

My CEO Ex: Let Me Go. Chapter 8

We arrived at Ashford Manor, where the housekeeper greeted us.

“Matriarch Evelyn Hawthorne is in the kitchen,” she said. “Please, make yourselves comfortable.”

She then went to pour drinks and set fresh fruit in front of us.

The Matriarch of the Hawthorne Dynasty had come from humble beginnings. Despite years of living in luxury, she still resembled the elders of an ordinary family—enjoying time with the children, cooking meals, and even knitting scarves for the younger generation. Despite the ongoing internal struggles within the Hawthorne family, the respect for Grandmother Hawthorne was unwavering.

I changed my shoes and casually asked the housekeeper, “Where’s Pop-Pop?”

She pointed upstairs. “He’s resting. The President’s health has been declining lately.”

Hearing this, both Alexander and I couldn’t hide our concern.

The Hawthorne family business had been passed down from Grandpa’s generation, but it had really flourished under his leadership. In his youth, Grandpa had sacrificed his health for the sake of work, and as he got older, his condition worsened. On top of that, he’d undergone a liver transplant and was on long-term immunosuppressants.

“What did Dr. Harrison Whitaker say?” Alexander asked.

Dr. Harrison Whitaker, the director of Saint James Hospital, was also Grandpa’s personal doctor.

“He can only do his best,” the housekeeper replied.

I could hear the sorrow in her voice. Alexander nodded, his expression grave.

I headed to the kitchen to help Grandmother Hawthorne.

“Vivienne,” Evelyn called when she saw me. “Go sit outside and rest. Don’t worry about me; I’ve got it covered.”

Reluctantly, I stopped and smiled. "Nana, I'm not doing anything outside. I might as well help you."

Evelyn shot me a knowing look and shook her head disapprovingly. "How can you say you're not doing anything? Go sit with Alexander and talk."

She paused, as if considering something, then added, "Is there trouble between you and Alexander? I saw the news. Don't worry, I'll make sure he gets a talking-to."

I felt a wave of helplessness at her words. "Nana, you don't need to worry about us. Alexander and I will figure things out on our own."

Evelyn's gaze softened, but there was a spark of resolve in her eyes. "I know what's going on. That boy takes advantage of your good heart and thinks he can walk all over you. That little brat, I know exactly what he's up to. You will always be the lady of this family, Vivienne. If he wants a divorce, he'll have to get through me first."

Evelyn seemed to understand that I didn't want to discuss it any further. She didn't press the issue, but her eyes held a silent promise of support.

At mealtime, the housekeeper helped Grandpa downstairs, and Alexander moved to assist as well.

Meanwhile, I was in the kitchen, helping Evelyn bring the dishes to the table.

Alexander glanced at the spread and nodded. "Nana's cooking is as good as ever."

Evelyn shot me a sideways glance. "Why don't you compliment Vivienne? These dishes were all made by her. Looks like you're starting to forget about her."

I had to fight to hold back a smile. Alexander hesitated before reluctantly responding, "Vivienne's cooking is good too."

"That's a pretty half-hearted compliment," Evelyn teased.

Alexander smiled sheepishly and fell silent.

The mood in the house suddenly became a little strained. Clearly, Evelyn wasn't happy with Alexander today, likely because of the gossip in the news.

We all sat down to eat, and Grandpa cleared his throat before speaking slowly.

"Alexander, I hear the girl from The Blackwood Family is back in the country?"

Alexander stiffened, then nodded gravely. "She returned recently."

Grandpa continued, his voice heavy. "I saw the news this morning. Even though you two used to date, that's in the past now. You're married to Vivienne. Don't get too close to that girl from The Blackwood Family anymore. What will Vivienne think? I heard your company is working with her—let Vivienne handle it. You don't need to be involved."

Alexander put his chopsticks down and looked at Grandpa seriously. "Pop-Pop, I plan to..."

"Cough, cough, cough..."

