

Love Spell 431

Chapter 431

Gareth stumbled over, his stomach churning. Suppressing the urge to vomit, he approached Kelly.

"M-Mr. Worth?" thought Kelly and her classmates, their eyes widening in surprise.

Gareth cupped Kelly's face, peering at her intently.

Sweeping her hair away, he murmured, "Carlisle, buddy... Why is your hair so long..."

Carlisle chuckled wryly and responded, "I'm right here, Gareth."

Turning to Carlisle, Gareth narrowed his eyes and said, "Nonsense... My buddy Carlisle was wearing a white shirt!"

Carlisle smiled helplessly.

"Can't you recognize my voice?"

Rubbing his eyes, Gareth took a good look at Carlisle's face and exclaimed happily, "Carlisle! Buddy!"

"You've had too much to drink."

Carlisle sighed.

Gareth swiftly sat up straight and declared clearly, "No, I haven't. I just ordered another 12 bottles of champagne. Gotta knock that bastard Hank out cold."

He abruptly turned to Yelena and the others, his gaze cold and fierce.

"Were you the ones bullying my buddy Carlisle?"

Yelena remained silent with her head lowered while her female classmates shivered uncontrollably.

did they?"

Laura approached Kelly and gently asked, "Kelly, those drunks didn't hurt you, Kelly shook her head, then she turned to Carlisle and said, "Cuz... your wound..." Carlisle was taken aback by the unfamiliar address. Kelly had always addressed him by his name since they were kids. Perhaps her sudden change in address indicated her gratitude toward him for rescuing her.

"I'm alright," Carlisle calmly replied, not particularly enthusiastic about the new address. "Wound? Are you hurt?"

Gareth pulled Carlisle toward him, only to find blood dripping from Carlisle's fingers as he covered his shoulder.

"Who did this? Who hurt my buddy?" Gareth questioned furiously.

Carlisle quickly smiled to reassure him.

"It's nothing serious. The manager has already taken the perpetrators downstairs to teach them a lesson."

Gareth snorted coldly.

"That's it? I want those men to spend the rest of their lives in jail!"

With that, Gareth took out his phone and dialed a number. Aware that he wasn't sober enough to talk on the phone, he put it on speakerphone.

"What's up, Gareth? Why the sudden call?"

"Chief Welsh, my friend was almost killed. Please hurry over with your men. Don't let those bad guys get away with it!"

"What? Where are you?"

"The Pearl Lounge!"

"Got it. I'll send someone over right away."

"Great! Thanks, Chief Welsh!"

"Don't mention it. Just doing my job."

Gareth hung up the call, his anger dissipating somewhat. Carlisle was dumbfounded by the situation, finally realizing the terrifying power of top aristocrats.

"Alan Welsh, the head of the city police department?" Yelena and the others pondered, trembling all over.

They wondered about his identity and how he became acquainted with Alan.

Apparently, Mr. Worth possessed the wealth and power everyone desired most.

Gareth turned to Yelena and questioned, "Weren't you just boasting about yourself earlier? Why the silence now?"

"You called my bro poor just now, didn't you? Do you know that he earned 200 million in just half a month? In fact, we just partnered on a project worth 400 million. Do you seriously think Zachary and Austin are big shots?"

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"Call them over. Let's see if they've got anything to boast about before me!" Gareth demanded of Yelena.

His voice was as loud as thunder, piercing her heart like sharp thorns.

Yelena was taken aback by Gareth's statement about Carlisle earning 200 million within half a month. She wondered if that was even possible. She was even told that Carlisle even partnered with Mr. Worth on a project worth 400 million, which caused her to feel more puzzled.

Yelena had no doubt that Mr. Worth was capable of such feats, but she refused to believe that Kelly's cousin had the same capability.

However, these words came from Mr. Worth himself. Why would he fabricate such a lie to deceive her?

Lowering her head, Yelena remained absolutely still and silent.

"Apologize to my cousin now," Carlisle demanded calmly.

Yelena raised her head to glare at Carlisle but met Gareth's bloodshot eyes instead.

Facing his intense gaze, akin to that of a raging beast, Yelena swallowed hard and softly mumbled to Kelly, "Sorry..."

"Louder."

"Sorry..." Yelena raised her voice.

"To whom?" Gareth asked casually.

"Kelly, I'm sorry!" Yelena said loudly, her eyes brimming with tears.

