

Surprise 306

Chapter 306 They Looked Quite Similar

As Courtney was coming down from her office, she saw Leon surrounded by a group of female receptionists who were asking for autographs.

She stood there with her bag in her hand, feeling absolutely annoyed inside. It didn't seem right to keep walking or go back up.

At that moment, she was almost certain that the Facebook post on his official page wasn't even written by himself; it was probably scripted by his company. How could he show up at my office when the issue had just been resolved? What's he up to?

"Hey, Miss!" Leon looked up and spotted Courtney through the gaps between the women in front of him. He waved his hand and made his way through the crowd to get to her. "Why didn't you tell me you're here?"

"With so many of your crazed fans around, I'm afraid I'll go viral again if I interrupt you."

"Nah, that won't happen. I've already cleared it up with them," Leon replied innocently.

He was wearing a white puffer jacket, and the fur around its hood was big and fluffy. The light color made his skin look even fairer, and his face was as small and delicate as a woman's.

"I found a place we can eat at. It's just gonna be the two of us, so don't worry. We'll definitely not get caught on camera this time."

Courtney was a little regretful for coming down from her office. She should've just told him that she wasn't in.

However, it was difficult to reject him face-to-face like this.

"You see, Leon... I still have something to do tonight, and I'm sure you're busy too. Why don't we have a meal together next time? I..."

"I've already made a booking, though. That Japanese restaurant is pretty good—my assistant told me so."

"Japanese restaurant?" Courtney jolted when she heard that. She couldn't help but swallow at the thought of the food.

Half an hour later, Courtney sat in a private room of a Japanese restaurant in East Melrose City. She couldn't stop singing praises of the plate of fresh sea urchin in front of her.

"This is really not bad. It's very fresh indeed."

"It was my assistant who'd strongly recommended this place. Look, I'm really sorry about the commotion earlier."

"Don't worry about it. It's no big deal."

Courtney drank a sip of water before she continued, "Aren't you already treating me to dinner? Besides, it wasn't your fault anyway. You celebrities have it quite hard; every little thing you do is bound to be exaggerated by the public."

"It's not so bad," Leon said with a chuckle. "I've gotten used to things like that. I would've starved to death a long time ago if I hadn't entered the entertainment field."

"Really? You can't be serious."

"Yeah, I've been running around on my own since I was 10 and I've worked every job you can think of. If I hadn't been scouted by chance and became an idol trainee at 13, I probably would've frozen to death in that very winter."

Courtney jolted momentarily. She'd always assumed that Leon grew up in a well-off family without experiencing any hardships in life. She thought that he'd become a celebrity purely for the fun of it, but she didn't expect his past to be something as depressing as this.

When he noticed the doubt on her face, Leon rubbed his nose awkwardly. "Everything you see online is fake. According to my management company, people don't like celebrities with a miserable past anymore. They prefer the persona of a rich young master, so they made up a nice family background for me. In truth, I don't even know who my parents are."

"I'm so sorry." Courtney frowned apologetically. "Let's not talk about unhappy times."

"Nah, don't worry about it. It's all in the past anyway."

Leon took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. The young and naive face of his was extremely pitiful to look at. "Honestly, I'm not too sad that I've never seen my parents. I was adopted from the welfare center at 5 years old, and back then, I thought I was finally going to have a mom and dad. Not too long after, though, my adopted mother died in a car crash, and my adopted father started to rely excessively on alcohol since then. He'd beat me up when he had too much to drink, so I ran away when I was 10—I just couldn't take it anymore. Then, I started working at various places, doing all sorts of odd jobs." He paused and sniffed before carrying on, "I heard that you took in a little brother who's about my age. Is it Shay?"

Courtney nodded without denying it.

Quite a number of people knew about this, and it was even reported on the news before.

"It'd be great if I met someone like you back then." Leon pursed his lips; he seemed to be a little sad. His eyes were fixed on Courtney for a few moments before he picked up the cup of sake and gulped it all down. He immediately choked from the burn. "Cough... It tastes so bad..."

Courtney quickly passed him the glass of water in front of him. "Here, have some water."

It was pitiful to watch Leon act this way. He almost reminded her of how Shay was back then.

Years ago when she saw Shay in the underground boxing ring, he was only 12 or 13 years old. Boys usually reached puberty at a later age, so he was tiny and skinny. Even though she was only 15 at the time, she was a lot taller than him.

