

A Spoonful of Sugar: Don't Beg for Love By Oopsie Daisy

Chapter 241

Juniper was applying a facial mask when she saw Michelle's message. She replied to the text with a hug emoji perfunctorily, but the message she sent seemed extremely considerate.

Juniper: It isn't your problem. But I really admire you; you've proven yourself to those people who once looked down on you with your achievements. They must feel so irritated now.

Juniper: Perhaps they're jealous of you deep down now.

Seeing the message from Juniper, Michelle instantly felt a lot better and started to feel complacent as she thought about it.

'Hesper is a nobody now, and Xavier must've started to despise me because I've negatively affected his reputation!'

'She's just putting on a calm demeanor!'

A lecture went by, and Hesper had just finished amending her drafts. She stretched, hearing her spine

crack several times.

The other students left in pairs or groups while Hesper and Jessie slowly packed their things and walked out of the lecture hall, only to find Michelle still standing by the door, waiting for them.

"Why are you still standing here?" Jessie said with a cold expression. "Anyone who doesn't know would think that you're being punished by my father."

Jessie's words choked Michelle for a split second, but when she thought of what Juniper had said to her before, a smirk reappeared on her face. "I just feel that I didn't get to catch up with you two much during the class reunion. Everything was so rushed. We haven't seen each other in such a long time, so let's go. out for a meal now. I'll buy you both lunches."

Hearing Michelle's invitation, Jessie pouted and Hesper tapped on the drafts in her hand.

"What... What's the matter?"

Hesper glanced at her casually, then sighed. "I still have classes to attend."

In the end, Michelle could not wait for Hesper to finish attending all her classes, as Hesper's day was fully packed with lectures, and her classes went on until 6:30 in the evening. After following Hesper into lecture hall after lecture hall for half a day, she could not take it anymore and found an excuse to excuse

herself.

Seeing Michelle escape from the lecture hall, Jessie was amused. "Isn't Michelle hilarious? She just came to you without asking anyone for a clue or two about your schedule, did she?"

"I just hope she doesn't come and disturb the class again." Hesper speechlessly shook her head.

Every time a lecturer came into the auditorium, they would spend some time catching up with Michelle since she was there. After all, she was an alumna of the department, and the other professors were different from Xavier, showing Michelle some respect.

These conversations went back and forth throughout the whole day and wasted a lot of time.

"You really are..." Jessie never expected Hesper to focus on this aspect and let off a heavy sigh. "But frankly speaking, I also hope that she won't come back here. I'm afraid that my dad might not be able to hold back the next time he sees her. In that case, he might straight-up make her cry and get himself onto the headline of the news."

Hesper took a glance at the time and realized that it was already 6:50, and she had made an appointment

with Renee, asking her to come to pick her up at 7:00 for the company meeting.

"I still have some affairs to attend to, so I'll get going now."

Jessie had already gotten used to Hesper leaving her straight after class, so she nodded. "Then I'll see you tomorrow... Oh yeah, do you know that Roberto Sanchez will come to Genecity tomorrow?"

"What?" Hesper was stunned for a moment. "Roberto?"

"Yeah, I remember that he was your favorite designer when you were still studying in college. Didn't you follow his news?" Jessie turned on her phone and put the news article right in front of Hesper's face. "This article was released one week earlier in the entertainment section, so I thought you were already aware. My dad believes that Roberto must be here because of some big plans, so he asks that you prepare yourself for any possibility."

Chapter 242

Hesper had been very busy these days, so it was only natural that she did not have the time to go through the entertainment section in the news, let alone listen to rumors that had not been officially announced, so she did not know anything about Roberto's trip to Genecity.

"Well, it's not too late to know." Jessie patted Hesper's shoulder. "It seems that whenever God closes a door, He would open a window for you. After rejecting Rickard, you now have Roberto."

That was somewhat unrealistic. Hesper felt that she was unexpectedly calm; she only nodded when she heard what Jessie had to say then left to meet Renee at the campus's gate.

However, she was stunned for a moment when she saw Isaac. "Where's Renee?"

Isaac explained, "She's feeling a little unwell today, so she asked me to come and pick you up. By the way, she also claims that she sent you a text message to ask for a leave, but you didn't reply to that message."

Hesper had been so busy attending lectures and dealing with Michelle, she hadn't had the time to check her phone at all. Hence, when she tapped into the communicating software on her phone, she found that Renee had sent her a message earlier in the morning and she just had not seen it.

