

Love Spell 531

Chapter 531

As Francis pulled the Rolls-Royce up to where Carlisle and Gareth were waiting, a group of young men and women trailed behind the car. A few street ladies also approached, hoping to get his number.

Gareth grinned and said, "Is this the charm of a Rolls-Royce? I should've gotten one for myself, too!"

"Your Ferrari is pretty attractive, too," Carlisle remarked.

"Are you a fan of sports cars?" Gareth asked, glancing at Carlisle.

Gareth had initially considered buying Carlisle a sports car but thought Carlisle, with his reserved and mature demeanor, was better suited for a Rolls-Royce. Compared to other teenagers, Carlisle seemed more like a successful businessman who had endured hardship before achieving success.

Thus, Gareth felt that a Rolls-Royce matched Carlisle's mature character better.

Carlisle took a photo of the Rolls-Royce.

He smiled and said, "I prefer the Rolls-Royce!"

Car enthusiast or not, no one seemed to be able to resist the charm of a Rolls-Royce- Carlisle was no exception.

After Carlisle and Gareth got into the Rolls-Royce, they felt as though its luxurious interior had elevated their status.

Francis turned on the starlight headliner. The dynamic effect of the starlight headliner created a dreamy atmosphere akin to the light and shadow of an eclipse.

Leaning back in his seat, Carlisle gazed at the starlight headliner above him, his heart filled with astonishment and contentment. He believed that not many people in Riverland could afford a million-dollar car in this era.

After dropping Gareth off at Imperial Hotel, Francis drove Carlisle back to Willow Grove. He had arranged for his comrade, who had been assigned to protect Carlisle in secret, to drive the Mazda 6 back.

The next day, Carlisle woke up early for his morning run. After his run, he took a cold shower before heading to school.

Carlisle had already covered most of the semester's material on his own. His desk was now filled with second-year textbooks, which he had bought from a third-year senior. With diligent study, he could complete his university degree within a year.

When Carlisle arrived at the classroom, he found Christine sitting in Wanda's seat. Given

SwiftFunds' recent excellent performance, Carlisle believed she was there to share the good news.

Swiftly settling himself in his seat, Carlisle asked, "Any good news for me?"

Christine took out a folded piece of paper from her pocket and said softly, "I found this in the company mailbox this morning. I think it's from Wanda."

Christine's demeanor seemed a bit off as she spoke. However, Carlisle was too anxious to notice her unease. He quickly took the letter, his expression full of excitement.

"Why didn't she send me a letter? That silly girl hasn't forgotten about me, has she?"

Christine's eyelashes fluttered at his words. She was unable to mutter another word.

Carlisle unfolded the paper and saw it was filled with many rectangular boxes with names written inside them. They were the names of their high school classmates. It seemed to be a seating chart of their high school class.

Carlisle noticed a sentence written beside his name in the chart: "Christine, can you tell me who this person is?"

Carlisle stared at the note blankly.

He contemplated if Wanda had really forgotten about him. He wondered if she was joking and questioned if she genuinely couldn't recall who he was.

"What happened?"

Carlisle's expression turned pale, his hand slightly trembling as he held the paper.

Christine shared her thoughts.

"I suspect that Wanda wasn't taken to Yorksle for treatment but to undergo a procedure to make her forget you!"

Understanding that Christine was probably referring to memory erasure, Carlisle shook his head and said, "It can't be. Memory erasure is impossible with current technology!"

Even in his previous life, which was decades from the current timeline, Carlisle had never heard of memory erasure.

Noticing Carlisle's reddening eyes, Christine quickly comforted him, "In that case, don't overthink it. It's possible that Wanda has recovered from her illness, and she's just messing with you."

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When the class bell rang, Christine said, "I'd better return to my seat now."

Carlisle, lost in thought, stood up and moved his chair aside, allowing Christine to leave Wanda's seat and return to her own.

Carlisle continued to stare blankly as he sat in his seat. He wondered if memory erasure was possible. Perhaps he was unaware of it because he hadn't been able to access that kind of information-just like those unethical experiments abroad that only came to light after being exposed to the world.

