

Surprise 226

Chapter 226 Touch Him if You Dare

The piano performance did not stop. Its volume was just enough to cover up Alexander's voice. Thus, they didn't attract too much attention. Nonetheless, the guests on the surrounding tables were casting strange glances at them.

Elijah was the first to come back to his senses. Immediately, he got someone to send Tina out.

After Courtney recovered from the shock, she saw the woman behind Alexander through the corner of her eye. Instantly, her gaze turned cold and she said apathetically, "What does that have to do with you?"

With a gloomy expression, Alexander's cold gaze swept across Elijah and he demanded, "So, this is the 'friend' you keep talking about? Having fun with a 'friend' with your daughter by your side?"

When he saw Elijah leave Courtney's house that day, she also quarreled with such confidence. Even though he had witnessed the scene, she insisted that Elijah was just a friend. In the end, he even doubted his own investigation and judgment.

Yet, at this very moment, he finally met Elijah. Based on his intuition, he could clearly sense that this man definitely had feelings for Courtney—Elijah didn't see her as a mere friend.

"Don't you think that you owe me an explanation?"

Facing Alexander's aggressive tone, Courtney only felt disheartened. She then took a deep breath. "Alexander Duncan, I have nothing to say to you. Please leave."

Upon hearing that, Alexander clenched his fists. Snorting, he said, "Fine. I'll leave." His eyes were flashing cold lights, and all of a sudden, he grabbed Courtney's wrist and pulled her up from her seat. "But, you'll have to come with me."

She had been cheating on him since the beginning. No matter what, he was determined to demand an explanation from her.

However, a big hand pressed on his arm at the same time. The powerful arm stopped him from pulling Courtney up. Frowning, Alexander glanced at the side and he met Elijah's calm and collected gaze.

Elijah's gentle voice then rose. "Mr. Duncan, I'm afraid that what you're doing is inappropriate."

"This has nothing to do with you." Alexander put on a grimace. Without giving Elijah face, he said in a cold voice that made anyone feel like they were trapped in an ice cellar, "This is our problem. You better leave us alone."

Elijah stood up from his seat. Nevertheless, his force on Alexander's arm did not subside. His expression was as gentle as always, and he said faintly, "Courtney is an independent individual, and she has her own thoughts. It has nothing to do with whether I should leave you guys alone. The point is whether she is willing to go with you."

“I don’t care if she’s willing, or not. After all, this is still a matter between us.” Impatient, Alexander increased his force, trying to tug Courtney up from her seat.

“It’s too bad, then.” Elijah’s grip on Alexander’s arm increased. It was sufficient to keep his arm from moving away from its original position. His voice was not loud, but it was full of certainty. “It is my priority to respect and protect Courtney’s will.”

A cold light flashed before Alexander’s eyes. If one could kill another with their gaze, right now, there would be two flying knives piercing through Elijah’s face. With a warning in his cold voice, he said, “Mr. Grant, we’re in Melrose City, not Manhattan.”

A powerful dragon couldn’t crush a snake in its old haunts. No matter how respectable Elijah was in Wall Street and the financial world, if he wanted to do business here in Melrose City, he had to follow the custom.

In Melrose City, the Duncan Family was the snake.

The melody of the piano stopped abruptly. Although the two men were merely staring at each other, the restaurant seemed to be overwhelmed by a strong smell of gunpowder. It was as if a war was about to start.

Everyone had noticed the situation between them. Some even secretly took their phones out and tried to take pictures of them. Yet, as soon as they turned on the cameras, men dressed like bodyguards came forward and warned them to switch off their phones.

Amongst these men were people from Alexander’s and Elijah’s sides.

“A home game or an away game makes no difference to me in order to win a match.” As if he was the winner, who had already predicted the ending, Elijah looked calm. He continued to stare at Alexander with an imposing charm. “After all, I made it to this day without relying on my family.”

Instantly, the spectators gasped at his words.

Who was Alexander Duncan? He was the young master of the Duncan Family from Melrose City. Even if he didn’t have the capabilities, the fact that he had inherited the Sunhill Enterprise was sufficient to scare off anyone. No one would dare to criticize him to his face, especially since his capabilities were recognized by the public.

