

ICE STORM

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Chapter 13 - Supply Orders

In the crane cab my ear piece heard a strong string of swear words in some masculine voice from down there on the ground. That voice conveyed too much anger for me to recognize who.

No one would ever accuse Sam of being a warm and fuzzy social worker. But he did a fair job of it this time asking about the problem.

A delivery truck had just delivered part of an order with an invoice for one thousand feet of pipe and one hundred feet of electrical cable. It had been supposed to be the other way around of a hundred feet of pipe and a thousand feet of cable. That truck had the hundred feet of pipe on it. The problem sounded like that supplier didn't have a thousand feet of expensive copper conduit electrical cable on hand.

Well, that screwed up the day for the crane hoisting that cable up to the current top floor. I told Sam my hunch over the hard hat electronic communications system. He told me the Wyndham central office had been screwing up the orders for weeks. I asked didn't they have some of the catalogues for supplies here on-site?

Grumbling and low level swearing dominated the conversation down there. That Rick would not be happy could have been an understatement.

I took out my hand held and Googled construction materials finding three suppliers scattered around town. I reported what I found to Sam.

His surprise became manifest in his voice although his words were more discrete about what he really thought.

I threw a strong one letter swear word at him. Then I told him I would look up stuff on those suppliers websites if he would give me the specifications.

He warned the crew chiefs the crane would go down in ten minutes. Then he told me to stay right there, and someone would bring catalogues from the work site office up to me.

Eddie in concrete needed a pallet lifted, which I did, and then a very young Hispanic knocked on the cab door.

I had my finger on an electrical cable page in three minutes and called down to Sam to be sure. "Who?" he asked.

"W. W. Grainger. Their southside store says they have it in stock."

“Sit tight. Take no crane orders.” He clicked off the connection without telling me another thing. But he was the site boss. I popped a soda can open from my cooler and wet my diaper.

“Crackle from Sam. Got something to write with?”

“Just a sec.” I dug in my backpack for a pad and a pen. “Sandy to Sam. Yes.”

He gave me a purchase order number from the office, and told me that Rick had said for me to call.

“Thou jest.”

Sam rarely used excess words. “Do it.”

I couldn't resist, and besides he hadn't used his typical word of 'kid' after something like that. “Yaz'za boss, whatever you say. I'm calling now.” I clicked off before he said whatever he usually said. I knew I wouldn't like it.

I wrote everything down including the Grainger phone number. I pushed buttons on my handheld, but got the wrong number. On the second try a sweet woman's voice answered. “W.W. Grainger. Which department, please.”

“Placing a delivery order.”

“Hold, please.” The next voice was a man's. “Will call, counter.”

“Good afternoon. This is Sandy at Wyndham Construction. I have an order for a thousand feet of heavy electrical cable.” I rattled off the stock number. “You said 'will call'. Are you correct for delivery orders?”

“Yup. Got a purchase number?”

I gave that to him. “Honestly, I work at the site. Feel free to call Rick at Wyndham and confirm. Do you have this in stock?”

“Just a minute.” There was a pause. “I can have it out the door in twenty minutes, or so. Where is it to be delivered?”

I told him the site address.

“Which side?”

I stood up and looked out of the cab. “Vine Street is best at the moment.”

“What's your phone number. The driver will call you if there is any problem.”

I provided my cell phone number.

Five minutes later Sam called on the site communications system. “Crackle from Sam. Rick just called and said you told Grainger to check with the office about the purchase authorization. He told me how impressed he is with your thinking that up. That order is on the way. Good work, kid.”

I told him what I had been told, and especially about the Vine Street entrance. "Oh, and thanks for calling me a 'kid' again. I missed that when you said 'do it'. Sorry to raz you a few minutes ago."

"Don't worry about it, kid. You done good. While those catalogues are up there, look up fibreoptic cable." He gave me the specifications.

I returned in about a minute. "Sandy to Sam. Got it."

He called back in two minutes with another purchase order.

"Sure Sam, but pardon me, what the fuck is going on?"

"Rick is furious. Really furious. Something's gone very wrong. He likes you, though. Oops. Hold on."

Sam returned in another minute. "Rick wants you to call Dolan Concrete for two hundred yards of specialty concrete for tomorrow early AM for another site." He gave me the specifications, another purchase order, and which site. Now I knew that all purchase orders started with a 'wynd', a code for the date, and some alphabetic string of letters on the tail.

"Yaz'za boss." I found Dolan on the internet and punched phone numbers in under a minute. They gave me a particularly hard time until I realized this had become a huge order, and they had ever right to not trust a strange voice. "Confirm with Wyndham, Sir. I'm just doing what I have been told."

Three or four minutes later Sam's voice crackled in my ear piece. "Rick told me to tell you to not tell anyone to confirm any more with the office. When you have that purchase order number, that's a command from Rick."

