

Runaway 311

Chapter 311

“That is for sure,” Quincy said as she poured James a cup of tea. “I’m sure you also know Light Group’s

influence in the country too.”

“Of course,” James replied. “I wouldn’t have agreed to this meeting otherwise. In fact, I don’t mind telling you that there’s so many interested investors I couldn’t afford to meet them all, so I’ve picked the ones I see most potential in.”

“Apologies if we seemed prudent too, since we’re not learned in this industry,” Quincy said as she scrounged through the document James brought them.

The concept, development process, and other details about the mechanical component were summarized meticulously, and it appeared professionally done to Quincy and Ian even if they did not really understand it.

Ian then leaned in to whisper to Quincy, “Shouldn’t we get expert opinion on this, Mom? We don’t know anything about this...”

Quincy was hesitant too.

While the project shows potential, her ignorance on the matter made her worried about messing up, since research and development required a huge sum of capital.

And they could not afford to invest that much money right now...

James, however, noticed their exchange and slowly said, “I’m sure there are concerns and partnerships like this shouldn’t be forced. Don’t worry, you can read that report as much as you want for now-I’ll be meeting Mr. Underwood from Hundred Bangs after this.”

As James appeared eager to leave and Quincy heard that there was competition, she quickly said, “Actually, since you’re already here, why don’t we have lunch together? You have to eat even if you’re busy.”

“To be frank, Mr. Underwood is a friend,” James said feebly. “I can’t turn down an appointment, and it’s obvious they want in on this too. Hundred Bangs is certainly worth considering too, so...

“Mr. Cross.”

As he poured James a glass of wine, Ian said, “We’re already here, and there’s no reason to not stay for lunch. We can speak further on our potential investment, and you could take your time before heading off to meet Mr. Underwood. It’s not much of a delay, right? I mean, if we came to an agreement before that, Hundred Bangs would just be a memory.”

“That’s true, but if I may be honest, Light Group would be my first choice if Isaac Jefferson were still CEO. I’m sure he could tell by now that this investment is a solid profit, but you...”

James trailed off. Though he was clearly voicing his doubt, he hastily tried to explain, "Well, it's not like I'm questioning your competence, and I'm certainly not familiar with you yet since you've just taken office.

So....*

"So, you're saying you don't trust us?" Ian finished for him, slightly indignant.

Was this man comparing him to Isaac, even telling him that he was less than Isaac?

With that, Ian promptly jumped at the deal. "Alright, we'll invest in your project. Hundred Bangs is just at

retail network anyway, and they'd never understand what they're getting into."

James appeared hesitant. "Are you agreeing to this already?"

"There's nothing to hesitate about," Ian said.

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Beside him, Quincy had resolved herself as well.

If someone else were to beat them to this project because they hesitated, they would lose it entirely!

"Yes," she said. "Light Group is willing to invest in Eastdawn."

James made an awkward look even though he was celebrating inwardly.

"Are you not going to think further about this?" he asked, as if put on the spot. "Mr. Underwood and I are. quite close..."

"We can sign an agreement right now," Ian insisted.

James had to give in then. "...Very well."

They decided to do it after lunch.

In the meantime, James's phone rang repeatedly with new requests for appointments, making it clear that he was in high demand.

That in turn convinced Ian and Quincy that they had hit the jackpot.

Their meeting lasted three hours, and after signing the agreement, James took the document and said, "Do visit my company should you have time."

"Of course, Ian replied.

"Contact me anytime you decide to come," James said. "Anyway, I'll be excusing myself now since I have other matters to attend to."

"Allow me to escort you," Ian said, and James happily accepted.

"We're partners from now on," James said as they headed for the exit.

“Yes. Here’s to a productive partnership,” Ian agreed.

“Of course.” James smiled meaningfully.

Ian was too engrossed in his success in securing the project that he never noticed anything unusual. After leaving Light Group headquarters, James returned to his car where his chauffeur was waiting.

Getting inside and staring at the grand tower from his car for a while, James then whipped out his phone. to dial a number, and someone soon answered...

