

## Love Spell 691

### Chapter 691

Creative Advertising was one of the best advertising companies in Riverland. Jordan's face flushed with anger as Carlisle-a relative newcomer-dismissed him.

Selena gracefully sipped her tea. At first, she thought Carlisle was simply maintaining his relationship with the two business giants. But now, it was clear that Carlisle had Jordan in his sights.

"Why should I show you any respect? Do I have to be polite to every random person on the street who approaches me? Mr. Holman, do you treat every employee in your company like a king?" Carlisle asked, grinning.

Jordan's expression turned dark as he tried to control his anger.

"Mr. Zahn, what exactly are you implying? Are you comparing me to an ordinary person or an employee?"

"What? Do you think you're somehow more important than them?"

Carlisle snickered.

"Y-you've gone too far!"

Jordan then turned to Bob.

"Bob, help me out here. Who's in the wrong?"

"Let me take a puff of my cigar."

Bob chuckled awkwardly before pulling out a cigar cutter and trimming his half-smoked cigar. He took a long drag. He was well aware that Jordan wanted him to be on his side. Although Bob and Jordan had a connection going back a few years, it was based on mutual interests.

Jordan had just introduced himself to Carlisle, so it was unlikely that Jordan knew what he had done to offend Carlisle. It was also possible that Carlisle was simply annoyed by Jordan's presence.

What made matters worse for Jordan was Carlisle's stature.

As the founder of Aurora Holdings, which was behind Alumni Network, Carlisle was not someone to be trifled with. Insulting such a prominent figure was a risky business.

Rather than get caught in the crossfire, Bob decided to remain neutral. He'd rather part ways with Jordan than take on someone like Carlisle. While Bob's analysis was spot on, he would never have guessed that Carlisle's actions were driven by resentment from a past life. Carlisle sat calmly in the chair.

He sipped his wine and smiled faintly before saying, "If you're upset at me, you're welcome to declare war on Aurora Holdings."

"What makes you think I won't?"

Jordan glared at Carlisle as he got ready to make a call on his phone. He nudged Bob with his foot, hoping that Bob would intervene and give him a way out. Jordan knew Bob's company was struggling and that he didn't have the resources to engage in a full-blown business battle.

Bob retracted his leg and pretended to cough, making it look like the smoke had irritated his throat.

Jordan noticed Bob's lack of support, which only added to his frustration. He needed a way to back out gracefully.

"I-if it wasn't for..."

"Is your phone out of battery?"

Carlisle tossed his Motorola V3 on the table, grinning.

"Here. Use mine. It has full service. Don't let me down, Mr. Holman."

"You... you're going too far!" Jordan snapped.

Then he turned to Selena, his frustration evident.

"Your chairman is young and doesn't understand what he's doing. You, as his secretary, should know better. Don't you understand the dangers of a business war?"

## Chapter 692

Jordan had thought of Carlisle as just another arrogant rich kid, with Selena acting as a watchdog for Carlisle's parents. He was surprised that Selena hadn't stepped in to defuse the situation.

Selena sipped her wine gracefully before smiling softly.

"Our company is considering a move into advertising. I think Creative Advertising could be a valuable stepping stone for us."

"W-wait, are you..."

Jordan was on the verge of a breakdown. He had hoped that Selena would mediate rather than escalate the situation.

Carlisle stroked his chin thoughtfully and said, "Even prestigious brands like Hermès advertise on Alumni Network. If we start an advertising company, our internet exposure could give us a solid foothold in the industry."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Zahn. I spoke too much. Please, go easy on me..."

Jordan's face had paled as he clasped his hands in desperation.

Alumni Network had an undeniable reach, and their collaboration with Hermès was real. If Aurora Holdings truly entered the advertising industry, it wouldn't just carve out a niche- it'd likely dominate the Riverland market.

With Creative Advertising's prospects looking bleak, the emergence of a formidable competitor could lead to significant losses for the company in 2005.

"I admired your enthusiasm before, Mr. Holman, but now you're rather disappointing."