"Tonight's meeting has been arranged. I've prepared the following proposal and emailed it to you." Isaac opened the car door for Hesper. "Young Master Lane will also sit in on the meeting in the form of a

video call tonight. The headquarters is placing a lot of emphasis on that piece of land too."

Hesper nodded and got into the car, but in a corner that was out of her sight, someone took a picture of her getting into the car...

The land that Rickard sent over was a region that the senior management of Lane Holdings liked, which meant it would bring unlimited benefits. This could be regarded as the largest project that Hesper had ever received after arriving in Genecity, and that was why Wilfred, who was currently in Emperion, miles away from Genecity, could no longer stay still.

While Hesper was busy going back and forth with Matthew in order to deal with Wilfred during the meeting, she skimmed through the proposal in her hand and felt a little inexplicable feeling in her heart.

No matter how considerable the benefits were, Hesper felt disgusted when she remembered that the centerpiece of this plan was hand-delivered to her by Rickard.

Matthew could also see that Hesper had been rather absent-minded all night, so he called Hesper that night and asked her if there was anything that she could not solve recently.

“It goes like this...”

Hesper told Matthew all about the promise that Rickard made, as well as how she obtained the land. She then said in confusion at the end of the conversation, “I keep thinking that I should hate him, just like how I did when I first returned to Genecity. But he started treating me so well all of a sudden, making it very difficult to continue to do so. I can’t hate him, but I can’t love him either. Matt... It feels really suffocating.”

After hearing that, Matthew remained silent for a while, then said, “Actually, before you returned to Genecity, I was worried that you would one day feel this way. But I still remember how much agony you were in when I first picked you up, and I don’t want you to forget that feeling.”

Hesper drank some wine and sat on the window sill, allowing the cold breeze to brush through her hair. She lowered her head as she listened to Matthew’s words.

Anyone who saw Hesper now would be awed by her appearance. Her long black hair hung softly over her

shoulders; she looked like an elf who appeared only during the night, but her enchanting gaze made her look so obedient.

“How could I forget...?”

The pain of having your bones crushed to pieces is something no one should ever experience. That’s why I’ll never forget it.’

“If you feel really bad, you could always come back to Emperion.” Matthew’s voice sounded a little tougher. “No one among the Lanes will leave you out there to get bullied. You have my word, as long as you don’t want to, you’ll never have to see Rickard ever again in the future.”

Hesper did not say anything for a while before shaking her head and speaking up childishly.

“No. I want to bring Renfrew home. And I’ll make those who bullied me pay the price.”

Chapter 243

“In addition to that, I’ll make Rickard...”

Hesper paused for a split second and then gave off a faint sigh as if a gust of breeze had just brushed across the room behind her.

“I want Rickard to fall for me, but he won’t get me. I’ll also make him... He’d have to crush his bones for me at least once.”

Matthew frowned, but Hesper’s voice had already disappeared on the other end of the phone call. He guessed that she had fallen asleep, so he could only hang up the phone silently.

‘Has Hesper always had such thoughts?’

Matthew did not know whether to praise her for being smart and knowing how to inflict equal pain to those whom she had suffered under years ago or to call her stupid for using her feelings as a bargaining chip.

He sat back in his seat in the office for a while then contacted his assistant. “Book me a plane ticket to Genecity. The sooner the better.”

However, his wish was not granted. On the second day, it started raining cats and dogs in Genecity.

Almost as soon as Roberto’s private plane landed in the city, torrential rain started cascading.

Heavy rain was not a common phenomenon during this season. It was already late autumn, and the temperature in Genecity was dropping at a perceivable speed daily. It was so cold that even Hesper put

on a coat.

She had drunk a little too much the night before, and she did not know if she had told Matthew something that she should not have. She only realized that she had fallen asleep on the balcony when she woke up. early that morning. It was fortunate that she did not catch a cold.

As the best tertiary education institution in Genecity, Roberto’s first stop fell at Genecity University.

When Hesper received the news, she was astounded. She never thought that she would get to meet

Roberto so soon.

Genecity University’s main auditorium was built with funds raised by outstanding alumni from previous years. It was as luxurious as any other convention center, and it would be used every time the university had events or celebrations to host. It was only natural that Roberto’s visit was no exception.

Hesper and Jessie received the news relatively quickly. As soon as they heard that Roberto was coming to Genecity University, they went to the auditorium early to reserve the best seats possible.