It wasn't an overstatement to say that Shay's life had changed completely after Courtney brought him home. They weren't exactly living and eating the best, but it was definitely a lot better than what he went through in the underground boxing ring.

"Though you didn't meet me, you're not all that bad now, are you?"

"I actually met someone who's quite like you back then, you know." Leon let out a bitter chuckle. "But I feel like anyone who showed me kindness was destined to suffer." As he spoke, he retrieved his phone from his pocket, and his slender fingers swiped on the screen for a bit before he passed it to Courtney to show her a photo. "Look at her. Isn't she pretty?"

The screen showed a young lady in her late teens and a boy around 15 or 16 years of age. It was obvious that the boy was Leon who hadn't fully grown into his features. Courtney didn't need to ask to know that this was an old photo of Leon.

As for the young lady, she was innocent and sweet, and Courtney even felt like she looked a little familiar. Surprisingly, Leon was right—the girl in the photo looked quite similar to herself.

Something instantly clicked in Courtney. It was no wonder Leon acted so enthusiastic the first time they met. No doubt, this was why he was willing to wait for her in the freezing cold just so he could have dinner with her.

"I do see the resemblance." Courtney nodded and asked, "Is she your girlfriend?"

"Yeah, her name's Kirsten Ivanov. She's Otharian, and she's from a wealthy family," Leon admitted. His eyes no longer looked pure and naive like a boy's. Instead, they were now filled with deep emotions and nostalgia.

"Something came up two years after I became a trainee in my management company. I left the company, but I was saddled with a huge debt for violating the contract. She cleared my entire debt and helped me out a lot in those two years. She's the only reason I was able to enter the modeling industry later as well. We were planning to get married once I reached the legal age."

"What happened after that?" Courtney knew that she wouldn't be hearing a happy ending the moment she asked the question.

As expected, Leon chuckled self-deprecatingly.

"Anyone who treats me kindly tends to be quite unlucky. She had congenital leukemia; she didn't survive and passed away two years ago. She left me all her assets that she'd inherited from her father, and her family background became mine that everyone publicly celebrates. It seems like this is the only way for me to feel like she's still alive and has never left."

Leon downed both flasks of sake as he told Courtney about him and Kirsten in incoherent words.

Courtney was overcome with mixed feelings at once. This young man who she assumed to have always lived a carefree life in a perfectly harmonious family turned out to have such a troubling past. It was truly a sad story that could put tears in one's eyes.

## Chapter 307 He Lied

“You need to stop drinking.”

Courtney grabbed the flask of alcohol and placed it aside. When she tried to pay the bill after that, she was even stopped by Leon who’d insisted on paying with his card.

“I have to do this... I can’t let a woman pay...”

Courtney felt both troubled and amused. She had the waiter help Leon into the car before she personally drove him back to his hotel.

Glancing at the red-faced young man through the rearview mirror, who was leaning against the back seat groggily and still rambling on under his breath, Courtney shook her head.

“My goodness, you really can’t hold your liquor, can you? You didn’t even drink that much.”

Leon hugged the cushion on the back seat and mumbled, “I promise... I won’t drink anymore... Kirsten...”

Courtney let out another sigh.

A short while later, the car came to a stop in front of the hotel. A few lobby attendants helped take Leon upstairs while Courtney took his room card from the pocket of his jacket and opened the door.

“Just put him on the bed.” Courtney turned on the lights and instructed the attendants on where to put him down. Then, she walked around the room and pulled the curtains together before turning on the air conditioner to 78 degrees Fahrenheit. Before she left, she even put a glass of warm water by his bed.

The entertainment industry was a complicated place that was filled with people from all walks of life. No one knew for sure how their lives were before fame.

What Leon told her was indeed a little twisted; it sounded as if life was simply playing tricks on him. However, it wasn’t completely unbelievable either. After all, why would anyone make up such a story for no reason?

After leaving the hotel, Courtney stood by the roadside to hail a cab. She wasn’t planning to expose anything that Leon had just told her. Just then, she noticed a familiar figure quite a distance away, but she couldn’t believe her eyes even after taking a long look.

Alexander was wearing the black long coat that she’d picked out for him in the morning. He’d just gotten down from a cab, and she couldn’t see him clearly since she was a street away.

Courtney immediately ran to the zebra crossing. Just as she was about to cross the road, the traffic police blew his whistle—the light was still red. So, she could only stand and wait. In the meantime, she picked up her phone and prepared to give Alexander a call.

