

Chapter 123

NOAH

I stopped typing on my computer long enough to adjust the shirt I was wearing. I felt uncomfortable as I tugged the fabric, feeling unusually small in my shirt.

I sighed, a deep, weary sigh.

That was what came of a reduced appetite, worry, many late nights of staying awake thinking of how best to get a lasting solution to all the problems I had been having. I made a mental note to myself to eat more and hit the gym before my enemies noticed my weight loss- if they hadn't already.

I hoped they hadn't. There was nothing as aggravating as a well timed news headline to set the sharks at my door. Sitting here, I could just picture the sort of headlines those news vultures would print.

BUSINESS MOGUL NOAH CARTER GOES TO PIECES FOLLOWING RUMOURS OF BANKRUPTCY.

I clenched my fists, and found myself already getting worked up over the imaginary headline. Recently, a lot of news had been circulating around me. I would be damned before they printed something like that about me, before-

I frowned at the door of my office as a knock interrupted my thoughts. Who was it? My next appointment wasn't until five minutes. A second later, my secretary poked her head around the door.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, sir," she said with a glance at the computer on which my fingers were still poised. "But the investment manager of Fidelity Investments is here to see you. Should I send him up?"

What could he possibly want now? The man hadn't even called on phone to tell me he was coming.

I despised him. He always had a pompous attitude like he had somehow established my company for me. Of course, they invested hugely in my enterprise but I worked hard to get where I was.

He was just an investment manager, snooping around and looking for where to direct his company funds. A complete nobody. His arrogance was completely bewildering to me sometimes.

"Look, I have an appointment with someone else in-" I took a glance at my watch. "Five minutes, almost four minutes now. You can tell the manager to go and come back some other time. Or maybe he can wait until I'm done with my next appointment. Since he didn't bother to call me, I think he deserves to wait."

She shook her head regretfully. "I'm sorry, but he insisted on seeing you immediately. Whatever he wants to talk to you about seems rather urgent. I tried to delay him for some minutes, hoping he would leave but he kept demanding to see you."

I leaned back against my chair with another sigh. It seemed I was doing a lot of sighing these days. "Fine then. Send him in."

I thought, before he came in, that it was just another shitty day with too many interruptions. The man had better have a damned good reason for barging in on me like this. Today was a really busy day for me and I couldn't deal with idle chitchat.

Since my interview, I was hoping to double my work load, assuming that it would bring positive result to my revenue.

So far, it wasn't really working but I was optimistic it would.

The investment manager walked in a few seconds later. I rose to shake his hand, and waved him into a chair.

"Mr. Smith, I really didn't expect to see you." I said as he sat.

He smiled but it didn't quite reach his eyes. "I know. It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

"Yes. I believe the last time we met was when I closed that ShellySphere deal. Good old days." I said and sat down.

He cleared his throat, ignoring my welcoming joke and I knew he wanted to get straight to the point.

"There is something important I have to talk to you about," he said, his voice and face grave. "I would have called you to disclose the news or have had one of the investment portfolio managers schedule an appointment with you, but I'm here because of the urgency of the situation."

"Situation? What situation?" I asked worriedly. "There isn't a problem, is there?"

"I'm afraid there is, Noah. My company, after a lot of deliberation, has decided to stop investing in your company. Even though we initially considered the move to be a bad idea, we are not the only ones who think you're sinking. We discussed it with the second investment company funding you, Prudential Financial. They agreed it was the only course of action to take at this time. Long story short, we have all decided to pull our funds."

I found myself rising to my feet with no recollection of having made a conscious decision to do so. His words were shocking to say the least. I felt like I was in some sort of bad, lucid dream. This couldn't be happening, could it?

It was simply trapped in a trance, right? There was no way my biggest investment partners were ditching me. No way.

"What are you saying?" I croaked. "This is some kind of prank or- or a joke. I mean, we've had a good deal for years, haven't we? Come on, tell me you're here to pull my legs."

"I'm afraid it isn't a joke. I know this news is all rather sudden. The process of completely stopping cash inflow to your company will take a few days or maybe weeks depending on how collaborative you are. I just thought it wise to inform you in person about the company's decision in time since we are currently preventing your company from going completely bankrupt. Well, that is from our calculations."

"Please," I suddenly found myself begging. "Please, you can't do this. You can't bail on me now, not at this time. I am not bankrupt now but I certainly will be if you decide to pull your funds from my company. Is that- Is that what you really want to happen to my company, a company you have already worked so hard to keep afloat all these years?"