However, what he had was not a big deal to Elijah.

With the word ‘family’, he had simply dismissed Alexander’s reputation.

Alexander’s expression hardened. Subconsciously, his grip on Courtney’s wrist tightened. Even he had not realized how horrible his expression was at the moment.

What Elijah said just now was something he had never really cared about. Everyone was born with their own starting point and this was an indisputable truth. Because, even if it was the same starting point, the result might be different depending on the person. Whether one’s life was successful couldn’t be determined only by their family background.

Nevertheless, at this moment, he felt that Elijah was deliberately letting Courtney hear that.

He was using the comparison between them to show off his achievements.

“Family?” Alexander’s eyes were as cold as the night sky. “Listening to your disdainful tone, you probably don’t know what it means to have a strong family background.”

With just one glance, Alexander’s bodyguards, who were standing afar, understood his order. Quickly, they found someone to send the guests out. In just a few minutes, all guests were sent out gradually. Courtney and the others were the only guests left in the originally crowded restaurant.

“Alexander, what are you doing?” Courtney panicked. She struggled and tried to break free from his control. “Let me go.”

Still, Alexander had no intention of letting her go. His cold gaze remained fixated on Elijah. “Family background means that if you don’t walk out of here alone now, you won’t ever walk out of here again.”

His purpose was obvious.

It was impossible for the Duncan Family to stand strong in Melrose City for so many years just by relying on their legal business. The root of their success was that they were equally invested in the underworld.

To make someone vanish into thin air was not something difficult for him.

Nevertheless, Elijah remained undisturbed. His eyes under the gold-framed glasses did not stir. “It seems like the young master of the Duncan Family always handles things with such simplicity and crudity. Apparently, I’ve overestimated you.”

His ridicule ignited the anger that had long accumulated in Alexander’s chest. With a grimace, he turned and glared at Courtney. “I’m giving you one last chance to leave with me; otherwise, he will never get out of here.”

For a very long time, Courtney had been silent. When Alexander finally acknowledged her presence, she could hardly make an expression. Her face was frozen and her words came squeezing out from her teeth. “Alexander, I never knew you were so childish.” Her woeful and farcical tone was like cold water splashing over Alexander’s head. Traces of coolness soaked through his nerves that were about to burn up.

“See if you dare to touch him.” Not knowing where she found the strength, Courtney shrugged off Alexander’s arm. There was a clear bruise surrounding her fair wrist. Vaguely, one could see traces of fingerprints. Her voice was extremely cold, and with certainty, she said, “If you’re so capable, make me stay here forever too.”

Chapter 227 A Friend That I’m Ready to Risk My Life For

A chill penetrated Alexander’s limbs from all directions. The last hint of warm light in his eyes went out. Staring coldly at Courtney’s expressionless face, word by word, he said, “Say that again.”

“Even if I were to repeat it ten times, it’s going to be the same thing. If you dare to make a move on Elijah, you’ll have to do the same thing to me.” Courtney’s tone was decisive. From her gaze, it was obvious that she was completely disappointed in Alexander.

She was even starting to wonder how blind she was to fall in love with a petty, bourgeois ideologist; a pretentious and selfish man who had little regard for human life.

Alexander cracked his joints. His words squeezed through his clenched teeth. "It looks like he's a friend whom you're ready to risk your life for. How touching! So, this is what you call an ordinary friend. Courtney, you're really good at acting in front of me."

Frowning at his words, Courtney did not try to explain herself.

Noticing her silence, Alexander thought she was speechless and he snorted, "Don't you think it's ridiculous to threaten me with your own fate? Who do you think you are to me?"

Although Courtney knew he was pissed off, she couldn't restrain herself. Meeting his gaze, she asked hopelessly, "I'm curious too. Who am I to you?"

"Just a temporary bed partner to warm my bed."

The reality was always crueler than imagined. Alexander's harsh words were like a knife piercing through Courtney's eardrums fiercely. Clenching her fists, she wanted to punch him in his face. Yet, she found herself to be too weak. The man, whom she had poured her heart into, said that she was just a mere 'bed partner'.

