

Chapter 1

Chapter 1: When Frankie called out to Monique, asking her to step into her office, the young journalist was initially taken off guard. She glanced around at her colleagues, uncertain of whom Frankie was addressing. When it became clear that Frankie meant her, Monique felt a mix of confusion and excitement. She hadn't expected to be called into her boss's office, especially after having spent less than a year at Vivant, mostly working on lighter pieces. Frankie, known for her no-nonsense attitude and magnetic presence, had earned Monique's respect from day one.

Walking into the office, Monique couldn't help but be captivated by Frankie's commanding energy. Despite not fitting the mold of conventional beauty—her features were sharp and striking, with widely set eyes and a tall, slender frame—there was an undeniable magnetism about her. Frankie's bold fashion choices, her love for vibrant colors, and the oversized jewelry she wore only added to her presence. For Monique, Frankie represented something more than just a successful journalist—she embodied a role model for women of color in a field where such figures were often underrepresented.

Sitting down across from Frankie, Monique prepared herself for whatever news was coming. But nothing could have prepared her for what Frankie was about to say. Evelyn Hugo, one of the most iconic movie stars of all time, had specifically requested Monique for an exclusive interview. It was a shocking turn of events, especially given Monique's relatively junior position at Vivant. She had spent most of her time at the magazine writing light, trendy pieces, far removed from the kind of serious journalism that this opportunity promised.

Frankie continued to explain that Evelyn's people were asking for an interview related to a charity event she was hosting, but there was a sense that something more was

going on beneath the surface. Frankie suspected that Evelyn, known for her many marriages and turbulent Hollywood career, wanted to craft a specific narrative, one that could only be controlled by someone less seasoned, like Monique. It was a challenge—one that tested both her professional skills and her personal confidence. Frankie, however, didn't seem to doubt Monique's abilities for a second. She was confident that this young writer, despite her lack of experience, had the potential to not just interview a legend but to take charge of the narrative.

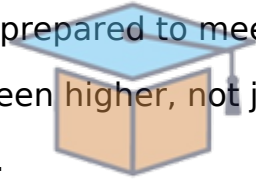
As Frankie showed Monique the email confirming the request from Evelyn's team, Monique's emotions swirled. There was a mix of excitement, disbelief, and fear. The pressure was immense—Evelyn Hugo's fame alone could turn this feature into a massive success, but Monique realized it wasn't just about landing the interview. She was being asked to step into the spotlight, to stand her ground, and perhaps even clash with one of Hollywood's most revered figures. In that moment, Monique realized that the story wasn't just about Evelyn Hugo—it was about her as well. This was her opportunity to prove herself, to transition from being the writer working in the shadows of more experienced colleagues to being someone whose work would be front and center.

Monique had always aspired to make an impact in journalism. She dreamed of writing stories that mattered, stories that changed the way people viewed the world. But after months of writing filler pieces and observing her colleagues getting the big assignments, Monique's confidence had taken a hit. Now, with the opportunity to interview a living legend, it felt like everything she had worked for was about to come to fruition. Frankie's words, though tough, were meant to motivate her. Monique wasn't just being asked to write a piece—she was being asked to rise to the occasion, to break free from the constraints of her current position and make her mark.

Frankie's belief in her, combined with the pressure of the assignment, ignited something in Monique. She knew this was her moment. She wasn't just being asked to interview Evelyn Hugo; she was being invited into a world where her voice mattered. It was time to step up, to stop doubting herself, and to show that she could handle the

big leagues. Monique's response was simple, yet resolute—she was ready. But deep down, she knew this was just the beginning of a much larger journey, one that would require everything she had, both professionally and personally.

The next few days were a whirlwind. Monique found herself researching Evelyn Hugo's career with an intensity she hadn't known she was capable of. Every movie, every marriage, every moment of scandal—she devoured it all, knowing that the story she was about to tell would define her career. There was no room for second-guessing or hesitations. As she prepared to meet Evelyn Hugo, Monique understood that the stakes had never been higher, not just for the magazine, but for her own future in the world of journalism.



Summary