

Surprise 411

One Night Surprise Chapter 411 But I'm the Only One Daddy Has

Cameron spun Courtney around from the mirror. When Courtney looked up, her gaze met the look that Alexander had sent her way. It was as cold as ever. Now, it even seemed to have a hint of desolation to it.

"Since we all know each other, I guess I don't have to introduce you all." Gale gave a dry cough, not quite smart enough to navigate the situation. The atmosphere got even more awkward.

"Let's have your clothes fitted first." Cameron was the one to rescue them all as she urged an attendant to take Alexander to the dressing room.

Throughout the entire process, neither Courtney nor Alexander interacted with each other.

After Alexander entered the dressing room, Cameron balefully shot Gale a glare. "Did you lose your marbles? Can't you be more mindful about what you say?"

Gale chuckled in embarrassment. "I was just trying to liven things up, you know? And besides, I think that no one here has a grudge against someone else. We can all still be friends in the future."

"On my best friend's behalf, thank you. But, do you think that she looks like the kind of person who needs more friends?"

Courtney felt exasperated when she saw both of them activate roasting mode. "I'm going to the washroom."

Even after she had put a lot of distance between them, Courtney could still hear Cameron and Gale arguing whether it was okay to be friends with your ex after breaking up.

As she stared at her reflection in the mirror, Courtney also thought about the question herself. The answer was no. Whether it was an amicable breakup or not, it was best for both parties to not meet again since they'd made the decision to part ways. And being friends was out of the question. Popping up in the other's life would hinder them in getting a new start, so it was better to never see each other again.

Courtney deliberately stayed longer in the washroom. By the time she emerged, Alexander had already finished trying on his tuxedo and left. He hadn't even so much as greeted her.

By the time Gale and Cameron drove her back to Elijah's manor, it was already evening.

The manor had a mini playground built on its grounds, so Courtney could hear the sounds of laughter the moment she entered the yard. Elijah had been worried that Tina would be bored out of her mind being cooped up at home without going to school, so he had invited Tina's kindergarten class over the weekend to come and play with her.

Following the direction of the laughter, Courtney saw around eight children clambering around in the ball pit. Meanwhile, there was a little figure sitting desolately by the slide in the corner. The child looked out of place. She frowned and walked over to him.

“Jordan, why aren’t you playing with the others?”

The rays of the evening sun splashed across Jordan’s face. He looked up. “Mommy,” he greeted dully.

“They don’t want to play with you?” Courtney was a little worried.

Jordan shook his head. He seemed down.

The boy had always been a worrier. Courtney was concerned, so she sat down next to him. They sat with their backs to the radiant evening sun, their shadows, one bigger than the other, cast in front of them.

“What is it? Can you tell me?”

Jordan turned his head to regard Courtney carefully, his pretty forehead wrinkled up into three deep lines, looking exactly like a certain person. “Tina said that Mr. Elijah is her daddy now. I won’t be able to see my own daddy anymore.”

Courtney stiffened for a bit. She then reflexively turned around to look at Tina, who was screaming like a banshee inside one of the tunnels connected to the ball pit. Truly, Tina didn’t know what sadness was like.

To Tina, leaving Melrose City was no big deal. On the contrary, since she grew up in the US, she was used to its way of life. She wasn’t all that attached to Alexander either. At least, not when compared to her father on paper, Elijah, who had taken care of her since she was small.

To Jordan, however, it was different.

“So, you miss your daddy.” Courtney sighed. “If that’s the case, are you still willing to come with me and go overseas?”

Jordan stared at her for a long while. At last, he shook his head. “I’m not going.”

“Why not?” Courtney furrowed her brows. “Don’t you want to live together with Tina and me?”

Jordan was quiet for a few seconds before he started to stick his fingers up one by one like an adult.

“You have Tina, Mr. Elijah, Angie... Mommy has a lot of people by her side, but I’m the only one Daddy has.”

Courtney suddenly felt a tug at her heart. His last sentence—“I’m the only one Daddy has”—sounded extraordinarily heartbreaking.

She clenched her fists, and after a few moments of silence, she spoke. “But Daddy still has your grandma, Mr. Oliver, and your great-grandpa. I actually only have you and Tina.”

Jordan shook his head. “Great-Grandpa and Daddy are always fighting, and Grandma doesn’t talk much to Daddy either. Mr. Oliver is about to go overseas for his studies soon. Daddy isn’t good at taking care of people, but I know that he loves me a lot.”

In the end, Jordan might look like he was close to Courtney, but in reality, he still leaned toward Alexander.

Courtney didn't know what to say. Although she really wished that Jordan would go with her, logically speaking, going with her wasn't the best thing for Jordan. After all, the Duncans had raised him for six years. And besides, he himself didn't want to leave.

The end of the month came. Gale and Cameron's wedding was held at a holiday resort in one of the suburbs in Melrose City. Guests streamed in like water. The road leading to the resort was filled with luxury cars.

Gale went over to Cameron's tiny apartment to pick her up shortly after daybreak. Because Alexander was with him, Courtney had no interest in participating in the games that they had planned beforehand. Fortunately, Courtney's assistant, Natasha, was there. She enthusiastically locked the door, stopping Gale from entering the apartment. She then put her hands on her hips and yelled to the men waiting outside, "If you want to come in, you'll have to pony up. We'll only let you guys in once we're staggering from the weight of all that sweet, sweet money."

It was loud and noisy outside the apartment. Courtney had no idea what Gale and his entourage said, but envelopes were immediately slid under the crack of the door. The shiny coating of the envelopes was positively blinding.

Courtney was startled by this. "Whoa..." she yelped in surprise.

"Holy moly, they're that intent on getting in?" Natasha exclaimed at Courtney as she picked up the envelopes. "Back in my hometown, the grooms were stingy as all hell. It took forever for them to cough up anything, and even then, they only gave us two envelopes."

Courtney had never been to a wedding before, so she didn't know what was standard. "How much money do they normally put inside the envelopes?" she asked casually.

"Five bucks, at most—" Natasha opened an envelope as she spoke, but the rest of her words were left stuck in her throat. A hundred bucks. And in US dollars too. That came up to over 600 in the local currency. And there was still a whole heap of envelopes by her feet. Just looking at them was enough to make Natasha's eyes bug out. "Hey, Miss Hunter, is this how rich people's weddings go?"

It wasn't like Courtney had experienced a wedding before; she was frozen as well. All of a sudden, Cameron stood up from her bed, craning her neck. "Who do they think they're bribing? Do they think we don't know what they're up to? Don't open that door."

Courtney and Natasha exchanged looks with each other. Natasha proceeded to pick up the envelopes and retreat to the side. "Miss Hunter, come here. I can't pick up everything myself."

Why wouldn't they grab the envelopes? With how stacked the envelopes were, Natasha was sure it was worth her several months' salary.

Loud thumps could be heard from the door, along with the sounds of the Langley men's voices. "Open the door for the groom himself if you're already drowning in envelopes! Don't tell me that you're keeping the door locked because you really got weighed down from all the envelopes!"

Courtney greatly disliked what she heard. Immediately, she fired back, "Your envelopes only have a bit of money in them. No one's going to be surprised seeing that amount. Sincerity is needed when getting married, so if you're just going to give those little bribes out, then you can forget about stepping past that door."

One Night Surprise Chapter 412 Let Only the Best Man Drink

It promptly went quiet outside.

Half a beat later, after Gale had seemingly chastised and calmed down his rowdy entourage of cousins and friends, he spoke good-naturedly. "Of course I'm sincere. My cousins were just fooling around just now. Whatever you want me to do to prove my sincerity, I'll do it. I'll even go out and pluck the stars from the sky if that's what you want me to do."

"You're being a pushover, Gale." A round of laughter sounded outside.

"Shut it... If you ruin my wedding, you little brats, I'm going to choke you all to death."

"Stop yammering. Words alone aren't going to prove your sincerity," Courtney said to the men outside. "If you're really sincere, you wouldn't have just brought these envelopes with you."

"So, what do you want?"

His question had Courtney stumped. She immediately looked at Natasha for help.

Natasha was busy counting their spoils. After some quick thought, she pretended to lift a wine glass and drink from it.

"Drinking?" Courtney said without thinking.

"How much to drink?" the men outside yelled back.

Courtney was stunned. She hadn't actually intended to make them drink. Now that she had made her bed, she had to lie on it. Courtney immediately shot a look at Natasha, signaling for her to help clean up this mess.

Once she was done counting, Natasha put the envelopes aside. Clearing her throat, she yelled to the men outside, "Simple. We agree on a lucky number, of course. It's a wedding, right? So, one glass to prove the groom's heart, and two glasses to prove the love between both bride and groom."

