

Surprise 201

Chapter 201 I Am Her Bodyguard

After driving for more than thirty kilometers, they finally arrived at Eldham Town. Courtney sat in the passenger seat. She had fallen into a deep sleep with dried tears still staining the corners of her eyes.

Although Alexander couldn't bear to wake her up, he knew that they were pressed for time. They needed to finish things here as quickly as possible. Therefore, he shook her by the shoulder to wake her up after parking the car. "Courtney, we've arrived."

In response, she opened her eyes and stared at him drowsily for a long while before looking out the window dazedly as if she was still dreaming.

The sun outside was so strong that it could almost burn one's skin. She had only taken several steps after getting out of the car when she felt a cool shade above her head. Lifting her head, she saw him holding a black umbrella next to her. He candidly asked her, "Where are we going?"

She pulled her focus back to the present and pointed to the grocery store in front of them. "There. Cameron told me to contact the owner of the grocery store. This store is the only place in this town that has a public phone."

Lisboa was never a prosperous land due to its topography, and Eldham Town was all the more so. It was a place so poor that even the birds did not visit it; it seemed to retain the economic development situation and living standards from the last century. Fishermen squatting by the door basking in the sun and smoking homemade cigarettes could be seen everywhere.

Courtney introduced herself to the owner of the grocery store, Mr. McCullough. After her introduction, Mr. McCullough quickly recalled that she was the woman he had spoken to on the phone before. Thus, he asked his wife to watch the store while he led Courtney and Alexander to look for Bill Dawson. "Bill lives by the seaside. He's a strange fellow; he doesn't interact much with people in town."

"Really? How is he strange?" Courtney followed behind the owner and curiously inquired about the designer, Bill Dawson.

"He doesn't want to live a good life in the city. Instead, he returned to this poor place to suffer. Doesn't that make him strange?"

Upon hearing those words, she smiled. "Mr. McCullough, there are many people like that. The city is too noisy. I'm sure there are perks to coming back to the countryside to live."

"I don't know about that, but Bill is much weirder than that. Two years ago, the mayor took the lead to develop a resort town by the seaside. However, Bill shocked everybody by ruining everything."

"Huh? Why?"

"He claimed that too many people coming here would disturb his peace. He also mentioned something about pollution."

"Couldn't the mayor do anything to him?"

“Bill is knowledgeable. He is the only talented person in our town that has ever gone abroad. Therefore, almost everybody in town listens to whatever he says. We didn’t understand what was wrong with the development, so we just left him alone.”

Eldham Town was relatively remote and highly isolated from the outside world. Hence, somebody like Bill, who had left the country and seen the world, was no different from an authoritative figure in this town. Even the mayor respected him.

On the other hand, Courtney frowned. Isn’t Bill hindering the people of this town from improving their lives just for his own selfish interests? If the tourism industry flourishes, the entire town will be born anew. Its stunted development will improve at an astounding speed.

After walking for nearly two hours, Courtney’s calf was trembling from tiredness when she finally heard Mr. McCullough speak.

“We’re here.” Mr. McCullough pointed to a wooden house by the sea that was painted blue and white. “Bill lives there. I won’t be going with you. If you want to find a place to stay for tonight, you will need to return to the town. If you can’t find the way back, you can call my store. I will ask my daughter to come and lead the way.”

“Okay, thank you so much.” After saying their thanks, Courtney and Alexander walked toward the lonely house by the sea.

The coastal area around here had never been developed before as there were no soft, sandy beaches nearby. Moreover, the scenery in the vicinity was not that great, and the wind had a fishy smell to it. The blue and white wooden house was surrounded by a white fence. Three rows of wooden frames stood inside with salted fish and some men’s clothing hanging from them. A shirtless, dark-skinned man was boiling water in the yard. He was using a pot hanging from a frame over an open fire to carry out the simplest distillation method. It was certainly very primitive.

Courtney and Alexander exchanged glances and shared a knowing smile.

“Excuse me, are you Bill Dawson?” Courtney stood at the gate of the fence and politely directed a question at the figure.

The man turned around and glared at her. His gaze was cold and vigilant. “Who are you?”

“I am a friend of Cameron Miller. She told me to come here and meet you. I heard that you and Cameron were schoolmates at St. York University, and you were her senior there.”