The moment she called his number and looked up, she saw a woman getting down from the cab opposite. She was heading toward a shopping mall with Alexander right by her side.

The dial tone rang in her ear as she waited for her call to be picked up. Even a street away, Courtney could clearly see Alexander taking his phone out of his pocket and looking down at the screen. The woman beside him even leaned in slightly to take a look at who was calling.

Beep— Before long, her call was answered. Courtney couldn't recover from what she saw even when Alexander spoke into the phone. She only responded after a long while. "Where are you, Alexander?"

On the phone, Alexander's voice was as calm as ever. "I'm working overtime in the office. Why?"

Courtney's grip around her phone tightened at the sound of that. "Ah, is that so? But why do I hear traffic noises in the background?"

"Oh." His voice remained its casual tone. "I came downstairs to get dinner."

"You haven't had dinner?"

"Yeah."

"Why don't I pick you up from the office? It's getting late; you should get some rest." Her other hand clenched into a fist as she racked her brains to find a good reason for his behavior. However, she couldn't think of any.

"It's fine. You should go to sleep first. I'll be a little late tonight. I'm still busy, so let's talk tomorrow, alright?" With those words, he hung up without a sliver of hesitation.

Courtney held her phone in her hand as she watched the two figures on the street, her expression going stiff.

She didn't want to assume the worst of things, but Alexander had indeed lied to her today. People only lied when they wanted to hide the truth, but she couldn't think of anything he would want to hide from her.

Just then, the traffic police blew his whistle again, and the crowd started to cross the road at once. Courtney rushed through the crowd and quickly made her way to the shopping mall that Alexander had just entered.

The Pinnacle Shopping Center was huge. After going through the entrance, Courtney didn't know where to go from there. She stood by the door and stared at the escalator, feeling flustered and confused inside.

Her phone buzzed endlessly in her pocket. She stood stunned for a moment until she realized that the people around her were all staring in her direction. Only then did she hastily pick up the call.

"Courtney, where are you? Are you in Melrose City?"

"Yeah, why?" Courtney looked around with a frown, trying to find the familiar figure in the mall.

"I've been thinking for some time, and there's something I need to tell you." Cameron's voice sounded rushed at the other end of the line. "I heard from Gale that Alexander found Jordan's biological mother."

Courtney's face darkened at once. She couldn't believe her ears, and her voice even went an octave higher. "What did you say?"

"I can't believe it too. Didn't you tell me that Jordan's your son? But Gale told me last night that Alexander has found Jordan's biological mother. He even said that he's already met her. Apparently, the woman had come to him herself because she wanted to see Jordan."

“That’s impossible.” Courtney’s frown deepened. “She must be an imposter.”

“What if she’s not?” Cameron sounded a little perplexed. “Can you confirm that the man from all those years ago really was Alexander just because of a pendant? Didn’t you tell me that he’d lost the pendant a long time ago? Even he doesn’t know when exactly he lost it.”

Courtney rubbed her forehead. At that moment, she felt like her mind was in a mess. “That can’t be right. Let me think... Jordan should be my son—I’m sure of it.”

Back then, the salesgirl from the jewelry store had told her that the pendant belonged to Alexander, so she was certain that Jordan was her son who had been taken away all those years ago. Furthermore, Alexander had indeed found a surrogate mother to deliver his baby. But what if Alexander had lost the pendant long before that night? She didn’t seem to have more evidence to prove that the man back then was indeed Alexander.

“Don’t panic, Courtney. What about your paternity testing report? Have you and Jordan done a paternity test?”

“A paternity test?” Courtney slowly calmed down. “Yeah, we have. I have a copy of the report with me.”

The test wasn’t done on her own will, though. Mikayla had secretly got it done behind their backs to confirm Courtney’s relationship with Alexander back then. The results proved that Alexander and Tina were father and daughter. Overwhelmed with immense panic, Courtney had almost forgotten about this.

“That woman must be an imposter, then.” Cameron gasped. “You need to be careful, Courtney. I’ve been having heart palpitations lately for no reason. I just knew something wasn’t right when Gale told me about this. He said that Alexander had told his assistant to look for Jordan’s biological mother, and his assistant ended up discovering a problem with the surrogacy from back then.”

“What’s the problem?”

