

Although Edward and his wife maintained their silence, the smile on their faces grew wider when his brothers and their wives gazed their way.

"Catherine, can you handle getting the account?" Mr. Barlow asked, gently gazing at his granddaughter.

A feeling of self-doubt seized Catherine as she gazed into her grandfather's eyes. Then she felt Rome squeezed her hand, and she softly smiled.

“Yes, I can,” Catherine said, lightly squeezing Rome's hand.

“Good, make grandfather proud.”

“I will.”

After faintly smiling at her, Mr. Barlow and Madam Rosey walked away, and a few minutes later, the rest of the family went their separate ways.

“Do you remember what you told me this morning?” Rome asked, taking Catherine's hands in his.

For a moment, she stared into his eyes. Then she slightly nodded with a soft smile and said, “Yes.”

“Do you still feel that way?”

“Umm... yes!”

“Good, let's go get those accounts.”

 Comments

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Chapter Seventeen

The musicians kept playing classic tunes as the guests enraged themselves in discussions, munching on appetizers, and dancing.

“The way the night is going, you might just end up shaving your hair.” Jeff teased, smiling at Charles, but he got an icy stare in return.

“Catherine may be assigned to that account, but just as it was easy for it to be taken from Chloe and passed onto her, it's that easy to snatch it from her grip,” Charles replied with a frown.

Then glared at his cousin before walking away, heading towards Bill.

“What is he up to?” Jeff mumbled, scowling as he watched Charles meet up with the chairman of the MC group.

At the same time, Catherine and Rome

were in the process of walking towards Bill when she saw her cousin and him talking, and she stopped in her tracks.

“What's wrong, wife?” Rome softly asked, sadly gazing at her.

“My cousin is planning on killing two birds with one stone. Since that's his intention, then I'm going to take a step.” Catherine mumbled with a slight smile.

“Why are you letting them step all over you? That account was rightfully given to you by your grandfather, you're just going to disappoint him by letting Charles have it?”

“But...”

“No, but. Look into my eyes.”

A look of hesitation crossed Catherine's face. Then she took a deep breath and gazed directly into her husband's eyes.

“You are just as qualified to get those accounts as any of your cousins, so what's stopping?” Rome said, resting his palm against her cheek.

“Nothing,” Catherine mumbled, smiling softly.

“Then don't let nothing hold you back.”

“You are right. The only person that can stand in my way, is myself and I am tired of being my stomping block.”

A frown settled on Charles's face as he stared at Bill and firmly said, “Why can't you give me the account? I have spent minutes pitching a great proposal to you, and it's not worth your interest!”

“How should I put this nice and simple? Your kind of ideas is old-fashioned and dull. I'm looking for a fresh mind with inspiration and creative concepts, not something sterile.” Bill casually said,

taking a sip of his drink.

At that moment, Catherine and Rome joined them, and Charles shot them an icy stare. But they ignored his mad eyes and gazed at Bill.

“Another Barlow. I already told your cousin that I'm not accepting your family proposal for my account.” Bill said, shoving his hand into his pocket.

“Charles is extremely brilliant and talented, but he doesn't represent the entire Barlow family, and neither does his proposal. Please give me a chance to show you what it means.” Catherine said with a pleading expression.

“As you said, your cousin is extremely brilliant, if I didn't like his plan, what makes you think that you will be any different?”

“Because we are not the same. Maybe you might accept mine or not, but at least give me the chance to prove to you

what I can do.”

After taking another sip of his wine, Bill let out a deep sigh and said, “Fine. Wow me, Miss Catherine.”

Although she sounded confident, her heart was beating rapidly and her mind kept crowding with unnecessary thoughts until she felt Rome's hands in hers, and everything suddenly became calm.

Then without giving in to her fear, Catherine boldly pitched her proposal, making sure not to leave any details out. By the time she finished, Bill was staring wide-eyed at her with his jaw hanging loose.

For a while, he thought Catherine was just a woman with a powerful husband, that's why he had to give her the project.

But after hearing her brief presentation, his mindset totally

reauthors itself, making him see her as a woman with a powerful mind and excellent potential.

