

When Life Takes a Turn – Chapter 146 - 150

Zayn's expression darkened. This man was unbelievable! "What, you're saying you're above the law?"

Skyler laughed. "Good, good! You're catching on. This is my turf, dumbo, and I'm the boss around here I am the law!"

He sounded so domineering when he asserted his rule that his five companions joined in on the boisterous cackles. In an instant, the air was filled with a terrible mire of lawless tyranny, causing many of the onlookers to back away in fear.

"Hey, isn't that Sky Lord? Why are you here?"

Suddenly, a man had walked forward from the crowd of people.

It was Howard Carter. He was looking at Skyler with pleasant surprise on his face.

Skyler, too, was a bit bemused at his appearance. "Howard? Didn't think I would see you here, punk."

Howard stepped forward and lit up a cigarette before passing it to Skyler. "What's the matter, Sky Lord?"

"Nah, nothing big. Just two blind dumb*sses provoking my baby girl. Of course, I'm gonna teach them a lesson!" he answered smugly.

Seeing that Howard knew him lightened Faye's mood. Instantly, she stepped out from Zayn's shadow and said, "He's your friend, Howard? That's great news! Please tell him that this was all a huge misunderstanding."

Ruby was quick to chime in, "Oh yes, Howard, what a great coincidence that you know our guy. Tell him it was all just a funny stroke of misfortune, it's all a misunderstanding!"

Skyler's expression darkened as he furrowed his brows. "You know them, Howard?"

Faye and Ruby trained their hopeful eyes on him. They felt as though much of their panic had subsided the moment he appeared. It initially felt like there was no way out, after all. Since Howard appeared to know this thug, he could put in a good word or two and probably put this whole thing to rest.

When Howard finally understood the situation they were in, an unreadable expression shadowed his pate. Ignoring Faye and Ruby's eager looks, he shook his head and denied with a smile, "You're joking, right? of course I don't know them."

Faye was the first to erupt exasperatedly, "How could you, Howard Carter! I'm your first cousin!"

"What are you talking about, Howard?" Ruby added hotly. "We're your relatives!"

Skyler frowned and turned to him. "What's this?"

"Well, Sky Lord, they are my relatives all right. But you don't have to pull your punches for my sake, just give them whatever it is they deserve," Howard replied, chuckling. "I was never close to them anyway."

Skyler understood his implication and cackled. "You're an interesting kid, aren't you? If they aren't your favorite relatives, then I'll go all in!"

"Suit yourself, Sky Lord," A twisted smile played on Howard's lips as he stepped aside, taking up the best position to watch Faye and Zayn suffer.

He loathed the both of them with every fiber in his core, he always wished the worst upon them. How could he possibly want to save them? Besides, Skyler Moore was infamous for his shameless arrogance. Even if Howard were to plead mercy for those two, Skyler was likely to refute it. Why would a shrewd, cunning man like himself risk crossing Skyler?

Skyler raised his head and straightened his back, causing his bloated belly to be lifted as well. With the same arrogance he displayed since his debut, he commanded, “Get on your knees and apologize to my right hand woman right now, or else I’ll crush your legs into dust!”

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Everyone thought that Zayn was doomed. A useless failure of a son-in-law who had provoked the ire of a gangster that was the sort of thing that basically sealed one’s fate.

Once again, the Carters were about to suffer another blow to their reputation.

When Life Takes a Turn – Chapter 0147

Just as everyone was expecting Zayn to wet his pants in fear, he shocked them by showing no trace of fear. Instead, he flashed a smile.

An unexpected word left his lips, and uncanny silence filled the air around them. The crowd widened their eyes and stared at Zayn in palpable shock. No one had thought that Zayn would not only refuse to beg for mercy, but also insult Skyler to his face.

If this was not an act of suicide, then what was? Skyler was the leader of a gang, he had wealth, power, and manpower. Any businessman would know better than to raise his ire, but this sorry excuse of a son-in-law had the b*lls to call him a buffoon?!

The muscles around Skyler's lips twitched. His face was visibly turning red.