“That’s where it gets weird. Gale wouldn’t tell me anything else after that. He said that it’d ruin your relationship with Alexander.”

Courtney gave it a thought for a moment. She could feel her hands and legs slowly getting colder.

If Alexander had really found a problem with the surrogacy from all those years ago, perhaps what he discovered was that his child’s surrogate mother wasn’t who he thought it was. Then, when he was just a step from the truth, a woman who claimed to be Jordan’s biological mother appeared all of a sudden.

It was as if there was an invisible hand behind the scenes that was pushing them toward a direction that was filled with chaos and danger, as if someone who knew the truth was watching them from above, toying with them just for fun.

Chapter 308 Why Did He Never Once Mention Her?

The heat inside the shopping center had been turned up, but Courtney’s hands and feet were still cold.

A familiar figure finally showed up on the escalator. And yet, she hesitated, taking advantage of the promotional standee outside a store to hide herself away from Alexander's line of sight.

Courtney could clearly see the woman next to Alexander. The woman looked young. She was clad in a white fur coat and a pair of pale blue jeans, her outfit completed with a pair of tan boots. The woman's long hair brushed past her shoulders. A gray coat hung over her arm as well. She surprisingly seemed very refreshing and put-together.

If what Cameron said was true, then this girl was probably the one she was talking about.

The pair came up from the first floor, each of them carrying a paper bag from a baby shop. Courtney didn't even need to give it much thought; she could already tell what was inside those bags.

She had no idea what the girl said, but Alexander actually lowered his head and laughed.

After they walked out of the shopping center, they hailed a taxi and left.

Courtney saw all of this from the entrance to the Pinnacle Shopping Center. She couldn't hear anything from the rush of people passing her; all she could hear was the cold wind whistling past her ears.

When she returned home, Courtney took a shower as usual and got into bed. She attempted to regulate her emotions, hoping she could pretend that she didn't know anything when Alexander came back later.

This woman that had popped up out of the blue had to be a liar, but Courtney couldn't just tell Alexander directly that the woman was lying and that she couldn't have given birth to the child.

Unless she could prove everything, Alexander would simply think that Courtney shouldn't have said something like that.

Should she be honest, or use a bigger lie to correct an earlier lie? All Courtney felt was conflict.

Meanwhile, a young man sat by the bed inside a suite at Melrose Hotel. The drunkenness on his face from an hour ago had completely vanished now, and his eyes were absolutely clear. A little sharp and cold, even.

A phone rang then. He looked down to glance at the incoming call before he picked it up with a blank face.

"Hello."

"Are you done yet?" The voice of a man came over the phone, questioning him. "How many days has it been already? How did you even convince me in the first place that you'll be sure to finish this little job?"

"These things take time. She's different from all the women I've encountered before."

"I've told you before that Courtney is no ordinary woman. I don't need you to actually seduce her; just getting a few videos is enough. As for how, that's up to you. Didn't I give you the drugs already?"

At the mention of the drugs, Leon's expression darkened a little. His gaze shifted over to the little paper packet on top of the bedside cabinet.

“I did use the drugs, but she didn’t drink them.”

“Then what in the world have you been doing tonight? You at least have a video of her sending you back to the hotel, right?”

“Nope.” Leon paused for a few seconds. “I got a taxi myself. I’ll look for another opportunity next time.”

“You don’t have much time. Don’t come crying saying that I didn’t give you a reminder: if you don’t give me what I want soon, then you won’t be able to get the money to pay back your remaining gambling debts.”

At that, Leon gradually paled.

The call was cut off, and the room once again fell into silence. The room was still filled with the scent of alcohol. When he took a deep breath, he could seemingly still smell a hint of a light fragrance, and when he lifted his head, he saw the white jacket hanging on the clothes rack.

His cold, sharp gaze softened a little at the sight.

The next morning, the sky was aglow with the rays of the rising sun.

Sunlight streamed in through the curtains, scattering across Courtney’s face. It was a little blinding, so she raised a hand to block the rays. Instantly, the signs of sleepiness on her face dissipated greatly. When she sat up, her blanket still in her arms, she was still a little lost and confused.

When did she fall asleep last night?

The house was quiet. Judging from the perfectly smooth, undisturbed pillow on the other side of the double bed, Alexander never came home last night.

Gripping the corner of the blanket, Courtney thought of last night’s events.