She felt wronged.

Kelly responded expressionlessly, "I don't need your apology. All I ask is that you leave me alone at school."

Gareth slammed the table hard and said, "A cousin of Carlisle is also a cousin of mine. If anyone dares to bully you at school, just tell me, and I'll make sure justice is served!"

Carlisle waved his hand, dismissing everyone.

"What happened today ends here. You can leave now."

Not wasting a single second, Yelena swiftly walked out of the bar, only to find several police patrol cars parked outside.

Yelena felt a tingling sensation on her scalp, her mouth dry. Mr. Worth indeed had

connections with the police. In other words, he meant what he had said. It seemed she really shouldn't mess with Kelly.

The police entered the bar to check the surveillance footage, but the booth was located in a blind spot, so they didn't find anything.

Fortunately, many eyewitnesses could testify to the events. Consequently, Cody and his gang were taken away by the police.

After sorting things out for Kelly, Carlisle rejoined Gareth and continued their drinking. Kelly exited the bar and got into Laura's car, lost in thought.

Everything that night seemed unreal to her. Had Carlisle really become a billionaire within a few months? How did he manage to earn 200 million in half a month? Was it true that he had partnered with Mr. Worth on a project worth 400 million?

Sitting in the back with Kelly while her driver drove them home, Laura suddenly broke the silence, "Kelly, why have you never mentioned having such a handsome cousin?"

With a bitter smile, Kelly replied, "There's a grudge between my family and his."

"What kind of grudge?" Laura exclaimed in disbelief.

Kelly slowly recounted how her family had looked down on Carlisle's family.

After listening to Kelly's account, Laura sighed softly.

"Social inequality has always been the norm. In the past, the poor were generally poorly educated, unaware of their ignorance, making it difficult for them to turn their lives around.

"Now that the country has begun promoting nine-year compulsory education, I believe this phenomenon will be greatly improved soon."

Gazing at the scenery outside the car window, Kelly choked up.

"I never imagined Carlisle would save me from danger!"

Wrapping her arms around Kelly's shoulders, Laura remarked, "This shows he has a big heart and is more mature than his peers. He's someone with vision and ambition. That's why he could achieve success at such a young age!"

Laura leaned into Kelly's shoulder and sniffed.

"What are you doing?" Kelly asked, feeling goosebumps on her neck as she realized Laura had moved close to her.

Laura chuckled and said, "Sell me Carlisle's shirt, will you? I have a feeling he'll be someone influential in Riverland's business industry one day!"

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Since Carlisle was a university freshman like herself, Laura assumed he was around 17 or 18 years old. Yet, despite his youth, he had partnered with Mr. Worth on a project worth 400 million. Laura couldn't imagine how far he could go in just a few years.

A business prodigy like him was indeed someone she admired and looked up to. Therefore, Laura was eager to keep his shirt as a source of motivation for herself.

"No. This shirt belongs to Carlisle. I must return it to him someday," Kelly insisted, shaking her head.

Laura glanced at the blood-stained hole on the shirt and remarked, "The shirt is already torn. I doubt someone like Carlisle would wear it again!"

"You've got a point."

Kelly nodded in agreement.

"So, why don't you sell it to me?"

Laura's expression lightened up.

"No. This shirt was torn because Carlisle tried to save me. I'll hang it by my bed as a reminder for me to repent," Kelly replied firmly.

Kelly's perspective toward Carlisle had clearly changed after he risked his life to save her. After all, Carlisle was a teenager like her, too, and yet he had bravely confronted those middle-aged thugs.

Laura pouted. Her expression was filled with disappointment.

After a brief silence, she smiled and asked, "Then, could you give me Carlisle's messenger username?"

Kelly lowered her head gloomily.

"I don't have his messenger username."

She used to detest Carlisle so much that she would rather not see him, so how could she possibly have his messenger username?

At The Pearl Lounge, Gareth took off his coat and draped it over his shoulders as he and Carlisle headed toward the largest booth, their arms around each other's shoulders, looking like a pair of ruffians.

Gareth had a good physique. He appeared slim in clothes but muscular without them. His eight-pack abs resembled rugged mountain ranges, exuding a wild and powerful charm. ga

Carlisle glanced down at his belly. Although he didn't have a beer belly, he certainly didn't

have abs. Recalling his earlier powerless situation, he decided to carve out time for daily exercise and perhaps learn some self-defense techniques, too.

