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After an hour had passed, Zayn was finally back at 4S. He heaved a sigh of relief, it was almost impossible to get away from that relentless tomboy.

Zayn felt very uneasy during their meal. Alexandra was obviously a woman, but she desperately tried to mimic the mannerisms of a man. It would have been dismissible if she was decent at it, yet she was far from being convincing.

What made matters worse was that she was completely oblivious to her poor performance. She interacted with him with blind confidence as she butchered her identity. The way she went about conversing with Zayn frequently throwing in curse words for no apparent reason and touching Zayn all too comfortably rendered him speechless.

As a result, when Alexandra offered to keep him company after the meal, he hastily declined and retreated to 4S as he waited for his car to be repaired. Alexandra was swelling with pride as she watched Zayn's departing silhouette fade into the distance. "Heh! What an idiot. He had no idea that he was talking to a woman!"

Her two bodyguards rolled their eyes in unison upon hearing her unbelievable conviction. 'Miss, he was well aware that you're a woman. Your disguise gave it away immediately. You're the one who's being ignorant.'

Of course, none of them had the courage to point the fact out to Alexandra. They knew her temperament very well. Trying to talk any sense into her would only result in a firestorm of rage.

It was not long before she arrived home to her elegant manor. The entrance was crowded with servants and helpers looking on in worry and concern. However, they were relieved of any anxiety as soon as they caught sight of Alexandra.

“Goodness, miss. Where did you run off to? Sir and madam were worried sick!” chided a middle-aged butler as he approached her in short and swift steps.

Alexandra coughed, straightening up. “What is there to be worried about? I’m home already, aren’t I?”

The butler responded, “Miss, sir and madam were worried because they care for your safety. It goes without saying that you’re a very important figure. If anything were to happen to you, we would be killed!”

“That’s such an exaggeration. We’re not trapped in the past, you would never be killed for something like that anymore.” Alexandra shot back impatiently. “Alright, alright. We can drop it. I’m back home, so none of that matters anymore.”

They continued to speak as Alexandra made her way towards the manor, followed by her many servants as they attended to her diligently. It was quite the scene.

As soon as she had set foot into the living room, she was met with the gazes of her family members. All of them donned a different set of expressions.

The middle-aged man who sat on a large chair glared at Alexander unsmilingly. He had a square face and maintained a sombre disposition. In fact, he looked rather similar to Alexandra. His deep voice boomed throughout the space as he chastised her. "You're insane for dressing like that. Where's your sense of dignity? Shame!"

He was Alexandra's father, Victor Smith.

The handsome young man seated opposite Victor exuded an air of pose and grace. You could tell that he was a man of great wealth and refined mannerisms with a single glance. Upon witnessing Alexandra's grand entrance, he gazed at her in admiration. Though, Alexandra's attire left him raising his brows.

Alexandra spared a disapproving glance at the young man. She furrowed her brows ever so slightly, suggesting her ill feelings towards him. She approached Victor to greet him obediently. "Good evening, Daddy."

With that, she turned to head upstairs. Alexandra completely disregarded the other young man in the room who obviously admired her.

The Smiths established very strict family practices to maintain order and discipline. For example, not only are the servants required to greet the masters, but the children were to greet their parents as well.

This practice applied to outsiders as well.

“Come back, you haven’t greeted Mr. Brown yet,” commanded Victor sternly.

Alexandra rolled her eyes, turned around to face William, and forced the joyless words out of her mouth. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Brown.”

She did not bother to meet his eyes, and she was as curt as she could be without getting into trouble. William was slightly aggravated at her behavior, and he could not suppress the dissatisfaction that plagued his features. Despite this, he bottled his anger and relaxed his lips into a gentle smile. “There’s no need for such formalities, Ms. Smith. I…”

However, before William could even finish his sentence, Alexandra had already stormed out of the room without another word. William was left speechless as he watched her disappear, frozen with wide eyes.

Victor called out to her twice, but was unable to stop her leaving. Flushed from embarrassment, he apologized guiltily to him. “William, it’s my fault for spoiling her. My daughter’s not one for politeness, please don’t mind her.”

“It’s no problem, it’s no problem at all.” William waved his hand dismissively with a well-meaning smile. “Ms. Smith’s direct attitude makes her rather adorable. Though, I have to say that she has a very unique choice of fashion.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine.” William waved his hand and said with a smile, “Ms. Smith’s forthright attitude makes her very adorable. However, her attire earlier is rather unique actually.”