The self-esteem that she had always been so proud of was stepped on and rubbed against the ground by him. She didn't even have a fig leaf to conceal her uneasiness that was now being disclosed to everyone present at the scene.

"Alexander Duncan, except for overestimating you, I might also have misunderstood your personality." Elijah's voice rose at the right moment, breaking the deadlock between the pair. He unbuttoned his suit naturally, and all of a sudden, his expression changed. As sudden as lightning, his punch fell on Alexander's face.

Groaning in pain, Alexander fell onto the floor, knocking over the table and the chair beside him.

Immediately, his bodyguards wanted to come forward and help. Yet, Elijah's men weren't slouching. Soon, both parties, who were well-matched in strength, got into a fight.

Amongst the sound of smashing tables and chairs, someone howled and rolled on the ground. For a moment, the scene was chaotic. Before Courtney could even return to her senses, Elijah and Alexander started hitting each other.

Elijah was an extreme sports enthusiast. With his excellent combat skills and extraordinary endurance, he quickly gained the upper hand.

Being hit once again, Alexander knocked down a floor lamp that was waist-high. He sat on the ground awkwardly.

"Alex!" screamed Mikayla as she came and stood in front of him. Facing Elijah, she yelled, "I've called the police. My brother and the police will be here in a second."

As soon as Elijah saw her, his already raised fist came to a halt. His gaze darted between Mikayla and Alexander. In the end, he snorted, "I'll never hit a woman."

Clutching his chest, Alexander couldn't say a word. Is he mocking me because of what I did to Courtney? If he even knows about that, they really keep no secrets from each other.

Picking up the towel on the table to wipe his hand, Elijah turned and looked at Courtney's pale face. There was a flash of regret before his eyes. She's probably frightened.

"Let's go, Courtney," he said with concern as he held her shoulders.

Courtney glanced at Alexander through the corner of her eye. Her gaze then moved to Mikayla, whose face was painted with anxiety. Her crying expression was a tenderness Courtney could never pick up. At first, Courtney wanted to check on Alexander's injuries. Yet, when she saw the scene before her eyes, she gritted her teeth and didn't look back.

A French restaurant that looked totally fine at the beginning now looked like a Shura field with tables and chairs falling apart.

It was impossible for Elijah to go out without bodyguards and this was something Courtney was not surprised about. Without asking anything further, she got into his car after leaving the restaurant.

In the car, Tina was eating her pudding and watching a cartoon quietly.

Children were always children. No matter what was happening on the outside, they always managed to live in their own world without being disturbed by the outside world.

"We didn't even finish our lunch. Let's go somewhere else and get you something to eat." As if he had not been affected by the earlier incident, the unfinished meal seemed to be the only thing occupying his mind.

However, how could Courtney still eat at this moment? Shaking her head, she rejected, "No, I'm full. Send Tina back to my aunt's place. I have to meet the designer at the company for the samples tonight."

Instead of saying anything, Elijah replied with a 'yes' and instructed the driver to set off.

From that day on, Courtney and Alexander hadn't met or contacted one another for two weeks.

Courtney was busy with the production of samples for the opening day of Citron Apparel. After switching between almost a dozen types of fabrics and clothing factories, none of them had reached her expectations. However, she was someone who had a one-track mind. Both fabric and craftsmanship were indispensable. Therefore, even though the due date was approaching, she had not come up with a conclusion yet.

In the end, it was Elijah who contacted an Italian fabric manufacturer. They agreed to work with Citron Apparel for the first phase of the project and provide them with the fabric. Regarding the craftsmanship, with Bill's hard work, the machines in the factories were improvised.

Two weeks later, Citron Apparel's first flagship store started its business as scheduled.

The store was located at the Sawgrass Mills Mall, which was an excellent location. To celebrate the opening, many people had sent flower baskets and they were placed at the entrance of the shop. Most of them came from Courtney's former colleagues back at Sunhill Hotel.

Her break-up with Alexander was no longer a secret these days. Therefore, her former colleagues couldn't show up in person. To send her a flower basket here was a sign of sincerity, which she appreciated.

