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Hannah remained concerned, asking, "So what was your brother like overseas?"

Grace shrugged.

"I could only catch up with him over the phone now and then, so I can't really say what he was like while he was in school."

Leaning her chin on her palm, Grace said, "He was probably more light-hearted and sociable than he is these days. Definitely less reserved."

After a pause, Grace looked at Hannah and joked, "So, why the interrogation? Planning to marry my brother?"

Hannah's cheeks flushed.

"What? No, it's way too early for that."

Lydia playfully nudged Hannah.

"Oh, come on, you're not fooling anyone! You're clearly into Bryson, acting all shy like that."

"Lydia! Stop teasing me!"

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The three of them erupted into laughter, momentarily setting aside the weighty discussion they'd been having.

The next morning, Hannah rushed down the stairs, heading for work.

Clad in an apron, Grace emerged from the kitchen, plate of poached egg in hand.

"Hannah, breakfast is ready!"

As she hastily slipped on her shoes in the foyer, Hannah responded, "Eat with Lydia, I've got urgent business at the office."

"But..."

Before Grace could complete her sentence, Hannah was out the door.

Left puzzled, Grace said, "Why is she in such a rush?"

The previous project had been a hit, and the faulty equipment stockpiled by the White family had been cleared out.

Upon wrapping up the project, another board meeting was convened.

Dexter drummed his fingers impatiently on the table, frequently glancing at his watch.

“Miss Moore has been a huge asset for us, so we must sit here waiting, huh? Humph!”

Jalen, seated beside him in the conference room, offered a sidelong glance.

“Mr. Schneider, I’ve only just notified Hannah about today’s impromptu meeting. She’s just ten minutes late. Ease up.”

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“Ease up? Me?” Dexter scoffed loudly, “I think she’s the one disrespecting the board!”

Just then, the secretary opened the door to reveal Hannah. She shot Dexter an icy look, saying, “If you don’t want to be in this meeting, feel free to leave.”

Dexter retorted icily, “I have shares in White Group too, you know.

It’s not your place to tell me to leave!”

Hannah settled into the head chair and calmly responded, “Let’s be clear, Mr. Schneider. I own over 20% of this company. If I want you off the board, who’s going to stop me?”

She fixed him with a steely gaze.

“You’re challenging me in my own company. Why not take your shares and wait at home for the dividends?”

Her eyes narrowed menacingly.

“I’d prefer you not to stir tensions among the shareholders.”

Sitting off to the side, Dexter wore an expression of stunned silence.

Another shareholder stepped in, attempting to smooth things over.

“Look, we’re all here for the company’s benefit. Mr. Schneider just has a direct way about him. No offense, Miss Moore.”

Jalen chimed in, “Our last project’s success was largely due to Hannah. Mr. Schneider, your people almost compromised our files.

We’re letting that slide.”

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Face flushed, Dexter snapped, “What are you insinuating? You have no proof. Don’t tarnish my reputation!”

Ignoring him, Hannah addressed the rest of the room.

“We’re looking to secure additional funds for expansion. What do you think of it?”

“I strongly disagree! What right do you have to propose this?” Dexter was quick to challenge her.

“Byrum never talked about raising capital when he led the company. Why should we dilute our ownership?”

Unfazed, Hannah continued, “The Mitchell Group in Valmere is interested in collaborating with us.”

The room erupted in surprised chatter.

“The Mitchell Group in Valmere? They’re expanding their business to Hoijery too? So they’re in talks with the White Group!”

“Miss Moore, you’re amazing. You’re actually in touch with the Mitchell Group.”

“Unbelievable! The Mitchell Group are known for never investing in other companies!”

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Hannah received widespread praise, much to Dexter's frustration.

"Why does she get all the attention? Just because she's a woman?

That doesn't make her competent!"

Jalen rose to his feet, visibly annoyed.

"Mind your words. This is a business partnership. Gender has no place in this discussion."

Undeterred by Jalen, Dexter retorted, "'Byrum had originally picked you to succeed him. But now she's taken the reins while he's laid up in the hospital. Don't you resent her for that?"

He said with newfound audacity, "So she swooped in, snatched shares, and took your directorial seat. Now we're supposed to heed her every command? That was absurd!"

Tensions in the conference room reached a fever pitch.

Just then, the meeting room door swung open abruptly.

"So, are you all willing to hear me out or not? Humph!"

ALL eyes turned toward the entrance.

The secretary wheeled in Byrum, who was supposed to be confined to a hospital bed.

Upon seeing Byrum, Jalen swiftly approached him and said, "Grandfather! You're not fully recovered! Why did you leave the hospital?"

