

One Night Surprise Chapter 26

Chapter 26

Right then, someone knocked on his door. "Come in."

Britney stepped in with two cups of coffee in her hands. "I've brought your favorite americano drink, Alex."

"What brings you here?" Alexander glanced up at her calmly.

"Didn't you say that we'll be telling Grandpa about our wedding tonight? I'm a little nervous." Britney bit on her lower lip as she gave him a bashful smile.

"Haven't you always visited Grandpa before we even decided to have this wedding?" Alexander didn't bother to play along with her; he simply tore down her pretentious front.

An awkward look crept across Britney's face, but she shamelessly continued to speak in a sweet voice. "That was when I was putting up a show with you, Alex. Naturally, I have to be a little more worried now that this is the real thing. Do you think I'm dressed appropriately for tonight? Will Grandpa like this?"

Alexander didn't even look at her. "Whatever."

"Alex" Britney uttered as she walked toward him. Feeling slightly annoyed, she was about to start a fight when she caught a glimpse of the medical documents that were placed on the table. The words 'Tina Hunter' were printed on it.

"Who's Tina Hunter?" Britney couldn't stop herself from asking. Alexander glanced at her as he responded calmly and said, "She's the daughter of an employee."

"Why are you looking at the medical records of an employee's daughter? Who is this staff of yours?" She demanded.

Alexander finally placed his hands over the medical records as he spoke with a sharp edge to his tone. "Do I have to report everything to you?"

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"No. That's not what I meant; I was just asking," she said as her face fell a little.

"Well, you're asking too many questions. I still have other matters to handle, and we're only meeting Grandpa during dinner. You can head over there yourself; I'll be there on time." This time, he was giving her a direct order. She quickly regretted having asked so many questions earlier, but she knew that the situation could no longer be salvaged when she saw the annoyed look on Alexander's face. She embarrassedly mumbled some excuse before seeing herself out of the office. Tina Hunter, she sneakily recited the name in her head as she went out.

"Alexander offered to handle your kindergarten admissions for you?" Scott pressed a phone against his ear as he paced around energetically in the Duncans' ancestral home. "It seems like things are working out well since he offered to help your mother out so soon."

The voice on the other end of the call was sweet and innocent. "It's lucky that you informed me about Mr. Alexander's whereabouts, Grandpa Scott. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to get Mommy and Mr. Alexander to 'bump' into each other at the restaurant."

"It's also partially because your mother's a good woman. There aren't many women who have caught Alexander's attention in the past," Scott replied.

"You're saying that Mommy has a chance, right?!" Tina asked excitedly.

"She doesn't just have a chance; she has a high chance." The two of them were chatting happily when the housekeeper stepped into Scott's room. "Mr. Duncan, Mr. Alexander and Miss Price have arrived."

Scott chuckled. "Alright, Alexander's back. I'm going to take this opportunity to ask him what his thoughts are. I'll talk to you later, Tina."

"Okay. Bye, Grandpa Scott," she uttered. Scott felt extremely pleased and relaxed to hear the easygoing, cheerful voice on the other end of the call; he was still beaming even moments after the call had ended.

"That cheeky girl, Tina, really captured my heart. If her mother gets married to Alexander and moves in with us, the atmosphere in our house will be so much more lively. Jordan will get himself a friend too." he said.

"Aren't you afraid that Tina's mother will be less attentive to Jordan since she has her own child to care for?" the housekeeper asked.

"Didn't you see them at the restaurant that day? Jordan and Tina got along so well, and her mother was so sweet to Jordan" Scott replied. The housekeeper seemed a little more at ease upon the mention of the meeting at the Japanese restaurant that day.

No one was surprised to hear Alexander bringing Britney home for dinner. Ever since Scott pressured Alexander to get married five years ago, he had brought her back to meet the Duncan Family so that they would stop pestering him. Initially, Scott considered the possibility that they might actually be interested in one another, but he soon realized that it was all just a show.

"Why didn't Jordan come along?" Scott asked about the young boy once they were all sat at the dining table. Alexander frowned a little when he thought of the tantrums Jordan had thrown at home. "He's been in a bad mood recently, so I didn't want to cause more trouble by bringing him here," he explained.

