

Steve Kloves sat opposite the old man, who looked way too smug for his own good.

"I hope you are here to accept my offer and not haggle for the sale price again?" Rupert Murdoch mused. "Because honestly, that's beneath a man of your stature, Steve."

"Is it?" Steve shot back. "Then again, you are much older and experienced than me when it comes to business dealings, so you must know better."

Murdoch narrowed his eyes, sensing the slight sarcasm in Steve's voice, but ignored it in favor of addressing the real reason he was there.

"I had given your associates a price for the Fox Entertainment division of \$20 billion for one week. Today is the last day of that deadline. If you walk away today, tomorrow this price will be \$25 billion."

Steve nodded. "Sure, we'll come to that, but before that, there are some issues that I need to discuss with you."

He pulled a folder from his bag and placed it in front of Murdoch.

Murdoch eyed it warily. "What is it?"

"Nothing much, just our due diligence team doing their work. Like they should before any merger. You know how it goes."

Murdoch motioned for Steve to get to the point, so he did.

"As you know, we checked the workings of the entire company, not just the entertainment assets, to see if we were getting in bed with an ethical company or not. The revelations were not flattering for you or News Corp as a whole. Now that we have the full picture, we would not want to acquire a news agency like yours at all."

Murdoch's frown deepened as he picked up the folder and quickly turned the pages.

"Just so we are both on the same page," Steve continued. "Those files in your hands are hard evidence that your reporters at the British paper *News of the World* are still hacking into phones of civilians and high ranking government officials just to get news. That is a big lawsuit waiting to happen the moment this information is leaked. For all we know, it could spiral into something bigger here in the US as well. It may even lead to your termination from the company."

Murdoch looked up sharply. "Are you out of your mind? These files are circumstantial at best. No one can terminate me from my own company. After all, I am the company."

"Maybe," Steve said with a grin. "Just saying it would be a shame if that information mysteriously landed in the hands of, say, Scotland Yard or the FBI. They can do the real digging and determine if there is actual fire behind this smoke, and how circumstantial this evidence is."

Murdoch gritted his teeth before finally saying what Steve wanted to hear all along. "What do you want?"

"I don't want anything," Steve said emphatically. "What do you think I'm here for? To blackmail you? No. That would be beneath a man of my stature."

Steve picked up another folder and pushed it forward. "What I'm saying is that your offer to sell Fox is a little on the higher side for our tastes, and given everything, I don't think we can acquire your studio as things currently are. So here is our counteroffer. Four billion dollars for acquiring all of Marvel's IPs back from you. In addition to that, you will also give us the streaming rights to the entirety of Fox's library."

Rupert Murdoch snatched the paper from Steve and carefully looked over the document.

"You really think that I will sell off just because of this little leverage you seemingly have over me?" he asked with a raised eyebrow. "If you think I have not protected myself from any fallout, you are not as bright as I thought you were."

Steve inclined his head before adding, "True. You could save yourself. But what about the company? *News of the World's* reputation will undoubtedly be destroyed, and so will News Corp's image. So why risk it when I am offering you a very valid price? You and I both know that I could have lowballed you here with the offer. I am not doing that, because I know you have a board of directors and shareholders to answer to as well."

Murdoch pretended to read through the offer, but it did not take a genius to deduce that he was thinking about it seriously.

"Even if I were to accept that," Murdoch continued, "do not forget that Fox is developing Hulu with NBCUniversal. How can I justify selling the rights to you when we have our own streaming platform?"

"How much did you spend on it? One hundred million? Probably less, right?" Steve asked rhetorically. "I am offering you a billion here. Best guess estimate says that the Marvel rights you hold do not exceed three billion. That is why I am offering you four billion, which is a very fair amount for what I'm asking."

Murdoch and Steve exchanged a tense gaze. For a moment, no one spoke until finally, "Okay, I will sell Marvel's adaptation rights and Fox's streaming rights back to you, but the price has to be six billion. If we have to give away our future profits, I have to make this deal sound enticing enough for our present investors. Also, you and Troy will sign an NDA for the things you seemingly know, but shouldn't have."

Steve thought about it before adding, "I can agree with the NDA, but the price is still too high. How about four and a half billion? Any more than that, and I will have to get rights to your other popular franchises as well. How about Planet of the Apes?"

"We cannot do that," Murdoch said, shaking his head. "I will need to compensate Universal and Providence, other investors in Hulu, for breach of contract if Fox backs out. That is why we need a higher amount."

It did not matter to Steve what the final price would be. As per Troy's instructions, he was ready to accept the deal even at six billion, but when the man was willing to agree, why not milk him for all he was worth? The fact that Murdoch was ready to negotiate with him was enough to tell Steve that today was a successful day.

(Break)

Bobby Caron sat across from Sumner Redstone, the de facto owner of Viacom (and thus Paramount and CBS), who looked deep in thought as he read the documents presented to him.

"Are you sure about this?" Redstone asked in confusion. "Because this deal does not sound legit."