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James appeared solemn and respectful as he said, “Mr. Jefferson? They’ve signed it.”

A deep voice spoke from the other end, “Good. Stick to the plan and keep reaching out. Don’t let them catch you before they inject their first batch of capital.”

“Of course,” James replied before hanging up and telling the chauffeur, “Let’s go.”

Meanwhile, Isaac had just put away his phone and turned around when a soft body threw herself into his

arms.

Irene then wrapped her arms around his neck-she had tied her hair into a ponytail and was dressed formally, her bright eyes twinkling as she smiled faintly. “I’m going to the interview soon. Do you think I’ll make it?”

Isaac put his hands around her waist and made a pensive face, which left Irene frowning and pouting with her pink lips. “Don’t you have faith in my skill?”

“You have skills?” Isaac asked in return.

Irene was speechless for a moment, and stood on her toes to bite his lips, immediately leaving a row of bite marks.

He smiled. “Attempting mariticide, are we?”

As he spoke, he reached underneath her blouse and pinched her smooth, delicate skin.

It was at once aching and embarrassing, so Irene shot him a glare. “I’m leaving, or I’ll be late-shouldn’t leave a bad impression with the interviewer for that.”

With that, she escaped Isaac’s arms, and he watched her leave with a faint smile.

She was always able to make him happy.

Outside, Irene told Jimmy the chauffeur where to go, and they quickly drove out.

She had to take a deep breath-she was feeling a little nervous since she had not been working for a

while. Since the previous night, she had been preparing and revising materials and information for the interview, and read a book on the way as well.

Jimmy had always been a good driver who could keep the car steady, but he suddenly stopped.

“What’s wrong?” Irene asked.

“There’s someone in the way,” Jimmy said.

Irene wound down the window to find a group of people encircling something.

Jimmy said, “I’ll go take a look.”

Irene nodded and kept reading, while Jimmy soon returned, “Sorry, ma’am, but I think someone passed out in the middle of the road.”

Irene looked up, quickly put away her book and alighted. She squeezed her way through the crowd and found a rather old man lying on the ground

“Excuse me, please let me through. I’m a doctor-please let me check on him. Also, try to make space for

the patient so that he can breathe easier.”

Everyone promptly cleared a path at her voice, and kept their distance as instructed.

Irene first made sure that the man was lying flat on his back and checked for breathing, and then his heartbeat for how he went unconscious.

If it was something like a spinal problem, low glucose shock, or emotional distress, massaging the philtrum or the nerves under the feet could help.

If it was a heart attack and resuscitation was needed, keeping the patient level could help direct blood flow up to the brain, improving circulation and helping them get revived right then.

Irene determined that it was the latter, and therefore applied the second method, and the patient slowly regained conscious thanks to her skill.

The ambulance also arrived just then, and she helped him into the car.

The onlookers also scattered, clearing the road and letting Irene’s car through.

However, the incident made her late for her interview, and she was not there when they called for her.

As such, she stayed at the waiting room until everyone was gone, and asked the interviewer why she was not called after other interviewees had left.

It was only then that she realized that she had been late.

“You’re here for an interview, so you should at least be punctual. How are you going to be a good doctor if you don’t know how to manage your time?” the interviewer said impassively and sarcastically.

Irene explained, “Actually, I ran into=”

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The interviewer shot her a look. "No excuses. Now, leave."

But Irene was not about to give up on such a rare opportunity!

"Please give me a chance. I've prepared for this interview-"

"That's your business. You're late and missed your chance, so you only have yourself to blame. You won't be late if you care at all," the interviewer growled impatiently. "I would have to call security if you insist on staying."

Irene stopped in his tracks then even as disappointment caught her.

She sighed she had a rare opportunity, and it went up in smoke.

Stepping out of the hospital, she felt more or less dissatisfied-it would have been better if they had rejected her because she fell short of their standard, but she did not even get an interview...

And how was she going to pursue her dream if she could not even get herself hired as a doctor?

The thought left her despondent!

As she made up her mind to leave, she heard someone speaking and turned to look.

It was the old man she had just saved earlier, and the interviewer and the old man saw her too.

