

Chapter 46

Lady Zelda's face freezes, her eyes widening in shock, as she struggles to register the weight of Luke's words. Her voice trembles as she seeks clarification, desperately clinging to a sliver of hope.

"What... what do you mean by a 'mere victory'?" She asked, stammering.

Luke maintained a calm and composed demeanor, but his words carry an underlying sense of disappointment. And with a sigh, he said, "Yes, sorry to say, ma'am Zelda. I don't think your son is capable of handling the business yet."

Lady Zelda's shock intensified, her disbelief etched on her face. She leaned forward, her hands gripping the edge of the ornate armchair she was seated in.

"What? He's a twenty-seven-year-old man, and you say he's incapable?"

Luke maintains his professional stance, meeting Lady Zelda's gaze with a hint of sympathy.

He firmly said, "You don't know how he lived his life the last two decades. He might be your son and the family's heir, but you should not forget that he's an undergraduate. He's inexperienced."

Lady Zelda recoils, her shock giving way to a surge of maternal protectiveness. Her voice rises, filled with defiance and unwavering loyalty to her son.

"I don't care about his lack of experience! He's my son! He's intelligent and capable, and he deserves a chance!" She said, defensively.

Her words hang in the air, a testament to her unwavering faith in Duncan's abilities. The room seems to hold its breath, waiting for Luke's response.

"He doesn't look promising yet."

Luke's words land heavily on Lady Zelda, shattering the remaining fragments of her composure. Her eyes well up with tears as her voice trembles with a mix of sadness and anger.

"Don't you dare demean or underestimate my son, Luke," she warned him with a quivering voice.

She takes a moment to collect herself, her emotions threatening to overwhelm her. Her voice cracks as she continues, her words laden with a deep sense of disappointment. "I was thinking I would celebrate my son's victory with you, but hearing you devalue him is just..." She paused, struggling to find the right words to express her frustration. Her index finger shakes in front of Luke, a gesture of reproach. "It's unacceptable. You were with me, Luke," she uttered, unyieldingly. Then her tone went low. "You were my confidant these last twenty years, and my life wasn't great. You witnessed how pathetic I lived during that time."

Luke's face softens, a mixture of regret and understanding washing over him. He takes a step closer to Lady Zelda, his tone becoming gentler.

"Lady Zelda, I apologize if my words hurt you. I understand your love and loyalty towards your son, and I acknowledge the bond you share. I didn't mean to devalue him."

Lady Zelda choked back her tears as she listened intently, her anger slowly giving way to a glimmer of hope.

"I just want him to have a chance, Luke. I want him to prove himself, to find his own path."

Luke reaches out, placing a comforting hand on Lady Zelda's trembling shoulder.

Softly, he said, "I know, and I believe he will. Let's find a way to support him and help him grow. Your son has potential, and with guidance, he can overcome his current limitations.

Lady Zelda's expression shifted from despair to determination. She nodded, grateful for Luke's understanding and renewed resolve to stand by her son's side.

"Yes, let's do that. Together, we'll give him the opportunities he needs to succeed. I hope he'll gladly guide him through."

With a half smile, Luke nodded and left the room.

Thinking of an idea to spend some time with Duncan, Lady Zelda decided to call him back to suggest a celebration over his win.

Duncan stood in his office, phone pressed against his ear as he listened to Lady Zelda's excited voice on the other end. "Duncan, my son, it's your first win for the business. We should celebrate it," she exclaimed, her words filled with joy and pride.

Duncan hesitated for a moment, his mind racing as he considered his options. He didn't want to disappoint his mother. However, he had already made plans for the day, plans that he couldn't easily change or cancel.

Sensing his reluctance, Lady Zelda continued, her voice filled with

conviction. "Babette, you and I can have a simple celebration. Maybe you could come over for a meal? It doesn't have to be anything extravagant, just a small gathering to mark this special occasion."

Duncan sighed inwardly, torn between his desire to please his mother who he still abhors for their separation before, and his commitment to his prior plans. He knew that his mother would understand if he explained the situation, but he still felt a pang of guilt. Taking a deep breath, he replied, "Sorry, Mrs. Zelda, I can't. I already have the day planned, and Babette has a lot to do."

Despite his formal response, Zelda, being his mother, could sense the underlying meaning. Despite not spending twenty years of his life with him, she still knew her son well enough to understand that he wasn't being insensitive or dismissive of her suggestion. "That's alright, dear," she said, her voice softened with understanding. "I know how important your plans are. We'll celebrate another time, then. Just make sure to take a moment to appreciate your achievement today. I am proud of you, Duncan."

