

## Chapter 21 She Was Smiling

It was 6 am when the ringtone of his phone caused him to wake up from his sleep.

Lancelot groaned as his eyelids parted. He had always been an early riser, but he didn't mind waking up late every now and then, especially when he had dreams like the one whoever was calling had just rudely interrupted. In his dream, he had seen her, but he would not go into details about that now.

Frowning, he turned to his bedside drawer where his phone lay in. When he saw the caller ID, he sprung up immediately. He clicked the answer icon and pressed the phone to his right ear.

As he did, Lancelot caught sight of his chest in his mirror. The hair on his skin was beginning to overgrow, he made a mental note to get rid of the rough parts of it later.

"Peter?"

"Good Morning sir, I take it from the sound of your voice that I have just interrupted your sleep."

Lancelot's brows furrowed in annoyance. What was wrong with this man?

"I am hoping for your sake that you did not wake me up to talk about work," Lancelot spoke. The dangerous tone in his voice told Peter that if Lancelot didn't see his reason for waking him up a good one, he would be in serious trouble. Luckily, it was.

"My apologies sir. It is only that the flight I booked for us leaves in..."  
There was a short antagonizing pause.

"Forty-five minutes."

Lancelot's gaze widened.

"And you didn't see it fit to call me earlier?!" His feet were on the ground now as he ran his free fingers down the rough mess of hair he had on his head.

"I can always arrange another one if we miss this one," Peter said in a serious tone, but Lancelot had worked with the man long enough to know that he was secretly making fun of him.

"Mock me all you want Robertson, but if I miss this flight, you miss your next month pay check," Lancelot spoke as he hurried to the door of his bathroom.

"Oh my! I shall be there to assist you in getting ready sir, I'm on my ..."

Lancelot hung up the phone and walked closer to his bed, before flinging the gadget on his bed. He did so in a haste, but not without caution to make sure that it didn't fall to the ground and break. Lancelot did his human best to make sure that he was ready to leave in twenty minutes. Luckily, he had packed all personal and official things he would need on his trip, the night before.

He was grateful for his traveler's instinct. Lancelot had felt that Peter would not be able to book an early flight, he had anticipated to leave by 12 pm after a short but successful banter with his mother. Lancelot knew Madeline would still be fast asleep. His mother never rose from bed before 8am. Her sleep was one of the many things she took very seriously.

However, today it would work to her son's advantage.

By 6:25 am, Peter was struggling to carry Lancelot's suitcase down the steps. The man wondered what it was Lancelot always carried that made his luggage awfully heavy.

Butler Lee was walking up the steps when he saw Lancelot hurrying down, Peter was behind him, struggling with a black box.

Lee's questioning eyes rested on Lancelot.

"Where is my mother?" Lancelot stopped to ask him.

"In her bed Chambers, still fast asleep," Lee replied, looking over Lancelot to the big box Peter carried. Lancelot took note of the man's gaze and chuckled lightly.

"I'm heading to New York, something very important came up," Lancelot said hurriedly, walking past Lee.

"Young master! What shall I tell the Luna when she's up?! She would have my head for allowing you out of the palace without her permission."

"Then I shall be sure to make a generous donation to the success of your burial ceremony!" Lancelot called out over his shoulder, not sparing the old man a glance. Seemingly frustrated, Lee's eyes fell on Peter who was still struggling.

"He would be back in latest a week. He wanted you to pass that message to the Luna."

Before Lee could reply, Peter walked ahead of him as well, still struggling to catch up with his boss.

Inside the car, Lancelot continued to rub his sweaty palms against the fabric of his sea blue suit pants. It was cold outside, even colder in the Tesla due to the air conditioner, still, beads of sweat formed on his forehead and gathered in his palm. "Perhaps we should lower the temperature sir? You're sweating," Peter said, after noticing Lancelot's predicament.

Lancelot frowned and turned his eyes to him.

"Focus on whatever it is you're doing," Lancelot said, brushing him off. Sighing, Peter returned his eyes to the iPad on his lap.

Lancelot just wished the man would leave him alone. How could Peter not see that he was not in the mood for small talk? Here he was, slowly losing his mind from all the pent-up anxiety he dared not show or speak about, and Peter was sitting by him worried about nothing but the temperature?!

Lancelot bit his lower lip and sighed. Just why exactly was he getting mad at Peter? The man was only doing his job.

Transferred aggression. He heard his subconscious say.

Indeed, he was transferring all his anger and every other thing he felt, turning it into irritation and leaving it on the poor man's head. Peter had worked too hard to deserve that, but Lancelot would not apologize. He paid Peter too well to do

so.

So, he stayed quiet for the rest of the drive to the airport.

They boarded a first-class flight on American Airlines to New York.

As Lancelot settled into his seat, he couldn't keep his thoughts straight. He was going to see her now, what did he intend to do? What did he intend to say?

How was he going to cope with seeing her again after she had abandoned him? Snuck out of his life just the same way she had snuck in, only quieter. "Lemonade sir?"

