

SAMPLE CHAPTER
GETTING EVEN
Revenge is Fun series

ONE

I BOARDED THE PLANE IN PORTLAND, OREGON that morning feeling great, still aglow from all of the back-patting and praise I'd received during five glorious days at the Pacific Northwest Technology Conference.

"Woman of the Year" was the highest possible honor from my peers, and winning that accolade filled me with well-deserved pride. The inscription on the little bubble-wrapped statue, securely nestled in my roll-on suitcase, was irrefutable proof of how far I'd come from an accounting assistant to someone worthy of such prestigious recognition. Life just couldn't get any better.

I landed at SEATAC airport with visions of swooping into my office like a triumphant empress returning to her kingdom. At thirty-five years old, I had worked my way up to making a ton of money as Chief Financial Officer of a respected corporation and I'd just won a coveted award.

Fate had already forged the first link in an astounding chain of events, but I was still high from my success at the conference and totally unaware that my life was about to change.

At that moment if anyone had even hinted I would tumble from the top of the heap to a devastated woman desperate for survival money in less time than it took to pick out a great pair of shoes, I'd have advised them to seek out the nearest psychiatrist and book some serious couch time.

It turned out to be the worst day in my life—ever!

I hopped into a taxi at the airport planning to zip home, pick up my new Mercedes and head for the office to show off my trophy. Instead, for some reason I blurted out the address for my office and didn't correct it.

Why would I do such a thing?

I have no idea, unless subconsciously my zooming ego couldn't wait for the praise I was sure to receive. I mean, this was a big deal.

The driver pulled to a stop in front of our glass and steel high-rise building. He lifted my roll-on from the trunk and burst into a gap-toothed smile after I handed him an overly generous tip. Hey, I could afford to make someone else's day, right?

The elevator doors slid open at the eleventh floor. I hurried along the wide corridor that led to our suite pulling my roll-on suitcase behind me.

With the confidence of a winner, I threw open the door and promptly froze, paralyzed by the scene before me.

What the hell was going on?

The reception room looked like something out of a doomsday movie. A few of the employees rushed around like rats in a maze, occasionally colliding, while others carried boxes filled with personal belongings. Some were even crying.

Everyone was in the clutch of panic and as for me, I'd begun to shake like a sapling in a windstorm. I've always felt I might be sort of psychic. Oh, not like those charlatans on TV or phone lines who claim to really see the future. Nothing like that. For me it's more like having subtle forewarnings of impending disaster. As I stood there watching the pandemonium, an awful thought shot through my mind. Maybe it hadn't been impulse that compelled me to come here first. What if it was an omen?

Our receptionist lifted a tear-stained face and began to babble. I couldn't even understand what she was saying until she finally slowed down enough to fill me in while attempting to hold back the cascade of tears pouring from her sky-blue eyes.

"Oh my God, Kim, oh my God." She gulped a few times, then choked out, "Didn't you see the notice on the door? How can you possibly look so happy?"

That said, she went back to throwing things into a carton on her desk. Unable to say anything else that sounded remotely coherent, she jabbed one bright red nail toward the entry doors.

What notice was she talking about? I backed into the hall, then couldn't take my eyes off the brilliant fluorescent yellow notice.

How had I missed it?

OFFICIAL NOTICE

As of June 21, at 5:00 pm, this property will be under the jurisdiction of the
Washington Western District Bankruptcy Court.

Access to the premises will be prohibited.

Beads of perspiration dripped from my forehead, creating little moisture stains as they hit my silk blouse. *Today was June 21!*

Poor Bonnie was in a state of full meltdown by the time I stumbled back to her reception station. It took a minute to realize the dull monotone buzzing sound in my ear was Harold Spacklemeyer, our Controller. He looked like a man in shock.

“Th—the shit hit the fan a few days ago, Kim. Our shady CEO isn’t in New York on vacation, like he said. Harold dropped his head into his hands, as his voice trailed off. When he looked up, his expression was that of a whipped puppy.

“A team of auditors have been here since yesterday. They’ve begun to uncover a trail of clever embezzlement movements over a period of time. One of the auditors said he was sure it would lead to a dead end, though.” He shook his head like a bobble-head doll. “We’re done for, Kim. Absolutely done for.”

By now my heart was beating so loud, I was sure everyone in the office could hear it. Harold looked at me with those sad sack eyes of his, all softness and sympathy, then patted my hand. “Don’t worry about getting arrested. No one thinks you or I helped him. When I said ‘done for,’ I meant as far as saving the company. We’re all dead ducks, so forget this month’s paycheck.”

The words jumped out of my mouth. “Where could he...”

The distraught little man cut me short. “Steve is no one’s fool. You can bet wherever he ran off to, they don’t have extradition. That damn crook will probably live in the lap of luxury, while we’re all screwed.”

He grabbed me by the elbow. “You’d better hustle. If you don’t remove your personal belongings by five o’clock, you can just kiss them goodbye.

The air conditioning ruffled my sweat-drenched blouse, and I couldn’t stop shivering. Don’t believe it when they say ladies don’t sweat. I was sweating like the proverbial pig.

Bonnie tapped me on the shoulder. “Ki-Kimberly—here’s a box to put your stuff in.” She held out a carton, as she tried to wipe a tear from her cheek with her other hand. “I’m so sorry. We’re all devastated, but I can only imagine how you must feel, you know, walking in on this without warning.”

A voice screamed inside my head. *How I feel? I want to murder someone, that’s how I feel.*

Icy fingers of fear enveloped me, but I made it back to my beautiful office and put anything I wanted into the box. A few hours later, clutching the carton with both hands, I went down to the parking garage. Then I remembered I’d come here directly from the airport and my car was at home. Could it get any worse? I pulled out my cell phone to call a taxi. *This is just a bad dream. It can’t possibly be real.*

But it was.