Byrum cleared his throat and, despite his frail appearance, said in a measured tone, "If I hadn't shown up, would you youngsters have been able to handle matters?"

He glanced at Hannah, his eyes softening but his voice icy.

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“It looks like it’s too soon to hand over the company to you.”

Hannah stepped back, her head bowed in silence.

Dexter, upon seeing Byrum, suddenly lost his bravado. He shifted his eyes guiltily and sat down.

Byrum fixed his gaze on Dexter.

“It seems you’re unhappy with my granddaughter. If you have any grievances, air them now. If she’s truly unfit, we can remove her as chairwoman.”

The room fell into an eerie quiet. Byrum’s composed voice held everyone mute.

Noting the silence, Byrum scoffed, “You all seemed quite vocal before my arrival. I may be ill, but I’m not dead. Speak up!”

Suddenly raising his voice, Byrum continued, “You dared to openly challenge the White Group’s decisions. Are you hoping to dismantle the company? Explain yourselves!”

Grimacing, Dexter stood up cautiously.

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“Byrum, you know I didn’t mean it that way. It’s just this girl...”

“What do you mean?”

Byrum cut him off, piercing him with his steely gaze.

“Has she made a mistake some way? Or did her choices somehow harm your personal interests? Tell me!”

Dexter's expression shifted in an instant, yet he refrained from clashing with Byrum. Instead, he quipped, "What personal interests do us minor shareholders really have in all this?"

Byrum's eyes moved frostily over everyone gathered, declaring, "Hannah Moore will officially take on the role of Chairman for White Group!"

Caught off guard, Hannah stood next to him, momentarily at a loss for words.

"Anyone who challenges her authority in the future is challenging my judgment!"

Byrum's icy tone filled the room, effectively muting all present.

Even Dexter, with his sour demeanor, chose not to further contest the matter.

The meeting wrapped up without a hitch. Jalen guided Byrum from the conference room.

Walking quietly beside the two men was Hannah.

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Out of nowhere, Byrum said, "I'm aware of recent events. Make time to visit home. The younger generation of the White family has numerous misconceptions about you. I'll straighten things out."

After a prolonged silence, Hannah finally said, "Grandpa, as soon as your health improves, the Chairmanship should go to..."

"Unhappy with your role at White Group, are you?"

Seated in his wheelchair, Byrum observed Hannah and said, "The past is gone. Your mother is no longer with us. Do you still harbor resentment towards me?"

"Grandpa, if she truly resented you, why would she assist the White family during our darkest hour?" Jalen interjected on Hannah's behalf.

“Before Hannah’s arrival, the company was in disarray. Uncle Bryan... well, he never took an interest in corporate affairs. I’m not suited for it, as you know.”

Byrum lifted his hand.

“Fine, I get your point.”

Then, turning to Hannah, he added, “You should consider moving back to the ancestral house. It’s your home, after all.”

Hannah gave a gentle shake of her head.

“Thank you, Grandpa. But I’ve made a home in Hoijery and I’m used to my independent lifestyle.”

Though Byrum had been out of commission for a while, he’d learned from Jalen about her relationship with Bryson upon regaining consciousness.

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“Who you choose to be with is not my concern,” Byrum stated gravely.

“The Mitchell family, particularly Franco Mitchell, didn’t amass their wealth honorably. They’re all shrewd and scheming. Watch your back.”

“I understand, Grandpa.” Hannah lightly pressed her lips together.

“I’ve got it under control.”

After bidding farewell to Byrum and Jalen, Hannah headed to a nearby eatery, looking forward to a peaceful meal alone.

Just then, her phone buzzed.

“Hello, who is this?”

A voice responded, “Miss Moore, this is Alfredo Stevenson, a friend of Bryson’s Hannah identified Alfredo’s voice and sounded taken aback.

“Mr. Stevenson, is something wrong?”

“Just a bit of news to share.

Alfredo hesitated before continuing, “Ruby Green took her own life while in custody.”

“What?” Shock coursed through Hannah.

“How did she...

Angela’s Library

“In the detention cell, there were sheets. During the dark of night, she twisted one into a rope and hanged herself from the cell door.”

It sounded like Alfredo was lighting a cigarette.

“I shouldn’t really be disclosing this, but she used her own blood to write a message on the sheet that involves you. So, I thought it best to let you know.”

Collecting herself, Hannah finally said, “What did she write?”

“Our officers found that she wrote your name, saying you’re the next target.”

Alfredo quickly reassured her.

“But don’t worry. We’ve looked into her background overseas. Her connections are mostly with foreigners.