“Cameron Miller?” The man stood up and wiped his hands before walking toward the gate. “Are you the boss Cameron mentioned the other day? The one with the surname ‘Hunter’?”

She hurriedly nodded, took out her name card, and handed it over. Meanwhile, the man did not reach out to take her name card. His expression remained cold and distant. His tanned face was so dark that it was practically glowing. After studying Courtney for a while, he looked at Alexander. “Then, who is he?”

“I am her bodyguard.” Before Courtney could say anything, Alexander replied to the question softly. Unfortunately, his words were utterly outrageous. She glared at him fiercely. “What do you mean by bodyguard? Aren’t you—I’m sorry; this is my assistant.”

Why would anybody bring a bodyguard along when inviting somebody to return to society? Doesn't that imply that we don't trust him?! She suddenly felt as if he was merely here to cause trouble for her.

The man swept a glance over Alexander and pulled open the gate. "Come in."

Courtney heaved a sigh of relief at the sight of the man's tanned shoulders before following him into the yard. "Mr. Dawson, I know you have lived here alone for quite some time. It's such a waste to let your designing talent rot here. So, I hope that you can consider returning to society."

Bill didn't even bother to look at her. He ignored her and sat down in front of his simple distillation device, his face glowing from the fire. Then, she heard his voice through the crackling flames, "I live here alone, so there is no place to sit. Make yourselves comfortable." After that, he said nothing more.

Then, she secretly groaned. Cameron was not lying when she said that Bill is a strange person. I think it will require a lot of effort to hire him. She did not leave even though he was completely ignoring her. Rather, she simply stood there awkwardly without moving. We can't just stand here all day, can we?

While she was considering her options, Alexander stepped forward. His deep voice rang out in the courtyard. "Mr. Dawson, in my opinion, it's not hard to make somebody do something as long as the other party has something that they want. However, this process requires communication between both parties. It's meaningless if you don't tell us what you want and leave us hanging here."

Courtney hurriedly tugged at his arm. Unfortunately, the damage was done—what had been said could not be taken back again.

In response, Bill turned around and glared at Alexander.

"I'm sorry..." Courtney hurriedly apologized.

He turned away again, showing his back to the two. "Your assistant is right. Everything starts from the negotiation of terms and conditions. But, there's nothing I need."

"Then, why did you make me come here?" Courtney became slightly angry.

"I made you come?" Bill glanced at her, continuing to tinker with the things inside the pot. "I believe what I told Cameron was: Don't come looking for me. Even if you do, I won't go back."

Chapter 202 I Hate Being Threatened the Most

"What?!" Courtney widened her eyes and stared at Bill. She was so shocked that it took her a long while to return to her senses. "Did you really say that?"

Bill glanced at her. "I'm guessing you were not there at the time."

She clenched her fists tightly. D*mn you, Cameron. You deceived me! No wonder she kept repeating that her senior had a bad temper and told me to be mentally prepared before I left to come here. She probably said that because the discussion over the phone didn't go well. If not for the fact that she is lying unconscious and receiving treatment in the hospital, I would have called her up and given her a tongue lashing. Still...

“Mr. Dawson, since I’m already here, why don’t you take a few minutes to talk to me about your cooperation intentions? No matter what kind of conditions you ask for, it can be discussed.” She forced a smile on her face while imagining herself stabbing Cameron thousands of times with a knife.

“No need. As I’ve just told you, I don’t have anything I want. I am satisfied with my current lifestyle.”

“We won’t force you if you are unwilling.” Alexander stopped Courtney and indicated for her to keep quiet. “Mr. Dawson, do you mind if we take a look around?”

“Sure. There’s nothing of value here.”

“I’ve never been to a place like this before, so I’m quite curious. Can I go inside?” Before Bill could react, he had already stepped into the house.

“Who allowed you to enter my house?!” Bill rushed inside in a fluster, chasing after Alexander. In his agitation, he even kicked over the tattered chair by the door.

Alexander crossed the threshold of the door and was standing just inside the door. However, Bill blocked his path and spread out his arms on both sides to stop him. He looked like a black eagle with its wings spread open. Courtney became frightened upon seeing this posture, thinking that the two men might start fighting each other. Thus, she hurriedly stood between the two men and said, “I’m sorry, Mr. Dawson. It wasn’t on purpose. We’ll leave—”

In the dim light inside the house, she swiftly caught sight of several items on the table out of the corner of her eye. Scattered across the table were several design drafts, white or yellow paper, colored pencils, and various clothing design drawings. Although none of the elements were similar to the styles being sold in major stores right now, it only took one glance to form a lasting impression of the designs.