Irene was not inclined to speak with him-she had taken the Hippocratic Oath as a doctor, and helping him was no trouble.

She turned around and continued ahead when the old man called out, "Please wait a moment."

Irene turned and asked, "Were you talking to me?"

The old man walked up to her and asked, "Did you come for a checkup?"

"No, I had an interview, but I was late, so..." Irene cast a helpless glance at the interviewer-it was his cold. indifference that denied her a chance.

The interviewer frowned. "You know her, chief?"

The old man nodded. "I had a heart attack and didn't have my aspirin. She saved me there."

Turning back toward Irene, the interviewer asked, "Was that why you were late?"

Irene nodded, even as she felt surprised.

Chief? Did that mean the old man was the hospital's chief?

The interviewer grimaced just then. "Why didn't you mention that?"

Irene was speechless-he was so snappy and stopped her from explaining herself! Did he even give her a chance?!

The old man said then, "Come to my office."

Seeing that she had a chance now, Irene naturally followed chipperly.

The interviewer turned to look at her just then-he was in his forties, and he had chiseled facial features and a sharp glare, which naturally discouraged anyone from holding his gaze.

Irene kept her head down as well. It was the first time she felt utterly intimidated by another person.

They soon arrived at the chief's hospital, and the old man told the interviewer, "You can go about your business, Stephen. I'm just having a few words with her."

With that, Stephen Carr quietly left, while the old man said, "Please have a seat."

After Irene did so, the old man asked, "Since you've come for an interview here, would you happen to know our specialty?"

Irene certainly did since she had done her homework!

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Irene's response was fluent. "Cardiology. In fact, one of the cardiologists here at Melville Hospital is known to be a miracle worker, and has famously cured multiple patients with near-incurable heart conditions."

The old man rested his chin on his hands and grinned. "Well, you've met the man. What do you think about him?"

"I've met him?" Irene considered it for a moment, before exclaiming in disbelief, "Wait, do you mean Mr. Poker Face?!"

She could not find a better description for the man-Stephen Carr was so aloof that he was basically devoid of humanity!

"Yes. That was Stephen Carr, Head of Cardiology and our miracle worker."

"That's my idol?" Irene thought to herself then.

"Anyway, which position are you applying for?" the old man asked.

"Cardiology. I'm willing to start as an intern," Irene said-she was not experienced enough to jump straight into residency, but she was willing to start from the bottom.

"Do you have prior experience?" the old man asked them.

It seemed that he was rather strict, and did not immediately hire her just because she saved him.

In fact, Irene's resume had been quite simple, starting out as an intern after graduation for two years-one year less than most interns, since the doctor in charge of training her acknowledged her outstanding ability.

After that, it was a year of residency. The first six months was routine training, while she was allowed in the room during surgeries for the next six months, before she went on to be an attending physician over a year.

Most doctors her age would not be allowed to take the scalpel independently, and she was among the more gifted.

The chief of Charity Hospital certainly admired her for that, along with her willingness to work hard.

She had a promising future and could make a name for herself, but she ended up running into more than a few obstacles that kept her from working for a long while.

Nonetheless, Irene told the old man about her experience. Given her youth, her resume was already an impressive one.

“Why cardiology?” the old man then asked. “This isn’t exactly the most rewarding department.”

He was hinting that it would be a difficult speciality and required more skill than it was worth, but Irene simply smiled. “It’s not as hard as when I had to get my medical license.”

The old man laughed in turn—it was certainly difficult, as students were tested on their knowledge on surgery, physiology, biochemistry and pharmacology, each of which were broad fields of knowledge of their own. To make things worse, there were cases where two or more of those domains were involved at

once...

As an example, the use of a medicine is pharmacology, but physiological observations of side effects and the biochemical compatibility with the individual would also come into question.

Therefore, most students had to cram themselves and memorize entire textbooks, stressing their brains. to the extent of losing hair, occasionally leading to baldness.

Following exams at medical school, the final test to claim a practicing license was certainly even harder.

“Honest, aren’t we?” The old man smiled, mused to himself for a while, and then said, “What do you think about an attachment with Stephen?”