When he noticed Carlisle staring at his abs, Gareth smirked proudly as he patted his own stomach and asked, "Envious of my abs? Want to feel them?"

"No thanks!" Carlisle replied, his expression showing disgust.

Hank had already fallen asleep on the couch. However, Gareth hadn't outdrunk him. Rather, Carlisle had sent him a message telling him to get himself drunk.

In fact, before Carlisle headed to the restroom, Gareth had already had too much to drink, while Hank was only slightly tipsy. Despite Hank claiming he could handle more alcohol, Carlisle worried Gareth might overdo it, so he urged Hank to speed up his drinking.

"Carlisle, buddy. Are you ready for our next round?"

Gareth leaned weakly on Carlisle's shoulder, clearly feeling the effects of alcohol.

"Next round? You should take a break now!"

Carlisle's face twitched, feeling the pressure on his wound from Gareth's leaning.

Gareth didn't respond, completely knocked out. Carlisle quickly pushed him onto the couch.

Hank opened one eye to confirm that Gareth was thoroughly drunk.

He then swiftly got up and asked, "Carl, did you really gamble on shares worth 4.08 million dollars?"

He wondered what kind of shares would cost 4.08 million. Even selling off Govan Technology Limited couldn't fetch that amount.

"Leave that for now. Let's find him a room to rest," Carlisle said, patting his pockets.

He still had his phone and keys, but it seemed that he had forgotten to bring some money.

"Can you lend me some money for a cab?" Carlisle asked Hank, who lent him a hundred dollars.

Hank escorted Gareth to a luxurious guest room on the fifth floor of the bar while Carlisle took a cab back to Willow Grove.

After showering and tending to the wound on his shoulder, Carlisle sat on the couch to check his phone. There were over ten missed calls from the same unidentified caller.

Carlisle returned the call and heard Christine's voice on the other end.

She said, "Carlisle, the investor agreed to meet you and Wanda tomorrow at noon at Imperial Hotel to discuss the collaboration."

"Okay. Please arrange the venue and give me the room number," Carlisle replied.

"I, um, heard Wanda has taken a break from studies. If she's not there tomorrow, I'm worried the investor might think we're not serious enough," Christine said, concerned

about the 30 million investment potentially falling through.

"Taking a break from studies?"

Carlisle's eyes widened in disbelief.

He frowned and remarked, "I thought she was just on a few days' leave."

He ended the call and dialed Susan's number.

"Hi, Carlisle-

"Ms. Lowe, I'm sorry for disturbing you at this hour. I just wanted to ask if Wanda has taken a break from her studies?"

"Yes, she has."

"For how long?"

"Indefinitely. Didn't you know?"

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"I just found out about it now. Thank you, Ms. Lowe," Carlisle replied, his voice drained of energy as the phone slipped from his hand.

It turns out that Shein hadn't taken Wanda away for medical treatment purposes only. He probably planned to separate Wanda from Carlisle. In other words, even if Wanda recovered, she might not return to Riverland.

Carlisle tried to call Wanda, but her phone was switched off. Closing his eyes, Carlisle felt his heart in disarray.

After a brief moment, he opened his eyes and gently touched the couch cushion beside him, vividly remembering when Wanda had just been sitting there that morning, requesting him to feed her the imported black tea. The cup of black tea was still unwashed on the coffee table.

Carlisle returned to his room to collect his clothes from the balcony and put them on. He then wandered around the room, recalling Wanda's presence in every corner.

When he entered the bedroom, Wanda's purple camisole was still on the bed, her scent filling the room.

Carlisle closed his eyes and let out a breath before whispering, "Wanda... I'll bring you back in no time!"

His eyes were filled with determination.

"Shein, Zachary, you both look down on me, don't you? In that case, I'll show you what I've got," Carlisle murmured before taking out his phone to call Leon.

"Mr. Zahn-

"Get me some suits," Carlisle abruptly interrupted Leon.

"No problem."

Leon offered some styles and brands for Carlisle to choose from, but Carlisle left the decision to Leon, trusting his expertise.

After the call, Carlisle went to a high-end hair salon in the city and spent five hundred dollars on a trendy hairstyle.

Then, he called Logan, informing him that Govan Technology Limited must launch its first phone in two months.

