

# Easy Money

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*My first ever romance story! ^\_\_\_\_^*

*It's rated to be safe, I'm not sure if it really qualifies for the rating or not. ^^;*

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**Chapter 1 - Easy Money**

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# 1 - Easy Money

Lying on his back on the sofa, his feet over the back of it and his head hanging down off the front, Bakura stared sulkily at the ceiling.

He was bored. Very, very bored. Ryou had taken everything. His knives, his Gameboy, his air rifle, his deck, he'd even taken his books and he never even used those. He'd been extremely thorough. It almost made the ex tomb robber regret pulling the prank that had landed him in so much trouble.

Almost.

He could still just about convince himself that the look on Ryou's face when he opened the freezer to find the waxwork model that Bakura had pinched from the local museum amongst the frozen peas was worth it.

Sighing for the tenth time in as many minutes, he refocused on trying to think of a way to escape without Ryou chasing him down the road with a frying pan again.

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Scowling at his laptop, Seto tapped lazily at the keys with one hand while the other rested on the desk, supporting his head on his clenched fist.

He hated sorting through employee records to decide which, if any, were worthy of promotion. He hated having idiots amongst his senior staff even more though, which is why he was spending his precious time on the unenviable task instead of getting one of his lackeys to do it.

It didn't help that he hadn't been having the best of days. He seemed to have experienced nothing but an endless stream of misfortune and humiliation since he got out of bed that morning.

It started with the fall. As he'd been descending the stairs, he'd somehow managed to trip and went flying down three flights in his underpants, much to the amusement of the housemaid. Shortly after that, he'd had a rather nasty accident with his cereal. Not really paying attention due to the thumping headache he'd gained from his tumble, he'd picked up Mokuba's experiment, a five week old carton of milk, instead of the one he'd bought the day before. He could still taste it now.

Once he'd finished being sick into the kitchen basin, he'd gone back to his room to get dressed, only to find that Mokuba's cat had relieved itself all over his precious white coat. After that, his car had refused to start, resulting in him having to walk to work, which had led to him being almost hit by three separate cars, hit by the fourth, splashed by a giant puddle in the road, assaulted by a small child with very sticky fingers and chased by a pack of stray dogs.

Then, after breathing a sigh of relief as he got to work, believing that he'd be safe there, he'd found that all the lifts were out. He tried not to think about what he must have looked like after climbing the up forty

two floors with a heavy briefcase full of paperwork and Mars Bars.

Staggering into his office, he'd then managed to shut his replacement coat in the door as he slammed it, ripping about half a foot of it clean off.

Which is why he was now staring angrily at his laptop through his good eye, the other having been taken out of action by the car, grinding the teeth he had left and trying not to look down at the horrendous state his clothes were in.

Grumbling as he crossed yet another name off the list, he comforted himself with the thought that the day couldn't possibly get any worse. Right?

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Sticking his hands in his pockets as he walked down the street, Bakura chuckled again at his stroke of luck. It surely must have been divine intervention that caused Ryou's gerbil to escape into the cornfields behind their house? More likely, it was the fact that Bakura had forgotten to close the cage after he'd finished putting vodka in the thing's water bowl. Either way, it meant the same thing. He was free. Ryou would be out there until he found the thing, his light was very attached to his pets, treated them like members of the family. He usually found it extremely irritating but in this situation, it had actually worked to his advantage.

Kicking a rat out of the way, he strolled up the path to Marik's run down apartment block, trying, as usual, not to look at the black stained walls or breathe through his nose too much. Reaching the boarded front door, he pulled his hand out of his pocket to press the intercom, only to be thrown backwards onto the garbage covered lawn fronting the place as electricity surged out of the device and into his body.

"What the hell!?" he yelled, lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread wide. Hearing a chuckle in response to his angry question, he lifted his head off the ground, wincing at the stiffness in his neck, and glared up at Marik, who was hanging out of a fourth floor window and grinning down at him.

"Sorry, I forgot to warn you, I rewired the intercom to see off any unwanted visitors" Marik called down, watching in amusement as Bakura tried to pull himself off the ground.

"And how are you supposed to tell if they're unwanted or not?" Bakura snarled, running his hand over his leg as he finally managed to stand to try and find what was sticking into it.

"Simple. All guests are unwanted" Marik shrugged, "You gonna come up or shall I join you down there?"

"No bloody way am I setting foot in your booby trapped apartment!" Bakura snapped, wrenching the shard of glass out of his leg and nailing a rat with an expert throw.

Shrugging again, Marik pulled himself up over the window ledge and leaped out into thin air, landing on his back in the dumpster below his apartment. Pulling himself out, he quickly dusted off his clothes then joined Bakura on the overgrown lawn.

“So, what do you want to do?” He asked, trying as hard as he could not to grin too much as Bakura tried to get his frizzed up hair to lye in its usual style again.

“I don’t know, let me think for a minute” Bakura replied, giving up on his hair. Who to torment today? There was such a long list of worthy candidates, it was hard to choose.