Irene was surprised, but she certainly was not reluctant to learn from such an illustrious doctor.

“However, you must know that from now on, what he says goes. He decides when you can be promoted to cardiac surgeon, and should you believe that you can accept that, I will speak with him and you can start tomorrow,” the old man told her.

He was convinced that Irene was a good talent, and poor guidance would be a pitiful waste.

Naturally, he also had his own personal interest in mind—Stephen Carr could get a little stringent, and putting a lively person like Irene with her might ease his poker face a little.

“Yes, I accept the offer,” Irene said without hesitation.

She had been limited to minor surgeries before, and was only an assistant during Sheryl’s surgery.

It had always been her regret that she could not save her mother herself, but she had been lacking in both experience and skill at the time for a major surgery.

“You may go now. Prepare yourself for tomorrow,” the old man said.

Thrilled, Irene stood up and thanked the old man. “I will do my best.”

As the old man waved, she left his office, beaming... only to run into a familiar poker face on the walkway, and her smile slowly faded.

Stephen gave her a cool look and growled, “What are you so pleased about? Getting hired through the back door is nothing to be proud about.”

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Irene was speechless.

How was this getting hired through the back door? Did she not impress the hospital chief with her own expertise and earn the chance herself?

Nonetheless, Stephen left with those words, leaving her alone and sulking.

She felt conflicted at the thought that he would be the one instructing her from now on, but she did not want to give up on her dreams either.

Breathing a long sigh, she thought to herself that life was going to be hard from now on.

Even so, she could take anything as long as she got to learn from him-once she could stand on her own, he would be a distant memory.

Leaving the hospital and returning to the car, she told Jimmy the chauffeur, “Let’s go to the grocery store.”

She was very pleased to have succeeded in the interview, and wanted to cook something. She also thought that it was great that she chose to be a doctor-she knew what to cook for Isaac to help with his recovery.

“Of course,” Jimmy replied.

They were soon stopping near a traffic light, when Irene spotted Greg and Kathy stepping out of a jewelry

store.

Greg actually had his hand around Kathy’s waist-it seemed that Isaac’s plan had gone smoothly.

If things were already going so smoothly between Greg and Kathy, Quincy would explode if she found out!

Tut, tut...

Irene honestly thought then that Isaac was as cunning as he was evil.

As the light turned green, Irene looked away as Jimmy drove off.

They headed straight home after getting the groceries, but Isaac was out, and did not come home even at dinnertime.

The food was getting cold, so Irene told Mrs. Watson and Jimmy to eat with her-she had cooked a lot, and it would be wasted if they did not.

Mrs. Watson cleaned up the table afterwards while Irene gave Tommy a bath.

Maybe it was a very good bath, and Tommy quickly fell asleep after playing a little in his crib.

Irene left the shower to find him sound asleep, picked him up to lay him straight, and pulled his blanket over him. She gave him a soft peck on his cheek, and it felt so soft she wanted to peck him more...

Bzzt-

Her phone suddenly started to vibrate, and she picked it up. Worried that she had woken Tommy up, she stayed for a while and made sure he was not stirring before leaving the room to answer it.

It was Lulu Adams, and Irene was quite surprised to find that she was coming over-she did not mention it when they spoke just a couple days ago.

"When did you arrive? You could've told me."

"Just today. We should meet if you're free..."

Irene could tell from her voice that something was up. "Sure. Where?"

Lulu was not sure, however, and she had been wandering alone in the streets.

"How about Spencer Mansion? I'll be there soon," Irene suggested.

"Okay," Lulu replied.

Irene glanced at Tommy after hanging up. The baby was still sound asleep, so she gently closed the door, got changed, and left, telling Mrs. Watson before she did, "I have something to attend to, so I'll be out for a while. Keep an eye on Tommy and make sure he doesn't wake up, and if Isaac comes home and asks, I'll be at Spencer Mansion."

"Okay," Mrs. Watson replied, and Irene left.

Arriving at Spencer Mansion, she found Sheryl talking to Lulu in the living room as she entered. "It's late, Mom. Shouldn't you be in bed?"