Cameron claimed that Bill was a genius, but Courtney had doubted those words. From the looks of it, Cameron was not wrong in her assessment. Living in this remote and isolated place for five years, the designs he created had not been influenced by current consumer trends. Therefore, these design drafts were undoubtedly fresh and unique.

“Mr. Dawson, you didn’t stop designing.” Courtney lifted her head in surprise. Her gaze was so straightforward that it suppressed Bill’s temper. Frowning, he said solemnly, “It has nothing to do with you. You can leave now.”

“If you were hurt by the way your previous employer did things, then I can assure you that my company will never do something like that. We only deal with original creations, not plagiarism. Moreover, you are free to design whatever you want without being disturbed by anyone.” Her tone was sincere when she said those words. She heard from Cameron that Bill’s previous employer had been overly focused on pursuing commercialization. In the end, an issue occurred with the clothing, and the entire company pushed the blame on the designer. Therefore, he left the designing industry in disappointment.

“No need.” Bill’s attitude was cold. “Your company is not a charity. Designers are not dreamers either. If there exists a gap between ideals and reality, then it will simply turn into a war between you and me. There’s no need for that.” After saying that, he turned around and tidied up the design drafts on the table. “Leave.”

It seemed like he was unmoved by her words; he was resolute in his decision. Thus, she couldn't help feeling disappointed. Alexander glanced at her sideways and frowned. Then, he directed his words at a tall figure inside the house. "What if I said that you can continue maintaining your current lifestyle aside from handing your design drafts to us from time to time? Your life will hardly be any different from now."

"I don't need to create more trouble in my life." It was an expected answer.

"Let's go." Courtney tugged at Alexander's sleeve. She was not the kind of person that liked to force a person against their wishes. Bill clearly did not want to be involved in these things anymore. Why bother forcing him?

Alexander reflexively grabbed her hand in return. He was like a statue, blocking the doorway and refusing to move. "Of course, if you won't agree to it... I don't plan to let my trip here be in vain. I will develop Eldham Town into a tourism area."

Upon hearing those words, Bill froze in his actions. After confirming that Alexander was not joking around, his expression turned grim. "You came here prepared. Did the owner of the grocery store tell you about that?"

Courtney's expression changed drastically. Why is he threatening Bill? We should still maintain friendly relations even if we fail to reach an agreement!

"You sure are going through a lot of trouble just for a nameless guy like myself." Bill gave a cold laugh as he slammed the design drafts in his hand down on the table with a 'Bam!'. "Unfortunately, I hate being threatened the most."

Alexander did not respond.

"You can go ahead with the development. Before your development is completed, I can just move away from this place. There are many places for a quiet life; Eldham Town is not the only one."

This is turning into a disastrous situation. Courtney felt as if she was being dragged down by Alexander. Hence, she wanted to smile and try to smooth things over. However, Alexander spoke up before she could do anything. "My company is currently working on a project on resort towns. Coincidentally, Eldham Town seems to be geographically advantageous. As the president of a company, there is no reason for me not to proceed with my plans with such great benefits in front of me. Make no mistake; this has nothing to do with her. We do not work at the same company."

Alexander glanced at Courtney. There was a hint of a barely noticeable smile in his eyes. "My original intention is that if you sign a contract with her as a designer, I will give up on developing this land in her honor. It's too bad that you don't seem to appreciate my kindness, Mr. Dawson."

Bill clenched his fists tightly. "Where does your confidence come from for you to say such words?"

"You've worked at Melrose City before. Even if you've never heard of me before, I'm sure you've heard of Sunhill Enterprise, right?" Alexander looked at Bill and smiled faintly. "Allow me to formally introduce myself; my name is Alexander Duncan."

Courtney was very unhappy with Alexander's blatant harassment and bullying. She gritted her teeth and endured his behavior for a long time. In the end, she couldn't take it anymore and kicked him. When he grunted in pain, she scolded, "Alexander Duncan! Are you done?! This is my company's affairs. Do you have to ruin everything? Even if you ruin everything, I will never return to Sunhill."