Ruby almost fainted at the height of her fury. Was Zayn a straight up moron? How could he have looked at the situation that they were in and thought it was a good idea to say something like that?! He had doomed them, the idiot had doomed them all to death!

Ruby was beyond livid. How she wished she could just slap the living daylights out of Zayn!

Faye, too, lurched to regain her footing. She was so mad at Zayn that she could hardly stand still.

Howard was the only one who could not stifle his desire and let it out as a cackle. Zayn Larson was as brain dead as he was a useless piece of trash, he concluded. He was just born with a brain, was he? He was almost going to die, and yet instead of admitting that he had done wrong, he decided to use this chance to pretend to be a hero one last time! Ha-ha-ha!

Thanks to his so-called 'valor', Howard knew he was in for a good show.

Many of those in the audience thought Zayn was crazy, too. That, or he was suicidal.

Finally, Skyler laughed, he was so bilious that it came out as a scornful laughter. "Okay, okay! So you wanna show us that you have a pair, don't you? You think talking tough alone makes you a big boy! Fine, then I should teach little punks like you how much of a jungle this world can be!"

Just like that, Skyler swung his big, thick palm at Zayn's cheek.

A lot in the crowd closed their eyes. They were sure Zayn was done for, Skyler's hand was so huge that, if it decked on the man's face, at least half of his cheek would burn and swell!

What they expected did not come, however. Instead, what happened next absolutely blew their minds.

Zayn had attacked the same time Skyler did, his hand taking a form of a deck across the man's face. He was faster, too, with a crisp, loud smack, he hit the man on his flabby cheeks.

It was hard enough that Skyler pirouetted, before he fell forward and crashed onto the floor with half of his cheeks swelling and bleeding. Two of his teeth had been knocked out of their places.

“You’re not just a buffoon. You’re trash,” Zayn finished, his tone brimming with spite.

It was at this moment when Zayn looked nothing like the useless son-in-law the rumors had painted him to be which was why many of the onlookers were absolutely flummoxed. They could not believe what they were seeing at all. What was happening? Was Zayn not supposed to be a doormat who never fought back? Why did he retaliate now?

Howard was flabbergasted. Suddenly, it felt as though this was the first time he knew Zayn.

“Damn it, f*ck! You... You..!” Skyler struggled for a bit before pushing himself back to his feet. He shook his head hard, and two teeth fell out, causing him to sound like he was lisping. “What are you people doing, standing right there?! Get that punk! Snap his damn neck! Make him pay!”

Hearing Skyler’s command, his five underlings lunged at Zayn, their mouth busy with aneg curses and battle cries.

The crowd thought this was it for him. No one would bank on Zayn and his lucky hit to save him from five burly men’s concerted onslaught. It might have made him look cool when he counterattacked Skyler, but in truth, everyone thought it was the move of a madman.

When Life Takes a Turn – Chapter 0148

Ruby did not waste another second launching into her next vitriol. “Zayn, you suicidal idiot! How could he think it’s alright for him to hit him?! Was his brain smooth? Or was he so blind that he had no idea what he was looking at! Well, isn’t this just dandy! He’s pissed someone off, and now there’s no way we can recover out of it. We’re doomed! We’re dead! The entire Carter family is gonna be dragged through hell because of a single person’s dumb decision!”

“Can you just stop it already, Mom? No matter how useless Zayn is supposed to be, he’s still your son-in-law. You shouldn’t disparage him like that, you know?” Faye replied, frowning.

“Son-in-law? Son-in-law, my as*! He has always been just a glorified slave to the family! Also, the two of you never consummated your marriage anyway. You two are only married on paper! How does that make him my ‘son-in-law’?” Ruby retorted.

Faye opened her mouth to defend him only to realize she could not. Ruby was right. Faye had never consummated her relationship with Zayn, they hardly counted as husband and wife. In that sense, Zayn was not exactly Ruby’s son-in-law either.

“Don’t worry, Morn. Zayn is actually a very skilled fighter. None of these could match him at all,” she said instead. Faye had seen Zayn’s martial prowess that night, and so she knew better than to worry.