Suddenly, beeping sounds came from outside the bedroom, signaling the door being unlocked. Her expression froze. She quickly tossed her blanket aside, got out of bed, and pulled open the bedroom door.

“Alex—”

Oliver had two bags filled with breakfast food hanging off his arms as he took off his shoes. At the sound of the door opening, he looked up to see Courtney standing by the bedroom door, still clad in her pajamas. He stiffened a little when he saw her, swallowing what he was about to say.

“Hey Courtney, what’s with that expression?”

“Nothing.” Courtney returned to her senses. “Why are you here? It’s still early.”

“Oh, I came here to get something. The school’s going to have a drill at the end of this month, so I probably won’t be able to come back for the time being. I got breakfast for you since I was on the way here anyway.”

Oliver had brought a lot of food. Clearly, he had also bought breakfast for Alexander.

“Have some food first. I don’t know what you like, so I ended up buying a little of everything.”

However, Oliver had always been quick to pick up on others' feelings. Although Courtney hadn't voiced it, he could already sense her unease. It seemed that Alexander hadn't come back last night. Oliver was about 80 to 90 percent sure that something had cropped up between them.

Courtney sat down at the dining table. Although she had snapped back to her senses, her mind still wandered a little.

Oliver stuck a straw in the packet of soy milk he had brought and pushed it over to her. "Drink up while it's still fresh," he advised.

"Thanks," Courtney answered, her tone dull and troubled.

Oliver watched her, noticing how she barely made a dent in the soy milk even though she had been sipping away for a long time. At last, he couldn't help but ask, "Something on your mind?"

"No," Courtney denied with emphasis.

"It's because of Alexander, isn't it?"

Courtney furrowed her brows at that. "Is it that obvious?"

"Yep, pretty obvious." Oliver sighed. "Ever since I got to know you, most of the time, the reason behind your mood swings can be boiled down to Alexander. So, I didn't even need to second guess myself. What has he done again this time?"

Again, huh... His words weighed on Courtney's heart for some reason. Instantly, a suffocating feeling crashed over her.

"Nothing." It involved Jordan's identity. Courtney couldn't talk much about it. "Feelings aren't really something that can be explained properly. Didn't you say that you're here to get something? You should do that."

Seeing how she had no intention of spilling the truth, Oliver didn't press the issue. After he had eaten breakfast and gotten what he needed from his room, he returned to school to prepare for the drill that was supposed to be carried out at the end of the month.

Courtney arrived at the Hunter Group. There was still over an hour to go until she was actually expected at work. The security guard by the entrance of the building yawned as he opened the door, but he immediately froze when he saw Courtney. Instantly, his eyes snapped wide open as he made himself look like he was wide awake and alert.

"Good morning, President Hunter."

Courtney gave a simple nod in greeting before walking in and entering the elevator. The elevator then pulled up to the tenth floor. The secretaries and assistants weren't in yet, so the entire floor was pitch-dark. Just as she was about to switch on the lights, Courtney noticed a weak light in the distance through the corner of her eyes.

It was coming from the CFO's office.

She paused, and in the end, she didn't turn on the lights. Instead, she made her way over to the CFO's office with light steps.

The door to the office was ajar, a yellow light streaming through the crack. A familiar figure was behind the desk inside, having laid his head down to sleep.

Courtney stopped by the door, her emotions complicated when she remembered the events of last night.

She couldn't figure out why Alexander didn't return home last night, but she figured that he had returned to his office and spent the entire night here after he had sent the woman off. He has nothing to do with the Hunter Group in the first place; he only helped me because of my own carelessness. But if he's willing to offer his unconditional help with such a task, why isn't he mentioning a word about that woman?

### Chapter 309 He Can't Change His Picky Ways

Courtney stood outside by the office door for a while. At last, she picked up a blanket from the couch and draped it over Alexander.

"Courtney..." Alexander opened his eyes. They were only half-open, still hazy with sleep. Upon seeing Courtney though, he sat up and glanced at his watch. "Why are you so early? You didn't sleep well last night?"

Courtney nodded. "Yeah, I had too much to eat and got a stomach ache."

Alexander pulled her hand over and placed it within his palm, frowning. "Your hand is so cold. You haven't dressed warmly enough," he said.

"It's fine; we have heaters at work."

"But it's cold outside." Suddenly, Alexander thought of something, and he let go of Courtney's hand, bending over to dig out a hot pack from the drawer of his desk. After pressing the button on the hot pack, he shoved it into Courtney's arms.