Lancelot sighed in annoyance. Why did everyone decide to cut into his thoughts today?

He looked away from the white clouds the window graced his sight with and set his eyes on the thin blonde woman in front of him. From her accent, Lancelot could tell she was French. And no, he did not want a lemonade.

What he wanted right now might have smelt like fresh lemons the first time they had met, but she certainly wasn't a lemonade.

When he dismissed her, Lancelot's eyes rested on Peter who was currently staring at him. When their eyes met, Peter cleared his throat and turned his gaze away.

What was it with his assistant these days? Lancelot thought. The man was beginning to move in suspicious ways. First, he made sure Lancelot went through the document knowing that Roxanne was part of the applicants. Secondly, he had been cautiously looking at him to take note of his every expression.

What exactly did Peter have planned in his head this time?

"Out with it," Lancelot said, calling out to Peter.

Wide eyed, Peter sat up, straightened his posture and cleared his throat.

"I only wanted to say that I have made arrangements for a five-star hotel. Exquisite and luxurious, one of the best in the state. You're going to enjoy every second of your stay sir, I promise you," Peter replied.

Lancelot only replied by nodding his head. The man seemed a little too eager to announce a hotel reservation.

It was obvious Lancelot would have to wait to see what other aces Peter was hiding up his white sleeves.

When they touched down at New York, a special cab was waiting at the airport for them. It was a silent one-hour drive to the hotel. Lancelot found himself wondering why Peter had not booked the previous hotel they had

stayed in. For all he could remember, that one had been closer to the airport.

The journey from road to sky, then road again was driving Lancelot mad. He needed to be under a cold shower or soaking himself in warm water. The both had a way of stretching out his bones and calming his nerves.

And he needed the two right now.

However, Lancelot knew that he only had a little time, and the interview was the next Thursday. Six days away from now. That wouldn't work. He thought.

They would have to move the date forward, to Monday.

Thinking out loud, he turned to Peter.

"What do you say we move the date further, to Monday?"

Peter heightened his gaze to meet Lancelot's.

"On such short notice?"

"They should be able to." Lancelot's tone was not that of a suggestion, it was definite tone that yelled "so shall it be." Peter knew this, and so he picked up his phone to dial the managing director's number. "Hello sir. Yes, it is I, Peter Robertson. Mr. Dankworth and I have just arrived the city... Yes, the boss decided it was important he is present...yes, about that..." He paused to look up at Lancelot again. Lancelot nodded, a sign for Peter to go ahead.

"Mr. Dankworth has just notified me that he would like the date for the interview to be moved to Monday..." A faint chuckle escaped his lips, earning him a raised brow from Lancelot.

"No, not upper week Monday, this coming Monday... Yes, I understand, but..."

"Whoever is not present can forget about the job," Lancelot cut in, making sure his voice was audible enough to be heard from the other end of the line.

"You heard the boss," Peter said, chuckling nervously.

"Yes...of course, thank you." He hung up immediately.

"All done sir, the interview has been moved to Monday."

"Good," was all Lancelot said. He had more things in his mind to worry about.

The hotel room had been just as Peter said it would be. Lancelot had settled in perfectly, taken the bath he had so much longed for and was now going through the file with the list of applicants again. While Peter was making sure Lancelot's clothes were arranged neatly.

"What do you say we drive around to Tudor city, Mid-Manhattan? I just really feel like getting to understand this place," Lancelot said, addressing his question to Peter, even though his eyes remained on the copy of Roxanne's CV he had with him, in his laptop.

Peter's lips spread out in a knowing smirk.

"That would not be a problem sir. We are not quite far from there."

Lancelot wanted to laugh. So this was why he had not booked a room at their previous hotel! Peter had brought him here on purpose.

"Did you do this?" Lancelot couldn't help but ask. Just what was Peter trying to plan?

Peter feigned a lost and confused look.

"Whatever are you talking about sir?"

To that, Lancelot shook his head in amusement. The man was an absolute character.

Thirty minutes after Peter was done sorting out Lancelot's clothes, they boarded a cab to drive around the city.

As they approached the 40th street, where Tudor city was situated, Lancelot felt Ziko grow violent within him.

"What is it now?" Lancelot asked, although inaudibly.

"Mate!" Ziko yelled.

"What?"

"Mate! Left! Mate!"

On hearing this, Lancelot turned left just as Ziko had instructed.

It was then his world seemed to have stopped.

It was her, he couldn't mistake that smile for anything else. She was clad in a black sweater, hands locked with the black woman Lancelot recognized as her best friend. They had stepped out of the coffee shop with plastic cups in their hands. Laughing.

She was so happy, yet she had brought him nothing but agony and confusion.

"Mate!"

"Oh, shut up!" Lancelot ordered. Earning him a stare from Peter who sat across him.

She was smiling. Even after everything she had put him through!

His fists curved into balls on top of his lap.

He would wipe that smile out of her face the moment he got the chance to.