The psychiatric rehabilitation hospital where Wanda was staying was a good example. After all, it was a private hospital founded by the rich and unknown to the public. According to Wendell's information, it studied cures for diseases that were deemed untreatable by conventional means.

Considering dissociative amnesia might also result in partial memory loss, Carlisle found his theory plausible.

Carlisle took out his phone and sent Shania a message.

"Shania, you know a neurology expert, right? Could you ask them if there's any talk in the medical community about memory erasure?"

Shania, who was discussing the acquisition of the local seafood business with Lethan and Nathan at a café, received Carlisle's message.

She frowned and remarked, "Memory erasure? Is this some kind of sci-fi movie?"

Lethan asked curiously, "What?"

Shania showed him the message.

After reading it, Lethan asked in puzzlement, "Why does he want to know?"

Shania shook her head.

"I don't know."

Lethan urged, "Well, do him a favor and find out for him."

Whatever Carlisle's intentions might be, Lethan figured it must be something important.

Shania immediately called her old friend, who was studying abroad.

"Wow, what a surprise! Why the sudden call, my friend?"

A lazy, masculine voice came from the other end of the phone.

Nathan's gaze darkened slightly upon hearing the voice.

Shania chuckled and replied, "Hey, can't a high school classmate call you out of the blue?"

The voice on the other end chuckled.

"Alright. What do you need?"

"A friend of mine wants to know if there's any talk about memory erasure in the medical community."

Shania got straight to the point.

"Actually, there is! In 2002, Amilica developed a device that analyzes brain neuron data. This device can effectively inhibit neural connections, making people forget specific memories—"

"Seriously? Such technology actually exists?" Shania exclaimed, her eyes widening in disbelief.

It sounded too fantastical to be true.

The voice responded, "It does exist. But before this research was made public, the company suddenly vanished!"

Shania found it intriguing.

"Was it bought out by some corporation that didn't want the technology to be publicized?"

"I'm not sure. Global Health Alliance may have some information about it."

"I see. Thanks!" Shania said before ending the call.

Lethan's mouth twisted as he remarked, "That was a bit rude!"

Shania responded indifferently, "He and I go way back. We used to hang out and eat together a lot during high school."

Nathan tightened his grip on his cup, wondering if Shania had intentionally flaunted her history with another man before him. He internally questioned if she was unaware of his feelings for her.

Shania reported her findings to Carlisle with a message.

When Carlisle saw her reply, his face turned even paler. It confirmed his speculation-some of Wanda's memories had probably been erased. She really had no memories of him

anymore.

Carlisle felt a sharp pain in his heart. It was so intense it was almost suffocating. He nearly crushed the paper in his hand.

"Carlisle..."

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Susan called out to Carlisle, holding a textbook as she approached.

Carlisle snapped back to reality, looking at Susan with bloodshot eyes.

"Are you... alright?" Susan asked, her tone full of concern.

Carlisle nodded and replied hoarsely, "I'm fine..."

"Your eyes are red. If you're not feeling well, you should go home and get some rest," Susan urged, worried about her most promising student.

She would hate to see anything happen to such an exceptional and smart student.

"Thank you, Ms. Lowe. But I'm really fine," Carlisle replied, lowering his head.

Susan had no choice but to let it go.

"Alright. But you can always come to me if you need someone to talk to."

With that, she returned to the podium to continue the class.

Carlisle had been in a daze the entire day. He remained seated, staring blankly into space, even after school had ended in the afternoon.

Phoebe glanced at Carlisle and pouted.

"We shouldn't have told Carlisle. He didn't even go for lunch today!"

Christine had intended to keep the news from Carlisle, but Phoebe thought Carlisle deserved to know about Wanda's current situation, so she encouraged Christine to tell him.

Christine sighed, feeling quite guilty.

After a moment of silence, Phoebe suddenly suggested, "Since Wanda was curious about who Carlisle is, maybe we should tell her their story. It might help her remember."

Christine replied weakly, "I've thought about that too. But this letter only has the recipient's address. We can't reply to her without knowing where to send it."

"Christine! Are you free tonight? How about I take you out for barbeque?" Daniel called out, smoothing his slicked-back hair and flashing a confident smile that he believed was charming.