"You're the only one that can ever cause me trouble," Scott said as he threw Alexander a side-eye. "You have to find a mother who can care for Jordan soon. Do you think he's going to be in a good mood when he spends all his time with a bunch of maids? It's going to be your own fault if you end up with a spoiled brat"

Upon the mention of that topic, Alexander lowered his chopsticks as he began to speak. "I've thought about this, and I think you're right. I'm planning to get married soon."

"You're getting married?" Before Scott could express his joy, Alexander continued to explain himself. "That's why I brought Britney home to let you know about this," he said.

"What? You're getting married to her?" The old man's face fell instantly.

Alexander frowned as he didn't understand why Scott's face had darkened so quickly. "Britney has been with me for a while now, so I thought I'd just get married since you want me to," Alexander explained.

"Wait, no. Hold on." Scott felt his mind spinning in circles, and it took him a while to calm himself down. "What about Jordan? Did Jordan agree to this marriage?"

Alexander nodded with great certainty. "I'm doing this for the sake of Jordan, after all."

"No way. I don't agree to this; not until Jordan comes over personally and tells me that he agrees to it." Scott was fuming as he rejected the marriage right in front of Britney. Alexander was rather surprised. I thought Grandpa would be glad to hear about my plans on getting married. What's up with this odd reaction of his?

Britney was fuming with rage at this point, but she tried her best to suppress it as she chimed in with a gentle voice. "I'm going to treat Jordan really well after we get married, Grandpa. Furthermore, I'm the one who knows Jordan the best-I've watched him grow up throughout the years." However, Scott only threw her a disdainful look before he scoffed and turned toward the housekeeper. "Go pick Jordan up and bring him over, Harry."

The Duncans' ancestral home wasn't far from where Alexander lived, so it only took half an hour for the housekeeper to return with Jordan. The young boy flinched with fear the moment he walked in and saw Britney in the house. Scott smiled and waved for Jordan to come over to him. "Come to your great-grandfather, Jordan." Jordan then ran over to Scott.

"Your Daddy told me that you want a Mommy, right?" the old man asked.

Jordan shook his head at first before shuddering in fear when he caught sight of Britney through the corner of his eye. He then nodded slightly. Alexander noticed that there seemed to be something odd about this.

"Children can't truly understand what's going on, but I'm sure he knows who treats him the best. Come over to your Aunt Britney, Jordan." Britney waved at the young boy as she beamed sweetly, but Jordan unknowingly shrunk away and hid behind Scott. The old man realized this and looked up at Britney with a cold glare. "That's not right of you to say that. I think children know a lot more than we think they do; the way you communicate with a child will eventually determine the child's character."

The smile on Britney's face froze a little as she awkwardly agreed to him. "Yes. You're right, Grandpa. I'll be careful with my words from now on."

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However, the look on Scott's face remained calm as the old man didn't express any opinions toward Britney. Instead, he turned toward Alexander. "You're in your thirties. Since you haven't gotten married, I don't think there's a need to rush into it now. I think you should contemplate more about your marriage before we discuss this again in the future." His words clearly indicated his disagreement toward the marriage.

What more is there to discuss? Britney dug her nails into her palms as she stared at Alexander. He didn't give any reaction at all, and dinner ended on a bad note. Britney was supposed to leave along with Alexander, but Scott got her to leave first as he wanted to speak to Alexander in private.

*"That sh*tty old man clearly doesn't support our marriage. I can't believe I've spent so much time visiting him at the Duncans' ancestral home all these years. All of that has gone to waste now," Britney hissed angrily as she punched her fists into the car seat once she got into the car.*

"Don't be angry, Britney. That old man won't be able to say anything as long as President Duncan insists on getting married. You know how bad President Duncan's temper can be, right? He even found some random person to give birth to a child just because that old man forced him to get married and have kids previously. You can clearly tell from that incident that President Duncan doesn't actually care about what his grandfather thinks."

The person's words served as a reminder for Britney. That's true. Alexander has always been one to do whatever he wishes to. Although he appears to respect Grandpa's orders, he still ends up doing whatever he wants to in the end, so I just have to make sure that he doesn't change his mind about the wedding.

That night, both Alexander and Jordan stayed in the Duncans' ancestral house. Alexander thought that his grandfather would have something to say to him, but after the old man

received a call, he hastily gestured for his maids to prepare the room for his guests before he went into his study and locked the door behind him.