Being dragged into her seat by Jessie, Hesper's palms were sweaty.

"Why do you seem a little drowsy today?" Jessie pinched Hesper's cheek. In truth, she had wanted to do this for a long time. Hesper's skin looked impeccable, so it seemed like it would feel extremely satisfying to pinch her cheeks.

Hesper recalled what happened the previous night after all the wine that she had drunk, but she did not know what she should say to Jessie, so she could only shake her head.

The auditorium soon became very lively.

Hesper looked around and saw Michelle not far away. "Why is she here?"

Hearing that, Jessie also found Michelle. But before Hesper had the time to say anything, there was a

commotion at the entrance of the auditorium-Roberto had arrived.

In fact, on such an occasion, Roberto would not speak much, as he did not speak the local language very well. While his interpreter spoke on his behalf, Hesper stared at Roberto who was on the stage in a daze.

She never thought she could ever be so close to her dream.

"Mr. Sanchez said that he appreciates our culture very much. He also claims that he's been thinking about coming over for exchange and study in the past few years, and it wasn't until a friend's words a while ago that he completely strengthened this idea of his with confidence."

"In the next few months, Mr. Sanchez will stay and study in Halwanest. As a close partner of Lane Holdings, he and the company will join hands in organizing a competition that truly belongs to designers."

For a moment, Hesper thought she had misheard, but then Jessie shook her arm vigorously, dragging her soul back to reality.

"What did I say, Hesper? What did I say?! You're so lucky!"

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Chapter 244

The university was like a smaller form of real society. The news that Roberto would be working with Lane Holdings spread like wildfire on campus. And just as Hesper stepped out of Genecity University, Isaac's phone call came through.

"Ms. Lane, about the collaboration between Mr. Sanchez and the Lanes..."

Hesper watched as Jessie got on the bus, listening to Isaac's report. "Ms. Lane, the company's collaboration with Mr. Sanchez has created a lot of noise in the public, but you didn't seem to tell me about this matter before, and it also wasn't mentioned in that to-do-list that Renee handed over to me-"

While Isaac's voice came from the other end of the call, Hesper's own voice sounded a little distorted in the storm. She quickly gave out orders and arranged things to be done in the company then asked Isaac to send someone over to pick her up.

Isaac was not the only one who did not know about Roberto and Lane Holdings' collaboration, as even Hesper did not know anything about it. Up until this moment, she still thought that she was dreaming.

'Roberto isn't someone that our company can persuade easily. With his current status and reputation, money is just a number to him. The money that he could earn from just one draft might already be enough to compete with the amount that he might get through this cross-field collaboration.'

Recalling the business card that Nathaniel gave her without explaining what the "surprise" that he mentioned during the conversation the other day was, Hesper realized that Roberto's contact information was not Nathaniel's actual gift. This collaboration was the matter that he had been referring to!

By the time she looked into all the affairs the company faced and arranged them in an orderly manner, it was already late at night.

The sudden torrential rain made the whole city look inexplicably depressed.

Almost everyone in the company had left. After all, no one liked such high-intensity overtime work. But after seeing the objective revenue that Roberto would bring to the company in advance, no one could complain.

Who would not love to earn more money?

Hesper was not stingy with the compensation either. She paid everyone who stayed back triple for their effort.

"It's getting late, Ms. Lane. Are you planning to go home at all?" After bringing the compiled documents to the department located floors below and coming back, Isaac saw Hesper sitting at the desk pondering. about something, so he stepped forward and draped a coat over her shoulders.

“Huh...? Thanks.”

Hesper took a glimpse of the time and rubbed her dry eyes. She was so busy just now that she did not even have the time to look at the clock.

‘It’s already past 2AM. No wonder the lights outside the office have been going off one after another.

“I guess I won’t be getting any sleep tonight. I still have some documents to go through.” Hesper straightened her posture, rubbed her stiff neck, and glanced at the chat box between her and Renee, who had not contacted her since she asked for leave the other day. She could not help but feel a little uneasy.

“Did Renee contact you yesterday? What happened to her?”

Isaac shook his head. “She didn’t tell me anything. Speaking of which, I haven’t heard from her all day.

Hearing what Isaac said, Hesper sighed, lowered her head, and sent Renee a message.

Ever since Renee became her assistant, she was like a woman made of steel. She never took any medical leaves or personal leaves, so Hesper was unused to not having her by her side due to the illness.