"It's not even nine," Sheryl countered. "Nobody can fall asleep."

Irene then walked up to pull Lulu along. "I need to have some girls' talk with Lulu. Can we?"

Sheryl feigned exasperation and shot her a look. "Don't let me stop you."

Irene smiled, and took Lulu to her old room.

Once she closed the door, she turned toward Lulu and asked directly, "Did something happen? I could tell from your voice that something is wrong."

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Lulu sat on her bed, silent for a long while.

Irene waited quietly without urging her, until Lulu suddenly said, "Zachary and I had a fight."

Irene was left stunned for seconds, before asking in disbelief, "You two fought? Why?"

"His mother promised that she'd agree to our relationship if Zachary returned to his family business and claimed leadership, right? He did, but his mother now insisted that I must give up on my career to be a full-time housewife if we are to get married. She said that I'm supposed to care for and support Zachary, but I don't want to give up on my job."

"Well, what did Zachary say?" Irene asked.

Lulu scowled at the mention of Zachary. "He said that he gave up his preferred career for my sake, and asked me why I can't sacrifice mine for him. But is our relationship only sustained by our sacrifices?"

Lulu certainly knew that she should sacrifice a little for him after what he did, but said, "Look, Irene. I can make it up to him in any other way, but I would have nothing left if I gave up on my career. I mean...."

Irene knew why she felt insecure.

Lulu came from a poor family, and she would be fully dependent on Zachary if she did not have a job.

And if Zachary had a change of heart, she would have nothing.

Irene understood her worries, and was herself unwilling to give up on her passion over family.

Fortunately, Isaac was supportive, and she decided to be nicer to him. After all, not all partners could be understanding like him.

"But you're working in Sunny City. If you didn't resign, won't you be living apart even if Mrs. Slate agreed to you getting married to Zachary?"

"I can request for a transfer here," Lulu replied, paused for a moment and asked, "Do you think I should resign too?"

Irene was simply giving her take on the situation and did not intend that, so she quickly shook her head. "I think I'd want to be independent as well even if I get married. At least I'll have my own career- I'd feel insecure if I depended entirely on someone else."

"Isaac has been good to you, hasn't he?"

Lulu was actually envious that Isaac was powerful enough to not have to consider the opinions of others, but he still pampered Irene regardless.

Zachary was a different case-he came from a dynasty with strained relationships, and his parents did not like Lulu, causing complications on every turn..

Irene smiled. Isaac was definitely nice to her, but she also had concerns that she never mentioned to anyone. "I'm young, so this is probably our honeymoon period. Who knows what would happen years down the line?"

"Is he cheating on you already?" Lulu's eyes widened.

Irene quickly shook her head. "No! It's just that I'm losing confidence. Do you know that there are many women around him? It's like another shows up soon after I chase one away."

"There are women stalking him?" Lulu asked.

"I don't know about that, but there are some who are secretly in love with him." Irene scowled when she remembered Debbie, and knew from the start that she would be difficult to get rid of.

Lulu breathed a long sigh. "I guess life is hard for you too."

Irene could not help laughing. "What, did you think it was easy for me?"

"Isn't it?" Lulu asked in return. "That's Isaac Jefferson we're talking about-he has the money and looks, and most importantly, he loves you. Don't you think it's easy not to have a mother-in-law harass you?"

Irene was speechless for a moment, but decided that Lulu was right.

"I can talk to Zachary for you. There might be other options-"

"No, it's fine," Lulu said, cutting her short.

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Lulu appeared helpless.

"Look, I didn't tell you before, but the fight we had was really bad. He's really angry, and he's definitely on his mother's side about having me resign. I feel like he really wants me to be his full-time wife... but this is the one choice that matters, isn't it? Either I give up my career to be with him, or keep my career and give up on him. Can't bake your cake and eat it."

Irene did not know what to say. "Well, you have no family here and no place to stay, so you can stay here. in my room."

Lulu smiled. "Thank goodness I have you."