"Is Grandpa busy with something recently?" Alexander gave the butler a curious look. The butler maintained a calm expression as he answered, "Your grandfather has been talking to his friends a lot more recently, but I'm not sure about the details. You can just make yourself comfortable as you wait for him to get off the call, Young Master."

But Scott remained on the phone even as the night fell. Alexander had already read Jordan an entire storybook, and Jordan fell asleep by the end of it. Soon, Alexander found himself yawning uncontrollably. He glanced at the clock to see that it was nearly midnight, so he decided to go to bed without waiting any longer.

Sometime during the middle of the night, Courtney woke up to pour herself a glass of water. Seeing that the lights in Tina's room were still turned on when she went out to the living room, she frowned and walked over to the room. She could hear Tina's voice from the outside. "You'd never told me about this person. Ugh, this is so troublesome. I wouldn't have asked Mommy to go if you had told me about this earlier. It's just too much trouble," Tina said.

"What are you doing up at this hour, Tina?" Courtney immediately pushed the door open and scowled at her daughter.

Tina hurriedly ended the call before she turned around with a frightened look on her face. She shifted her eyes nervously before she replied, "Nothing. I was just talking to my godmother."

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Courtney's eyes lit up upon hearing this. "Really? I have some stuff to tell her too. Pass me the phone and let me talk to her for a while."

"No. I ended the call. Godmother said she was going to bed," Tina mumbled as she hid her phone behind her back.

"Oh?" Courtney seemed rather disappointed, but she didn't suspect anything. "Alright. You should go to bed too. Look at the time! Kids have to sleep early."

"Alright." Tina nodded obediently before she knitted her brows and scrunched her face into a rather worried expression. "I just got some bad news, Mommy. Do you want to know about it?"

"Did your godmother get into a fight with her clients again?" Courtney tensed her facial muscles as she felt rather nervous. Although Cameron appeared to be polite and gentle, she actually had a terrible temper. Furthermore, she was a pretty good fighter, and it was common for her to get into scuffles with her clients when she encountered clients that couldn't get along well with her.

"No. It's not about her; it's about you, Mommy." Tina shook her head.

"Me?" Courtney pointed at her own nose.

"Yup." Tina lowered her head and sighed dejectedly. "I think your second marriage isn't going to happen, Mommy."

"My second marriage?" Courtney was utterly bewildered.

"I heard that your boss, Mr. Alexander, is about to get married," Tina uttered.

Courtney froze upon hearing this. The rumors of Alexander and Britney's marriage had been spreading like wildfire across the entire company, and it sounded pretty legitimate. Furthermore, Britney had been showing up more frequently at the headquarters, so all of the staff began to gossip about them even more. They all assumed that it was true since Alexander didn't show any intentions of clarifying the

rumors. But what has Alexander's marriage got to do with me? "What are you talking about?" she asked.

"Mr. Alexander is handsome and rich; he's literally the man of every girl's dreams. I'd be able to enjoy the rest of my life if you get married to him, Mommy. Great-now that you've failed to seize this opportunity, he's going to get married to someone else," Tina grumbled.

Courtney finally understood what was going on. This silly girl is still trying to find me a husband, huh! She didn't know whether to laugh or cry as she knocked her knuckles against Tina's head. "What's going on in that little brain of yours all day? What has his marriage got to do with me? He's just my superior; that's all. You need to stop daydreaming and just go to bed."

Tina quietly crawled under her covers and went to bed. There goes a good opportunity, she thought disappointedly. Courtney simply shook her head before turning the lights off and shutting the bedroom door.

After that day, Courtney began to purchase all the classroom necessities for Tina. She then picked a Monday morning to send her daughter off to school. The local schools were rather different from the

schools they had overseas, so Courtney was worried that Tina might not be able to adapt to the environment. 'Coincidentally', Alexander had picked the same day to send Jordan to school.

"Isn't it good enough for Jordan to have his home tutor? Why did you decide to send him to school all of a sudden?" Britney tried her best to sound casual as she spoke to Alexander in the car. Ever since Alexander brought up the idea of marriage, she had been especially attentive and thoughtful with all her acts. She diligently traveled between the two places-Alexander's house and Sunhill Enterprise-to fulfil her duty as a caring partner. After she heard that Jordan was attending his first day of school, she specially woke up early in the morning just to appear as if she cared and wanted to accompany the

boy

"It's better for his recovery if he gets to spend time with more people." Alexander uttered calmly. He hadn't actually planned on sending Jordan to school, but Jordan insisted that he did so. There were a lot of students in school, and that just increased the chances of there being problems occurring. Alexander wasn't sure that he'd be able to handle all of it.

