

Chapter 1

The fall weather in New York City was beautiful today. The light breeze pricked my skin as I sat on a wooden bench. I was in a park that was just a block away from my apartment, staring into nothing in particular. The leaves had fallen onto the ground as the trees were getting ready for winter.

I had been trying to steal my thoughts away from what had happened the past week. A very well-respected man like Wilson Alexander didn't deserve this. He was my boss and at the same time, he was already like my father. I had worked for him as his assistant for the past three years. Never had I encountered a hard time working for him. He was always so cheery and full of life. He might have lost his temper at times but he had never failed to apologize right after he cooled down. I could never blame him though; he was, after all, the CEO of Alexander Corporation. The pressure from running a business successfully was his responsibility.

Alexander Corporation was one of the biggest companies in the hotel industry. They had several hotels all around the world with exceptional building structures and first-class services. I had never been to any of them except for the one

that was located here in New York. The place was beyond spectacular if you asked me.

I was never the type to own or live much in luxury since my parents had left me at the age of sixteen, but I lived an ordinary life during my childhood days. We didn't have much but I was contented because I had my own perfect family. We had each other. We were happy.

After my parents were gone, I stayed with my grandmother until I graduated from high school. As soon as graduation was done, I packed all of my things to find a job opportunity in New York. Since I was already of legal age then, I decided to support myself from then on. And now at twenty-three years old, I could afford to live on my own. I still visited my grandmother from time to time, especially during the holidays. Although I knew that I shouldn't have left her behind since she was the only family I had, I couldn't live off of my grandmother for the rest of my life.

Wilson Alexander found me three years ago. It was around a year and a half after I left for New York City. That day, I woke up early to dress into corporate attire. I wanted a change of scenery from the waiting tables. So, I decided to submit applications to several companies that needed a rank and file employee.

Alexander Corporation was my fifth stop that day. I remembered that my feet were beginning to hurt after walking in heels all morning trying to impress everyone. I also remembered smiling too much, my cheeks aching from greeting a lot of people who worked inside the building. I was exhausted.

There was no way these people were going to hire me, I thought sourly. I was on the verge of giving up but I kept moving forward. I dragged my feet onto the tiled floor without really looking to where I was going until I bumped into someone.

The force made me lose a step and was about to fall when I suddenly felt strong hands that held both of my arms to steady myself.

"Oh god, I'm so sorry!" I practically yelled in panic.

Wide-eyed, I tried composing myself and stepped back from the person that I just bumped into. I looked up and saw those golden eyes looking at me in amusement.

I heard him chuckle and said, "Woah there, you should watch where you're going and maybe try to relax. You look disheveled."

"I'm so sorry, sir. I wasn't paying attention to where I'm going," I said nervously.

He then smiled warmly at me. "Well, may I ask what a pretty girl like you is doing here inside my building?"

Did he just say that this was his building?

I gulped. "Excuse me?"

"What's your business here in Alexander Corporation?"

"I-I just submitted my resume at Human Resources."

He nodded in understanding. He then stared at me intently for a few seconds before he said, "You have no idea who I am, do you?" He paused as he waited for me to reply. When I didn't answer, he grinned at me. "Wilson Alexander, owner, and CEO of this building. It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss...?" He extended his hand to offer a handshake. I was pretty surprised at how he didn't sound arrogant when he introduced himself. I just stared at him awkwardly and then came into the realization that he wanted to shake my hand.

I then began to stutter again. "O-oh...um..." I laughed at my silliness since I wasn't usually this nervous. "Olivia. My name's Olivia Bailey." I formally shook his hand and I knew that my hands began to feel sweaty. I had been a nervous wreck in front of the CEO of Alexander Corporation. It was not a good first impression.

"Such a pretty name." He smiled warmly then an unexpected question escaped from his lips. "I'm headed out

for lunch. Care to join me? I have a proposition that might interest you."