Carlisle smiled indifferently.

Jordan's face flushed with embarrassment as he pleaded, "Mr. Zahn, I'll do whatever you say. Just please, spare me..."

Carlisle sighed.

"You should be grateful that my mother has a close friend in your company."

"Who... Who is she?"

Jordan understood now why Carlisle was targeting him. He suspected that it was probably because Carlisle had learned about his mistreatment of employees from his mother's friend.

Carlisle's lips curled into a smirk.]

"Are you going to fire her? It works for me. After all, we need people in our company."

"N-no, absolutely not! I'll promote her immediately and treat her like royalty!"

Jordan shook his head.

"Her name is Sabrina Welter!"

Carlisle named Sabrina's position. Sabrina was the head of planning at Creative Advertising.

In his previous life, Carlisle's mother had gone to great lengths to secure Sabrina's help. When Carlisle was introduced to the company, Sabrina treated him like a stranger. She even

told him not to mention their connection to others.

Securing a white-collar job was quite an accomplishment in those days. It was certainly better than working on an assembly line with only a middle school education, like many of his peers from his hometown.

During the holidays, the villagers praised him as the most successful young man in the village. He would be considered the best if it weren't for his cousins.

Carlisle felt a deep sense of gratitude to Sabrina. In his previous life, he had given her many gifts during the holidays as a token of appreciation.

Now, in this new life, he wanted to repay her by securing a promotion for her at Creative Advertising. It was his way of honoring the rare friendship between her and his mother. "Sabrina... She's the head of the planning department. I'm promoting her to Director of Planning tomorrow!" Jordan said, his face pale with fear.

Carlisle gave Jordan a knowing look.

"Money isn't everything. Stop exploiting your employees. If you continue to push them too hard, your few remaining customers may go elsewhere."

In his previous life, Carlisle had discussed the possibility of jumping ship with some colleagues. They had planned to take clients with them to other agencies, which would have guaranteed high salaries. However, when some colleagues thought it was unethical, they abandoned the plan.

"Yes, Mr. Zahn. You're absolutely right. I will definitely change."

Jordan nodded vigorously.

Carlisle turned to Selena.

"Let's hold off on the advertising market for now. With Alumni Network's visibility, breaking into the market will be a breeze."

"Whatever you say, Mr. Zahn!"

Selena nodded.

"Thank you, Mr. Zahn. I... I have to step away for a moment," Jordan said, obviously relieved.

He quickly went to the bathroom, eager to escape Carlisle's presence.

"Mr. York."

Carlisle suddenly turned to Bob.

"M-Mr. Zahn."

## Chapter 693

Bob's face was tense, and his hand trembled slightly as he held his cigar. The pressure he felt from Carlisle was intense.

Although Carlisle was young, he clearly had the power and resources to back him up. Jordan's Creative Advertising would likely be devastated if Carlisle did venture into the advertising industry.

Jordan was a billionaire, but before Carlisle, he seemed so insignificant. Bob wondered where that left him in front of Carlisle.

"Mr. York, how big is your electronics factory?" Carlisle asked, his lips curling into a subtle smile.

Bob forced a smile.

"Do you have any friends working in my factory?"

"I'm not sure. Some of my high school classmates who didn't get into college might've ended up at your company," Carlisle replied with a chuckle.

"If you provide me with a list of your classmates, I'll look into it and give them promotions and raises," Bob said nervously, his hand shaking slightly as he held his cigar.

He feared that Carlisle's classmates might have spoken poorly of him, and Carlisle might retaliate out of loyalty to his friends.

"Mr. York, you're overthinking it. I simply wanted to discuss a potential partnership."

"A partnership?"

Bob looked at Carlisle in shock.

"I only have a hotel and an electronics factory. How could we collaborate?"

"Can your electronics factory handle phone assembly?"

Bob quickly nodded.

"Yes, we can. Our company specializes in contract manufacturing for mobile phones. We just completed a renovation of our clean room to Class 100. I can't guarantee other aspects, but in terms of cleanliness, our factory is among the top five in the country!"

