

"What? Are you sure it's only fifty thousand? I mentioned one hundred thousand, didn't I?" Cody denied deliberately.

"I'm very sure you only mentioned fifty thousand just now! How can you go back on your words!" Casper pretended to be flustered.

"Did I say that just now? Anyway, I have changed my mind. If you wish to see my sister, you have to give me one hundred thousand." Cody's lips twisted into a sly smile, contorting his fleshy face. Even so, a glint of greed was still visible in his smiling eyes.

Even Hilda's eyes were sparkling with anticipation at that moment. It had never occurred to her that Casper, whom she thought was penniless, turned out to be exceptionally wealthy. Ah! I shouldn't have judged the book by its cover!

She put on a smile and repeated Cody's words, "That's right. We will only let you see Amelia if you agree to give us one hundred thousand."

With an exasperated look on his face, Casper glared at them and relented, "Fine! One hundred thousand is the final figure, right? So I will be able to see her after paying you the sum? I hope you'll keep your words this time."

The smiles on Hilda and Cody's faces widened as they nodded in utter excitement.

Nevertheless, they were not aware that Casper had activated something on his phone. It was something that could enable Amelia to release herself from the shackles of Hilda and Cody forever. Without hesitation, Casper transferred another fifty thousand to Cody's account. Cody checked his account again to ensure that the transaction was successful. For the first time in his life, he felt that making money was such a piece of cake. With that, his frustration with Amelia subsided as well. After all, she was the reason Casper came to them.

When the latest balance of his account came into view, Cody felt on top of the world.

Casper asked impatiently, "So, that's all, right? Can you keep your promise and let me see Amelia now?"

Cody exchanged gazes with his mother and remained silent momentarily before they shook their heads.

"Why?" Casper lashed out at him. "I just want to see her for a while! How much more do I need to pay before I'm allowed to see her? This is indeed extortion in broad daylight!" His loud and penetrating voice was audible to everyone in their vicinity. In fact, he intended to cause a ruckus and attract attention from passersby.

Hilda let out a cunning smile. "Calm down. That's not how it works. Since you have given my son one hundred thousand, he will lead you to see Amelia.However, she's my daughter. Thus, you should give me one hundred thousand as well." A hint of greed flashed across her eyes.

Casper gaped at her and shook his head in disbelief. Both of them have no sense of shame at all!

Even so, he still transferred one hundred thousand to Hilda's account. Eventually, both mother and son led Casper into the house in contentment. Every corner of their three-story European house screamed money. Nevertheless, he realized that it was not as luxurious as he thought when he set foot in it. It seemed as though they could not afford to furbish the entire place. As a result, the house ended up looking rather odd.

Casper guessed that Amelia was somewhere in the house. After a series of turns on the second floor, they finally came to a halt outside a small room in a secluded corner. Hilda inserted the key into the door and unlocked it.

The moment the door was opened, Amelia's figure came into sight. She was crouching in a dark corner pitifully. There was a mixture of helplessness and despair written across her face as though she had resigned to her fate.

Casper's heart wrenched in pain at the sight before

him. In fact, anyone who saw her in that wretched state would undoubtedly feel sorry for her too.

Nevertheless, the mother and son duo did not share the same sentiments as him. They threw a glance at her disdainfully, as if she was a filthy rat on the street. After that, they left the room, leaving Casper alone with her.

It cost Casper two hundred thousand just for the short private session with Amelia.

Amelia's eyes widened in shock the moment she saw Casper as she could not believe that Hilda and Cody let him in so easily.

Hilda had given her a call earlier and told her that Cody was gravely ill, requesting her to come home.

Throughout these years, Amelia had not kept in touch with her family other than the times she transferred money to them as promised.

Even so, she had never expected that Hilda would make use of Cody in order to trick her. Thus, she believed her words, and it was already too late when she realized that it was a set-up to lure her home. Hilda was actually trying to coerce her into marrying a wealthy man for the sake of money.

Amelia had gotten used to her mother's wickedness since young, and the latter's unforgivable doing this time made Amelia lose all hope in her.

It's all because of money. They would do anything just

for the sake of it.

Amelia was stunned the moment Casper appeared before her as she couldn't believe that she was able to see him again.

At the same time, she was ashamed to face him under the current circumstances. She never expected that he would find out about her background in such a way.

Casper scanned Amelia from head to toe. He was stupefied to find that she seemed to have lost half of her weight within a few days.

His heart ached at the sight of her sunken cheeks and scrawny physique.

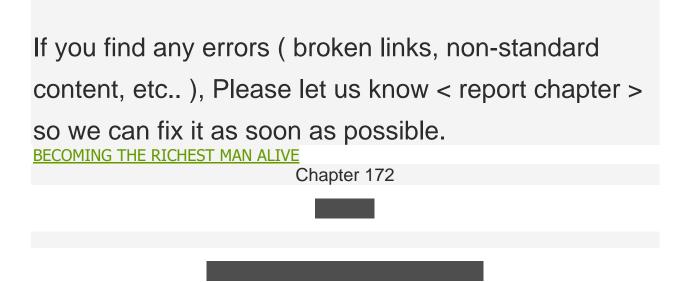
Fortunately, he had foreseen that both Hilda and Cody would not treat her well, given their cold-

blooded nature. Otherwise, the first glance at Amelia's miserable state might have driven him insane, and he would have killed the heartless duo.

Amelia choked up as she asked, "Casper, how on earth are you here?"

Tears started to trickle down her cheeks. Casper was like the only ray of hope she saw ever since she was trapped in darkness a few days ago.

"I waited for you behind the hill for quite a while at noon. Then, your classmates told me that you had not been attending class since a few days ago. I called you several times, but your brother was the one who picked up the call in the end. After that, your mother gave me a call using your phone. So I grabbed the chance to ask for your address, and that's how I ended up here," he explained casually as if he was telling a story to a child.



Casper intended to ease her anxiety by describing the incident to her in a relaxed manner.

"I wanted to check on you to make sure that you are safe and sound," he added placidly.

Upon hearing that, Amelia burst into tears. Nobody had ever cared for her like Casper did, and she even doubted if she was worthy of such treatment. Nevertheless, Casper proved to her with his actions that she was. Amelia had gone through a lot of obstacles in life. But no matter how distressed she was, she would not shed tears easily.