He had suddenly appeared at the classroom entrance.

"No time, no mood," Christine responded flatly.

Recently, Daniel had been bothering Christine. Christine usually responded with polite smiles because of respect for his relationship with Carlisle. However, she wasn't in the mood to humor him then.

Daniel was momentarily taken aback.

He then asked solemnly, "Who upset my dear Christine? Tell me, and I'll handle it for you."
"Buzz off, will you?" Christine snapped.

She was aware of Daniel's feelings for her but thought her usual distant demeanor made it clear that she wasn't interested. She wondered if she had to spell it out for him.

Daniel's smile vanished completely.

He asked meekly, "Christine... What's wrong with you today?"

Phoebe chimed in to explain, "She's in a terrible mood today, Daniel. You'd better not bother her. Why don't you go comfort Carlisle instead?"

Daniel then turned his attention to Carlisle, noticing him sitting there in a daze.

"What's up with Carl?" Daniel asked, startled.

Phoebe briefly explained how they had learned about Wanda forgetting Carlisle.

After hearing Phoebe's explanation, Daniel chuckled awkwardly, "Come on. Quit messing with me. Wanda is so attached to Carl. There's no way she'd forget him. It's only been a little over a month, not years!"

Suddenly, Carlisle rose from his seat. The three immediately shifted their gazes to him.

Taking a deep breath, Carlisle regained his usual composure and left the classroom.

He wasn't a teenager who would be defeated by such minor setbacks.

According to Shania's explanation, the devices merely inhibited Wanda's memory neurons. Carlisle figured that there should be a way to restore those neural connections if such technology existed.

He was determined to restore Wanda's memory. But he planned to go to Yorksle to meet her in person first.

Carlisle went to the teacher's office to get a leave form from Susan. Susan handed it to him without asking any questions.

She assumed Carlisle was exhausted after covering most of the second-semester material on his own. She figured that a couple of days off would likely do him some good. However, when Carlisle completed the leave request form and handed it back to her, Susan's smile instantly froze.

He had requested ten days off, citing "Family matters" as the reason for his request. According to standard procedure, the leave form should specify the reason and be signed by a parent before being submitted to her. After she approved it, she would then forward it to the dean, Peter, for final approval.

Suspecting there might be some mistake, Susan asked, "Carlisle, are you requesting ten days off?"

"Yes," he answered without hesitation.

Susan took a deep breath and dialed Peter's number.

When Peter learned that Carlisle was requesting ten days off, he frowned and replied, "Have his parents call me first."

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The school had to ensure that parents were aware of their child's request for extended leave. Otherwise, if something occurred during the student's absence, the school could also be held responsible.

After Susan conveyed Peter's message to Carlisle, the latter nodded and replied, "Alright then!"

Carlisle stepped out to call his father. When Gordon heard that Carlisle planned to take ten days off, he was taken aback.

If it were his old self, Gordon would have questioned Carlisle about the reason for such an extended leave.

However, this time, he chose to remain silent and instead asked, "What's the dean's phone number?"

Carlisle obtained the dean's number from Susan and provided it to Gordon.

Gordon took down the number in his notebook and called the dean right after ending his phone call with Carlisle.

Half an hour later, Carlisle finally left the office.

As she watched Carlisle leave, Susan murmured softly, "Is he going to find Wanda?"

Given Carlisle's distracted demeanor throughout the day, Susan couldn't think of anyone else who could affect him so profoundly other than Wanda.

When Carlisle reached Willow Grove, he called Wendell.

"Boss," Wendell answered.

"Have you seen Wanda this past month?" Carlisle asked.

Wendell replied, "No. There's a strict attendant named Brenton Krash at the psychiatric rehabilitation hospital. When he's around, no patient can step outside their living area." Carlisle continued, "Do you have any connections with the people there? Can you get me in?" Wendell responded solemnly, "You probably can't get into the hospital directly, but you could join us in making deliveries. There's no guarantee that you'll see Wanda, though..."

Carlisle sighed.

"Find a way. I have to see her."

Wendell hesitated for a moment before agreeing, "Okay. I'll see what I can do, but don't get your hopes up too high..."

After ending the call, Carlisle sat in a chair and flipped through a photo album.