Just the night before, Alexander had asked her if she wanted to return to the hotel to work. However, she had refused his offer. I can't believe this guy is using such offensive methods to hinder me from recruiting talents! What an evil man! Bill looks extremely upset. Even if it were any other man, they would not be happy about being so openly humiliated by another man.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Dawson. Allow me to apologize for the trouble we caused you. I will bring this lunatic away with me immediately," Courtney said as she pulled on Alexander's sleeve fiercely. "Let's go."

"Wait." Bill's voice came from behind them.

Chapter 203 It Seems You Know Of Me

Bill's voice sounded like a pool of icy water—it was bitterly cold. "Did you say that you are Alexander Duncan, the president of Sunhill Enterprise?"

Courtney had just dragged Alexander out the door. When they heard that question, they turned around again. Then, Alexander confirmed his identity unabashedly. "It seems like you know me."

"It's more than that!" There was a livid, teeth-gnashing expression painted across Bill's tanned face. Immediately after, Courtney saw white snowflakes rushing toward her face. They slammed against both her and Alexander's bodies. At the same time, a black figure rushed at Alexander from the front. It was accompanied by Bill's roar. "You brought this on yourself!"

"Watch out!" Courtney's head was buzzing in shock. She only registered a pair of hands pushing her away. Slamming against the white, wooden door with a loud 'Bang!', she cried out from the searing pain in her back. By the time she came back to her senses, the two men were already entangled in a brawl.

Alexander had the upper hand due to his skills. However, Bill was 1.8 meters tall. Moreover, his muscles were well-built from living by the beach. He hardly felt any pain from where Alexander hit him, but every hit he landed on Alexander was heavy.

Thus, Alexander was soon placed in a disadvantageous position. Grabbing him by the collar, Bill pressed him down against the ground. He grunted in pain as he took a punch from Bill. The corners of his mouth were stained with blood.

"Stop fighting!" Courtney finally recovered from her shock and screamed anxiously.

Unfortunately, the two men wouldn't listen to reason. Or rather, Bill refused to stop. Alexander simply fought out of self-defense, refusing to be a sitting duck waiting to be hit. Following their fight, the yard quickly turned into a mess. The dyed cloth and salted fish hanging from the bamboo frames fell to the ground noisily and rolled about in the dirt.

Holding her phone, she stomped her foot in anxiety. "Stop fighting! If you continue, I'm going to call the police!"

Caught up in the flames of their anger, the men couldn't care less about what she was saying. Bill was fighting like he was carrying out a suicide attack. He fought as if he had a deep hatred for Alexander, punching without stopping.

Courtney couldn't stand it anymore and hurriedly stepped between them to pull them apart. Then, a loud 'Crash!' came from the side, followed by a woman's scream.

Initially, Alexander had already run out of strength. He was being pressed down on the ground and beaten to a pulp. However, his pupils contracted abruptly when he heard that scream. He didn't know where he got his strength as he suddenly shoved Bill aside and staggered toward Courtney. "Courtney—"

The big iron pot in the yard that had been holding a simple distillation device had fallen over at some point, and Courtney lay next to the pot. There was a dark brown spot as large as a bowl that was still emitting white steam on her calf—she had been scalded badly. The sight distressed Alexander so badly that cold sweat dripped down his back, and he immediately picked her up and ran out of the yard.

Bill was dumbfounded too, his face turning pale as he took in the sight in front of him. He was stuck in a daze for a long time before he stood up, chased after Alexander, and stutteringly said, "I-I have an electric tricycle! I'll send you to the clinic in town."

No matter how great Alexander's resentment was, he could only endure it as he got on the tricycle. He felt extremely heartbroken as he held the unconscious Courtney in his arms throughout the journey. Ever since getting into a relationship with me, this woman is always in some form of trouble at any one time. She doesn't even have time to rest.

Inside the clinic at Eldham Town, Courtney was rushed into the operating room to treat her wound. The scalded area was not large, but the wound was deep. During the treatment, heartrending screams rang out from the operation room as she woke up from the pain and fainted again due to the pain.

"Didn't you give her any anesthetics? Why is she in so much pain?!" In the middle of treating her wound, the doctor came out. Then, Alexander grabbed the doctor by the collar with a furious expression.