Even so, her heart was touched by Casper's simple words of concern. It was as if the armor enveloping her vulnerable heart was shattered by his warmth.

It struck her that she deserved to be cherished despite being mistreated by her family members.

As a wave of indecipherable emotions overcame Amelia, she cried her heart out. It was as though she was venting her despair and frustration through her tears.

At that moment, snippets of the misfortunes that befell her during her childhood, her mistreatment by her family, and everyone's doubts in her flashed across her mind like a movie. Casper could feel the throbbing pain in his heart at the sight of Amelia's tears. Wrapping his arms around her petite body, he consoled her in a gentle tone, telling her that the worst was over for her.

In Casper's warm embrace, Amelia finally released her suppressed feelings of despair, sorrow, and insecurity through her tears. After wailing for half an hour, she finally calmed down gradually.

However, as an introverted girl, Amelia could not help but feel awkward for crying herself out in Casper's arms. Her cheeks flushed red, and she dared not look at Casper.

Meanwhile, Casper heaved a sigh of relief and smiled at the sight of her rosy cheeks. The despair and sorrow on her face earlier on had vanished, and Amelia was finally back to her old self. When both of them finally came to their senses, Casper asked Amelia curiously, "Have you ever thought of cutting ties with your family? How can you accept the way they treat you?"

Amelia shook her head and let out a bitter smile while muttering helplessly, "It's not that I don't want to do anything about it, but there is just no way out for me. I have tried to free myself from them by all means. But no matter where I go, they never fail to track my latest whereabouts. They can effortlessly trace my school, teachers, circle of friends, and even my contact details. As such, I can never escape from them."

Placing both his hands on Amelia's shoulders, Casper looked into her eyes and asked firmly, "What if I can help you to get away from them? But the downside is, you won't be able to meet them anymore. Are you willing to let me help you?" Casper's words took Amelia by surprise as she had not expected him to say that.

Needless to say, Amelia trusted him, but she could not come up with any feasible way to escape from her vicious brother and mother, who were like demons haunting her. No matter how hard she tried, she was unable to free herself from their claws.

"If there's a chance for that, I'm willing to give it a try," Amelia took a deep breath and replied resolutely.

It was impossible for her to support her good-fornothing family forever, despite her kindness. In fact, nobody would be willing to be exploited by freeloaders.

What was more, Amelia had given up all hope on them after what they had done to her. They were consumed by greed and would do anything when it came to money.

Even though she was aware of their previous heinous deeds all this while, she had not been with them for most of her high school days.

Thus, it had never crossed her mind that they would stoop so low for money and that she herself would become the victim of their greed one day.

If possible, Amelia wished that she would not have to cross paths with them anymore in the future. Nevertheless, there was unmissable hesitation in her eyes.

Casper knew that Amelia was a kind and soft-hearted girl. Even when she was utterly disappointed with her family members, she never thought of cutting ties with them. She is such a kind-hearted person, yet her family members do not cherish her.

Casper could not help but let out a deep sigh.

Although being kind was laudable, it would be disastrous when one's compassion was exploited by a ruthless person.

However, Casper knew that he could not blame Amelia for being unable to make up her mind and cut ties with her family. After all, blood was thicker than water, and it was a fact that she was the flesh and blood of the Williams family.

All of a sudden, he recalled the speculation that crossed his mind when he reached their house earlier on.

He looked at Amelia quizzically again after making another round of comparison inwardly. Based on his observation, there was not the slightest bit of resemblance between her and her family members.

He asked jokingly, "Are you sure they are your biological family members?"

Unable to wrap her head around what he was trying to say, she glanced at him in bafflement and replied confidently, "Of course." The firmness in her tone and the sincerity in her eyes indicated that she was clueless about her own family background.

Family members usually resembled each other due to genetic factors. Since Amelia did not look like her mother and brother at all, Casper presumed that she took after her father.

He asked inquisitively, "Do you have a photo of your father?"

Amelia nodded instantly. Although she wondered why Casper was so keen on taking a look at her father's photo, she kept her suspicion to herself and added, "The photo is not with me now. I kept it with my other belongings on the campus, and I came back here without bringing anything with me." Casper joked casually, "If you don't mind, I would like to have a look at the photo someday."

Amelia nodded again in agreement and smiled.

Later, they continued to make small talk, albeit Casper was the one talking most of the time. Meanwhile, Amelia listened attentively with a smile.

He was glad that she managed to push her mishaps to the back of her mind. At that moment, she was back to her usual self; the kind-hearted and gentle girl who was sometimes cheerful and shy.

They had a great time chatting until Hilda suddenly flung the door open and told them that the time was up. Thus, they had no choice but to part with each other reluctantly.

Two hundred thousand was gone just like that, yet

Casper still felt that the session, which lasted for barely an hour, was worth the price.

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Casper was delighted to have learned the truth and obtained sufficient evidence. On top of that, he managed to get a clue of Amelia's thoughts.

To him, the most important things at the moment were to stay hopeful and set a goal.

With that, he left the place at once without sparing another glance at Cody and Hilda.

After that, he headed straight for the car rental firm to return the old Santana before he went back to the campus.

It was already evening when Casper was back on campus. After having his dinner at the cafeteria, he returned to his dorm.

Most of the students staying near the campus had already returned home as it was Friday, and Casper was more than happy to enjoy a peaceful night.

Felix was out on a date with his girlfriend while Colton was playing computer games.

Casper was lying idly on the bed when he received the first-ever reminder from Darwin Corporations' livestreaming app.

What was more, it indicated that Giselle's live stream

would begin soon. If he was not mistaken, there had already been a few days since her last live stream.

It was actually Giselle's second appearance on the platform.

Even if Giselle had her face covered as usual, Casper could imagine his goddess' dainty face while listening to her melodic voice. It was a blissful moment as he enjoyed her enchanting singing.

Having his eyes glued to the screen, Casper was mesmerized by Giselle. At the same time, he did not forget to send a series of virtual gifts to Giselle discreetly. In a blink of an eye, Giselle's live-streaming platform was flooded by the notifications of the gifts obtained.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle ninety-nine Super Rockets.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle a Banner.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle five Banners.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle ten Banners.

The next instant, the comments section was bombarded by another series of notifications, spurring the netizens' excitement.