"Two then. Two glasses." Gale's voice emerged from the crowd. "I'll prove that we're a match made in heaven."

The sound of wine being poured out and glasses clinking together could be heard from the outside.

Courtney pricked her ears up as she listened.

"Hey, we should let just the best man drink. If the groom himself falls over drunk, it's going to be a pain since we still have to survive the rest of the day," someone said.

Before Courtney could speak, Natasha answered, "Sure, just the best man is fine."

Gale only had one best man, and that was Alexander.

And fortunately, since he would only be drinking two glasses, Courtney also relaxed.

“Two glasses down,” said Bill. He was Cameron’s friend, so he was considered her eyes for the entourage outside the apartment. He definitely was speaking the truth.

Do we open the door? Courtney mouthed to Natasha.

Natasha shook her head, a meaningful smile appearing on her face before she raised her voice and shouted out the door, “If two glasses is to prove the love between both bride and groom, then three glasses is to show your determination for the life you two will have together in the future.”

The outside of the apartment went quiet for a bit before the raucous laughter started up again.

“What’s one more glass? Three glasses, go.”

“All finished.”

“Four glasses for fortune and a lovely family.”

“Done.”

A while later.

“Nine glasses for a life that’s as long as a cat’s nine lives added together.”

“Done.”

“Ten glasses for a ten-out-of-ten married life.”

“Done.”

“Eleven glasses to prove the groom’s heart.”

“Hey.” Someone noticed Natasha’s phrasing and suddenly fought back with her on this. “Didn’t you say that one glass was for that?”

“But you guys started with two glasses!” Natasha said languidly.

The people outside had no choice but to accept their fate.

They finished eleven glasses of wine, but Natasha had a way with words. Soon, they made their way to the twentieth glass.

Courtney could vaguely hear Gale’s voice through the door. “Alex, are you okay?”

Her heart suddenly clenched. While Natasha was distracted, Courtney secretly unlocked the door.

“Hey guys, we can open the door now...”

With a loud crash, the door swung open. Gale’s entourage gushed in like a raging river, instantly crowding the entire room. Caught off-guard, Natasha shrieked as she was forced over to a corner.

Courtney, on the other hand, had already retreated to the side before this. Once everyone was inside the apartment, she stood on her tiptoes and surveyed the crowd. The pungent smell of alcohol hit her nostrils, but she didn't see Alexander inside. She had no idea where he was either.

They had a wedding emcee come in for the rest of the wedding ceremony. Gale carried Cameron out of her bedroom.

Since Cameron had no family attending her wedding, they simply skipped over any parts that involved her family. No one mentioned this 'oversight' throughout the ceremony, probably because Gale had brought this matter up beforehand. He left the apartment with Cameron in tow to head straight for the Langley residence.

As Cameron's bridesmaid, Courtney followed Gale and Cameron. She watched as Cameron completed the rest of the wedding ceremony with Gale's parents and accepted the wedding gifts they offered her. Cameron remained smiling under everyone's gazes as they gave her their blessings. It was the first time Courtney had seen Cameron have such a calm and sincere smile on her face for the entire day.

The wedding banquet was held at a holiday resort in the suburbs. Because of the delay when Gale went to pick up Cameron, they arrived at the venue later than expected, so the program was a little rushed. The emcee also skipped over all the fluff and went straight to the highlights: the exchanging of rings and the bouquet toss.

A group of young women stood on a white stage that was decorated with roses, waiting to catch the bouquet.

Cameron stood with her back to everyone. Lifting the pure white bouquet of flowers, she tossed it over her head. The bouquet sailed in a perfect arc in the air while the crowd cheered and hooted, and it struck Courtney, who had just walked off the stage to retreat from the bouquet toss.

She had no idea who started it, but the crowd began clapping.

Natasha poked her head out from the crowd and yelled, "Miss Hunter, those who catch the bouquet have to get hitched within three months. If you don't get married by then, you'll remain a spinster."

The crowd followed her lead and laughed.

Courtney forced herself back onto the stage. "Why don't we do the toss again? It seems like the bouquet is wasted on me..."

"How is it wasted on you? Are you actually worried that you won't be able to find someone to marry?" Cameron shoved the bouquet into Courtney's hands. After looking around, she grabbed the emcee's microphone. With one hand on Courtney's arm, she addressed the crowd, her voice loud and clear. "This lady by my side is my bestest best friend. I'm sure many of you here know her. Her name is Courtney Hunter, and she's the kindest woman that I've ever known. You all saw her catch the bouquet. There's a saying out there: if you don't get married within three months of catching the bouquet, then you will remain unmarried forever. So, on her behalf, I'm going to make this announcement: Courtney Hunter is currently single. Gentlemen, feel free to shoot your shot. No f*ckboys allowed."

The crowd below whooped and cheered the moment Cameron finished her speech.

“Sign me up!”

“You think I have a chance?”

Soon, the crowd went into a frenzy.

Courtney was a beautiful woman in the first place. Her aura was especially out-of-this-world, so she had long since attracted the attention of many men here.

Now that Cameron had announced that it was open season for Courtney, she had sicced a whole troop of men on Courtney, making Courtney wish for the ground to open up and swallow her whole. Without waiting for Cameron to finish, she rushed off the stage, running faster than anyone there could.

“Sorry, but where’s the washroom?”

“Over there.”

Courtney lifted the front of her dress and made a mad dash for the washroom. When she saw her red face in the mirror, she got exasperated. She had just whipped out a tube of lipstick to reapply her makeup when she heard a loud thump from further inside the washroom. She jumped from the shock, and she turned around to see a cell phone had fallen and slid out through the crack under the stall. However, the person inside seemed to have not noticed this, for there was no sign of activity from them.

She hesitantly put her lipstick away to pick up the phone. Then, she knocked on the door. “Hi there, you dropped your phone.”

There was still no sound inside the stall. Just as Courtney was about to knock again, she realized that the door was unlocked. A dark figure could be seen slumped next to the toilet bowl when she peered past the crack in the door. The air was filled with the scent of alcohol.

She pulled the door open and looked inside. Instantly, she recognized the occupant.

One Night Surprise Chapter 413 Time Waits for No One

Inside a hotel room at the resort, the scent of alcohol wafted around indiscriminately. A bellhop came by with a basin of warm water, placing it on a stool next to the bed. “Here is the water that you requested, Miss Hunter. The hangover cure has been left on the dining table outside. Do you want me to bring it here?”

“No, thank you.”

“You’re welcome. If you need anything, please call for me.” The bellhop eyed the person on the bed. “I’ll take my leave now.”

“Okay.”

Courtney soaked a towel in the basin of water and placed it on Alexander’s forehead. He had indeed drunk too much earlier this morning when Gale went to pick up Cameron. No wonder she hadn’t seen

any sign of him earlier at the banquet. Initially, Courtney thought that he was deliberately avoiding her, but now, it seemed that she had been overthinking it.

“You can’t hold your liquor. Why did you drink all that wine then? None of Gale’s horde of cousins wanted to help when they were screaming their heads off earlier. You, on the other hand, are a self-sacrificing nut,” Courtney mumbled as she wrung out another damp towel and carefully wiped his hands clean. Alexander’s half-dead form slumped in the washroom earlier had indeed given her a fright.

The room was quiet since Alexander was out cold from all the alcohol. Suddenly, he murmured, “Courtney...”

Courtney stopped wiping his hands for a moment. All of a sudden, she heard him say, “Don’t come back...”

She froze, her lips twitching, curving up into a self-deprecating smile. She tossed the towel into the basin and got up to leave.

By the time Alexander came to, it was already evening. His head threatened to split itself apart from the pounding headache he had. When he shifted a little, the towel on his forehead slipped and fell onto his pillow.

The sound of footsteps came from outside. A female attendant stood by the door, smiling thankfully. “You’re awake at last, Mr. Duncan.”

Alexander sat up and placed a hand on his throbbing forehead. All he remembered was that he had followed the others to the resort after he had drunk himself silly earlier. His stomach had roiled, so he darted away from the crowd to go to the washroom. He couldn’t remember anything after that. “Why am I here?”

“You passed out in the washroom. Fortunately, our foreman brought you to this room to rest. You’ve slept the entire afternoon.”

Alexander brought his wrist up to check the time. It was six already. He did indeed sleep the entire afternoon away. “What about the bride and groom?”

“The married couple set off for their honeymoon right after the wedding ended some time after three. Their flight is probably going to take off soon.”

Alexander nodded thoughtfully. When he pulled the blankets off to get up, he noticed a bouquet of flowers by the bed. His gaze stilled. “Other than your foreman, did anyone else carry me here?”