At ten in the morning the following day, Carlisle arrived at Aurora Holdings.

When he stopped at the entrance, his brand-new Rolls-Royce immediately attracted the attention of many white-collar workers in Windex Building.

"Which CEO owns this? He's loaded!"

"Oh my god, a Rolls-Royce! I wonder if I could even afford the rim of a wheel if I sold my kidney."

When Carlisle got out of the car, some of the white-collar workers stared in astonishment. "It's Mr. Zahn."

"Isn't Aurora Holdings something? Even our boss, Mr. Zahn, has switched to a Rolls-Royce!"

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Selena, who was waiting for the elevator, immediately greeted Carlisle when she saw him, "Good morning, Mr. Zahn."

"Good morning," Carlisle responded, nodding.

When the elevator opened, he walked straight in.

The companies in Windex Building now had staggered work hours. Aurora Holdings was the only company that started working at ten in the morning. Although their workday started later in the morning, the end of their workday was also extended.

Selena followed Carlisle into the elevator and pressed the button for the 18th floor. As the elevator ascended, she struck a conversation with him.

"Mr. Zahn, don't you have school today?"

Carlisle replied, "I took a leave of absence. I'm here today to handle some work."

Selena asked, "How long will you be away?"

"Ten days, or maybe longer," Carlisle answered.

It was October 22nd, which meant that there were 18 days until Wanda's birthday on November 9th. Carlisle had resolved that he wouldn't return to Riverland until he saw Wanda.

Carlisle gave Gareth a call when he arrived at the office.

Gareth, who was still groggy, was immediately energized upon receiving Carlisle's call.

He answered lazily, "Carl, why are you calling during class?"

"Gareth, please come to Aurora Holdings."

"Huh? Aren't you at school?"

Gareth was shocked. He recalled that Carlisle had never taken time off from school. Carlisle

had even joked that nothing but a seven-figure project should interrupt his studies. Gareth wondered if this meant that Carlisle had found another huge business opportunity.

With that thought, Gareth suddenly perked up and said, "I'm on my way."

Gareth arrived at Carlisle's office about an hour later. Dressed in formal attire and having carefully styled his hair, he exuded a mischievous and casual demeanor. Seeing Felicia and Anthony also present, Gareth smiled and asked, "What's up?"

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Anthony stood up and pulled a chair out for Gareth.

"Please have a seat, Mr. Spencer."

Sitting down, Gareth narrowed his eyes and asked, "Are we running out of funds, or is there a big deal coming up?"

Carlisle got straight to the point.

"I'm taking an extended leave of absence, and I'd like you to take over as CEO of Aurora Holdings temporarily."

Gareth raised an eyebrow and asked, "How long are we talking?"

"At least ten days. It could be a month, possibly two or three..."

"Are you heading to Yorksle?"

Gareth had a hunch about Carlisle's reason for taking leave.

"Yes," Carlisle admitted, nodding.

After a moment of silence, Gareth said, "I know why you're going there. Let me go with you." It was evident that Carlisle was headed to Yorksle to look for Wanda. However, it wasn't a place one could easily get into. Gareth worried that Carlisle might have conflicts with the Murray family. If that happened, Gareth's grandfather, Theodore, might be willing to help Carlisle out if Gareth was there.

Carlisle shook his head and said, "No. You'll stay here. I'll go by myself."

Gareth shrugged and responded with a playful smile, "Well, unfortunately, I'm going home in a few days, so I can't help you run the company."

Carlisle stared at Gareth, feeling troubled. Clearly, Sean and Owen couldn't possibly manage Aurora Holdings. And he didn't feel right handing over authority over the company to Felicia and Anthony. It wasn't that he didn't trust them. He was simply being cautious.

After all, Aurora Holdings now managed all of his properties and the mobile hardware companies he had invested in. A single wrong step might ruin all his plans.

At the sight of Carlisle's distressed look, Gareth quickly responded, "Alright, alright. I'll do it!"

Gareth was aware that Carlisle trusted Aurora Holdings to him because he considered him like a brother. Besides, he wouldn't feel at ease if Carlisle handed over the company authority to others.