There doesn’t seem to be any other powerful influence.”

Hannah touched her forehead, feeling an unsettling sense that Ruby aimed to pull her into the chaos, even from beyond the grave.

When Hannah didn’t reply, Alfredo probed again, “You haven’t offended any dark forces, have you?”

Memories of Muvrand crossed her mind...

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After contemplating, Hannah decided to keep it hidden.

“Mr. Stevenson, you’re free to investigate who I am. I was once with Declan, considered his wife but essentially just a caretaker. Who could I possibly offend?”

Alfredo’s voice was muffled, as if he were speaking through a cigarette.

“Alright. If you ever find yourself in trouble while in Hoijery, don’t hesitate to call me.”

“Thank you, Mr. Stevenson. I will,” she said.

The moment she ended the call, her expression darkened. Before she could even set down her phone, another call buzzed in.

It was Rocco.

Lifting the phone to her ear, Hannah inquired, “What’s the update?”

Any news?”

“Is it just you right now?” Rocco asked from the other side of the call, his voice tinged with a chill.

“I’ve got something to discuss.

Is this a good time?”

Pondering briefly, Hannah replied, “Yeah, I’m alone, outdoors. Is this about Bryson?”

“Yes,”

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Eyes narrowing on the table strewn with photos and documents, Rocco held the phone tightly.

“The Mitchell family isn’t what it appears to be. I visited that apartment you mentioned. Found a bunch of international articles and pictures, mostly featuring Bryson from his school years. These documents indicate that he’d already been establishing enterprises for the Mitchell family overseas.”

Unfazed, Hannah said, “Bryson did mention to me that he had some overseas ventures even before rejoining the Mitchell family.”

“So you know about the shady businesses he was entangled in overseas?”

“What?”

Hannah was caught off guard, momentarily speechless.

Sensing her surprise, Rocco concluded she didn’t know.

“I can’t send this stuff over the internet. It’d be risky if Bryson found them on your digital devices.”

Hearing her silence, Rocco suspected she was wavering.

“These documents might not be wholly accurate, but I’d strongly suggest you dig deeper into Bryson. This is a serious issue.”

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“I get it. Just concentrate on your studies in Valmere. I’ll return when I can.”

Taking a brief pause, Hannah added, “Be sure to keep all that information secure and confidential.”

“Understood.” Rocco’s face remained impassive.

“Enough with the warnings. Just be cautious around him.”

After disconnecting the call, Hannah was awash in conflicted emotions.

She was torn between trusting Bryson and acknowledging that Rocco wouldn't make false claims.

Gripping her phone, she resolved to visit Muvrand at her earliest opportunity, aiming to unearth some of Bryson's history.

Returning to the villa after a hectic day, she found it empty as Grace and Lydia were out.

Seated in the living room, Hannah skimmed through recent corporate updates. Now that Byrum was back on his feet, he needed to catch up on the latest figures.

Just then, the front door swung open, and in walked Bryson, looking a bit drained and carrying a takeout container.

"Hannah."

A N G E L A ' s L I B R A R Y

Hannah lifted her gaze, locking eyes with Bryson's grin.

"I picked these up after our meeting. Spotted a noodles stand near the office that was still open and thought you might Like some. Did you have dinner already?"

Hannah had lost her appetite earlier that day when she received a call from Rocco. She had given her meal to a coworker and hadn't eaten since.

Setting the bowl of hot noodles on the coffee table, Bryson shrugged off his jacket.

"Give it a try."

She closed her laptop and popped open the container of food. The inviting scent filled the air, reminding her of how hungry she actually was.

Grabbing a spoon and fork, she twirled a noodle around her utensil, taking a bite along with the savory beef broth. She nodded in approval.

“This is delicious.”

Bryson’s smile warmed at her commendation.

“I’m happy you enjoy it.”

As she continued to eat, Hannah’s eyes rested on the bowl of noodles before her.

“By the way, Bryson, where did you go to college?”

“Why the sudden curiosity about my education?”

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Hannah studied Bryson’s face, attempting to read any hidden cues.

Unfazed, Bryson simply looked back at her with a sincere gaze.

Hannah concocted a quick excuse.

“I studied overseas too and realized I never asked where you graduated from.”

“I went to the Woolwich University in Newfort. My grades weren’t stellar, so I opted for engineering.”

Woolwich University? A globally respected institution, and he thought his grades weren’t up to par?

Internally, Hannah arched an eyebrow.

A N G E L A ‘ s L I B R A R Y

“You must’ve done fairly well.