The doctor was frightened by his hostility and cowered in fear. "This is a small town. We don't have an anesthesiologist here, so we can't administer any anesthetics. Besides, we are just a small health clinic. If you have so many requests, you need to go to the hospital in the city."

"The city is 50 or 60 km away from here! If I had the time, do you think I'd still be here?!" Alexander roared. His voice was hoarse, and his eyes became bloodshot. Along the way, Courtney had curled up in his arms while trembling. Even though she had lost consciousness, she gritted her teeth and refused to make any sound. The way she looked as she silently endured the pain greatly distressed him. This d*mn place!

"Don't blame the doctor. This is a clinic. There's really no other way." Bill frowned and grabbed Alexander's arm. "If you grab the doctor in this manner, there won't be anybody to treat Miss Hunter's wound."

Alexander was filled with animosity. Even so, he released his grip and punched Bill in the face while cursing viciously.

Bill staggered backward several steps and slumped down in a corner. Lifting his head, he wiped away the blood at the corners of his mouth. "I was at fault for causing harm to an innocent bystander. But, you don't have the right to hit me. If it wasn't for you, all of this would never have happened."

"What did you say?" Alexander's expression was icy. "Speak clearly!"

"Why? Can't you even remember what you did?" Bill looked contemptuous. The corner of his eyes curved upward in a cold arc. "Wasn't Sunjoy Fashion a clothing brand under Sunhill? Did you think you can pretend that what happened five years ago never took place if you changed the name of the company and switched out all the employees?! Sunhill is the most horrible company I've ever seen; even children are not spared from your evil deeds!"

Sunjoy Fashion? Alexander's furrowed eyebrows were dyed with a faint trace of doubt.

However, Bill had no intention of talking to Alexander. Using the wall as support, he slowly stood up. His gaze was proud and lonely as he grimly said, "I don't regret beating you up. You can go ahead and report this to the police; send me to jail for eight to ten years. But, I wish to wait until Miss Hunter wakes up before you do that. I need to apologize to her. Harming her was not my intention."

I have no idea what he is talking about, but his tone indicates that this company named 'Sunjoy' is related to me. While Alexander was deep in thought, a cell phone rang and interrupted his thoughts. He looked at the caller ID then glanced at Bill. After that, he walked out of the clinic and answered the call. It was a call from Josh.

"What is it?"

"President Duncan, all the seafood has been delivered to Melrose City. Why aren't you at the company?"

"I was busy with something. I'm still at Lisboa right now."

"Then, about the project development meeting tonight..."

"Proceed as usual but change it to a video conference."

"Alright, I will inform them."

Before hanging up, Alexander asked, "Was there a clothing company by the name of 'Sunjoy' under Sunhill Enterprise five years ago?"

"Sunjoy?" Josh seemed to hesitate slightly on the other side of the phone. "Yes, there was. But, I only heard of it four years ago. Sunjoy's reputation as a clothing brand was extremely negative by then. It no longer held any value, so I applied to deregister it. Afterward, I also dismissed all the original employees at the company."

"Why don't I have any recollection of that?" Alexander frowned.

“It’s probably because it wasn’t that important at the time. It was a bankrupt and liquidated subsidiary with no value to it. At the time, you were busy competing with Vice President Duncan over the hotel development project at Southprime Resort Town. I handled these smaller companies on your behalf.”

“How did it go bankrupt?” Alexander questioned. “Why didn’t the group carry out any assistance strategies?”

“There was no saving it. The brand was ruined by some evil factories, as well as the manager of Sunjoy at the time. They even went so far as to cut corners when producing a large batch of materials for children’s clothing. The materials they chose to use failed the quality inspections; they contained chemicals that were harmful to the human body.

That incident was a huge deal back then. Fortunately, Sunjoy did not have much interaction with Sunhill and did not drag the head office into its scandal. By the time I went there, Sunjoy had been abandoned.”

Five years ago, Sunhill Enterprise had not been under Alexander’s control alone. Scott was worried about handing the entire control of the company over to him. Moreover, he had a child behind Scott’s back, which left Scott feeling extremely displeased with him. Therefore, the control rights of the group had been divided, and the other half of the authority was held by his cousin, James Duncan.

The project at Southprime Resort Town was the decisive battle between them. They competed for two long years before Alexander finally took the win. After that, James was forced to leave the company.