Victor heaved a helpless sigh, “My daughter is a mischievous one indeed. She disguises herself as a man so she can go out and ‘have some fun’, at least that’s what she tells me. There’s nothing I can do, even if I am her father. I’m sorry for her behavior, William.”

William said, “Oh? I didn’t know that Ms. Smith engaged in such an eccentric pastime. That’s interesting, very interesting indeed, hah-hah.”

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They chatted for a while more before William abruptly took on a grave tone of voice. “Sir, in all frankness, I paid you a visit because I have something important to discuss with you.”

Victor responded earnestly, “What is it? If it’s anything I can be of use for, I won’t back down from an opportunity to help a friend.”

William glanced in the direction in which Alexandra had stormed off, and cracked into a sheepish smile. “It was love at first sight with me and Ms. Smith. I’ve spent countless

nights tossing and turning in my bed because she's always on my mind, and so after mustering enough courage, I've come here today to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage!"

Howard was having a tough time because of his recent demotion. Not only had he been demoted, but his authority had been stripped from him as well. He could well be considered as nothing but a miserable bum now. What made matters worse was that he still owed Gordon an outstanding amount of a few hundred thousand dollars. He had to resort to maxing out his credit cards and loaning all the money he could scrounge up from his friends before he could finally return the money.

While he wallowed in his misfortune, Faye was the polar opposite, her company was thriving and she was making a name for herself in the industry. She had full authority over the company treasury, and she was making waves as a powerful figure in her family as well. Howard was painfully jealous of her.

And in an attempt to vent out his pent up frustration and hatred, he had turned his home upside down by smashing and breaking everything in his wake.

He hated Faye with a passion. That f*ck*ing b*tch took everything that was in his name. She was the root cause of his abjection. He hated Zayn even more because that good-for-nothing freeloader was acquainted with Gordon, yet he refused to beg for his mercy that day. Zayn was to blame for his fall from grace too!

He swore to himself that if the opportunity ever showed itself, he would certainly seek revenge on the two and reclaim all of what had been lost in one fell swoop!

At last, the opportunity did indeed show itself.

Through a friend's connections, he was able to befriend a big shot business magnate and angel investor whose net worth exceeded a few hundred million dollars at the very least. If the magnate could grant him an investment, the Carter family business could be resurrected to its former glory. In fact, it could even be revived to greater heights!

Now that the Carters were stuck in another financial crisis, the rupture of the capital chain had resulted in some of their partners cutting ties and abandoning their contracts. If they could not obtain the necessary funding needed to operate the business in a week's time, going bankrupt would be the least of their worries! They would also need to fork out large sum of money as compensation, and their predicted loss would amount to over eight million dollars!

As a result, it had caused quite a stir in the Carter family as everyone frantically tried to come up with a feasible solution to circumvent the situation. Faye was in a state of nerves as well.

She wanted to meet Violet Vision's chairman so they could discuss the possibility of him investing in the business. However, she could not bring herself to do it.

Howard finally found the opportunity one day to have a meal with the business magnate. They were able to find time to talk about the Carter family financing situation as well.

“Mr. Brown! The Carters are considered a rather large scale company in Waltz City, and we’re certified experts on anything and everything that there is to lighting. We’re in possession of the world’s most cutting edge technology and we have the skills to back it all up. Invest in us and you won’t regret it one bit!”

Howard procured the documents and passed it to the young man before him politely before he continued, “Mr. Brown, this is our…”

“Alright,” Mr. Brown rubbed his eyes as he crossed his legs and picked up his cigar from the table. He pressed his lips against the cigar, and Howard dutifully got up to light the cigarette for him. “I will invest 15 million dollars into Neotech Co. Ltd., but I require 51% of the company’s shares to be under my name.”

Howard was rather taken aback by such an outlandish request He protested, “Mr. Brown, Neotech belongs to the Carters, after all. If you take 51% of the company’s shares in exchange for 15 million dollars of investments, I consider it a bit much. I’m afraid that my grandfather may not agree to that.”

“Heh-heh, you’re up to your neck in debt and your capital chain is in shambles again. If you don’t show up with more than a million dollars by the end of the week, you’re going to have to file for bankruptcy. Isn’t that right? How much will Neotech Co. matter to you when you’re on the streets and penniless?” asked Mr. Brown disdainfully.

Howard was at a loss for words as he stared at Mr. Brown glumly. He could not believe his ears.