Clean room classifications included Class 10, Class 100, Class 1000, Class 10000, and Class 100000. The levels represented different air quality and filtration requirements.

Class 10 represented an extremely clean room used for high-precision semiconductor chips. Class 100 was standard in pharmaceutical and biological labs, while Class 1000 was widely used in electronics and medical fields.

Class 10000 and Class 100000 were the standards for food processing plants and an ordinary cleanroom, respectively.

Selena was surprised.

"Class 100? For electronics, wouldn't Class 1000 be sufficient?"

"Is something the matter?"

Selena began, "The cost difference between a Class 100 and a Class 1000 cleanroom is

significant. A Class 1000 clean room might cost around a thousand dollars, while a Class 100 can cost about 18 thousand dollars!"

"That's almost like housing prices," Wendell muttered quietly.

Chapter 694

"Vision Electronics is managed by my wife. She's a bit of a perfectionist and has a strong aversion to anything that's not up to standard.

"She often brings her work frustrations home. It's like the feeling when someone pulls the plug during a critical moment in a guild battle," Bob explained, managing a wry smile as he sipped his wine.

"Out of frustration, I upgraded our factory's Class 100000 clean room to a Class 100," Bob added with a hint of bitterness in his voice.

"Your wife can't be that old, can she?"

Carlisle chuckled. Bob scratched his head, looking a bit embarrassed.

"She just turned 24 this year, fresh out of college."



Wendell's eyes widened.

"You must be in your 30s, then?"

"I was born in 1971, so I'm 33."

"That's quite the age difference. Her relatives must have a lot to say about it. It's rather selfish, don't you think?" Wendell muttered.

Selena turned to Wendell slightly and cleared her throat.

Wendell realized his inappropriate comment and quickly apologized, "Sorry, Mr. York. I spoke out of turn."

Bob didn't mind and responded with a smile.

"It's okay. As you said, many people do talk behind us. My wife doesn't let it bother her, but I do. I rarely visit the factory myself!"

"It's just a nine-year difference."

Carlisle shrugged.

"Age doesn't determine the quality of a relationship. Everyone has their way of living, and there's no need to cater to others' opinions. Those who gossip are likely just jealous or bored. Keep a positive mindset!"

Recently, much judgment about age differences in relationships has been surfacing. Carlisle believed a nine-year gap was trivial compared to some of the more extreme age differences in relationships that are publicized.

Selena nodded in agreement.

"I agree with Mr. Zahn. A happy marriage isn't about age but mutual love and a healthy mindset. You live your own life, and there's no need to worry about external gossip. As Mr. Zahn said, a nine-year age difference is not that big!"

"I guess I was being narrow-minded."

Wendell felt embarrassed after listening to Carlisle's and Selena's reasoning. He scratched his head awkwardly.

"The chairman of my previous company was 65, and his wife was only 42!" Selena added, smiling.

Carlisle waved his hand.

"Let's change the topic. Mr. York, how much did the clean room renovation cost?"

Carlisle needed to plan the production environment with the Govan smartphone development nearing production. He needed to understand the situation before deciding whether to rent and renovate a factory clean room.

"Vision Electronics has 15 workshops, each 800 square meters. The renovation for the clean room cost around 20 million," Bob said, his expression reflecting the sting of the expense. Having started the business at 14 years old with his parents and accumulated around 50 million over 19 years, spending 40% on the renovation was a significant hit.

Carlisle admired Bob's dedication to his wife. He would do the same, too.

"Investments like that can yield great returns. With the intense competition in the phone contract manufacturing industry, enhancing your production environment will likely attract more orders."

Bob's face lit up with a hopeful smile.

"That's true. Nokia is considering a visit to Vision Electronics. It's a rare opportunity for us. We might secure a Nokia order after the New Year if all goes well."

"But hasn't Nokia always worked with Wealth Technology and Ally Electronics for manufacturing?" Selena asked, as she was familiar with the industry.

The two companies were the best in the country, so she thought it was strange that Nokia would hand over manufacturing to a smaller company.

