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"Listen." Instead of blaming Ben, Zachary warned. "I don't want someone to love me out of sympathy. A relationship built upon sympathy is meaningless, and I don't need it!"

Ben kneeled before him on one knee and begged for his forgiveness. "I'm sorry, Mr. Nacht. Please forgive me."

"All my life as a businessman, I've been through hell, but nothing had ever taken me down. Even now I'm on the brink of death, I'm not afraid of dying, because I've lived my whole life with dignity. So please don't take the last shred of dignity away from me. You hear me?" Zachary said in a calm but sorrowful voice.

"Got it." Ben kept his head down. Tears began to well up in his eyes.

It must have taken this egoistic man a lot of courage to admit how vulnerable he was at this point. Zachary must have trusted Ben wholeheartedly to make that remark.

He hoped Ben could understand him and stop doing anything that would upset him further.

"All right." Zachary let out a deep sigh. "You may go."

"I'm so sorry..." Ben apologized in a hoarse voice and left the room.

After a final puff at his last cigarette, Zachary returned to his bed. He was a little worn out, and his back hurt. Suddenly, he recalled how weak Dr. Felch was before he passed away.

Right now, he felt just as weak and sickly.

I can't sleep. I got to stay awake!

Zachary had to remind himself to stay awake as he was afraid he would pass away in his sleep.

After fighting off sleepiness for some time, he gave in and dozed off.

In his dream, countless demons grabbed him from below as if they were trying to pull him into the abyss.

He struggled to escape but to no avail. His body was so stiff that he did not have any energy to fight back.

All of a sudden, he heard Henry's voice from afar. "Stay strong, Zachary. You cannot fall. The entire Nacht family depends on you."

All these years, he had pushed himself beyond his limits, but at this point, he could not take it anymore.

"How are you feeling? Are you tired? Come, take a break." His father's gentle voice emerged from the other side.

Zachary knew his father had never cared about power or prestige. All his father ever wanted was for him to be happy.

Yet, in reality, Zachary never had the chance to experience such love and care, as his father passed away at a young age.

Growing up, Zachary had no choice but to live up to Henry's expectations and fulfill all the responsibilities as a Nacht.

"Honey, come to Mommy. Come here..." His mother's compassionate voice emerged next.

The love and care his parents showered upon him in his dream had comforted him for a bit. How he wished he could leave everything behind and not have a care in the world.

But soon, all sorts of voices echoed in his ear. "You mustn't fall, Mr. Nacht! Divine Corporation needs you, and Nacht Group needs you! The Nacht family cannot survive without you!"

"Our livelihood depends on you, Mr. Nacht. Our lives are in your hands!"

Once again, these voices reminded him of all the responsibilities he had to shoulder.

Zachary dared not put his guard down. He had no choice but to persevere.

In his dream, he also saw the innocent smile on his children's faces. "Daddy! Daddy!"

Zachary felt much better after seeing their adorable faces and hearing their vibrant voices.

A pair of dainty hands gently tapped on his. The person then whispered in his ear, "Don't worry, I'm here with you. I'll be with you till the end of time."

Charlotte...

What Charlotte said in his dream gave him hope.

He grabbed her hands and tried to crawl up from the ground. Yet, all of a sudden, she pulled her hands away and shoved him into the abyss.

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Zachary was jolted awake from the nightmare. His eyes were wide open as he had not recovered from the shock.

His mind turned blank when the dream ended, but the fear continued to haunt him even after he had woken up.

It took him a while to pull himself together. He placed his palm on his forehead, trying to regain his composure.

He looked out of the window and realized it was already the next morning.

The sky was drizzling, and he could hear car noises from a distance.

Zachary looked at the clock and noticed it was only seven in the morning. He wanted to go back to sleep, but something seemed to have triggered him, causing him to open his eyes.

He could see now.

In fact, his vision was so clear that he could see everything around him.

Unlike how weak and stiff his body was last night, he felt energetic today.

False alarm, I see...

I don't think I'll die so soon. At least not now. Thank God!

Zachary took a deep breath and got up from his bed. He must not waste any time as he had to accomplish as many plans as possible while he still could.

"Daddy, Daddy!" Robbie, Jamie, and Ellie barged into his room.

"Hey. Welcome home." Zachary bent down and extended his arms to embrace them.

While Jamie and Ellie ran up to Zachary and hugged him, Robbie observed him from a distance with knitted brows.