Mr. Brown, on the other hand, was casually checking his phone before he cracked into a meaningful smile. He held the phone up to Howard. “The woman in this photo, it’s your younger sister, is that right?”

Howard was stunned. Was that not Faye?

“Mr. Brown, what are you implying here?”

“Send her over so we can have a friendly conversation, and I might just ask for only 40% of your shares.” Mr. Brown narrowed his eyes as he conveyed words that only a man could truly understand.

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As a man, Howard clearly understood Mr. Brown’s intentions. Mr. Brown obviously wanted to sleep with Faye!

If it had been in the past, Howard would have blindly agreed to it without the slightest hesitation at all. However, it was different now. It was not because he was unwilling, but it was because he was not in the position to make such a decision.

Now that the Carters held Faye to such a high regard, even George would be tentative to force her into doing something so salacious. Now that Faye's status in the Carter family was different, even George would not necessarily be able to force her to come to do this if she refused to. And even then, he still feared Zayn to a certain extent. As of late, Lady Luck seemed to be on his side. Not only did he manage to save Jordan's life, he had even gotten acquainted with George.

George Hayes was a malicious man with too much power for his own good. The ordinary people of Waltz City knew better than to offend someone so disreputable. Of course, what mattered the most to him was that the contribution in question was in his name. At the end of the day, he was the man who befriended Mr. Brown. In case Faye did manage to close the deal, wouldn't she be credited for the deal?

"Why? Are you troubled?" said Mr. Brown, furrowing his brows as he stared at Howard in displeasure. Howard was quick to bounce back, "No, no, no. I don't mean that all, of course. I'm not making the decisions here. Even though Faye's my cousin, she's always been stuck up and proud. I can't just demand she'd show up here. Plus, she's married already. Her husband's acquainted with Gordon."

"Gordon?" Upon hearing the name, Mr. Brown cracked into a disdainful smile and said, "So what if it's Gordon Hayes? He's just a witless brute. He's less than nothing to me!"

Mr. Brown was so domineering that he had no respect for Gordon.

Howard heaved a sigh of relief. As long as Mr. Brown was unafraid of Gordon, it should all play out according to plan.

Mr. Brown continued to say, "This is a good opportunity for your family think about it."

Howard hesitated for a moment before he spoke up, "Mr. Brown, in case I do manage to get Faye here, wouldn't she get all the credit? I'm not scared of telling you this. My relationship with Faye is honestly on the rocks. In fact, she's the reason why I'm in this mess in the first place!"

Mr. Brown chuckled before assuring him, "Don't worry. I'm only interested in having a drink and dance with her. When I do end up investing in your family business, there will be ample opportunity for you to take the credit."

"Thank you for your help then, Mr. Brown!" Howard was over the moon.

The next day, Howard marched back to Neotech Co. as if he had become a hero overnight. He walked toward the meeting room in long, confident strides.

The situation with the Carter family business was becoming more dire by the minute. Two more of their partners paid a visit to the company demanding for payment. Had it not been for their respect for George, the company would have been sued long ago.

However, the company was still powerless when it came to affairs concerning other companies, regardless of their respect for George. The two partners provided them a grace period of three days, and if the Carters were unable to pay the hundreds of thousands of dollars needed to appease them, they would meet in court.

The Carter family members were all on their toes, and for good reason. They held meetings every day in an attempt to devise a strategy that would resolve the situation once and for all.

A layer of darkness shrouded the meeting room as everyone exchanged looks of harrowing dismay. George sat in his seat with a solemn expression upon his features.

“Now that the company’s capital chain has ruptured once more, I would like the members of the floor to provide any effective solutions that will pull the Carters out of this critical situation.”

His question was left unanswered as everyone lowered their heads in shameful unison. They were at their wits’ end.

“Faye, do you have any ideas?” George looked to Faye with an ounce of hope.

Faye looked up, only to shake her head and respond dejectedly, “Grandpa, I’m tight on funds as well.”

Someone from the crowd suddenly piped up. “Why don’t we ask Mr. Wilson for help again he might loan us some more money!”

As the words left his lips, he glanced over to Faye expectantly.

An ounce of hope arose in the hearts of everyone present in the meeting room. They looked to Faye as if she were a beacon of hope.

It was true that Faye was able to borrow three million dollars from Mr. Wilson previously, so if Faye could sacrifice herself for the greater good once more, she could possibly dig the Carters out of their hole.