Mr. Lingham has just gifted Giselle one hundred and ninety-eight Super Rockets.

Mr. Lingham has just gifted Giselle five Banners.

Not long after that, the observant netizens managed to deduce a theory. Ah! It seems that the number of gifts sent by Mr. Lingham is always double the ones given by Mr. Simpson! The finding piqued the curiosity of everyone watching Giselle's live stream in an instant. Subsequently, the number of netizens following the live stream increased significantly from thirty thousand to seventy thousand.

Casper furrowed his brows the moment he noticed that somebody was seemingly challenging him.

Mr. Lingham? A thought flashed across Casper's mind abruptly. Could it be Sawyer Lingham?

Even so, Casper could only make a wild guess since there was no concrete evidence. A surge of frustration started to well up within him.

In the meantime, Giselle also sent a series of replies as a token of appreciation: Mr. Simpson, thanks for the gifts! Mr. Lingham, thanks for the gifts! Casper's displeasure was intensified by the formality in her tone. Moreover, there was not the slightest bit of difference in her replies when she addressed both Casper and Sawyer. It was as if both were merely strangers to her.

It makes sense that Giselle is unaware of Mr. Lingham's identity. Yet, how is it possible that she is clueless that Mr. Simpson is me? Does it mean that Goddess is deliberately keeping a distance from me after I poured out my feelings to her previously?

Under the current circumstances, Casper could only think of three possibilities at that moment. Does she still need time to think it through? Is she feeling shy because of my confession? Or has she made up her mind to reject me?

If she has thought it through, then her actions should

reflect her decision.

Nevertheless, Casper felt that he should not jump to a conclusion right away.

However, ever since Casper confessed his feelings to his goddess that night, they had not contacted each other. Moreover, Giselle seemed to have forgotten the promise made between them to keep in touch.

Casper wondered if it was just a mere coincidence or Giselle was avoiding him as he realized that he had not met her for quite a long time.

Somehow, Casper's gut instinct told him that it was not a good sign. He did not receive anything from Giselle, not even a single voice message, text message, or phone call.

As a fervent fan of Giselle, Casper was displeased

with his goddess' nonchalance. To vent his frustration, he started to send a series of virtual gifts to her again. In a blink of an eye, the comments section of Giselle's live stream was swept by another wave of notifications again.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle one hundred and ninety-eight Super Rockets.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle twenty Banners.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle forty Banners.

Mr. Simpson has just gifted Giselle sixty Banners.

The netizens were rendered speechless as Casper bombarded the live stream with virtual gifts.

Nevertheless, they got used to it soon. Even so, they couldn't help lamenting how wealthy Casper was.

My goodness! He is indeed a filthy rich guy! Look at how he spends without a second thought! Is he an heir from an affluent family?

Within just a few minutes, Casper had spent two million on the virtual gifts.

Those who had come across Casper's user ID in previous live streams were already used to his thriftless ways.

For common wage-earners, they might not even have two billion even if they painstakingly scrimped and saved for their entire lives. What was more, those from the lower ranks of society might not even have an opportunity to come across such a large sum!

Nonetheless, Casper was no ordinary person. By then, there was not a single sign of Mr. Lingham, Casper's so-called opponent, to be seen, and Casper ended up domineering the live stream. On the other hand, Giselle was boiling with anger when Casper sent her gifts non-stop.

She was reluctant to keep in touch with Casper as she did not wish to drag him down. What's playing on this brat's mind? Why can't he stay away from me? Doesn't he know that he will only put himself in trouble if we get close to each other?

Two million worth of gifts! What is the value of two million to him? How could he spend such a large sum so impulsively?

Undeniably, Giselle had feelings for Casper. Yet, she was repulsed by his extravagant spending habit. Instead of feeling touched by his gesture, she felt humiliated.

It was as if Casper was trampling on her efforts all these years. In a split second, there was a look of sadness on her face.

It was evident that she cared for him. Otherwise, she would not have bothered about his impulsive spending.

Deep down, she knew that Casper was better than that.

Despite that, there were times when our feelings were not in sync with our thoughts. Sometimes, our minds would take control of our hearts, and sometimes vice versa.

As such, Giselle could not bear with it any longer when Casper continued to send her virtual gifts, and she gave him a call.

She had made up her mind to end things with Casper once and for all.

Everything between us must come to an end today. If we continue to let things drag on, it will only aggravate the situation.

However, Gisell's call could not get through. Casper's line was engaged as someone had made a call to him moments earlier; it was Victoria Stalling from Victoria's Chamber.

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Casper did not expect that Giselle would try to call him while he was on the phone with Victoria, and unfortunately, the conversation with Victoria lasted for quite a while.

"Casper, do you remember that the Antique Fair is just one week away? You have to be prepared, yeah?" Victoria said in an alluring voice.

"Sure, Ms. Stalling, I didn't forget about it. I'll definitely be there on time," Casper replied cheerfully.

"Before that..." Victoria paused for a moment before continuing, "Can you come to Victoria's Chamber? I have something to tell you. Don't worry. It's no biggie. There are some rules and requirements for participants of the Antique Fair that I need to brief you on to help you prepare for the event."

Casper remembered that there were indeed certain basic requirements to meet when he attended the Antique Fair with his father previously. Companions of invited guests were also required to meet certain conditions before they were allowed entry.

That signified that the entry requirements for participants of the Antique Fair had become more stringent, and it would be a gathering for people who truly had an appreciation for antiques.

That was also to ensure that the event would go on smoothly and prevent malicious people from destroying the precious antiques.

"Sure," Casper replied in agreement as he knew what Victoria was planning to do.

In fact, Casper had only remembered that the Antique Fair was going to be held next week when Victoria reminded him of it. However, he knew that they would not merely be attending the Antique Fair like they had thought. Just like what Hector said, on the day of the Antique Fair, every gang in Horington would be attacking Victoria's Chamber.

Since Casper would not be making a move on Victoria's Chamber, naturally, the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce would not be targeting that shop as well.

However, he also needed to prevent the other gangs from striking as he had promised to protect Victoria's Chamber.

As such, before the day of the fair, the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce had to make some preparations.

Casper planned to contact Stallion, Jeremy, and Robin at once.