"The feeling's mutual." Irene smiled back. "I won't know what to do with myself in Sunny City otherwise... How about a little drink? It'll help you sleep."

"No thanks." Lulu shook her head-alcohol would only ease their frustration for a moment, but would not resolve the issue.

“Go home, Irene-you have a family now, so you shouldn’t stay out the entire night. I need time alone to think about what I should do anyway.”

“Okay,” Irene said, since Lulu just might decide what she wanted after calming down too..

“Who knows? Zachary might stay loyal to you forever.” To Irene, since Zachary was willing to give up on his career as a doctor for Lulu’s sake, he must love her to the bone anyway.

Lulu smiled faintly but said nothing.

As Irene headed downstairs, Sheryl was still in the living room. Seeing Irene come downstairs, she said, “Bring Tommy here if you have the time, Irene. I miss him.”

“Okay,” Irene replied.

It was midnight when Irene returned home, and just after she changed and got in bed, the door swung open, and she looked up to find a figure entering.

Sitting up, she asked, “Where have you been?”

“Zachary called me,” Isaac replied, taking off his shirt and ready to take a shower.

“Be careful when you get wet. Don’t hurt your back,” she told him.

“Okay,” he replied.

“Wait...” Irene suddenly said, frowning because she smelled alcohol. “Were you drinking?”

“He’s in a bad mood, so I had a couple of drinks with him,” Isaac chuckled. “I’m quite far from you though. -how did you smell it? Are you a dog?”

Irene was speechless, and wanted to snap at him, ‘You’re the dog!’

Instead, she said, “Go take your shower already. I have questions.”

“Yeah,” he replied and headed into the shower.

When he stepped out, Irene was waiting with the ointment for his back. As she applied it with a cotton swab, she asked, “What did Zachary tell you?”

“Just the usual grumblings,” Isaac flatly replied.

Irene frowned. “Why do I have this feeling that you don’t want to tell me?”

“Just not interested in talking about others with you.”

“Zachary is a good friend of yours, isn’t he? Stan even told me that he quickly claimed leadership over his family because you helped, even offering a lot of advice...”

Isaac suddenly turned around, and Irene had to quickly get the cotton swab away from him. She shot him a glare. “What are you doing? You almost knocked the swab off.”

“What do you think?” His voice was raspy and his gaze dark as he suddenly raised a foot, knocking Irene

down on the bed.

“Hey!”

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Irene was startled by his sudden move, and she shoved at his foot in the next instant. “What are you doing?! Get off me-I’d get the ointment all over you.”

Isaac reached out and took the swab out of her hands, throwing it on the table before pinning her down under himself.

Irene turned, not to struggle but to find a comfortable position.

Clang!

A loud noise suddenly echoed from the living room.

“What was that?!” Irene tensed up immediately, while Isaac frowned-seemingly unhappy with the sudden noise.

Irene was still looking at him. “Is there someone in the living room?”

Isaac breathed a feeble sigh just then..

“Is that Zachary?”

It was a question, but she basically knew the answer.

“He’s drunk,” Isaac explained.

He could not leave him outside by himself, so he brought him home..

That was when they heard a grating voice as if a table was pushed along the floor, and then something dropped and shattered loudly, followed by a scream.

Irene quickly tightened up her loose dress and shoved Isaac. “You should check on him.”

Still, it was a while before Isaac finally got off her, and he scowled as he left the room.

He turned on the lights in the living room to find Zachary on the floor, although he should be lying on the couch.

He somehow moved an entire table, knocking a glass to the floor which shattered into pieces.

Isaac frowned as he walked up to Zachary. “Get up, Zachary Slate.”

Zachary, however, was too drunk to respond.

Meanwhile, Irene had come downstairs as well after dressing up properly, and sighed lengthily at the sight of the carnage.

Lulu was hurting, and so was he... Was this not just mutual torture?

“I’ll make him a warm honey drink,” she said and headed to the fridge.

Blargh..."

Zachary was suddenly retching.

Isaac's brow furrowed, and he growled in disdain, "Throw up on my floor, and you're out of the house."

