

Love Spell 481

Chapter 481

"ScholarLoan!" Zadie replied.

"Do they specifically provide loan services to students?"

"Yes, exclusively for female students."

"Did you give them anything as collateral?"

"No, bu-but they took some photos and videos of me..." Zadie stammered, blushing deeply and avoiding Carlisle's gaze.

Carlisle naturally understood what kind of photos she was talking about.

This proved troublesome. If they angered the loan company, the company might release those photos at Zadie's school. Those photos kept the borrowers from reporting to the police.

Carlisle inquired further, "Where is this company located?"

After a moment of silence, Zadie shook her head and replied, "I can't tell you. If they find out, they'll beat me up again!"

Carlisle didn't bother asking further. He took out his phone and sent a message to Francis.

Daniel waited downstairs for nearly an hour, his legs turning numb. He bought a bottle of milk to drink while scanning the area, wondering who he was supposed to meet.

Since Carlisle had asked him to escort someone, he figured it must be someone he knew. So, he kept an eye out for familiar faces.

Suddenly, he heard a honk from a black Santana and realized it was Carlos' car. He wondered if Carlos was the person he was supposed to escort.

"Daniel? What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in school today?" Carlos asked, pulling up next to Daniel with a gentle smile.

"Carlos Ziegler, you old man, don't you remember? It's Sunday today!"

"Oh, excuse me! I've been working so much lately, my brain just assumes it's a workday!"

Carlos tapped his forehead.

He had become accustomed to Daniel addressing him by his first name. Ever since news of his family matters spread around the office, most people had started treating him differently. Daniel had also started calling him by his first name around that time.

Despite asking Ryan to discipline Daniel, Ryan had dismissed him as too rebellious to heed his advice. Eventually, Carlos had no choice but to accept Daniel as he was.

"As for why I'm here... I'm here to escort you, Mr. Zeigler!" Daniel said, tossing the empty

bottle casually next to the security booth.

The bottle hit the ground, prompting a tall, muscular security guard to emerge from the booth. His expression was dark as he fixed his intense gaze on Daniel.

Daniel shrugged and quickly picked up the empty bottle, properly disposing of it in the bin. Then, with an innocent smile, he returned to Carlos' car.

Still taken aback by Daniel's respectful address, Carlos asked, "What... what did you just call me?"

Daniel replied honestly, "Mr. Zeigler, of course."

Carlos smiled lightly.

"Were you sent by the chairman?"

Daniel nodded firmly.

"That's right!"

Carlos felt a thrill, finding it hard to believe that Carlisle had actually sent someone to escort him. Clearly, Carlisle recognized his importance.

However, Carlos wondered about Daniel's relationship with Carlisle. He suspected that Ryan had asked Carlisle to train Daniel at one of his companies, and Carlisle couldn't find the proper excuse to turn him down. Hence, Daniel was there.

Carlos chuckled, his face flushed with amusement.

"Daniel, since you treated me with respect, I'll make sure to make your father a security guard when I take over his place."

Daniel was startled as he pondered, "Is this old idiot hearing himself? What makes him think he's taking over my dad's position? Has he lost his mind?"

Daniel wondered if Carlos had misunderstood Carlisle's intentions. If Carlos thought Carlisle was going to promote him as CEO of Xenos Factory, Daniel thought he might as well play along.

Daniel sniffled and choked out, "That's very kind of you, Mr. Zeigler. No wonder you've been such a loyal friend to my father for over ten years!"

Carlos laughed heartily.

"Indeed we have been. Let's go. Take me to the chairman!"

Carlos parked his car in the lot. He walked with his hands behind his back, exuding the demeanor of a leader overseeing his company. Daniel walked alongside him and guided him to the elevator, where they encountered Anthony and three striking, mature women.

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Daniel caught the fragrant scent of the three women and couldn't help but close his eyes and take a deep breath. Even Carlos couldn't resist stealing a few more glances at the three beauties.

"Dang! Why doesn't Xenos Factory have such stunning women? If it did, I wouldn't have settled for a plain woman in my second marriage," Carlos thought.

"Hello, Mr. Swanson," Daniel greeted Anthony respectfully.

With a light smile, Anthony responded, "You are?"

Considering Sean and Owen were both CEOs, Anthony was confident that the teenagers Carlisle brought along were no ordinary people. He figured that these young men would also undoubtedly become elites in the workplace someday.

Daniel grinned broadly and said, "Daniel Scott, at your service!"