They had to handle the situation carefully and come up with a strategy. Thus, Casper informed Stallion that he would be making a trip to the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce the next day.

At the same time, he texted Robin and Jeremy to let them know the plan for the next day and asked if they knew what would happen at Pine Street on the day of the Antique Fair.

While Jeremy knew nothing about it, Robin had heard some rumors from Hector previously.

"Boss, I heard from Hector that our main objective during the Antique Fair is to destroy as many antiques as possible," Robin said.

Obviously, the man did not know that their actual aim was to destroy Victoria's Chamber's reputation in the

antique industry, which had taken the shop years to build up. In addition to causing damage to its reputation, destroying the antiques would also cause Victoria's Chamber to suffer financial losses.

With a grim expression, Casper replied, "This time around, our task is to protect the antiques instead of destroying them. And the focus of our protection efforts would be Victoria's Chamber on Pine Street."

Both Jeremy and Robin were rather shocked to hear that. What they did not know was that Hector's plan was originally decided by the higher-ups and not Hector himself.

They had assumed that Casper would not be personally involved in it. After all, it was a troublesome situation, and his involvement would not benefit the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce in any way. However, Casper's mind was set.

Since their boss had already made the decision, as subordinates, the rest of them could only try their best to complete their task.

They had also arranged their next meeting, where they would discuss the details of the plan.

Meanwhile, Robin and Jeremy would be in charge of carrying out manpower restructuring for the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce.

The reason for that was to reduce internal conflicts and promote harmony within the organization before the Antique Fair as that would be beneficial to their upcoming situation.

After discussing for a while more, the three men

ended the conversation.

Right after Casper hung up, he received a call from Giselle, who had been calling the man but was unable to get through to him.

As a result, she was burning with rage, yet Casper was oblivious to all of that.

He thought that she was still in a live streaming session.

Casper was delighted to see the incoming call from his goddess and answered immediately.

"Hello, Goddess. What's up?" Casper greeted joyfully.

Giselle wanted to talk to him in person, but it did not seem appropriate to do so, given that it was already almost midnight. When she heard his casual greeting, she could feel herself getting increasingly irritated by his ignorance of the situation.

As such, the woman simply said in a frustrated tone, "Casper, let's meet up tomorrow. I've something to tell you."

By then, Casper had also detected the indignation in her voice, but he did not know what was going on. He had no idea why his goddess was acting that way, what grievances she had suffered, and what actually happened.

Giselle had planned to talk to Casper once her live stream ended, but his phone remained engaged when she tried calling him multiple times.

First, it was Victoria. Then, it was Stallion and Jeremy.

During that hour when Casper was on the phone with those people, Giselle had tried to call him more than twenty times, but Casper had missed all of them.

That obviously upset Giselle.

What was even more infuriating for her was that the man did not even know why she was so angry.

As such, she also felt hurt at the same time.

She was fuming mad all by herself while Casper was totally unaware of her feelings and what he had done to offend her.

Casper could tell that his goddess was not happy. Even though he did not know the reason, his priority was to appease her anger. And so, he apologized right away. "What happened to my goddess? Did I do anything to upset you? If I did, you have to let me know. I'll make amends immediately," Casper said sincerely.

Given the man's good attitude, no matter how angry Giselle was, it would seem unreasonable for her to lash out at him, and she could only swallow her rage.

Nonetheless, Giselle knew that she might have been overthinking. In fact, it was not Casper's fault at all.

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Previously, he had also been sending her virtual gifts. Not only was she not upset, but she was also really pleased about it.

It was also the same with phone calls. Perhaps his line was busy because his friend happened to call him at the same time, and there wasn't any problem with that.

Besides, even though he did not know the reason for her anger, he had offered a timely apology.

Giselle wondered why she was being so petty and getting so upset with the man.

As she gave it some thought, she felt she was at a loss because of Casper's confession and the debtors.

Perhaps that was why she was feeling such a barrage of emotions.

Even Giselle herself did not know why she was

behaving in that manner and was upset with herself for being so sensitive, paranoid, and insecure.

The woman took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, hoping that her unhappiness, frustration, and all the other negative emotions would flow out together with her breath.

After doing the intentional breathing exercise for a while, Giselle felt calmer and said to Casper, "Everything's fine. I guess I'm just a little more sensitive today."

However, some things still needed to be said.

Giselle adjusted the tone of her voice before saying, "Let's meet tomorrow at noon or afternoon. I have something important to tell you."

The woman did not sound angry anymore, but the

seriousness in her voice made Casper wonder what she wanted to tell him. He did not have a good feeling about it.

It sounded like Giselle had done some serious thinking about the matter and was going to have an official talk with him. Casper could also sense determination in her voice.

Suddenly, he no longer felt like agreeing to the meeting, even though his favorite activity was spending time with the woman.

Whenever he got to meet her, he would always feel extremely happy and excited, just like a teenage boy in love.

Because of his sense of foreboding, Casper replied at once, "Goddess, I don't think I'll be able to see you tomorrow. I need to meet my friend to discuss something with him, and it might take some time."

Even though it was true that he had an important meeting with Robin and Jeremy to discuss the matter with the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce, it was definitely not a reason for him to turn Giselle down.

Casper was just scared that Giselle would reject his love outright, and he would not know how to deal with that.

Casper wasn't someone who liked to pester others, but it was also not possible for him to let go of her so easily.

After all, he had already regarded Giselle as his future wife, which meant that she would also be the wife of the future head of the Simpson family.

If Giselle had clearly shown no interest in him from

the start, it would be easier for him to let go.

However, from the woman's initial behavior and her indecisive attitude toward him, Casper was quite sure that she had feelings for him too.

If that was the case, how could he just let her go like that?

Even if the purpose of the meeting was not to discuss that topic but something else, that was not a risk Casper was willing to take.

He did not care if he seemed timid, cowardly, or even despicable.

When it came to Giselle, he would not give up as long as there was still a chance, and he was determined to play it as safe as possible. Since young, Casper was taught not to be a Samaritan but to utilize his strengths and maximize his potential to achieve his goals.

The man was a businessman and not a saint.

Giselle paused for a moment after hearing Casper's reply.

It was the first time Casper had rejected her so resolutely.