Considering the time, Hesper did not expect Renee to reply to her immediately, but she was a little worried about Renee’s current situation, as no one was around to take care of her, and she did not know what was going on with her.

Seeing that Hesper had not rested all this time, Isaac stayed back and helped her from the side. Seeing that it was dawn, the two of them looked at the pile of documents and sighed indistinctly.

“Let’s stop here for now. We’ll continue later.”

Chapter 245

After packing up her belongings, Hesper applied for a leave of absence with Xavier.

‘In my current state, even if I were to attend all the lectures, I wouldn’t learn anything, so why not just ask for a one-day leave and get some rest?’”

Xavier did not say anything about her absence. He only asked her how she was feeling and reminded her to prepare herself.

Xavier. We still haven’t received any news from Lane Holdings yet. When I get information about the total quotas that we have, you’ll be the first to know.

Seeing what Professor Jenkins had to say, Hesper felt warm deep down. But Xavier was not the only one who did not know how Lane Holdings would determine the quota, as even Hesper did not know the

details at that moment.

But there was no doubt that they wanted to initiate this competition before the end of the competition. organized by Duval Group. With the popularity that the Duval Group had created, coupled with Roberto, a more well-known designer, the Duval Group's tournament would become the springboard that would push their competition to new heights.

The addition of new media had made the competition more entertaining, but Hesper did not intend to market this competition as a highly entertaining but amateur event. If Lane Holdings were to mess this tournament up, it would become a humiliation for Roberto and the whole design industry.

'If we're going to do it, we'll have to do it the right way. And I must achieve a breakthrough in my design. career through this competition, relying only on my own ability.'

Another busy week passed, and it was time to meet Renfrew again.

Probably because the collaboration between Lane Holdings and Roberto had made a lot of headlines recently, but Duval Group had also been pushed into the limelight. Compared to Lane Holdings' serious preparations for the tournament, Duval Group's competition focused more on the entertaining aspect of things, so its reputation gradually dropped.

Rickard did not come this time around; he only asked Renfrew to put a contract in his backpack and deliver it to his mommy.

Hesper scanned through it and found out that it was related to some equipment that she needed for the competition.

If not for the fact that Hesper had not seen Rickard recently, she might have suspected that he was silently observing her from the shadows.

Without any hesitation, Hesper went through the contract and signed it. "He's sending me money, so why not? I could really get used to this."

Hesper closed the pen cap, glanced at Renfrew who was staring at her solemnly, and felt her heart melt. "Ren, is there anything you want to do today?"

Hearing this, Renfrew shook his head sensibly, his dark brown eyes looking exceptionally gorgeous. He looked at Hesper with his radiant gaze. "Mommy, have you

been very busy recently? There's nothing that I want to do today. I only want to stay by your side!"

Although Hesper's life was hectic, she still set aside a whole day to spend time with Renfrew. She had been planning for today since the beginning of the week, but Renfrew insisted that there was nowhere he wanted to go and that he only wanted to stay at home, so Hesper had no choice but to submit to her

son's wish. She ordered a small slice of cake and ate it with Renfrew.

The two of them spent the afternoon watching cartoons, and Hesper had not felt so relaxed in such a long time. However, when she turned her head, she discovered that Renfrew had fallen asleep in the corner of the couch at some point. She stretched her hand out and turned down the volume of the TV.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door, and Hesper immediately looked in the direction of the door.

'I thought I told everyone that no matter what urgent matter came up today, they could only send me a message, and after reading it, I'd decide whether or not to deal with it immediately. Not many people in Genecity know where I live, and if it's, Jessie, she would've asked me if I'm home before coming here. 'So who could it be?'

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Chapter 246

Hesper walked up to the door and looked outside through the peephole but saw nothing.

Recalling the recent news, which reported that many women living alone had been harassed, Hesper frowned. She wanted to see who it was, but a pair of hands appeared out of nowhere and blocked her

view.

Hesper was taken aback, but then Renee's voice sounded from the other side of the door.

"Ms. Lane, it's me."

While Hesper found a pair of slippers for Renee, Renfrew was still sleeping on the couch, showing no indication of waking up at all.

"Why are you here all of a sudden?" Renee's lips looked a little pale, and it seemed that she had not healed just yet, so Hesper dragged her into the dining room, only to realize that her hands were freezing cold. She instantly turned around and poured her some warm water.