"It's time to go to school now." Zachary rubbed Jamie and Ellie's head. "You're half a semester behind, so you must work harder to catch up!"

"Okay, Daddy!" Jamie and Ellie responded with a nod.

Robbie remained silent. A glint of confusion continued to flash across his eyes.

"What's wrong, Robbie?" Zachary turned to him and asked. "Don't you want to go to school?"

"Don't you remember, Daddy? I'm learning much faster than what the school taught because I have a private tutor," Robbie answered softly.

Zachary reached out his hands and embraced him. "Are you not bored? You should go to school with Jamie and Ellie if you're bored."

Jamie stepped in and said, "We'll go together tomorrow. There'll be a celebration in school tomorrow, and Mommy has given us permission to bring Alpha, Beta, and Gamma with us."

"I'm so excited! I wonder if they'll like our school," Ellie chuckled. "Can they come with us, Daddy?"

"Go ahead, since Mommy has given you the green light." Zachary gave Ellie a peck on her kiss. He then turned to Robbie, "Will you join them?"

"Yes," Robbie replied. He then turned to Jamie and Ellie, "You two should better get going."

"Oh, no. We're going to be late soon!" Jamie took a glance at his watch. "Mr. Marino, prepare the car! I'll go and grab my bag now."

"Wait for me!" Ellie, too, dashed out of the room. Before leaving, she turned around, ran to Zachary, and kissed his cheeks. "Bye, Daddy! Bye Robbie!"

"Bye, Ellie." Robbie waved at her.

"Have you taken your breakfast?" Zachary asked.

"Yes, at Mommy's place..." The two little ones put on their bags and scurried to the car.

After sending Jamie and Ellie off, Zachary squatted down and rubbed Robbie's head gently. "You don't look happy. Is everything okay?"

"Are you sick, Daddy?" Robbie asked. "You couldn't see anything last night, right? You made up a story because you couldn't read the words in the book. Are you sick? Tell me now." Tears started rolling down his cheeks.

Zachary looked at Robbie and froze right there. So that's what's bothering my poor child. He doesn't deserve to go through this. He's only six years old...

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The boy had easily seen through something that none of the adults had noticed.

On top of that, he even kept it to himself and played along so that no one would discover the truth about his father's condition.

Only after everyone had left did he finally bring up his worries.

My poor boy, he must have suffered a lot.

"You silly boy." Zachary put on a relaxed front despite the stabbing pain in his chest. With a smile, he said to Robbie, "Look at me. Aren't I just fine? I can see your charming little face, and I can also see your light blue shirt and navy knitted vest. You look like a gentleman! What made you think there's something wrong with my eyes?"

"Are you really okay?" Robbie waved a hand in front of his father's face.

"I'm fine. Really."

Suppressing his heartache, Zachary took Robbie's hand and pulled the boy into an embrace.

"You're only six years old, Robbie. You should be as carefree as Jamie and Ellie are, living your life without any worries. Leave the important matters to the adults."

Robbie choked up. "I know that, but I just can't stop myself from overthinking. Sometimes, I also feel that being too smart isn't a good thing. It's like I understand everything that's happening, but there's nothing I can do."

Zachary held his son even more tightly. In truth, he used to feel the same way when he was young.

As a child, he saw through everything that happened between the adults around him.

Yet, he did not have the power to protect his loved ones.

It would have been better not knowing anything and simply growing up like every other naïve child.

Unfortunately, just like Robbie, the young Zachary could not stop worrying.

Such conflicting feelings were utterly tormenting.

"I'll protect you no matter what happens, Robbie," Zachary said gently while patting the child on the back. "You don't have to be afraid of anything as long as I'm with you. Don't worry about anything. Just grow up happily like every other kid, okay?"

Robbie wanted to agree, but he knew he could not do as asked.

"All right, lad, I have some sorting out to do. Mr. Spencer's coming over in a while. Why don't you go play in the garden?" Zachary coaxed.

"I have to deal with some matters, so I'll be in my study." Robbie gazed at him. "If something comes up, could you let me know? Maybe I can be of help."

"You've already been a great help. Have you forgotten? Divine Corporation's managed to come up with several new tech products thanks to you." Zachary stroked the boy's head.

"I meant—" Before Robbie could say anything more, a knock sounded at the door, followed by Ben's voice. "Mr. Nacht! Mr. Spencer has arrived."

"Lead him to the dining room. I'll be right there to have breakfast with him," replied Zachary.

