

## Chapter 0017

Grace

Shit. I hadn't expected him to ask that. His expression was cool and unaffected. It felt like he already knew the answer, yet he was still waiting for me to answer. Why? Was this a test too? Some sort of power game? I swear, the stress of dealing with this man was going to be the death of me, I was sure. I cleared my throat and answered the call to stall for time, but I hit the speaker button before I could lift the phone off the cradle.

"Ma'am? The board is convening soon. They want to know if you'll be coming to the meeting."

I frowned. Was that normal? I didn't think I had to. Besides, I needed to check on the transfer from Charles and start working on paying the bills as quickly as possible. The contract was done, so the transfer should make it to my account by the end of the day. At least, that's what I hoped. With any luck, Kelly would think there was just some power issue. We could spend the night at Eason if I told a convincing enough lie. She hadn't texted or called me yet, so maybe she'd taken Richard and Cecil out, but I knew it was just a matter of time. [2](#)

"Oh, well—" Charles lunged forward and tapped the mute button.

I looked up and met his intense gaze. He looked so frustrated but not upset.

"You're going to the meeting," he stated firmly.

I frowned, feeling a bit defiant. I'd just signed the contract, and he was already making demands.

"What does it matter? I could just introduce you—"

"You're the owner of the company, the leader of the board, and you're new. You have to go."

I shook my head. "My father never had a board."

His eyes narrowed. "But you do."

I pursed my lips, eyeing him and trying to ignore the sting of his words. My father wouldn't need a board to help him run the company. He didn't need help at all, and I was failing him. I glanced over Charles' head to the portrait of my father before clenching my jaw. As much as I hated it, Charles had way more experience with this than I did. I didn't have to like the fact that he did, but I should listen to whatever reasoning he had.

"Why?"

He sighed. "You are not your father. You have hurdles he didn't, and I imagine strengths he didn't have."

I blinked at him. That, really, wasn't what I expected. The sting from earlier felt soothed. I felt my hackles start to

lower. It was such a reasonable thing to say, something my father had said so many times.

That mind of yours, Gracie, he'd say and laugh. If I had about half of it, I'd be President!

Charles softened his expression and leaned forward.

"I can tell that you have a head for the science behind Wolfe Medical. That's a talent, a gift, but business acumen is a skill that takes time to learn. And you need it to get Wolfe Medical back in the black. I'll help you learn the business side of things, starting with this board meeting."

My lips twitched into a smile before I hit the mute button.

"Yes, I'll be there. When will it be?"

"In about an hour. I'll put it on your calendar."


"Thank you."

I hung up and looked at him. "How'd you know?"


He smirked and nodded at my desk. "Clutter and that textbook certainly helped give it away."

I looked down. "I'm really going to have a hard time getting anything past you."

"You and everyone else," Charles said. "We're... partners at the moment, Grace. And we'll be partners for a long time to come. We're going to have to build some trust between us."

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I bit my lip. "... the last lycan I trusted did this to me."

Charles nodded. "Trust is a ladder, built one rung at a time. I imagine if you give me the chance to build that ladder with you, you'll find that it's quite sturdy." 


He sat back. "But the choice is yours ultimately. I will be attending the board meeting. Though I have a feeling no one, there will like it."

My lips twitched. "Something tells me that you might even enjoy pissing them all off."

"Do they own a stake in the company?"


I frowned. "I'm not sure."

I wasn't really sure what they were supposed to be doing or how they got their positions. Charles' expression turned dark.

"I'm sure we'll find out. Together." 

I smiled, feeling a little reassured as I nodded. "I'll try to learn to trust you."

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