“I didn’t send you the message last night to urge you to come back to work as soon as possible.” Hesper handed the warm glass to Renee. “It’s just that you don’t have any friends or family to rely on in Genecity, and Isaac and I are your only acquaintances here, so since you were sick, it’s only natural that I would care about how you’re doing.”

Renee obediently held the glass of warm water. She exerted so much force on the glass that the blood was drained from her knuckles.

“Ms. Lane, you’ve always been my only relative.”

Hesper was astonished for a moment then sighed. Instead of going on with the topic, she changed the subject. “So why did you come here all of a sudden? can see that you still have not fully recovered, SO you should stay at home and rest. How do you expect your body to recover if you’re running around like this?”

Renee sat on the chair cautiously, listening to Hesper’s warm reprimand. The temperature of the warm water spread from her fingertips and seemed to gradually seep into her body.

A hoarse voice then sounded. “I... I heard from Isaac that the company has been very busy these two days. I’ve always been the one who sorts out all the materials, so I was worried that it’d be too much for him.”

Hence, even though she did not have much strength in her body, she still made the effort to come over.”

“The company won’t crumble just because you’re not with us. The most important thing that you need to do now is take good care of your body.” Hesper looked at Renee’s desperate face, completely forgetting how she acted when she decided to travel all the way to Salt City back then, and shook her head in disappointment. “Come back when you feel better. Now go home and enjoy your holiday.”

Renfrew woke up just then. He then stared drowsily at his mother and Aunt Renee, who were sitting in the dining room a couple of feet away from him. Hints of confusion flashed across his eyes. “Mommy... Aunt. Renee?”

Hesper went up to him and rubbed his head, while Renee silently stood up and took a few steps backward. “I might spread the virus to the young master.”

Renfrew obediently stood a few steps away while Hesper held his hand and straightened his collar, which became crooked after the nap.

Hesper looked at her embarrassed-looking assistant and said helplessly, “It’s okay. Don’t be so anxious

about the virus.

Renee shook her head.

'Ms. Lane most cherishes the young master. If he were to fall sick because of me... I'd kill myself if that were to happen.'

Someone knocked on the door again. Hesper glanced at the door and felt a little helpless. "Who is it now?"

No one spoke up, so Hesper and Renee exchanged gazes.

Perhaps because there were two adults present now, Hesper strode up to the door and opened it immediately, only to realize that there was no one in the corridor. Only a paper bag was left at her doorstep.

"Who is it from?" Renee was a little wary, but Hesper frowned and picked up the paper bag. "Ms. Lane, we don't know who it's from..."

When she heard her worry, Hesper shook her head and carefully peeked at the contents of the paper bag.

"The person who sent this bag is an acquaintance of mine."

In the evening, the person who came to pick up Renfrew was someone that Hesper did not expect to see.

Chapter 247

Looking at Sophia, who was standing at the door, Hesper's expression turned cold instantly.

Seeing his aunt, Renfrew held onto Hesper's hand and hid behind her, only showing half of his face from beside his mommy's thigh as if he did not want to leave her.

"...What's with that glare of yours? Do you really think I wanted to come?"

'This b*tch sent me to prison a few days ago, and this time around, Dick didn't even bail me out as he would back then. In the end, it was Mother who spent a fortune to clear my name from the system. If my criminal record were to be kept in the system, any marriage prospects would be thrown out of the window for good! How I wish I could avoid meeting this woman for the rest of my life. She's like a lunatic now. She just doesn't care about sh*t. I'll be ruined as long as she seizes a chance to crucify me.'

Renfrew and Sophia were never close, and Hesper could tell that Sophia really did not want to come to pick him up, so she frowned. "Where's Rickard? Are you telling me that he doesn't even have the time to come and pick up his son?"

Sophia curled her lips. "Dick has gone to Juni's. I might want to come and meet you, but that doesn't mean that Dick also wants to, right? Just how ridiculous can you be?"

“You’re lying. Daddy would never go to another woman’s house behind Mommy’s back!” Before Hesper could say anything, Renfrew jumped out from behind her and stared at Sophia like a tiny beast. “You liar, don’t you dare stir up anything between Mommy and Daddy!”