“That was perfect. Exactly what I envisioned for this project. I loved every single bit of your plans, and I can't wait to work with you, Miss Catherine.” Bill said, extending his hand to her with a bright smile on his face.

For a second, Catherine glanced at Rome with happiness glowing in her. Then she held Bill's hand and shook it.

“Hey, Elon, Benjamin, Francis. Come here for a second.” Bill called out, letting go of Catherine's hand.

Gazing away from Richard for a moment, Elon stared at Bill and slightly smiled. Then he gazed back at him and said, “Excuse me.”

“But I'm not done explaining the rest of my proposal yet,” Richard said anxiously.

“I got to go.”

“How about later then?”

“There's no later, kid. The contract is not yours.”

In dismay, Richard watched as Elon walked away and met up with Bill. Then his gaze rested on Jeff sadly approaching him.

“Lost the account?” He asked when his cousin came closer.

“Yep,” Jeff mumbled, standing by him with his hand resting in his pocket.

Both of them stood in silence, staring at Charles and the others.

“Do you think he double-crossed us and got all four accounts?” Jeff asked with a frown.

“It wouldn't be shocking if he did. Charles had always been like that,

stepping on others to get what he wants.” Richard mumbled, tightening his grip on the glass.

As Catherine stared at the faces of all the chairmen, gazing at her, she felt her breathing becoming light, but she pulled herself together and kept a smile on her face.

“Miss Catherine's ideas are pretty fascinating,” Bill said with a smile.

“Seriously?” Elon said, feeling a bit doubtful.

Nodding slightly, Bill gazed at Catherine and said, “Do you have a pitch for Roadland INC?”

For a moment, Catherine glanced at Charles' angry eyes. Then she took a deep breath and said, “Yes.”

“Well, enlighten me, Miss Catherine,” Elon said, still feeling a bit skeptical.

However, after spending a few minutes listening to her proposal, he had a change of heart and a renewed mind.

“Wow, you weren't kidding. She knows her stuff.” Elon said, smiling at Bill as he nodded happily.

“I must say, she reminds me of the young Mr. Barlow, full of energy and fantastic ideas!” Francis said with admiration.

“I don't object to that,” Benjamin said, raising his glass to his lip.

Everything felt like a dream to Catherine, hearing such words about herself, and with excitement glowing in her expression, she gazed at Rome and beamed at him.

“Miss Catherine, if it's not too much to ask, ‘will you be willing to handle all four accounts?’” Elon said, and Catherine's face went blank.

Chapter Eighteen

“What's going on?” Madam Rosey mumbled, gazing in Carmen and Rome's direction. ¹

Then she stared at her husband, and he seemed concerned as he watched his granddaughter, chatting happily with four of the biggest chairmen in the business circle.

“What do you think they are talking about?” Elijah asked with a frown.

“We wouldn't know until we meet them. Let's go.” Mr. Barlow said, sitting his wine glass on the table.

Excitement was the only emotion Catherine felt as she gazed at the chairmen's lively faces, knowing that her potential was getting the spotlight it's deserved.

Over the past years, she had struggled s

o many times to showcase her talent, yet she kept messing up for unknown reasons.

However, now that she stood in the midst of the top-notchers in the business world, she was sure that her past mistakes weren't due to her fault.

“Bill, Elon, Francis, Benjamin, what could my granddaughter be saying to have you all so attentive.” Mr. Barlow asked as he approached the group.

“Oh, we are running through some of her ideas for our projects,” Benjamin mumbled without looking at him.

“All four projects?”

“Yes. She got all four contracts. Such an excellent talent she has.”

Numerous events happened tonight that left members of the Barlow family in dismay but none of those events shocked them like, hearing that

Catherine got four multimillion-dollar contracts within a matter of a day.

“You say what?” Elijah asked, gazing wide-eyed at Benjamin, but all he got was a dull stare as an answer.

Staring at the four chairmen in disbelief, William frowned and said, “That's impossible. Catherine is just a child. How can you guys trust her with such valuable projects?”

“Because she earned it, unlike your son who tried to pitch a boring proposal to me,” Bill said, glaring at him.