She was surprised that he had declined her invitation to meet up. Previously, regardless of the time or venue, as long as she wanted to see him, he would be there as quickly as he could.

"How about the rest of the day? Will you be busy the entire day?" Giselle pressed on. "Yup," Casper hesitated for a second before replying.

As such, Giselle had no choice but to forget about seeing the man the next day and asked if he was free the following day instead.

That further confirmed Casper's suspicions that Giselle was indeed planning to reject him.

However, Casper knew that he could not keep rejecting her requests to meet up. It was not possible for him to avoid the issue forever.

The man was aware that he had to deal with it sooner or later.

All he could do was delay the meetup and try his best to change Giselle's mind before that.

However, that was simply a ridiculous thought.

How was he going to change the woman's mind and make her fall for him without meeting her?

Even though Casper was unsure of his next step, there was one thing he was certain about—he did not intend to give up.

As such, he did not reply with a definite answer but merely told Giselle that he was not sure of his schedule yet.

He even used Remy as an excuse, telling her that Remy had not fully recovered yet and it was his turn to take care of him for the next two days.

After Casper said that, Giselle could only give up on the idea of speaking to the man anytime soon.

However, she knew that she would not be able to accept Casper as long as she was still carrying that

## burden.

She did not want to be selfish and drag Casper into the dark abyss that she was trapped in, as it wouldn't be fair to him.

That was probably the first time the both of them ended a phone call without chatting about other topics as neither of them knew what to say to each other. Moreover, they had their own hidden agendas.

It was also the first time their hearts felt so far apart, unable to find a way to each other.

The next day was Giselle's weekly presentation in class.

When Casper and his dormmates, Felix and Colton, reached the classroom, Giselle was already standing on the podium.

Giselle and Casper exchanged glances, but none of them said anything to each other.

It wasn't difficult for Felix and Colton to realize that something was amiss, given the awkward atmosphere.

Felix nudged Casper's shoulder with his elbow and flashed a meaningful smile at him.

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With a mischievous smile, Felix asked, "Did something unusual happen between you and

Goddess? Why are both of you looking at each other with such a strange gaze? Tell me now! Did something scandalous happen between you and her?"

When Casper heard that, he turned around and shot Felix a look of disdain. "If there really is a scandalous relationship between us, would I still be wasting time with you? I'd have announced it to the entire world."

Felix sighed. "You're right. If I'm lucky enough to be in a relationship with Ms. Clauder, I would definitely tell everyone. In fact, I'd even thank God for my good fortune."

Smiling, Casper shot him another look. The three of them then walked to their seats and prepared to start lessons.

For this lesson, Giselle planned to talk about finance

in ancient times.

When she talked about the previous dynasties, Giselle asked, "Would anyone here like to volunteer to describe the financial history of the ancient dynasties?"

Naturally, many guys were eager to answer her question.

At that moment, a random classmate suddenly yelled out loud, "Ms. Clauder, why don't we let Casper, our teaching assistant, answer this question?"

Giselle frowned and asked, "What does this have to do with the teaching assistant?"

The person replied, "To show us his capabilities! We have to approve of the teaching assistant's abilities, right? Only the competent ones can become the

teaching assistant. If he isn't, we won't be willing to acknowledge him."

Frowning, Giselle said, "My choice of the teaching assistant has nothing to do with his abilities. The only thing that matters is whether he's suitable for the role, and that is for me to decide."

After a slight pause, she continued, "According to what you said, why should I still look for a teaching assistant? Shouldn't I just ask the top student in the faculty?"

The students, who were initially making a huge fuss out of it, immediately fell silent. They did not expect Giselle to defend Casper like that.

Perhaps due to this reason, the students started to look at Casper in an increasingly hostile manner.

However, he did not care about what others thought of him. In fact, he was secretly delighted that Giselle was defending him, which meant that he had a place in her heart. Casper could not help but think that he still stood a chance.

Perhaps, the situation was not as hopeless as he had thought.

Naturally, Giselle was completely oblivious to the fact that her words had rekindled Casper's hope again.

Otherwise, she would have let him answer the question instead of speaking up on his behalf.

However, she could not stand seeing Casper bullied or wronged. After all, one would only show such concern toward people whom they cared about.

Casper just stared straight at Giselle, admiring her

serious demeanor while lecturing.

The more he looked at her, the more enamored he was.

He only averted his gaze reluctantly after the lesson ended and Giselle left the classroom.

Normally, no one ever paid attention to these lessons, even Casper.

He was troubled about whether to go to the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce. What should I prepare for the Antique Fair next week? What should the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce prepare?

And then there's that matter with Amelia.

On top of that, I have to worry about Remy and Giselle.

Everything's an utter mess. Even so, I still need to sort everything out.

After Jessica had that talk with Remy in the ward that day, he had been in a state of stupor.

He was at a loss, not knowing what he was doing. In fact, he probably did not even know where he was.

Initially, he refused to believe everything that Jessica had told him.

However, when all the evidence was laid out in front of him, he had no choice but to believe her.

Never would he have expected that his friends were actually telling him the truth. On the other hand, he was the fool in the situation.

Curling up into a ball, he clutched his head and mumbled, "What have I done? What have I done to my friends? What have I done to Casper?"

I've been a jerk, and a stupid one too. As he thought about it, he punched his chest furiously, wishing to punish himself and diminish the tormenting agony within him.

Jessica felt guilty as she looked at him. She knew that Remy, who was the most innocent of all, was also hurt the most by her actions.

At the thought of the despicable things she had done, Jessica's guilt intensified.

When she saw Remy hitting himself with such anguish and rage, her heart ached so much that she tried to stop him. However, he shoved her away.

"Don't touch me!" he yelled furiously.

"To think that I treated you so sincerely and trusted you so much! And because of that, I refused to believe my friends. In the end, it led to so many misunderstandings! But it turns out that you've been using me all along and deceiving me!" spat Remy agitatedly.

The tears that were brimming in his eyes finally streamed down his cheeks.

People often said that men only shed tears when they were utterly devastated.

"Don't torture yourself like that anymore. I'm begging you!" pleaded Jessica as she cried.

"Don't touch me! You should leave now. Let's not meet each other ever again." Remy sounded fatigued as if all the energy had been drained from his body.

Looking at how emotional he was, Jessica knew that she could not stay any longer as she did not want to agitate him further.