Anthony vaguely recalled that "Daniel Scott" was the son of Ryan Scott, the CEO of Xenos Factory.

He smiled gently and extended his hand.

"Anthony Swanson. You can call me Anthony like Mr. Zahn does."

"Oh no, that won't do. I can't possibly address you like Carl does. I'll call you Mr. Swanson!" Daniel replied as he shook Anthony's hand with both hands, presenting himself as a humble junior.

Anthony's eyes filled with admiration, finding Ryan Scott's son well-mannered and humble.

Glancing at Anthony's work badge hanging on his chest, Carlos realized he was the Director of Human Resources at Aurora Holdings. A director at Aurora Holdings held higher authority than one at Xenos Factory. This implies that Anthony was superior to Carlos.

However, Carlos wasn't too bothered about it. He figured that once he became CEO, he would report directly to the chairman. By then, even a senior director like Anthony would have to treat him respectfully.

With that thought, Carlos straightened up and turned to Daniel.

"Daniel, do you know what business Mr. Zahn has with me?"

Daniel replied, "Beats me. But there's a stack of personnel action forms on his desk."

Daniel's words settled Carlos' anxious heart.

Glancing at Anthony, Carlos said, "Mr. Swanson, I'm Carlos Zeigler. I assume you've heard of me."

Anthony was momentarily startled. He remembered receiving a call from Carlisle, who

instructed him to prepare a termination notice to remove Carlos from his role as Director of R&D at Xenos Factory.

"Mr. Swanson, you're looking at the future CEO, Mr. Zeigler! Where are your manners?"

Daniel winked at Anthony.

Being a seasoned white-collar professional, Anthony immediately understood Daniel's implications. Without hesitation, he extended his hand and smiled politely.

"Mr. Zeigler, it's nice to meet you!"

"Nice to meet you?"

Carlos raised his brows at Anthony's hand, clearly displeased.

He then spoke in a superior tone, "Don't you mean 'It's an honor to meet you'? There's a difference."

Anthony found Carlos' arrogant demeanor annoying and decided not to play along anymore. Fortunately, their elevator had arrived on the 18th floor just in time. Anthony quickly stepped out with the three female colleagues, rushing to prepare Carlos' termination notice.

Anthony's disrespectful attitude left Carlos momentarily stunned.

Gritting his teeth, Carlos turned to Daniel and said, "Daniel, when you start working, you must take note of the hierarchy in the workplace. With that kind of attitude, Anthony won't last long in the company!"

Daniel chuckled and replied, "Got it, Mr. Zeigler. Let's head to Aurora Holdings."

Carlos went to the restroom to tidy himself up. Clenching his teeth, he plucked a few stray hairs from his beard and wet his hands to smooth down his large pompadour.

After adjusting his tie three times, Carlos finally followed Daniel to the chairman's office. When Daniel knocked on the door, Carlisle's voice sounded from inside, "Come in."

Carlos was taken aback by the youthful voice. He couldn't help but wonder if it belonged to the chairman's son.

Xenos Factory's organizational chart hadn't been updated yet, so no one knows what the chairman looks like aside from Ryan.

Daniel opened the door, his smile fading as he said coldly, "Please, go ahead."

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Taken aback by the young man seated at the desk, Carlos didn't notice Daniel's expression change.

"Daniel, is that man Mr. Zahn's son or grandson?" Carlos asked in a low tone.

Daniel sneered.

"He's the chairman, Carlisle Zahn!"

Carlos was dumbfounded. He found it difficult to believe the chairman was someone around Daniel's age.

Carlos took a deep breath and regained his composure. He considered that perhaps having such a young chairman could work to his advantage, as he might be easier to manipulate. Making his way to Carlisle's desk, Carlos slightly lowered his head and said, "Mr. Zahn." Carlisle continued working, paying no attention to Carlos.

A smile crept onto Carlos' face when he noticed Carlisle signing personnel action forms. Suddenly, Carlisle said, "Carlos, do you recognize the person on your right?"

Carlos turned to the couch as instructed. When he saw the young lady seated there, he froze like a statue.

He wondered why Zadie was there.

The office fell silent. Only the sound of Carlisle's pen scratching against paper could be heard. Suddenly, the cap from Carlisle's pen fell to the ground, making a soft thud that startled Carlos.

Carlisle calmly retrieved the cap and placed it back on his desk. He then stood up with his cup in hand and poured himself some water.