"Well, if Jordan likes that, then we can give him a few younger brothers and sisters. He'd have more people around him, then," she offered. Jordan's face turned pale the moment he heard the woman's words. He shrunk in his safety seat as he hugged his drawing board tightly. This evil woman's kids must be just as evil as her.

Alexander frowned. "I don't have such plans at the moment. Just Jordan's enough for now." His words left Britney fuming on the inside. What is that supposed to mean? Is he saying that he's not planning to have kids with me after we get married? The atmosphere turned sour in the car, but they soon arrived at the school.

Once the driver held their car door open, Alexander took Jordan in his hand and led him toward the entrance of the school. They only walked a short distance when Jordan flung his father's hand away and charged toward another figure.

Courtney was speaking to Nora, who came out to greet her and Tina, when she felt a tight grip around her calf. She looked down to see a handsome young boy's face. It was Jordan clinging onto her leg with a look of distress on his face as he pouted his lips.

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"Jordan! Are you studying here too? What's with that sad face? Are you still half-asleep?" Courtney quickly kneeled down to see Jordan shaking his head in an upset manner.

Meanwhile, Tina was filled with joy the moment she saw Jordan appear beside her, so she quickly held onto his arm. "You're here too! That's great! I have a friend, then! I'll take care of you from now on!" Alexander and Britney walked side-by-side toward them. Once Britney saw how close Jordan was with the mother and daughter, she glared at Courtney for a long while. *This woman looks familiar.*

"Nice to meet you, Miss Price." Courtney immediately straightened herself after she saw Britney

"You know me?" Britney raised an eyebrow.

"Who wouldn't know the award-winning actress?" Courtney chuckled. "Also, I was the one who greeted you when you stayed in the Sunhill Hotel previously."

"You work for Sunhill Enterprise?" Britney froze for a moment as she seemed to have recalled something then. "Is 'Hunter' your surname?" she asked.

Courtney didn't realize anything odd about Britney's question, she simply nodded and beamed happily. "So you still remember me, huh, Miss Price."

"What's your daughter's name?" Britney didn't respond to her statement. She glanced at Tina's smooth and innocent face before she felt a sudden jolt in her heart. *Why does this young girl's face resemble Alexander's?* No way, she thought.

"I'm Tina Hunter. You can call me Tina." The young girl abruptly interrupted their conversation as she glanced up at Britney, as if she was analyzing the woman before her eyes.

"Tina Hunter?" Britney's fists curled up tightly when she heard the name. She recalled the medical records that she had seen in Alexander's office that day, and she felt suspicion growing within her. "Why do you have your mother's surname?" she asked in a straightforward manner.

Tina turned toward her own mother as she seemed rather confused. Courtney hadn't realized anything odd about the questions that Britney had asked previously, but at this point, she'd be an idiot if she didn't sense something wrong with Britney's invasive manners of questioning. She therefore pulled Tina closer toward her as she replied in a less friendly tone, "Tina grew up in America, so I don't think she understands your question since she's only returned to the country a while ago. Furthermore, it's the 21st century; is it really that odd that she takes her mother's surname?"

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Britney was rather taken aback by this, but she felt even more displeased when she saw Jordan hiding himself behind Courtney as well. Her tone took a more hostile turn. "It's fine to take either parent's surname; I was just curious because a school like Sapphire Kindergarten isn't a place that anyone can just enrol their children into. You're just a manager under probation in the Sunhill Enterprise; I don't see how you can have the ability to send your child here apart from having a husband with an impressive background"

This left Courtney feeling rather embarrassed. She wasn't the one who provoked Britney to begin with, yet the latter's tone of voice sounded hostile and rude. Furthermore, Britney's words had directly

attacked a vulnerable spot of hers-it was true that she would have no ability to send Tina to such a school if she didn't have help. Courtney therefore didn't know what to say in response.

"That's none of your business," said Alexander as he interrupted Britney to get Courtney out of her embarrassing situation. "Does everyone here have to inform you of how they got

enrolled into this school? You've been too much of a busybody recently," he uttered as he flashed Britney a look of disdain.