Ruby snickered in conceited disbelief. “Haha, and pigs can fly, can they? Really? Zayn Larson, a well-known useless waste of space, who couldn’t even beat someone up even if you give him a bat. You’re telling me this guy can fight? If you ask me, all it takes is five seconds, and these men will beat him up so hard he would have to beg for his life while grovelling on his knees!”

“No, I think we might need to call Ethan. At least that one’s an influential figure in this entire city. With him around, we’ll most definitely be protected...”

Before Ruby could even finish, though, Zayn’s battle was already over, fast, complete, and without any hesitation. All five of the seemingly unbeatable brutes were now lying on the ground, too enfeebled to even get up to their feet.

Zayn clapped the dust of his hands as though he had just finished a really small chore. “Skyler Moore? It seems to me that your underlings are pretty trash,” he stated noncommittally.

Skyler had only just climbed to his feet, and already he was witnessing the end of what should have been a brutal smackdown. Instantly, his eyes widened in disbelief. His body began quaking as his knees threatened to give up.

“B-B... But h-how...” He stuttered so hard he could not finish his own sentence. His shock was immeasurable. He knew each and every one of his underlings, knew their capabilities and prowess. All five of them were famously good fighters even within the criminal underground. Each of them could face off three average Joes alone and unassisted. So how could five of them together not overwhelm the useless son-in-law of the Carter family?

How skilled could this 'useless son-in-law' truly be?

Skyler had never felt so much regret in his life. A man this good at fighting was a far cry from any definition of uselessness!

Watching from the sideline, Howard's mind was just as blown. He quickly rubbed his eyes, thinking he must be hallucinating things, because there was no way someone as useless as Zayn Larson could have performed any feat like this. He already knew how utterly useless Zayn was, and now, he beaten up five brutes by himself without faltering even once?!

Ruby, whose sentence was cut short precisely by how quickly the fight had ended, was now gagging to find the right words. With her eyes widened to their largest, she blurted out, "What the hell?!"

Faye was the only one who was relatively more composed, but that was only because she had seen him fight before. Still, she could not help but feel rather aggravated by yet another display of his skills despite being his wife for four years, she still had no idea the extent to his skills.

In other words, Zayn was deliberately keeping secrets from her! And as his wife, she hated the feeling this revelation elicited.

Zayn cast his eyes on Skyler and strolled toward him as the latter turned to make a run for escape. Before he could, Zayn caught his shirt and halted him, smiling. “Where do you think you’re going, Sky Lord? Thought you said you wanted to snap my neck.”

He clutched his collar so tightly that Skyler felt as though he could not breathe. Coughing, Skyler turned his face back to Zayn and scrambled to his captor’s good side. “Oh, but it was all just a misunderstanding, sir! Simple misunderstanding!”

“Just a misunderstanding? Why didn’t I get the impression of that back then? I mean, you were pretty braggadocious, weren’t you? I even distinctly remember you ordering me to be on my knees for an apology,” Zayn replied with a smile that did not reach his eyes.

When Life Takes a Turn – Chapter 0149

“Hell no!” Skyler cried, swinging his hands wildly in an attempt to dismiss his claims. “Come on, brother! I was only joking around! Heh-heh... Ha-ha-ha..?”

The way he cracked his jaw wide for a forced fit of laughter somehow looked even worse than if he just broke down and cried. After all, when had Skyler ever been so humiliated before? The looks the crowd was giving him right now peeved him. It summoned a spring of rancor in his head.

Today was the day that he finally knew how it felt to mess with the wrong guy.

Either way, a wise man would know when to retreat to Skyler, this was the time. He would pretend to relent this time around, but once he was safe, he would find another chance to return Zayn this brutal humiliation!

Zayn could tell exactly what was going on in his head, but he would not deign himself to the mindset of a scum of society and give a damn about what Skyler thought. “Get out of my sight,” he said brusquely. “And don’t ever let me see your face again. Or else... I’ll knock your teeth out as soon as I see you.”