Sitting in her apartment, Logan exclaimed in shock, "Two months? That's too rushed! Our system is still a prototype. Most of the software is still in development, and the hardware is far from ready!"

"Downgrade it," Carlisle said calmly, looking at his reflection in the mirror at the hair salon.

"Downgrade?"

Logan didn't get it.

"Yes. Downgrade all functions and hardware of the phone. As long as the phone surpasses the other phones available on the market, I don't mind if it doesn't meet our expectations," Carlisle elaborated, eager to make profits so he would surpass Zachary, Austin, Shein, and Yuriel.

"Mr. Zahn, are you under some kind of stress?" Logan asked cautiously.

However, Carlisle ended the call without offering any explanation.

Sighing helplessly, Logan made a call to her secretary.

"Ms. Cooper-"

"Notify all department heads of a meeting at 8:00 am tomorrow. Everyone must arrive on time!" Logan instructed directly.

"Yes, Ms. Cooper!" the secretary replied.

Carlisle returned to his apartment and phoned Francis.

"Boss-"

"Return to Riverland."

"Roger."

Without delay, Francis embarked on an overnight trip back to Riverland.

Carlisle lay on his bed and stared at Wanda's pillow beside him, feeling as though she also lay there, her innocent eyes gazing at him. With a gentle smile, he soon drifted off to sleep.

The next morning, Carlisle woke up with a start.

"Wanda!"

His face was covered in sweat, his heart racing.

He had a nightmare. In his dream, Wanda was locked in a cage by Shein and was forced to marry someone else. He called out to her, but she didn't seem to recognize him.

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Wiping the cold sweat off his forehead, Carlisle glanced at the clock. It was only 6:00 am.

Devoid of any desire to sleep, he decided to get up and go for a morning jog. During his jog, Francis received a call informing him that he had just arrived in Riverland due to a traffic jam.

Carlisle sat on the bench to catch his breath.

With a slight pant, he said, "Where's the security team you promised to find me?" "They're already in Riverland. I'll have them gather at Willow Grove," Francis replied.

Carlisle then ended his morning jog and returned to Willow Grove.

Meanwhile, outside Willow Grove, seven nondescript men with buzz-cut hairstyles gathered and engaged in lively conversation. They were seasoned special forces veterans, having served longer than Francis in the military.

After being discharged, they were dissatisfied with the job opportunities provided by the government and harbored ambitions to carve out a new path. However, they encountered repeated setbacks in their careers.

Hence, when Francis told them that his boss would offer a salary of at least five thousand, they accepted the job without hesitation. In fact, they would have been grateful even for a job offering only a thousand dollars.

Hands in pockets, Wendell Webb asked skeptically, "Francis, what exactly does your boss do? Just to be clear, if this job involves anything shady, count me out!"

The others nodded in agreement.

Francis sighed in response.

"Come on. Do you really think I'd get involved in anything shady?"

Despite his confident tone, Francis felt a twinge of unease. After all, aside from legitimate business, Carlisle did have close ties with Prince Heath.

Spotting Carlisle approaching in the distance, Francis gestured toward him and told his old comrades, "There comes my boss."

Wendell and the others turned their gazes toward Carlisle, their eyes widening in disbelief. "A rich kid?"

Wendell smirked.

Francis shook his head and replied, "Self-made. I just visited his parents. They're ordinary folks who run a convenience store and breakfast shop. He's the one who funded them!" Francis' explanation left everyone dumbfounded. Before Wendell could inquire further, he

noticed Carlisle had already approached them, so he withheld his questions.

"Hi, everyone!" Carlisle greeted them first.

"Hi, boss!"

Wendell and the others instinctively straightened up, lifting their heads.

Francis glanced at Carlisle's new hairstyle before introducing the team to him.

"Boss, these are my comrades from the Leopard Strike Team. They're as capable as me, if not better."

Carlisle nodded calmly and said, "Let's head upstairs where we can talk."

Noticing the slight displeasure on Carlisle's youthful face, Wendell couldn't help but frown, thinking that Carlisle might be dissatisfied with them.

However, since Francis had followed Carlisle for some time, he knew something must have happened to the latter, which was why Francis was summoned back to Riverland. Still, he knew this wasn't the time to pry, so he followed Carlisle back to the apartment as requested.

Carlisle led them into the apartment and offered them some energy drinks from the fridge. He then took off his sweaty shirt and changed into a clean short-sleeve shirt which was laid on the couch.