Elijah was the first one who came. He came with a bouquet of sunflowers, congratulating the opening of her new store. Lilian had been ushering him to leave from the side. In the end, Courtney couldn't stand it anymore. Elijah finally left when she urged him to leave to deal with his own affairs.

As soon as she sent Elijah off, she saw a dark blue figure standing by the door. Focusing to check on the figure, she was shocked.

Holding a navy blue gift box that was wrapped in a very low-key yet luxurious packaging, the figure entered the store before handing the gift box to her. The figure had a pair of smiling and gleaming peach blossom eyes. "Miss Hunter, congratulations on the opening of your new store."

Courtney took the gift box. "Thanks for your best wishes."

Looking at her as he grinned, Gale teased, "You didn't expect me to be here, right? You looked somewhat awkward just now."

However, Courtney frowned and denied, "I just thought that you wouldn't have the time to come because you need to look after Cameron. Please don't overthink too much."

"I didn't overthink." Walking around with Courtney in the store, Gale asked indifferently, "By the way, I'm curious. Who is Tina's father?"

Chapter 228 I Did It for the Green Card

Courtney's heart flinched at Gale's words. "Why are you asking this suddenly?" She turned and looked at him with wary eyes.

Gale looked relaxed. "Actually, I really don't know much about what happened recently. Even the break-up between you and Alex was something I found out just a few days ago. If Alex was right, you really haven't gotten a divorce, right?"

Upon hearing his words, Courtney breathed a sigh of relief, yet she frowned at the same time. "Yeah."

"Awesome." His reaction was unexpected. He was actually giving her a thumbs up. "You're the only one that Alex has been willing to let be the mistress of someone else. I really admire you."

Is he really praising me? Courtney could no longer listen to what he was about to say. Irritated, she said, "Mistress? There's no such thing. I only married Elijah because I needed the green card in order to stay in America with Tina legally. Elijah needed money, and I needed an identity. It was only a deal struck between us."

"So... Tina's father isn't Elijah?" Stroking his chin, Gale suddenly came back to his senses. "A deal? You said the marriage between Elijah and you was just a deal? Why didn't you tell Alex?"

“He said I didn’t tell him that?” This time, Courtney got even more fed up. “Some people only have nasty things in their mind and they think that everyone else is the same. What more can I say?”

The marriage between Elijah and her was mainly because she needed the green card. She was pretty sure that she had told Alexander about it. Yet, he had his own way of thinking and insisted that she was a cunning egoist. So, what else could she say?

In secret, Gale was stunned. As a bystander, he knew none of them had made a big mistake. However, they were still holding a grudge against each other. Because they couldn’t let it go, they ended up in a conflict, which spiraled out of control.

“Wait, I didn’t get it. Can you please explain in detail?” He stared at Courtney curiously. “Why is the marriage between Elijah and you a deal? I’m curious about that.”

“It’s a long story.”

Courtney fell deep into her memories. Everything started five years ago. When she had just given birth to Tina, she escaped to America with her. Because Tina wasn’t born there, her visa expired after a short stay. Therefore, there were only two paths in front of Courtney: one, she had to come back to renew her visa; two, she had to come back and tell the Hunter Family the truth.

No matter which path she took, she had to go home.

Back then, Courtney was afraid. She was afraid that as soon as she set foot in that heartrending place, the man—who threatened her to have a child—would target her. For that reason, she would rather remain in America illegally instead of going back home.

“I was a cleaner in Elijah’s company.”

“A cleaner?” Gale was shocked.

Who would have thought that a young lady would become a cleaner?

Nevertheless, Courtney did not bother to explain why she chose the job.

“Elijah encountered a bottleneck in his business. He needed ten million and I had it. So, I went to his office to talk. At first, he didn’t believe me when I said I could lend him the money. He thought I was mad because no one would have lent out their money without asking for interest.”

Until today, Courtney could still remember herself rushing into Elijah’s office in her brown cleaner’s uniform. At that time, Elijah wasn’t as calm and imposing as he was now. Random items were scattered across his desk. He was the general manager of the company, yet his office was so messy that there was nowhere to get a foothold.

