

A Man with Nerves of Steel

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

The next morning, Cora called Fiona over upon arriving at Lowell Group. Cora noticed that Fiona was truly beautiful. Compared to Cora, Fiona was only slightly less attractive. However, when age was taken into account, Cora couldn't help but feel envious. 1

A saying suddenly surfaced in Cora's mind. "A woman can never stay 18 years old forever, but there will always be another 18-year-old woman."

Without giving Fiona a chance to refuse, Cora transferred the money for yesterday's late-night snack.

Cora began, "Fiona, guess what Joe asked me last night. It was about you."

Fiona responded, "Is Joseph still upset about the food I bought for him? I already apologized. He can't still be holding onto that, right?"

“It isn’t that. He said last night that I should have made you stay the night and let him sleep with you. Fiona, do you want to? If you do, come home with me tonight,” said Cora.

It was a life-and-death question. Fiona was terrified as she quickly answered, “Cora, you know what kind of person I am. I would never try to seduce Joseph. Without you, I wouldn’t even have what I have today. I could never repay kindness with betrayal.”

Cora replied, “I know you wouldn’t. You don’t have the courage to do it anyway. But Joe does. He’s bold enough to think about you.”

“What do we do then?” Fiona asked. She felt a bit excited upon thinking about Joseph. He was handsome and had overwhelming masculinity.

She had fantasized before about spending a night with him, but of course, she could never let that show.

Fiona continued, “Cora, could this just be another one of Joseph’s tactics? Maybe he’s trying to drive a wedge between us. After his lawsuit failed last time, he probably started holding a grudge against me.

“Maybe he doesn’t actually have bad intentions. It could just be like what he did to the network technology department. He’s just trying to needle us and push our buttons.”

Fiona replied, "You're right. Joe doesn't have bad intentions. He just wants to push our buttons. Still, we can't completely ignore it. After all, I already let him experience another woman once. Now, he's curious about you too."

Fiona forced herself to think about something disgusting so that goosebumps would rise across her skin. She quickly said, "If I can't afford to provoke him, I can at least avoid him. Maybe I should go out of town for a while?"

Cora responded, "That isn't necessary. Fiona, you aren't young anymore. It's time you find yourself a boyfriend. If you have someone protecting you, Joe won't dare to target you."

"Alright. I'll find myself a boyfriend who can fight. If Joseph ever has improper thoughts about me again, I'll scare him off," said Fiona.

+15 Bonus

"Be careful with that. Don't actually hurt him," replied Cora. She felt that Joseph needed to be taught a lesson. She couldn't keep allowing him to do whatever he wanted forever.

Meanwhile, Joseph was still at home. He had just answered a call from Marvin.

Marvin said, "Dr. Hart, didn't we already agree on this? You return to work, and I give you the authority of acting director of critical care. I've already prepared your appointment papers. Why aren't you at work? You can't stand me up."

“I thought about it, and I don’t think the director role suits me. I think I should replace Walt instead. I want to be the hospital director,” replied Joseph.

Marvin was shocked. “Are you joking with me? Do you think I can appoint a hospital director? That requires approval from higher authorities. Besides, you would still need prior administrative experience. Joseph, stop being childish and reckless. You should know when to quit while you’re ahead.”

Joseph responded, “Do you think I’m joking? If you want, just pretend I’m joking then. Marvin, did you ever imagine that there would come a day when you would have to beg me for help?”

Marvin roared, “You never intended to come back at all. You’ve just been playing with me this whole time!

Joseph chuckled. Then, Marvin said, “Joseph, do you know that if I hadn’t waited for you these past two days, I would have already found someone else capable of doing the surgery?”

“Don’t dump the blame onto me. I’m just an ordinary doctor. You said it yourself. The hospital has plenty of skillful people. Go and find one of them,” replied Joseph.

Marvin tried another approach. “The patient’s family is pressuring me to schedule the surgery as soon as possible. Where am I supposed to find someone capable of performing it? Besides, the family only trusts you. Joseph, come back and help us. I’ll owe you a favor.

“Once you return, we’ll be on the same side, and I’ll reward you generously. We all work within the healthcare system. We’ll inevitably cross paths again in the future. There’s no need to destroy our relationship completely.”

Joseph replied, “I don’t want to see you at all. I don’t need anything from you either. You’re the associate director of the hospital, yet you’re saying such things. It’s embarrassing!”

Without waiting for another response, he ended the call. He decided to let those incompetent fools clean up their own disastrous mess.

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

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The doorbell rang. Joseph went outside to check and saw a delivery truck carrying aquarium tanks. Wendy from Celestial Farm had come to deliver the expensive carp.

Joseph glanced at the delivery receipt. Only Wendy's name appeared on it. There were no other

suspicious people with the same surname as her.

He said, "I'm not interested in raising carp anymore. Take them back."

