

Chapter 16

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It's safe to say I hate every single woman at this PTA meeting.

There are four of them total, including Nina. I've memorized their names. Jillianne (Jillyanne), Patrice, and Suzanne (not to be confused with Jillianne). The reason I have memorized their names is because Nina will not let me leave the backyard. She's been making me stand in the corner, constantly at attention in case they need something.

At least the hors d'oeuvres are a success. And Nina has no idea Andrew picked them up for me.

"I'm just not happy with the field day menu." Suzanne taps her pen against her chin. I've heard Nina refer to Suzanne before as her "best friend," but as far as I can tell, Nina isn't close with any of her so-called friends. "I feel like there needs to be more than one gluten-free option."

"I agree," Jillianne says. "And even though there is a vegan option, it's not vegan and gluten-free. So what are people who are both vegan and gluten-free supposed to eat?"

I don't know? Grass? I've honestly never seen women more obsessed with gluten. Every time I brought out an hors d'oeuvre, each of them questioned me about the amount of gluten in it. As if I have any idea. I don't even know what gluten is.

It's a sweltering hot day today, and I would give anything to be back in the house, under the air conditioner. Hell, I would give anything to have a drink of the pink sparkling lemonade the women are sharing. I keep wiping sweat from my forehead every time they're not looking at me. I'm afraid I may have pit stains.

“This blueberry goat’s cheese flatbread should have been heated up,” Patrice comments as she chews on the morsel in her mouth. “They’re barely lukewarm.”

“I know,” Nina says regretfully. “I asked my maid to take care of it, but you know how it is. It is so hard to find good help.”

My mouth falls open. She never asked me any such thing. Also, does she realize I’m standing right here?



“Oh, it truly is.” Jillianne nods sympathetically. “You just can’t hire anyone good anymore. The work ethic in this country is so horrible. You wonder why people like that can’t find better jobs, right? It’s laziness, pure and simple.”

“Or else you get someone foreign,” Suzanne adds. “And they barely speak the language. Like Enzo.”

“At least he’s nice to look at!” Patrice laughs.

The rest of them hoot and giggle, although Nina is oddly silent. I suppose she doesn’t have to ogle the hot landscaper when she’s married to Andrew—I can’t blame her on that one. She also seems to have some sort of strange grudge against Enzo.

I’m itching to say something after the way they’ve been badmouthing me behind my... Well, not behind my back because I’m standing right here, as I mentioned. But I’ve got to show them that I’m not a lazy American. I have worked my butt off in this job and never complained once.

“Nina.” I clear my throat. “Do you want me to heat up the hors d’oeuvres?”

Nina turns to look at me, her eyes flashing in a way that makes me take a step back.

“Millie,” she says calmly, “we’re having a conversation here. Please don’t interrupt. It’s so rude.”

“Oh, I—”

“Also,” she adds, “I’d thank you not to refer to me as Nina—I’m not your drinking buddy.” She snickers at the other women. “It’s Mrs. Winchester. Don’t make me remind you again.”

I stare at her, flabbergasted. On the very first day I met her, she instructed me to call her Nina. I’ve been calling her that the entire time I’ve been working here, and she’s never said a word about it. Now she’s acting like I’m taking liberties.

The worst part is the other women are acting like Nina is a hero for telling me off. Patrice launches into some story about how her cleaning woman had the gall to tell her about how her dog died. “I don’t want to be mean,” Patrice says, “but what do I care if Juanita’s dog died? She was going on and on about it. Honestly.”

“We definitely do need the help though.” Nina pops one of the unacceptable hors d’oeuvres into her mouth. I’ve been watching her and she’s eaten about half of them while the other women are eating like birds. “Especially when Andrew and I have another baby.”

The other women let out gasps of excitement. “Nina, are you pregnant?” Suzanne cries.

“I knew you were eating like five times as much as the rest of us for a reason!” Jillianne says triumphantly.

Nina shoots her a look—I have to stifle a laugh. “I’m not pregnant yet. But Andy and I are seeing this fertility specialist who is supposed to be amazing. Trust me, I’ll have a baby by the end of the year.”

“That is so great.” Patrice puts a hand on Nina’s shoulder. “I know you guys have been wanting a baby for a long time. And Andrew is such a great dad.”

Nina nods, and for a moment, her eyes look a bit moist. She clears her throat. “Excuse me for a moment, ladies. I’ll be right back.”

Nina dashes into the house, and I'm not sure if I'm supposed to follow her. She's probably going to the bathroom or something. Of course, maybe now that's one of my responsibilities—following Nina into the bathroom so that I can pat her hands dry for her or flush the toilet or God only knows what.

As soon as Nina is gone, the other women burst into quiet laughter. "Oh my God!" Jillianne snickers. "That was so awkward! I can't believe I said that to her. I really thought she was pregnant! I mean, doesn't she look pregnant?"



"She is getting like a house," Patrice agrees. "She seriously needs to hire a nutritionist and a personal trainer. And did anyone else notice her roots showing?"

The other women nod in agreement. Even though I'm not participating in this conversation, I also noticed Nina's roots. On the day I interviewed with her, her hair looked so immaculate. Now she's got a good centimeter of darker roots showing. I'm surprised she let it get that bad.

"Like, I would be embarrassed to walk around like that," Patrice says. "How does she expect to keep that hottie husband of hers?"