During that period, all the competing real estate investment businesses had no time to be bothered by the trivial matters within their companies as everybody had their eyes on Southprime Resort Town. Besides, there was another more important reason behind the bankruptcy.

From the other side of the phone, Josh’s voice hinted at something significant. “It was rumored that the manager of Sunjoy at the time was Vice President Duncan’s lover. The relationship between them was not that simple. There were a lot of undercurrents going on. The performance reported to the headquarters during those years was always mediocre, but the headquarters never sent anybody to inspect it.”

To put it simply, James had been in charge of Sunjoy at the time. Alexander couldn’t interfere in its matters even if he wanted to

“Compile the details of the general situation at the time and send them to me.” Alexander pondered for a moment before adding, “Include a list of the designers at Sunjoy at the time too.”

“Okay.”

Alexander hung up and turned to see Bill standing behind him. Thus, he deliberately insulted Bill without mincing his words. “Eavesdropping is a bad habit.”

On the other hand, Bill seemed to be stunned. Alexander was about to leave when he turned around and said, “It’s impossible for you to know nothing about what happened back then! It was such a huge deal! Besides, the final decision to force all the blame on me was made by the headquarters.”

"I don't have any interest in what happened to you back then. And, I don't care why you hate me. There are many people out there who hate my guts. You're not the only one." Alexander spat those words out before entering the clinic without looking back.

The black figure stood at the entrance of the clinic, forming a stark contrast against the white walls of the clinic. He stood there motionlessly like a statue for a long while.

After the treatment ended, Courtney remained unconscious for two hours. By the time she woke up, her entire body hurt so much that it felt numb. However, even the slightest movement made her nerves throb in pain, and she couldn't help gasping from the agony.

"Does it still hurt?" Alexander held her hand, looking distressed. "The doctor said that your condition is not suitable for long-distance travel right now. He is afraid the blisters might burst. So, we will be observing you for tonight. Tomorrow morning, we will head to the hospital in the city."

Her throat was a little hoarse. It was probably caused by the excessive screaming from before. It took her a long while to find her voice. "I'm hungry."

His originally serious expression changed to a startled expression as he stood up. "I'll go and buy something for you to eat."

"No need." She winked at something behind him. "Mr. Dawson, are you here to bring me some food?"

He turned around and saw Bill standing at the door of the hospital ward. Bill was holding a simple wooden food container in his hand, and the fragrance of fish could vaguely be detected from it. As soon as Alexander saw Bill, he immediately felt his temper rising. His expression turned grim. "Who let you in? Take that and leave."

"Give that to me. Is it fish porridge?" When he heard what the patient on the hospital bed said, his expression stiffened in embarrassment. On the other hand, the patient did not respect her boyfriend's feelings at all. She even struggled to sit up on the hospital bed while warmly beckoning Bill over. Her struggles agitated her wound again, and she grinned in pain.

Bill quickly walked into the room, looking at a loss for what to do.

"Don't move." Alexander pressed against Courtney's shoulders to prevent her from moving about. Then, he looked back and glared at Bill warningly. "Just stay there without moving and hand me the item."

"What are you doing? Mr. Dawson brought me food out of kindness." Courtney endured the pain and squeezed out a smile that looked worse than if she had cried. "Thank you, Mr. Dawson."

Bill held the food container in one hand and scratched his head with the other. "No, I wanted to apologize to you. I'm sorry."

Before Courtney could reply, Alexander stretched out his hand with a chilly expression. "Stop wasting my time with your nonsense. Just hand that to me." If not for Courtney craving fish porridge, I wouldn't even touch anything from this crazy b*stard.

Contrarily, Courtney acted as if she had happened upon a great opportunity. She abruptly pinched his arm while looking at Bill with a bright smile. "Mr. Dawson, why don't you take a seat? This is no big deal;

you don't need to worry about it. Besides, it wasn't intentional. Rather, I'm quite curious as to why you were so furious just now."

Upon hearing those words, Bill's expression became stiff. He didn't know whether to sit or to stand. Thus, he was left at a greater loss for what to do.

Alexander threw a scornful look in Bill's direction. Then, he blew on a spoonful of porridge to cool it down before feeding it to Courtney. "Why don't you ask me instead of asking him about it?"