"Your wife bought these fish. She specifically asked me to teach you how to care for them," replied Wendy. Even now, she still disliked Joseph because of what had happened last time. Nonetheless, she restrained herself. After all, he was still technically a customer.

Upon hearing that, Joseph thought of an idea. He gave Cora a call and asked, "Darling, didn't you enjoy the carp banquet last time? I can make another one for you today."

"Joe, stop being ridiculous. Those are the carp I want to raise. They're supposed to bring me good luck,"

answered Cora.

“What era are we living in? Why do you still believe in such nonsense? Eating well, sleeping well, and staying healthy is what actually brings good luck,” said Joseph.

Then, he ended the call and turned to Wendy, wanting her to unload the carp. In the next second, he grabbed one of the carp and slammed it violently onto the ground in front of everyone.

“You all should stay back. I’ll make a fish banquet for you too,” said Joseph.

“You’re sick!” Wendy cried out. She cared a lot about these carp. As she hurried over and picked up the unconscious carp, her face was filled with distress. The fury in her eyes looked sharp enough to kill

Joseph.

However, Joseph’s response was simple. He picked up another carp and slammed it onto the ground as

well.

“This man is insane! Hurry up and load the carp back onto the truck,” ordered Wendy.

“Wait! Are these your carp? My wife has already bought them. They belong to us. If you dare to load them. back, I won’t let you all leave!” Joseph shouted, stunning everyone present.

The delivery people knew that residents in this luxury neighborhood were either rich or powerful. So, none of them dared to interfere. They only stood there and watched Joseph kill every carp.

“You’re completely insane! You had better pray you never fall into my hands someday. Otherwise, I’ll make sure this never ends for you!” Wendy warned. Despite her anger, she didn’t dare to actually beat Joseph up. She could only leave in frustration.

Not long afterward, Cora stormed into the study without knocking. The moment she reached Joseph, she raised her hand to slap his face. However, he grabbed her wrist midair.

+15 Bonus

“Cora, if work frustrates you, don’t come home and take it out on me. What do you take me for? If you do this again, don’t blame me if I hit back, snapped Joseph. He had already used every ounce of restraint not to return the slap

Cora demanded, “Why did you kill my carp? I already told you I wanted to raise them.”

“And I already told you I don’t want to raise them. In your eyes, am I worth less than a few carp? Joseph questioned with a calm expression. It was the kind of calm that only appeared after one’s heart had already gone cold.

At this point, even if Cora agreed to the divorce, Joseph might no longer want it. Whenever she felt miserable, he felt satisfied.

“Fine. We won’t raise them. They’re just fish,” said Cora after thinking for a while. Even though she knew that Joseph was deliberately causing trouble, she also knew that pushing the argument further would only make things worse.

Joseph added, “By the way, when I’m working, don’t come in without knocking next time. We may be married, but basic respect still matters. You may leave.”

Cora hadn’t expected Joseph to make things difficult to this extent. She stopped outside, then immediately knocked on the door before entering again. She asked, “Why haven’t you returned to the hospital?”

Joseph responded, “Return? What’s the point? To make money? If you want me to make money, I would earn far more working at your company instead. But do you actually need me to make money?”

“Isn’t it your career? You love being a doctor. Saving lives is the thing you care about most,” said Cora

Joseph stated, “I’m still studying medicine. I can only save more lives by improving myself. Cora, when it comes to my job, you’re an outsider. If you don’t understand it, don’t interfere.”

“Fine. I don’t understand, so I won’t interfere anymore. Do whatever you want,” replied Cora

Once Cora left the study, her gaze turned cold. To her, Joseph had become nothing more than a thorn She had to give him something to do so that he could be tamed.

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Joseph hadn’t expected Bernard to show up. Just like every previous visit, Bernard hadn’t come with good intentions.

Bernard arrived with bodyguards, but he left them outside and entered the house alone. Upon entering, he sneered. "You sit around at home all day instead of going to work. Are you planning to live off others for free?"

Joseph let out a mocking laugh. The reason he couldn't return to work in the first place was because of Bernard. So, Joseph said shamelessly, "With Cora's wealth, supporting me shouldn't be difficult, right? She could skip one meal of seafood and cover my living expenses for an entire year."

"I find it humiliating that you have such thoughts. If you refuse to return to the hospital, at least do something useful for the family," said Bernard.

In response, Joseph said, "Cora won't even let me interfere in Lowell Group's affairs, yet you want me to work for the family? Aren't you afraid I'll take your family's money for myself?"

Bernard shot back. "Try it if you dare! The Lowell family has reached its current status because of Cora's intelligence and ability, but it's also because everyone in the family stays united and works hard.

"You're an outsider. What gives you the right to enjoy the fruits of my family's success? So, I'll never hand you the family's money unless you actually contribute something. Go and recover this debt."