At that moment, William's gaze met with Charlies' darting eyes, and he scowled, knowing that his son just messed up big time.

Rage was what Mr. Balow felt while staring at his grandson, but he kept a calm expression as he focused his attention on the chairmen.

“So, what I'm hearing is that ‘DreamTeam Serviceable’ got all four accounts?” Mr. Barlow asked with a hint of uncertainty in his tone.

“Yes, all thanks to your granddaughter's amazing business abilities,” Elon said, smiling at Catherine.

Unable to continue listening to people praise his cousin, Charles walked away and joined Chloe, Jeff, and Richard.

“How does it feel stealing something that doesn't belong to you?” Jeff asked, scowling at his cousin.

“Safe those words for Catherine,” Charles mumbled, standing next to Richard.

“What do you mean?”

“She miraculously got all four accounts.”

“Huh?”

“Well, not miraculously. She pitched the perfect proposals and ended up wowing all four Chairmen into giving her the contracts.”

It grew quiet between the cousins for a moment. Then Richard stared at the others and said, “This is what we all fear to happen. There's no denying that Catherine is the most talented among us, that's why we gang up to take her down.”

“But now, it seems like fate has taken a turn, giving her the advantage to shine. Gosh, I hate this! That should be us over there!” Jeff said, clutching his fist.

Without saying a word, Chloe walked away, picked up a glass of wine from the waiter tray, and approached Catherine.

When she was a few steps away from

her cousin, she faked a trip, splashing the red wine on Rome since he shielded Catherine with his body.

Horror clouded the chairmen's eyes as they stared at Rome's stained suit, but his expression remained calm.

Every guest's eyes were on Rome, yet he didn't seem to mind the stares. Instead, he made himself look more pitiful and humble.

'Way to dig your own grave, Miss Chloe Barlow.' Bill thought, raising his brows as he took a casual sip of his wine.

With a frown, Elon sighed and thought, 'Well, Mr. Ford isn't going to be happy about you embarrassing his son, especially on his birthday celebration.'

A look of sadness crossed Catherine's face as she stared at Rome and mumbled, "Are you okay?"

"Yes, wife. I feel bad that the expensive

suit you bought has gotten ruin.” Rome mumbled with a smile while she cleaned his coat with a napkin. ¹

Staring away from the couple, Francis smirked and thought, ‘What a good actor this dude is.’

‘I should remind myself not to mess with Rome Ford. He seems like the kind of guy that can smile while stabbing a knife in your heart.’ Benjamin thought, gazing away from Rome's pitiful face. ¹

A faint smile crept on Chloe's lips as she stared at Catherine's embarrassed expression. Then it slowly faded when she gazed at her grandfather and saw the anger in his eyes.

“What's going on here?” Mr. Ford asked, walking towards Rome.

Then a frown settled on his face when he gazed at his son stained clothes, but Rome slightly shook his head, knowing what was going through his father's

head.

“Mr. Barlow, please take your discourteous granddaughter home. What she did just now is disrespectful to me. Rome is my guest just like everyone here, even if he's your useless son-in-law.” Mr. Ford said with a calm expression.

“I apologize on behalf of my grandchild.” Mr. Barlow mumbled, hanging his head low.

“I don't care what goes on in your house, but what your granddaughter did just now is unacceptable! Teach her some manners, or else, I will.”

“I apologize again.”

Without staring at his son, Mr. Ford walked away, fighting against his anger. ¹

“We should go home. I think the family name has gotten ruined enough.”

Madam Rosey mumbled, gazing at her

husband.

A while later, the Barlow family left the party, got into their separate cars, and drove off.

“My wife is so cool,” Rome mumbled, adorably gazing at Catherine.

Then she stared away from the car windshield, focused on his eyes, softly smiled, and said, “Thank you for being there for me tonight.”

“Of course, you are my wife,” Rome mumbled, caressing her cheek.

For a moment, they gazed deep into each other's eyes. Then Catherine hastily looked the other way, feeling her face getting hot.

‘Don’t worry. This is just the beginning. I will bring them all down to their knees before your very eyes.’ Rome thought, losing his cheerful smile. ①

Chapter Nineteen

“What happened at that party last night!” Madam Rosey shouted, glaring at her grandchildren.