He calmly said, "On my way here, I encountered this young lady staging a crash."

Carlos was surprised to hear that. He wondered if it meant that Carlisle wanted to discuss the trouble Zadie caused rather than a job promotion.

Carlos said, "Mr. Zahn, you can handle her however you see fit. If you like, I can take her to the police on your behalf. I've severed all ties with her and her mother."

Carlisle remained silent, returning to his seat with his cup refilled. Daniel clenched his fists so tight that his knuckles cracked audibly.

He thought that Carlos was a scumbag, who didn't deserve to be a human, let alone a father.

Carlisle blew on his steaming hot water before taking a small sip, filling the room with the sound of his sipping. Carlos had never felt such overwhelming pressure before, not even at Xenos Factory's peak under Ryan's chairmanship.

The only other person from whom he had ever felt such pressure was perhaps the mayor of Riverland. When the mayor visited the enterprises, he held a meeting at Xenos Factory. Carlos had felt the same pressure from the mayor as he felt from Carlisle now, which made him wonder if Carlisle was a scion nurtured by some upper-class family.

After Carlisle finished drinking half his cup of water, he raised his eyes and stared at Carlos.

He calmly asked, "Aren't you going to ask why she did it?"

Upon hearing Carlisle's question, Carlos finally relaxed his tension, his face sweating.

"W-Why did she do it?"

"Seriously? You don't know the reason?"

Carlisle chuckled, feeling dumbfounded.

Carlos swallowed hard and replied, "Mr. Zahn, I've divorced her mother, and the court granted custody to her. In other words, I hold no responsibility for her actions."

"Oh," Carlisle replied nonchalantly.

Carlos was drenched in sweat.

"Mr. Zahn, I understand she offended you. If it appeases your anger, I'll have her kneel and apologize to you."

Zadie sat expressionless on the couch. She knew Carlos had never treated her like a human since her birth. In fact, Carlos' offer was considered merciful. If Carlisle hadn't been present, Carlos might have grabbed her hair and slapped her hard by now.

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Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in," Carlisle said.

Holding a stack of documents, Anthony entered with three elegant, professional -looking women.

He handed Carlisle three résumés and said, "Mr. Zahn, these women are top graduates from prestigious law schools with over five years of experience as senior legal advisors. And they've never lost a case!"

"Take a seat," Carlisle instructed as he took the résumés and set them aside.

Anthony and the ladies settled onto the couch as Carlisle attended to Zadie's affairs.

While eyeing Carlos, Carlisle asked, "Are you prepared to provide alimony for your daughter?"

Daniel now understood why Carlisle had hired legal advisors. Clearly, Carlisle was determined to secure the alimony Zadie was rightfully due.

With three seasoned legal advisors present, Carlos found it difficult to refuse Carlisle's request.

"C-Certainly," Carlos replied, catching Carlisle's implication.

He understood that declining could lead Carlisle to take immediate legal action against him. "When are you planning to do that?" Carlisle asked casually.

"Tomorrow! I'll hand it to her by tomorrow!" Carlos quickly responded, aware that he was at risk of losing his position as Director of the R&D department, let alone any chance of a job promotion.

Despite Carlos' eagerness, Carlisle turned to Anthony and asked, "Anthony, have you prepared Carlos' termination notice?"

"It's under the résumés I just handed you, Mr. Zahn," Anthony replied.

Retrieving the notice from the stack of résumés, Carlisle signed it and slid it across his desk.

The termination notice read:

"Dear Mr. Carlos Ziegler,

After carefully considering the company's needs, we have decided to terminate your position as Director of the Research and Development Department at Xenos Factory, effective immediately.

We appreciate the contributions you have made during your tenure with us. Please ensure a smooth transition of your responsibilities as per the instructions provided.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aurora Holdings

Signed by Carlisle Zahn"

Carlos nearly passed out at the sight of the notice, finding it difficult to believe that his worst nightmare had really come true-he had been fired. With his employment terminated, Ryan could easily assign him to work as a security guard instead.

Carlos glared at Zadie wordlessly, his eyes filled with intense hatred.

Carlisle broke the silence, "Carlos, I hope you won't feel that you're not obligated to pay the alimony now that your employment has been terminated. If Zadie doesn't receive the alimony you owe her over the years, you would need to hire competent lawyers to go against my legal team. It'd also be a good opportunity for me to test their capabilities."

The legal advisors pursed their lips at Carlisle's remark.