While Zachary was left stupefied, Irene arrived with the honey drink and was just about to help Zachary up when Isaac pulled her aside.

She shot him a look. "What's gotten into you? You won't just leave him like that, or you wouldn't have brought him home."

Isaac sees things differently, however-having his woman care for others, and a man at that, was absolutely out of the question.

He took the drink off her hands and put it on the table. "Go back to bed. Leave this to me."

Irene glanced at the clock-it was certainly late, and she should head to work earlier tomorrow since it was her first day."

So, she nodded and returned to the bedroom, only to remember that Isaac was completely incapable of taking care of another person!

Was he going to throw Zachary outside?

As such, she returned to the living room, only to find that Isaac had called in Jimmy, who helped Zachary off the floor and gave him the honey drink.

Zachary was not exactly complying. He was flailing around, and repeating how much it hurts.

Isaac stood nearby and growled coolly. "That's your fault for boozing."

Zachary snorted. "I'm hurting."

"And do you feel better now?"

Zachary said nothing, because he was just hurting inside at first-but he was now hurting physically too. When it rains, it pours!

As dawn arrived the next morning, Irene woke up and found Zachary lying on the couch.

She breathed a long sigh-she did not have time for this since she had to report herself at Melville Hospital, and left quickly after breakfast.

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It was not going to be a typical day, as Light Group was prepared to invest their first batch of capital in Eastdawn!

The initial investment was 80 million-an amount that Light Group could still afford at the moment.

After the transfer, Ian Jefferson and James Cross shook hands.

“Here’s to a beautiful partnership. Let’s take our respective companies to new heights-may your component be unveiled to the world soon.”

James chuckled. “For sure. Once it hits the market, you shall be the biggest winner!”

Ian laughed heartily-certainly, with Eastdawn’s development already in the final stage and the money-burning phases now almost over, investing in them now was basically getting a cut of the profits for free!

There was no question he had won big here.

James sighed in front of him just then. “Well, things are going to get awkward with my old friends now that we chose you.”

Ian smiled and patted him on the back. “I’ll be your friend from now on.”

“Indeed.” James was watching him with a twinkle in his eye.

It was almost eerie, but Ian did not care since he was too busy basking in the delight of securing the partnership.

He is convinced that this investment was an assured success, and the profits would soon come rolling in.

As he is in a good mood, he could afford to take a break to visit Robin Lynd.

Nonetheless, she was not about to be nice since he only came to see her after a long while.

“I thought you’d already forgotten about me.”

“You know I’m busy after taking over Light Group,” Ian said, snaking his hands around her. “Are you upset? Fine-just tell me what you want. I can buy it for you.”

“I don’t want a thing-I’m happy just being with you.” Robin leaned into his arms.

She was genuinely in love with him.

“By the way, my mom has accepted you now. She even told me to bring you home for dinner before,” Ian told her.

“Really?” Robin exclaimed chipperly.

“Of course. Why would I lie?” Ian said. “How about tonight?”

“Oh, but I’m not prepared at all...” Robin was suddenly nervous. “I can’t go empty-handed, can I? I should at least bring something.”

“They don’t need anything anyway.” Ian countered.

“That won’t do. Going empty-handed is really impolite.”

Robin really cared about making an impression, so Ian had to play along. “Alright. Let’s go get something now, shall we?”

Robin nodded, and they drove to a large mall.

Quincy was a fan of gems but also picky, and since Robin did not actually have much money, it was Ian himself paying for the gift.

It took a long while for them to find the right gift, and when they stepped out, Ian saw a car he recognized.

It belonged to his father Greg, but just as he was about to go up and greet him, a woman carrying shopping bags of various sizes walked past him and headed straight inside.

Ian froze.

Who was that woman? Why was she getting into his father's car?

"Wait here," he growled, letting go of Robin's hand just then and heading straight to the car.

He opened the door to find the woman was with Greg, and glowered right then. "Dad, who is she? Why is she in your car?!"

Greg was surprised that Ian caught him, but warned, "Pretend you saw nothing. And don't tell your mom." Ian was left bristling right then!