Before she left, she kept turning around to look at

Remy.

However, he did not even spare her a second glance.

When she turned around and glanced at him, he was no longer looking at her.

Is this the retribution for my sins? This is living hell indeed.

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Remy continued sitting there, feeling clueless about what he should do.

He knew that he had committed an irreversible mistake, but he did not know how to salvage the situation.

Naturally, he was aware of how awful the things he had done to Casper were. If their roles were reversed, he would not forgive Casper so easily. But Casper was the one who found the medicine and saved his life when he was critically ill.

Yet, after he woke up, he threw a tantrum at Casper because of that minor incident. Even Felix and Colton were disappointed with him.

Remy shook his head in despair. If he were them, he would have punched himself so that he could get a wake-up call and see how utterly foolish he had been.

Raising his head, Remy lifted his arm and slapped himself forcefully.

Then, he slapped himself again. It was only until he lost all strength in his hands that he finally stopped.

By then, his cheeks had become swollen. It was the only way to ease the feelings of guilt and unease in him, even for the slightest bit.

After lessons in the afternoon, Casper went to Buddy Internet Cafe as he wanted to discuss with Jeremy, Robin and Stallion about the Antique Fair.

When he arrived, the three of them were already sitting there and waiting for him.

However, they were not the only ones there. For some reason, Elena was with them as well.

Casper shot her a suspicious glance before looking at Stallion.

Stallion shook his head, signaling that he was clueless about it too.

It turned out that Elena had suggested tagging along after knowing that Stallion would be attending a Firewolf Chamber of Commerce meeting and that Casper would be present as well.

In that case, Elena probably has something to say to me.

Casper shifted his gaze to her.

At that moment, she said, "Mr. Simpson, please proceed with important matters first. I have something really important to tell you later."

Casper shook his head and replied, "It's fine. You can just tell me now. They aren't outsiders. Since they'll

know about it sooner or later, you don't have to wait."

"Okay." Nodding, she started explaining her objective of coming here.

"Mr. Simpson, Tycoon's revenue has been decreasing lately. As of now, it has fallen by more than 20%. Besides that, our investors are withdrawing their investments. The guests who have booked us for banquets or parties have suddenly revoked their bookings too. They're even willing to pay us a huge sum of compensation so that they can terminate the contract. At the same time, there are some people spreading malicious rumors about Tycoon, saying that our food is unhygienic," said Elena solemnly.

When Casper heard about Tycoon's situation, he frowned. He had not expected the situation to be so serious.

Evidently, Tycoon's current predicament was caused by a few evil-intentioned people who were trying to target them.

He had no clue who those people were. After all, he had offended quite a lot of people recently.

However, since they dared to provoke him, they would definitely give themselves away.

By then, he would know what to do.

Casper nodded, implying that he was already aware of the situation.

Then, he asked Elena, "Have you found out whether there are any problems with the ingredients we use? And what about the investigation of the investment withdrawals and the booking cancellations?" Elena nodded. If she had a choice, she would not be troubling her boss with these trivial matters.

However, she was utterly helpless, unable to come up with any feasible solution.

She replied, "We've dispatched the respective departments to investigate the matter, but nothing came up. Not only were the investors and customers unwilling to communicate with us, but our diners did not believe us as well. We don't know who spread the rumor that our ingredients are unhygienic. In fact, we were only aware of it after a regular customer told us. Yet, he had only heard it in passing."

However, everyone would rather be safe than to be sorry.

For businesses in the F&B industry, especially those that had already made a name for themselves, a

single rumor could ruin them.

Elena lowered her head embarrassedly. In her opinion, her inability to answer all those questions undermined her professionalism greatly.

When Casper heard that, he frowned. It's definitely not a mere coincidence that all the mishaps happened at the same time. Someone must be deliberately trying to bring the hotel down.

However, who would oppose Tycoon so vehemently?

Now, Tycoon's one of the top hotels in Horington. To destroy such a hotel, the person must need an extensive social network, abundant resources, and immense power. Who has all these?

In other words, who is willing to sacrifice so much to ruin Tycoon?

Someone from the industry? Or one of my enemies?

Casper immediately told Elena, "We should give out instructions to the rest of the staff first, then wait and see what happens. We'll have a more detailed discussion after that. I'm aware of the situation now, so you can go back first."

Elena nodded and left.

When she was gone, Jeremy and Robin frowned.

Naturally, they were delighted to know that Tycoon belonged to their friend. It meant that they could go there to eat for free anytime.

However, they did not expect the hotel to be facing such a crisis.

Robin said, "Boss, why don't I think of a way and force those people to come clean about defaming the hotel?" Jeremy chimed in, "Why don't we catch a few investors, customers, and diners? We'll interrogate them and find out where they got their information from and why they did that to the hotel. Won't that work?"

But Casper shook his head.

Although such actions might have a temporary effect, it was not a suitable long-term plan.

Furthermore, if word got out, it would greatly impact the hotel's reputation.

Casper stroked his chin. Still, it's still a possible solution when the need arises.

For now, the most important thing was not only Tycoon's crisis but also the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce's preparation for the Antique Fair.

Hence, Casper instructed, "Both of you should focus your attention on preparing for the Antique Fair. As for the hotel, you can come with me and check it out later."

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After listening to Casper, Jeremy and Robin nodded.

"What about me, Boss? What should I do?" Stallion asked.

Looking at him, Casper answered, "You'll be in charge of disciplining those punks at the Firewolf Chamber of Commerce." "No problem! Leave it to me," promised Stallion as he patted his chest.

Although the three of them wished to share Casper's burden of dealing with the Tycoon Hotel problem, they had more important things to handle now.

Casper, Stallion, Jeremy, and Robin spent three hours planning for the Antique Fair.

They only heaved a sigh of relief when night arrived.

At the very least, they had already brainstormed the plans and figured out how to implement them.

The rest was left to Stallion.

Immediately after discussing the Antique Fair, Casper rushed to Tycoon Hotel.

If things were like how Elena had described, Tycoon Hotel was in a very grave situation.

Hence, he had to deal with the matter seriously.

Things must not drag on like this anymore.

However, when he arrived at Tycoon Hotel and witnessed the situation there, he was taken aback despite being mentally prepared.