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Seto’s stomach growled insistently as he sat, staring angrily at his screen, reminding him that he hadn’t eaten anything else after he’d thrown up his one spoonful of Cornflakes. Sighing, he reached for his briefcase and pulled it up onto his desk. Opening it with a loud click, he pulled out a Mars Bar then put the briefcase back on the floor.

Five and half minutes later, the Mars Bar was gone but the hunger remained. Mumbling under his breath, Seto shut down his laptop and rose from his seat. He was going to have to go out to eat, there was no way any of the food in the KaibaCorp cafeteria was ever going to pass his lips. Shuddering at the mere thought, he stalked past his secretary, ignoring the same curious look she’d thrown him on his arrival that morning covered in bruises and stains, and started his long trek down the stairs.

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“I’ve got it!” Marik cried, standing up so suddenly that he couldn’t see for a second and had to sit back down again, “How about a bet?” he continued, once the blood had returned to his head.

Grinning, Bakura nodded his approval, “What did you have in mind?”

Tapping his index finger against his lips, Marik thought for a moment, wracking his brains for a task that his friend would surely fail, thus earning him some cash.

“I’ve got it!” He yelled again, shooting up with the exact same result as before, “I bet you \$100 that you can’t make two people fall for each other by the end of the day!”

“You’re on!” Bakura said, his dark eyes lighting up at the challenge, “What are the rules?”

“You can use your ring, and my rod, but not directly on the two, only the people around them” Marik declared, “And you aren’t allowed to tell them of the bet, or get anyone else to tell them.”

“Is that it?” Bakura laughed, “This’ll be a piece of cake! Who are we targeting?”

Going quiet for a moment, Marik tried to think of the two most conflicting personalities that he could. The answer struck him suddenly and his eyes widened then narrowed again as he flashed Bakura a toothy grin.

“Kaiba and Gardener” He decided.

Groaning, Bakura snatched the rod from his grinning friend and stomped off. So much for easy money.

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Seto's mood worsened with every step as he stalked down the street. Every place he came to seemed to be closed for refurbishment, personal reasons or due to health violations. He was so hungry by now that he didn't even care what he ate, he was quite happy to eat at the first open place he came across.

That place happened to be a busy burger bar. Walking in hesitantly, Seto looked around then sighed and walked up to the counter. He hated places like this but it would have to do.

Looking up from her cash register, Tea gasped in surprise as she watched Seto walk through the doors of the burger bar. He looked awful. His right eye was bruised and swollen and his blue trench coat was torn and ragged at the bottom with dark stains all over it.

Staring as he walked up to the counter in front of her, she looked him up and down then raised an eyebrow.

Blinking as he noticed who was serving him, Seto scowled and made to leave, only to be prevented by Tea as she reached out and took hold of his arm.

"Are you ok Kaiba? You look like you've been fighting" She said, her voice full of concern.

"I'm fine!" He snapped, pulling his arm free and spinning back towards the door, this time prevented from leaving as his foot skidded in the puddle of Pepsi on the floor. Lying on his back, staring at the ceiling, he cursed everyone and everything he could think of.

Coming round to the front, Tea offered him her hand, which was swatted away, then asked him if he was ok again.

Narrowing his eyes at her, and trying to ignore the unpleasant wet patch on his behind and all down the backs of his legs, he gave no reply except for a small growl.

Tea took this as a yes and quickly guided him to a seat before he could argue, practically shoving him down into the chair.

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Skulking outside the burger bar, Bakura grinned at his luck. They were both here, maybe he could make this work...

Giggling in a not entirely sane manner, he pulled out Marik's millennium rod and picked out a target.

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Seating herself across from Seto, Tea sighed and folded her arms.

"Are you going to tell me what's wrong? It might help to talk you know" She reasoned.

“Will you just leave me alone!” Seto growled, “Why do you keep pestering me?!”

“Because I’m worried” Tea replied.

Laughing coldly, Seto looked away and stared out the window. Frowning slightly, he leaned a little closer to the window. He could have sworn he just saw someone dive behind a dumpster across the street...

“I am worried!” Tea insisted, snapping him back into the conversation, “What’s so funny about that?”

Sighing in irritation, Seto looked back over at her.

“Why on earth would YOU give a damn about ME?” he said coldly.

Blushing slightly, Tea frowned, “Because you’re a person, and everyone deserves compassion.”

Narrowing his eyes again, he made to leave. This time stopped by a small child barging into him and knocking him back into his seat, which then fell over backwards.

“Kaiba! Are you alright?” Tea cried, leaping round the table to pull him off the floor.

“Yes” He grumbled, “Crap like that’s been happening to me all day, hence my appearance.”

Giggling, Tea picked his chair back up off the floor and ignored the daggers he was shooting at her.

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Peeling the banana skin off his sweater as he crawled back out from behind the dumpster, Bakura released his hold over the child he’d used as a human missile against Kaiba and reviewed the situation. He had a pretty good sixth sense when it came to stuff like this. It was handy when you were in his line of work to develop your ability to predict how certain scenarios were likely to play out so you could get out if things started to look bad.