Britney's face turned pale immediately. *How can he speak up for this woman? He even shamed me in front of her.* "I was just asking for Jordan's sake, Alexander. I thought it'd be better to clarify things as I was worried that the environment at school might be messy." She tried her best to fix the situation.

"There's no need for that. You can go back to the car. I'll send Jordan in myself." Alexander's attitude was cold; he didn't even look at her. Since he had given his orders, the security at the entrance had a duty to stop Britney from entering the school compounds. This was a rule at Sapphire Kindergarten.

"Alexander!" Britney furiously stomped her foot against the ground as she watched Alexander and Courtney walking in together. *They didn't even bother to turn around and check on me, she thought furiously.* Tina and Jordan strolled around in front of the two adults. The little girl flinched when she turned around to see Britney throwing a tantrum outside the gates. "Jordan, do you really like that woman outside? I think she's a little scary."

Ever since Scott told Tina about the news of Alexander and Britney's marriage, she had been doing her research on Britney online. She looked like a beautiful angel in all the pictures uploaded online, but now that Tina saw her in person, she simply pursed her lips in dissatisfaction. *She probably just dresses in a trendier manner. But her face and the mean and harsh way she talks makes her*

incomparable to my own mother! Mr. Alexander has such bad taste

Jordan seemed a little agitated as he quickly shook his head. "Do you like her? Do you want her to be your stepmother?" Tina asked with a look of surprise on her face. Jordan shook his head even harder than before. "Does that mean that you don't want her to be your stepmother?" Tina's eyes lit up excitedly. Jordan nodded his head again then.

"Well... what about my mother, then? Do you think you'd like it better if my mother became your stepmother instead? The food that Mommy and I make is delicious," she said with her eyes widened. Jordan nodded his head with all his might. When she saw this, she jumped around with joy, as if she had just found a sliver of hope. She then held onto Jordan's hand in a formal manner as she stared at him with her big eyes. "You'll be my elder brother from now on then. Don't worry, as long as I have scrumptious meat in my bowl, you'll never have to fill your tummy with soup, okay?"

Jordan nodded for a while before he suddenly shook his head. He then looked down and began to write on his drawing board before he held it up to show her. Tina didn't know a lot of words, so she frowned when she looked at it. "What are you writing, Jordan?"

Seeing this, Jordan tottered over to his father before shoving his drawing board to him. Jordan then pointed at the drawing board before pointing toward Tina, indicating for Alexander to read it out to her.

Alexander threw his son a curious stare as Jordan anxiously tugged against his sleeve. With a frown, Alexander read the sentence out. "I'm really rich, so we can eat meat together. We won't have to survive on soup at all. Why did you write this, Jordan?"

But Jordan simply threw a faint glance at Alexander before he snatched the board away, ran back to Tina, and gave her a wink. Tina burst into laughter as she nodded at Jordan excitedly. "That's true! Hahaha!"

While Alexander saw all the odd exchanges between the two children, he couldn't understand what was going on at all. *Well, I guess it's no surprise that I can't understand these kids' behaviors. There's no need for me to overthink it.* Meanwhile, Courtney seemed rather distant as she strode in with them. She only came to her senses when she heard the two children laughing heartily. After some hesitation, she finally turned toward Alexander. "Thank you for helping with Tina's enrollment, President Duncan."

He continued looking forward without revealing any emotions on his face. "Don't think too much about it. As a father, I just want Jordan to have a friend, and it seems like Jordan really gets along well with Tina. Tina's his first friend."

Courtney felt a little speechless upon hearing this. *He spent all that money for Tina to study here just because he wanted a friend for his son. You can really do whatever you want to when you're rich. I wouldn't have had to go through all the trouble to send her here if it weren't for Doctor Ishiguro. But now, I'll just have to deal with all the troubles; I'll have to deal with them really well.* From where she stood behind Alexander, Courtney angrily cracked her knuckles to make loud noises.

"What's that sound?" Alexander turned around to look at her.

She then let go of her hands as she beamed. "What? What sound? I didn't hear anything."

"Huh. Perhaps I've misheard," he said calmly as his gaze sharpened.

Once the admission procedures were completed, the helpers came forward and led the two children into their classroom. Both Courtney and Alexander had come along to observe the school's environments, but the difference between them was that Courtney had to arrive at work by 9.00AM. She was running out of time, so she had to speedily tour around the whole school.