Felicia suddenly interjected, "Mr. Zahn, only six million dollars are left in the company's account."

Carlisle looked at Gareth hopefully, knowing that he wouldn't need to worry about money with the wealthy one there.

Gareth's face lit up with a bright smile.

"Let's talk business then. Do you prefer to borrow money from me or allow me to invest in the company?"

Carlisle had initially wanted Aurora Holdings to be a wholly-owned enterprise.

But he now changed his mind, saying, "200 million dollars for ten percent of the shares, how about it?"

Gareth snapped his finger and replied without hesitation, "Deal!"

Felicia, Anthony, and Carlisle's secretary, Selena, were all stunned.

They wondered if the two leaders were being a tad bit too casual about a 200-million deal. If Gareth only bought ten percent of Aurora Holdings for 200 million, didn't that imply the company's valuation was around two billion?

Carlisle turned to Selena and instructed, "Please draft an equity transfer agreement for me." Selena nodded and went to the Legal Affairs Department.

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The success of Alumni Network had made Gareth a firm believer in Carlisle's vision. The investment in Swift Funds had already started showing returns within a month. With a 20-million loan disbursed the previous month, Gareth anticipated significant profits for the coming month.

Gareth was confident that Carlisle's business model was bound to succeed. Carlisle's dream of becoming the world's richest man might not be just a fantasy. Even if he didn't achieve that, he would definitely be among the wealthiest in the country.

Gareth believed that the ten percent stake in Aurora Holdings could yield a future return of two billion or even 20 billion dollars.

"When are you heading to Yorksle?" Gareth asked.

He planned to inform Theodore in advance to arrange for someone to look after Carlisle.

"After Owie's birthday. I also want to visit my parents."

Soon, it was Saturday.

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Owen went to Willow Grove to borrow a car from Carlisle. He thought that driving back to his hometown in a nice car would make him look impressive.

Without hesitation, Carlisle instructed Francis, "Give him the car keys."

"Which car?" Francis asked.

"The Rolls-Royce, of course!"

"What? No, no, no. I wouldn't dare. I just want to borrow the Mazda," Owen quickly responded, looking terrified.

He had only planned to drive home in the Mazda. A car worth 40 thousand was enough to make him look impressive. He wouldn't dream of borrowing Carlisle's Rolls-Royce, which was worth over a million dollars.

"Don't worry. I won't ask you to pay for it even if you damage it."

"That's not the point. Francis, please give me the Mazda keys."

Owen was adamant about not borrowing the Rolls-Royce.

Francis glanced at Carlisle, waiting for his permission.

Carlisle asked Owen, "Can you drive?"

Owen replied with a grin, "I plan to take two colleagues who can drive with me to show off."

Carlisle chuckled and instructed Francis, "Give him the keys."

"Thank you, Carlisle."

Owen smiled gratefully as he received the keys. He then stared at Carlisle, intending to invite him to his birthday party.

However, after considering Carlisle's busy schedule with his many companies and his extended leave of over ten days, Owen decided it might be best not to trouble Carlisle with his birthday plans.

"Well, I should go now. Bye, Carl."

Owen turned to leave.

As Owen reached the door, Carlisle suddenly said, "Remember to prepare more food for tomorrow."

Owen, momentarily stunned, quickly understood Carlisle's implication and nodded excitedly.

"Sure, Carl!"

Carlisle continued typing on his keyboard, responding to Sean's message on MSN

messenger.

"We'll depart tomorrow morning," Carlisle typed.

"What gift should I bring?" Sean responded.

"Up to you. I'm giving cash."

"Then I'll give cash too. How much are you giving?"

Carlisle thought for a moment and typed, "888,888 dollars!"

Sean was speechless. He couldn't possibly come up with that amount even if he sold both his kidneys. He thought that he should perhaps give 8,888 dollars instead. However, it seemed quite insignificant compared to Carlisle's gift.

Sean then typed, "Lend me a million dollars. I'll pay you back when I have the money!"

Carlie replied, "Okay."

Gordon and Hilda's budget store, Gordon's Value Mart, was located not far from Franklin Complex. Due to its affordable prices, the store was bustling with customers.