Noticing their slight change in expression, Carlisle asked, "What's the matter? You seemn displeased with my suggestion."

Lilian Zeller, the most striking legal advisor, explained, "I handled these types of cases part-time during university."

"Can you take on cases without a lawyer's license?" Carlisle asked, admitting his ignorance of the law from his previous life and his recent purchase of several legal books to gain some legal knowledge.

"According to Criminal Procedure Law Article 33 and Civil Procedure Law Article 58, defense attorneys or appointed representatives are not limited to licensed attorneys," Lilian emphasized.

The other two legal advisors nodded in agreement.

Anthony chuckled bitterly and remarked, "Clearly, fighting for alimony is a piece of cake to them."

Carlos' expression was filled with desperation. He knew he stood no chance in the lawsuit, and it seemed he had no other choice but to pay the promised alimony.

Suddenly, a possibility crossed his mind. He thought he could perhaps seek a job at Terrence's Wind Semiconductors. With his over 20 years of experience in chip research,

Terrence would certainly value him if he joined the company.

With that thought, Carlos' expression lit up. He straightened his collar and exited the office with his head held high.

Zadie turned to Carlisle with reddened eyes and said gratefully, "Thank you so much, Mr. Zahn!"

With a wry smile, Carlisle shook his head.

"Don't thank me just yet. We're not done with you."

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Considering ScholarLoan still retained explicit photos and videos of Zadie, Carlisle understood that such loan scams wouldn't come to an end so easily. Even if Zadie had settled her debts, ScholarLoan might have refused to delete those photos and videos to continue blackmailing her for money.

Carlisle felt it was time to ask Wade to intervene and handle the matter.

"Daniel, please take Zadie to Arthur and have him take you both to Wade."

"I'm on it!" Daniel promptly replied.

He knew who Wade was. With Wade and his team involved, unless ScholarLoan was owned by Jalen Holder or Titan Lynch, he believed Zadie's issues would be resolved quickly.

After Daniel and Zadie left the office, Carlisle reviewed the résumés of the three legal advisors.

Lilian Zeller, 29, graduated from Yorksle Law University. With seven years of industry experience, she served as Senior Director of the legal advisor department at Wick Group for four years, indicating that she achieved the senior director position just three years after graduating.

Anthony left a note in the remarks column demonstrating she was an exceptional attorney.

Considering Lilian was a former employee of Wick Group, Carlisle understood she was likely recruited by Anthony from his previous employer.

Although persuading a coworker, especially one at the senior director level, to switch jobs together might not seem ethical, Carlisle was nevertheless impressed. He felt he had made a shrewd bargain decision in hiring Anthony with an annual salary offer of 500 thousand dollars.

The other two legal advisors were equally impressive too.

Zuri Summer, aged 33, was a top lawyer from a prestigious law firm.

Yasmin Crane was 32 years old and managed a listed company's legal advisor department. She specialized in corporate and labor law.

Carlisle assumed Zuri and Yasmin were classmates from their graduation years at Mocuwait Law University.

As Carlisle reviewed the résumés, Lilian and Yasmin exuded confidence, while Zuri appeared to be on edge. Her previous law firm specialized in social cases, leaving her with limited experience in corporate matters.

"All of you are impressive!" Carlisle remarked, setting down the résumés.

He then instructed Anthony, "Get them to familiarize themselves with our company."

Anthony nodded, then turned to the ladies.

He smiled and said, "Please wait for me outside. I'll be with you shortly."

After the three left the office, Zuri let out a sigh and patted her chest, saying, "Yasmin, this chairman sure is intimidating."

She was taken aback by Carlisle's assertive attitude toward Carlos earlier.

Yasmin smiled casually.

"He needs that kind of charisma to become chairman at such a young age."

In fact, Yasmin herself was surprised to find a teenager as the chairman of Aurora Holdings. She had expected the chairman to be a man in his 30s, if not 50s.

Zuri said anxiously, "This is frustrating. I don't think I'll get the job after all."

After all, lawyers and legal advisors were two completely different roles. While lawyers were licensed legal professionals who served a broad group of clients, legal advisors provided internal advice exclusively for the corporation they work for, prioritizing corporate legal affairs with business goals.

Having never worked in a corporate environment before, Zuri worried if she was fit for the position at Aurora Holdings.

With a gentle smile, Yasmin reassured her, "Don't worry. Aurora Holdings needs manpower now. You saw it just now, too. The chairman even intervened in his employee Carlos' child custody matters, which means he will not only need internal legal advisors but also lawyers to handle other affairs."