Francis noticed the bandages on Carlisle's shoulder and asked with concern, "Boss, are you injured?"

"Yeah. I got into some trouble last night when I was out for a drink. No big deal," Carlisle replied after sipping his energy drink.

He then glanced at Wendell and the others, who had lined up in a row, and said, "Since you're all Francis' comrades, I'll certainly reward you handsomely. I'll offer you a monthly salary of six thousand for now. Take the next few days to familiarize yourselves with Riverland, and then I'll assign a task to all of you."

Wendell and the others were stunned by the offer of six thousand in monthly salary. In their previous attempts to secure security jobs, all they had encountered were companies offering a mere thousand as base pay, with a chance for a 40% commission if they were hired by clients.

Carlisle's straightforward offer of six thousand dollars amazed them. They realized that Francis had been right all along.

Glancing at the time, Carlisle realized he only had half an hour before his class began.

As he headed toward the bathroom to freshen up, he instructed, "Francis, please take them to the game studio. There's three million in cash in my room. Use it to pay them a year's salary in advance."

Wendell and the others gasped. They were astonished that Carlisle wanted to pay them a year's salary in advance before they even started working. They wondered if Carlisle was

even worried they might run off with the money.

When Carlisle entered the bathroom, Wendell whispered to Francis, "Francis, are you sure the boss won't involve us in anything illegal?"

Everyone stared at Francis anxiously, their eyes filled with doubt.

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"So, do you want the job or not? If not, I'll find someone else. I heard that the retirees from the Dragon Special Force are looking for jobs now!" Francis retorted, rolling his eyes.

Wendell immediately smiled broadly.

"Oh, come on! I was just kidding. The Dragon Special Force is no match for us. They can't do a better job than we can!"

The others nodded in agreement.

With a smile, Francis replied, "Why don't you guys wait for me downstairs? I want to have a quick word with the boss."

Wendell nodded and led the rest down the stairs.

Shortly after, Carlisle emerged from the bathroom and found Francis in the living room.

"Did something happen to Wanda again?" Francis asked, noticing Wanda's belongings were still present in the apartment.

Since Wanda should have been living there with Carlisle, her absence raised concerns.

After hesitating briefly, Carlisle replied, "Wanda's father took her to Yorksle for treatment. I suspect he wants to separate us. I can't reach Wanda now, but I really need to know how she's doing."

Francis quickly understood Carlisle's concern.

"So you want us to search for Wanda?"

Carlisle nodded, affirming, "That'll be my last resort. I'll try to gather some information over the next few days. If I can't find anything in two days, then you'll head to Yorksle to look for her."

"Alright. I'll arrange for the team to stay in a hotel during these two days."

"I'm off to class now. Remember to lock the door when you leave!" Carlisle reminded Francis before leaving the apartment.

When Carlisle entered his classroom, all his classmates stared at him in astonishment and disbelief.

"Carl, where did you get your haircut?"

"Seriously, Carl? You already had a dashing face, and now this haircut makes it even more stunning. Are you trying to win all the ladies' hearts? Save some for the rest of us, will you?"

"Oh, Carlisle! You're the man of my dreams!"

The whole class buzzed with lively conversation.

Carlisle's outstanding performance at the bonfire party had already made him a heartthrob among the female students at his school. With his new hairstyle elevating his charm even further, the girls in his class were swooning.

With his talent and captivating appearance, he would surely become a top star if he ever ventured into the entertainment industry.

Carlisle returned to his seat, his expression remaining cold and impassive, devoid of his usual amiability.

Noticing his unusual demeanor, the class began to gossip among themselves.

"Wanda didn't come to school with Carlisle today. Did they have a fight?"

"Beats me. Let's ask Phoebe!"

Amid their speculation, Phoebe eventually disclosed Wanda's temporary withdrawal from school to several classmates. The news quickly spread throughout the class.

Ruby, who was in the process of packing up her books to return to Class 1, paused when she heard the news.

She suspected that Wanda was taking a break from her studies to be treated. She wondered if this was her opportunity to approach Carlisle.

When Ruby saw Carlisle enter the classroom earlier, her heart had fluttered uncontrollably, making her reluctant to return to Class 1.

She thought that she should perhaps continue staying in Class 2 so she could admire Carlisle's dashing appearance.

Ruby poked Carlisle's back and whispered, "Carlisle, did Wanda leave for treatment? How long will she be away?"