"It's likely they're looking to cut costs. Wealth and Ally's clean room standards aren't as high as ours. We may not have their reputation, but our quality is comparable."

Bob was confident in Vision Electronics. Their location in a small county had held their potential back.

"Mr. Zahn, the governor has arrived."

## Chapter 695

Wendell whispered a reminder to Carlisle about the governor's arrival. Carlisle glanced over to see a weary Sheldon surrounded by a group of dignitaries as he entered the hall.

"Mr. York, I'll take my leave now. We'll talk later," Carlisle said as he got up to return to his table.

Selena took the opportunity to exchange contact information with Bob for future reference.

When he arrived, Sheldon took the stage and began his speech, "Hello, entrepreneurs of Riverland! Attending today's charity dinner hosted by Mr. Yuriel is a great honor. First, I must express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Yuriel for his generosity and selfless contributions. I also want to thank all of you here today for your spirit of charity and social responsibility.

"You're a vital force in the Riverland economy and the bearers of social responsibility. While pursuing the development of your enterprises, you have not forgotten to address social needs and actively participate in charitable endeavors, making significant contributions to the development and progress of Riverland.

"In this period affected by an extreme cold wave, we deeply understand the boundless power of unity and mutual aid. We cannot ignore those affected by the cold wave. They need our help and support."

Sheldon's expression turned serious as he thanked the crowd for their contributions and concluded with a toast.

Everyone stood up, applauding enthusiastically. The applause echoed through the hall and lasted for some time. Sheldon waved his hand to signal the end of the applause. As it gradually quieted down, he continued.

"Finally, I hope all major enterprises will continue to work together with our municipal government to tackle various challenges, striving for the prosperity of Riverland and the happiness of its people. Thank you all!"

With that, the crowd gave Sheldon another round of applause. Sheldon and his secretary left the stage.

Yuriel took the microphone with a serious expression and said, "Due to the severe impact of the cold wave, crops in some impoverished mountain areas of our city have been severely damaged. The livestock industry, fisheries, and power sectors have also been greatly affected.

"The governor has been deeply involved in the rural areas, guiding rescue work, and made time to deliver this speech despite his busy schedule. He still needs to return to the countryside, so he won't be able to join us for dinner.

"I trust that the business leaders here will understand. Rather than more words, let us, as entrepreneurs, fulfill our corporate spirit and social responsibility. Let's all contribute what we can!"

While applause erupted again, it wasn't as fervent as before. Despite Yuriel being the wealthiest man in Riverland, his influence was still far behind Sheldon's, who had been dedicated to improving the city's economy and living standards. During Sheldon's tenure, Riverland's gross domestic product had surged.

Yuriel took out a check from his jacket pocket and showed it to the cameras.

"On behalf of Excellence Group and its subsidiaries, I am donating ten million dollars to the Riverland Charity Foundation."

A murmur of surprise swept through the hall. Most of the enterprises present had annual revenues of around ten million.

In 2004, the top donor on the charity list contributed 35 million dollars, and the second was Lethan from Thompson Group, who contributed 16 million. Yet, Yuriel donated ten million in the first month of 2005.

"Mr. Gust truly lives up to his reputation! Such a generous act is beyond my reach!"

"Mr. Gust's benevolence is commendable!"

The entrepreneurs present praised Yuriel's charitable spirit.

"I, on behalf of Fashion Elegance, am donating three million to the Riverland Charity Foundation."

## Chapter 696

As the voice of a young man rang out, the spotlight immediately locked onto the source of the sound. In the spotlight stood Austin. He was steadily holding a goblet in his left and extending three fingers on his right. A confident and composed smile played on his lips.

"Three million dollars... That's a huge amount."

"Isn't Fashion Breeze a subsidiary of Excellence Group? Why would Austin separately donate three million dollars?"

"Isn't it obvious? Austin is starting to take over Mr. Yuriel's business. He's using this opportunity to make an impression on the media and other entrepreneurs."

Austin was already on stage with the check as everyone buzzed with discussion. He first displayed the check in front of the cameras and placed it in the transparent donation box.