The attendant was stunned by this question. “I’m not really sure. The foreman ordered me to look after you. He said that it was a woman who discovered you.”

Alexander furrowed his brows. He didn’t say anything after that. It can’t be such a coincidence, right? I must’ve been dreaming.

When he left the resort, Alexander got a call from Gale. “Yo, back in the land of living already, Alex? I thought that you wouldn’t answer this call.”

“What is it?”

“Nothing. Cam and I are going to board our plane in a bit, and I just remembered that there’s something I haven’t told you yet. Before she left, Courtney asked me and Cam to tell you that she has sent Jordan back to your grandfather’s place. Go pick him up when you have the time.”

“She’s not taking Jordan with her?”

L“Probably. She said that it’s Jordan’s own wish, and he wanted to go with you.”

Alexander’s frown grew deeper. “Did she say when she’s leaving?”

“Tonight.”

Huh? Alexander’s expression stiffened abruptly. “What?”

“The adoption process for the young girl from the island has been completed. Courtney already made bookings for tickets out of Melrose City tonight. I wanted to tell you this, but Courtney said that she wanted to tell you herself. She didn’t say anything to you earlier this afternoon?”

“This afternoon?” Alexander’s expression remained frozen. “Who caught the bouquet earlier?”

Gale paused for a bit, stunned. “Courtney did. Why are you asking this?”

“What time is her flight?”

“Eight.”

No way.

On Gale’s end, the airport announced that the plane was ready for boarding. Gale ended the call under Cameron’s urging.

Meanwhile, Alexander gripped his phone as he urged Josh, who was driving. “Step on it.”

He thought that he had only been dreaming earlier—dreaming of that person, her scent, her smile, and her concern for him, all of which were too familiar to him.

After all that had happened, he had no expectations for Courtney to forgive him for all the harm that he had caused her. Even if she could find it in herself to forgive him, he wouldn’t be able to forgive himself.

Broken relationships would still have cracks in them even if they’d been repaired; they would never go back to being the same again. He needed time to carefully think about what he needed, and what he could give her. However, before he could figure it out, she was already on her way to leave.

Time never waited for anyone.

By half past seven, the car stopped in front of the airport’s terminal building. Alexander rushed out of the car like a whirlwind and charged straight for the terminal. There’s still half an hour until the flight to New York takes off. I should be able to get there in time.

Josh followed behind him, having booked tickets for the New York flight. He followed Alexander into the plane, where Alexander insisted on going to the first class cabin to look for Courtney despite the flight attendants’ efforts to stop him.

“Sir, the flight is about to take off. You can’t go there...”

L“I’m looking for someone.”

“No, sir. How about this? We can make an announcement for the person you’re looking for once the plane has stabilized...”

Upon hearing that, Alexander immediately turned and headed into the cockpit. “Where’s the PA system?”

LThe captain was stunned.

“Where’s the PA system?” Alexander repeated.

The captain was still caught up in his surprise as he reflexively pointed at the broadcasting equipment next to him.

The next moment, the microphone for the PA system was in Alexander’s hand. His deep and urgent voice reverberated throughout the cabin. “I apologize, everyone. I got on this flight not because I want to fly to the States, or because I want to go to some other country. I just want to look for someone— someone that I accidentally lost. If she’s willing to give me another chance, I will treasure her more than I ever did...”

The flight attendants had already squeezed themselves over to the cockpit’s entrance. Someone attempted to stop Alexander’s broadcast, but Josh locked all the attendants out. He pressed himself against the door, glaring at the captain and signaling for him not to do anything rash.

The captain shrugged, a nonchalant look on his face as he allowed Alexander to continue broadcasting.

“I thought that respecting your wishes and letting you go was the right decision, but when the time came for you to leave, nothing felt right. I know that if I actually let you leave, I will regret this for the rest of my life. Courtney, if you can hear me, please give me the chance to apologize to you, okay?”

His stifled sobs came through in the broadcast, announced to everyone on the plane. The passengers exchanged looks with each other, searching around for the woman called Courtney.

But in the end, no one answered.

“Okay.” The captain waved a hand at Alexander without any remorse. “Time’s up.” At that, he grabbed Alexander by the shoulders and smashed him down onto the control panel, pinning him down. “Call the police,” the captain said loudly into the PA system.

One Night Surprise Chapter 414 Why Do I Feel That This Sounds Kinda Sad?

By the time Alexander was taken to the airport’s police center, Courtney was already flying up above the clouds.

She hadn’t boarded that flight to New York. Since she was going for a fresh start, she decided to bury everything from her past and start all over again.

Three months later, a horse race was being held at a massive ranch in France.

A black car was parked by the outside perimeter of the ranch. A beautiful woman with short hair alighted from its passenger seat and ran over to the ranch's fence to watch the race.

"Hello, pretty lady," a French man complimented her, having observed her for a while as he leaned against the fence himself. "Lady Aphrodite."

"Is this what you say to every beautiful woman you see?" Cameron folded her arms as she regarded the man before her.

He was tall with forest green eyes that had a romantic air to them. When he spoke, he maintained a sunny smile, but he still radiated a dubious aura despite all that. The feeling he gave Cameron was about the same as her initial impression of Gale.

"Of course not." The French man lifted his hand up to swear. "I promise you that you're the second lady I've ever complimented this way."

Cameron lifted the corner of her lips. "Then, please take me to see the first woman."

The French man stiffened, only coming to his senses a few moments later. "You're her friend?"

"If the woman that you're talking about is Courtney, then yes."

The French man was too surprised to say anything.

Courtney lived in a log cabin by the lake situated to the south of the ranch. The place was pretty quiet, but if she wanted to liven things up for herself, all she would need to do was take a few steps into the ranch and join the crowd watching the horse race.

When Leon brought Cameron to the cabin, Courtney was in the middle of reading a book of French literature. It was a task in itself to understand its contents.

"Oh god, can you please stop being so serious? You're six months pregnant now. Take a break, will you?" Cameron stalked over huffily, her eyes never once leaving Courtney's stomach.

"You're here already?" Courtney quickly plucked her glasses off, a look of joy on her face. "I thought you said you would arrive a little later?"

Cameron had come to France to participate in a competition for wedding gown designs as Citron Apparel's representative. Before she came, she informed Courtney, saying that she was going to visit her since they would both be in the same country. She had also told Courtney that she would come to her home later in order to avoid Gale tagging along.

"I missed you, so I came earlier." Cameron immediately hugged her, giggling cheekily.

"Ahem." The two women could hear someone coughing outside. After they let go of each other, Courtney finally noticed Ryan—all six feet of him—standing by the door. "Courtney, that friend of yours—I still don't know her name," he said in halting English.

Courtney glanced at Cameron. "Did Ryan hit on you?"

Cameron didn't deny it. "You know him pretty well."

"What are you two talking about?" Ryan's English skills were limited. He didn't understand what Courtney meant by 'hitting on' Cameron.

Courtney smiled. "My friend said that you're handsome."

"Really? Thanks."

"My friend's name is Cameron. She's married."

Upon hearing the word 'married,' Ryan's face instantly fell. "Why, Courtney? Why are all the beautiful women from your country married already?"

Courtney shrugged. "It's not like I can help it."

"Never mind. I'll just have a nice, long talk with my horse."

After they watched Ryan trail off sadly, Courtney and Cameron exchanged looks and burst into laughter. Cameron guffawed as she plopped herself down onto the couch. "They say that French men have a penchant for the romantic. I can't tell whether that's true for him, but at any rate, he's got no eye for picking targets to hit on," she said, speaking her mind.

Courtney poured her a glass of water. "How many French men have you met so far? Getting xenophobic already?"

Cameron studied Courtney's stomach. Her belly was already heavy since she was six months along. "How are you doing?"

"Quite well." Courtney looked down and stroked her belly, a warm smile on her face. "This place is nice, and no one knows me. I just study here every day, prepping for my med school finals. By then, the child will be born. If I'm lucky and pass the exams, I can officially attend classes then."

"So, you took a long detour but ended up at the starting point again."

Courtney's gaze shifted. "You're right actually..."

It was difficult to predict how life would turn out. Back then, Tina was still young. Courtney was afraid of others stealing her child away, so she ran to the US. Thus, abandoning her studies was an unavoidable consequence. Abandoning her progress once again to learn about hotel management was also something that life had forced on her. Now, everything had returned to its original track.

"Oh yeah, he and Gale kept searching for you the month you left." Cameron abruptly changed the topic, her eyes casually studying Courtney.

"Really now? And?"