Bernard threw a file toward Joseph. Bernard had already discussed this matter with Cora beforehand. They were going to use this impossible debt collection task to make things difficult for Joseph.

“Let’s make things clear upfront. If I recover the money, what do I get?” Joseph asked instead of opening the file immediately. He knew that it wouldn’t be easy to recover since Bernard personally brought it over. If there was nothing inside, it would just be Bernard’s trap.

Bernard responded, “If you recover the money, half of it goes to you.”

“Verbal promises don’t mean much. Let’s record this conversation so that you can’t deny it later,” said Joseph, clearly not believing Bernard. After recording the conversation, he sent the recording file to Cora.

Bernard asked, “And if you fail to recover the debt?”

Joseph answered, avoiding the trap, “I failed to recover it then. None of you managed to recover this debt. Unless all of them were punished too, what right would you have to punish me?”

Bernard barked, “You’re such a coward!”

Joseph replied, “If I’m a coward, the Lowell family must be cowards too. Oh, wait, that isn’t quite right. Natalie was never my biological daughter, but she’s Cora’s daughter. This means that she carries half of the Lowell family’s blood.

“Do you know whose blood she also carries? If Cora refuses to admit it until the day you die, you’ll die without ever knowing who your granddaughter’s real father is.”

+15 Bonus

Bernard shouted, “You’re seriously seeking death! If Cora weren’t protecting you, I would have beaten you to death already!”

“You’re getting more impulsive with age. Your blood pressure is already high. Keep getting this angry and you’re going to have a stroke one day,” said Joseph.

He opened the file and saw that it was indeed an old debt collection case. The debtor was a deadbeat with government connections. This explained why the Lowell family had struggled to recover the debt.

Joseph put the document back into the file and walked out in front of Bernard. Then Bernard called Cora and informed her that Joseph had gone to collect the debt. Now, they could just sit back and watch Joseph embarrass himself.

Bernard went home and waited. That night, he saw Joseph. The moment the latter entered, he sneered.” You couldn’t recover the debt, could you? How do you still have the nerve to come back?”

“Oh, Cora is here too. That’s perfect. You can act as a witness. I already obtained the repayment confirmation. Once your finance department verifies everything tomorrow, remember to transfer me five million dollars,” said Joseph, shocking everyone.

Cora, Bernard, and Helen exchanged glances. The debt that had been dragged out for years was easily recovered by Joseph.

“No problem. I’ll have the finance department verify everything tomorrow. If there aren’t any issues, I’ll transfer the five million dollars to you. But how did you manage to recover it?” said Cora. After all, she couldn’t go back on her words.

“I spent the entire day handling it. I’m tired and don’t feel like talking. Give me a position as general manager or executive director in Lowell Group, and maybe I’ll tell you. My proposal is perfectly reasonable. Think it over carefully, Ms. Lowell,” said Joseph.

With that, Joseph smiled and turned to leave, with Cora hurrying after him.

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

Inside the house, Bernard was clearly in a bad mood. He let out a snort before walking into the study gloomily.

After settling the children, Helen followed Bernard into the study. She asked, “What’s wrong? The money is already recovered. Why are you still unhappy?”

Bernard answered, “The money may have been recovered, but don’t forget. We still have to give half of it to Joseph. If that ungrateful guy gets the money, all he’ll do is become even more arrogant toward us.”

Aside from that, Bernard was irritated because the entire setup had failed to make things hard for Joseph. Initially, Bernard had wanted to watch Joseph fail miserably and make a fool of himself.

Instead, Joseph had successfully recovered the debt in one day. Bernard felt like he had been slapped directly in the face.

Helen said, “That stupid bet was your idea in the first place. Why did you even gamble with him? If you refuse to give him the money now, it’ll just make you look like a sore loser. We aren’t lacking money anyway. Just treat it like feeding scraps to a dog!

“Besides, even if he suddenly has five million dollars, what can he do with it? I would rather he take the money and waste it recklessly. In that way, Cora would finally see his true nature, and maybe the marriage would finally end.”

Bernard snapped, “That’s easy for you to say. Didn’t you see how smug he looked just now? He irritates me. I really wanted to slap him.”

Helen replied, “I was annoyed too, but he still got the money back in the end. Forget it this time. We’ll find another opportunity to make him embarrass himself.

“But how did he do it? So many people on our side tried to collect that debt before. Even Cora personally went. None of them succeeded. However, Joseph went once and immediately got the money back. It’s

unbelievable.”

“Who knows? Let’s ask Cora tomorrow. If he used some underhanded trick, I’ll definitely embarrass him,” said Bernard coldly. To him, he hadn’t lost this bet completely. Perhaps he could win it.

Meanwhile, Cora returned home with Joseph. She questioned him about how he had recovered the debt. Nevertheless, he refused to reveal anything. Even when she used seduction to pry information out of him, trying to question him while he was most relaxed and satisfied, he still kept his mouth shut.