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She simply glanced around at the playground before she began to walk away. However, she then slowed down as she heard a voice behind her. "There aren't any safety precautions taken for the swings here." Alexander's voice was deep as he glanced at the helper who had been following them around. "Are you sure that these are safe?"

Nora, the pretty helper, seemed a little stunned upon hearing Alexander's question. "The swing isn't that high, and the ground beneath it is cushioned. Plus, we've never had any accidents with the swings in school," she answered.

But Alexander continued to point at the railing of the swings with a look of contempt on his face. "Just because there has never been an accident doesn't mean that there won't be one in the future. Do you think a child would be able to balance and keep themselves on the swing if they were to loosen their grip while they're high up in the air?" He then turned around to glance at the rainbow-colored tartan track nearby. "I took a look at the tartan track just now. Its corners aren't fully covered with rubberized material, and it's clear that you guys do not pay enough attention to the untrimmed weeds around the area. Some naughty kids might hide in the bushes without you realizing; what happens if a poisonous snake shows up then?"

The helper's face was drained of color. She didn't know how to respond to the man's words. *What kind of kid is going to let go of their grip on the swing for no good reason? Also, the gardeners might have slacked off a little with their work in the field recently, but the grass is*

barely at the height of my ankles! I've never seen a parent as harsh and demanding as Alexander in Sapphire Kindergarten!

"It looks okay to me." A pleasant and firm voice broke the silence as Courtney walked toward them. "I think you're too worried about Jordan, President Duncan. Tina fell off a swing when she was younger. She sprained her arm and had a few cuts on her face, but I don't think that it's necessarily a bad thing." She gazed at him gently, as if she was recalling a heartwarming memory. "After that incident, she always remembered to hold onto the sides of the swing tightly; she never fell off again after that. She would even remind me to hold on tightly whenever I rode the swing with her."

Her words seemed to have relieved the tension in his facial muscles. His gaze was filled with mixed

emotions as he glanced at her. Nora, who had been watching from the side, carefully spoke up then. "I think Miss Hunter's right, President Duncan. However, if you truly feel worried about this, we can just take the swing sets down. We'll also make sure to cover up all the tracks so that there won't be any weeds left."

He fell silent for a moment as he contemplated their words. "Forget it. Just leave it the way it is. You just have to call me immediately if anything happens to Jordan," he said quietly.

Nora heaved a sigh of relief as she flashed Courtney a thankful glance. "Alright! Well, if there isn't anything else that you'd like to ask, I'll have to excuse myself to send these reports over to the headmaster."

It was still rather early in the morning. Courtney took a deep breath before she sat herself down on one of the swings, her eyes squinting as she grinned at the man in front of her. "I didn't know you were willing to listen to the opinions of others, President Duncan."

When Alexander lifted his head to look at her, the sunlight spilled across her face and lit up her sparkling pupils. He noticed a hint of playful teasing underneath her crescent-shaped eyes, but surprisingly, he didn't seem annoyed by her words. "Do I look like a lone wolf who'd reject everyone else's opinions?" he asked.

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"No way! Everyone knows how you achieved success at a young age, President Duncan. How would anyone take you as a tyrant who only trusts in his own opinions?" Courtney

denied his accusations in an excessively flattering manner as she swayed herself on the swing.

"A tyrant?" He narrowed his eyes.

"Really?" Complicated emotions flashed across his face. Courtney assumed that he didn't agree to her point, so she continued to explain herself. "I don't think there's anything wrong with a child getting hurt sometimes. Us humans can't stay at home forever just because we're scared of the world outside, can we? Likewise, you can't treat Jordan like a plant cooped up in a greenhouse forever, he has to expose himself to the sunlight outdoors to understand the sort of life that he's looking for. Each of us has to learn to live our lives for the sake of ourselves, don't you think?"

Her words seemed to have made an impact on him, as the sentence, 'each of us has to learn to live our lives for the sake of ourselves', echoed in his mind for a long while. Once Courtney noticed the odd look on his face, she carefully proceeded with a question. "Are you only so nervous because Jordan can't speak?"

Alexander snapped back into reality then, his gaze as cold and dark as the bottom of a lake when he glared at her. "I'm sorry." She quickly bit on her lower lip. "I—I forgot that you mentioned that I shouldn't ask about that. I'm sorry. You can just pretend I never said that." She then glanced at her watch as she stood up from the swing. "Well, it's late, and I have to go to work. I'll have to make a move soon," she said in an attempt to change the topic of conversation.

