

Chapter 33 Inside the Heart of the CEO

Moana

A few more days went by, and I had just come inside from a midday walk with Ella and was taking her sun hat off in the foyer when I suddenly felt a newspaper being shoved into my hand. I glanced up to see Amy standing above me with a surprised look on her face, and I took the paper from her to see that the front page had a picture of Edrick crouching in front of Clara from the day we went to the orphanage, when he crouched to explain the situation with his father to her. Selina must have snuck a picture while they were talking.

The headline of the article read “CEO OF WERECORP VISITS ORPHANAGE, SPENDS HEARTWARMING AFTERNOON WITH CHILDREN”.

“What’s that?” Ella asked, leaning over to look at the paper. She gasped then and ripped the paper out of my hands. “It’s daddy! And look, Moana!” she exclaimed, pointing to the background. “There you are!”

In the background of the picture, I could be seen standing and looking down at Edrick and Clara. I felt my face get hot; I was never one for any sort of public attention, not that anyone would necessarily be looking at me.

Ella handed the paper back. “Will you read it to me?” she said.

I nodded and led her over to the big armchair in the living room, where she crawled up onto my lap and traced the words on the page with her small finger while I read.

“Mr. Morgan is a kind and lovely soul, beneath his hard exterior,” Sophia Brown, the director of the orphanage, stated during her interview,” I read. ““What was meant to be a brief meeting turned into an entire afternoon of fun with the children, who all can’t stop talking about their new favorite visitor. I sincerely hope that Mr. Morgan will come back often.””

The article went on to talk about Edrick’s donation, as well as his commitment to change. However, the reporter also went on to mention their suspicions that the visit to the orphanage was all just a publicity stunt to cover up his unfair treatment of human WereCorp employees and his cold attitude toward the children that tried to give him their thank-you cards outside the WereCorp headquarters. I stopped reading before I got to that point, not wanting Ella to hear those things being said about her father.

“Will you bring me next time?” Ella asked. “I want to see the orphanage.”

I nodded. “If your daddy says it’s okay, I’ll take you sometime,” I said. “I’m sure the other children would love to make friends with you.”

Satisfied with that response, Ella jumped off my lap and ran off to play. As I stood and began to tidy up, however, I couldn’t stop thinking about the article; the reporter was right about the fact that the visit to the orphanage was originally meant to be a publicity stunt, and although it ultimately turned out to be far more than that, it still made me feel a bit guilty for suggesting it to begin with. In a way, I felt as though I had helped Edrick take advantage of Sophia and the children by getting those nice pictures. He hadn’t mentioned the trip at all for the past few days, which made me wonder if it truly made him more compassionate or if it was all just an act to get some positive press. Was he even still planning on starting a foundation for human orphanages?

Suddenly, I heard the elevator ding and looked up to see the doors slide open, revealing Edrick; he had come home much earlier than expected.

“What are you doing here so early?” I asked, looking up at the clock to see that it was only a little past one o’clock.

Edrick shrugged and tossed his briefcase down by the coat rack in the foyer. “No reason,” he replied. “Just taking an extra hour for lunch to get some work done here.”

He started to walk toward his study, but I called after him.

“Edrick,” I said, watching him stop in his tracks and look over his shoulder. “There’s an article about you in the paper.”

“Oh?” he said, turning around now fully as I scooped the paper up and handed it to him. I watched his steely gray eyes scan the article, and then with a hmph, he tossed it back down on the coffee table.

“What’s wrong?” I asked. “Sophia said some really nice things about you.”

He shrugged. “I was just hoping they would have reported on the pay raises by now,” he said.

“The pay raises?” I c****d my head, intrigued.

“Yes. I gave the human workers the pay raises they wanted. A certain percentage, anyway.”

I was taken aback by Edrick’s sudden choice to do the right thing. Maybe the visit to the orphanage really did change a small part of the Alpha’s heart, after all.

“That’s... great,” I said, feeling a smile spread across my face. “I’m happy that you did that.”

Now, it was Edrick who appeared a bit taken aback. He almost appeared as though he didn't know how to respond to someone being happy for his decisions.

“Well, it's all for the productivity of my factories,” he said, his face returning to its usual cold and stony appearance. “And besides, I wouldn't have made this decision if it wasn't part of a negotiation to get my employees back to work.”

“He's lying...” Mina suddenly said. “I think... he wanted to do the right thing.”

I watched as Edrick turned to go back to his study. Before he disappeared inside, I called after him one last time: “Still. Thank you for doing the right thing.”

Edrick paused, his hand on the doorknob. Then, without a word, he closed the study door behind him and left me alone.

Just then, I felt my phone vibrating in my pocket, breaking me from my trance over Edrick's sudden change of heart. I pulled it out and felt my heart skip as I saw Ethan's name on the screen, then I glanced up at the study door to make sure that Edrick wasn't watching before I answered, walking further away. After how Edrick had always reacted before over Ethan, I felt like I should hide this phone call from him.

“Hello?” I answered.

“Moana, hi,” Ethan's soft voice said on the other line. “Are you free tonight?”

“Um— Why do you ask?”

“How cruel of you to have forgotten,” Ethan said. There was a bit of humor in his voice, and suddenly, I remembered that the exhibit was tonight.

“Oh!” I said, feeling my face get hot with embarrassment. “I’m sorry. I completely forgot.”

“It’s alright,” Ethan said with a chuckle. “Well, if you wanna come, it starts at eight. Afterwards, there’ll be an afterparty.”

I bit my lip, glancing over my shoulder at the study door — it was still closed.

“I’ll try my best,” I said.

After we hung up, I slipped my phone back into my pocket as I continued to look at the study door. Would it be a bad idea to lie in order to go to Ethan’s exhibit?