The living room was awfully quiet as they all hung their head low, avoiding their grandmother's icy gaze.

“Someone better start talking?” Rosey said, slamming her hand against the chair arm.

There was a long pause, then Charles gazed at Catherine and smirked.

“All this is Catherine's fault.” He mumbled, pitifully staring at his grandmother.

A look of disbelief settled on Jeff's face as he threw his cousin a hard look and thought, ‘What are you even talking about now?’

Then he gazed at Richard and Chloe, and from their expression, Jeff could tell that they were thinking the same thing.

“How is Catherine to blame here? She got all four accounts.” Edward asked, scowling at his nephew.

“That's the problem, uncle. She got all three accounts that weren't assigned to her.” Charles said, shifting his gaze to the floor.

A devilish smile crept onto Chloe when she finally understood exactly what her cousin was doing.

Then she lost the smile, sadly stared at her grandmother, and said, “Don't you think it's suspicious that Catherine just so happens to have the perfect proposal for all four Catherine.”

When Madam Rosey's cold gaze swayed towards Catherine, her heart sunk,

knowing that her grandmother had fallen for her cousin's scheme just like all the countless times she did.

“Do you have anything to say for yourself, young lady?” Madam Rosey asked, glaring at her granddaughter.

“Mother,” Catherine's father said, feeling sorry for his child.

“Shut up, Edward. I don't think you and your daughter are the same person, so don't address a question that's meant for her.”

“Sorry, mother.”

A mixture of anger and sadness coursed through Catherine as she stared into her grandmother's eyes.

“I have been studying for the projects and jogging down ideas suitable for them. That's how are got the perfect proposals.” Catherine said with moist eyes.

“When did you start studying for them?” Elijah asked, glowering at his niece with hostility in his eyes.

Staring into his wife’s eyes, Rome slightly shook his head and thought, ‘Don’t answer that. It's a trap.’”

“When grandpa told us about the projects,” Catherine mumbled, picking at her nails.

“See! She had a hidden agenda from the very beginning. She was craving what doesn't belong to her.” Charles said, pointing his finger at his cousin.

“Who knows if she had ruined our images to the chairmen, so she can get the projects.” Chloe said, eyeing her cousin with hate in her eyes.

“I did no such thing!”

“Being defensive! Then why were you studying for projects that weren't

yours?”

“Yeah, cousin. Those accounts were ours, and it was your plan all along to snatch them from us.” ¹

Speechless from anger, Catherine took a moment to pulled herself together, coldly gazed at Chloe, and said, “I did not snatch anything from any of you! I earned those accounts fairly!”

"Really. Then why did all four Chairmen refuse to see any of us?" Jeff asked, scowling at her.

“We worked so hard to get those accounts for days and our efforts were wasted because no one would even talk to us about the accounts. How do you explain that?”

Staring at the judgment faces of some of her family members, Catherine felt abandoned for a while.

Then with every last bit of hope she had

left, she gazed at her grandfather and said, “I earned those accounts honestly, grandpa.”

But he turned his head away from her with a look of disappointment on his face.

“Ruining your cousins’ hard work, how ambiguous can you get!” William said, slightly shaking his head.

“We get that you want to prove yourself. But do you have to damage the rest of your cousins’ reputation while doing it?” Andrew uttered with a hint of anger in his tone.

A frown surfaced on Rome’s face as he stared at Catherine's uncles, then at their wives before focusing on her grandparents.

“Accusing my wife without any proof, is this even fair? You all point fingers at her, but what evidence do you all have?” Rome asking in annoyance.

“Stay out of it,” Catherine mumbled, fearing that her family would gang upon him.

Staring at Rome, Elijah frowned and said, “Shut up. No one asks for a useless fool import on this matter.”

With his gazed focus on Catherine's nervous eyes, Rome sighed and said, “I'm may be poor, but I'm not stupid. Judging someone without any proof is just cruel. My wives got those accounts and this is the 'thank you' she gets?” 1

“How dare you accuse us of playing favorites among our grandchildren!” Madam Rosey shouted, banging her palm on the chair arm.