Grandpa suddenly broke into a violent fit of coughing, interrupting Alexander. His gaze locked onto Alexander's, hard and unyielding. "It was Vivienne's father who saved my life. I promised him I would treat her like my own granddaughter, which is why I agreed to her marriage to you. Before the wedding, I asked you if you were willing, and you agreed. I know you're a man of your word, Alexander. Don't go back on it. Don't let anyone look down on you. Don't make me regret bringing you into this family."

Grandpa's words were firm and unambiguous, and Alexander fell silent.

The atmosphere in the room became heavy, the air thick with tension, as if every word from Grandpa carried a weight that pressed down on us all.

I quickly spoke up to ease the tension. "Pop-Pop, try this Grilled Chicken Breast, it's my special dish. You used to love it so much."

Evelyn, seeing my attempt, smiled and joined in. "Look at that, Vivienne still remembers you. I'm starting to feel jealous."

"Vivienne's such a good girl," Grandpa chuckled, nodding as he picked up his chopsticks. "Unlike some ungrateful ones who always make me angry. I swear, they won't stop until they've driven me to the grave."

Alexander sat quietly, seemingly used to Grandpa's teasing, his face unreadable.

"Pop-Pop, don't say that. You're going to live a long, healthy life!" I couldn't help but laugh, trying to lighten the mood.

I had lost so many family members over the years. My parents divorced when I was very young, and I lived with my father. To be honest, my mother had never really cared for me, and she never showed up again after the divorce. Then, my father passed away when I was sixteen, leaving me completely alone. The pain of losing so many loved ones stayed with me, but today, I felt a sense of belonging with Pop-Pop and Nana. Whenever I saw them, I felt a deep dependence on them—they were the only ones who still offered me warmth.

I hoped Pop-Pop would live a long life, sparing me the pain of losing yet another loved one. No one wished for his long life more than I did.

The meal was especially harmonious, everyone chatting happily, except for Alexander, who remained quiet. To make the atmosphere even better, I kept doing my best to entertain Pop-Pop and Nana. We laughed and joked, our faces glowing with smiles, as if this was the most authentic image of a family.

"Mrs. Vivienne, ever since you've come, Pop-Pop's spirits have been much higher," one of the servants commented.

After dinner, I stayed with Grandpa to play a game of chess. He had taught me how to play, but I had improved so quickly that even he couldn't afford to let his guard down. Every time we played, Pop-Pop took it seriously, like it was the one thing that kept him feeling young.

"Pop-Pop, that's cheating!" I shouted in frustration as I watched him move a piece back. But I couldn't help but laugh inside.

"This isn't a do-over. I didn't even place the piece yet," Grandpa said, defending himself as he picked up the piece and prepared to place it again.

I widened my eyes, deliberately egging him on. "Are you sure? Are you really sure you want to place it here?"

Grandpa glanced at me, hesitated for a moment, then nodded. "Sure."

I quickly placed my black piece and burst out laughing. "Ha! Pop-Pop, you lost!"

Grandpa's eyes widened in surprise. He hadn't expected to fall for my trick. He quickly picked up the white piece and tossed it back into the box, muttering, "No, no, this doesn't count. I made a mistake, I made a mistake."

I couldn't help but laugh out loud, my gaze unconsciously turning to Alexander. He was standing off to the side, looking a bit helpless as he watched the scene unfold. When he saw me interact with Grandpa, the corners of his lips twitched into a slight smile.

In front of him and his brothers, Grandpa was always stern and serious, but in front of me, he was like a child—playful, stubborn.

Suddenly, I pointed at Alexander. "Pop-Pop, he's mocking you."

Grandpa immediately turned his gaze to Alexander, and Alexander's smile vanished in an instant, his face darkening.

"You little rascal, daring to laugh at me. Go get some water for me and Vivienne! Stop standing there like an idiot!" Grandpa's voice rang out, loud and unapologetic.

Alexander fell silent, his expression unchanged as he went to fetch the water. Behind him, I couldn't help but laugh again, as if I had just delivered the final blow.

"You..." He gritted his teeth, his face turning dark, clearly annoyed.

But I didn't mind. At that moment, my heart was full of nothing but Grandpa and the warmth of this time together.