"Here, hold this. It'll heat up in a bit."

The hot pack heated up gradually after Courtney held it for a while. She scrutinized the cartoon character on its exterior before she asked out of curiosity, "Did you buy this?"

Alexander looked composed. "It's a gift from my secretary. She said that it's a Christmas gift for Jordan."

When Jordan and Tina came to their workplace to play some time ago, an intern was in charge of showing them around. She was a girl in her early twenties, just fresh out of university. She was later retained to work as Alexander's secretary.

At that, Courtney's expression turned meaningful. "Don't tell me that you can't tell why a young lady would do that?" A Christmas gift for Jordan? More like she's trying to get in Alexander's good books. The

secretary could ask Alexander if Jordan liked the hot pack that she had gifted, and if Jordan did, she could also give the boy hats, scarves, or gloves.

Alexander's forehead creased slightly. "Why would she do that?"

"Developing a romantic relationship with her superior and all that. Did she not ask you how Jordan liked the hot pack?"

"She did, actually."

"That's not good."

"I told her I haven't given the hot pack to Jordan because it said that it's not suitable for children aged five or younger."

When Courtney heard that, she could totally imagine how unamused he had looked then. Her expression froze for a bit, but her lips promptly curved up into a smile.

"It must be mentally tiring to be your secretary. You can consider giving her a raise."

Ordinary people would typically say that they liked the gift they were given and call it a day, whether they liked the present or not. A present was a token of appreciation, after all. Alexander, though, was different; he couldn't change his picky ways.

Courtney didn't even need to make a guess. That secretary must've stopped giving him any presents after that.

"It's almost time. I'm going to start working now." Courtney glanced at her watch. "I have a meeting with the board of directors this morning."

"Another board meeting?" Alexander frowned. "It's already an amazing feat to gather everyone for the meeting when it's normally only held every six months. Even though the Hunter Group has been plagued with a slew of problems recently, there's no need to discuss everything with the board of directors."

Courtney frowned as well at the mention of that topic. "Kelly was the one who called for the meeting this time."

The young lady of the Yves Family was the kind of person to come whinging and grouching for no reason every few days or so. After returning from her studies overseas, she turned pompous and thought she was all that, constantly eyeing on the position of creative director of the Hunter Group's advertising department.

Back when Lucian was still alive, he never arranged for her to work at the Hunter Group, probably because he knew Kelly would not go far. Lucian's word had always carried weight; no one dared to go against his orders. But now that Courtney was in charge, Kelly's ambitions started to rear its head again.

Just as Courtney had expected, the board meeting was about the contract for the second advertising campaign.

"KPIs have indeed risen after the first advertising campaign. I have to admit that it wasn't a small rise across the board either. However, I think that there's been too many articles about that guy Leon. The

risks are too huge. So, I think there's no need for us to keep signing him for the second campaign. We can get someone else instead. And besides, we can find an even better candidate for the same price."

Somehow, Kelly's rousing breakdown seemingly made sense.

Courtney sat in the chairman's seat, waiting for Kelly to finish before she said, "Leon's contract renewal is up to the advertising department. I'm not well-versed in this. I think that there is nothing wrong with what advertising has told me. As for what you just said, the risks are certainly great. The advertising department has also suggested another plan: if we don't renew Leon's contract, we can sign a new spokesperson."

"A new spokesperson? Who is it?"

"Shay Spencer."

Courtney had just said Shay's name when Kelly burst into laughter. "President Hunter, or rather, Chairman Hunter, are you kidding me right now? Or are you taking everyone here for an idiot? Everyone knows that Shay is your younger brother."

"This doesn't have anything to do with our familial relationship, does it now?" Courtney said evenly.

"The advertising department picked a suitable candidate. Shay's reputation is clean, and those negative news articles you were talking about earlier? He has none."

"Courtney, you really think that we don't know your plans when you've been doing all you can to bring your cronies into the company to run the show?" Kelly stood up, her cold eyes staring at Courtney.

"How many people have you fired or transferred since you became the acting chairman? You ended up sending my two cousins to work at another foreign branch. I know you're planning to take control and dominate the company before my aunt's return."

It wasn't hard to understand why restrictions were constantly placed on Kelly at work, since she was brave enough to have this attitude in front of the entire board of directors.

Courtney took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. Then, she lifted her head to look at Kelly with a frigid gaze.