I finished medical school on a scholarship, and it wasn’t from a top -tier university.”

Bryson sensed that Hannah was acting unusually this evening. Her conversational choices seemed awkward.

He acknowledged her words with a noncommittal hum, choosing not to voice his reservations.

Hannah switched topics.

“You’ve mentioned owning businesses overseas.

What did your company originally focus on?”

“We initially dealt with finance, but later expanded into medical equipment. The early returns have been promising,” Bryson replied.

After speaking, he furrowed his brow and looked at Hannah, concern tingeing his eyes.

“You seem off tonight. Why all these questions about the past?”

Hannah took another bite of her noodles before speaking.

“The White Group is on the mend, but we’re not back to our former glory. I’m considering international ventures. Although partnering with the Mitchell Group is a good step, I’m also contemplating other opportunities, should they present themselves.”

Bryson took Hannah’s words at face value, saying, “If it helps, I can reach out to a few international firms for you.”

“Sounds good.” Clearly pleased, Hannah nodded.

“Excellent. Jalen’s been considering studying abroad, so this could be a great stepping stone for him.”

Seeing her enthusiasm, Bryson finally smiled, “Work never stops, but it’s getting late. You should get some sleep.

Taking his advice, Hannah closed her laptop and nodded.

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“You should get some rest too. I’ll go upstairs first.”

As she stood and walked past Bryson, her eyes met his for a moment, filled with a hint of uncertainty, before she headed upstairs.

The next day, upon Hannah's arrival at the office, chaos reigned in Duncan's team.

"Since we're down a person, it's time to hire a new one, isn't it?"

Patting the girl beside him on the shoulder, Duncan introduced her.

"This is Alvera O'Brien, a recent graduate with a finance degree.

She's now an official part of our team."

The HR representative looked incensed, practically fuming.

"Duncan!

Did you even bother with company protocol before making this hire?"

Duncan, ever dismissive of HR, retorted, "You handle recruitment, right? Well, I've recruited. Just prepare the paperwork for her to sign. Why make it so difficult?"

The HR representative was so furious she nearly called him an idiot.

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Just then, Hannah entered the scene, spotting the HR representative.

"What's going on here?"

Relieved at seeing Hannah, the HR representative blurted, "Miss Moore!

Duncan has bypassed HR and wants to sign a contract without any approval."

Hannah gave Duncan an icy stare. Before she could speak, Duncan quickly shifted gears.

“Miss Moore, we’re understaffed this month. I thought she was promising, so I brought her in.”

The so-called “promising” candidate that Duncan spoke of had been surveying the office with keen interest.

Hannah eyed her briefly.

“What are your qualifications?”

Alvera quickly replied, “I hold a finance degree and have organized numerous campus events. I’m here to apply for the Financial Director role.”

As soon as she finished, an uneasy silence filled the room.

A recent finance grad, aiming to join the White Group as a Financial Director.

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Everyone shared the same thought.

Either she was delusional or they were.

“Financial Director?”

With a sly arch of her brows, Hannah addressed Duncan.

“Mr. Hanson, you claimed your department is understaffed. So why is she applying for Financial Director?”

Cornered, Duncan discreetly tugged at Alvera’s sleeve and murmured, “Don’t make a scene.”

He then beamed at Hannah.

“Miss Moore, young people need more experience. A few years in our department could pave the way for her promotion.”

Angela's Library

Sensing ulterior motives, Hannah chose not to press Duncan. Instead, she turned to the HR representative beside him.

“Rosy, would you mind outlining the starting salary and perks for a position in the project department to her?”

Unmoved, Rosy declared, “The starting salary for recent graduates is four thousand, with a 10% bonus per completed project. The better the project's execution, the larger the bonus.”

Alvera's brow furrowed.

“I was told the starting salary was ten thousand, so why...”

She was interrupted by a nudge from Duncan and hesitantly concluded, “Isn't this salary a bit underwhelming?”

With a dismissive smile, Hannah swept her gaze over Duncan.

“If you find it insufficient, you're welcome to leave. Rosy, would you kindly escort them out?”

Without another glance, Hannah retreated into her office.

As she settled in, she noticed Duncan discreetly guiding Alvera to sign a contract. Her eyes darkened imperceptibly.

Finally getting a breather after a hectic morning, Hannah leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes for a moment.

Her phone buzzed. It was a call from Bryson.

“Hello?”

“An upcoming construction site on the east side of Hoi Jerry looks promising. Interested in venturing in real estate?”

Hannah offered a serene smile, eyes still closed.

“You know, the White Group isn’t typically involved in such businesses.”