We just met and he immediately wanted to have lunch together? I didn't even know this man. Even if he was interested in me, I wasn't the type to date older men. When I meant older men, like grandpa old. I wasn't going to lie; he looked good for his age. How he dressed in a well-tailored suit made him look pristine. He had hazel eyes that were wrinkling from the sides. His silvering hair was noticeable, giving away the fact that he was probably around his fifties.

I was silent for a while, contemplating if this was a good idea. Why would he even suggest that we have lunch together? What was so special about me? I was just an ordinary woman with a job experience that was not worth bragging about.

I heard him chuckle all of a sudden. I looked up and met his warm gaze. "If you're thinking that I'm asking you out to a lunch date then you're wrong. I'm interested in the potential that I see in you right now. I might offer you a position here in this company. Are you up for a lunch interview?"

Was he serious?

He was willing to give me a job that easily?

"Really?" I couldn't contain the excitement that bubbled inside of me but I had to hold it in until after I finished lunch with Mr. Alexander. I couldn't believe my luck. I never thought that this kind of opportunity could happen to me. I was still a bit wary about all of this but it might turn my life around for the better. We would just have to see.

He smiled at me again. "Yes. I'm not usually this informal but I have a different feeling about you. Have you decided if you're joining me for lunch?"

I nodded silently. He then asked, "Shall we?"

He gestured his hand for me to go first. I started to walk as he fell into step with me. I looked up and smiled at him brightly. "Thank you, Mr. Alexander."

"Please. Call me Wilson."

Chapter 2

For the past year, I had been taking care of Wilson. Even though I was nothing more than just his personal assistant, he was like family to me. I normally spent my time in his house after work, taking care of his needs. He would always scold me that he didn't need my assistance since his nurse that was looking after him would take care of everything.

My stubborn self wouldn't take no for an answer. He would just roll his eyes at me while I don a cheeky grin. I knew that the old man loved that I cared for him. He just didn't show it. He had helped me so much and this was my way of giving everything back. It was the least I could do to help him out of his misery.

I knew his health was deteriorating but he never mentioned calling his family over. I tried to convince him to contact them but he just brushed me off every time I suggested it. It was as if he didn't want to hear any of it. I remembered him telling me that he had not contacted them for years. He had a son who was living with his ex-wife back in England. Deborah Alexander was his wife until she left him around 20 years ago, hating Wilson for being a workaholic. It

was true though; he had an empire to run. However, he was too immersed in working his ass off that he never had time for his family anymore which resulted in a gap that made them more detached from one another. Deborah couldn't handle his way of life which made her pack her bags and leave with their only son, Pierce Alexander.

"Come on, Wilson. Why wouldn't you let me contact your family? They need to know," I begged. I tried my best to persuade him into giving them a call.

"I already told you. They don't care about me anymore so just drop it," he muttered in annoyance.

Instead of arguing with him, my face softened as I tried to understand why he was beating himself when in fact he didn't even know if it was true.

"I don't believe that," I whispered. "I could feel that she still cares for you. You just have to reach out and try."

"I can't let them know. If I get better, then I would give them a call. Does that sound good enough?"

I shook my head in defeat. I knew I was getting nothing out of this argument. He was too stubborn for his own good. "Alright, you win. But I'm not letting go of this conversation."

He just gave me a weak grin and let the conversation drop. "Okay, time for bed old man. I'll be back tomorrow and

annoy you with my caring ways." I gave him a smirk as I kissed him lightly on his forehead. I knew that it irked him but he secretly loved it.

Wilson was diagnosed with a rare type of heart disease last year. He never thought that the pain he had been experiencing on his chest was serious until I forced him to get an appointment with a doctor. We found out that his heart was weakening, and if he kept on working and stressing himself out, then it was not good for him. He could eventually die.

I was scared for him, like really scared.

After finding out about his condition, he took it as if nothing was wrong with him. I was afraid to see that it clearly didn't affect him. He still forced himself to show up to work and busied himself managing everything. I tried warning him about his heart but he would just dismiss me from his office. He never wanted to hear any of it.