Sophia had wanted to sow discord, as she could not bear to see how smooth Hesper’s life had become. However, looking at Hesper’s unconcerned expression, she felt that she had not had enough, so she continued. “Your daddy has definitely gone to find Juni. And when he marries Juni, I’ll make sure you get kicked out of the Duvals’ residence. Just wait and see

“Have you had enough?!” Hesper’s voice turned cold. Even if Rickard goes to a hundred women’s places, it’s got nothing to do with me. At the end of the day, I won’t let you take Renfrew away.”

“What right do you have to stop me? Renfrew shares the same last name as me, so that makes him one of the members of the Duvals...”

Before Sophia could even finish speaking, she suddenly felt a chill jolt down her spine. She raised her head, looked up at Hesper, and saw that she was staring at something over her shoulder as if there was someone behind her....

“Sophia Duval, what horse crap are you talking about?”

It was Rickard’s voice!

Sophia had not expected Rickard to appear all of a sudden and demolish what she just said. She shrugged like a pheasant, and her neck contracted. “No, it’s nothing, Dick. I wasn’t talking nonsense. Renfrew is indeed a member of the Duvals, isn’t he?”

Rickard only arrived a few minutes late, but he did not expect Sophia to be there.

Looking at Hesper’s subtly dissatisfied expression, he guessed that Sophia had had nothing good to say and even got him involved.

“Renfrew is mine and Hesper’s son, not just any random member of the Duvals.” After saying so, Rickard remained silent for a moment and then glanced at Hesper. “I’m sorry to have brought you trouble again.”

Seeing that Hesper did not plan to say anything in response, Sophia hid behind Rickard and breathed a sigh of relief.

However, that was when she heard Renfrew’s voice calmly say, “Aunt Sophia told us that you were on a date with another woman. She also said that you’ll abandon me as soon as you have a new baby.”

Sophia was dumbfounded.

‘What the f*ck?! Renfrew Duval, you son of a b*tch!’

“Dick, I’m sorry. I lost control of my mouth for a split second before. I’ll apologize to Hesper...”

Hesper interrupted Sophia’s explanation halfway. “Alright, if you want to put on an act, just go home and do it in front of the mirror.” She still had work to attend to, so she did not have time to watch Rickard and Sophia quarrel.

With that being said, she handed Renfrew to Rickard.

“I’ll... see you next week then?” Rickard asked tentatively.

Hesper’s eyebrows raised as she heard the words but then she waved her hand kindly. “Yes, I’ll see you

next week.”

Chapter 248

After a week of planning, the details of the collaboration between Lane Holdings and Roberto were finally finalized. Just when Hesper was still rather anxious about what identity she should use when she went to meet Roberto, Matthew stepped in and took the Initiative to solve that doubt of hers.

“Matt, why are you here all of a sudden?”

Seeing that Matthew suddenly appeared at the door of her house, it took Hesper quite some time before she could recover from the trance. She only came back to her senses when Matthew walked into the living room with his luggage and changed into his slippers.

“If I continue to let you be, I’m afraid that you’ll lose your mind here in Genecity,” Matthew responded a little angrily. “Do you really think that nothing would happen just because you didn’t let anything stupid escape your mouth? If it wasn’t for the storm from a few days ago and the sudden collaboration with Mr. Sanchez, which delayed my flight significantly, I would’ve arrived here long ago.”

Hesper was startled, but what Matthew said was rather funny.

“Matt, I think I heard what you just said in some drama a while back.”

Seeing that Hesper was still in the mood to joke around, Matthew sighed. “You... All you know is to play dumb in front of me. Do you really think you can just get by this matter by fooling around? The trips that you made to the aquarium and the amusement park... Have I reprimanded you unjustly for those two incidents?”

Those intimate-looking photos actually crossed the ocean and traveled all the way from Genecity to Emperion, ending up in Matthew's possession at the end of the day. One could imagine how hot the topic had been all this while.

Hesper felt a little guilty, while Matthew stood still in the living room, looked around the small apartment, and sighed again. "I bought you a manor here yet you don't want to stay comfortably there. You just had to come out here and live in a small apartment by yourself. Does this mean to remind you of the good old days in which you suffered?"

"Matt..." Hesper felt helpless. "It'd be better if you just scolded me."

Before Matthew arrived at her place, Hesper was actually planning to go out for a walk. It was fortunate that the recent weather had changed her and made her obedient. She looked very warm in a knitted sweater and a long woolen skirt.

Her attire looked harmless, and although her thick eyelashes originally made her appearance look somewhat offensive, Hesper's aggrieved expression actually changed the outcome.