"I didn't tell Gale, so he doesn't know. He seemed to have given up after more than a month of searching."

"Understandable." Courtney sat down, her hands at her waist to help support her weight. Her expression did not change one bit, as though she had already expected this. "That's pretty good."

“Is it really, though?” Cameron had a complicated look on her face. “I never really could understand it. Avoiding Alexander is understandable, but why are you avoiding Elijah too? You said that you would follow him to the States, so why did you end up running away to this backwater little corner alone?”

“I’m not avoiding him.” Courtney took a sip of tea. “Who said that I’m avoiding him? The med school that he helped me to apply to is here. I can’t possibly let him move his company just to be with me.”

“I feel that Elijah would actually do that if you brought that up.”

“Stop it. I know what you’re trying to say.” Courtney looked like she had already guessed Cameron’s thoughts. “But you really got the wrong idea this time. Elijah’s getting married soon.”

“With who?” Cameron was stunned. “That’s so sudden. I’ve never heard about him getting married.”

“Lilian.”

“Wow, talk about dating your boss.”

“That’s why I didn’t go to New York. I can’t possibly interfere with their life together, can I?”

“Why do I feel that it all sounds kinda sad?” Cameron watched Courtney’s nonchalant expression, feeling heartbroken all of a sudden. “So you put them before yourself, but what about you? The kid is due in a few more months. Do you really want me to still keep everything a secret?”

Courtney was quiet for a bit. “There’s no need for you to tell. Love isn’t always needed in life. And besides, I have plenty of things on my to-do list.”

Cameron instinctively glanced at the towering piles of medical textbooks. Her scalp crawled at the sight. “You’re just transforming all your sadness and anger into strength. It’s a good thing, but I still feel a little heartbroken about it. Say, I’m going back tomorrow. Do you really have nothing that you want me to convey?”

Courtney carefully thought it over. Suddenly, her eyes lit up. “Actually, I do.” She then fished out an aged black velvet box from the drawer in her desk and handed it to Cameron. “Please help me give this back to him.”

Cameron didn’t even need to open the box to know what was inside: it was the necklace that had seemingly determined Courtney’s fate. The gears of fate were stuck on this necklace. Once it was returned to its original owner, everything would seemingly return to their intended tracks, never to cross each other again.

One Night Surprise Chapter 415 Seemingly Forever Ago

“What am I supposed to tell him if he asks about you when I give the necklace back?”

“Tell him that I gave it to you before I left, but you just forgot about it all this time.”

“That works, I guess.” Cameron sighed helplessly. “At first, I thought that leaving Alexander alone in Melrose City until he’s a graying old man was a good punishment for him, considering how he treated

you. But now that you told me that Elijah is getting married and it's not to you, I just think that it'll be better for you to go back to Melrose. I thought that you and Elijah would get together."

Courtney rolled her eyes at Cameron. "How many times did I tell you? My relationship with Elijah is like that of two survivors—two people understanding and helping each other. There really isn't anything else to it, but you won't believe me."

"I believe you now," Cameron said as she fiddled with the velvet box. "Now that I think about it, Elijah was kind and caring toward you, and he thought of everything for you. But the problem is, he did everything for you. He doesn't have the same kind of burning determination. If you compare them that way, Alexander's the more sincere one."

Courtney stared at her in astonishment.

Cameron was left a little discomfited by the stare, so she moved away from it. "Don't look at me like that; I only realized that later. He used to be so bad-tempered. Like, he'd see something, take it at face value, and lose his temper. Now that I think about it, when you left, Alexander—thinking that you had gone back to the States—actually went chasing after you there. After a long while, I heard that he met with Elijah. I have no idea what Elijah said to him, but he went back right after that. He hasn't mentioned looking for you since then."

It had only been around three months since then. Hearing Cameron talk about it though suddenly made Courtney feel like it had happened forever ago. However, she didn't beat herself up over it.

Cameron left that evening. Since Gale had come with her and they were close with each other—like any other married couple—if Cameron went home late, he would most likely come looking for her here. Courtney was content with her quiet life; she didn't want anything suddenly interrupting it.

When one loved someone so madly—when they lingered in one's mind, it was always hard to forget about the times one spent together with their significant other. Once those memories had been relegated to being things of the past, however, time would heal their wounds. Perhaps they might still love them, or maybe miss them, but they would finally be able to let go of them at last.

...

Five years later, at East Melrose, spring arrived at the Duncan Residence. The weather was still chilly from the remnants of winter. The servants rushed in and out of the premises like they had rockets attached to their feet.

Meanwhile, Harry kept yelling from the kitchen, "Slow down! Why is everyone rushing?" He then caught sight of Fiona, who was harvesting vegetables in the yard. He frowned. "Why are you helping in the kitchen again, Madam Fiona? We have enough servants for this. You don't have to help."

Fiona looked up, but her hands never stopped harvesting. She smiled gently. "I feel bored sitting around doing nothing, and it's been such a long time since Oliver came to visit. He loves my dumpling soup. Those vegetable dumplings have to be freshly made for maximum deliciousness. The chefs don't make those dumplings like I do."

At the mention of Oliver, Harry sighed. "The house is no longer as lively as it once was. Young Master Oliver is in the army, and Young Master Alexander is always out on business trips with Little Master

Jordan. Miss Hannah is studying overseas, and Old Master Duncan doesn't like to leave the house due to his illness. You're the only one I can ever see in this yard."

"The children are all grown up now. It's normal for them to be busy with their own lives. You don't have to be so hung up about them." Fiona's smile grew a little sadder, but it was still warm and kind. "And besides, aren't they all coming home today? Oliver's even bringing Tess with him. I'm sure Old Master Duncan will be overjoyed if you tell him about this."

"Truly? Is Young Master Oliver coming back with Miss Reid?" Harry's dull eyes immediately lit up into glittering gems. "We can't pin our hopes on Young Master Alexander anymore. If Young Master Oliver marries and produces an heir or two for the Duncan Family, that will fulfill all of Old Master Duncan's hopes. I must inform him of this now." With that, Harry charged over to Scott to relay this piece of good news.

Fiona chuckled and continued to make her dumplings. The children's fates are up to them. There's no point in me worrying about them. The old man is simply looking for some form of company due to his old age.

In truth, Oliver and Tessa were already set to be married; they simply didn't get many chances to meet up due to their army duties. It was rare of them to pay the rest of the Duncan Family a visit. Although their wedding kept being delayed, the Duncans had already silently acknowledged Tessa as Oliver's fiancée.

That night, other than Hannah who was still overseas because it wasn't summer break yet, the Duncan Family had reunited at last for dinner. Scott was beside himself with joy as he poured everyone a glass of wine, but Oliver frowned. "Grandpa, your health isn't the best. The doctor said that you can't drink. Have some tea instead."

"Just one glass. It won't do anything to me." Scott was a headstrong man. If he said that he wanted to drink, then no one could stop him.

Oliver shot a look at the person sitting across him a little to the side. Soon, the low voice of a young boy rang out. "Great-Grandpa, today, you'll have a glass, and tomorrow, you'll have another glass again. If you keep drinking, the wine cellar will be emptied before you know it."

The young boy looked to be about twelve, dressed in a plaid vest. His complexion was clear and unblemished, and although his face still bore the childishness of youth, his eyes were extraordinarily solemn. He was young but already quiet and reserved. Whenever the young boy spoke, he sounded exactly like a carbon copy of the man next to him.

The moment the young boy finished, all the guests chuckled quietly.

Scott was stunned. "You aren't worried about my health like your Uncle Oliver, but instead, you're worried about the wine cellar?"

"You know your own health better than anyone else. You're still waiting to witness Uncle Oliver get married and have children, so you don't need us to remind you about that."

Oliver immediately shot a glare at the young boy the moment he said that, but the boy ignored him. What were you expecting when you signaled for me to talk him out of drinking otherwise? If Oliver expected him to lead the conversation, then he would lead it however he wanted to.

Just as expected, Scott's expression froze after he heard that. After a moment of hesitation, he put down his glass of wine at last, and he looked at Oliver. "You two should hold your wedding soon. You may be busy, but you'll always be busy whether you get married or not. So, why not get it out of the way?"

"Grandpa, I only have three days of leave. Do you want me to have that wedding tomorrow or the day after? No matter which day it is, we won't be able to hold it in time."

"I didn't say that you have to hold your wedding now. You just need to give me a date, just one day. You two won't have to worry about anything—you just need to show up at the wedding when the time comes."