"Jordan wouldn't have stopped talking if it weren't for my carelessness." Courtney's footsteps came to a halt when she heard a deep, self-critical voice from behind. She turned around, stunned. *I can't believe my ears. He doesn't seem like the type to talk about his private life. I even got lectured by him the last time I asked about Jordan's condition!* "Are you saying that Jordan doesn't talk only because he refuses to speak?" she asked cautiously.

He nodded lightly as a mixture of emotions surfaced within him. "Jordan was already a talkative boy by the age of 2, but he stopped speaking after he had a high fever. The doctor was certain that there wasn't any damage to his nerves and vocal cords, so his refusal to speak is entirely a psychological

issue."

"A psychological issue? What did he go through?" A hint of sympathy flickered across Courtney's gaze.

Alexander heaved a long sigh; he was always flooded with guilt upon the mention of this topic. "I don't know." He felt more guilty precisely because he didn't know. The high fever that plagued Jordan appeared out of nowhere; no one knew what Jordan went through that night. The maids at the Duncans' ancestral house didn't have the answers to anything, and that was one of the reasons why Alexander no longer wanted to leave Jordan with his grandfather. Alexander also came to another realization only after Jordan nearly lost his life due to that high fever—*a father's duty is beyond just visiting his child whenever he has the spare time. It's more than just getting his son to call him 'Daddy'. Being a father is a lifelong responsibility.*

Right then, Alexander's brows were knitted tightly as he was extremely upset. Courtney was surprised to hear what he just said. "Well, it explains why you're so worried about Jordan now. But you shouldn't dwell on the past; it's in the past after all." Her attempts to comfort him were feeble, and he still looked rather gloomy. Upon that, she immediately felt a pang of uneasiness. *I shouldn't have brought up such a sensitive topic. He's not going to burst into tears after telling me about his story, right?!* Courtney's eyes then lit up as she saw the swing set that she had played with from the corner of her eyes. "Have you tried going on a swing, President Duncan?"

Her sudden, silly question got Alexander to glare at her curiously. Before he could get a full grasp of the situation, Courtney grabbed onto his arm and tugged him toward the swing. "Going on a swing can help you forget all of the problems that you have in life. Sit here, President Duncan. I'll push you from the back."

"I don't need you to push me," he grunted.

"Oh, don't worry, President Duncan; I know it was my fault that I brought up some sad memories of

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your past. Sit tight."

"Courtney." Alexander felt the corner of his lips twitching in anger as he gritted his teeth together. "Stop it now."

Courtney kept telling Alexander not to worry as she thought that he simply didn't want to trouble her. She only heard the fury in his voice after she pushed the swing forward a few times. "Stop it, Courtney." he hissed

"W-What's wrong?" She quickly stopped pushing the swing. He then planted his feet on the ground to slow the swing down, his expensive leather shoes forming 'brake marks' on the sandpit beneath his feet as he dragged his shoes across the ground. He then turned to glare at Courtney. "Did I say that I wanted to ride on the swing?"

"Well, I thought you might want to test it out for Jordan since you said that it didn't look safe. You have to play with these childish rides when you're spending time with your kid, anyway. I'm sure you've been on a swing with Jordan, right?" Courtney didn't see the need to apologize for her acts as she didn't think that she had done anything wrong.

"That's the reason you think I should be riding a swing here?" His gaze was burning with anger as he stared at Courtney, but she didn't understand his rage. The smile on her face hardened as she observed Alexander for a while more. He was dressed in a black, formal suit-the complete opposite of the colorful swings he was seated on. I was trying so hard to comfort him that I nearly forgot how he's usually as cold and emotionless as an iceberg. "Well... um... I just realized the time. I have to go to work. I-I'll leave now." Courtney pretended to glance at her watch before she took a few steps back and turned to run away from him.

The rage Alexander felt within him gradually dissipated as he watched the woman's flustered manner of running away from him. He even felt an odd sense of fondness. Once he checked

to see that there wasn't anyone around him, he wrapped his long fingers around the ropes of the swing as hints of joy flickered across his gaze.

Courtney jogged out of the school and only stopped to catch her breath once she got out of the front doors. She pressed her palm against her chest, as if she was still in shock from what had just happened. That was terrifying. The knives in Alexander's eyes could have killed me if I had stayed any longer.