To my surprise and immense annoyance, the man chuckled. He actually chuckled! He was sitting there, telling me my company would be practically bankrupt in a few days and he had the guts to laugh? I held onto my temper with a lot of effort.

"Don't try to guilt trip me, Noah. This is business, purely business. There are no sentiments attached. Besides if you really cared about your company like you claim you do, in the first place, you wouldn't have been associating with the caliber of people who ruined your reputation."

"What are you talking about?"

"Do I really need to call names? Let's start with the Monique scandal..." Yes, the Monique scandal had raised a bit of dust but I had managed it rather well. I told him so. He smiled wryly. "The media and the internet never forgets. As a businessman, you should know that. And then there are the interviews you have been granting. They haven't done much to paint you in a very good light. Anyway-" His voice suddenly became brisk and businesslike. "We all are channeling our funds to the city's amusement park project which will generate at least 2 million dollars monthly. Oh and Mrs. Amelia Donovan's businesses are not left out. The turnover of her businesses is quite impressive so we'll be funding those as well. It's a win-win for her and for us."

I froze for almost a minute, a high-pitched sound ringing in my ears like I had been slapped with a chair.

Amelia?

I didn't want to believe I heard him right.

"Did you just say Amelia?"

He nodded casually. "Yes."

This could not be happening. No.

Again, Amelia at the core of my troubles. She was fueling everything that was going badly in my life. Anger slowly began to replace shock.

"What are you saying?" I ground out. "I cannot believe that you are all pulling funds from my company to invest in my ex-wife's businesses. Need I remind you that the sort of company she does cannot be compared to what I do? Her businesses are SME's at best. You can't possibly want to fund a business like that which still has a strong likelihood to fold up at any moment."

Before he could respond, I continued. "Do I also need to remind you that she's a woman? You don't do business with a woman! That's the first rule of law! She will sink you."

"That will likely not happen. You speak of durability of businesses. Now how about you print out copies of the last revenue generated by your company and then explain how you paid your workers with that revenue. You underestimate Mrs. Donovan because she's a woman but you're not doing better than her. Her businesses are thriving, far better than yours. And wasn't it just few months ago she brought them one of your business branch? Again, provide evidence to show you've been paying your workers with the revenue generated from this company and we will consider keeping you on board."

My collar began to grow uncomfortably tight. I resisted the urge to adjust it. He would read it as a gesture of nervousness. I swallowed. How long had this creep and the others been snooping into my affairs?

"I have everything under control," I stated, sounding as sure as I possibly could. "I can pay my workers without having to explain where the funds came from. And if you really think Amelia is better than me, I want you to remember she fucked her way to the top. She would be nothing without her husband. I have everything under control!"

"Do you now? My company doesn't take affairs of business lightly, Noah, so I know a bit more than you think. For instance, I know you borrowed a lot of money from the bank and you are trying desperately hard to rescue your sinking business with part of the money."

"That is not your business. That was a personal matter, completely unrelated to-"

"Oh but your business is my business- or was... since we aren't going to be working with you anymore. And the money you borrowed was certainly related to your company. And if you're going to sit here and spew sexist opinions, my humble opinion is that you also fuck your way to the top. It's not hard, is it?"

"That's what Amelia wants you to think," I said, torn between the idea of punching his face or punching the wall. "She's feeding you lies about me. You're taking her bait without even considering my side. I've worked with you for years! Years!"

He shrugged. "I don't know the sort of battle going on between you and your ex-wife but one thing is obvious. She has won." He pushed to his feet. "Mr. Noah, you're sinking and I'm afraid you'll never recover. Now, If you'll excuse me, I have quite a number of other clients I have to see now."

"Mr. Smith, please wait." I called after him as he turned on his heels to leave. "Let's negotiate. There's got to be something we can do."

But he ignored me. Without a backward glance, he left my office taking all my chances at keeping my company afloat with him.

"FUCK!" I yelled.

In one quick movement, I swept all the contents of my desk onto the floor, my chest rising and falling in anger.

I couldn't believe this was happening. Amelia had struck again and this was her final blow. What did I ever do to deserve this? What!

I could picture her smile and her lips curving to whisper the words, "Checkmate." She was capable of doing that.

Goosebumps masked my skin as I paced around the room, my mind hazy with thoughts.

There was no way I could recover from this latest attack. Everything keeping my company grounded was gone. With no more money and no investors, not even new ones, I would have to declare bankruptcy. Amelia had ruined me.