Oliver exchanged glances with Tessa before he said in exasperation, "The problem here is that neither of us can actually pick out a date. If the army says you're going on a mission now, then that's what you have to do. There's no guarantee that we'll both be free at the same time for the next one and a half years. Tess attended a talk a few days ago, and to this moment, I still don't know where that talk was held."

Due to the nature of their jobs, Oliver and Tessa had to sign NDAs each time they were assigned their missions. Neither of them would know what mission the other was undertaking, never mind coordinating their schedules.

Scott had listened to those excuses for several years now, and he was fed up with them. "Don't tell me that none of those personnel are married? Do you two intend for me to pass from this world without seeing you walk down the aisle and have children?"

The atmosphere promptly turned tense.

One Night Surprise Chapter 416 How Do You Make Someone Stay When They Are Intent on Leaving?

Everyone knew who Scott was actually admonishing.

Alexander rarely returned to the Duncan Residence during the past few years. Even when he did, he would only be there for dinner before he once again rushed off, his aloofness only becoming worse. At this point, even Jordan spoke more than him.

Five years ago, Alexander had gotten into a huge fight with Scott because he handed custody of Jordan to Courtney, greatly angering Scott. It was also then that Scott's illness took hold of him. His health had been worsening by the year.

Seeing how tightly Alexander's forehead was screwed up, Fiona couldn't take it anymore. "Dad, the children are all grown up now. Let them be the master of their own decisions," she said, attempting to sway Scott.

Scott's expression was as frigid as ever. "A family's descendants should not ignore their elders' wishes. If they always live their life the way they want, then doesn't that mean that we as parents—as their elders—have raised them for nothing?"

Fiona's expression stiffened. Judging from the look of fury on Scott's face, she wouldn't be able to convince him otherwise.

The sound of cutlery being dropped rang out across the table. Everyone looked in the direction of the sound and saw Alexander slowly look up. "Please, calm down. All these years, I've never declined to meet the women that you arranged for me," he said calmly.

At the mention of that, Scott's eyes widened into a bug-eyed glare. He slammed the table. "How dare you bring that up in front of me? Did any of the women you've met with ever keep their mouths shut about me? Are you not ashamed of what you said to them?"

"Sir." Harry's expression fell as he lowered his voice to remind Scott, "Miss Reid is still here. Let's discuss Young Master Alexander's matter another time."

The fury already burning within Scott was forcefully extinguished by those words. He glanced at Oliver and Tessa to his right before he sat down with a stony face.

"Let's eat." Fiona attempted to smooth things over. "Try this: these are the dumplings I made. Tess, have some and see if they are to your liking."

Tessa had grown even more solemn and reliable due to her years in the army. She knew about the Duncan Family's issues very well, so she knew what she should say or do now. Picking up on Fiona's intentions, Tessa picked up a dumpling and ate it. "Mm, this is so good. These can go toe-to-toe with my mother's dumplings. She likes making dumplings too. Maybe you can have a competition with her one day," she said, smiling.

"Sure, I was bored out of my mind at home anyway."

"The same goes for my mother too, haha."

The women's banter managed to ease the atmosphere a little.

Since Tessa was here, Scott reined in his anger for now. However, he barely ate any of his food, and throughout the entire dinner, he sat there with a stormy expression. After a while, he excused himself to his room, saying that he felt unwell.

After Scott left, Alexander and Oliver chatted for a while, asking about their lives recently. Having exercised his duties as a responsible older brother, Alexander took Jordan and left as well.

But there's still plenty of food left on the table. Fiona sighed.

Tessa blinked and gulped down the dumpling that she had been chewing. "Don't beat yourself up over this, Mrs. Duncan. We'll eat whatever they didn't. Oliver and I love your cooking," she comforted Fiona.

Upon hearing that, Fiona relaxed, and her lips curved up into a smile. "What a kind girl you are. You've seen what my father's temper is like. He's always antagonizing the children, except for Jordan—he treats him a lot better. Don't mind him; he's just anxious."

“What’s he anxious about?” Tessa didn’t understand. “Alexander’s son is already beginning to grow into a young man; why does it matter if Alexander remains single? To me, he looks like he already has everything.”

“You don’t understand, actually.” Oliver glanced at her from the side. “Grandpa isn’t really forcing Alex to marry; he just doesn’t want Alex to lose himself in the past and never move on.”

Fiona was quiet, as though she had silently accepted this explanation.

Tessa was taken aback. “You’re talking about what happened between Alexander and Courtney?” she asked hesitantly.

Oliver nodded. “Back when Courtney left, Alex got into an argument with Grandpa because of Jordan’s custody rights. He had insisted on handing custody of Jordan to Courtney, to let her take Jordan to the US, but Grandpa didn’t agree. In order to successfully pass the rights to her, Alex even said that he would let Grandpa decide his marriage details as long as he allowed Jordan’s custody rights to be handed over.”

“No wonder Alexander mentioned something about arranged meetings with women.”

“But in the end, Jordan didn’t go with Courtney. Despite that, Grandpa held fast to the promise that Alex made. He kept setting up blind dates for Alex. I heard that every date always ended up ugly.”

“But how?” Tessa was surprised. “Alexander looks pretty decent and reliable to me.”

“How? You think my brother is as law-abiding as he looks? He’s done plenty of things by bending the rules. How else did you think Jordan came to be?” At the mention of that, Oliver looked at Fiona. “Mom, I’ve only been home a few times over the years. Just what did Alex do?”

Fiona knitted her brows. After a few seconds of silence, she explained, “When Alexander met with the women, he would straight-up admit to them that he has an eleven-year-old son. That’s not too bad, but he would also insist on a prenuptial agreement, and that they would both live separately after getting married, living their own lives. They would just be married in name. Do you think any of those women—all from families with status and power—will agree to those terms? When they went back home, they made a racket over that. Your grandfather thinks that the Duncan Family’s name is close to being tarnished completely. That’s why he exploded.”

Oliver burst into an awkward laughter. “Alex isn’t afraid of stepping on some toes.”

“He’s made several enemies, all right.” Fiona looked exasperated. “Fortunately, we Duncans are an established family. The women’s families didn’t dare to say anything even after Alexander humiliated them. But if this keeps up, people will whisper about us.”

“Let them talk. No one’s going to be happy about being forced into a decision they don’t want. I’m sure everyone can see who my brother is yearning for.”

“Who said otherwise?” Fiona’s tone had a hint of a sob in it. “It’s been more than five years since Courtney left Melrose. He hasn’t mentioned it, but everyone knows that he still isn’t willing to move on.”

“Why didn’t Alexander try to get her to stay back then?” Tessa couldn’t help but voice her question after listening to Oliver and Fiona.

So many things had happened during that short period of time that year. There was Courtney’s kidnapping by a drug dealing organization, followed by Alexander’s unrelenting efforts to save her. Later, he even got hospitalized for a month due to pneumonia. That was a good opportunity for him then. He could have easily gotten her to stay. They didn’t have to break up and go their separate ways then.

“How do you make someone stay when they’re intent on leaving?” Fiona sighed.

“You’ll never know if you don’t try. If you fail, at most, you’ll just continue to live life as it is now. But what if you succeed? Life will definitely be different then.”

“He did try.” Oliver’s voice was dull.

Tessa’s gaze stiffened as she turned to look at him.

“The reason why Alex was so insistent on handing over Jordan’s custody rights to Courtney was because he was sure he would get her to stay. Jordan is the strongest connection he has to her, and since he had raised Jordan for several years, Courtney wouldn’t have taken Jordan and vanished into thin air. She would’ve let Alex see Jordan...”

One Night Surprise Chapter 417 Please Stop Disturbing Her Life

“But no one expected Courtney to not bring Jordan away.”

Oliver’s words reminded the others of the countless events that had happened in the past, and the atmosphere became even more gloomy.

Late that night...

Alexander and Jordan entered the house one after another while the sound-activated lights lit up as their footsteps patted along the way.

“It’s getting late. Let’s rest early.”

After saying that, Alexander went upstairs and walked toward the study room.

Currently, the eleven-year-old youth who was about to hit puberty was standing at the staircase as he asked, “Great-grandpa wants you to get married, so will you marry another woman?”

“No.”

Alexander did not stop walking but swiftly blurted the one word.

When Jordan heard that, his anxious countenance was relieved at once. He stared at Alexander in confidence and said, “Mm-hmm. Mommy will definitely come back.”

Nevertheless, the only response he got was the sound of the study room’s door closing.

Meanwhile, Alexander stood beside the door and had not moved for a long while. Five years had already passed, yet Jordan's childish side still firmly believed that Courtney would return. Why exactly was he standing so firm in his belief?

Previously, Alexander arrogantly thought that he was shrewd and that every step of his life was well-controlled within his plan. However, one mistake five years ago had caused him to lose terribly.