At a nearby table, Lethan drank silently, his face expressionless. Shein, Josie, Shania, and Zachary all looked displeased.

Excellence Group had split off Fashion Breeze specifically to suppress Islo Clothing. Now, Austin had represented Fashion Breeze and donated three million dollars. As a company in Riverland's fashion and handbag industry, Islo Clothing couldn't possibly donate less. Moreover, Lethan and Yuriel belonged to the same generation. If Lethan donated less than a younger person, Islo Clothing's reputation would be inevitably affected.

Lethan had no intention of competing. But he couldn't withstand the media reports and external gossip.

"Islo Clothing will donate 3.5 million dollars!" Lethan put down his wine glass, raised his right hand, and shouted.

The spotlight shone on him.

However, the audience's reaction was lukewarm. After all, Islo Clothing was a well-known brand in the country. With Fashion Breeze donating three million dollars, Islo Clothing's 3.5 million dollars seemed somewhat underwhelming.

On stage, Yuriel held the microphone and chuckled.

"Lethan, you're a representative of the fashion industry. My son donated three million. How can you donate an almost equal amount as him?"

Austin's lips curled into an amused smile. When it came to the art of words, Yuriel was unmatched.

Other entrepreneurs at the scene also caught the double entendre in Yuriel's words and couldn't help but chuckle.

Lethan's face burned with embarrassment. He clenched and unclenched his fists before picking up a pen to write another check.

But Shein stopped Lethan.

His expression was calm as he said, "Donate what you should. Without this bit of composure, how can you achieve great things?"

Lethan took a deep breath before entering the stage with the three-million-dollar check and placing it in the donation box.

Reporters eagerly snapped photos and filmed, causing Lethan to feel a fear of exposure for the first time. He had to admit that Yuriel's and Austin's actions had indeed affected his state of mind.

"Thompson Group donates ten million dollars!"

Shein donated ten million dollars, causing another wave of astonishment and praise among the crowd.

"Prosperity Group donates five million dollars!"

Josie walked onto the stage with a check.

Under Josie's control, Prosperity Group had a smaller scope of involvement. They also had a significantly lower annual profit than Thompson Group and Excellence Group. Thus, the donation was half as much.

"Mr. Zahn, how much should we donate?" Selena asked softly.

Carlisle blew on the steaming tea in his cup and said calmly, "10.01 million dollars."

Everyone who heard this was shocked. Carlisle was clearly trying to outdo both Yuriel and Shein.

Sean frowned.

"Carlisle, we're a new enterprise. There's no need to compete with them."

## Chapter 697

Logan also spoke up to persuade Carlisle.

"Mr. Zahn, Aurora Holdings is only profitable with Alumni Network at the moment. Other companies have yet to start generating revenue. And we still need significant funding for further research and development. Please reconsider."

Sean continued to murmur, "Given the current earnings from Alumni Network, we'd need to take on 20 ads a month for three months just to make a million dollars."

"Ms. Johansen, please try to persuade Mr. Zahn..." Owen whispered to Selena.

Gareth, playing with an exquisite lighter in his hand, smirked.

"I think it's worth doing. We should put on a brave face about it. This million can be seen as an advertisement for Aurora Holdings."

Selena replied, "Mr. Zahn just wants to stand up for Islo Clothing. Besides, Mr. Spencer is right. If our donation matches those of Riverland's richest man and Shein, it will

undoubtedly capture the attention of all the businessmen here. The name 'Aurora Holdings' will be etched in their minds."

Carlisle's eyes flashed with surprise. Everyone thought he wanted to elevate Aurora Holdings to the same level as Thompson Group and Excellence Group, but only Selena saw that he wanted to stand up for Lethan.

Lethan was Wanda's uncle. When Carlisle first started with his business, Lethan had provided him with some support. Now that Lethan had been humiliated by Yuriel and dared not retaliate, Carlisle decided to stand up for the former.

In this era, a million dollars was undoubtedly a huge sum. For most entrepreneurs, it wasn't a small amount.