“After I proposed a fake marriage with him so that I could stay in America legally with Tina, he believed me.” Without any questions, Elijah acceded to her request. Regardless of what brought him to make that decision, looking back now, he had done what he promised her back then.

“Then, what happened after the marriage?” Gale continued to ask. “You guys didn’t live together?”

“Of course, we didn’t.” Courtney shook her head. “Later, he took my money and moved his office to a new address. He was in the north and I was in the south. The two places were separated by a strait. It was only during holidays that he would fly over to spend time with Tina so that Tina would see him as her father.”

Now that every doubt had been cleared up, Gale breathed a sigh of relief.

It was a breath of relief he took on behalf of Alexander. However, he still couldn’t stop worrying about him.

It was such a big mistake and Courtney, who was clearly innocent, was wronged. Perhaps, Alexander had hurt her with the words he said. It might not be easy for him to get her back.

He still had to take measures according to the situation.

“Then, I think this is a situation where the player sees less clearly than the bystander.” Gale studied Courtney’s expression. “I’m a bystander. But, even I can’t judge what happened from an objective perspective. There will be more or less some subjective elements, especially for Alex who is the party involved. He is closely connected to you.”

“Just say what you want to say.” Courtney rolled her eyes at him. “Stop beating around the bush. I don’t have the time.”

Nodding, Gale tried his best to explain, “Look; the fake marriage between you and Elijah is something you didn’t give Alex a heads up about previously. After all, marriage is a huge life event. Even if it was just a formality, you can’t just pretend like nothing ever happened, right? So, I apologize to you on behalf of Alex and we should just let bygones be bygones. You two should make up.”

Gale’s advice was reasonable. Courtney had tried to reflect on whether her ignorance was what led to the subsequent suspicions and conflicts.

However, when she found that those negligible suspicions and conflicts were enough for Alexander to insult her with so many unkind words, she was extremely annoyed.

“If he wanted to make up with me, why didn’t he come personally?” Courtney threw him a vicious glare. “How can he ask you to apologize for him? Did he feed his sincerity to the dogs?”

“Alex is innocent.” Gale looked helpless. “He was admitted to the hospital with two broken ribs. He can’t go out at all temporarily. So, please don’t make things hard for him.”

“Admitted?” Courtney’s expression changed in an instant. “Why is he hospitalized?”

“Huh? You didn’t know?” Gale pretended to be surprised. “Alex was injured when he got into a fight with someone at a restaurant. He was admitted on that same day and hasn’t recovered yet. According to the doctor, he might need to stay there a little longer. After all, it takes a hundred days for the bone to knit and the tendons to heal.”

Courtney’s expression sank immediately and she became pale.

The moment Gale mentioned the fight, she knew what happened. Honestly, she didn’t know Alexander was hurt so badly that day. Elijah always had a good temperament and he never fought.

“For the past two weeks, he has been calling and disturbing me almost every day. I was so annoyed, so I had to come and find out what exactly is wrong between the both of you. And look; apparently, there’s no problem at all.” Gale thought he could persuade Courtney with soft soup. He could even persuade her that black was white. “Don’t you think that Elijah is the problem? Both of you are just a fake couple. What problems can there be? If two people are in love and there’s nothing that can stop them from being together, then why can’t they?”

Upon hearing that, Courtney frowned. “Which hospital is he at?”

Chapter 229 He Just Left

In the huge VIP ward of the hospital, Josh’s voice that was mixed with concern could be heard.

“I didn’t mention anything else during the meeting. But, most of the members on the board wanted an explanation in regard to the loss of the project in Elmsbury. Mr. Lightwood said a few words on behalf of you, but Mr. Bane shut him up.”

“Got it.” Alexander had already changed out from his hospital gown. The custom-made black suit fit the curve of his streamlined body and it concealed the bandage on his back. When he got up on his feet, he no longer looked morbid. “Go and take care of the discharge procedures.”

“But, President Duncan, the doctor said that with your injury you can’t be discharged yet.”

However, Alexander seemed to have not heard him. Buttoning up his suit, he marched out of the ward, leaving behind one sentence: “You know what to say to the hospital staff when you go through the procedures.”

