

BAD DAY FOR A BAD DAY

I know Mom's not herself. She's in sick and in pain. I shouldn't let it get to me. But the constant stream of snide remarks and biting complaints is eating away at me. It's barely 7:00am, and she's already ripped me to shreds because I made the eggs too hard and forgot to put a dryer sheet in with the load. *"Are you even trying, Yvonne?"* she said. *"Don't you care about me at all? I'm your mother, and I deserve better."*

I love her, but don't know how much longer I can take this. Hopefully, things will be easier at the office, Yvonne thinks as she heads out the door.

The spilled, scorching cup of coffee and extra-long commute don't help her mood. She arrives just a few minutes before the staff meeting. Instead of being able to put down her things and collect her thoughts, she sees Isabella, their intern, waiting for her.

Isabella always manages to look eager to please and terrified at the same time. Some days, Yvonne finds her endearing. Today, she's just grating.

"Um, Ms. Upton?"

"Please, it's Yvonne. Remember?"

"The thing is, I really wanted to follow-up with you about our talk from last week? Um, I was just wondering if you'd talked with Phil about what he said to me? It's just that I'm having a hard time, you know? Because he was so mean?" Each sentence is spoken as a question. Which they aren't.

"I'm sorry, Isabella, but I don't have time to discuss this. Phil can be harsh. But you need to learn to let things roll off your back. This isn't school. Not everyone is going to be nice to you. You shouldn't take everything he says so personally."

Isabella is surprised by Yvonne's sharp tone and words. *"Oh, okay, Ms. Upton,"* she replies, hurt and crestfallen.

A few days later, Yvonne's boss Tim beckons her into his office. *"I just got off the phone with HR,"* he starts.

This can't be good.

"Isabella was really upset after meeting with you. Apparently, she's spoken with you—twice, now—about some abusive comments made by her project supervisor, and you haven't taken her concerns very seriously. She said you even blamed her for what happened. That your team is 'toxic,' and she doesn't feel comfortable working with Phil or you anymore."

"Yvonne, this is not acceptable. It's not how I run my department..."

Sure, why not? Add it to the list, Yvonne thinks bitterly. Apparently, Mom was right: I mess up everything.