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Feeling humiliated just then, Ian snapped, "What do you think you're doing. Dad?!"

Having an affair at his age?

Quincy would flip out if she knew!

In fact, Ian himself was already losing his mind!

Still, he worked hard to cool his temper and stopped himself from getting in the car to drag the woman out. "Tell her to get out of your car right now!"

Kathy York was startled right then, and promptly threw herself into Greg's arms.

Greg naturally felt protective seeing that his sweetheart was frightened, and shot his son a glare, "Don't think you can order me around just because you became CEO of Light Group. I'm still your father-and you don't ever get to talk to me like that!"

With that, he shut the door in Ian's face and snapped at his chauffeur to drive, leaving Ian shaking with rage.

Robin walked up to him gingerly, and tried to assure him, "Maybe it's not what you think..."

"What, does it only count if I catch them in bed?!" Ian was wheezing, feeling down in the dumps just then. "I think you should go. I don't think I can take you home today."

"Okay..." Robin murmured.

She was certainly reluctant since it was a rare chance for her to meet Ian's parents. Even so, her feelings did not matter after what just happened, and had to accept that as reality.

As for Ian, he headed straight home... but could not say a word when he actually saw Quincy.

He knew his mother's temper, and that if she found out, she would definitely go to war with Greg.

And at the moment, they had yet to rein in Light Group back on the right track, and he would rather not have family troubles on his plate too.

Light Group was Ian's priority... but as things go, the more you care, the more you would lose it.

Just two weeks after the 80 million dollar investment into James Cross's Eastdawn, the man called him, saying. "Sorry, Ian, but we ran into a snag. We're going to need more capital."

Ian had been in a bad mood since learning about Greg's affair, and James's request for additional capital left him even more annoyed.

"I thought you said the development is in its final phase?" he asked with an edge in his voice. "Are you saying that the 80 million I injected isn't enough? What happened?"

"Yes, we wouldn't have needed a second injection if things had gone smoothly, but there's an issue now. It's alright if you're not interested-we have other interested parties.."

"We have an agreement," Ian growled, cutting him short. "It's stated in black-and-white that we're your sole partners. You're breaching the agreement if you find someone else!"

"Yes, but my company is this close! Am I supposed to just give up on all the capital spent on the development instead of finding solutions? James became harsh and direct as well. "I didn't want to say it, but you definitely don't have Isaac Jefferson's mettle. Do you remember how everyone only had praise

for him back when he was in charge? He's even famous for throwing money into risky projects--"

"What is that supposed to mean?" Ian was already upset, and the mention of Isaac only worsened his mood. "Are you calling me stingy?"

James, however, was not afraid to provoke him with an agreement signed. "Yes, you're stingy," he said shortly. "Your company is worth billions, and we're just asking for 150 million, but you're already getting cagey. How is that not stingy?"

Ian frowned. "What was that? 150 million?"

"Uh-huh."

"I've already given you 80 million!" Ian was left heaving, and it felt like his chest was burning from sheer frustration. "And you're asking for 150 million dollars not a few days later? What am I, a money-printing machine?!"

Nothing was going his way at all!

"Development like this has always been a money burner--"

"This isn't even a money burner! You're basically using dollar bills like toilet paper!"

Nonetheless, Ian took a deep breath to calm himself before continuing. "Fine, let's cut the crap. Give me a precise amount and make sure there won't be more issues this time, and I'll give you the capital. Also, do you actually have an ETA for the project's completion?"

"I've already told you: we're in the final phase. It's just an accident and no one wanted that. Also, I know that you've poured a lot of money into us, but you should already have known that I've bet my bottom dollar on this. I won't lie to you-I've spent over a billion on this, and failure means bankruptcy for me. That's why I would never let this fail, and I apologize if I have been rude. It's just that a setback when we're so close hurts me too, and I should have chosen my words better as well. I hope I have your understanding..."

Ian certainly could not say more after James put it that way.

Also, James had invested over a billion, while he only invested 80 million. Ian was still going to make a killing even if he invested more, since he would get half the profits once the component was finished and marketed.

"How much do you need?" Ian asked.