“Mother, please be calm. We don't want you falling ill because of this ratchet fool.” Andrew said, pleadingly staring at Madam Rosey.

Not planning to give up just yet, Rome

huffed and said, “I think the person we should be focusing on is Charles.”

In a fit of rage, Charles walked over to Rome, collared him, and said, “What nonsense are you sputtering out now!”

“You were the one pitching a proposal to the chairman of the MC group, even though the account was assigned to my wife at the time.”

“Haha! You must be going mad, telling such lies.”

“Oh, really? What did the chairman of the MC group say to your father again? Right, he said, ‘Because she earned it, unlike your son who tried to pitch a boring proposal to me.’ Isn't that right?”

When Mr. Bralow’s eyes met Rome’s judging gaze, he frowned and angrily said, “Let him go, Charles. He may be worthless, but he isn't wrong. How dare you go after the MC group account

when you were assigned to the Skylight company?”

“Grandpa, I was just trying to help Catherine. We all know how she's been messing up in the past.” Charles nervously mumbled, letting go of Rome's coat.

“How can my daughter who has been messing up in the past suddenly have the ability to sway four top-notch chairmen's minds into giving her projects worth billions of dollars,” Edward uttered, glaring at his nephew.

The room became quiet for a while. Then Charles gazed at Chloe, Jeff, and Richard, but they stared the other way, maintaining their silences.

“So she got those contracts out of shed luck, is that what you are implying?” Elijah said, glowering at his brother.

“I don't know. But from what happened at the party tonight, it seems like my

daughter was the only one who kept the family reputation intact, no thanks to your daughter and William's son.”

“How dare you!”

Out of anger, Madam Rosey scowled at everyone's faces and shouted, “Everyone shut up and gets out!”

As they all walked out of the living room, Elijah walked over to Edward and said, “Do you know what happens to people who depend on luck, it runs out, and they are left struggling. The company doesn't need a person who preform because of luck.”

A frown surface on Catherine's father's face, but he said nothing as he pitifully stare at his daughter.

Chapter Twenty

“Good morning. What are you working on?” Rome mumbled as he stared at Catherine, concentrating on her laptop.

For a moment, she focused on the screen. Then she gazed at him and said, “It took three weeks, but I'm finally finished with my final soft copy for the plans for the ‘Fine wine’ project, and I just send it to the team members.”

A smile crept on Rome's lips as he got out of bed and approached Catherine. Then he squatted in front of her and softly intoned, “You have been working so hard. I'm proud of you, wife.”

“Really?” Catherine whispered, gazing into his eyes.

For the past week, she had been doubting herself every step of the way, knowing how many people are

expecting her to fail, and Rome knew it, even though he didn't talk about it with her.

As he slowly ran his fingers through her hair, he nodded and said, “Yes. How about you take a day off, and we can go out for dinner? I have saved a lot of money from my part-time job. Allow me to take you out.”

“I can't. I have to brief the team on what each person needs to do, and I need to run after the materials we are going to need. Today is a hectic day.”

With a faint smile on his face, Rome sighed and thought, ‘I know. That's why I want to take you somewhere nice to relieve the stress you've been undergoing these past weeks.’

When Catherine saw the trace of sadness in Rome's expression, she let out a soft breath and mumbled, “How about we schedule dinner for ten

o'clock today?"

"Okay. I can follow you to the office, and wait for you to get done with your work. Then we can leave the company together." Rome said, taking her hands in his.

"Don't you have your part-time job to go to today?"

"I can put in an excuse."

A look of hesitation crossed her face. Then she beamed at him and said, "Okay."

At nine o'clock, Catherine and Rome arrived at the company.

They headed towards the elevator and waited patiently for its door to open.

When it did, their gazes rested on Charles, Chloe, Jeff, and Richard.

The three cousins stared at them with nothing but hate in their eyes. Then

they walked out of the elevator. 1

Paying them no mind, Catherine and Rome walked inside, keeping a calm expression.

When the elevator door was about closed, Chloe frowned at her cousin and mumbled, “Good luck because you are going to need it.” Then the doors shut. 1

A sense of nervousness swept through Catherine and when Rome gazed at her, he noticed a trace of fear in her eyes.