Fortunately, due to his people reading skills, and also a little to the millennium eye stashed in his back pocket, he was confident that he wouldn’t need to meddle too much to make this work out. All he needed to do was watch from the shadows and make sure they stayed near each other.

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“Shouldn’t you be working?” Seto asked grumpily, picking at the fries that he’d just purchased with little enthusiasm.

“I’m on a break” Tea smiled, “So I can sit with you a while.”

“Lucky me” Seto said sarcastically. He didn’t understand why she wouldn’t just leave him alone. Surely she had better things to do than sit here watching him glare at her. More importantly, her presence was awakening thoughts he’d tried very hard to squash over the last few months.

“Ha ha” Tea said dryly, pulling a face at him. She was having just as much difficulty understanding him as he was her. He appeared to completely hate the thought of any kind of friendship, seeming instead to want to be alone. Something she couldn’t really comprehend. She’d also been thinking of him more and more recently and the thought of him being so alone all the time made her sad. She found herself wishing she could be the one to fill the void.

They both fell into an uncomfortable silence for few minutes, neither really sure what to say.

“I like your Beaver” Seto said quietly, a few moments later.

“W...what?” Tea stammered, blushing again.

Raising an eyebrow, Seto pointed to the Beaver hat on her head. Glancing upwards, Tea remembered her manager handing out the new hats that morning and laughed.

“Oh yeah, it’s cute, isn’t it?” She giggled.

“Yes. Adorable” Seto said in a flat voice.

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Outside, Bakura was starting to get impatient. The clouds were beginning to look a little ominous and the possibility of Ryou finding his Gerbil and returning home to find him missing was growing by the minute.

Sneaking over to squat directly outside the window beside Tea and Seto so he could hear their conversation clearly, he readied the rod again.

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“So, why are you eating here?” Tea asked, tilting her head slightly with a curious look on her face. She found it a little strange that someone like Kaiba would choose to eat in a place like this.

Before he could reply though, a young man slid into the seat beside Tea and grinned at her.

“Hi there” He winked.

“Um...hello” Tea said hesitantly, not sure what to make of this stranger’s sudden appearance. Completely unaware that he was in no way in control of his own actions.

“Go away” Seto growled, eying the man with distaste.

Laughing, the man slung his arm around Tea’s shoulders and grinned at her, “Your boyfriend’s a little touchy, ain’t he?”

Blushing furiously, Tea wriggled out from under the man’s arm. “He’s not my boyfriend” she muttered. Completely unprepared for how much it disappointed her to say that. Did she really want to date Kaiba?

Seto, too, was surprised at how that simple statement made him feel. All the thoughts that he'd been forcing himself not to think came flooding into his mind. Thoughts about Tea and the way she made his heart race when he looked at her, how her laugh made his knees go weak and the way she looked at him, with true compassion in her eyes rather than the usual resentment or dislike he was used to receiving.

"Not your boyfriend?" The man chuckled, "The way he's shootin' daggers at me, you'd think he was."

"Just get lost!" Seto snapped, rising out of his seat slightly in anger.

Shrugging, the man got up and walked away, leaving Tea and Seto to sink into another awkward silence.

Glancing at the clock, Tea decided she'd better get back to work before she got in trouble. At the same time, Seto decided it was time to return to KaibaCorp. The result was that they both stood at the exact same moment, placing their hands on the table to push themselves out of their seats, which brought their faces less than two inches from each other.

Blushing for what seemed like the hundredth time that day, Tea stared into Seto's eyes and gulped. He was so close, she could feel his breath on her lips.

Seto's mind, usually so active, ground to a halt and instinct took over, guiding him forward the small space between them until his lips pressed gently against hers. His whole body tingled as he made contact, a pleasant shiver running down his spine.

Tea's eyes widened in shock as he kissed her. Her shock quickly faded though and she happily pressed into it, closing her eyes as she leaned forward a little more.

Pulling back, Seto locked his eyes onto hers and smiled slowly. He couldn't begin to describe the relief that had pumped through him when, instead of pushing him away like he expected, she had actually kissed him back.

"I guess today isn't such a bad day after all" He grinned.

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Whistling as he walked back towards Marik's apartment, Bakura mentally snickered. He'd hardly had to do anything at all to win the bet. He was fairly certain the situation would have played out much the same if he hadn't been there at all. Picking up a stone, he threw it through Marik's window and waited.

Sticking his head out, Marik scowled down at him. He was already aware of Bakura's victory, he had spies everywhere.

"Here" he said grumpily, throwing down a wad of notes which Bakura caught neatly.

His scowl turning to a smirk, Marik showed the smug ex tomb robber the phone he had been holding out



of his sight until now.

“Guess who I just called” he laughed.

Paling, Bakura stared wide eyed up at the grinning Egyptian, “You...You didn’t?!”

Whipping around, he yelped as he spotted Ryou stomping up the road, his eyes blazing with fury.

“I’ll get you for this!!” Bakura yelled angrily as he legged it down the road, Ryou hot on his heels with a rolling pin in his hand.

Marik just laughed and pulled his head back inside.

There was no such thing as easy money.