The five-star restaurant, which used to be filled with people, was now completely empty.

Furthermore, most of the people there were the hotel staff, and they all looked listless and despondent.

When Casper saw how spiritless the staff members were, he finally knew why Elena went looking for him so urgently.

Given the current state of his staff, their rival did not even need to lift a finger to deal a blow to them.

If this went on, the hotel would crumble on its own, and he would be handing it to the enemy just like that.

Staring at the hotel staff with a frown, Casper could not help but feel angry.

If things continued like this, before anyone could

attempt to take over the hotel, it would have already ceased to operate.

A grim look crossed Casper's face. This is definitely not only due to the hotel's situation. Someone must be pulling the strings behind the scenes and destroying the staff's morale.

He immediately called Elena and instructed her to gather all the staff working at Tycoon Hotel, including the cleaners, waiters, and miscellaneous employees.

When Elena heard that, she knew what Casper was planning to do.

Naturally, she was aware of the problem concerning Tycoon Hotel's employees. However, she had no idea how to solve it.

After all, she was only an assistant, not the CEO himself. Even though she received recognition for her work performance, she did not have that much authority.

She had tried to warn and remind the staff, but even though they appeared to understand, they

immediately ignored her words after that. Behind her back, they still acted in the same manner.

After all, she was only the CEO's assistant. Hence, it was impossible for her to convince the other employees, who only listened to their boss.

As she was not the boss, the others were not intimidated by her at all.

Thus, even though she already knew about this situation, she was helpless to turn it around.

Despite wishing to solve the problem, she had no authority to do so. On the other hand, those who actually had the power chose to turn a blind eye to the situation.

With that, the option left for her was to get help from Casper.

Upon hearing his words, Elena immediately knew that he was going to come and take a look at the staff. He was determined to teach them a lesson.

Unlike her, Casper definitely had power over the staff.

After all, he was the boss of Tycoon Hotel.

As such, Elena was more than happy to arrange the meeting for him.

"Wait, Elena, Casper suddenly called her back.

"Can you prepare a suit for me?" he asked embarrassedly.

Since he was going to attend a meeting with his staff, it would be inappropriate for him to be dressed shabbily.

Although Casper did not really mind the clothes he was wearing, this was not the time to prioritize comfort and humility. Instead, he wanted to impress upon them his dominance and authority.

Elena was extremely efficient. Within fifteen minutes, all of the employees were seated in Tycoon Hotel's meeting room.

Naturally, most of them looked puzzled.

The cleaners did not know why they were invited to this meeting. In fact, they had never stepped foot in such a formal setting. Yet, Casper had gathered all of them here.

The servers, chefs, dishwashers, and cashiers were similarly confused.

Many of them became solemn the moment they stepped into the meeting room. The venue alone already gave them a feeling that this was a serious and significant meeting. With that, an innate sense of respect rose within them.

Soon, Casper, who had changed into the suit Elena prepared, briskly walked to the center of the meeting room.

At that moment, he was the focal point of everyone.

Looking at this scene, Elena finally felt relieved.

Initially, she was afraid that Casper would be intimidated due to the large crowd.

Evidently, she was mistaken.

Others would have gotten stage fright if there were more than a hundred people staring right at them.

In fact, some might not even be able to utter a single word.

Yet, that was not the case for Casper, who strode to the center of the meeting room confidently.

He was more capable than Elena had expected.

As Casper strode into the meeting room, her gaze never left the man.

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That was true. Even though they heard that the hotel had been taken over by someone else, they had never seen the new owner.

They still got to work at this hotel, enjoying the same salary and benefits. As long as it didn't compromise their interests, they couldn't care less who the new owner was.

Every person had an indifferent and selfish side, and there was no exception to this.

Right then, Casper turned to look at Elena.

Immediately, the latter understood him and strode over to the stage.

Looking at the crowd, she announced solemnly in a steady tone, "In fact, this man who's standing in front of you is the major shareholder of Tycoon Hotel. He's also the chairman who holds the authority over the hotel."

Her words came like a bombshell and startled everyone present.

After all, the man on the stage looked more like a fresh graduate who had never worked in his lifetime.

How can this young man be the chairman of Tycoon? She must be kidding.

So what if he's wearing a well-cut suit and has a domineering aura? It still doesn't change the fact that

he looks young and immature. There's no way he's the owner of Tycoon.

We're not sure if he has the wealth to support the hotel's operation, not to mention the capabilities to be the leader.

How much money can his family allow an undergraduate like him to squander? This capricious young man is probably nothing more than an ignorant son from a rich family.

Does this mean that these jobs that we went to great lengths to get are not stable? How long can Tycoon last under the leadership of such a hedonistic and wayward son of a rich family? If Tycoon crumbles, what should we do next?

The expressions of those in front of the stage changed drastically at these thoughts.

Their gazes on Casper glinted with distrust, doubt, and disdain.

Some of them even felt that his incompetency was the root cause of all the issues Tycoon was facing recently.

The corner of Casper's lips quirked into a nonchalant half-smile as he met their gazes.

"I can tell that most of you have difficulty believing me, and I can put myself in your shoes. After all, age is one of the deciding factors of one's capability. Besides, my capability has a direct correlation with your jobs and incomes. That's why you're all in doubt and disbelief," he said with a smile, which turned unruly and condescending in the next second. "No matter what, I'm still the boss of Tycoon now." His voice was laced with arrogance. "Therefore, I have every right to make decisions and do whatever I please. Every single one of you has to obey me. As the owner, the fate of this hotel is in my hand."

As everyone's gaze flickered, Casper knew that he was halfway through achieving his goal.

Everyone's eyes were filled with distrust as they stared at the man matter-of-factly, as if they had expected him to be such a person.

Having a young man lead the hotel already had them feeling troubled and worried, but his hedonistic attitude made things seem much worse than it was.

A look of disappointment crossed their faces, and their expressions turned gloomier at the thought that they might lose their jobs soon. Just then, Casper's demeanor shifted all of a sudden as he asked, "Previously, I heard about the hotel's current situation and recent happenings. I believe we're of the same mind and wish not to see the hotel being in such a tight spot. Don't you hope that the hotel's situation will get better?"