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Carlisle was engrossed in his book and completely ignored Ruby's attempts to get his attention.

Ruby wrote a note and placed it on his desk, but Carlisle didn't even look at it.

Her spirits sank. Carlisle had agreed to be her friend before. She wondered if he treated his other friends the same way. She assumed he must be in a bad mood since Wanda had just left.

"Whatever! I can wait," she thought to herself.

Ruby pouted before she took out a book and started studying as well.

Carlisle's concentration on his book was interrupted when his phone buzzed with a message from Logan.

"Mr. Zahn, I need to ask you a favor. A close friend of mine has an accounting firm in Yorksle, but its competitors have crushed it. You've registered a gaming company, right? Could their team work for you?"

"Sure!" Carlisle agreed without hesitation.

After all, he needed a professional accounting team to manage the funds and handle the taxes. Logan's friend had shown up at the right time.

"That's great. I'll send them to Riverland right away!"

After reading the message, Carlisle put his phone down. He had a morning of back-to-back classes ahead of him.

At noon, when school was dismissed, Carlisle received a call from Leon. Leon had picked up his suit for him.

Just then, Phoebe and Christine stopped Carlisle outside the classroom.

Christine looked anxious.

"Carlisle, the investors have already arrived at Imperial Hotel. Are you coming with us now?"

"You guys go ahead and entertain the investors for me. I'll be there shortly," Carlisle replied before heading off.

Phoebe and Christine exchanged nervous glances. They were dealing with a 30 million dollar investment. Coming from humble backgrounds, it was a sum neither of them had ever imagined they would come close to in their lifetimes.

Gareth had booked an entire floor for the occasion at Imperial Hotel. Through his father's

connections, he had even managed to invite several high-ranking officials from the Department of Culture and Tourism to the signing ceremony.

The presence of government officials drew Yuriel, Shein, and local businessmen alike from Riverland to witness the event. The banquet hall was set up with five tables. It wasn't a grand affair, but each guest was a billionaire in their own right.

Zachary and Shein sat together.

"It's just a 200 million dollar deal. What's so special about this signing ceremony?" Zachary complained.

Shein sipped his tea elegantly before replying calmly, "Our goal today isn't the ceremony itself but to network with the high-ranking officials from the Department of Culture and Tourism.

"They outsource many projects yearly. Building a relationship with them could be extremely beneficial for your future business endeavors. Make the most of this opportunity!"

Zachary's eyes lit up with interest.

"Just who exactly is in charge of this project? How did they manage to get officials from the Department of Culture and Tourism to attend this ceremony?"

"The investor is Mr. Spencer from Scarlet Corporation. I don't know who the contracting party is."

At another table, Shania whispered to Lethan, "Lethan, do you think Carlisle is the contractor?"

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Lethan stroked his chin and smiled.

"You think so too?"

Shania said, "Gareth attended Riverland University's bonfire party for Carlisle. And now he's suddenly having a big signing ceremony. It has to be for a deal with Carlisle. I can't think of anyone else!"

Lethan glanced at Josie, who was happily chatting with some businessmen across the room, and sighed softly.

"I wonder what Josie and Shein would think if they knew."

"Besides, Wanda isn't with Shein today. I wonder what he's up to!"

Shania looked around before furrowing her brow.

All the guests were prominent Riverland businessmen. It would have been beneficial for Wanda to network in such a setting.

Lethan chuckled.

"Yuriel didn't bring his daughter either. They should focus on their studies for now. They still have a long way to go!"

While the two whispered to each other, Gareth entered the banquet hall in a red suit. He was accompanied by two secretaries.

They were followed by government officials from the Department of Culture and Tourism.

Everyone in the room stood up and greeted them warmly.

Phoebe, Christine, and two financial advisors from SwiftFunds Financial Investments hosted Liam Ziegler, an investor from Shorefield, in the executive suite on the eighth floor.

After ten minutes of waiting, Liam became increasingly frustrated. As an investor, he expected immediate attention from the contractors. Instead, they kept him waiting.

He would have walked out if he hadn't been interested in the project.

"Mr. Ziegler, we're still students and can only come after school. We apologize for the wait!" Christine apologized respectfully.

Liam was a foreign man in his 40's. He wore a floral shirt and several gold rings on his fingers.