"Why did you come out by yourself, Miss Hunter?" Courtney looked up to see Britney, who had just stepped out of Alexander's MPV. Britney had her arms crossed in front of her chest as she gave Courtney a hostile glance, making the latter frown at this. She felt rather disgusted by the woman in front of her after she thought about how Britney had rudely asked Tina about her surname earlier, so she simply gave her a perfunctory nod before she stepped aside to hail a cab for herself.

"Do you know that Alexander and I are getting married?" Britney pressed on, as if she didn't want to allow Courtney to leave. Courtney had no choice but to turn around and reply to the woman. "It's hard to ignore the rumors that have been spreading across the company."

"Well, it's great that you know about it." Britney tidied her hair and lifted her chin up a little. "Although the official news isn't out yet, we will be hosting a press conference soon. The whole nation will learn about this huge news of my marriage with Alexander. If anyone dares to even dream of coming between us, then that person should be prepared to be cursed by thousands of others. Don't go out for wool and come home shorn."

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Courtney decided to pretend that she didn't understand what the other woman meant in an attempt to stop the woman from further embarrassing herself. "You might have been worrying too much, Miss Price. I don't really understand what you mean."

Britney clearly didn't accept Courtney's courteous reply, for her voice was cold as she got directly to her point. "I'm asking you to stay away from Alexander." Britney had never seen Alexander interested in another woman ever since she met him 6 years ago; she once thought that this would give her an advantage. Since he doesn't seem interested in women, I'll just have to try my best to secure my slot as

his wife. I'll be able to get everything I want, and I won't even have to be worried about him cheating on me But the woman who is standing before my eyes has intrigued Alexander enough to get him to personally find a school for her daughter. I can't believe it.

Any pretentious façades that they had put up between them were gone the moment Britney clarified herself. Courtney took a deep breath as she clenched her fists tightly. "I would suggest you take your words back, Miss Price," she uttered in an angry tone.

"What's wrong? Are you guilty of something?" Britney scoffed.

"Do you think every woman in Alexander's life is interested in taking advantage of him?" Courtney asked in return.

"Most of the time, yes. Who knows what sort of requests you might come up with since you saved Jordan before? After all, how did you-a manager under probation at the hotel-even manage to send your daughter here if you hadn't seen an opportunity and seized it immediately? Don't think I don't know what you're thinking-you're trying to get closer to Alexander. I've seen countless women like you," Britney hissed.

Courtney's face darkened when she heard all the malicious and hurtful words that escaped Britney's lips. "Women like me?" she simply asked.

"I meant shameless women like you who only think of using men to lift yourselves up. I'm warning you now: don't try to take what isn't yours. You should take note for your daughter's sake, at least." Britney curled her lips up into a cold smirk.

"You should be careful with your words, Miss Price. I don't have any interest toward President Duncan; you're simply imagining things on your own." Courtney curled her fists up tightly after she heard what the other woman said. Britney was about to respond when she saw a familiar figure emerging from the corner of her eyes. Immediately, her expression turned into a pleasant one as she turned around to greet the man. "What took you so long, Alexander?"

"I had some stuff to handle." Alexander only glanced at her slightly before he looked over her shoulder to address Courtney. "I'm heading over to the hotel now, do you want to come along?"

If Courtney agreed to tag along after the warning that she had just received from Britney, she would clearly be seen as trying to start a fight. She didn't want to do anything of that sort, so she shook her head furiously. "It's fine. I'll get myself a cab."

Alexander didn't insist on his offer; he simply got into the car and headed over to the hotel along with Britney. On the way there, Britney stole glances at Alexander. She suspected that something might have occurred in the kindergarten as he seemed to be in a really great

mood. "Alexander, although Miss Hunter has indeed saved Jordan's life, don't you think you're being a little too nice to her?" she asked.

"Really? You're just thinking too much," he muttered in a calm voice as he continued to look at the view of the streets outside the car window.

"You were the one that arranged for Miss Hunter's daughter to attend Sapphire Kindergarten, weren't you?" she asked again.

When he heard this, his expression darkened as he turned to glare at the direction of his driver. It looks like Josh's selection of workers has really declined in terms of quality. You can collect the rest of your salary from the finance department today afternoon; you don't have to work anymore after today, he said to the driver.