However, Carlisle had already experienced the next 12 years. He knew that there would be an economic leap in the coming decade. Hence, he believed his company would easily earn billions in the future.

His subconscious view of money was based on future values. So, donating a million dollars didn't make him feel any pain.

The charity donations continued in an orderly fashion. "Creative Advertising donates 50 thousand dollars!"

"Vision Electronics donates 35 thousand dollars!"

"Stellar Materials donates 30 thousand dollars!" "Delights Catering donates 30 thousand dollars!"

"Universal Finance donates one million dollars!"

Suddenly, a crisp young lady's voice echoed through the hall. The crowd fell silent immediately, and the spotlight shone on Sarah.

Sarah was dressed in a pure white off-shoulder gown. Her innocent and lovely face complemented the sexy and fashionable dress. Her black hair cascaded naturally down her back. She looked like an angel who had fallen from heaven.

"Who is this beauty?"

"What kind of company is Universal Finance?"

"Wow... She's so pretty. She's even prettier than my goddaughter."

"I noticed her earlier. I thought she was the daughter of some boss. Turns out she's a young entrepreneur."

"She looks so young, probably not even 18. Calling her a young entrepreneur might be an understatement."

All eyes were on Sarah.

At this moment, Sarah felt elated. She had always been the center of attention at school, and now, stepping into the business world, these wealthy and influential bosses were focusing on her. She felt that this charity gala was her true transformation.

On stage, Yuriel whispered something to Austin. Austin nodded, then walked to the steps to wait for Sarah.

After a moment, Sarah walked up the steps. Seeing Austin waiting for her, she smiled. She extended her arm, gloved in white, then elegantly and gently said, "Austin, come on stage with me. I want everyone to know that I'm yours."

Austin's gaze grew fiery as he stared at Sarah's delicate neck and collarbone. Her blood vessels were even visible.

He swallowed and smiled slightly.

"This isn't the right occasion. We're here for charity-to show love for the suffering farmers. I'll declare my love for you in front of everyone next time at a major business gala."

Chapter 698

"I didn't think of that."

Sarah blushed, realizing she still had a lot to learn.

Austin leaned in and whispered, "You look stunning today, Sarah. Go ahead and make the donation. Then, I'll take you upstairs."

"Okay."

Sarah knew exactly what Austin wanted to do. Her blush spread to her neck.

"Sarah donated a million dollars? Is her company that profitable?"

Lily's eyes widened in surprise as her grip tightened on Sean's hand. She disliked Sarah and didn't want to see Sarah succeed.

Sean held Lily's hand and scoffed.

"It's all Austin's money. Without him, she's nothing."

After making her donation, Sarah stepped down from the stage. Sienna immediately approached and held onto Sarah's arm.

"Mr. Gust has something to take care of. He asked you to mingle around for a bit."

"Okay."

Sarah nodded, planning to network with some friends from the business circle. "Sarah, how much do you think Carlisle will donate?" Sienna asked out of curiosity. "At least a million dollars," Sarah replied.

She glanced confidently at Carlisle's table and continued, "Carlisle has always wanted to prove himself. So, if I donate a million dollars, he'll definitely donate more. However, he won't donate more than 1.5 million.

"My donation has two purposes. One is to make Carlisle spend more. Another is to get Universal Finance into the business circle and make everyone remember my company. This is what you call killing two birds with one stone."

"You're so smart, Sarah. I need to learn from you."

Sienna's eyes were filled with admiration.

"Come on. Let's go have a drink with our old classmates."

Sarah was worried Carlisle might donate less than her as it would undermine her donation's impact. Sarah and Sienna took two glasses of red wine from the table and walked over to Carlisle's table.

Sean teased, "Carlisle, your ex is here."

Everyone at the table looked toward Sarah, following Sean's gaze. Carlisle glanced briefly at Sarah, his face indifferent.

"We never dated. How could she be my ex?"

Sean chuckled.

"I bet she's here to flaunt her million-dollar donation."