However, George shook his head before explaining, “That’s off the table. I’ve already asked Mr. Wilson and he won’t be loaning us any more money. Moreover, if we don’t return the three million dollars within the agreed three years, we’re going to have to bear the legal consequences!”

Someone muttered softly, “I thought there wasn’t an IOU?”

It was none other than Hector.

George immediately stared daggers at him, causing Hector to tuck his head away guiltily.

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As soon as she laid her eyes on the scene, Faye felt immediately discouraged.

“You idiot, do you think we can just walk away from paying the three million dollars just because there wasn’t an IOU? Fifi loaned the money from the chairman of Violet Vision. He’s so powerful that the Carters could never afford to resist him. We are obligated to return the money, even if it means loaning more of it from a loan shark! ”

George paused before directing his attention to Faye. “Oh, Faye, aren’t you on friendly terms with the chairman? Would you like to meet with him again? We’re not loaning money from him this time around, instead we’re looking to strike a business proposition with him that will benefit the both of us. What do you say?”

Faye considered George’s words for a moment before bursting his bubble, “Grandpa, my relationship with the chairman honestly isn’t all that intimate. If I pay him a visit, he would most likely disagree with our proposal.”

In truth, Faye met with the chairman of Violet Vision yesterday. It was such a waste, she did not even have the permission to meet him. She even waited for a few hours to receive a response, yet to no avail.

In the end, she did meet Sean, however. Though, Sean told her explicitly that the possibility of the chairman investing in the Carter family business was near to none, so she could only leave empty handed and disappointed.

The room fell into a hush upon hearing Faye's disheartening words, and it was suddenly back to square one.

Out of the blue, a clamor was heard from behind the door. "Mr. Carter, you've been removed from the board of directors. You have no authority to enter the premises during an ongoing meeting..."

"Move! I'm back to save the Carters!"

With that, the door to the meeting room was practically forced open as Howard strode into the meeting room exuberantly. He had a proud smile playing on his lips as he paraded around the room acting high and mighty.

"Howard! We've kicked you out of the board of directors. What are you doing here, leave now!"

"That's right. You're the reason we're in this mess in the first place, yet you still have the guts to just stroll right in!"

“Can someone call security to remove him?”

Almost everyone was glaring at Howard bitterly as they verbally attacked him.

Many people were glaring at Howard ferociously and they were scolding him in anger.

The Carters were supposedly saved with the three million dollars that they had loaned from the chairman of Violet Vision, but that selfish b*st*rd Howard just had to throw a wrench in their plans by gambling away more than a million dollars. He was the reason the Carters were in peril once again! Numerous Carter family members loathed him with a passion. Had it not been for George’s protectiveness, Howard would have been beaten up more times than he could count. Yet here he was standing right before them in such a pompous manner. The mere presence of him ticked everyone off.

Faye was no exception as well, in fact, she looked like she was out for blood.

George demanded in a deep voice, “How dare you come back, Howard?”

Howard was no longer his demoralized self. As soon as he entered the room, he pulled a chair to sit right next to Faye. He even nudged her twice to make room for himself.

“Hey, make way, make way. Where are your manners?”

“You still have the nerve to come back, huh, Howard?” spat Faye coldly.

“Hah-hah, of course I do!” Howard’s arrogant gaze swept past everybody in the room. He insulted the lot of them, “Look at all of you, it was only a little over a million dollars. Did you really have to arrange a full blown meeting to talk this through? What a bunch of losers.”

His insensitive remark triggered a firestorm of angry threats from the crowd once more.

“There’s no need for you to look at me like that. I’m back this time to save the Carters!” Howard announced loudly. He extended a finger. “I, Howard Carter, have acquired an investment worth 15 million dollars!”

“What?”

“F*ck!”

“For real?”

His statement sent the room into a frenzy of discussion. Faye was stunned as well. She had never expected that someone as useless as Howard was capable of getting his hands on such a large investment.

It was known that Neotech Co. was only worth a few million dollars.

“Howard, explain it to me in detail. Where on earth did you acquire 15 million dollar investment? You can’t be lying, can you?”

George was quickly excited by the news. “Stop beating around the bush. Tell us, quickly! Who’s the investor who’s so graciously providing us 15 million dollars?”

Howard relished the sensation of being revered. He narrated the details of the events slowly. Noticing the uncontrollable excitement that filled the room, he bragged on haughtily. “That’s what I’ve been saying all of you are the worst! Even after forever, no one’s ever managed to get a single investor on board, yet you still thought that removing me from the board of directors was a good idea! Heh-heh.”

