

I tried leaving the door open, since I wanted residents to feel welcome to stop by, but it kept swinging shut on its own, like it had strong personal opinions about boundaries. After the third attempt, I went to find Hector, the maintenance guy. He seemed surprised when I asked if he could remove the door entirely.

I explained my reasoning: “I want people to see me and come in when they need something. A closed door gives the wrong signal.”

He looked at me for a long second, then said he’d take care of it later that morning.

With that sorted out, I went straight to the director’s office to thank him. It seemed like the polite thing to do.

“Thank you for your time, Mr. Fisk.”

“Sit down, Matthew.”

His tone suggested this was not a moment for gratitude.

“I wanted to share a few observations following my visits with the residents these past weeks.”

His eyebrows shot up. “What do you mean, the past few weeks? You just started today.”

“Oh. Yes. After I received confirmation of my hiring on December twentieth, I visited each resident so I could get to know people before starting.”

“You... did what?”

His jaw locked, and whatever friendliness had been in his eyes vanished. I had no idea why he suddenly looked angry.

“I wanted to introduce myself. I thought it would help me

begin the job effectively. Is... is this a problem, Mr. Fisk?”

His eyebrows met squarely in the middle, forming one large hairy punctuation mark.

“You did all that without asking for permission?”

“Oh. I’m so sorry. I didn’t think it would be a problem since I’d been hired.”

“Hired from January fourth,” he said, tapping the desk as if that date were engraved in law.

I still didn’t understand. “I’m truly sorry... but what is the problem with meeting residents? The activity coordinator should get to know them, shouldn’t he?”

His chin lifted, a reflex I was beginning to recognize as him searching for an acceptable-sounding answer.

“I don’t appreciate that you went behind my back. Any initiative needs my approval.”

“Oh.” Was he afraid I would ask to be compensated? “I didn’t expect to be paid for it, Mr. Fisk. I was just... eager.”

“You sure won’t get a penny for it,” he muttered.

“No, no, of course not.”

His breathing gradually returned to baseline.

I brightened again. “I created a few charts summarizing the information they shared.”

I placed the first chart on his desk. “This one lists each resident’s skills and values. I grouped them into twenty categories.”

Since he didn’t react, I added the second sheet.