

Chapter 16

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[Vivienne]

The next day, I wake up with a new sense of purpose. I finish my daily routine, get ready, and head downstairs in record time. Mom and Dad are already up and having tea in the garden. I greet them with a smile.

"Good morning, Mom. Dad."

Mom is quick to notice my readiness. "Going somewhere?"

"Yes!" I tell them because there's no reason to hide anything anymore. "I have a few errands to run, and I thought I'd also pay a visit to Harvey. Let's see how he's doing."

My dad looks more than happy with my decision. "Harvey would love that!" he says with a wide smile. "You know how much he loves spending time with you. In fact, let me just call him and give him the good news."

Before he reaches for his phone, though, I stop him. "No, Dad, please. Let it be a surprise. I'll go see him after lunch today. You don't need to warn him or anything."

Dad laughs, shaking his head. "Okay, if you say so. But he's going to be over the moon when he sees you."

"I hope so," I say, feeling excited. "Anyway, I should go now. Don't want to waste any more time. I have so much to do today. See you guys later!"

As planned, I ask Marcus to drive me to Lawrence's office building, where Marcus drops a package at the reception on my behalf. From there, we drive straight to one of New York's top fashion brands: Rosita Roe.

Rosita studied fashion design at the London College of Fashion, but she always loved coming back to the States during summer and winter breaks. We met when we were kids through our parents. We quickly became inseparable and even went to the same university together. Rosita chose Fashion Design while I opted for Economics and Business Administration, which allowed me to stay close to Caden.

We remained good friends until graduation day when Rosita announced that she was moving to Paris to pursue her fashion career. That was only one year before I got married to Caden, and my life changed forever. Since then, we have barely seen each other and fell out of touch pretty quickly.

Perhaps that's why, when I walk into her store, I'm slightly nervous. And perhaps that's why I fail to notice the woman who comes walking right into me, and curses so loud that I almost wince hard enough to crack my jaw.

She must be carrying a latte with her because the drink is all over her white dress.

Her eyes widen, and she looks at me in shock. "What the hell? Are you blind? Would it kill you to see where you're going?"

I stare at her in disbelief. I agree that I was nervous walking in, but

she was too busy staring at her phone instead of watching where she was going. It's not entirely my fault. She's just as much at fault as I am.

"I think you're mistaken. I really didn't mean to—" I start to say, but she cuts me off.

"Oh, you didn't mean to?" she interrupts, her voice dripping with sarcasm. "That makes everything better, doesn't it? Just because you didn't mean to, my dress is magically clean again. What kind of idiot are you?"

I clench my teeth. "Look, I'm sorry, okay? But you were on your phone. You weren't paying attention either."

The woman gasps as if she can't believe I just dared to speak up. "Are you saying it's my fault? Are you seriously blaming me for this? How dare you? Do you even know who I am? I am the most esteemed client of Rosita Roe. Rosita will have your ass on a silver platter for what you've just done!"

I don't know why I keep bumping into rude, ignorant people. It's as if a curse has fallen upon me and I can't seem to shake it off, no matter how hard I try.

The woman continues with her insults, and when she realizes they aren't having any effect on me, she turns to the receptionist and pounds on her desk. "I want you to throw this woman out!"

The receptionist, whose nameplate reads "Gigi," stiffens at her demand. She looks between me and the other woman and says, "Ma'am, I think we can arrange—"

"No," the woman snaps, not ready to listen. "I don't want to hear excuses. Do your job or I will get the store manager out here to take care of this personally!"

Wow. This escalated quickly.

"There's no need for that," I say to Gigi, and she looks like she can finally breathe. "I didn't come here to cause any trouble. I will be leaving soon. I was just hoping to see Ms. Roe. Can you tell her Vivienne is here to see her? If she is not available—"

I have barely finished my sentence when the woman scoffs and rolls her eyes at me.

"Seriously, why would Ms. Roe be interested in seeing someone like you? Do you even know how famous she is? She doesn't have time for such peasants like you! Who the hell do you think you are? Just some wannabe trying to get a glimpse of the high life, aren't you?" She laughs bitterly. "Don't you get it? People like you don't belong here."

Gigi steps in cautiously, sensing the tension escalating. "Ma'am, if you could please calm down. Let's see if Ms. Roe is available or if we can reschedule..."

The woman cuts her off, her tone sharp and dismissive. "I don't have time for this nonsense. Call Ms. Roe or get the manager. I won't stand for this disrespect."

"I think it's pretty obvious who's disrespecting whom."