Staring at his back, Josh could only sigh and run after him.

According to the doctor, Alexander had to stay at the hospital for at least one month. Two of the ribs on his chest were broken, compressing the nerves around his heart. His condition was very serious.

Nonetheless, Alexander was casual about his injury.

Secretly, Josh thought, Even my boss is so hardworking. There’s no reason for me not to work as hard as him.

With a ‘ding’, the elevator came to a stop as it reached its destination. Josh followed Alexander into the elevator. At the same time, the elevator on the other side had also arrived. A nurse came out pushing an operating bed. Behind her were a bunch of family members and amongst them was a thin figure, who had no strength to resist the push, and came out helplessly with the flow.

The hospital was noisy. It only took a turn for the both of them to miss each other.

“Discharged?” After Courtney asked the nurse on duty at the inpatient department’s nurse station, she was told that Alexander had been discharged. Shocked, she asked, “How could it be? I came right after I heard that he was admitted. Are you sure you didn’t check it wrongly?”

“No.” The nurse explained patiently, “The patient just went through the discharge procedures. Didn’t you just come out from the first elevator over there? He just left.”

Courtney was puzzled once again. “Just left?”

“Yeah. The one next to him, who took care of the procedures for him, is probably his assistant. Both of them just—”

Before the nurse could finish her words, an older nurse from the side cut her off. “They just left. Miss, if you’re really worried, you might be able to catch up to them. But, the patient’s injury isn’t really serious. It’s just that rich people like to make a fuss. According to the doctor, there was no need to stay in the hospital for so long, but he was very worried. So, he ended up remaining under observation for the past few days.”

Upon hearing that, Courtney came back to her senses. Staring at the nurse—who just spoke—in puzzlement, she then confirmed with them again that what she heard was correct. Soon, the anxiety in her eyes faded. This was replaced by a smirk at the corners of her mouth. She was laughing at her own foolishness. How can I believe that Alexander’s injury was so serious and run over like that? If he hadn’t just been discharged and left, he would probably mock me for visiting him.

Staring at Courtney, who had just left in disappointment, the young nurse at the nurse station patted her chest and let out a long sigh of relief. “May, luckily you were fast to stop me. I almost told her before I knew it. If the head nurse finds out, she’ll probably scold me to death.”

“The head nurse said that Mr. Duncan’s assistant had specifically told her that if anyone was asking about his condition, we are not allowed to disclose it. You were probably playing with your phone, right?”

The young nurse stuck her tongue out. “I heard what the head nurse said. But, I didn’t expect there would be someone asking so soon. I was careless. But, it’s strange. His condition isn’t something extraordinary. Why can’t we tell anyone?”

“What do you know?” The older nurse frowned. “Those admitted into the VIP wards are worth hundreds of millions. Things change rapidly in the business world. When one person is down, there are thousands of people who are waiting to take over their place. How can they simply expose their health condition?”

“Is it so scary?” The young nurse was shocked. “Then, I just...”

“Enough. The past is in the past. Besides, nothing happened. Please be more careful in the future. It’s time to begin patient rounds. I won’t tell the head nurse about what happened.”

“Thank you, May. I’ll go now.”

Looking at the reckless young nurse, the older nurse shook her head helplessly.

The worst thing one could do when working in the hospital was to be careless. One had to be on guard at all times. This was especially so for people like them who worked in the special wards at the inpatient department. If they couldn’t keep their mouths sealed, they wouldn’t be able to keep their jobs too.

After leaving the hospital, Courtney went back to the store first. The business was pretty good and there were a lot of people who came to show support. As the designer, Bill came personally. Like a sales

promoter, he introduced the material of the clothes and their comfort levels to the customers. He was even listening to the opinions given by the customers humbly.

“This batch of clothes designed by Mr. Dawson has been sold out both online and offline. Several customers failed to buy them and they told us to reserve them when we release the next batch.” The staff reported the sales to Courtney with respect and went on to ask, “President Hunter, we should inform the factory to increase the production of this batch of clothes, right?”

Glancing at Bill, who was busy at the moment, Courtney shook her head. “No. After they’re sold out, we continue to hang up the samples, but we also have to put on a label saying that they’re out of stock.”