Soon, Sarah and Sienna arrived at the table.

Sarah looked like a noble young lady with her captivating face and elegant dress. She thought her presence would overshadow all the women at Carlisle's table. But she quickly realized that most of the women carried a kind of grace and elegance she couldn't match.

"What are you doing here, Sarah?"

Sean had already dropped his smile and was staring at Sarah blankly.

Sarah replied, "I'm here to drink with your chairman."

Her words implied that she was on par with Carlisle. On the other hand, Sean was merely Carlisle's subordinate, not worthy of speaking to her.

Sean frowned, clearly catching the disdain in her words. He held back his anger as the company's core executives were present. He clenched his fists but didn't act out.

Carlisle looked up at Sarah.

"Do you think you're qualified to drink with me?"

Sarah was slightly taken aback, not expecting Carlisle to humiliate her in front of so many people. Her previously gentle expression turned cold.

"Carlisle, do you really have no regard for an old classmate?"

Sienna nodded in agreement.

"That's right, Carlisle. You're being too heartless. You pursued Sarah for so long.

"Now, she's come to toast you. Not only do you refuse her, but you also insult her. If Ms. Turner knew her highly regarded student turned out like this, she'd be heartbroken."

Chapter 699 "Wendell?"

Carlisle couldn't be bothered to deal with Sarah and Sienna's embarrassing antics, so he simply got Wendell to chase them off.

"Please leave."

Wendell got up and began walking toward the two ladies. His broad physique and cold expression were incredibly intimidating.

Sienna said angrily, "Carlisle, you're inhumane! We're still high school classmates. How could you-"

"Do you need a refresher of what happened at Papplewick Tea Shop?" Gareth asked, looking at Sienna.

His head was tilted to one side, and an evil smirk on his lips. Sienna shuddered and quickly ducked behind Sarah. She clearly remembered everything that had happened at Papplewick Tea Shop that day.

It was her first time ever getting beaten. Her face had swelled up and needed a few days to recover fully. The worst part was that she had no way of getting revenge. Even Manny, the leader of Gaston's gang, feared Gareth.

If even they didn't dare to go against Gareth, what could Sienna do?

"You've always wanted to prove yourself, right, Carlisle? I hope you don't donate less than me," Sarah spat out before dragging Sienna away.

Sean said through gritted teeth, "I guess leopards really can't change their spots. Those two idiots really piss me off!"

Lily caressed the back of his hand gently as she consoled him, "You know they're just dumb. Don't stoop down to their level. Carlisle just chased them off, see?"

Carlisle smiled serenely and said, "They'll find out how ignorant they were just now in a moment. The best way to destroy their dignity is for them to find out how much more powerful we are!"

At that point, the donation event lasted for an hour and a half. The transparent donation box was already more than half full with checks.

"Hello, everyone. May I ask for everyone to be silent for a moment?"

Yuriel suddenly picked up the microphone and spoke into it. All the chatting businessmen in the room began to quiet down as they shifted their focus to Yuriel.

With a smile, Yuriel said, "Alumni Network has been the talk of the town recently. I am sure everyone's curious about the person behind a giant social network like that and how this network managed to achieve over eight million users within just two months."

As he spoke, he looked down at Carlisle's table and continued, "Today, I've invited the creators of Alumni Network and Aurora Holdings, the company behind Alumni Network. Aren't you guys interested in meeting the youngest entrepreneurs in Riverland?"

"Quit beating around the bush, Mr. Gust! Alumni Network is famous now. Let us business veterans see how powerful the new generation of entrepreneurs are before we retire!" an

older gentleman called out from his seat below the stage.

Yuriel sighed and said, "They're all university students who are still studying, so they're pretty lowkey when discussing work and dealing with clients. After all, they're a new business and have much to deal with, so I hope everyone here can understand."

It seemed like a compliment to Alumni Network and Aurora Holdings, but Yuriel was actually pushing them right into the eye of the storm.

He deliberately mentioned that the two of them were university students. By bringing up their subtlety when it came to business matters, it meant one of two things. Either people believed it to be true, or people would assume that Sean and Carlisle were arrogant, cocky, and couldn't be bothered to respect others.