With Yasmin's assurance, Zuri breathed a sigh of relief. The rapid proliferation of law firms led to the competition in the industry becoming increasingly intense.

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Although Zuri had never lost a lawsuit, it didn't guarantee her receiving a law case every month. Despite her glamorous appearance, she was, in fact, in a dire situation.

Zuri and Yasmin graduated from the same university, but Yasmin's monthly salary was clearly higher and more stable than Zuri's.

When Anthony came out of the office, Yasmin quickly asked, "Mr. Swanson, Mr. Zahn is hiring Zuri, isn't he?"

She was certain that Anthony had discussed their job assignments with Carlisle during their absence. She was anxious to know whether Zuri would be joining her at Aurora Holdings, too.

Anthony lightly smiled and replied, "Aurora Holdings is establishing a Legal Affairs Department and a Legal Consulting Department. Zuri will be assigned to the Legal Consulting Department, which handles our employee's legal disputes. You and Lilian will be in the Legal Affairs Department, which handles all the internal legal matters of the

companies under Aurora Holdings."

Yasmin was thrilled to hear that.

Holding Zuri's arm, she exclaimed, "See! I told you so. However, I didn't expect Mr. Zahn to assign the Legal Consulting Department to handle employees' legal disputes. Isn't he something?"

Zuri's eyes were tinged with tears of joy, too.

"Thank you so much, Yasmin."

"You should thank Mr. Swanson, not me. Mr. Swanson must have offered some advice to Mr. Zahn," Yasmin said.

"Thank you, Mr. Swanson," Zuri said sweetly to Anthony.

Anthony, an honest man in his 40s and father to teenagers, accepted her gratitude without any ill intentions.

He smiled and said, "You don't have to thank me. It was entirely Mr. Zahn's decision."

Lilian suddenly chimed in, "Mr. Swanson, am I keeping my previous position?"

Anthony nodded and replied, "Certainly. In addition, you should expect a 20% increment in your salary."

Lilian smiled contentedly at his reassurance, recalling that her annual salary at Wick Group used to be 200 thousand dollars.

It was normal for one to aim high and seek better opportunities. When Lilian had acquired the role of Legal Affairs Director at Wick Group, her salary barely increased, if at all.

Now that she had joined Aurora Holdings, she was promised a 20% salary increase, which would make her annual salary 240 thousand dollars.

She was quite pleased with the offer, though she disliked adapting to a new environment and mingling with new colleagues. She wasn't a fan of office politics.

Lilian glanced at Yasmin, who had shown no intention of greeting her until now. Her worries intensified inwardly.

Looking at the women, Anthony said, "By the way, Mr. Zahn wanted me to convey this message to you if any of your subordinates or acquaintances in the industry are interested in joining Aurora Holdings, you may introduce them to apply for the job. If they're accepted, you will receive a referral bonus of three months after they begin working with us."

Lilian's eyes lit up at Anthony's words, seeing it as a good opportunity to recruit her team from her former employer. Then, she wouldn't need to worry about office politics with her old teammates. Best of all, she could earn a referral bonus, too.

"Ms. Zeller, I look forward to working with you in the future," Yasmin suddenly said, extending her hand for a handshake.

With a calm expression, Lilian shook her hand and replied, "Likewise."

Yasmin smiled cheerfully and added, "Do you have any plans tonight, Ms. Zeller? Perhaps we could have dinner together."

Sensing Yasmin's friendly approach, Lilian smiled faintly and replied, "Dinner's on me then."

Yasmin quickly declined, "Oh, no! I'm the one who invited you, so the treat's on me!"

Anthony promptly interjected, "No need to fight for the bill, ladies. Tonight's dinner is on Mr. Zahn!"

Lilian was taken aback.

"Is Mr. Zahn joining us for dinner?"

Anthony shook his head and said, "No. The dinner's on him, but he probably doesn't have time to join you all."

Meanwhile, in his office, Carlisle received a call from Francis.

"Boss, I've found it. The owner behind Scholar Loan is a thug operating near Riverland University. His name is Landon Johnston," Francis reported.

"Landon Johnston?"

Carlisle frowned, recalling that it was the name Kelvin Knox had mentioned when he told him that someone planned to abduct Shein.

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Landon was one of Jalen's men.