The next day, Joseph received a call from the director of surgery at the Traditional Medicine Center. They wanted him to assist with a surgery. After asking for details, he learned that the patient had been transferred from Jenton University Hospital. It was the patient in Ward 15.

Joseph knew how difficult the surgery would be. He had a high chance of success, but it wasn't guaranteed. Of course, no one would dare promise a one-hundred percent success rate for such a surgery. Still, he decided to perform the surgery. He needed to perform surgeries of this level.

+15 Bonus

When Joseph was in the operating room, Cora called Fiona in to investigate how Joseph recovered the debt.

Fiona worked efficiently. While Joseph was racing against time to perform the surgery, she had already placed a detailed investigation report in front of Cora.

According to the report, Joseph had first visited the debtor's home. Not long afterward, he took the debtor to the Traditional Medicine Center for a complete medical examination. After the medical examination, the two returned together.

In the end, Joseph left. Based on the time difference, the debtor transferred the money shortly afterward.

“It looks like Joseph simply got lucky. He happened to encounter the debtor while the latter was having health problems. Since Joseph is a doctor, he brought him to carry out a medical examination and treatment. That probably earned the debtor’s trust. 1

“When we approached him in the past, everyone focused on the money. However, Joseph approached him through his health instead. That difference in attitude probably convinced the debtor to repay the debt willingly, concluded Fiona.

“That’s probably what happened!” Cora nodded. On the surface, the explanation made sense. But deep down, she still felt that details were missing. Those details would likely only come from Joseph himself.

Just then, the finance department manager came in to ask whether she should transfer the money to Joseph, since Bernard had instructed her not to. Clearly, she was terrified of offending Joseph after the beef offal incident. So, she wanted Cora to make the final decision.

Transfer it. If we don’t, he’ll definitely find another way to cause trouble,” stated Cora.

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

Joseph's surgery went extremely smoothly. Still, the surgery took a long time, and he had to stay behind to monitor the patient until he regained consciousness afterward. By the time everything was finished, it was already past midnight.

The patient waking up was the clearest proof that the surgery had been a complete success. As for the rest of the recovery process, it would now be handled by the Traditional Medicine Center's doctors and the private medical team arranged by the patient's family.

Since Joseph's part of the job was done, he walked out of the Traditional Medicine Center and got into Cora's car. The two headed home together.

In the car, Joseph checked his phone and saw a notification from the bank. He had actually received the five million dollars. He turned to Cora and said, "You actually transferred me the money. Your father probably isn't happy about it."

"A deal is a deal. My dad isn't so petty that he would go back on his word. Joe, maybe my father has been too harsh on you all these years. Perhaps we should have let you join Lowell Group earlier," said

Cora.

Joseph immediately replied, “You’re trying to say that I’ve never seen wealth before, aren’t you? Do you think I’m so desperate that I would pounce at a mere five million dollars?”

“You’re the richest person around. If five million dollars fell onto the ground in front of you, you probably wouldn’t even bother bending down to pick it up.”

“How could that be? Lowell Group’s money didn’t fall from the sky either. Of course, every cent matters. By the way, since you just finished that surgery, did the patient’s family thank you properly?” asked Cora.

“One of them invited me out for a late-night snack, but I was too tired. So, I declined,” answered Joseph.

Cora pressed on. “That isn’t what I meant. Did they offer you money or some kind of favor?”

Joseph replied, “They didn’t offer me anything. Perhaps someone wanted to, and perhaps not. In a lot of people’s eyes, doctors saving lives is just part of the job.”

Cora’s expression became serious. “You need to be careful. Don’t ruin your future over something small. By the way, you’re technically still a doctor from Jenton University Hospital, yet you performed surgery at

the Traditional Medicine Center. Doesn't that break the rules?"

Joseph snapped. "What do you know about rules? The so-called rules you people follow don't mean a thing when human lives are on the line."

"Joe, I realized that you've... Forget it. Let's not argue about this," muttered Cora.

Cora noticed that Joseph had become increasingly hostile during this period of time. Every sentence was an attack.

Meanwhile, Joseph was exhausted. Before long, he drifted off to sleep in the passenger seat.

+15 Bonus

When they arrived home, Joseph noticed that Fiona was around. She had even prepared late-night snacks. Of course, there was nothing weird this time. It was all normal food.

After eating, Fiona hurriedly left as fast as possible. Maybe she was worried that Joseph might mess

with her.

After freshening herself up, Cora said, “Joseph, you stopped doing house chores, and I don’t have time either. This house really can’t function without a housekeeper. I’ll arrange for someone to come over tomorrow. Don’t make things difficult for her and scare her away.”

“Do whatever you want.” Joseph compromised.

The night passed quietly.