Five years ago, when Courtney had escaped from a deserted island, she recuperated in Elijah's manor while Alexander was hospitalized due to a lung infection and had only regained consciousness after remaining in a coma for two days. The first thing that he did after awakening was to talk to Scott about Jordan's custody.

At that time, Josh was accompanying Alexander, and his expression changed when he heard Alexander's decision.

"President Duncan, have you really made up your mind? Little Master is your only son. Although it is the Duncan Family which has let Miss Hunter down at that time, you've raised Jordan for six years. How can you simply give him away?"

As Alexander was leaning against the bed, his face was as pale as a sheet, but his eyes were as deep as a ditch of dead water.

"She's stubborn. Previously, I've hurt her a few times and she blamed me for being selfish and inconsiderate to her. There is already estrangement between us. Even though she is willing to forgive me because I saved her this time, the estrangement is still there, so it's very hard to repair our relationship now."

"Since this is the case, why do you still have to send Little Master to her?"

"You don't get it."

Back then in the ward, Alexander merely blurted that sentence and did not continue explaining. For quite some time, Josh could not fathom what exactly he did not understand about the situation—until the day after Gale and Cameron's wedding.

On that day, Alexander had a hangover and slept in the resort's hotel until the next evening. When he woke up, he was told that Courtney had left Jordan with him and would leave Melrose City that night by plane.

That was the first time Josh had seen Alexander being that panicked, helpless, and even crazy after so many years of knowing him. After failing to find Courtney on the flight to America, Alexander ran straight to the management office of the airport and stopped all the international flights from departing. Even the airport police were alarmed, and the incident had become the headline news of Melrose Evening Paper that day. Thereafter, it had caused a sensation in the city for quite some time.

However, what the others don't understand was—it was Alexander who allowed Courtney to leave and did not even ask her to stay. Everyone thought they broke up on good terms. Since Courtney was going to leave sooner or later anyway, it would not make a difference whether she informed him about her departure or not as there wouldn't be a heart-breaking farewell at the airport.

After the incident had subsided, Josh made a trip to America with Alexander. They did not find Courtney but had a meetup with Elijah, and it was only then did Josh understand everything.

Everything started on the day Courtney left and returned Jordan to the Duncan Family without taking him away. Because she had not brought Jordan away, Alexander had not met her ever since then after so many years. He did not even know where she was and there was no way he could find her.

This was what Elijah told Alexander back then—“You should have thought of this. Back then, Courtney decided to return to Melrose City because of the two kids. But now, she has left without even requesting custody of the two kids, so you should understand that she has really thought it through clearly. She allowed the kids to follow you and does not want anything to do with you anymore. I don’t know where she is now, but even if I do, I won’t tell you. Please stop meddling in her life.”

After coming back from the trip to America, Alexander pulled through a serious illness and had locked himself up for a whole three months. He would not even meet Scott when the latter personally went to check up on him. As such, no one knew what was on his mind during the three months when he locked himself up at home.

Following that, it was only when Fiona, Alexander’s mother, held Jordan’s hand and stood outside his house to urge him to think of the children did he come out of the house. Ever since then, Jordan had followed him to attend all kinds of business events. Currently, Jordan was only eleven, yet he had started taking part in the shareholder meetings of Sunhill Enterprise.

In the present, it was the crack of dawn, and Alexander had stayed up all night again. In his hand held a book that was flipped to the last page. Beside him, there was an opened jewelry box with a jade necklace inside which glowed brightly as sun rays reflected on it.

At that moment, the chirping sound of birds could be heard from the outside of the window. Alexander closed the jewelry box and carefully locked it in the safe before standing up and leaving the study room.

Suddenly, his phone started ringing. He then answered the call after seeing the incoming caller ID.

“Hey, Alex. Have you received the invitation card?” Gale’s bubbly voice came forth from the other end.

Alexander glanced at the red invitation card which was placed on the study table. “Since you’re going to call me about it, you did not have to specially send an invitation card to me.”

“Of course I have to. I think it’s very necessary. I finally got a daughter after waiting for so many years. You have to attend her first month’s birthday party.”

“I’m busy. I’m going on a business trip to Kyoto at the end of the month.”

“C’mon. How can you be like that? You must be jealous that I have a daughter and you don—”

Before the sentence was completed, Gale quickly bit his tongue and stopped babbling.

There were a few seconds of silence before Gale’s unnatural voice emerged again. “Uhhh... Anyway, you have to come and get a nice gift for my daughter. I’ll let you be her godfather. What do you think? You can treat my daughter like your own.”

“I’ll see if I have time.” Alexander’s nonchalant voice was tinged with gloominess for some reason.

Gale's daughter, who was turning one month old, was the apple of his eye. He was not even this overjoyed when Cameron gave birth to their first son three years ago. This time, the Langley Family had booked the entire Purple Peak Hotel for the celebration banquet and even invited many big shots from the business and political circles.

Alexander had no desire to attend the banquet to begin with and had rejected Gale a few times because even though Gale's intention to make him his daughter's godfather was to comfort him so that he could get past Courtney's incident as soon as possible, he did not want to.

He actually had a daughter too, and to him, his daughter was the most adorable and smart child in the world. As such, he was worried that his daughter would be upset upon hearing some other girl call him father when she returned in the future.

One Night Surprise Chapter 418 He's Destined to Be Caught

On a late night two days later, Fiona hurriedly walked through the corridor in her jacket and went to the yard of Oliver's residence.

Inside the house was a suitcase which was half-packed. Sitting in a daze on the side of the bed, Oliver had obviously not regained his composure yet.

"Where's Tess?"

"She left." Oliver yawned and lay back in bed to continue sleeping. "She has an impromptu mission."

"She left in such a hurry that she didn't even pack properly? Could it be that something bad has happened?"

As Oliver covered himself with the blanket, only his pair of narrowed eyes could be seen. "It's an urgent mission, so of course she wouldn't have time to pack."

"Where did she go this time?"

"Not too sure."

"Why don't you ask her?"

"Mom." Oliver was getting a headache after being questioned by Fiona, so he answered in resignation, "Since it's a secret mission, she wouldn't tell me even if I asked, so why should I ask?"

Fiona sighed and started clearing the mess.

"Why did she have to leave in such a hurry? I was initially thinking of discussing your marriage with the in-laws. All her missions are always urgent; I'm always frightened when watching the news after her missions are accomplished, yet you can still sleep in peace. What if some accidents happen..."

Realizing that her words were not desirable, Fiona quickly bit her tongue. When she glanced toward her son who was on the bed out of the corner of her eyes, the latter was actually snoring already. His wifey is out there under fire, yet he can still sleep soundly. What a carefree man.

...

At the border of the mainland and Xanter, a helicopter was hovering in the air, causing the wild grass to sway in the strong wind. Just then, a rope was let out of the cabin. Following that, a few agents dressed in yellow and green suits slid down the rope and quickly disappeared in the bushes one after another.

“We’ve got a message from the information center—the terrorists are holding a total of 13 hostages and some of which are seriously injured. After successfully rescuing the hostages, Team 2 will defend the area while Team 1 treats the injured hostages at the scene. Any hostages whose injuries are serious will be sent to the nearest rescue station by Wolf and Leopard from Team 1. The medical team in charge of the border is estimated to arrive in the afternoon.”

Tessa’s face was fully covered with black and green camouflage paint. After giving the orders, she swiftly headed toward the destination using the forest’s cover.

Just then, the chattering voices of the other teammates came forth.

“We come to Xanter’s border at least 3 times a year. In recent years, we’ve come to rescue hostages more than 4 times already. This group of terrorists at the border are like weeds that can’t be fully wiped out. I really wish to get rid of them once and for all.”

“Shut up and watch your path lest you step on a grenade.”

“Don’t jinx it! I’ve not had a son yet. I’m the only child in my family, so don’t you curse me.”

“Ha! Wolf is just jealous of your pretty wife. If something happens to you, he will have to take care of your wife.”

“That’s enough.” Tessa’s serious and cold voice interrupted the conversation out of the blue.

“The mission this time is different from those of the past as there is a large number of hostages. Two of them have already been tortured to death by the terrorists. The video that was uploaded to the internet has caused great fear among the citizens. Don’t assume it will be an easy task just because you’ve come across them a few times. They know our habits, so buck up!”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Roger that.”

The border rescue station was situated within 3 kilometers from the country’s border. The frontier defense base and the land of Xanter were merely separated by a row of barbed wire. On the other side of the barbed wire were the homeless refugees of Xanter. The sun was scorching hot at noon when groups of skinny children climbed over the barbed wire under the cover of the vine bushes.