Considering that the nature of ScholarLoan was worse than ordinary loan sharks, it was

unlikely that Jalen was the one who initiated such a business. Landon might have been behind this himself.

However, Kelvin had also mentioned that Landon had approached him to borrow money. Carlisle wondered where Landon could have gotten the money to begin his loan scams if that were the case.

"Alright. Got it."

Carlisle ended the call and dialed Wade's number.

"Hey, Carl!" Wade greeted Carlisle with a playful tone.

"Has Arthur reached out to you?"

"No. What's his business with me?"

"Well, here's the story..."

Carlisle told Wade about Zadie's affairs with ScholarLoan, then instructed him to talk to Landon to see if they could retrieve those explicit photos and videos for Zadie.

Licking his dry lips, Wade asked, "What if he doesn't agree?"

After briefly pondering, Carlisle replied, "I'll leave it to you then."

"Very well, Mr. Zahn!" Wade gladly responded.

Having been bored the whole day, he was itching for some fun now. Since he had nothing to lose, he wasn't worried if Landon would seek revenge on him anyway.

Carlisle had initially planned to report Landon's scams to the authorities if Landon refused their request. However, he worried that it might lead to harsh retaliation against Zadie. Therefore, he concluded that the best way to deal with these thugs was by force.

Carlisle picked up the payroll chart to review it.

The average salary at Dragonaire Studio was around 2.8 thousand. The R&D department had an average salary of 3.2 thousand, and their CEO, Owen, had an annual salary of 200 thousand.

At Alumni Network, Sean also earned 200 thousand annually as its CEO. Technical staff earned around three thousand, and general management staff was paid 3.5 thousand. The salaries for management-level staff appeared to be about the same across both companies. The payroll chart included a fixed salary list of management staff. Although each company offered different salaries, the amounts were more or less comparable. Team leaders earned

between three and four thousand, supervisors earned between four and 5.5 thousand, managers earned around six thousand, directors earned over eight thousand, and senior directors earned over 15 thousand.

These were the salaries offered to employees who had applied for job vacancies. Those recruited from other companies were offered slightly higher rates.

The salaries of the general manager and CEO were not fixed yet. Since the chairman appointed these positions, he would also determine their salaries.

Carlisle left his signature on the payroll chart as a sign of his approval.

Suddenly, his mobile buzzed on the desk. Glancing at his phone, Carlisle found that it was a call from Heath.

Overjoyed, Carlisle picked up the call.

"Heath!"

Slightly coughing, Heath replied weakly, his voice almost inaudible, "I... I survived..."

"Don't talk. Save your breath and rest well to heal your wounds," Carlisle gently advised. Heath mumbled in response.

Then, Benjamin's voice came from the other end.

"Carl, Heath can finally speak now!"

Heath had woken up several days ago, but he couldn't move or speak.

"Surviving that kind of ordeal means he's not destined to die yet. I'm happy for him! Look after him well. It'll take some time before he's fully recovered," Carlisle remarked.

After a brief exchange, Carlisle ended the call and headed to Govan Technology Limited's office in Block B.

Govan Technology Limited focused on software development. Its nearly 11,000-square-foot office housed over ten departments.

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The company's five core departments were the R&D, production, operations, design, and marketing departments. The office building housed about a hundred people but still felt spacious.

Carlisle stood at the entrance, eyeing the words "Govan Software". He considered

separating the software into a separate entity as it was intended to be released to the public.

"Who's that kid outside?"

"No idea. Probably somebody's younger brother?" a couple of new employees from the design department, who were slacking off, whispered among themselves as they watched Carlisle stand outside the window.

The oldest employee in the office was only 35 years old, while the handsome young man outside looked about 17 or 18. That ruled out the possibility that he was someone's child.

Sandy sat at her desk, absorbed in her work. Her cheeks were puffed out, and her desk was littered with creamy candy wrappers.

Noticing the new employees' chatter, she pounded on her desk and glared at them.

"What are you whispering about? Aren't you interested in becoming permanent employees?"

Spurred on by their supervisor's outburst, the group quickly returned to work. It was then that Sandy finally noticed Carlisle at the entrance.

She choked on her candy. The chairman had arrived unannounced and must have seen the employees slacking off.

She had just started her probation period as a supervisor. She feared her chances of being made a permanent staff member would be jeopardized if Carlisle got mad.

Sandy spit out the candy and hurried to the front door.

"Mr. Zahn..."

She was extremely nervous. Her hands clenched into fists at her sides, like a student who was caught misbehaving by the principal.