Truth be told, before Courtney began her business, she had talked about the same thing with Bill. Bill participated as the chief designer for this series of autumn clothing and his designs weren’t produced in mass quantities. Every size was only made in a limited number of pieces. That way, the clothes would definitely go out of stock.

However, it was Bill’s intention from the beginning to sell them until they were out of stock.

Citron Apparel established itself as an affordable luxury brand. They couldn’t compete with the international first and second-tier brands. Yet, to compete with high fashion brands from the third-tier, they weren’t as fast and as cheap as them. Thus, they could only focus on making their products in limited quantities.

People like to see themselves as a special existence in this world and the limited sale would undoubtedly bank on that mentality.

Bill was indeed a great designer. He could grasp the hearts of consumers with such accuracy and maximize the commercial value of every piece of clothing in the market.

After the customers followed the sales promoter to settle their bills, Courtney only came over to greet Bill. “How was it?”

“Not bad. It’s almost like what I had expected. But, after this series is sold out, there are going to be many imitations on the market. By then, you will be very busy.”

Upon hearing his comment, Courtney flashed him an indifferent smile. “Then, I can just sue them. The compensation we can get from the infringement will be enough for us to open up more flagship stores.”

“I don’t care about these things.” Bill was as cold as usual.

“I’ll go visit Cameron in a while. Do you want to follow?”

“Nah. I don’t want to see her ghostly face.” He frowned. “Wait a minute. I have something to give you. You can pass it to her.”

After he said that, he went to the warehouse and came back with a bag in his hand.

“What’s this?” Courtney was curious when she saw some white yarn peeping out the corner of the bag.

With a disgusted look, Bill said, “Her graduation project.”

Chapter 230 Her Graduation Product Is Called 'Dream'

Cameron and Bill had graduated from St York University in the same year, but when they graduated, Bill received a doctorate, while Cameron received a master's degree. They were fellow students in the same course, and they made a great team in terms of fashion designing.

The graduation project that Courtney had brought for Cameron was the one that she and Bill had designed together.

When Courtney went to visit Cameron, Cameron's mental state was much better than before and her mind was clear. She was aware of who she was, and she knew who Courtney was too. Her emotional state was no different from the average person's, and she even went to the kitchen with great enthusiasm to make a salad.

However, her excitement made Courtney distressed.

This was by no means a sign of improvement, but rather an indication of deterioration.

Cameron mentioned in her notes that if she was overly friendly or enthusiastic after her relapse, it was definitely not a good thing. That kind of flattery was a product of suppressing her emotions, and it stemmed from her last will to survive. It forced her to please everyone around her as if she was holding on to her last anchor in life.

"You don't seem well," Courtney hinted while looking at Gale, who was opposite from her.

"Why do you say that? I feel rather great." Gale had just returned from her shop not long ago, so he was still wearing the same outfit from before. He had taken his jacket off, revealing a clean white shirt underneath.

There were obvious dark circles under his eyes, and the lights shining down accentuated them.

Whenever he was with Cameron, Gale would appear energetic. Conversely, once he was out of her sight, he wouldn't be able to mask the exhaustion that emanated off him.

In fact, Courtney reckoned that it was a miracle that this pampered young master could persist for so long.

"Both you and Cameron don't seem to be in very good states," Courtney said truthfully. "I still think that we should send Cameron to a professional institution to receive treatment."

"That's not happening. I've checked out all sorts of mental institutions and rehabilitation centers in Melrose City, and none of those places are suitable for a patient's recovery. Any sane person who goes in there would walk out a psychopath." Gale refused flatly, giving her suggestion zero consideration.

Courtney remained composed. "All of the local institutions are like that, but I'm not talking about those. I'm talking about those in America. As Cameron's best friend, I think that it's best for her to receive treatment there."

"Is this Elijah's arrangement?"

Courtney frowned, but she didn't deny it.

“Is he crazy?” Gale turned emotional all of a sudden. “Are there no other women in America? Does he have too much time on his hands? Why did he have to come to Melrose City? First, he stirred up trouble between you and Alexander, and now he wants to separate Cam and me?”