A medical center that had just been set up had an eye-catching red cross on a white flag outside its green tent. Currently, there was no one guarding inside the tent.

The leading child signaled for the other children to keep quiet before secretly sneaking into the tent. Just as he took up two packets of compressed biscuits, a voice of reproach came forth from the outside of the tent.

“Hey, where did you guys come from?”

With a fluster, the group of kids outside of the tent quickly dispersed. Obviously, they were used to being thieves, so they could climb over the barbed wires in a very swift manner like monkeys, and no one was able to catch them. Nevertheless, the kid who had already entered the tent was the unlucky one.

At the same time, Courtney had just come back with a bucket of water in her hand when she saw Chris Browne, the surgeon, grabbing the kid’s arm while dragging him out of the tent violently.

“Punk, you have sneaked in here several times already. This time, I purposely hid at the side and finally caught you. You’re coming here so often to steal; do you deem here as a refugee center?!”

The child remained silent and allowed Chris to grab his arm tight as he glared at him with his wolf-like eyes. He clutched the two packets of compressed biscuits tightly and didn’t want to let go of them no matter what.

“Hey, Dr. Browne. What’s going on?” Courtney put down the bucket, went up to Chris, and asked, “Why are you getting mad at a kid?”

“A kid? These kids come so often that they are going to steal all our resources sooner or later. I have to give him a lesson this time or he’ll think we are pushovers.”

The child looked no more than fourteen years old. With his dark upper body naked, the barefooted boy wore a pair of dirty gray pants whose original color could not be identified anymore. Besides that, his feet were stained with grass and muddy water. He stared fixedly at Chris with his big eyes, and it was unclear if he could actually understand Chris’ words.

“Calm down, Dr. Browne. Don’t you know there’s a refugee camp at that end?” Courtney lowered her voice.

“I heard from the soldiers at the border that the other side deliberately relocated the refugee camp here to cause disputes. They have no regard for these children’s lives, but if anything happens, it will become an excuse for them to cause trouble, so let’s not put these children in a difficult position.”

Hearing that, Chris frowned. “Tell me, what should I do then? If I let him off today, I guarantee that he’ll come back tomorrow.”

Courtney gazed at the child and waved at him in a friendly manner. “Come here.”

The child might have not understood Courtney as he looked toward Chris after a while.

At that moment, Chris was still hesitating. “Courtney, if I release his hand now, he’ll surely run away.”

Nevertheless, Courtney still waved her hands to signal Chris to let go of the kid.

After Chris let go of his hand, the kid remained standing at the spot while staring blankly at Courtney for some while. Just as Courtney took a step toward him, he suddenly ran away as if he was frightened.

Seeing that, Chris became frustrated. “What did I say—this punk will surely run away.”

As soon as he said that, the kid who darted away screamed as he stumbled and fell onto the ground.

“Ha!” Chris rolled up his sleeves and was ready to catch the kid again. “He’s destined to be caught.”

Courtney quickly stopped him. “Dr. Browne, I’ll go instead.”

The kid seemed to be injured quite badly and couldn’t get up even after a long time. Hearing the footsteps behind him getting nearer, he struggled hard on the ground. He was in such great pain that beads of sweat started rolling down his cheeks.

Squatting down beside him, Courtney frowned when she saw a bulge at his ankle.

“Your ankle seems to be dislocated.”

Fear spread across the child’s face as he probably could not understand her at all.

Upon hesitating for a while, Courtney picked up the packets of compressed biscuits from the floor and passed them to him.

One Night Surprise Chapter 419 I Guess She Resembles Her Father

The kid’s skin was so dark that it formed a strong contrast with the whites of his eyes. Seeing Courtney stretching her arm toward him, the kid thought he was going to get hit, so he subconsciously lifted his hands to shield his head. It was only then did he see from the gaps of his fingers that Courtney was passing the compressed biscuits to him.

As expected, he was startled for quite a while before carefully reaching out to take the biscuits.

Smiling kindly toward him, Courtney pointed at his ankle and then at the cross pendant in front of her chest, signaling that she wanted to help him treat his leg.

However, the kid still did not let down his guard. As if the pain numbed all his pain receptors away, the kid quickly got up and ran away when Courtney was not paying attention.

“I’ve already said that these brats from the refugee camp are all ungrateful rascals. Why do you still bother to care for them?” Chris’ voice emerged from behind.

Courtney did not refute him nor gave him a look of approval but merely lifted her head to look at the sky.

“It’s getting dark soon. Let’s go back to the camp; the director said that there are quite a number of poisonous snakes in the woods.”

“Don’t worry. I have some ointment; you can take some and apply it on yourself.” Chris wore a concerned look. Thereafter, the two walked side by side back to the camp while chatting.

“The condition here is not very conducive. Those medical staff who have even the slightest connection will not be willing to come here. I haven’t asked you this previously, but I unintentionally read your resume yesterday—why were you sent here since your profession is in child psychology? Did you offend one of the leaders?”

Chris was indirectly trying to get Courtney to tell her story.

Courtney clearly knew that if she admitted it, the next thing Chris would do was definitely to complain about the corrupted health system and ask her to follow him as he would think of a way to send her back to the hospital. Nevertheless, she would not believe these bluffs at all because if Chris really had that ability, he would have sent himself back first.

“Nope.” She denied it and said calmly, “I volunteered to come here.”

“Huh?” Chris was startled. “Why?”

“Why else?” Courtney smiled. “Of course, it is to give back to the community and serve the country. Isn’t that how it is promoted in the promotional video to hire volunteers?” After saying that, she lifted the drape of the tent and walked in.

Truth was, the instructor had reminded her even before she came here that Chris Browne, the surgeon at the border’s rescue station, had some conduct issues and liked to take advantage of women, so she had to be more cautious.

After the sky turned completely dark, the rescue team at the camp was ready to rest.

Leaning on the pillow, Courtney took out her phone. As expected, the phone had no signal. The picture on the lock screen was the family picture shot half a year ago before she left. Tina already looked like a young lady, and her eyes turned into crescent moons when she smiled. Standing beside her was a little girl who was about the height of Tina’s shoulder. The girl looked exactly like Tina when she was younger. The only difference was that the girl was pulling a long face and had an oddly mature and cold look.

“Are they your daughters?”

Hazel Sue, who slept across Courtney, came back after washing up. She craned forward to glance at the picture and asked with a smile, “Which one of them is your daughter?”

“Both.” Courtney lifted her head. “They both are.”

“Oh!” Hazel glanced at the picture again in shock. “I won’t be able to tell if you didn’t say so. These two girls don’t look like each other at all. The elder one resembles you; as for the younger one... I guess she resembles her father.”

Courtney’s eyes turned gloomy at the mention of this topic, and no response was given.

Just then, some noises came forth from the outside. The nurse on duty lifted the drape of the tent and yelled, “The frontline special forces has sent three injured patients over. Quickly get ready for the surgeries.”

As soon as the nurse said that, the other medical staff in the tent immediately sprang up from the bed as if it was a reflex response. Courtney too quickly put away her phone and wore a white coat before following the team to the temporary operating room.

“Two of them are hostages who were seized by the terror group. One suffers more external wounds but has the symptoms of internal hemorrhage while the other one had a bullet shot into his chest and the bullet is currently stuck at the lower side of his atrium. Both of them need a chest operation. Hazel, you and your team will be in charge of the one with internal hemorrhage. As for Charlie, you may go extract the bullet from the other patient. The rest will follow me to attend to the third patient.”

Then, Chris selected Courtney and another two surgeon interns to head to the third temporary operating room.

While checking on the patient, Courtney looked carefully at the injuries and said, “Dr. Browne, his leg was injured by an explosion, but the wound doesn’t seem to be too serious...”

The condition of the other patient who had a bullet shot through his chest was much more critical than this one, so Courtney thought Chris—the most experienced surgeon in the team—should participate in the chest operation instead of clearing wounds here.

However, Chris darted a glance at Courtney and said displeasably, “How is this not serious? The patient’s condition is clearly critical. If we don’t pay attention and cause the wound to be infected during the operation, his leg would be gone!”

Hearing that, Courtney still wanted to say something, but when she noticed the badge on the patient’s camouflage uniform, she clammed up obediently.

This soldier was a member of the Falcon Special Forces Team. No wonder Chris was so dedicated toward him because no matter how serious his injury was, Chris would be considered performing a meritorious service. Not only would he receive praises, but he might even have a chance to be sent back from here and be promoted to become an assistant director.

This Chris sure knows how to seize opportunities.