"So, you called everyone on the board of directors here today just to point your finger at me? Kelly Yves, did you think that you can do whatever you want just because you have some company stocks in hand? This isn't your home. This is a workplace, and there are rules at a workplace. Did you actually think that I wasn't aware how your two cousins misappropriated company funds for their private use?"

Kelly's two cousins used to call the shots at the Hunter Group. They would embezzle the company's funds for risky investments, and in the end, they racked up such huge losses that they could barely keep the clothes on their backs. When they couldn't pay the staff who had been working on their projects, someone reported them to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

One could say that the source of all the Hunter Group's financial troubles was Kelly's cousins.

"That was just a momentary lapse of judgment on their part." Kelly tried her best to justify her cousins.

"What right do you have to discipline them? You're just the acting chairman."

"I am the chairman as long as I remain as acting chairman."

“And what happens when my aunt comes back?” Kelly lifted her chin, her haughty expression already revealing her thoughts. “She’s the biggest stakeholder in the entire company. When she comes back, don’t you have to give up your position as chairman?”

Before Courtney could answer, the secretary opened the door at the side of the meeting room.

Susan was dressed in a mauve suit. An assistant by her side held her bag and jacket. When she walked over and caught sight of Courtney, rage and hatred filled her eyes. Then, her dark voice reverberated throughout the room.

“You’ve done a good job until now, Chairman Hunter. Now that I’m back, you no longer have to work yourself to the bone.”

### Chapter 310 I’m Going To Take You To See Someone Else First

The moment she saw Susan, Courtney finally realized why Kelly had gone through all that trouble to organize this board meeting: if there was going to be a change in chairmen, then naturally everyone had to be there.

According to their share ratios, Susan’s shares were greater than Courtney’s by three percent. Without a doubt, Susan was the largest shareholder within the company, and according to her qualifications, she was also the executive director of the Hunter Group.

“Now that I’m back, I’ll take the burden that is the Hunter Group off your shoulders, if no one here objects. So, Courtney, shouldn’t you give up your seat?”

Susan had dropped her kind and gentle veneer. Now, she looked absolutely murderous, as though she had condensed all her rage and hatred and directed it at Courtney.

Courtney frowned and stepped aside. “Of course. This seat was yours in the first place.”

Thus, Susan sat down in the seat unceremoniously.

Natasha hastily pulled a chair over for Courtney by the side. Only then did the awkward atmosphere ease. However, Natasha’s actions seemed to have earned an eye roll from Susan, as though she was berating Natasha for meddling.

“So, since I’ve made my return, the company should run like how it did before. Weren’t you busy with your fashion company, Courtney? You can focus on that now. The Hunter Group has me.”

Immediately after that, the board of directors started talking and discussing among themselves.

Regardless of everything, the Hunter Group managed to weather their earlier crisis because of Courtney’s work. The company was now able to operate normally. In fact, it ran even better than before. Courtney’s efforts could not be dismissed in bringing the company to where it was today.

Why would anyone kill the goose laying the golden eggs and then trample on its corpse?

Courtney didn't feel anything as she listened to the din. She didn't hold much expectations for the Hunter Group in the first place. She was merely forced to take up the responsibility and resolve the crisis.

"I've got no opinions about this."

During this time, she had been so busy that she didn't even have time to care for the children. Now that someone was willing to take the Hunter Group off her hands, she couldn't be any more happier. There were people who would chase after power and money, and then there were also people who didn't care for things like that.

After the meeting ended, Courtney returned to her office to pack up her things, emptying the entire room for Susan's use.

Not long after, Susan came over. The smug look on her face was enough to make people wonder if she wasn't really as troubled and concerned as she had seemed during the earlier board meeting. To Courtney, however, it wasn't important, and she couldn't be bothered to question Susan.

"I've packed my things already. You can just move in right away, Chairman Yves."

Courtney stood off to the side. Natasha had already helped her to cart away the cardboard box containing her belongings.

The only ones left in this office were Courtney and Susan.

Susan eyed Courtney with a cold gaze. "You agreed very quickly to leave when I told you to show yourself out. Are you really that unsentimental toward the company, or have you already plotted out a path for retreat?"

"I've got no interest in managing the company; my father already mentioned that back when he was still alive. And anyway, I'm not listed in line for the inheritance. If you're still worried about that, I can sell off my shares, and the company will finally fully belong to the Yves Family. It won't have any ties to me."