"Do you know about it?" Courtney ate a spoonful of porridge and looked at him in surprise.

"Eat while we talk." He didn't like how she seemed to be interested in everything. She is always curious about everything but me.

The two men finished explaining everything in the time it took for her to finish the bowl of fish porridge. Everybody had their own reasons in the story.

At the time, Bill was already a famous designer in the designing industry. He joined Sunjoy under his friend's invitation. His friend claimed that Sunjoy had a powerful supporter, which would allow them more freedom in creating designs there. Not long after Bill joined Sunjoy, he accepted an order to produce a batch of uniforms for middle school students.

Back then, the fabric he advocated was not directly adopted for use due to the high costs involved. Thus, he lost his temper during the meeting. In a fit of anger, he sarcastically said, "We might as well use inferior fabrics to save cost since nobody can tell anyway." As a result, the factories under the company went rogue and used substandard fabrics to produce shoddy products. This turn of events was what led to the events down the road.

Bill had been unaware of these matters. Afterward, the company's evil deeds came to light. The top brass decided to dump the blame on the designer to protect Sunjoy's reputation. Forced to bear the blame and stigma from the incident, he was kicked out of the designing industry and returned to Eldham Town in a fit of rage

When the story ended, Bill's face was flushed as he anxiously explained, "It was a statement from Sunhill Enterprise which clearly stated that I was to blame for the entire incident. At the time, the president of the company was none other than you, Alexander Duncan."

Chapter 205 Never Smiled That Brightly at Me Before

Courtney swallowed and looked at the man in front of her as he fed her porridge. Then, she awkwardly said, "Uh... I think the president of the company at the time really was you."

"No need to beat around the bush. It has always been me." Alexander stuffed the last mouthful of fish porridge into her mouth. Clang! The spoon clattered against the walls of the porcelain bowl. He placed the bowl by the bedside and wiped his hands slowly.

"However, the person in charge of the clothing brand was not me." He glanced at Bill and continued in a cold voice, "Didn't you eavesdrop on my phone call this afternoon? Why are you still doubting me? Or, could it be that you just refuse to accept the truth?"

Bill trembled with anger. "That was caused by the conflict between the senior executives of the company! It's really disgusting how you treat us designers as sacrificial pawns to shield yourselves from harm!"

"If that's what you think, then there's nothing more for me to say." Alexander glanced at Bill as he crumpled the tissue in his hands into a ball. The white ball-like object traversed in a smooth arc through the air and accurately landed into the trash can at the foot of the bed. If it wasn't for Courtney. I wouldn't have bothered about such trivial matters from the past, let alone the messy business James left behind.

"You know, I believe that this is all just a misunderstanding." Courtney looked at the two men. "It's not fair for Sunhill Enterprise to indiscriminately frame the employees of its subsidiaries back then. Those actions could easily ruin a person's future."

Bill vehemently agreed on this point.

"But... even if Sunhill Enterprise's actions were wrong, you cannot blame somebody else for that without understanding the truth behind the incident, Mr. Dawson. How is that any different from what the senior executives at Sunhill Enterprise did back then?"

Upon hearing those words, his tanned face paled considerably.

To be honest, she had seen through his feelings from the way he carefully and stutteringly explained his side of the story. He probably knew that he had wrongly accused Alexander and was regretting his actions.

Unfortunately, he could not set aside his pride and admit that he was wrong. "Why don't everybody shake hands and make peace for my sake? Mr. Dawson, I've eaten the fish porridge you gave me. It was delicious. Let's just take that as your apology for accidentally scalding me. I won't be paying you for it, okay?"

Courtney aimed to lighten up the atmosphere, but Bill couldn't bring himself to smile. On the other hand, the expression on Alexander's face was so cold that he resembled an iceberg sitting there. Nobody responded to her joke, and the atmosphere became even more awkward than before.

He needs to apologize to me." Alexander pointed at the bruise at the corner of his mouth to show Courtney. "I'm letting him off easy with just an apology."

"You—" Bill angrily pointed at his black eye. "You beat me up too!"

"Self-defense and intentionally causing harm are two different things."

Seeing that the situation was turning explosive again, Courtney abruptly fell into a coughing fit. Cough, cough, cough—

Both men stopped suddenly and looked at her anxiously.

