

The Glass Ship 2ii

“Hey Prof, that big guy is here again.” A student guffawed as he was left the classroom.

Delon rolled his eyes. He walked to the classroom door with barely contained frustration. “Yes?” he demanded.

Wilfred walked right up to him, stopping within an inch of separation between them. Delon stepped aside exasperatedly. Wilfred went to the same seat, sat himself down and extracted a file from his backpack.

“We had our weekly meeting yesterday and I want to update you on the agenda.” He flipped the pages of the file and began “The board discussed...”

Delon raised his hands. “Look, I told you do not need to do this...”

“You are a shareholder,” Wilfred said stoically. “I need to update you. Our meeting...”

Delon folded his arms. “Look. I already told you that I don’t need to know all these. Can’t you manage on your own?”

Wilfred and looked up from his file. “I need to report this to all shareholders,” he said. He went back to his file and continued “We discussed the expansion of our logistics hub in Shanghai...”

Delon looked incredulous. “Why don’t I just give you all my shares? Is that what you want?”

Wilfred stopped and looked up. “That’s not what father wanted.”

He was about to go back to his file before Delon blurted. “I will give to William Man then. He will be the largest shareholder, and he will run all over you, won’t he?”

“That is your choice.” Wilfred said. “I need to keep you updated as long as you are a shareholder.” He made to continue poring into his file.

Delon shook his head in disbelief. “Who are you? Why are you doing this to me?”

“I am the CEO of Man Logistics, and I am your brother.” Wilfred said. He went back to his file and continued, “About the logistics hub in Shanghai...”

Delon’s eyes narrowed. “You are not my brother.”

Wilfred stopped, and he looked up with an expression that infuriated Delon to viciousness.

“I have no family.” Delon said searingly. “My only family is my mother, and she has died.” I have no more family.”

“I am your brother.” Wilfred said.

“You are a freak.” Delon told him. “I had a perfectly happy life before you appeared. I was doing well, and I had absolute freedom. People are wondering why a strange man is coming

to me at this time of the week. They think I am weird. I have to make time for you to recite your meeting notes at me.” He laughed bitterly. “I have as good as given you everything in the will. Why can’t you leave me alone?” He started yelling ‘Why are you treating me like this?’”

Wilfred stood up. His stoic expression finally broke into a grimace. “I needed to...”

‘You are a freak!’ Delon yelled at him. “You want to play games with me? I am warning you now: If you come here again, I will call security to get you arrested.” He stormed to his table, grabbed his bag and as he made for the door, he told Wilfred “Get this clear: I don’t want to see you ever again!” He shrieked. “Get lost!”

He left the classroom and rushed back to his office in a frenzy. He panted as he put his head down on the table. He lost track of time as he slipped into a half-conscious sleep.

There was a knock on his office door. He sat up in shock and looked around anxiously. He saw a familiar face outside the door and looked relieved. He waved her in.

“Are you ok?” Imelda asked.

“Could do better.” Delon lamented. “He grabbed a tissue from a box and began cleaning his face.”

“Who was the guy in the classroom?” Imelda asked. “I walked past your classroom and saw you raging... I mean talking to him.”

“Wilfred Man.” Delon moaned. ‘He keeps coming to campus to see me, and the students are talking.’ He sat up and asked in horror. “Did he remain in the classroom?”

“No,” Imelda replied purposely. “I saw him crying in the classroom. Then he left.”

Delon looked taken aback. “Crying? Could he? He behaves like an AI.”

“Do you know him well?” Imelda asked.

“You know I only got to know him because his father wanted to see me.” Delon replied impatiently. He asked curiously “Why do you ask that?”

“No, I thought you might have known him well to talk to him that way.” Imelda said with a forced smile as she shrugged her shoulders.

“You know something.” Delon said. “Quick shoot.”

Imelda looked at Delon for a moment. “Do you think he is on the spectrum?”

Delon’s eyes widened. “You mean he is autistic?”

“An obviously high-functioning one, if he is.” Imelda quickly added.

“What makes you think that?” Delon asked.

“I have walked past him a few times, and he doesn’t look at people in the eye.” Imelda said. “And he seems to be obsessed with a routine such as coming here to see you.”

Delon frowned “He said he must update me on meeting details because I am a shareholder.”

“You would have spotted those traits easily if he weren’t who he is.” Imelda said with her eyebrows raised.

Delon looked frustrated. He looked into space, shook his head and gave a sigh.

Imelda smiled to herself and waited.

“Was I too harsh?” Delon finally asked.

“You mean by yelling that he is a freak?” Imelda asked teasingly.

“You heard?” Delon gasped.

“I think the whole floor heard you.” Imelda laughed. She collected herself and continued, “if he is on the spectrum, coming here to see you could be much more challenging for him than you seeing...” she twiddled her second fingers to indicate a quote “...a freak.”

“Oh, stop it.” Delon growled.

Imelda chortled. “But I meant something else when I talked about him being who he is.”