Skyler was working so hard to suppress his spleen that his cheeks turned brilliant red, and yet, he was too terrified to let loose even a hint of his anger. He had to grit his teeth, crack a smile out of his reluctant lips, and let out a horribly unnatural chuckle before turning away and fled.

He was so eager to run, he did not even make time to care for his underlings, still lying on the ground, groaning and his right hand woman, Charlotte.

Zayn returned to Faye’s side and smiled. “That takes care of that. Let’s go home.”

Faye leveled a penetrating gaze into Zayn’s eyes. “When did you learn how to fight this well?”

“Oh. Er...” Zayn began before faltering into a loss of what to say. Faye had seen him fight during the incident with Moses, but she never inquired anything about him back then. It made him think that she did not care about it at all.

He could not bring himself to just admit to Faye that as one of the scions to the Larson family, he learned close quarter combat since he was just a child.

The wait for Zayn's answer was too long to Faye's liking. Her expression turned steely before she snapped, "If you don't want to talk about it, fine! I don't give a damn either way!"

There was an undercurrent of embarrassed bluster in her words.

"Wait, Fifi! That wasn't why!" Zayn began, his tongue mounting an explanation, when he suddenly heard a voice coming from behind him.

"Who knew a good-for-nothing like you could have known some performative fighting skill, huh? You must feel pretty cool and mighty when you managed to slap Skyler in the cheek!"

Faye's eyebrows furrowed. "What's that supposed to mean, Howard? Honestly, I've never seen a cousin as callous as you. Your family was literally being bullied back there, and what did you do? Nothing! You didn't help even when we needed it the most! Just you wait, I'm telling Grandpa about this, and he will punish you for sure."

Howard laughed. "Sure, please do! Then let us see if Grandpa would punish me as you clearly hope! You know what's the more important issue at hand? It's the fact that you people managed to cross Skyler. You think hitting back at him and getting him to run away means the end of your trouble? Ha! Think again! You people have basically set

yourselves up, because Skyler is famous for being vindictive to a fault! Of course, most importantly, he's Mr. Hyde's inferior. That's right you people have really brought a calamity onto yourselves now."

Faye's heart skipped a beat. "No, we'll be fine. Zayn knows Gordon Hayes personally."

Howard cackled as though he had just heard a joke. "Gordon Hayes? That man has to bow down before Mr. Hyde too, for crying out loud! You think Gordon's gonna be able to save your hide? Hahahaha!"

Ruby was frightened out of her wits. She lunged and grabbed Howard by his hands, pleading, "Oh no, Howard! You have to help us! You can't just leave us to die like that!"

Howard swung her hand off his own and sneered. "No offense, but 'leaving you to die' is the best course of action in this case. See, Mr. Hyde is one of the biggest guns in the entire city. Even Grandpa's social capital wouldn't earn him a lick of favor from him, let alone mine! Oh, Zayn. You really outdid yourself, didn't you?"

"Faye? Aunt Ruby? I sincerely think the two of you should kick this useless jerk out of your family while you still have the time. Sever your ties with him and maybe you might not be dragged into a bloodshed!"

Ruby was beyond panicked. She dug the nail of her index finger into Zayn's chest as hard as she could and shrieked, "Zayn Larson, you goddamned scourge! You are a bane to this family whose every action just breeds more menace to us by the day!"

Yesterday, you ruined our car in a crash. Today, you ruined our safety with this! I don't give a damn about what you think, I want you to go back to Skyler and apologize! Do whatever you need to do so that you don't drag us down a hellhole. Have I made myself clear?!"

"Don't worry, Mom. I won't drag you down at all," Zayn replied. "Besides, there's no reason why I should be afraid of Mr. Hyde."

"Seriously? You're about to have the life crushed out of your skull, and the only thing you care about is to sound tough?"

Howard jeered. "Zayn Larson, you think that just because you were struck by a fool's luck and saved Jordan Larson's life that one time makes you some sort of big damn hero? That everyone around you has to worship the ground you walk on? You really are weak in the head. Now, as your in-law, let me give you a suggestion, run! Run as far away as you can starting from tonight, and don't ever think of coming back to Waltz City. It's probably the only means for you to preserve that worthless life of yours!"