A warm smile spread across Duncan's face as he heard his mother's words of encouragement. "Thank you, moth...Ma'am," he replied sincerely, almost addressing her as his Mom which would have increased her joy. "I appreciate your understanding. We'll definitely celebrate soon, I will give you my word."

With that, they exchanged a few more pleasantries and said their goodbyes. As Duncan hung up the phone, he couldn't help but feel a mixture of gratitude and determination. He knew that his success in the business world was very important to take him far and topple his enemies. He didn't want to get so close to his real family and get a bit emotional.

Later in the evening, Duncan sat at his desk in his office, engrossed in watching a video clip on his iPad. He had set up surveillance cameras in various locations throughout the Lennart mansion, and the footage he was watching brought a mischievous grin to his face. The clip showed Zinnia who was up to no good, cleaning one of the toilets in the house. She looked exhausted and he could tell it was because of the much cleaning she had done for the day.

As he watched the video, Duncan couldn't help but burst into laughter. His wife, Zinnia, unaware of the hidden cameras, scrubbed the toilet vigorously while making disgusted faces. Her reactions were priceless, and Duncan found satisfaction in seeing her discomfort.

His happiness grew as he witnessed her gag and retch, unable to contain her disgust as she dropped her gaze on the toilet water. He chuckled, finding amusement in her predicament as she reluctantly dipped her hand into the bowl.

Lost in the hilarity of the moment, Duncan's laughter echoed through the room. However, his joy was abruptly interrupted as the office door swung open, revealing Karla, standing there with a warm smile on her face.

"Hello?" Karla greeted, waving cheerfully. Her eyes sparkled with friendliness, but in that instant, Duncan's mind flashed back to the events of the previous night. They had shared a moment, an almost kiss that had left him feeling both exhilarated and apprehensive.

Caught off guard, Duncan's laughter died in his throat, and a nervous tension settled over him. He quickly composed himself, his expression turning more serious as he greeted Karla. "Hello," he replied, his voice tinged with a touch of unease.

The air in the room momentarily felt charged with the memory of their near-intimate encounter. Duncan's gaze shifted, his eyes avoiding direct contact with Karla's, as he tried to regain his composure. Deep down, he wondered if she had any inkling of the emotions that had stirred within him the night before.

Karla, seemingly oblivious to the sudden shift in the atmosphere, maintained her smile. She took a step closer, her friendly demeanor unchanged. "I just wanted to check on the successful man, which is you," she explained, her voice warm and elated.

Duncan abruptly gave her a stern expression before it shifted into one of surprise and mild panic as Karla approached his desk, her friendly smile still intact. Her observation about his changed demeanor caught him off guard, and for a moment, he struggled to find the right words.

"What is with that face?" Karla inquired, her voice filled with curiosity. "You seemed happy earlier."

Duncan's mind raced, desperately searching for an explanation that wouldn't reveal the true reason behind his sudden change in mood. "Uh, hmm...n...nothing," he stammered, attempting to compose himself. He forced a smile, hoping to mask his inner turmoil.

Karla, however, wasn't easily dissuaded. She pouted playfully and took a step closer to the desk, her eyes shifting to the screen of his iPad. A small burst of laughter escaped her lips as she saw the footage of Zinnia cleaning the toilet. The sound of her laughter resonated through the room, momentarily distracting Duncan from his inner turmoil.

As Karla got closer, Duncan felt his body responding in a way that heightened his awareness of her presence. Goosebumps prickled on his

skin, and he couldn't help but wonder if this reaction was a result of the intimate moment they had almost shared the night before.

The memory of their lips so close, the charged atmosphere between them, flashed vividly in Duncan's mind, causing a mix of excitement and apprehension to course through his veins. He glanced at Karla, her laughter and proximity only intensifying the sensation.

Duncan's heart raced, his mind torn between the desire to explore this newfound connection and the fear of his fear of thinking anything intimate again. There was a growing attraction he felt which he was trying to deny.

Swallowing nervously, Duncan finally managed to find his voice. "It's really nothing," he repeated, his tone slightly strained. He shifted his focus back to the iPad screen, attempting to divert Karla's attention away from his internal struggle.

Karla, still smiling, seemed content with his response for now. She leaned against the edge of the desk, her gaze fixed on the footage of Zinnia cleaning. The tension in the room lingered, unspoken but palpable, as both Duncan and Karla grappled with their emotions and the uncharted territory that lay before them.

Then as if realizing their proximity, Karla flicked a gaze at Duncan who avoided her eyes. She remembered about last night and quickly asked the question that left Duncan speechless.

"Did we do something out of line last night in my house?"

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