He glanced at Christine and Phoebe, then waved his hand dismissively and urged, "It's fine, it's fine. Just call Ms. Thompson and tell her to hurry."

Christine and Phoebe exchanged worried looks. Their faces were clouded with worry. They couldn't reach Wanda, so they wondered about their next steps.

They feared Liam would reconsider his investment if Wanda weren't there.

A knock at the door interrupted their thoughts. Christine hurried to open it.

When she swung the door open, she was stunned.

Standing in front of her was Carlisle, who stood six feet tall. He wore a crisp white shirt beneath a sleek black suit and paired it with a navy blue tie. His tailored trousers and polished black shoes, which reflected his face, completed the look.

SwiftFunds Financial Investments had hosted many ambitious young clients in suits and ties, but none matched the presence that Carlisle exuded. It was like night and day.

"Sorry for the delay, Mr. Ziegler."

Carlisle ignored Christine's astonishment and walked past her into the suite.

Liam frowned.

"Who are you?"

Carlisle sat beside the equally surprised Phoebe and held out his hand.

"I'm Carlisle Zahn. Ms. Thompson, my girlfriend, isn't in Riverland at the moment. I'm here to discuss the business deal with you."

"Do you take me for a fool?"

Liam didn't even look at Carlisle. He grimaced and sipped his red wine.

He had tolerated waiting for over ten minutes, but Wanda's absence was a significant blow to his pride.

Carlisle withdrew his hand with a blank expression and stated bluntly, "I've made it clear that Ms. Thompson is currently unavailable. If you insist on her presence, then there's no need to continue this discussion."

Phoebe and Christine paled at Carlisle's words. Even Jenny, the SwiftFunds financial advisor, frowned.

She felt that Carlisle wasn't there to negotiate but to vent his frustrations. They had finally calmed Liam down, but Carlisle's words seemed to worsen the situation rather than improve

it.

As she had expected, Liam slammed his hand down on the table. It made the two secretaries next to him tremble with fear.

"Is this how you do business?" Liam snapped.

"I have eight more investments waiting for me. I've never met anyone as arrogant as you."

Carlisle couldn't be bothered with Liam. He turned to Phoebe.

"I have a 200-million-dollar investment signing downstairs. You handle this one. If you can make a deal, great. If not, just forget it!"

With that, he stood up and left the room without looking back.

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It wasn't until Carlisle slammed the door that Christine and Phoebe returned to reality. They glanced cautiously at Liam, whose face was flushed with anger.

Phoebe stammered, "M-Mr. Ziegler, Ms. Thompson is—"

"That's enough."

Liam cut Phoebe off with a cold laugh.

"A 200 million dollar investment? If he can secure a 200 million investment, I'll eat my hat. You guys are way too unreliable for that!"

With that, he got up and left with his secretaries in tow. Christine and Phoebe exchanged confused looks.

Phoebe turned to Jenny with tears in her eyes.

"Ms. Robson, what are we going to do now?"

"Let's just eat to cut our losses."

Jenny picked up a fork and began to dig in.

It was obvious that Carlisle had thoroughly infuriated Liam. The situation could not be salvaged unless Wanda herself showed up.

Back on the third floor of Imperial Hotel, the governor, his secretary and Alan had arrived. Once again, the assembled businessmen marveled at the grandeur of the signing ceremony. Gareth and Max greeted the governor and Alan with great respect. The governor, Sheldon Darnell, had neat, graying hair and was dressed modestly.

He shook Gareth's hand warmly and said, "Gareth, you didn't tell me you were coming to Riverland for business. I hope you don't mind me showing up uninvited!"

"Mr. Darnell, you're a busy man. I didn't want to bother you."

Sheldon had once been Theodore's secretary and owed his current status to Theodore's mentorship. When he heard that Gareth was conducting business in Riverland, he naturally wanted to show his support.

Just then, Sheldon's secretary smiled and added, "Mr. Darnell did indeed have a busy schedule today. In fact, he canceled several lunch meetings just to be here!"

"Hey, don't tell him that."

Sheldon frowned at his secretary, who quickly fell silent.

Gareth looked touched.

"Mr. Darnell, you honor me. Please, have a seat..."

After his guests were seated, Gareth checked his watch. It was almost one o'clock, and Carlisle still hadn't arrived.

Zachary had been sitting idly for over an hour.

Frustrated, he grumbled, "Who are we waiting for? He must think highly of himself to keep everyone waiting like this."