Honestly, at this point, Zayn was too lazy to demonstrate how little he feared Mr. Hyde.

When Life Takes a Turn – Chapter 0150

Even when they were on their way home, Ruby's grating billingsgate never once stopped. She kept whining about how much trouble he had gotten themselves in, or why Zayn should have just let the thugs rearrange his face, or how irritating it was that Zayn

chose to showboat his skills 'just because it looked cool', and now he had offended Skyler Moore and everything was going down to the drain.

Her philippic against Zayn never once ceased. In fact, she kept arguing that Zayn should go back and apologize to Skyler right now. Regardless of his methods, Zayn was not supposed to drag the Carters into this feud.

Zayn had gotten so chafed by her endless vitriol that he finally snapped, "Mom, seriously, can you just shut up already? I've said I won't drag the family into this, for crying out loud! What's the point of your drivel if nothing of that sort was gonna happen anyway?"

Unfortunately, his retaliation only served to enrage her.

"Oh, so this is what happened! You useless piece of trash can't even bear to listen to the truth anymore, can you? If it weren't for my family feeding you, boy, you would have died out of starvation ages ago! But now that you're all fed and full, you think you can lord over me now, can you? Think you have the rights to talk back at me, huh? I always thought that you're a no-good, ungrateful little loafer, and not a single one of you believed me. Well, now the proof is right there in front of you, isn't it?!"

The corner of Zayn's lips twitched against his will. How he wished he could just knock her out- old for two days straight, but he knew better than to put his desire to motion. No matter how asinine this woman might be, she was still his mother-in-law.

He tried his best to block all of her words from entering his ears and ceased talking.

After reaching home and returning to his room, he finally felt some semblance of peace.

Faye was unnaturally pensive, though. Even after they had gone home, the graveness in her face was hardly lifted, and her eyes kept staring straight on, unseeing and in a daze. When she did eventually act, she was forgetful and clumsy. She was taking a shower now, and yet she forgot to bring fresh clothes into the bathroom with her.

Faye opened a crack in the door and had Zayn help fetch her clothes, a thing that had never happened in the past. It was so unprecedented, in fact, that Zayn became excited. His heart was racing!

Just as Ruby had acridly pointed out, the two of them had been married on paper. It had been four years already, and yet intimacy eluded them. Still, living together with her for four years managed to add more and more fuel to his ardor for Faye, and so his desire for her triumphed whatever arousal any other woman in the world could theoretically bring him.

Even after he passed her clothes, Zayn's mood refused to retreat into dispassion. In the end, it cost him a night's rest. Luckily, his physical state had always been pretty hardy and brimming with vim, so a night's loss hardly damaged his focus.

While they were having breakfast, Waine said something that immediately attracted Zayn's attention. "So, Fifi? I've heard from the office rumor that Howard found an investor who agreed to invest 15 million dollars into Neotech."

Faye's motion halted for half a beat as a look of hesitance crossed her face. Just as quickly, however, she feigned indifference and nodded. "Yes, that's true."

"How on earth does Howard know so many of these people? How did he even manage to find an elite who was willing to invest a whopping 15 million? That's hardly a smile feat at all, is it?"

Ruby was quick to chime in with envy induced ire, "Howard has it easy. Even after the hoo-ha he had created, even after he was exiled from the Carters, he still managed to find an investor this wealthy..."

At that thought, she furtively kicked Zayn's foot under the dining table, before ranting with an accusatory inflexion, "Unlike a certain good-for-nothing loafer who's camping in this house, I will bet! That one only knows how to attract all the worst possible troubles to himself, all while being utterly useless!"

By this point, Zayn had gotten so used to the vixen that he already knew how to feign deaf while tucking his foot back to himself in silence.

"Who's this investor?" he asked in curiosity.

Waine glared at him and hissed, "Who cares? It's not like you would know him."

"William Brown," Faye suddenly said, answering his question.

Zayn churned the name in his mind and realized he did not know who this was, after all. He had never heard of his name even in the past.

And if someone was unheard of by Zayn, then that person was likely not at all an important figure of the city.