As expected, many younger businessmen thought they perfectly understood Yuriel's veiled compliments and began to chat about the two companies.

"Mr. Gust is too nice to say it too straightforwardly. I bet Alumni Network and Aurora Holdings aren't planning to donate!"

"They're just university students. How impressive could their companies really be?"

"Alumni Network is just a viral sensation for now. They won't be able to keep this momentum in the future."

"Good observation! Besides, their whole marketing tactic is to reward newcomers. That's basically the same as a pyramid scheme! We should bring it up to the commercial

department and get them to really look into Alumni Network!"

"I think Mr. Gust is only complimenting them to put them at a disadvantage!"

The young businessmen were all simply jealous.

After all, Alumni Network's eight million users couldn't be denied. If all the users were realized as assets, then Alumni Network's future would be a bright one.

## Chapter 700

The other older businessmen simply remained silent, excited to watch the drama unfold.

Yuriel's smile widened when he heard the chatter happening among the guests.

He looked at Carlisle and said, "Aren't you going to grace us with some wise words, Mr. Zahn?"

The other guests at Carlisle's table began to look annoyed by all the other tables' chatter. Yuriel was the wealthiest man in Riverland. Why was he giving Carlisle such a hard time? Selena tore a page out of her pocket notebook, which had a speech draft written on it.

She passed it to Carlisle and said, "Mr. Zahn, you can use this as a guideline."

It was Carlisle's first time joining a gala with other businessmen, and since Yuriel was also present, Selena was worried that Carlisle wouldn't be able to keep up. Thus, she had already drafted some responses while Yuriel had been speaking.

"Why should I have to explain myself to them?" Carlisle asked coldly, quoting a book from his past life.

He stood from his seat and walked towards the platform with his cheque in hand. He had no idea how shocking his words were for the crowd to hear.

They thought he was arrogant, reckless, cocky, domineering, and unreasonable.

He seemed to be standing on top of the business world at that very moment. Even Selena, who had witnessed many legends in the business world, was taken aback.



She had witnessed the wealthiest man in Riverland and the richest man in the country come to the forefront. She had even seen the wealthiest man in the world during the international business conference that Forbes had organized in 2003, but she had never encountered a businessman as cocky and confident as Carlisle. After all, none of them could guarantee that they would never need help from anyone else.

"Damn. Carlisle really knows how to hold his ground," Sean murmured as he stared at Carlisle with a burning gaze.

He felt his passion begin to light up in his veins. Who cared about Austin? Who gave a damn about Yuriel? Did either of them really think Carlisle was that easy to pick on?

"Carlisle is so cool!"

Even though Lily and Christine were Carlisle's high school classmates and friends, they also blushed after witnessing Carlisle's confidence.

Back in high school, Carlisle had been so poor that he refused to buy any new clothes so he could have money to impress Sarah with. It had only been four months since they passed the college entrance exam, and yet Carlisle had already become bold enough to look down on all the major businessmen in Riverland.

"There's no need to be so cocky in front of us. If he really has the guts, he'll say that on stage in front of everybody," Gareth said at an unfortunate time.

Hank glared at Gareth and said, "Easier said than done!"

At that very moment, Carlisle had stepped onstage.

Yuriel announced into the microphone, "I believe most of you here have already heard about Mr. Zahn, but I also believe some of you have never met or even heard of him. Allow me to introduce you all to the CEO of Aurora Holdings, Carlisle Zahn! He's also a freshman at Riverland University!"

Some people in the crowd began to clap. However, not many of them were enthusiastic about it.

Those sitting at Gareth's table were clapping. Bob clapped as well. Lethan, Shania, and Luna were also clapping for him. Even Queenie began to clap after hesitating for a moment. Zachary glanced at her but didn't say anything. Sarah folded her arms over her chest and subtly smiled.

She murmured to herself, "Carlisle, Carlisle. Your sad little ego is probably shriveling up to a husk right now."