Everyone felt ashamed by his statement, though they could not bring themselves to refute it either.

When he was done gloating about his success, Howard finally began to elaborate on the particulars of the investment. “My investor’s big on coffee, and that’s why he’s specifically requested that Faye accompanies me to his office and makes him coffee before we sign the contract. If you know what I mean.”

Everybody in the room was a grown adult, so they immediately understood exactly what he meant.

Upon hearing that, Faye's expression darkened at once.

"No way!"

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During the previous financial crisis, Faye had already felt disheartened enough. There was absolutely no way that she would agree to do something like that!

She still remembered how she sacrificed herself for the greater good in order to loan the three million dollars from the chairman. It felt even worse knowing none of the Carter family members believed her they went as far as calling her an embarrassment to the Carters.

They still harbored those prejudices against her, and she knew. Plus, who did these people take her for?

She was a proper lady!

Howard had already expected Faye to say that. He sneered at her, "What kind of attitude is that, Faye? I was only going to ask you to come with me when I sign the contract, and now you're overreacting and being the drama queen like you always are. Are you even a Carter?"

Faye stared down at him coldly. “Howard, don’t try that stuff with me again! I sacrificed myself when we were going through tough times back then, and guess what happened to me? I managed to get my hands on the money, but all of you refused to believe me. Some of you even accused me of tarnishing the Carter family reputation! Let me remind you, I’m not the one who threw over a million dollars out of the window because of my gambling addiction, and be the whole reason we’re in this predicament at all!”

Howard was infuriated by Faye’s provocations. He wanted to prove her wrong, but nothing came to his mind when he tried to think of an appropriate rebuttal.

Meanwhile, George chimed in, “Alright, break it up. Howard, who is this investor of yours? And why does he want Faye to make his coffee?”

“Grandpa, the investor’s name is Mr. Brown, William Brown, to be exact. The investment genius whose name is known far and wide, who was a net worth of over 150 million dollars, that William Brown! He earned it all by himself. Plus, William has the Browns as his backers. With William’s investment, the Carter family business will definitely expand exponentially! By then, not only will our business operation focus on offline marketing, but we’ll also be exploring online marketing as well! It’s a long term investment. Think of it this way, he’s only asking for 40% of our shares in exchange for his 15 million dollars. If we don’t take up his offer, the family business will be done for,” said Howard loudly.

His statement piqued the interest of the crowd.

Yes, the Carters were already on the verge of destruction. Without an investment, they would surely be doomed.

It sounded too good to be true. The investor was only asking for 40% of their shares for 15 million dollars.

George was tempted as well.

Faye interjected, "You know, I'm not the only woman in our family. You could have Eve or Skye make the coffee instead."

"That's different, William is requesting for you specifically." Howard countered, "In addition, you're just going to be there to buy some time. We're not asking you to do anything else, what are you scared of?"

"There's no way that I'd go regardless!" said Faye coldly. She could not be bothered to involve herself in Howard's mind games anymore.

"You!" Howard was infuriated. He grunted heavily before insisting, "Alright then, watch the Carters go bankrupt since you're so full of yourself! Don't blame me when all of this comes crashing down on you. Your father's the legal representative of our company. If we don't have the money by then, he's going to jail for commercial fraud."

Howard was no longer panicking, instead he was sneering at Faye maliciously.

Faye faltered as she tried to deflect Howard's contemptuous words, but you could clearly see the hurt in her eyes. However, she quickly jeered back at him. "Howard, is that your pathetic attempt at scaring me? The legal representative of our company is your father, not mine, so technically your father's the one getting put behind bars."

"Heh-heh-heh-heh, we shall wait and see then."

Howard leaned back on his chair and put his feet up on the table. He looked unsettlingly calm.

Faye hated to admit it, but Howard's confident disposition made her mildly anxious. She glanced at George. "Grandpa, is he... right?"

George did not respond. It took him a few seconds before he nodded slowly to indicate his acknowledgement.

Faye flew into a panic. She clenched her teeth as she took out her phone and shakily dialed Waine's number.

"Hello, Dad? It's me. Are you the legal representative of the company now?... Ah, no, I thought it was Uncle Hector. Why... Alright, I understand, it's fine."

As soon as she hung up on him, Faye felt like the air was knocked out of her lungs. She was furious, but her rage was quickly replaced by unimaginable desperation.