“What do you mean?”

“He is quite a looker without being a CEO. Are you worried...?” she tailed off, looking deliberately awkward.

“That people know I am a gay?” Delon demanded. “He’s my brother!”

“Is that why you called him a ...?” Imelda paused, looking at Delon meaningfully.

Delon didn’t quite know what to say.

“I have a class soon.” Imelda said brightly as she turned and left the office, leaving Delon stranded in frustration and guilt.

If the vast universe is devoid of any matter in perfect union, Endy seems to be the perfect union for Delon when they are in the vastness of the bed. Endy seems to know his every thought, his movements synchronising perfectly with the pulsation of sensations. Endy is in contact when any inch of his skin beacons. To Delon, they were the ultimate equilibrium, the flawless balance of give and take. Every flawless perfection bears a price, however.

Endy abruptly stopped and rolled away to his side of the bed.

“What?” Delon asked.

“Are you thinking about somebody else?” Endy demanded.

Delon’s eyes shifted “What are you talking about?”

Endy’s thumb shot up “Your mood is not there.” His second finger shot up. “Your mind is somewhere up there.” His third finger followed. “Your body is neither here nor there.”

“Human language, please.” Delon told him.

“You are thinking of someone else.” Endy said sharply.

“Here we go again...” Delon sighed. He got up from bed and sat at the side of the bed.

“What do you mean by that?” Endy sat up demanded. “You are thinking of someone else, and I am wrong to call it out?”

Delon turned and patted Endy’s hand. “I am just pre-occupied.”

“Is it about that guy that is looking for you on campus?” Endy asked.

Delon sighed. But he didn’t reply.

“You don’t want me to ask, but you don’t tell me what you feel.” Endy said.

Delon remained quiet.

Endy got out of bed in a huff and into the washroom. He emerged fully dressed a few moments later and made for the door. Delon hurriedly grabbed a large towel and wrapped around his waist before rushing after Don.

Endy strode across the living room and opened the main door of the apartment. Delon gasped and hid out of view by the wall. Endy looked at him and closed the door a little.

“I don’t mind a clandestine affair with you.” Endy said with his voice slightly breaking. “But I don’t deserve the clandestine in your heart.”

Delon looked at him “Endy...”

Endy put his finger to Delon’s lips. With his cheeks reddening, he left the apartment swiftly and shutting the door behind him, leaving Delon staring at the door, his face blank with emotions.

Delon sat uncomfortably in the small meeting room that the receptionist has shown him into. He had turned up unannounced and asked to meet with the CEO. The receptionist was taken aback and said a firm no. “You need to make an appointment before meeting the CEO,” she said looking at him from top to bottom and back to the top again, as if she was searching for his audacity.

"I am Delon Wong, a shareholder. I can wait." Delon said as politely as he could.

"Shareholder?" her eyes widened as she scanned him a second time. "Have a seat," she told him.

Somebody must have instructed the receptionist to bring him to one of the meeting rooms on the sixth floor, as the receptionist hurried to bring him there.

He sighed to himself resignedly as he waited past the hour. He was half-expecting it. He waited silently as his honesty and guilt continued their silent battle deep in his mind.

Then he saw Wilfred approaching at a pace. He was in a full suit, making him even larger than his casual version. Delon stood up as Wilfred entered. They were about the same height and Wilfred was looking at his necklace again.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. I will ask the reception to register you as a shareholder so that you can have access to this building."

Delon raised his hand "It's quite all right."

Wilfred paused for a moment before asking, "You wanted to see me?"

Delon nodded. "Yes, I do." He took a long breath and continued. "I want to apologise for my behaviour that day. I shouldn't have called you a freak..." he paused awkwardly. "...and I was behaving like one."

Wilfred did not answer and appeared to be considering what he just heard. His gaze elevated to Delon's eyes before he asked. "So, you are all right with it?"

"All right with what?"

"My shareholder report to you," Wilfred replied, looking at Delon intently.

Delon looked incredulous and began to hiccup. "You mean... hic...now?"

"You missed three reports to date." Wilfred said.

Delon thought madly. "How...hic...about meeting somewhere? Not...hic...on campus...or here....hic."

Wilfred nodded and looked at Delon expectantly.

"Hic...I will contact you..." Delon said.

Wilfred whipped out his mobile phone in a flash, and stood ready.

"I...hic...oh gosh...let me...hic" Delon took over Wilfred's phone and gave himself a call.

He ended the call when he heard his phone rang.

"Got it...hic..." Delon mumbled as he keyed in Wilfred's contacts. "Willie."

Wilfred looked at him.

“What? Hic...” Delon asked.

“When will you call?”

“Soon. I need... hic...need to go...” Delon said hurriedly.

Wilfred nodded. He opened the room door for Delon who dashed out.

‘You want water?’ Wilfred asked.

Delon shook his head and made for the lift lobby as he gave a giant hiccup.

For the first time in a long while, a snigger dissolved the stoic on Wilfred’s face.