

Chapter 28

They were close

"David!? It's you!?" My bewilderment was plain as day.

"Olive," David sighed, relieved. "I'm so happy it wasn't anyone else. Ready to go take our picture?" He took my hand and gave me a gentle look.

I could only return his excited expression with an awkward smile.

I was not happy to see him.

If this was David, then where the hell was Aaron?

Oh my g*! I couldn't believe I bought the wrong man. I spent nearly \$20,000, and it wasn't even Aaron! Earlier, Aaron said he'd only pay for his share, so was I supposed to fork up the cash now?

"Are you really Number Eight?" I swallowed. This couldn't be happening. I glanced at Jane, still beside me, and she looked as shocked as I was.

"I'm yours for the next twenty-four hours." David leaned down to kiss my hand, and my body shivered in response. I gave Jane a confused look. Had David really been single for as long as she'd said? He seemed a lot more comfortable with

showing affection than I would've guessed.

Jane's initial surprise quickly faded. She smiled and said, "This works out wonderfully! I don't believe the two of you got to finish your conversation earlier, so this gives you both the

chance to talk more about your research."

"Did you set all of this up so I'd finally settle down?" David narrowed his eyes, suspicious.

"Of course not! Given Olive's... situation," she said playfully. "I'd hope you keep your relationship strictly academic, David.""

"Oh?" He tilted his head toward me. "You have a boyfriend?"

Jane turned to look at me as well.

How did I get into this mess?

Jane already thought Aaron and I were engaged, and at the very least, I did come to this party with him...

"I... Yes, I do." He just wasn't who they thought it was.

"Is it Aaron?" David asked curiously.

"Well..." I stammered. This was about to be the most humiliating moment of my night.

What was I supposed to say? No, David. Aaron isn't my boyfriend. He's my boyfriend's best friend, and I've just been sleeping with him!

Then I could kiss my social life goodbye...

Maybe I could leave out that detail and say Aaron and I were just friends, but that still wouldn't make sense. It wouldn't

matter if I'd slept with him or not; I'd still be the woman who goes on dates behind her boyfriend's back! And it didn't help that Aaron and Jane both introduced me as his fiancée.

I've never needed Aaron more than I did now-never needed to kill him more than I did now. If he hadn't lied to Jane in the first place, none of this would be happening!

Luckily, the hostess' next announcement saved me from responding. The three of us turned our attention toward the stage.

"Let's take a look at our ninth Angel of the night! The Cheater's Best Friend!" Everyone in the audience exploded with laughter. Everyone except for me.

I bit my lip hard. That had to be Aaron.

I couldn't wait to get out of here...

And with a codename like that? Were we that obvious? Did I have 'W*ore' written on my forehead?

I tried my hardest to calm down. After being blindsided by David, maybe I shouldn't be so sure this next one was Aaron. The codenames and photographs were intentionally misleading.

But how was I going to smooth things out with Aaron now?

On the one hand, Aaron was the one embarrassing me; he threw me into this engagement charade for no reason! But on the other hand, I felt awfully guilty... I was supposed to spend the money to save Aaron from going on a date with someone he wasn't interested in, but I wasted it on David.

And Aaron hated David.

The next image projected onto the screen was of a pair of lips. Aaron's upper lip was relatively thin, and his mouth was

39.39%

perpetually curved into a gentle and elegant smile. He also had an inconspicuous dark spot on the corner of his lip.

I was one hundred percent sure this was his mouth I was looking at.

D*mn!

I wasn't allowed to bid again. I turned to Jane, but she shook her head before I could even ask.

"Honey," she started with a sigh. "I'm a married woman, and lots of people here know me. Even if I knew without a doubt that that was my nephew, there's nothing I could do."

The auction for him had already begun, and my anxiety grew as I heard the women around me call out their bids.

"\$6300," came a man's voice from beside me.

It was David.

My eyes widened. Everyone-even the hostess herself-was shocked.

"Sir, weren't you the eighth Angel?" The hostess' smile never wavered despite her confusion. "I don't think we've ever had an Angel participate in the auction."

"But there's no rule against it, right?" David matched her smile with his own.

"Well, alright then! As long as the lady next to you allows you to bid, we won't stop you. Men have just as much right to participate as women here." The hostess promptly continued with the auction. "\$6300 going once!"

I leaned in and nudged David, "I think Number Nine is

Aaron..."

"I know it is."

"I- How?" I was astonished.

"We used to be close." David shrugged with a smile and continued bidding.

There were several women competing with him. Maybe it was his confidence that inspired other men in the room because there were even a few others shouting their bids. From the looks of them though, it seemed like a couple of them were only bidding to drive up the price.

In the end, Aaron was auctioned off for \$19,000 to none other than David Ford.

I glanced at David. His mouth was pursed into a line and his fists were clenched. He was even bouncing slightly where he stood, obviously excited for his prize to be brought out.

Aaron took to the stage. He was met with cheers from dozens of women and disappointed cries as other bidders realized just who they'd given up on.

My heart dropped to my stomach. I knew he'd be ready to strangle me as soon as he got over here.

The hostess seemed to have a wry sense of humor as she announced, "Angel number nine, if you would please proceed to the lady in the burgundy dress."