‘Don’t worry. You don't need luck because you got me.’ Rome thought, holding onto her hand.

A few minutes later, they arrived in the conference room, and everyone was already waiting on them.

Without any hesitation, Catherine held Rome's hand and led him to the head of the table. Then she let go of him and sat down.

“Sit,” Catherine mumbled, patting the seat beside her.

As Rome gazed around the room, he could tell that none of the employees was happy about what Catherine did. But he didn't care about them because he was so excited that his wife finally acknowledged him.

After he had sat down, Catherine softly smiled at him before gazing at the employees.

Then she raised her chin, sat up straight, and said, “Thank you all for being here. Please open the soft copy document that I sent to you all this morning.”

There was a brief pause as she gave them a few minutes to get to access their devices.

After a few more seconds had passed, Catherine gently cleared her throat,

and said, “Fine Wine,’ want to open a new Winery in the urban-esque area.”

The room became so quiet that even a pin drop could get considered as a noise.

“Our job is to design a winery that merges a gravitational procedure of winemaking with a structure of architecture that is integrated into the landscape in such a way that it seems to be a natural element,” Catherine said, gazing at the faces around the table.

The meeting lasted for hours, and when it was over, Rome and Catherine headed to her office.

After closing the door behind him, he adorably gazed at her.

“Did I do good?” Catherine mumbled, sitting behind her desk.

“Of course. You were super awesome.” Rome replied.

Both of them shared a sweet smile.
Then Rome walked over to the couch.

As he was about to sit down, he realized
that he feel a bit thirsty.

“Excuse me. I need some water.” Rome
said, staring at Catherine.

When she nodded, he took one last
glance at her and walked out of the
office.

A few steps into the corridor, he heard
whispers coming from one of the
rooms.

Feeling a bit curious, Rome walked over
to the door and leaned his ear closer to i
t.

“You guys know what to do right?”
Charles' voice echoed from within the
room.

“Yes, boss.” A male voice flowed into
the hallway.

“Disaster should be the only result of the ‘Fine wine’ project.”

“We understand.”

Frowning, Rome walked away from the door and walked back into Catherine's office.

“Did you find water?” She mumbled, raising her head to meet his eyes.

“Huh?” Rome mumbled absentmindedly.

“You said that you were going out for water.”

“Yeah, I drank.”

For half of the day, Rome's mind remained restless with several thoughts.

After a few hours had gone by, it was nine o'clock and Catherine finally put her phone down, then turned her

computer off.

Afterward, she gazed at Rome and mumbled, “Ready for our date?”

But a look of concern crossed his face as he stared into her eyes and said, “You look tired. Let's do it another time.”

“I want to do it tonight. I'm exhausted from work, and tomorrow, I have to do more work, so it will feel nice to do something other than work, even if it's just for a few hours.”

“Okay.”

By ten o'clock, Roland and Catherine arrived at a local food truck. Then she stopped the car, gazed out the window, and mumbled, “So this is the place, umm?” ³

“Yes. They sell delicious Tacos.” Rome said, chuckling softly.

“Yummy.”

“Can you order for us? I will join you shortly. I need to make a call.”

“Sure.”

After Catherine got down from the car, Rome watched her walked towards the truck before he took out his phone and dialed Mr. Orlando's number.

The moment he answered the phone, Rome glanced at Catherine from the car window and said, “I'm going to send you a list of names. These are people that are working with my wife on the Fine Wine project. Among them is a few traitors.”

“Okay, boss. So what's the plan?” Mr. Orlando's voice echoed from the speakers.

“Track all of their movement and interaction and find the double-crossers.”

“Copy that, boss.”

Once Rome had ended the call, he got out of the car and walked over to Catherine.

“What did you order?” Rome asked, smiling with his eyes.

“Spicy chicken wings,” Catherine said, faintly giggling.

Admiring the excitement in her eyes, he lowered his head and lightly kissed her on the mouth.

For a moment, Catherine stared wide-eyed at him as her heart hammered against her chest. Then she shut her eyelids and claim his lips. 1