"It is," Bobby assured the old man. "We all know that my employer has the cash to burn, and he wants to try something new and experimental. Paramount and CBS have the library necessary to fulfil our needs. With the recent dip in market value that Viacom has faced, and the lack of funding from the big corporate advertisers, I daresay that you would not mind some liquid cash for any future projects. As soon as you sign this deal, you will get the cash within a week. All one billion dollars of it."

Redstone frowned in thought before saying, "This deal seems too good to be true, but all future rights sound excessive. How about we lower it to a decade from today? Let us say until the end of 2018."

Bobby shook his head. "A billion for a decade is too low, Mr. Redstone, and we both know that. We at Netflix are taking a huge risk here. No one really watches anything on streaming. We will make some cash out of it only in the long run. If you want a limited time, I can do half a billion for twenty-five years."

Redstone considered the offer before countering, "How about two billion for perpetuity?"

"The entire Paramount studio is worth less than ten billion," Redstone reminded him. "I was offering you a billion only because of the extensive library that CBS also provides. How about one point two billion?"

"How about two point five billion instead?"

Bobby goggled at the old man, who instead of lowering the price, raised it.

"I have a feeling that the two billion I am offering is within your price range," Redstone said thoughtfully. "I am not some greenhorn who has just started doing negotiations, so do not try to lowball me. I will also have conditions if this sale were to go through. To begin with, no current or future TV shows will be available for streaming until a week after the season is over. Also, any new movie would be available for streaming only a month after its home video release, or six months after its theatrical release, whichever is later."

Bobby closed his eyes in thought before nodding. "Fine, I will do two billion, but you will have to lower the wait time for streaming. How about two days after an episode is aired, and for the movies, the same time as the home video release?"

As he began negotiating, he could not help but think about Andrew, who was having similar negotiations with Disney management at that moment. If he was also successful, that would leave only Warner Bros and Universal. Universal would be approached only after getting Fox to sign the deal, so Universal would have more incentive to abandon Hulu. Warner Bros, on the other hand, would be approached by Troy and Steve directly because of their long-standing relationship from [Harry Potter].

Bobby did not understand why he was negotiating a deal that was bound to be a losing one, but he was set to get a good commission out of it, so he would do as instructed. And the instructions from Troy were very clear: seal the perpetual deal for their past and future content, no matter the price.

(Break)

"Potter must be here," Amycus Carrow muttered as he paced across the room where his sister was passed out on the floor. "If the Dark Lord does not find him here, he will punish us all." He then turned towards the student dormitory, where a few people were still peeking out. "I know, I will blame those pesky students for calling the Dark Lord."

"You will do no such thing!" Minerva McGonagall rounded on him quickly. "I will not permit you."

Amycus scoffed before moving right into her face and spitting, "As if you have the power to permit me to do anything, McGonagall."

Before their exchange could become even more heated, I threw away the green cloth (invisibility cloak) I was wearing and pointed my wand at the man. "Crucio!"

Hidden wires attached to his form pulled him away from McGonagall and slammed him against the wall before he fell to the floor twitching.

"Huh," I whispered in amazement, looking at my wand. "Bellatrix was right. You had to mean it."

“Potter!” Professor McGonagall turned to me. “Why are you here?”

“I need time, Professor,” I said urgently. “As much as you can get me. Professor Dumbledore gave me a task here in the castle. Voldemort knows that I am here, and he is coming. Can you secure the school and the students for me till I’m done?”

McGonagall hesitated for only two seconds before brandishing her wand, which picked up the two Carrows and tied them with rope before hanging them from the ceiling.

As soon as that was done, the students of Ravenclaw House began cheering.

“Come along then,” McGonagall motioned me towards the exit. “We will have to start that by taking care of Severus.”

A sizeable group of students from Ravenclaw also followed us out but stayed a few feet behind. The older witch quickly sent her Patronuses to her fellow heads of houses as we walked. Before we could go far, we ran into one Severus Snape, played by none other than the amazing Alan Rickman.

I was not wearing my invisibility cloak in this version, and as soon as Snape saw me, he pointed his wand at me.

I did not even lift my wand. I did not have to, because McGonagall pushed me behind her and fired a spell at Snape.

“Let me handle this, Potter, and do what you have to do,” she barked as she began fighting Snape seriously.

I was conflicted for a moment as the two teachers clashed, and I was about to help her fight back, but I quickly raised a shield to protect the Ravenclaw students standing behind me from a stray spell.

After a moment, when I saw Flitwick, Slughorn, and Sprout arriving, with Flitwick joining McGonagall in fighting Snape while Sprout and Slughorn protected the students, I did as McGonagall had asked and ran in the opposite direction, pushing students out of the way, with Luna just a step behind me, until I heard the word, “Coward!” from McGonagall.

I had just turned the corner when Alfonso Cuarón’s voice rang across the soundstage. “Cut! Perfect, guys! Let us break for an hour for lunch.”

Almost immediately, everyone relaxed. It had been a difficult scene to bring together because of how everyone moved at some point or another, and I had to give it to Alfonso for his dedication to making as few cuts as possible in the final product.