While Gordon was busy unloading inventory, Hilda was manning the cash register. Hayley was there helping out as well.

"This cookie is near its expiry date! It could make someone sick!" Karen, a portly woman, complained disdainfully while holding up a cookie.

Hayley glanced at the cookie and responded with annoyance, "It's still good for two more months."

"Even so, it's close to expiry! Products like this are most likely to cause stomach issues!" Karen retorted loudly, causing other customers to scrutinize the expiration dates.

Karen continued in a sharp, critical tone, "No wonder the products here are so cheap. They're all near expiry!"

Hayley, already short-tempered, glared at her and asked, "Are you just here to cause trouble, bitch?"

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Karen continued to make a fuss even though the cookies were not expired. She was clearly there to cause trouble for a thriving business.

Karen's eyes reddened with anger at Hayley's insult.

"Who are you calling a bitch?"

"I'm sure everyone here knows who I'm referring to."

"I'll tear your mouth off!"

Karen was furious. She rolled up her sleeves, ready to pounce on Hayley.

Gordon rushed over to break them up.

"Hey, hey! Let's talk this out. No fighting!"

"Get out of my way, Gordon! I'll rip her to shreds!"

Karen was a local, and Gordon's place had recently become a hot spot. The regulars knew him by name.

Hayley shoved Gordon aside and put her hands on her waist.

"Go ahead. Hit me if you dare!"

"You think I won't?"

"Go on. Try me," Hayley taunted.

Karen raised her hand as she prepared to deliver a slap to Hayley's face.

"Stop..."

A cold voice broke the tension.

Karen froze and turned in the direction of the voice. A young man in his 20s, wearing earrings, was pushing a burly man in a wheelchair.

"Well, if it isn't the cripple Gordon took in," Karen sneered.

Benjamin's eyes flashed with anger. He would've lunged at her if it hadn't been for Gordon's presence.

Heath glared at Karen.

"Let's talk this out. No physical violence. You can do that elsewhere, but not here."

"Mind your own business, you cripple. I'll hit whoever I want, especially since I have backup!"

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Heath was intrigued.

"Oh, you have backup? Who might that be? I might know them."

Since his recovery, Heath had been on a mission to regain his power. In just two weeks, he had unified the underground forces in Rainville.

Seth Clayton, one of his loyal men, was the current underground boss in Rainville. He was known on the streets as "Scar."

"Listen closely, my nephew is Ivan Sanders!" Karen declared proudly.

Benjamin laughed the moment Karen finished her sentence. Ivan was one of Seth's men.

"You may not know my nephew, but just ask around for Mr. Sanders. No one's allowed to open an Internet cafe or an arcade in Rainville without his permission."

Karen continued to rant, feeling that Benjamin's laughter was an insult to Ivan.

Gordon knew Ivan's reputation, and Karen didn't seem to be lying.

He quickly warned Heath and Benjamin, "Pipe down. We shouldn't mess with the likes of Mr. Sanders."

Hayley's earlier bravado faded when she heard Ivan's name. She looked at Karen as fear crept into her eyes.

Karen, energized by the shift, jabbed at Hayley, "Not so tough now, are we? Cat got your tongue?"

Hayley took a deep breath and forced a smile.

"It was all my fault. I apologize. You can hit me if it makes you feel better..."

Hayley didn't want her actions to cause problems for Gordon and Hilda's shop.

"Hitting you would only dirty my hands. If you get down on your knees and apologize, I'll let it slide. Also, I'll be confiscating all these nearly expired products."

Her arrogance was unbearable. The other customers looked at her in disgust but were too intimidated to speak up. After all, Karen had the backing of Ivan.

It was then that Benjamin couldn't hold back any longer.

"Bitch, don't push it," he spat.

Karen's ears perked up at Benjamin's insult. She turned to Benjamin. Her face contorted with anger.

"Kid, you're going to get on your knees and apologize, too, or I'll call Ivan. When he gets here, your apologies will mean nothing!"

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Karen pulled a PHS phone from her pocket, ready to make the call.

Hayley panicked and grabbed Karen's wrist, pleading, "This was all my fault. I'll get down on my knees and apologize, okay?"