"Stop pretending to be a saint." Susan's expression darkened. "You think I don't know this? Lucian didn't even mention your name once in his will, but he left you an insurance policy. The insured amount for that policy comes up to one whole billion. He pretended to not care about you in front of me, but in reality, you're actually the daughter he cares for the most. All he gave me and Anna is the trainwreck that is the Hunter Group."

The temperature in the office suddenly dropped several degrees, becoming as cold as an icehouse.

Courtney abruptly found things laughable as she took in Susan's frustrated and furious look. After a few seconds of silence, she looked at Susan with cold eyes. "Whatever we do, God is watching. Susan Yves, do you know why my father died? Do you truly have a clear conscience?"

"What is the meaning of this?" Susan frowned, an obvious look of nervousness flashing across her face as quickly as it disappeared.

"You only know that the insured amount for the policy is one billion. But do you know what the policy is for?" Courtney's eyes darkened, as though she was staring at Susan from an abyss.

“If my father dies in an accident, I will receive one billion.”

Courtney’s expression turned stormy. “The money I invested into the Hunter Group was part of the inheritance my mother left for me years ago. Aunt Alicia has been helping me to look after it for years. When the company was being investigated for issues with its capital flow, you ran and hid yourself, even though it was all mere suspicions then. It’s because deep down, you know that you have skeletons in your closet. You also don’t know what your elder brothers have been hiding from you for the past few years.”

As of now, Courtney hadn’t claimed a single penny of that insurance policy yet, simply because she hadn’t officially gotten proof that her father’s death was due to an ‘accident.’

‘Accidental death,’ of course, referred to death by unnatural causes.

Susan’s expression gradually changed.

“You know very well what I mean. You also know very well why Anna died.” Courtney adjusted the bag strap hanging on her shoulder. “I can leave, but don’t get any twisted ideas in your head.” Susan’s life wasn’t all smooth sailing. She lost both her husband and her daughter during midlife. As long as she stays in her lane, I have no intentions of pursuing the truth. Courtney was simply worried that Susan would not recognize her fortune.

When Courtney stepped out of the office, she found Alexander waiting for her by the door. For a moment, she was stunned. “Why are you here?”

“Since you’re about to leave, there’s no point in me staying here anymore.” Alexander’s expression was calm. “But if you continue to stay, I’ll be by your side.”

“No, I don’t want to.” Courtney gripped his hand.

“That’s good then.” Alexander rubbed his nose before he continued in an unhurried manner, “After all, I’ve already handed in my letter of resignation. It’ll be kinda awkward if I run over to HR to stop my letter from being processed if you end up staying.”

Courtney instantly let out a giggle.

When they left the company building, Natasha came chasing after her.

“President Hunter, are you really leaving? Are you never coming back?”

“Probably.” Courtney smiled at Natasha. “Keep working hard.”

“No.” Natasha couldn’t quite catch her breath. “Can I go with you? Even working as an assistant for you at Citron Apparel is fine with me.”

Instantly, Courtney understood the situation.

All this while, Natasha had been her right-hand woman. Once she left, Natasha would most likely be alienated by the rest of the workers. Susan would definitely not treat her kindly just because she had just the slimmest of ties with the Yves Family. Staying here at the Hunter Group would just put Natasha in a very awkward situation.

“Citron Apparel doesn’t pay as well as the Hunter Group. If you don’t mind...”

“I’m willing to take a pay cut,” Natasha quickly answered. “I’ve always wanted to study fashion design. I’m willing to work at Citron Apparel even without pay as long as you will take me.”

Courtney and Alexander exchanged looks. Then, Courtney turned back to Natasha and smiled. “Go report to Bill then. I noticed that he’s been lacking a handy assistant recently.”

Natasha’s eyes were as wide as dinner plates, a surprised delight on her face. “I’ll go over immediately!”

Courtney watched as Natasha zoomed off like a quick gust of wind, and she smiled a meaningful smile.

“Bill’s rather lucky.” Alexander took Courtney’s hand. “You’ve always been sensitive when it comes to others’ needs. When will you be sensitive toward mine?”

“Are you getting jealous over Natasha?” Courtney rolled her eyes at him. “I’m considered unemployed now. Take me out for a meal.”

“I’ve already made a booking at a restaurant.” Alexander lowered his head to look at her with a complicated expression. “But first, I’m going to take you to see someone else.”