"It's all my fault-"

Matthew clearly knew that Hesper was only pretending to be pitiful.

He stared at Hesper's clasped hands and was trapped in a daze for a moment, as if she had done this to him a long time ago. Thinking of this, Matthew returned to his senses, and his gaze became a little more complicated.

'Sure enough... They do look extremely similar. Both Hesper and Rach.'

"Matt?"

Staring at Matthew's bewildered look, Hesper called him twice before Matthew recovered from the trance. "Alright, let's get down to business now. I'll take over the collaborative project and discuss the details with Roberto from now on."

Hesper nodded immediately when she heard his suggestion. "Okay."

"You're so..." Matthew sighed again. "You do realize that if you hand over the project to me and let me be in charge, the person who'd benefit from this collaboration would be me, and this project would no longer have anything to do with you anymore, right?"

Hesper certainly knew about this, but she glanced at Matthew with a weird gaze.

"The Lanes' assets all belong to you while I'm just an outsider. I won't compete with you for the inheritance. So, why would I put on an exceptional performance?"

Hesper's question astonished Matthew for a split second. For a while, the two of them exchanged gazes in silence before bursting into laughter at the same time.

'That's right, there's no conflict of interest between us, and that means that... We can always trust each other.'

After dealing with the company's affairs, Hesper would have to start preparing for the competition.

In order to better understand the outstanding strengths that the contestants of such competitions had, Hesper searched through all the videos recorded during previous tournaments organized by Duval Group over the years. She even watched some of that year's clips.

The contestant that Hesper thought highly of was indeed eliminated in the latest episode, but in terms of theme adherence and conception, the costumes she designed looked far better than Michelle's, who was ranked first in that week's competition.

Chapter 249

'What a pity.'

Hesper remembered the name of the designer who just got eliminated.

'Celine Campbell. No matter how you look at her, she looks very ordinary. However, she has the talent to surpass any other designer.'

"I wonder if she'll participate in Lane Holdings' tournament this time around..."

Hesper hoped that Celine could get over the disappointment of her elimination, but she was also forced to empathize with her at the same time.

'Although the production team did not capture it on camera, I can totally imagine just how many grievances Celine suffered during the whole competition organized by Duval Group. Apart from Michelle sabotaging her both explicitly and covertly, the works that she produced and felt satisfied with were rejected one after another. The production team was just trying to kill her love for design in the crib.'

"Forget it..." Hesper shook her head, disposing of all these thoughts in her head.

'As long as she really likes design, I believe that she'll definitely participate in our competition! The opportunity is rare, and everyone should understand this.'

Hesper originally thought that Matthew would return to Emperion after securing the contract. However, Matthew still did not show any intention of leaving after the contract had been signed three to four days ago. On the contrary, he mobilized every single man that he could get his hands on and refurbished the whole apartment while she was away at school.

Hesper had a weird premonition, and only God knew just how much she wanted to find out what she had said to Matthew when she got drunk the other day.

'Why does it feel like Matthew is planning to move and stay here for a long time?!'

"Matt, I don't think..." As she saw Isaac move a new bed into the guest bedroom, Hesper tried to protest. "I don't think this is a good idea. Don't you still have a position to uphold and work to do in Emperion? And what about Grandpa? He's too old and needs someone to constantly take care of him, doesn't he? And Isaac Lennon, just who exactly do you work for? Why are you moving the bed for him?!"

Hearing Hesper's complaint, as soon as Isaac placed the bed in a suitable position, he lifted his head in embarrassment. "About that... Before I started working for you, I was indeed the young master's bodyguard."

"You... Traitor!"

Matthew measured the space that he had reserved for the bookcase with his naked eyes, jerked the chattering little girl behind him, and pulled her aside. "Don't delay my schedule here. Go and play somewhere else."

Hesper was taken aback by what he had to say. She curled her lips and complained with extreme dissatisfaction, "But this is my apartment."

"Oh?" Matthew finally turned around and glanced at Hesper. "No way, are you telling me that you're planning to kick your brother out of your apartment?"

Of course, Hesper gnashed her teeth and claimed that she would not do so, then witnessed from the side as pieces of furniture were moved in one by one. At the end of the day, Matthew's furniture almost filled up every available corner of the guest bedroom, which now looked even more exaggerated than her master bedroom.

"I'll work here. Don't worry, I won't fight you for the study," Matthew explained solemnly, but Hesper felt that he was deliberately showing off.