Karen was only bluffing about calling Ivan. A magnanimous smile appeared on her face when Hayley submitted.

"Fine. You're just a kid who didn't know any better. I won't hold it against you. Now get down on your knees and apologize to me!"

"You're being ridiculous! You're the one who started this mess, and now you're blaming us?"

Hilda had come out from behind the counter, frowning.

Despite their usual bickering, Hayley and Hilda's quarrels were just minor neighborhood disputes. They were quickly resolved and forgotten. Humiliating Hayley was something Hilda wouldn't stand for.

"If you don't want her to kneel, then you do it," Karen said nonchalantly.

Benjamin stepped forward and slapped Karen across the face. The room fell into a dead silence, followed by a chorus of gasps.

"Who does he think he is? He knows her nephew is Mr. Sanders, yet he hit her. That's suicide!"

"I'm sure it felt good, but... this is bad."

"The poor fool got himself into a real mess now."

"Poor Gordon. He's going to have to deal with all this."

Gordon and Hilda were stunned. They had never expected the usually mild-mannered Benjamin to hit anyone, especially Ivan's relative.

It took Karen more than ten seconds to recover from the shock. She clutched her face and let out a shrill scream. Her eyes blazed with anger at Benjamin.

"You hit me! You actually hit me! You're a dead man!"

She reached for the phone and called Ivan. Hilda panicked and pulled out her phone to call the police.

Benjamin grabbed her wrist and reassured her, "Hilda, there's no need to call the police. I'll handle this."

"And how will you handle it? Do you think Ivan will listen to you?"

Hilda felt a mixture of emotions.

"Trust me. It'll be fine."

Hilda looked anxiously at Gordon. Gordon narrowed his eyes at Heath before making a dismissive gesture.

"Let them handle it."

On the first day of Sawyer's treatment of Heath, he had a private discussion with Gorwon about Heath's background.

Gordon had told Sawyer that Heath was Carlisle's business partner, but Sawyer had immediately dismissed it. He explained that Heath's numerous scars and tattoos indicated a rough past and that he was probably connected to the underworld.

At that moment, Gordon considered that Heath and Benjamin were perhaps connected to Ivan after all.

With that thought, Gordon pulled Hilda inside. Meanwhile, Benjamin called Seth.

Seth was having a drink at Ivan's internet cafe. Their conversation drifted from The Legendary Tale to the in-game equipment and finally to Heavenly Sword.

Ivan bragged about the time he bought a Heavenly Sword for 80 thousand dollars and sold it for 150 thousand.

Seth chuckled, "The seller must've been young. After all, only a kid would let it go at that price!"

"Don't underestimate Carlisle, Scar. He's got real talent. Soon after arriving at Riverland University, he started a business and made enough to buy over 30 computers in less than a month. They were worth over 200 thousand dollars.

"And that's not all. I heard he recently started a company and bought several hundred computers..."

Seth raised his glass to continue drinking but stopped mid-sip, a sudden realization dawning on him.

"Wait, who?"

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Ivan was drunk, so Seth's sudden outburst startled him.

"What... what do you mean?"

"Who did you say sold the Heavenly Sword?" Seth asked, putting down his glass.

Ivan looked at Seth in surprise.

"His name is Carlisle. Scar, do you know him?"

Seth was from Riverland and had been associated with the infamous Heath. Although Heath was no longer around, Seth had seen a lot in his time.

"He's the guy my boss reports to," Seth said, shocking Ivan.

"What? He's the guy behind Heath Group?"

Carlisle was only 18. There was no way he could be Heath's boss. Ivan thought Seth must be joking.

"Our boss has woken up and is staying with Carlisle," Seth said as a cold smile formed on his lips.

"He will soon lead us back to Riverland to reclaim everything that's rightfully ours."

Ivan felt his jaw drop. He thought the reason Seth was in Rainville was because Heath was gone, and his followers were scattered. But now it turned out that Heath was alive and staying at Carlisle's house in Rainville.

Seth patted Ivan's shoulder.

"Do a good job, and I'll find a way to get you closer to Heath."

"Don't worry, Scar. I'll do my best!"

Ivan quickly poured another drink for Seth.