“That was intense,” Evanna Lynch, the girl who played Luna Lovegood, said in a serious tone. “I thought this scene would never be approved.”

I chuckled at that before nodding. "Alfonso is a hard taskmaster to please. But I can bet that the final product will be worth it in the end."

"Let us hope so," she murmured.

Before we could continue the conversation, someone walked up to me. A man I had known for years but had not spoken to much in recent years.

"Troy, can we talk in private?" Alan Rickman asked in a heavy voice. "There is something I need to discuss with you."

"Sure," I smiled at him. "Let us go to my trailer. It is parked nearby."

Usually, I would have pulled him into a corner, but from the severity of his expression, I could sense that it was something urgent and needed discretion. It helped that my security team insisted that I take all my meals away from the rest of the cast and crew.

As soon as we were in my trailer, he said something I had not expected.

"I know your secret, Troy," he said in a somber tone.

I raised an eyebrow in question. "I have quite a few secrets. Which one are you talking about?"

"The real reason you made all this money. Why none of your films or songs ever flop. And how you knew... about my illness."

My stomach dropped. This could not be happening. The more he spoke, the sharper my headache grew, each word driving home the terrifying truth: he had the power to ruin me if he really wanted to.

Nonetheless, I kept a small smile on my face and chuckled. "Oh? And what would that reason be?"

"You have prophetic dreams," he said with utmost seriousness. "I know that no one else will believe me, and I am not trying to extort you or anything of the sort. I just want to know if it is the truth."

I was at a loss for words, so I asked, "Why do you think I can dream of the future?"

"You said to me once that you saw in your dreams me getting diagnosed with two types of cancers," he pointed out. "You even identified correctly that the first one would be prostate. Then there are other matters. Like, you knew exactly how big of a series [Harry Potter] would be and you asked Steve to get it. Or how you seemingly choose only good films. And of course, how can I forget the fortune you made in the stock market. People consider it the biggest trade in the history of stock markets."

In hindsight, it probably was not my smoothest move warning him of his impending health scare. I had to be very careful in the future about what I saw and to whom. Nonetheless, it was time to do some damage control, and quickly.

"It is not true," I said vehemently. "I have made films that I am not very proud of. Take [A.I. Artificial Intelligence] or [Disturbia]. If I could see the future, as you say, I would not have done either of those films."

"But they still made a lot of money," Alan pointed out.

"Why does it matter?" I asked. "If you're not trying to extort me, as you say, then why does it matter whether your deduction is correct? Which it's not, by the way."

Alan's breath came slow and heavy before he said, almost in a whisper, "I... was diagnosed with stage one pancreatic cancer last month. Just as you predicted. I'm undergoing chemotherapy right now. This—" he tapped his hair "—is a wig."

For a moment, I couldn't speak.

"The doctor praised me for changing my lifestyle and for getting tested regularly," he continued, "but a few years of good habits can't undo decades of bad ones. The tumor was under a centimeter in size, so they're optimistic. Still..." His voice cracked. "If this was inevitable, why warn me at all? You must have an answer. Please! Help me understand."

I opened my mouth, shut it, tried again. Nothing worthwhile came out.

When Frank Armitage had died of the same disease, I'd gone down a rabbit hole of research in my previous life. Pancreatic cancer was one of the worst diagnoses anyone could get, with less than fifteen percent surviving five years after detection.

But Alan... I remembered him living until at least 2016. It was only 2008 now. That meant he still had years ahead of him. Early detection this time might have give him even more.

"Alan," I said finally, my voice low, "I can't see the future. Yours... was an isolated case that even I'm not sure how it came to be. I'm sorry, but I can't magically fix something like this. What I can do is use my resources to connect you with the best doctors in the world for a second opinion. Or maybe some experimental treatment."

His gaze hardened, still skeptical.

"That won't be necessary," he said. "My treatment's good. I'd just hoped..." He trailed off, unable to finish. "I'm sorry for—"

"No, I'm sorry," I cut in. "I spooked you years ago and probably gave you false hope."

He shook his head. "I won't tell anyone about my theory, or that you knew. And I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell anyone on set about my condition. However you found out, I can say without a

doubt I owe you my life. I'd be in much worse shape if you hadn't spoken to me that day. So it doesn't matter if you know the future or not. Thank you."

He left my trailer without another word.

I sat there, replaying every choice that had led to this moment. I'd thought my story about "dreams" was clever. Clearly, Alan had come close to the truth. I'd have to be much more careful about who learned what.

Still... even if he had almost figured it out, I didn't regret it. His life was worth more than my secret.

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AN: I'm surprised that only one person could deduce who the mystery man was. Kudos to Vespucci for their accurate deduction skills.

Just to assuage your fears, I want to clarify that this is the first and last time someone would bring up Troy's future knowledge. I put it in this chapter because many readers were suggesting me to save multiple people from their inevitable death. I needed a reason for Troy to not play God for each and every person he came across in the future.