Carlisle nodded in acknowledgment.

"Is Logan in?"

Sandy's heart skipped a beat. She wondered if he was going straight to the CEO. If even the CEO got mad, not being made a permanent employee would be the least of her worries.

Carlisle noticed that Sandy was shaking.

"Are you okay?"

"I-I'm fine, Mr. Zahn. Could you please not go to the CEO? It's my fault for not supervising

them properly. They're new employees and haven't been here long. I'll make sure to keep them in line..."

Sandy pleaded with teary eyes. The air was filled with a faint smell of the creamy candy.

Carlisle was slightly confused.

"What... are you talking about?"

"Mr. Zahn, did you not see what happened?"

Realizing what she meant, Carlisle smiled and said, "You mean the slacking off? Isn't it normal to slack off at work? They're technical staff who need to use their brains, so short breaks can lead to more efficient work!"

His presence had distracted them. It was a good reason for them to take a short break to reset their minds.

Sandy couldn't believe what she was hearing from the chairman. She hadn't expected him to be so understanding.

Carlisle continued, "I'm not advocating slacking off, but I do believe that a proper rest is necessary as long as it doesn't affect the team's efficiency!"

With that, Carlisle entered the office building. He looked around before locating the CEO's office and going straight in.

Logan was busy testing a software application. She didn't notice Carlisle's arrival until he knocked on the door.

Setting aside her work, Logan weakly said, "Come in..."

Carlisle entered, causing Logan to jump to her feet.

"Mr. Zahn..."

"I'm thinking of splitting off Govan Software. What do you think?"

"I don't think that's necessary..."

Logan stepped away from her desk and gestured for Carlisle to sit at the coffee table.

Carlisle took a seat.

Logan poured him a glass of coffee and continued, "Mr. Zahn, you want to publish the software and make it available to the public, right?"

"Developing software isn't cheap, and releasing it will attract more users. The more users we have, the more value we create!"

"Mr. Zahn, have some coffee."

Logan placed the tea in front of Carlisle, then added, "If we open our software to the public, other smartphone developers will eventually catch up. We'll lose our competitive advantage."

Carlisle took a sip of coffee.

"Have you considered that by the time other smartphones are released, ours will have already taken over the world?"

As the first smartphone, its popularity was undeniable. In his previous life, the world's first smartphone, the HTC G1, was launched in 2008 and sold a million units in just three months. New models were released over the next two years, and sales reached tens of millions of dollars.

At the moment, it was only 2004. Other phone companies had no concept of smartphones.

By the time Carlisle's phones hit the market, the competition would be just getting started. They wouldn't be able to keep up.

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Carlisle and Logan spent nearly an hour discussing whether to make Govan Software independent. Ultimately, they decided against it.

The Govan system, a hybrid of the Ember and Android of the future, would become the pioneer of the smartphone industry. The Govan software was tailored specifically for the Govan system and wouldn't be compatible with later Android or Ember phones.

Logan's reasoning was sound. The Govan phone, system, and software formed a cohesive ecosystem, and integrating them would make them more competitive in the mobile industry. Later, Carlisle visited Alumni Network's marketing department. The department head was a middle-aged man nearing his 40s. He patiently explained the features and promotional strategies targeting the schools to Shane.

The head of marketing furrowed his brow when he saw Carlisle walk in. He was about to shout when Shane abruptly stood up.

"Carl..."

The head of the department swallowed his words.

"Carl?"

The CEO had addressed the chairman as "Carl". He wondered if the man before him was the chairman himself.

With his hands in his pockets, Carlisle asked Shane, "So, do you know how to promote the network now?"

"I guarantee the promotion will be flawless," Shane assured confidently.

He knew Carlisle was giving him a chance, which was a test of his skills.

Alumni Network's features were perfectly catered to the online needs of that day's college students.

Shane was confident that he could make the social network a hit at Riverland University.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Zahn!" the department head greeted nervously.

Carlisle nodded calmly.

"Is the promotion plan in place?"

"Mr. Cannon briefed us this morning. We'll follow your plan and also set up campus contact points at nine universities in Riverland."

As he spoke, he stole a glance at Carlisle. At 17 or 18, Carlisle was about the same age as his daughter. She was still dependent on her parents while Carlisle ran several businesses.

It would have been one thing if his businesses had been inherited, but he had built them from the ground up.

The head was especially stunned when he heard about Carlisle's marketing strategy.

