

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

### Chapter 251

Matthew frowned in silence for a short while, then said, "But I just spoke to his professor yesterday. They're definitely free now."

That was the silver lining.

Hesper's instinct was that this wasn't a mere coincidence. The hidden message on the sticky note was what Julian couldn't say.

That was why he tried to use four words to tell her something?

Beware of those around. The people around?

Hesper took out her phone and wanted to send a message that she was going to send a while ago just to test it out, but another question popped up in her mind. Why would this bag suddenly show up at her doorstep? Who left it there?

When she thought of that, she put her phone away just to be careful. She didn't want to alert anyone.

The competition held by the Duvals was coming to an end. Michelle was undeniably the winner.

Since the diversion caused by the Lanes Competition and Robert was very obvious, the Duval Competition started out strong but eventually flopped. A lot of people could see that it was rigged, as they weren't dumb. As a result, Michelle's reputation dropped.

On the way back, Michelle kept refreshing her feed and seeing the news about her being the rigged winner. She cursed out loud.

Michelle: I really don't understand what they're thinking. I get it, people are just jealous.

Michelle: (Crying face)

After sending out the message to Juniper, she felt calmer.

Ever since Juniper's consolation gave her solace, Michelle developed a bad habit of ranting to her. Juniper would always comfort her and say that others were always the problem to calm her down.

Juniper quickly replied as expected, so Michelle continued.

Michelle: Remember that old coursemate that the professor was biased about? She's going to compete in the Lanes Competition to get some fame.

Michelle: She's such a hypocrite. She always pretends that she doesn't care but she's actually very vain. She even asked her kind rich boyfriend to come over a little later just to show him off.

Competition held by the Lanes? Wasn't that Hesper's company?

Juniper was interested. She had been living the best life with Carter recently, traveling around. If Michelle hadn't mentioned Hesper, she would have forgotten about her.

Juniper: What's her name? Let me dig into her.

Michelle: Sure, her name is Hesper Rivera.

Juniper was just casually waiting for a reply, but when she saw the name, she sat up straight.

What a coincidence that the person Michelle was hating on was Hesper too!

She would never imagine that Genecity was such a small place that two people who met could actually

hate the same person. She looked up and read the previous message.

Kind rich boyfriend?

When did she get a new boyfriend? Was it... Rickard?

Chapter 252

Oblivious to the scheming happening between Juniper and Michelle, Hesper drove over to Ernest's place to drop some medication off. When she got back, she started paying attention to the competition

Now that Matthew was living in Genecity, she could take a break from the company. She handed her previous work to Matthew but suddenly realized that he probably insisted on staying in Genecity to help her manage the company

"Don't get emotional about this

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Seeing how Hesper was looking at him with puppy eyes, he cleared his throat and then looked away. "I just don't want to die of exhaustion because it would be tough for me to explain to Grandpa"

She didn't have to worry about the company and Professor Jenkins would vouch for her in university, so Hesper could join the competition without worry "Come back as the winner. I believe in you"

The day before the competition began, Jessie had to drag Hesper to get some barbecue to celebrate her

win

Hesper didn't know how to react "I still have a long way to go when it comes to design, and my future is still unclear However, I do hope that I can get a good placement so I'll get to team from Roberto."

Jessie ordered some beer but Hesper was worried that drinking might affect her performance tomorrow, so she just drank juice They didn't eat for too long because the competition was starting the next day, and Jessie knew that she had a lot to prepare.

To avoid cheating, the Lane Competition was locked down Hesper suggested it to ensure that it was at fair competition and everyone agreed

Jessie went to the ladies' restroom. Hesper put her empty cup down but saw two familiar faces when she turned around.

Hesper thought she must have made a mistake. Zikmund tried to hide behind a pillar, but Rickard's face

was still seen.

Seeing Hesper standing up from not too far away, Zikmund grabbed Rickard by his shirt. "We've been exposed!"

Rickard looked at him, not knowing what to do. "You're such a failure."

Zikmund didn't expect Hesper to have sharp senses since she had missed him so many times. They never really talked to each other, so he wouldn't expect Hesper to recognize him with just one look.

The truth was that if Zikmund were there alone, Hesper wouldn't have recognized him, but she was very familiar with Rickard, so when she connected the suspicious-looking man with him, she knew who she was looking at.

"What a coincidence..." Zikmund stood up nervously. "The food here is great. Do you come here often? Hahaha..."

Rickard and Hesper were speechless.

“Alright, stop playing dumb.” Rickard pulled him down. Hesper brought a chair over. She was surprisingly calm, probably because of how silly Zikmund was. She just couldn’t get mad.

Rickard saw that Hesper seemed to be feeling good, so he poured her some warm tea.

It was cold outside and he saw her drinking cold juice a while ago. He was worried that cold drinks would make her too cold, but he thought it would be inappropriate to point it out.

## Chapter 253

Hesper held the glass of warm tea in her hands and sat there silently. Rickard finally broke the silence.” Are you going to join the Lane Competition tomorrow?”

