

Chapter Six

Sloth

September 3rd Skyscraper Day

That Zap! I was blown away that my girl got the headshots. In my heart, she's my girl. She must have ESP. How else could she have known in advance to listen in on my interview. Her quick thinking helped me snag that job. When it came to the headshots, she didn't listen to me. She did things her way and got the headshots from Gloria. She knew what she was doing, but what did she mean by Rookie pulled it off?

It was around 4 when I pulled my car in front of Stravos Management. I was playing a thumping "I Got A Feeling," by The Black Eyed Peas.

"Operation Success," I said.

"You better believe it," she replied.

Zap was carrying a large manila envelope. Her tightly coiled curls pulled back from her honey-brown skin showed drooping eyelids and an ashen face. So, once she wrapped the seat belt around herself and Rookie, I drove toward The Wilmington Apartments. I was caught off-guard when she made a circular motion with her finger.

"Something wrong?" I asked.

"Yeah, we need to go back to La Jolla," she said. "We still got time to get these headshots to Chloe."

"You look so tired I thought you'd want to go home," I said.

Even Rookie looked like she had a hard day. She lay in her pet pouch cuddled up to Zap not even stirring.

"I am tired. That's where you come in." She laughed softly. "Don't forget Chloe said there's a job waiting for Rookie. The faster we get those headshots in..."

"Gotcha." I drove over to 6th Avenue and headed to 163 North.

"Guess what," I said. "I got some good news today."

I glanced over to see if she was paying attention. Her eyes were closed, and she was easing down in her seat.

“Nerdygeeks emailed me my start date. I start next Monday,”

“Don’t mess this up,” she said. “Now you can start contributing to groceries.”

Her voice sounded scratchy and tired. I wanted to pout ‘cause I really wanted to hear let’s go celebrate with some pizza and brewskies.

“Look at you. So not a morning person.”

“You can’t say anything.” She cranked the seat back as far as it would go. Rookie, inside her pet pouch, was now curled under Zap’s neck.

I jumped on 163 North and met with bumper-to-bumper rush-hour traffic. By the time, I got off the freeway, it was close to five. Thank goodness I remembered to wear my Bluetooth. I called Chloe to let her know we were on our way with Rookie’s headshots.

“I’ll wait for you fifteen minutes. Hurry,” Chloe said. She sounded perky. The way I wished Zap had sounded after she heard my start date.

I parked the Corolla and hustled butt inside the door. Chloe was waiting for me at the elevator.

“You need a key to get to the other floors after 5 o’clock,” Inside the elevator, she tapped her fob against a button and the elevator sailed upwards.

“I can’t wait to see the pictures myself. You’ve got time?” I handed her the manila envelope.

“Where’s Zapporah? I thought she was with you,” Chloe asked.

“Zap was too tired so I’m dropping them off,”

We exited the elevator and I followed as she led the way to her office.

“They better be quality headshots and not photos taken from someone’s phone,” she said. Her pouty lip and a playful side eye made me chuckle.

“They should be. She followed your advice and went to Gloria.” Hearing that, she did a thumbs-up.

Once inside her office, I took a seat while she found a letter opener and wasted no time opening the envelope and removing the photos.

“Don’t get any fingerprints on them.” As she viewed each photo, she laid it on her desk so I could view it. Knowing how clammy my fingers could be, I touched nothing.

Whoever took the pictures was good at what they did. Rookie’s black fur had a glossy sheen to it. Her wide green eyes made her look so lovable. Each photo showed Rookie posing and looking into the camera like a badass supermodel. I wanted to frame the picture of Rookie laying on a yellow beach towel wearing white sunglasses.

The way Chloe was grinning, and her green eyes shone I knew she was pleased with the quality. It was a done deal.

When I got back to my car, I noticed Rookie had crawled to the back seat and now was spread out on her back. A rare sleeping position for her. I remembered seeing her like this when we fed her some turkey. The tryptophan zonked her out to the point she was sleeping on her back. What in the world had the two been through to cause this? Was Zap so tired because she wasn’t a morning person? I recalled her text message and wondered what she meant by Rookie pulled it off. I knew Zap was out of it, but I had to know.

“What did you mean by Rookie pulled it off?”

Zap must have heard me in her dreams ‘cause she said something that didn’t make any sense. Her voice sounded all muffled.

“Rookie held that guy’s boxer shorts hostage.”

We got back to The Wilmington around six something. Instead of going to bed, Zap looked in the refrigerator and grumbled.

“Sloth, there’s not a thing in the refrigerator. We need to go shopping.”

I cringed and ducked just in case she might throw something at my head.

“I’ll ask Steve if he can advance me some coins before pay day,” I said.

I doubted he’d do it. When I thought about it, if I collected what was owed from all the technical work I did, I would gather a couple of hundred. It was time to do just that. Starting with that gym geek, Lamont.

“Don’t forget you owe me a beer.” With that, she went to her bedroom and closed the door. I knew from previous her early morning risings; she would not be returning.

Earlier today around mid-afternoon, Steve’s offer letter had hit my inbox. I didn’t like that he wanted me to work early in the mornings. Off all things, six in the morning. Supposedly, to handle East Coast callers. Like Zap, I hated getting up early. I replied to Steve’s email requesting later hours. I hoped he would oblige me. If he wanted me to make this thing work, he should give me what I want.

I retired to my bedroom space. Zap converted her den to a bedroom for me. It was complete with my King-sized bed, and space for all my stuff. I sat down to my computer and logged into my email. *Bingo!* There was an email from Steve Carson with my subject line, “Request to Move Shift Time To Twelve Noon.” I opened the email and read. He’d denied my request. He explained that I was the only person on the phone project and would have to support the East Coast market. Sheesh.

I wanted to call him and read him the riot act, but he was probably gone for the day. I would just keep at him. I was not only going to request an advance in pay, but a second request to move the shift time from 6 AM to 7 AM. That would give me another hour for sleep. I expected to be turned down again for the shift, but maybe he would grant the other request. Come on, Steve Man. Come through. *Deny me once, shame on me. Deny me twice, shame on you.*