The next day, Joseph still had no intention of going back to the hospital. So, he met the new housekeeper that Cora had hired.

Ella Loway was young and looked nice. Her skin was rough, but she carried a healthy tan. Her figure wasn’t especially eye-catching. She wasn’t particularly tall or slim. She just looked ordinary.

The elderly housekeeper from Helen’s and Bernard’s house had come over personally to explain the layout and duties.

Joseph stood on the balcony smoking. Then, his attention was averted to Ella's actions. While cleaning the gym, she lifted a piece of equipment weighing dozens of pounds with one hand and effortlessly cleaned underneath it with the other.

The action looked completely natural. It wasn't an act. After quietly observing a few more subtle details, Joseph quickly concluded that Ella was talented at martial arts.

"Cora, did you hire a housekeeper or a bodyguard? Are you afraid that I'll hurt you? Or did you hire her to monitor me?" Joseph mumbled.

Then, a thought crossed his mind.

He added, "I get it now. You hired a woman who can fight because you're worried I'll harass her

Joseph could easily picture a scenario-the moment he made an inappropriate move toward Ella, she would reject him outright and beat him to a pulp.

He muttered, "Cora, you would probably love to see something like that happen."

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

That day, Joseph was in the study researching medical case files and preparing material for his doctoral thesis. As long as he completed the thesis and passed the defense process, he would officially receive

his doctorate.

At this moment, the new housekeeper knocked on the door, saying that Cora had something to discuss. It was obvious that Cora disliked his staying in the study all day, either watching bloody surgical

recordings or smoking cigarettes.

“What do you need?” Joseph asked the moment he walked over.

*Joe, did you write this article?” Cora asked, handing Joseph a printed news article.

The article read that someone had reported Celestial Farm for occupying agricultural land, damaging local vegetation, disrupting underground water systems, and wasting farming resources. There were all kinds of violations.

The article had even been published in one of Jenton’s more influential newspapers. After investigating the matter and relying partly on instinct, Cora had become convinced that Joseph was the author.

“Maybe. I’m not sure. Lately, I’ve been writing a lot whenever I’m bored. So, I don’t even remember everything I’ve written anymore. What about it? Does it have something to do with you?” Joseph asked.

Cora replied, “To be frank, I have investments in Celestial Farm too. The shareholders are also friends of mine. If you publish articles attacking the farm, it will cause us major losses. In the future, can you at least discuss things with me before doing something like this?”

As Cora spoke, she carefully watched Joseph’s expression. He didn’t look guilty at all, which irritated her.

Joseph said, “Cora, in your eyes, the real issue is that I didn’t ask your permission first? Not the problems with the farm itself? It makes sense. You still don’t understand where the problem is. You’re a businesswoman. You pursue profit and status. I can’t stop that.

“There’s something you should understand, though. Throughout history, people who pursued wealth at any cost and who sacrificed the interests of the majority for their own gain never ended well

Cora responded, “I’m not interested in your lectures. That rigid academic mindset of yours doesn’t work in modern society’

“You’re right. I’m old-fashioned, conservative, outdated, and narrow-minded. What do you want from me? Do you want me to apologize to you and Frank Ashmore? Should I apologize in front of you guys, or would you prefer a public statement?” Joseph asked coldly.

Frank Ashmore was the hidden owner behind Celestial Farm and also the chairman of Meridian Group. Naturally, he was one of the main people Joseph suspected of having an affair with Cora

“We don’t need your apology. I’ve already suppressed the issue for now. Just don’t bring it up again. Don’t do anything like this in the future. Can you do that?” Cora asked.

+15 Bonus

Instead of backing down, Joseph snorted and said, “Cora, let me give you a piece of advice When problems appear, solve them Don’t think about trying to cover them up

“Are you that bored? If you don’t want to return to Jenton University Hospital, go and work at the Traditional Medicine Center instead Just focus on being a doctor and stop interfering in other matters,” said Cora

Joseph snapped. “In your eyes, I’m just loafing around? Only your work matters, while mine is meaningless?”

“Must you compare yourself to me? Honestly, your work really can’t compare to mine. You’re a doctor At most, you save one patient, or maybe a few. However, my work affects hundreds of thousands of people across Jenton,” stated Cora.

Joseph nodded. “You’re right. Lowell Group is involved in almost every major industry in Jenton Of course, you influence countless people’s lives, but if you choose to do harmful things, the number of people affected becomes just as massive.

“Take Celestial Farm as an example. How much farmland did you guys seize? Did you properly compensate the local farmers? How many acres of farmland disappeared because of this project?

“After taking the land, how many government subsidies are you still planning to collect? What’s the value

of this farm?”

Joseph thought to himself, “Cora, you’re just a beneficiary.”