"I traveled all the way out into the boonies to sign a contract with a designer only to receive this burn on my leg. Yet, the two of you keep on quarreling with each other. It's very annoying!"

Alexander felt extremely guilty upon hearing those words. If it wasn't for me, Courtney would not have gotten injured. With nowhere to vent his resentment, he shot a chilly glare at Bill again.

In response, Bill glared right back at Alexander without holding back. Then, he turned to Courtney to confirm something. "Miss Hunter, you mentioned previously that you do not work for Sunhill Enterprise. I would like to confirm that again; is that true?"

"Of course." Courtney nodded. "I might hold the surname 'Hunter', but there is nothing between me and Sunhill Enterprise whatsoever aside from being a former employee at Sunhill Hotel. Citron Apparel has always been my family's business, and now, I oversee the company."

She greatly emphasized the words 'former employee' as if deliberately trying to warn Alexander about something. When Alexander heard those words, he silently swallowed the words he had been about to say to Bill.

"Good." Bill nodded solemnly. "Then, I will sign a contract with you. Any conditions will be fine. It will be my compensation for harming you."

"Huh?" Courtney was stunned. "Are you serious? Can you repeat that?!"

His expression was serious as he repeated what he just said, word for word.

I can't believe my sudden stroke of fortune! Who could have thought that Bill's sense of responsibility could be so strong?! I can't believe he accepted my offer because he accidentally burned my leg! If so, this burn is totally worth it! "Then, I will immediately draw up a contract upon my return. I will send somebody to deliver it to you later."

"No need. You can go back first. I will head to Melrose City after packing up my stuff. By the way, I have a condition."

"You dare to set conditions?" Alexander glared at Bill.

"What is it?" In response, Courtney pinched him as she flashed a brilliant smile at Bill. "I'll accept whatever you ask for."

This is unbelievable! Alexander thought furiously.

"I don't have a place to stay in Melrose City. So, I need a temporary place to stay. I will move out once I find a house."

"Sure. You can leave it to me. I'll make it so that you can move in as soon as you arrive," she agreed readily. Getting a good designer is equivalent to obtaining a cash cow! What is a house compared to that?!

"I look forward to working with you." Courtney struggled to stretch out her arm, intending to shake hands with Bill. However, Alexander caught her hand before she could fully stretch out her hand. He impatiently pushed her back down on the bed. "Your injury is not healed. Did you forget about the pain? So what if you're working together? Just stay still."

Bill glanced at him contemptuously and faintly said, "Male chauvinism will kill a marriage. Miss Hunter, I advise you to reconsider this person carefully."

“What did you say?!” Alexander’s expression was extremely dark.

“I’ll go back to pack up so that I can make it to leave with you.” Bill acted like he heard nothing. After saying that, he arrogantly walked out of the clinic.

“Hey, Mr. Dawson! You forgot your bowl!” A melodious voice rang out from the lobby of the clinic.

“Just throw it away. I’ll get new ones when I move out.”

A long time after Bill left, Courtney was still staring in the direction he left with a foolish smile on her face.

“Are you done being happy?” Alexander stared at her coldly, looking very dangerous.

She wiggled her eyebrows at him. “Of course, I’d be happy about signing a contract with a designer.”

“You’ve never smiled at me like that before.”

“Smile at you?” She looked at him in contempt. “People will think I’m crazy if I smiled at you like that.” If Cameron saw that, she’ll say that I’ve been deluded by his beauty and turned into a nympho!

He felt extremely dissatisfied with the result. Gritting his teeth, he said, “I was still diligently trying to find a way for you to win over that stupid designer when you were being treated for your wounds inside the clinic. But, you only focused on that b*stard the moment you woke up. You didn’t even look at me! Courtney Hunter, don’t you have anything else to say to me?”

He immediately regretted saying those words. Thus, he scowled deeply and turned to leave. In the past, he would not have said anything. However, he was feeling extremely anxious right now—so much so that he shamelessly said something he did not mean just to take credit for what he secretly did.

Courtney grabbed Alexander’s hand abruptly. His hand was large and wide. Moreover, it had the warmth that was characteristic of a man. Following her action of leaning forward, her waist gradually arched into a smooth line as she placed a warm kiss on the corner of his mouth. The hospital ward immediately became very quiet. Then, he heard the gentlest voice murmur, “Thank you.”