He scanned the people in front of him and added, "I know many of you still don't trust me, thinking that your jobs are not secured and that you'll probably be unemployed soon. Because of your distrust, you're crippled by the fear of losing your jobs. Am I right?"

Lowering their heads, none of them refuted him, affirming his words silently.

With his eyes riveted on them, Casper continued speaking, "Even if I wasn't around, Tycoon would still face critical problems. If Tycoon's reputation

continues to worsen, it'll be shut down before I can cause trouble. In the end, all of you won't be able to escape unemployment and losing your source of income. What's going to happen to your children and parents then?" Pausing briefly, he questioned again, "Or do you subconsciously reckon that Tycoon is already doomed? Are you so lazy and undisciplined because you think that the hotel won't pull through? Are you ready to lose your bread and butter?" Casper sniggered at them.

"If this is the case, why did you act that way earlier?" Despite the smile on Casper's face, there was not a trace of amusement in his gaze.

"You're afraid that my incompetence and lack of funds will cause the hotel's business to go downhill, which in turn makes you lose your jobs. Yet, you turn a blind eye to the hotel's critical issues and have even given up already. Does this make sense to you?" Casper questioned.

His words were greeted with pin-drop silence. Everyone hung their heads in shame and couldn't bring themselves to glance up at him.

"The first thing I noticed when I stepped into the hotel tonight was your lazy attitude at work. Think about it. Even a normal tourist who doesn't know the inside story won't want to dine in here ever again after experiencing our sluggish services," Casper said sternly with a grim expression while glancing around at everybody.

"Don't you think this makes no sense?"

Everyone in front of the stage lowered their heads,

unable to find the right words to explain this matter.

Nevertheless, some were still staring straight into Casper's eyes in disdain.

Without a word, the man took note of their faces and turned to look at Elena, stealthily pointing in their direction.

She nodded, trying to remember every face she saw.

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Elena memorized those people's faces so that she could investigate them after the meeting.

Seeing the servers and the hotel staff's languid attitude, Elena and Casper believed that there must be someone who instigated them to act that way.

Previously, the staff members were very diligent and responsible, but now they were seriously slacking. Part of the reason might be the poor business condition of the hotel. But given how aggravated the situation was, someone must've been fanning the flames behind the scenes.

Thus, it meant that someone here had ulterior motives.

Casper wanted to give all the staff, the moles, and the mastermind a warning via the meeting.

"It takes time to prove my ability to manage the hotel. But now, the most important thing is to look into the problem that we are facing. If we can't handle it properly, we will face a huge crisis. You should know what will happen if our hotel's reputation is ruined. So, I hope that you can take this matter seriously and change your attitude.

"In the F&B industry, when you treat people well, they will treat you the same way. Even the most insignificant staff in the hotel can make a big impact. All your efforts count, so I hope that you can take your job seriously. Otherwise, I'll kick you out of our hotel before it even crumbles. If you piss me off, I will give you neither compensation nor salary."

Casper put on a devilish smile as he said the words. His voice was loud and firm.

At that moment, his imposing aura made him look like a master who dominated the meeting room. Elena was mesmerized by Casper's charisma, staring at him in a daze.

Casper looks so handsome.

Her face flushed instantly at that thought.

After the meeting, everyone left the hall except Casper, who stood rooted to the spot.

He knew that even though they were intimidated by his words, some of them hadn't given up the idea of ruining the hotel's reputation.

The ones with ulterior motives weren't going to change their minds just because of the speech he gave. After all, nothing else mattered to them besides money.

He had no idea whether the staff's behavior would

worsen or change for the better after listening to his words.

On top of that, he didn't know how many shareholders would side with him because he had not met with the investors and shareholders after buying Tycoon Hotel.

So he knew absolutely nothing about them.

But anyway, I will kick all the traitors out of Tycoon Hotel sooner or later.

At that moment, Elena strode toward Casper and gave him a pat on his shoulder.

It was as if she was comforting and encouraging him.

The latter glanced at Elena and nodded with a smile.

Seeing the smile on Casper's face, Elena broke out

into a wide grin too.

The two exchanged glances and smiled.

Shortly after, Casper brought Elena home.

Since he had no car, both of them went back on foot.

Initially, Elena refused Casper when the latter offered to take her home.

However, when Casper suggested visiting the commercial pedestrian street together and told Elena that he wanted to eat the barbecue in that couple's shop, she didn't reject him anymore.

She couldn't deny the fact that she had a crush on Casper.

But she knew that Casper was the one who would

decide if they had a chance to be together.

Soon after, both of them reached the commercial pedestrian street.

Casper took a glance at the street.

After the implementation of their plan previously, the street had returned to prosperity. But that was not enough for him as his goal was to make the street even more bustling.

However, Casper knew that this was not the right time to think about that.

After a busy day, all he wanted right then were relaxation and good food.

He glanced at Elena and let out a grin. Then, he grabbed the latter's hand and made his way toward that couple's barbecue shop.

At that, Elena's ears turned red in embarrassment.

However, under the dim lights, the redness of her

ears went unnoticed by Casper.

Upon seeing Elena and Casper, the couple was delighted.

It had been a long time since the duo came to their barbecue shop.

While Elena was close to them, Casper was the one who saved them from their predicament.

He even allowed them not to pay protection money to the ruffians so that they could save the money for their children and parents.

He was indeed their savior.

So when they saw Elena and Casper, they were overjoyed, and their eyes crinkled into smiles.

The couple immediately served the dishes to Casper and Elena before they even ordered the food.

"Elena, what do you feel like having? Take your pick." While saying that, the shop owner continued to serve them more dishes.

Casper and Elena were dumbstruck at the sight of the dishes on the table.

Then, the owner continued, "Take your time. My wife is grilling more food. Do tell me if you want to eat anything else."

They knew Elena's favorite food, and they had made a note of the food that Casper liked when he visited their shop last time.

Now that Casper and Elena were finally here, they took the opportunity to show their gratitude by serving

the duo scrumptious dishes.

If you find any errors ( broken links, non-standard content, etc.. ), Please let us know < report chapter > so we can fix it as soon as possible. him, Casper took a deep breath and said slowly, "You might've heard that the boss of Tycoon has already changed. However, except for the executives in the company, none of you have seen the actual boss, right?"

When he said that, everyone nodded.

They assumed that Casper was merely the host of the meeting.

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