Cora said, “Your thinking is becoming extreme. You’re deliberately dragging yourself into danger-

Joseph cut her off. “The future can wait until the future arrives. I only care about living through the

present”

He scoffed inwardly at the absolute absurdity of them having any kind of future together. She had cheated on him for years, and the daughters she had given birth to weren’t even his. Yet, even now, she still refused to grant him a divorce.

She clearly wanted to keep deceiving him, but he was done playing the fool. As far as he was concerned,

she could dream on.

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Neither Cora nor Joseph could convince the other. They called a silent truce, knowing that any further argument would only turn bitter.

Shortly after, Ella informed Cora, “Ms. Lowell, Mr. Hart is heading out. He’s loading things into the car and said he won’t be back for dinner.”

Cora immediately hurried outside. “Joe, we were just having a discussion. So what if we have different opinions? I didn’t say anything extreme, and I didn’t demand anything from you. Is it really necessary to run away from home again?”

This was the move Cora feared most. When Joseph left, he’d stay gone. He would check into the hotel, or worse, find some woman to accompany him. She wasn’t about to spend the night alone in an empty

house.

“Run away? No, no. I’m going fishing,” Joseph replied, gesturing toward the fishing gear packed in the

car.

“Fishing? I’m coming with you then.” Cora packed up, changed into casual clothes, grabbed some outdoor gear, and entered Joseph’s car.

“Cora, I’m free from work. I just want to relax. I’m 40 years old, not some kid. I need to learn how to enjoy life. You’re different-you’re responsible for the well-being of countless people. You should go back to

work.”

“I’m 40, too. I’m going to enjoy life with you,” Cora insisted.

Joseph didn’t say another word. He drove Cora to the riverbank, found a spot to cast his line, and set up his gear for a day of leisure.

After watching him for a while, Cora realized Joseph had absolutely no idea what he was doing.

“You didn’t even bait the hook,” she pointed out. “How do you expect to catch anything? No one fishes

like that.”

“Some people fish for the experience; others fish for the catch. I’m not like them. I’m here to relax. If I start acting like a professional, it becomes exhausting.”

“I suspect you didn’t come here to fish. You’re only pretending to fish because I showed up.”

“Oh? Then what was I originally planning to do?”

“You tell me. I’m sure you were up to no good.”

“Are you afraid I was headed for a foot spa and a full-service massage?”

“Don’t act like the thought didn’t cross your mind.”

“Well, since you’re the one bringing it up, Cora, where’s the lady from the dorm previously?”

“Gosh. Forget about that already.”

+15 Bonus

“That bitch ruined my reputation. I won’t forget it. However, I’m sure, sooner or later, you’ll find a reason to bring her back into my bed.”

Just then, Joseph saw a fish take the bait. He reeled in and saw it was a carp. He unhooked the fish and then tossed it back into the river.

The next day, while Joseph was at the sanatorium for a consultation arranged by Dolly, Natalie arrived at the Meridian Group. She stood before the company’s chairman, Frank Ashmore, and sized him up.

“Mr. Ashmore is tall, but he has such a square jaw. He looks nothing like me. Did Joseph get it wrong?”

Natalie wondered.

“Nat, I assume your mother asked you to find me?” Frank recognized Natalie, but he was perplexed by the way she was staring at him the moment she entered the room.

“Nope. I came here on my own. Look at me closely. Do I look like your daughter?” Natalie asked.

“I didn’t hear you clearly. Say that again.”

“Stop pretending. I know how close you and my mother were. You slept with her. That makes me your daughter.”

“Have a seat. I’ll call your mother to get here.” He managed to calm Natalie before sending a frantic text

to Cora.

When Cora arrived, Frank was already waiting for her at the elevator. He asked, “Is Natalie really our daughter?”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Cora snapped.

Cora was astonished when she realized what had happened. She silenced Natalie and led her into the

car.

“Have you lost your mind? You’re looking for your father? Aren’t you embarrassed? You’re getting more shameless by the day!”

“Joseph isn’t my father. Someone said that Frank is my biological father. Shouldn’t I ask him about it?”

“Who told you that Joseph isn’t your father?”

*Joseph himself. He even showed me the DNA test results. You may think it’s fake, but I believe him.”

“That’s fake! Joseph is lying to you. Don’t bring this up again, or I’ll teach you a lesson.”

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

Cora sent Natalie back to her parents’ house. Once inside, Natalie stormed to her room and locked the door. Cora no longer knew how to deal with Natalie’s rebellious streak.

Helen and Bernard sat in the study, reeling from the news. 1

Helen asked, "Cora, you and Frank have always been close. Did something really happen between the two of you?"

Cora replied, "He's just my business partner and a close friend. The idea of anything else is ridiculous. Dad, Mom, you need to watch over Nat. She's becoming impossible to handle."