"OK, Sam, but what the hell is going on over there? I've figured out those purchase order numbers. It ain't hard. You give me a catalogue and a need and I'll create my own. Just don't tell anybody. For this I'll only take orders from you."

"Hold, Sandy."

A minute went by. "Rick just ordered you down off that crane and to the office. He ain't mad at you, but he is madder 'n' hell at somebody. I'd get down right smartly. We'll send somebody up there for those catalogues."

"Which way should I point the crane arm for shut down."

"East. Get you butt down here."

When I reached the ground I entered a big pow-wow of Sam and his crew chiefs. They brought me right in. Their best guess became Rick had just fired somebody, or maybe a whole flock of somebodies.

"Uh, sir, can I be your favorite girl?"

They all looked at me strangely.

"I mean, if Rick keeps me there, can I still be part of you guys?"

Eddie the concrete foreman got it first. "Of course, Sandy. You're good. We hate to see you go. You'll always be our girl. Now get your butt in that skirt to the office and straighten that place out. For all of us."

A car arrived. Out popped another crane operator and in I went. It wasted no time getting to the corporate office.

A receptionist I didn't know saw me arriving on the other side of the glass door. She had already picked up the phone when I entered. "Sandy is here. Where do I send her?" There was a pause. "OK." She turned to me. "Someone is coming for you."

My diaper had become wet enough I didn't exactly want to sit down.

A door flew open with a bang, and a man in a shirt and tie waved a hand at me to come.

"Yes, sir." I moved quickly before anybody yelled at me.

He stopped abruptly in the hall and checked both ways. "Rick just fired the entire purchasing department. We're up shit's creek without a paddle. He's assigning two clericals to take calls, and putting you on the hot seat to confirm the specs and place all the orders. If I were you I would write everything down on paper, and smuggle your own copy out of here every night. The shit just hit the fan."

He led me into a big room with desks in cubicles and many catalogues on the shelves above each desk. He barely pointed at a desk for me with more catalogues than anybody else when a man in his mid thirties arrived from technical support. He talked a mile a minute as his fingers flew across the computer keys.

"Oh no you don't." I said. "I don't remember a tenth of that. Send somebody here to work that computer."

He glared at me. "Guess that's me."

"Hi, I'm Sandy a crane operator." I dug my Wyndham name badge out of my backpack and put it on. It had a magnetic backing so I didn't have to poke safety pin holes in my women's clothing. My hard hat was still on my head. "Who are you?"

"Ron." He froze. "You're that miracle working fake girl at Vine Street that walks on water."

"Uh, just a steep stairs up to that crane. Now, what the hell is going on here?"

Ricks voice boomed from behind me. "Good question, Sandy. Purchases are so screwed up the whole office had to go. Your job is to get on top of two things. First is get the orders placed when the sites call in. Second, is figure out what the staff needs are to run this shop. We've been told more squirrely answers than anything. You need a computer operator. How about Ron here?"

"Uh, sir, can Ron be dragged away from his job? I've only known him for five minutes."

Two women came in a door. There weren't dressed very well.

Rick brought them in. "You spend the afternoon setting up your own system. If you need help call the Admin VP. Your third job Sandy is to tell us how many people are needed in here. All of these people have to be back at other jobs just as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir. What if I told you I know of half a dozen people who can't hold jobs because they're cross-dressers like me. But they are very loyal - at least to me. Can I call them?"

"Susie. Run down to personnel for a fist full of employment applications." She darted off. Rick brought his attention back around to me. "Get 'em in here. But tell 'em they have to pass a criminal background check and drug tests."

That afternoon Susie and Ronnie answered the phones and took the orders. I did the searching in the catalogues. Ron punched computer keys and out spooled purchase order numbers. I called the suppliers.

The next morning there were six reasonably dressed women at the front office. Except they were all trans-girls from my group.

I marched into Rick's office. "Sir, how soon do you need this mess cleaned up. Last week, maybe?"

He looked annoyed.

"I've got six good people downstairs. I want them in here now, and we can straighten out the paperwork as we straighten out that office." I couldn't figure out how to say 'may I' and have a strong voice or words, so I didn't say anything."

"Good people. You know them?"

Yes sir, good people, and yes I know them. They've all been battered around in life. They may have all sorts of defects in their backgrounds. What I told them is to get their butts in here and I would see what I could do."

He didn't say a word.

"Sir. You need that office up and running and quickly. That place is going to be a mad house and your good people are going to quit if we yank them around like what happened yesterday. I say we hit the ground running faster than the banks can find out that we're out of compliance."

"Do it."

"Yes, sir."

A week later I asked to be back in the crane at Sam's.

Rick said 'no'. The next day he told me what he really wanted me to do.

My cross-dressing buddies kept their new jobs. There were some tough moments. I had to go in there a few times. Experienced people could have run that office with fewer staff. But it worked, and there were no screw ups unless the work site gave them bum information.

Then Rick sent me out cruising the work sites.