"Yes, Sir." Ben headed downstairs.

"Well, I'll be going now." Robbie gave Zachary a hug before turning to leave.

Zachary's chest tightened as he watched his son walk away, albeit feeling assured about having a successor at the same time.

At least I know that when I'm gone one day, Nacht Group will be safe in his hands. Still, someone's going to have to call the shots before that day comes.

At that thought, Zachary grew solemn. I have to be extra prepared. If Charlotte doesn't come back, I need to keep Nacht Group alive for at least twelve more years until Robbie turns eighteen. That's still a long way to go. I'll have to lay all the foundations out before that.

Then, he quickly washed up, changed his clothes, and headed downstairs to meet Spencer.

Meanwhile, Robbie sat in front of his computer in the study, searching for Danrique's whereabouts.

He had inadvertently found out from Marino that Zachary was looking for someone named Francesco, who was Danrique's close friend. I have to find Uncle Dan first.

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Spencer had been recuperating at Garden Villa ever since Henry's passing and would seldom leave the place unless Zachary summoned him.

When Zachary underwent treatment for those two months, he occasionally took charge.

Although he had no idea what happened to Zachary, he figured the latter had run into some problems.

Since Zachary's return, he had been waiting for the young man to contact him.

After receiving Ben's phone call the night before, Spencer could not sleep a wink, for he could tell that something big was about to happen. That was why he rushed over first thing the next morning.

Coincidentally, he bumped into the three children who had just come back from Northridge and chatted with them for a while. The sight of them zooming upstairs to look for their father made him smile.

Mr. Henry used to love the kids most when he was still around. It was like he saw a glimpse of hope in his life along with the Nacht family's future whenever he met them.

Soon after, he quickly comforted himself. No, stop thinking such thoughts. Mr. Zachary's just fine, and so are the Nachts. Everything's perfectly fine.

"Mr. Spencer," greeted Zachary as he walked downstairs in a set of comfortable loungewear.

"Mr. Zachary," Spencer responded, rising to his feet. However, when he noticed how thin the man had become, he furrowed his brows. "It's only been about two months since we last met; what happened to you?"

"My diet plan was a success," Zachary joked.

Spencer could not bring himself to laugh, raising the corner of his lips ever so slightly. "I just met the children. They've grown up so much. Such adorable little ones."

"Indeed. They grow up so fast."

As soon as Zachary took his seat, Hanna summoned the housemaids to serve breakfast.

Spencer stared at him intently. "I met Johann a few days ago. He told me you'd been back at work for the past two weeks. How are you? Are you feeling well?"

"I should be asking you that instead." Zachary smiled faintly. "You're not young anymore, so you should take extra care of your health."

"I'm doing pretty swell since I've been recuperating for a long time. My leg's gotten much better now." Spencer chuckled. "You, on the other hand, have lost quite a lot of weight."

Zachary did not respond and drank his coffee in silence.

Just then, Hanna and the maids returned with breakfast. "Let's eat, Mr. Spencer. We'll have a talk in the study later," he proposed.

"All right." Spencer's expression turned grim, and he had lost all his appetite.

The two shared a simple breakfast before heading to the study. By then, Hanna had already prepared them some tea and fruits. At the sight of their arrival, she excused herself and left.

Ben wheeled Spencer into the room and stood next to him.

A stack of papers was placed on the coffee table. Passing them to Spencer, Zachary said, "Have a look at these."

"What are these?" Spencer took the documents. Then, his eyes widened in shock as he glanced at them. "What is the meaning of this, Mr. Zachary?"

"I've spoken to your doctor. You're in great health, and you'll live to see another decade as long as nothing major happens to you."

Zachary took a sip of his coffee before continuing, "That's why I've gotten Mr. Williams to draw up a will for me. In the event that something happens to me, you will have the guardianship of my three children. I want you to look after them well."

"Mr. Zachary..." Spencer panicked, his hands beginning to tremble. "What on earth is happening? Don't scare me like this."

"Nothing," Zachary answered with a faint smile, feigning nonchalance. "This is just a backup plan."

"A backup plan? What for?" Spencer demanded agitatedly. "You're still so young, and Nacht Group's fate rests on your shoulders! You can't go yet..."

While speaking, the older man's breathing grew erratic, and Ben quickly served him his medication.

"What the hell is going on here?" Not daring to lose his temper at Zachary, Spencer proceeded to slap Ben on the back of his head. "You'd better explain everything to me loud and clear."