"If Cora says it didn't happen, then it didn't. We trust you. As for Nat, she clearly overstepped her boundaries. She needs to be taught a lesson. If this gets out, people will start saying the Lowell family lacks discipline. Oh, yes. Who told Nat about Frank?" Bernard scowled as he tried to trace the root of the problem.

"It's all Joseph's fault. He showed Nat those DNA results, and she fell for it. Nat is going through a rebellious phase and was displeased with his strict parenting. She saw that DNA report and believed it. She knows Frank and I are close, so she confronted him and caused this humiliating scene," Cora explained. ¹

"That ungrateful brat again?" Bernard hissed. However, his take on the DNA report differed from Cora's.

Helen added, "Tell that ungrateful brat to come over and explain to Nat."

"We can't let Joseph anywhere near Nat. Who knows what bad advice he would give her?" Cora left after instructing Helen and Bernard to keep an eye on Natalie.

Helen and Bernard called Natalie out of her room and questioned her sternly.

Natalie retorted, “Grandpa, Grandma, if you had to choose between Joseph and Frank, who would you pick? You’d definitely choose Frank-and so would I. He has a good family background and is a match for my mom. None of you likes Joseph, and neither do I. So, help me prove that I’m Frank’s daughter. If we can prove it, Mom won’t have any choice but to accept the truth.”

Bernard replied, “But Cora said that there’s nothing between Frank and her.”

“Do you think she dares to admit it? Of course not. She’s still married to Joseph. If she admits to an affair with Frank now, Joseph will take half of her assets in the divorce.”

The mere mention of losing a massive payout to Joseph soured Helena and Bernard’s mood.

“How do we prove you are Frank’s daughter?” Helen asked.

“Grandma, you’re so smart. You know I’m not Joseph’s daughter. Look, Grandpa, just don’t tell Mom

about this, and stop trying to lock me up. I'm going to see Frank tomorrow. I'll find a way to convince him to acknowledge me."

+15 Bonus

Natalie managed to persuade Helen and Bernard, who helped to cover for her. When Cora called later that evening, they told her that Natalie was well-behaved and had realized the error of her ways. They assured Cora not to worry and promised to drop Natalie off at school in the morning.

Cora, who didn't suspect Helen and Bernard, felt relieved.

Joseph didn't bring up the matter that evening, so Cora stayed silent as well. Since his phone was off, she assumed Natalie wouldn't be able to reach him to plot any further moves.

However, Cora never expected that Natalie would march straight into Frank's office the next day. She showed the DNA report to the senior management of Meridian Group, leaving Frank humiliated.

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

Cora had no choice but to head back to the Meridian Group. Frank pulled her aside and asked, “Cora, is Nat really our daughter?”

“Do you honestly think that’s possible?” Cora denied vehemently.

“But she brought a DNA report that showed we were related by blood. Cora, to be honest with you, I’m willing to accept the truth.”

“Let’s talk about the DNA report another time. I’m taking Nat home first. She’s never acted out like this. before. Something is going on.”

“You think there’s more to this?”

“If there is, it’s targeted at me. It has nothing to do with you.”

Cora dragged Natalie away once again.

After they got into the car, Cora didn’t explode with rage. Instead, she said calmly, “Natalie, I see you’ve really grown up. You think you’re independent to do whatever you want.”

“You still think I’m a child, don’t you? I have the DNA report. Cora Lowell, you can’t fool me. You may not believe it, but I do!”

“Who helped you with that report? How could you pull that off on your own?”

“Joseph did.”

“I knew it! Fine. Since the two of you have become so close, there’s no point in keeping you apart. From now on, you’re moving back into this house. Whatever games you two are playing, you’ll play them right under my nose. No more secrets.”

Cora didn't make a scene; she simply brought Natalie back to the villa.

Cora took the DNA report from Natalie and slammed it down in front of Joseph. "Joe, what's going on?"

"Aren't you the one who owes me an explanation? I don't care who initiated the affair. I'm more than happy to let you two be together," Joseph replied calmly.

"You liar! You tried so hard to get a divorce. Let me be clear that it's not happening!" Cora gave Joseph a final warning before retreating into her study.

"Joe, what do I do now?" Natalie asked Joseph after Cora left.

"Let's wait. Isn't Frank already running the DNA tests with you? These things take time. Just sit tight and wait for good news."

"But Mom refuses to acknowledge the DNA results. Perhaps she and Frank really didn't have an affair? What if Frank isn't my father?"

“And how exactly did you figure that out? If I hadn’t run the tests myself, would you have known that we weren’t blood-related? If you’re that smart, why are you still here?”

“ ... ”

“I told you to wait, so wait. If Frank isn’t the one, don’t lose heart-there are plenty of other candidates. We will definitely find your real father if you wish to. Unless, of course, you’ve decided to stop looking for him and be an illegitimate child.”

“Damn it! I think you’re trying to insult me.”

