



CHAPTER 1

Claudia Mc Bride's office door was open; an open door got things done quickly. Open doors meant open minds.

Claudia liked doing things with the minimum of fuss. It made perfect logic to her, that once you found reliable and trustworthy people, you looked after them. You treated them with respect and you did everything possible to avoid unnecessary complications. Responsible adults didn't need to be regimented like boarding school students. They needed to know what they were directly responsible for; they need to understand what was required and when it was required, and they needed the tools to get the job done in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Claudia made sure her people got what they needed, when they needed it. As the CEO she made it her responsibility to know what her people needed. She took her people seriously; they rarely waited long for decisions to be made, or to get the equipment they need to get the job done.

Three years had passed since **EcoLogic** had formed a strategic alliance with the American company **Weather Scope**. The joint venture made their combined force one of the most influential organisations in the western world. Claudia had started EcoLogic from scratch, after resigning from her senior research position with **The Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research**. That was twelve years ago.

When EcoLogic opened for business the offices were furnished with castoffs the staff dragged out of the garages and attics. The only unifying feature was that no two pieces matched, and all of them needed multi layers of paint to fill the deeply scratched surfaces. Buy what they lacked in smart office furniture and fancy décor items, their combined genius and high energy levels made up for; and then some. The EcoLogic team members, weren't just good at their jobs, they were outstanding. And that's why it wasn't long before people who really mattered were noticing them.

People like the New York based, Weather Scope. They were on the lookout for smart new scientists; smart new technology and youthful enthusiasm. The hunt really began in earnest when Weather Scope called for expressions of interest to find an affiliate partner. EcoLogic didn't just meet the selection criteria, they exceeded Weather Scope's expectations on every point.

After they signed the contract which gave them the right to wear the international group's badge of honour, the team convinced Claudia they should move out of their extremely cramped offices. She agreed that the time had come to do a slash and burn, but only on the condition that the tasks of sourcing the new accommodation, shopping for, and selecting, office furniture and fittings, would be done by others.

She wanted nothing to do with the relocation project, and apart from approving the final décor plans, she didn't want to be involved in any of the process of finding, selecting and refurbishing new accommodation. Claudia made it perfectly clear that she was totally abdicating all responsibility for the EcoLogic rebranding. She provided a generous budget to the project, but had absolutely zero input into dismantling one office space and setting up the other. So the team had taken complete responsibility for relocating the equipment, records and everything else they had accumulated over the years.

It had taken Claudia many months to really claim the top level, designer-decorated, office as her own. Not that she didn't like it; she did. She loved the extensive use of metal, glass and marble, softened with soft cream leather, but during her time as a rather austere public servant, she had grown accustomed to cedar and sandstone. She knew she had to break the establishment stereotype, but it took a little time before she felt really at home in the new environment.

Claudia sat at her desk by the window, but today she had hardly noticed the opera house's spectacular white marble sails, or the breathtakingly beautiful harbour, outside. Today she was totally focused on business; the business of climate change.

Katherine Spender, EcoLogic's marketing manager, stuck her head around the laminated glass door and tapped her pen on one of the huge stainless steel hinges. 'It won't work you know' She called across the room.

Claudia looked up, pushed her half glasses higher on her nose, and sighed. She was working to a ten o'clock deadline and a nine-thirty interruption was not welcome. 'What won't work?' she asked without attempting to hide her frustration.

'Working your butt off won't change anything. It won't make it disappear in a poof of smoke.'

'Oh come on Kate. I don't have time for this right now.' Claudia put down her pen with unnecessary force, and pushed the pile of documents to the side. 'You of all people know how important this is. The deadline is non-negotiable.' She leaned back in her white leather chair and frowned.

For a while neither of them spoke. Then Claudia said, 'OK, so I've been working a few too many hours these past weeks' her eyes moved towards the window and soaked in the outside beauty; she sighed again. Only this time it wasn't from frustration; it came from deep inside, and carried a torrent of pain to the surface. Tears she'd been trying to contain all morning, finally won the battle.

Katherine closed the door, quickly pulled the cream silk drapes across the glass wall facing the passageway, and then she crossed the room and placed her hand gently on Claudia's shoulder. 'Hey girlfriend, what's going on?' She said gently wishing she could take away the pain she saw reflected in the eyes of the only person she really loved.



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