The operation ended in half an hour. Throughout the operation, Chris had asked Courtney to help wipe off his sweat numerous times. It was just a minor operation to clean the wounds, and Courtney knew he wasn’t truly sweating that much.

“Done.”

When the operation was over, the patient’s leg was bandaged. At that moment, he was still in a coma and just had to get more rest, so Courtney suggested, “Dr. Browne, would you like to go check out the chest operation next door and see if Dr. Garfield needs any assistance?”

“You guys go ahead. I’ll look after the patient here.”

Chris pulled a chair and directly sat down beside the operation table. Obviously, he was waiting to be appreciated when the patient regained his consciousness. As such, Courtney and the other two interns exchanged glances and walked away in resignation.

As soon as they stepped out of the tent, an anxious voice came forth. “How is his condition?”

It was already dark at that time, and the area was not lit bright enough to clearly see the appearance of the person who spoke up. All that they could identify was a person dressed in a grayish-green suit with camouflage paint on her face.

Nevertheless, Courtney and the other two were surprised to hear the female voice.

Courtney was the first one to regain her composure and answered, “He’s fine. The operation has ended, and our chief doctor is looking after him inside.”

“Can his leg still function in the future?”

“Don’t worry. He just needs to get enough rest.”

Courtney smiled. “You can go inside and take a look if you’re still worried. We need to head to the operating room next door first.” With that, she said to the two interns beside her, “Let’s go.”

“Courtney?”

Suddenly, the female special forces soldier called out Courtney’s name from behind with uncertainty.

The warm and humid wind blew past Courtney’s ears which caused strands of hair to give her a tingling sensation. Stunned, Courtney turned around in astonishment and could only recognize that person after quite some while.

“Tess?”

“It’s me.”

Tessa strode forward and sized Courtney up from head to toe in disbelief.

“It’s really you, Courtney! Your voice was rather familiar just now, but I thought it couldn’t possibly be you, so I didn’t dare to call out for you. Turns out it’s really you!”

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Courtney turned around and stared at the female soldier whose face was fully covered with paint for quite some time.

“Tess?”

It was not rare to see female soldiers in the Falcon Special Forces Team. In fact, it was not the first time the soldiers came to their rescue station. Nevertheless, Courtney had never expected that among the sea of people, she would come across an acquaintance at this place and at this point in time.

Tessa immediately gave Courtney a big hug and was at a loss for words for a long while.

Just then, Chris lifted the drape and stretched his head out from the operating room behind Courtney. Seeing the scene, he blurted, “It’s me who saved—excuse me, Dr. Hunter, what are you doing here? Quickly go check on the operation next door.”

Startled, Courtney cast a glance at Tessa in resignation and was about to leave when Tessa grabbed her.

She then gave Courtney an assuring look and turned to Chris. “I’m consulting this doctor about my comrade’s situation. How is he now?”

Hearing that, Chris quickly walked up with a smug look.

“I’ve treated the soldier inside the tent without any delay. He’s fine now and will come around after the anesthetics wear off. I’m the doctor in charge of this patient and the chief doctor at this rescue station too. My name is Chris Browne.”

Tessa nodded coldly. "Thanks, Dr. Browne."

"Don't worry. I'll make sure to take care of this soldier personally."

"Didn't you say he's fine now?" Tessa glanced at Chris as her eyes darkened. "The other two hostages which we've rescued are shot. Dr. Browne, since you're the most skillful doctor at this rescue station, why didn't you treat the other two hostages first?"

Chris was stunned and beads of cold sweat gathered at his forehead as Tessa questioned him. Then, he stuttered, "I'm thinking the soldier should be prioritized to get treated since he's serving the country at the risk of his life, so I—"

Tessa interrupted Chris impudently and said coldly, "We're just serving the people. At the warzone, the one and only priority of the members of Falcon Special Forces Team is to protect the people. We're at the border, and the patients inside are our citizens, so why is it that we should be prioritized?"

After saying that, she shot a cold glare at Chris. "I urge you to waste no time anymore and quickly go check on the patients next door. Since my comrade is fine already, leaving me and this doctor here is enough."

Dumbfounded, Chris did not dare to refute anymore and could only dejectedly lead the other two nurses to the operating room next door. With that, Courtney was left standing at the spot. Thereafter, she and Tessa smiled at each other.

"Let's go in and talk. There are many mosquitoes here."

"Sure."

The operating room was filled with the odor of disinfectant besides a faint bloody smell. This was a common smell at the rescue station. The soldier was still in a coma lying on the bed as the anesthetics had not worn off yet.

Tessa heaved a sigh of relief after checking on his wound. It was only then did she sit across Courtney and start chatting with her.

"I've never thought that I'll meet you here." Tessa sounded emotional. "Before I received this task and came here, Oliver and I actually talked about you. We were saying that we've not met you for several years and were wondering where you are and what you are doing now. Little did I expect that you'd become a doctor."

"It's actually my original profession." Courtney smiled. "That is what I studied during university, but I dropped out later due to some accidents. So, I started picking it up again after leaving Melrose City."

"Are you a surgeon?"

"Nope." Courtney shook her head. "It'll take way longer for a surgeon to be equipped; they have to study for at least seven to eight years. My profession is child psychology."

"But why did you come here?" Tessa wore a puzzled expression. "It seems like the warzone rescue stations do not have a high demand for psychologists."

“I’m taking it as a stepping stone.” Courtney did not conceal her motive but merely lowered her voice. “As long as I stay at the border rescue station for a certain amount of time, I’ll be able to apply for domestic internships after going back to the country.”

“Are you planning to come back?”

“Yeah. I need to go back for a period of time.” Courtney knew what Tessa was thinking, so she quickly clarified, “Tina needs at least a year of treatment back in the country, and that’s the duration of my internship upon graduation too. If I wish to accompany her without affecting my work, I have to apply to go back to the country for this internship. In fact, this opportunity is also given to me by my instructor.”

Tessa nodded thoughtfully as her eyes turned slightly sullen. “I thought it’s because of...” Before completing the sentence, she glanced at Courtney again. “Forget about it. Let’s drop this topic. The plane to pick us up will only arrive tomorrow, so let’s have a good chat tonight. Oliver has always missed you.”

Courtney smiled. “Sure.”

The night was as humid and warm as always. The two chest operations lasted the whole night until the next morning while Courtney and Tessa stayed by the soldier whose anesthetic had yet to wear off and chatted throughout the night.

Courtney had been very busy during these five years after she had left Melrose City. Her time was so occupied that she did not have the energy to think about all that had happened in the past, so she had gradually let it go.

Naturally, Courtney did not tell Tessa that she actually gave birth to a child back then but merely talked about her busy study schedule as the campus life of a medical student was very packed to the point she could easily spend an entire day in the labs and library from the break of dawn until nightfall.

“So have you been staying in France all these years? Is Tina with you too?”

“She needs to go to school.” Courtney shook her head. “She remains in America all this while, so she’s currently staying in a boarding school.”

In fact, Elijah insisted that Tina stayed with him at the beginning. However, he just got married at that time and was already taking care of Angie, who had no blood relation with him, so it was unfair toward Lilian if he took Tina in again. Toward the end, it was Tina who proposed that she would like to go to a boarding school.

To be frank, Tina was a sensible child to begin with, and she became more mature all of a sudden after leaving Melrose City. She was very considerate toward the others in all matters, so she had settled this issue on her own too without putting Courtney in a difficult spot.

However, Tessa frowned.

“Actually, I think Tina is being too sensitive. She could’ve just stayed with Mr. Grant. After all, Mr. Grant is her father in name. According to the local laws, he is obligated to take care of her. Even the child who was saved from the remote island is staying with Mr. Grant, so why can’t she? She has even called Mr. Grant ‘Dad’ for more than five years!”

“That was before. Later, she was made aware that Elijah is not her biological father. She might be slightly oversensitive, but there’s nothing wrong with that. If Elijah has his own children in the future, she will more or less be awkward staying with the family.”

“What about that child then?” Tessa suddenly changed the topic.

Hearing that, Courtney immediately knew she was referring to Angie. “Angie chose to follow Elijah. Back then, it was Elijah who rescued her from the water. Later when we left Melrose City, I asked for her preference, and she chose to follow Elijah.”

“That’s weird.” Tessa furrowed her brows. “It’s you who brought her out from the remote island, but she insisted on following Elijah. How can that be?”

Courtney replied in deep thoughts, “That’s reasonable too since it’s Elijah who saved her after all. Also, he has been taking care of her all this while after we went to Melrose City. To think about it, she is indeed closer to Elijah than me. This child has lacked fatherly love ever since young, so I guess she deems Elijah as her father.”