“You aren’t my lover, and I ain’t your father. Why should I treat you nicely? Give it a rest. If you want to be coddled and loved, go find your real father. I’m not your father. Do you expect me to show you affection?”

“You’re heartless!” Natalie fled to her room when she couldn’t think of a comeback.

When Cora entered Natalie’s room a moment later, she was met with her daughter’s furious glare.

“What did you and your dad talk about?” Cora asked.

“Mr. Ashmore told me he’s going to divorce his wife and marry you. He’d treat me really well and finally be the father I’ve been missing all these years.”

“Are you playing games with me? Since when was Frank your father? Joseph is your father.”

“Joseph isn’t my father. Don’t even talk about him-it makes me sick!”

“Damn it, Natalie! If you weren’t my flesh and blood, I would find a thousand ways to punish you for that poor attitude!”

“Go ahead, Cora. Punish me. I’d definitely find my biological father. You refuse to take responsibility for your actions. You have no right to judge me!”

Cora struck Natalie’s cheek. However, Natalie didn’t flinch. Instead, she offered the other side of her face and yelled, “Go ahead, Cora. Kill me. I’m just an illegitimate child who doesn’t even know her biological father. Do you have any idea what it feels like to be called a bastard at school? You’ll never know what

it’s like. You should just beat me to death!”

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A Man with Nerves of Steel

Cora was furious that she could no longer control Natalie, so she placed her under house arrest. She wanted to reprimand Joseph, but he had become a wildcard. She was powerless against him without

using extreme means.

Helena and Bernard hurried over after learning about Natalie's latest stunt at the Meridian Group.

"Cora, what's happening? Why did Nat go to the Meridian Group again? She's so stubborn. Is there really something going on between you and Frank?" Bernard asked.

"Dad, don't cause more trouble. There is absolutely nothing between Frank and me. Even if he takes a sample from Nat for a DNA test, it won't yield any results."

Cora's head was spinning. Her parents were demanding answers, and she knew others would surely start calling to ask as well. She had to waste her breath explaining to everyone else.

"DNA test? Cora, based on your theory earlier, would you still believe the validity of the DNA test?" Bernard countered.

"Well..." Cora was lost for words. After questioning Joseph's DNA test results and calling it

pseudoscience, she was now relying on that same method to disprove Natalie's connection to Frank. It

was an ironic situation.

"Cora, are you keeping something from me? This might be a personal issue for you and Joseph, but if it becomes a problem for the Lowell family, you don't have to face it alone. You must be clear of the severity and urgency of the issue," Bernard explained.

"I haven't shot myself in the foot yet."

"How about Joseph? You said he told Nat to head there. What exactly is he up to?"

“He’s in the study. You can ask him yourself. But please, speak to him calmly. Don’t get worked up or start a fight,” Cora said before knocking on the door. Inside, she found Joseph studying a video recording -it was still a bloody scene.

“Joe, my father is here. He wants to talk to you. Pause your work for a moment.”

Bernard walked in and saw Joseph acting as if nothing were wrong. He wanted nothing more than to smash his fist right into the man’s jaw. “Joseph, do you have any idea what you’re doing?”

Joseph replied, “I’m watching a recording of a craniotomy. Severe strokes require this kind of surgery to clear out blood clots. It isn’t a pretty sight. You won’t like what I have to say, but you should stop losing your temper and remember to take care of your health. Otherwise, this is the fate that awaits you if you have a stroke.” 1

“Joe, my father isn’t talking about this video. He’s referring to how you instigated Natalie. Explain to him why you made her go to the Meridian Group.” Cora knew that Joseph was playing dumb.

“I get a medical checkup every month. Your curses won’t work on me.” Honest advice fell on deaf ears as

+15 Bonus

Bernard didn’t care about Joseph’s good intentions.

“Natalie went there of her own accord. She knew better than anyone that she isn’t my daughter. In her quest to find her biological father, she won’t stop at Frank; she’ll investigate every man you’ve ever been close to who fits the age range. The root of this problem isn’t me, and it isn’t Natalie. It’s you, Cora!

“Since your father is here and there are no outsiders present, why don’t you just come clean? If you keep hiding the truth, you will only end up hurting your parents, the children, and this family.”

Cora warned, “Joseph, don’t push it! You know exactly whose daughter Natalie is-she’s yours! You’ve been slandering and insulting me. No matter how much I love or indulge you, there is a limit to my patience. Stop testing me, unless you’re ready to reach a point of no return.”

Joseph said coolly, “I am simply laying out the facts, but you two resort to bullying and intimidating me. How can we communicate like this? I’m a nobody, a failure-you can deal with me however you want and silence me. However, can you silence the rest of the world?”

“Are you trying to drive me to my grave? You have betrayed my love. Sooner or later, karma will find you. And when it does, you will regret this!” Cora snapped before storming out.

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