He had tried to make his way on the streets before, but he had never quite made it. He was untouchable to students, but he was just another small fry in the real underground.

After his wife fell pregnant, he left that life behind and became a family man. Then Seth came along, and Ivan's life took a turn.

Seth had effortlessly crushed several local gangs in Rainville and, after bonding with Ivan at his internet cafe, handed over control of Rainville's underground to him. Ivan had consulted his wife and in-laws, who supported his decision to take on the new role.

Going back to his old ways had its perks. Most of the internet cafes and arcades in Rainville paid Ivan protection money. Anyone who wanted to open a new one had to get his

permission. It was as simple as handing him a small fee.

Ivan saw no reason to turn down easy money, especially with Seth backing him up.

But now things were different. Seth had an even bigger supporter.

"By the way," Seth began.

"Gordon's Value Mart outside the Franklin Complex is owned by Carlisle's parents. Make sure your men look after their business."

Ivan grinned.

"Got it, Scar. I'll let the boys know right away!"

Even if Seth hadn't mentioned it, Ivan had already planned to do that. He pulled out his phone to call his right-hand man, but the phone rang before he could dial the number. It was Karen.

"Karen, what's up?" Ivan answered, sounding a little impatient.

He didn't like Karen very much. She often caused trouble by leveraging her connection to him, and he often had to pull strings to get her out of jail.

"Ivan, someone hit me! You have to come and help me take revenge!" Karen cried.

"People wouldn't beat you up for no reason. Have you been causing trouble again?"

He knew Karen well. She was a bully without any real skills, so he figured she probably deserved to be beaten up.

"I didn't do anything! They sold expired products. When I complained, they got angry and attacked me. You have to come quickly, or they'll kill me!" she cried.

"Where are you?"

Ivan was an orphan and owed a lot to Karen's family in the past. If Karen was really in trouble, he felt obligated to help her.

Chapter 540

"I'm at Gordon's Value Mart..."

"What?"

Ivan jumped out of his chair, knocking over the bottles on the table.

"It's right next to Franklin Complex. The store's only been open a month. Hurry up and get over here!"

Karen hung up before Ivan could answer.

She put the phone back in her pocket with a grin.

"You two are dead meat..."

"Hilda, did I get us into serious trouble?" Hayley asked with a worried face.

Hilda had dragged Hayley back into the shop and squeezed Hayley's hand reassuringly.

"We have cameras in the store. They won't dare do anything."

Hayley nodded and wiped away a tear.

Suddenly, the phone she had tucked away in her apron pocket rang. It was her son, Owen. Her heart skipped a beat, and she looked at Hilda with joy.

"Hilda, it's my son!"

"Go ahead and answer it. Just keep calm, and don't start screaming like last time." Since Owen had run away from home, Hayley had hardly smiled. Whenever Owen called, their conversations quickly turned into arguments. It deepened the rift between them.

"Tomorrow's his 18th birthday. He must want to come home for my cooking," Hayley said, wiping away more tears before answering the call with trembling hands.

Owen started carefully, "Mom..."

"Yes, that's me!" Hayley replied with tears streaming down her face.

A mother would always worry for her child. Their previous arguments had all stemmed from Owen leaving without a word.

She wondered how much money a kid under 18 could make. Fortunately, he was with Carlisle. Carlisle was a sensible kid, so that gave her some peace of mind.

"Mom, are you home? I'm almost there," Owen said.

"I'm at Hilda's store, Gordon's Value Mart outside the complex."

She hadn't seen Owen in two months, and their phone calls always ended in fights. Now that he was coming back, she felt a mixture of excitement and nervousness.

"Okay. I'll be there in 20 minutes," Owen said before hanging up.

Hayley didn't ask if he had made any money. She was just relieved that he could take care of himself at his age.

Meanwhile, a black Santana pulled up in front of the store. Ivan got out and quickly made his way to the entrance.

Karen's arrogance grew when she saw Ivan.

"My nephew's here. You're dead now..."

Benjamin shook his head and stepped behind Heath's wheelchair, gripping the handles. "Ivan, it's him..."

Karen pointed at Benjamin.

"Avenge me. Make his face swell up!" Karen yelled at Ivan.