As a senior marketing executive who had been in the industry for over a decade, he was so taken aback that he almost bit his tongue. The referral-based strategy resembled multi-level marketing and was sure to quickly attract a large user base for Alumni Network.

In addition, the platform's various features were designed specifically for internet users, ensuring a high retention rate among registered members.

Carlisle sat at the head's desk and tested Alumni Network's features. Since it wasn't connected to a server, they had to use special tools to test it.

After a thorough check, Carlisle was generally pleased.

Alumni Network beat out SchoolSpace, which was set to launch in 2005. It had perfectly replicated SociableNet's features. But unlike SociableNet, Alumni Network wouldn't be completely public.

A fully open platform would attract a mix of users, diluting the site's quality.

"When will the server be ready?" Carlisle inquired suddenly.

Time was money, and he was anxious to get Alumni Network up and running.

Chapter 490

The marketing head was visibly nervous.

"Well... that's being handled by Aurora Holdings, so I'm not too clear on the details!"

In the workplace, being unable to answer a superior's question could easily lead to a scolding. If the superior was understanding, it wasn't a big deal because the task wasn't his responsibility. But with a temperamental superior, he was guaranteed to get an earful.

The marketing head braced himself as he imagined Carlisle's possible outburst.

"Don't you have a mouth? Can't you ask if you don't know? Do I have to do everything myself?"

However, Carlisle simply took out his phone and called Felicia.

"Mr. Zahn..."

"How soon can we have the servers ready for Alumni Network?"

"It will take at least a week. The vendors we're negotiating with aren't willing to lower their prices..."

"Are they that expensive?" Carlisle asked, puzzled.

He didn't remember servers being particularly pricey.

Felicia explained, "They're not expensive, but we need many of them. Alumni Network is building a large social network that requires a significant number of servers. Dragonaire Game Company needs a huge server room, and so does the Govan software and system.

"We're going to need a lot of servers in the future, so I decided to buy server rooms for all three companies at once. That's why I've been negotiating with several vendors over the past few days."

She paused before adding, "There's also an issue regarding the location. We need at least three large server rooms. The radiation and noise from the server rooms are considerable. If we put them in the office area, it could affect the work environment. We can get the servers in a week, but the location is more challenging.

After a moment of thought, Carlisle spoke up.

"I'll handle the location. You focus on getting the servers."

Carlisle ended the call and dialed Shania's number. Shania was inspecting a construction site at Holly Fisheries. She stepped aside to answer when she realized it was Carlisle calling.

"Carl, what's up?"

"Shania, are you busy?"

"Just inspecting the greenhouse construction site..."

"Thanks for all your hard work!"

"It was such a big investment that I have to be hands-on," Shania said, laughing.

"So, what do you need?"

"I want to rent another floor in Windex Building for office space. Are there any suitable floors available?"

"Isn't the 18th floor enough? You're not expanding your business again, are you?"

Shania gasped. She suspected that Carlisle had started several new companies, given his partnership with Gareth.

"Not really. I need some server rooms and plan to rent an entire floor to set them up," Carlisle clarified.

Shania's mouth twitched.

"You don't need an entire floor for a server room. Any of your four office areas could accommodate a server room."

If this were any other client, she'd be thrilled. But Carlisle was practically family, and she felt obligated to give him a friendly warning.

Knowing that Shania had his best interests at heart, Carlisle simply replied, "ed a lot of servers. With more servers comes more radiation and noise. So as not to disrupt the work environment, I'm renting an entire floor."

After hearing Carlisle's explanation, Shania said, "I'll call the sales department and have them reserve the 15th floor for you."

The 15th floor of Windex Building had been reserved on opening day, but the client kept delaying the contract and payment. Tired of waiting, Shania decided to offer the floor to Carlisle for his server rooms.

Half an hour later, Windex Building's sales manager presented Carlisle with a contract. After going over the contract, Carlisle was confused.

"Is Shania not interested in making money?"

The 15th floor consisted of four office spaces totaling 45 thousand square feet. However, it was priced at an annual rent of just 300,000 dollars.

Windex Building had just been completed and was a high-end office building of its time.

On opening day, Carlisle had rented the 18th floor for a monthly rent of 200 thousand dollars. With only a three-floor difference, the 15th floor should've cost over 100 thousand dollars a month. Yet, the contract stated that it was only 300 thousand per year. Shania definitely gave Carlisle a generous deal.