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"I think it's pretty obvious who's disrespecting whom."

We all turn toward the source of that comment.

A woman stands by the stairs, tall and graceful in her beautiful clothes and jewelry. Her hair is pulled into an intricate bun and she has an air of sophistication that commands attention and awe.

It is none other than Rosita herself.

However, before I get to say something, that arrogant woman dashes over to her.

"Ms Roe, I was just telling this girl that she has been so disrespectful to me that she needs to be removed from your premises before I do something about it. Can you believe the nerve of this girl? Look at my dress! She spilt coffee all over it! She must be punished! All the hard work you put into this dress is now gone just because she didn't look where she was going. And on top of it all, she is blaming me for it. Just imagine it! She had the audacity to say it was my fault!"

Rosita raises an eyebrow and looks at the other woman from top to bottom.

"Is that so?" she asks, her eyes finally settling on mine. I stare right back, wondering if she remembers who I am.

"That is exactly what she said. I can't believe her rudeness."

I purse my lips in irritation. I was rude? Says the one who insulted

and yelled at me when it was clearly an accident.

"Well, I believe there's only one way to settle this. And that is to find out exactly who is at fault in this matter. But to do that, we all would have to check the cameras first," Rosita says with a small smile on her face.

She's good, I must say.

The woman blinks in confusion. "Cameras?" she says with a nervous laugh. She clearly knows that she's at fault, why else would she be looking around to see the cameras if she did nothing wrong? "What are you talking about? You don't have any cameras in here."

Rosita laughs as if she has heard the most hilarious joke of the year. "Don't I?" she asks and takes a step to the side. Her gaze is fixated on something and she continues in her authoritative tone, "Gigi, why don't you get the footage and see what we have?"

Gigi looks like she has been waiting for this command. "Sure thing, boss. Give me a moment." She winks at me while the woman turns to Rosita, trying to talk herself out of the situation.

"Ms Roe, you don't need to go through all this trouble, I assure you. In fact, why don't you just kick her out for what she did? It's not like she can afford anything you have here. Why waste your time on her? I assure you, it will be for the better if you do kick her out. In fact, she is starting to be a huge pain in my neck."

I frown. "What?"

Rosita, however, remains unfazed by this woman's rudeness.

"Why do you want me to kick her out? Because she doesn't want to be insulted?" She takes a deep breath and fixes her gaze on the other woman, who shifts uncomfortably. "I can't say I appreciate your attitude toward my business."

The woman immediately takes a step back, realizing that she may have pushed the envelope too far. "But, I—I was just saying that, I mean..." she stammers.

Rosita cuts her off before she can say another word. "You were saying that this young lady was at fault while it was your carelessness that ruined that lovely dress of yours. Not to mention, you insulted one of my dearest friends without a valid reason."

My jaw almost hits the ground. She knows me. She actually recognizes me. I mean, it has been years since we had last seen each other, so I thought she would have forgotten me by now.

I have never been more grateful to God ever.

The woman stands there in complete shock. "I—"

Before she can utter a single word, the security guard shows up by our side. He looks between us, but only Rosita and the woman seem to know why he's here.

The woman turns pale.

"Mr. Gorski, it's good to see you," Rosita says. "Please escort this woman out of my shop."

The woman starts to shake her head frantically. "What? But I—"

"No, I'm done hearing what you have to say. You insulted my friend and you destroyed one of my creations. Not only that, but you were also rude to my staff. As such, I will be banning you from this shop for as long as I see fit," Rosita declares calmly.

"But I didn't—this is so unfair. You have no right! This is against the law!" the woman shouts, turning from one person to the other in desperation.

The security guard doesn't seem to care; he simply grabs her by the arm and starts pulling her toward the entrance. "Come on, lady. Time to leave."

She turns back toward us in outrage. "You're making a huge mistake, Ms. Roe. I will sue you! Mark my words! This is not the end! You will be hearing from me and my lawyer very soon! This is—hey, let me go! Get off me, you filthy gorilla! You—ow! OW!"

Rosita laughs and then turns to face me. And just like that, her calm and mature persona transforms back into the teenager that I had befriended in high school.

"Oh. My. God!" She squeals and hugs me tightly, laughing with pure happiness. "Vivienne Sinclair, I'm going to kill you for not keeping in touch, you brat!" She laughs, pulling away. "Come on, let's go to my office. And Gigi? Darling, please cancel all my appointments for the rest of the day. My best friend is here after three long years; I don't think I'll have time for anyone else." 1