It was as if he was provoking her by saying, "Look, I've moved in, and what can you do about it?"

Seeing that Matthew really did not intend to leave any time soon, Hesper could not help but feel a little troubled.

'Leaving everything else aside for now, when Matt meets Rickard when he comes over this weekend, it'll instantly become the most difficult and problematic issue that I'll ever have to tackle in my life. The scene would look no worse than a World War Four battlezone.'

Hesper shook her head.

'Crap, I have to find a way to prevent Matthew from knowing that I'm going to meet Rickard on Sunday. There won't be any problems as long as the two of them don't see each other!'

"What's wrong? What are you thinking about?"

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Chapter 250

Matthew's voice suddenly sounded from behind, and Hesper was so frightened that she almost

screamed.

Hesper could not let Matthew know the plan that she had mapped out just then, so she responded by shaking her head and trying to hide her thoughts. "Nothing! I'm fine!"

Seeing the vague hint of guilt that flashed across Hesper's face, Matthew did not dig deeper either. Instead, he took out a paper bag out from behind his back and handed it to Hesper. "This is yours, isn't it? I found it when they were moving my stuff here."

Seeing the paper bag, Hesper froze for a split second then nodded and grabbed it from him. "Yeah, it's mine. I almost forgot about it."

There had been too many things distracting her from the paper bag after receiving it the other day, so Hesper placed the bag aside casually and then forgot about it later on.

Inside were several boxes of medicines sent to her by Julian. It was said that they were special

medicines that had been newly developed for Ernest, which would produce a much better result than the previous ones.

There was also a note inside.

Julian: "These two boxes of medicine have to be taken in five cycles. I've written the detailed

consumption method and procedures in the box."

"How are you doing? You okay?"

"It turned out to be Ian." Hesper did not deliberately avoid the subject.

Matthew could also see the handwriting on the note. "Why does he sound so awkward in the message? And since he's already written the note, why would he write the consumption method on a different piece of paper and insert it into the box?"

"The last sentence is even grammatically incorrect."

Julian studied literature in high school, so even if he had been abroad all this time, he should not sound so weird when he's trying to write or speak.

Hesper frowned and took the medicine in the paper bag out.

'There are three boxes in total here, but it's mentioned in the sticky note that there should be two boxes instead. Even if he might make such a simple mistake, it's still a little far-fetched.'

After opening one of the boxes, the dosage of the medicine was written on another sticky note, and it was indeed Julian's handwriting. However, when it came to the number "5" which was written down in the note to signify the five cycles, it looked as if it was originally an Arabic number "3", but it seemed that the number "5" was forcibly written over it as if it was a clerical error.

"Something doesn't seem right."

After receiving Julian's note for the first time the other night, Hesper had actually felt as if something was

wrong.

'Although Julian and I used to depend on each other a lot, Julian wouldn't say such sickening things like "I miss you".'

Recalling the spy game that they occasionally played in the orphanage when they were still kids, Hesper bought a dictionary that was distributed to them by the orphanage's management when they were staying

there and found the words and phrases corresponding to "I miss you".

'Be careful.'

Without any hesitation, Hesper returned to her room with the sticky note, took out the dictionary from the shelf, and opened the dictionary to respective pages.

'The words that correspond to "you" and "okay" are-

"People around you."

When Matthew read the three words, Hesper felt a jolt of chill shoots up her spine.

“Who is he referring to? And what does this mean?”

‘The first note might just be a coincidence, but when two coincidences cross paths, it looks less likely to only be a coincidence.’”

Hesper frowned, and Matthew also realized that something was wrong and asked immediately, “Are you two the only two people in this world who know how to crack these codes with this dictionary? Could it be a coincidence or something like that?”

Hearing his questions, Hesper shook her head and lifted the dictionary in her hand. “This dictionary was given to us when our orphanage received donations back then. And because we didn’t have many ways. to entertain ourselves, Ian came up with such a way to crack codes between the two of us.”

“Many people may have this dictionary, but we’re supposed to be the only ones who know how to use it as a codebook like this.”

Hesper usually did not talk much with Julian, and the recent pleasantries that went back and forth between the two of them felt ordinary too, so she had not felt that something was wrong at first.

“His means of communication have been compromised.”

Hesper was taken aback when she realized this.

‘So, that’s the reason why I didn’t receive Julian’s distress message when he texted me in the first place. It might not have been because Rickard deleted the message?’”

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