"If the governor can wait, so can you," Shein replied calmly.

Zachary took a sip of coffee to quench his thirst before pulling out his phone to chat with his guildmates.

Meanwhile, Gareth stepped out to call Carlisle. Just as he dialed Carlisle's number, he saw Carlisle exit the elevator.

Gareth hurried over, slightly annoyed.

"Carlisle, hurry up. Everyone's here, and they're waiting for you."

"Got held up with something," Carlisle explained briefly before following Gareth into the banquet hall.

As Gareth led Carlisle into the room, dozens of eyes turned to look at them.

Zachary's eyes widened in shock.

"C-Carlisle?"

He pinched his leg hard, doubting his senses. The sharp pain confirmed that it wasn't a dream.

"No way. He couldn't have secured a 200 million dollar investment. Something's definitely wrong!"

Shein frowned slightly but quickly composed himself.

Lethan and Shania smiled when they saw Carlisle. Josie drank her coffee, her eyes showing surprise. She had expected Gareth's business partner to be someone closer to his age, not someone so young.

Josie had never met Carlisle and didn't know that he was the same student who almost ran off with her daughter.

"Dad, could Carlisle be the contractor?" Austin whispered, frowning.

Yuriel shook his head.

"Not necessarily. He could just be here for the signing ceremony."

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Gareth led Carlisle to the frontmost table which was where the contract was placed. With a smile, he introduced Carlisle to the crowd.

"First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to witness the signing ceremony between myself and Dragonaire Game Company.

"Allow me to introduce my business partner, the chairman of Dragonaire Game Company, Carlisle Zahn!"

"He's so young!"

"Dragonaire Game Company? Never heard of it. Do we have such a company in Riverland?"

"No. I'm in the gaming industry, and I know pretty much every game company in Riverland, big or small. I've never heard of this one!"

"This kid is probably fresh out of high school and started a business with his parent's money."

The crowd buzzed with chatter.

A high-ranking official from the Department of Culture and Tourism smiled at Sheldon. "Riverland sure is filled with extraordinary people. What a young entrepreneur!" "Brookfield State has never been short of talent," Sheldon replied while smiling broadly.

Riverland is part of Brookfield State. While the officials had praised Riverland, Sheldon wanted to elevate the entire state.

"Mr. Darnell, doesn't that young man look familiar?" the secretary beside Sheldon whispered.

Sheldon nodded and smiled. "I noticed him as soon as he entered. He's the student who finished the SATs in just 30 minutes!"

Josie's calm face turned into one of astonishment upon hearing Gareth's introduction. She had finally seen who Carlisle was. It was no wonder he could win over Wanda-he had some skills. But unfortunately, that wasn't enough. Moreover, Wanda was already betrothed.

Josie composed herself and elegantly sipped her red wine.

"Hello, everyone. My name is Carlisle, and I'm a student at Riverland University. I'm a novice in the world of entrepreneurship, and I look forward to learning from all of you."

Carlisle waved at the crowd.

The crowd was taken aback once more by the fact that he was still a student at Riverland University. While their children were squandering resources at Carlisle's age, he had already started a business-and not a small one at that. They began to speculate about his origins.

After leaving the suite, Liam stormed into the elevator. It stopped on the third floor, where he ran into an acquaintance from Riverland on the phone.

Liam's eyes lit up.

"Mr. Cagney?"

Randy Cagney was startled. When he noticed it was Liam in the elevator, he hung up the phone and grinned.

"Mr. Ziegler, what brings you to Riverland?"

Liam stepped out of the elevator and shook hands with Randy.

"I'm in Riverland to discuss a business deal!"

"If it brought you here personally, it must've been a big one."

Liam waved his hand in frustration.

"Don't get me started. I was nearly driven mad."

"Calm down. Let me take you to Mr. Spencer's signing ceremony!"

Randy chuckled.

"Mr. Spencer?"

"Come on. You'll find out soon enough!"

Randy led Liam to the banquet hall. Liam gasped in surprise when he saw the two biggest entrepreneurs of Riverland there. He became more nervous when he noticed the governor of Riverland.

Finally, Liam's eyes locked onto Gareth and Carlisle. He stared intently at Carlisle, recalling the latter's earlier words. A chill ran down his spine.

He couldn't believe that Carlisle actually had a 200 million investment deal in the works.