“Gale.” Courtney’s tone was sharp, and she looked rather upset. “Be mindful of what you say. Elijah is one of the few friends Cameron has. He doesn’t have any other intentions toward her; I can guarantee this. He’s just kindly helping out a friend. He’s not as nasty as you say he is.”

Gale’s face darkened, and a tinge of hostility appeared in his eyes. “Consider me nasty, then. I will never agree to let anyone take Cam away from me.”

Courtney clenched her fists. “You’re selfish.”

Those two simple words encapsulated his behavior right now. He was being plain selfish.

For the sake of his personal comfort, he was refusing Cameron a chance at recovery. This wasn’t love.

Courtney glared at Gale, discarding all sense of civility. “Cameron’s not an object. In terms of closeness, I have more power than you in deciding how she should be treated now. I’m not here to discuss with you; I’m just here to inform you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Gale’s face fell. “Do you think that you can do as you please in Melrose City just because you have Elijah’s backing?”

He had clearly overstepped her limits. The anger that Courtney had suppressed all morning rushed to her head. She snarled, “Do you think that everyone is like you? Besides finding someone to back you up so you can have power in Melrose City, is there nothing else to do? You’re the same as Alexander—you’re both trash. Do you think I want to take Cameron away? You’re the one forcibly keeping her here, letting her mind go astray with no means of distraction. If something happens to her one day, you’ll regret it for the rest of your life.”

As he was being berated, his expression was extremely sour, especially when he heard the words ‘something happens to her’. In a flash, he thought of the accident that occurred two days ago, and his heart twisted.

“Do you know what I brought with me today?”

Courtney poured out the contents of the enormous paper bag, then spread out a white silky fabric inlaid with gold thread on the sofa. Under the light, it was modest and radiant as if it was woven from clouds and the starry night sky. The dress fluttered; it was soft and puffy. It was nothing less of a dreamy wedding gown.

“This is Cameron’s graduation project. It’s called ‘Dream’.”

Cameron regarded her marriage as a dream because to her, it was something that was out of reach. She figured that going back to leading a normal life and getting married was an impossible reality. It wasn’t so much as looking forward to marriage than looking forward to going back to her normal self.

“I hope you’ll think this through.”

Throwing down the paper bag, Courtney grabbed her bag and was about to leave. Before she walked out, she darted a look at Gale and said brusquely, “Your little ruse this morning was too clumsy. You may want to intervene in the situation, but you’ve got to see if people actually need your help. Don’t be so nosy next time.”

Gale was baffled by the scolding he just got from her. If this was any other time, he would’ve jumped up from his seat and demanded explanations, but now he had seemingly turned mute. He stared blankly at the wedding gown on the sofa, lost in thought.

All along, he had thought that Cameron didn’t care for marriage, and he even suspected that she feared it. It was similar to how he had always thought that she was only seeking freedom with no place for family in her heart.

He had thought wrong, and he realized that he had yet to fully understand Cameron.

As soon as Courtney left, Cameron walked out of the kitchen holding a salad. When she saw that only Gale was in the living room, she asked, “Where’s Courtney?”

“She left,” Gale answered bleakly.

“Huh? Why did she leave?” Cameron had a look of confusion on her face. After placing the plate of fruit salad on the coffee table, she looked up, only to see a flurry of white on the sofa. She froze. “Why is this here?”

Watching the change of expressions on Cameron’s face, Gale’s emotions felt even more complicated. “Is this your graduation project?”

“Yes,” Cameron answered weakly. Touching the bottom of the gown, she sat down slowly to one side. “I’ve not seen it once since I graduated. I started to forget what it looks like. Back then, this gown even won me the award for the best creation.”

Judging from the look in Cameron’s eyes as she gazed at the dress, Gale could tell what she truly desired.

She wasn’t willing to be a patient that never saw the light of day. She had dreams, and she had things in this world to look forward to. She wouldn’t stay with him forever in this tiny house.

Courtney was right—he might be careless one day and cause an accident that couldn’t be fixed.

“Cam, do you want to get treated in a hospital in America?” The man’s heavy voice rang out in the house.