"Olivia, I'm fine," he shot back for like the hundredth time that day. I made him take his medication as I kept asking him if he was feeling okay. I couldn't help it. I cared for the man like he was my father. I didn't want to lose him.

"You're not. I know I'm not your biological daughter but I don't want to lose you too!" I screamed in exasperation. He

knew I was talking about my parents. He needed to know someone cared for him and that he didn't have to suffer alone. He had me.

The room suddenly became eerily silent from my outburst. Tears were trying to escape but I held it all back. I didn't want to breakdown in front of Wilson. This wasn't the right place since we were still in his office.

His eyes softened and I could tell that he was ashamed that he didn't see me like family. I couldn't help but admit that I didn't have any boundaries. I knew I was merely his personal assistant. But, I happened to care deeply for him ever since I started working for him.

He broke the silence as he said my name softly, "Olivia..."

"...how could you care so much?" he asked after a minute had passed, looking fragile and broken.

"You have no idea how you made want to get up every morning and keep fighting. I care because you deserve it. You really don't give credit to yourself on how much you have helped a lot of people," I answered solemnly.

He shook his head. "I couldn't even help myself." He smiled bitterly as he turned around to look outside his window. "Because of me, my family left."

"There's still time! You can't close a book without even trying to read it until the end."

"Look, I'm sorry. You're not going to lose me any time soon. I wish to live longer. I promise." He tried to smile sincerely but right then I knew he was lying.

I promise – these words echoed through my ear every single day ever since he said them as I didn't believe him one bit. He kept on exerting himself to keep Alexander Corporation running smoothly.

He eventually broke that promise.

Two weeks after that argument inside his office, he died from heart failure while he was asleep. Wilson was only sixty-four years old when he died. I didn't even get the chance to say goodbye.

The last moment I had with him was when he asked me for a Chinese take-out. I rushed into China town after work and bought his favorites, shrimp dumplings, and Kung Pao chicken. He was sitting comfortably in the living room when I arrived. The old man was concentrated on watching the news on TV.

"Time for dinner." I entered and grinned at him, holding up the paper bag full of food. He looked up and his crinkly eyes sparkled when he saw that I bought what he asked for.

"This is the last time I'm buying you these. You know this isn't good for you."

He chuckled lightly and grabbed the bag from me. "Can't a man have his last meal in peace?" he jested.

I frowned at his joke. It didn't amuse me one bit. He noticed my expression had changed and he just laughed awkwardly, trying to cover up what he just said.

"Oh don't look at me like that. I was joking," he said cautiously.

"It's not funny." I gritted my teeth.

He just smiled and opened the bag as he started digging around for his meal. "I really appreciate everything you've done, Olivia."

I sighed as I tried to hide that I was still upset. I smiled up at him and started arranging all the food on the coffee table.

We ate in silence as we watched some news. I stole a glance at him and saw his face in content. I still couldn't believe how he had managed to have worn this mask that made people think he was happy for years. My mind wandered back to his family. It made me curious about them.

"What's your son like?" I blurted out as I lifted a dumpling with my chopsticks and put it in my mouth in one bite.

He had a thoughtful expression on his face while he thought about his son. "I really haven't seen him since he was just six years old. I heard he was really hardworking and graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Management at Oxford University. He's twenty-six now."

"What does he do now?"

"All I know is that he's working in a financial firm in England. "

"You really never talked to him?" I asked.

"Not after the divorce. No."

I felt sorry for Wilson. He never got the chance to see his son grow up into this amazing guy that so far had my interest. I also wondered why he never tried.

The evening grew late and we just talked about his life. He had shared all the wisdom he had learned over the years in business. He dropped a few pieces of advice that could help me build my career if I ever decided to leave Alexander Corporation. It felt like the talk came from my own father. My father and I never had that kind of talk when I was young since I wasn't exactly of age. It felt nice that I was given a chance to have this kind of parental guidance. Most kids would have probably resented this because they thought they

were already old enough for it. It didn't bother me though, I actually embraced it.

I just didn't presume that it would be our last.