Hesper wasn’t surprised that he knew, so she nodded. “It will last about a month or even longer. I won’t be able to visit Renfrew during that time. Please tell him I’m sorry.”

“Okay.” Rickard took a piece of beef tongue and placed it on her plate. Zikmund watched their interaction suspiciously.

Weren’t they on bad terms? When they went to see Ernest the other day, he heard Rickard and Hesper arguing.

He was planning to console his broken-hearted best friend because he thought that their relationship would end. Seeing what was happening changed his mind.

“My brother is in Genecity and will take over Lane Holdings. You’re going to see him a lot.” Hesper looked down. “Don’t make him angry.”

Hesper got up and went back to her seat before Rickard could say anything.

Zikmund was confused. “What is happening between the two of you?”

Rickard shook his head. Seeing how secretive he was, Zikmund remembered that Rickard needed his help two months ago, but now he seemed to be doing well on his own.

Jessie sobered up a little after her visit to the restroom. When she saw Hesper walking over from another direction, she was confused. "Where did you go? You were gone when I came back, so I thought something happened."

"What could have happened? I'm fine." Hesper sat down. "I bumped into Rickard."

Jessie's eyes widened and looked around for Rickard. She never paid a lot of attention to business news and the photo she saw was just blurry. All she could tell was that he was a handsome man.

"Why would he be here?" Jessie teased. "Even though this isn't some low-class restaurant, he doesn't seem to be someone who would come here."

Hesper nodded because she clearly knew that it wasn't a coincidence that Rickard and Zikmund came here. Jessie started prying. "I never asked you what happened between the two of you. He doesn't seem to hate you."

Doesn't seem to hate... Hesper mulled over that then nodded. "You're right. For now, he just doesn't seem to hate me."

Hesper said it very quietly. Jessie heard but didn't understand what she meant, so she just brushed it off as her mishearing things.

Hesper didn't like to talk about her private life, so Jessie didn't want to pry too much. They both left and went home after that.

The restaurant wasn't too far from her apartment and it was a clear night. Two or three stars could be seen, even in Genecity.

Hesper enjoyed the free time she had while walking home. Once the competition would begin, she would be busy again. She wouldn't get the chance to do that anymore.

"Hesper." Hearing Matthew's voice, she looked up and saw him standing under the light in front of her apartment building.

Chapter 254

"Matt?"

Hesper, not having expected him to show up, tugged at her sleeve that she rolled up before.

“Why are you waiting here? I’m not a child anymore. I can find my way home.”

Matthew shook his head. “It’s too late. As a woman, it’s unsafe for you to be alone.”

“Oh...” Hesper walked over to walk next to him.

Hesper felt down-to-earth as she walked next to him because there was a sense of familial love that she never felt before this.

The feeling Matthew gave was different from what she got from Grandpa Ernest. Maybe because Hesper used to be more egoistic and sensitive, but she was thankful and respected the man who pulled her out of the orphanage.

However, Matthew was different. Hesper thought that she was meant to be his sister after meeting him.

When they got home, Hesper suddenly remembered that Matthew couldn’t cook, so she was curious if he had eaten.

“What did you have for dinner?”

Matthew was silent for a few minutes. “I didn’t.”

As Hesper expected. She nodded. “I’ll see what I have at home. There are eggs and a slab of beef. I think there is some spaghetti too. I can cook that for you.”

“It’s fine...” Matthew was going to reject her, but Hesper already put her apron on. When she heard what Matthew said, she turned around. “Just sit down and wait for the food. Why? Don’t you trust my cooking skills?”

Matthew shook his head, but Hesper had already turned around and didn’t see that.

“I just think that... you might be too tired.”

The next day, Hesper hopped onto the bus that was for the competition with her luggage.

The competition was going to be grander than the Duvals’. If the competition held by Lane Holdings and Genecity University was known even in the few cities around them, then Roberto’s name was the best marketing tool. A lot of designers from other countries came over to take part.

The time between preliminaries and the closing of registration was very short, but after Hesper got on the bus and saw the contestants, she was still surprised.

These were just contestants from one area, and it was enough to show how tight the competition was going to be.

“This one’s empty...” Hesper was looking for a seat when a woman’s voice was heard.

“Here!”

The woman’s voice was a little timid. Hesper looked over and saw someone unexpected.

“Celine?” Hesper didn’t expect to see Celine Campbell there. She also didn’t expect her to have already recovered from what happened during the Duval competition, ready to take part in a new competition.

Celine didn’t think that Hesper would recognize her, so she was shocked. However, she still moved aside and let Hesper take her seat, then pointed at herself. “You know who I am?”

## Chapter 255

Hesper nodded and didn’t hold back with her compliments. “I followed the Duval Competition and I remember you very well. You’re talented and have your own ideas. I was rooting for you.”

Hearing that, Celine smiled bashfully and showed a deep dimple. “Thank you, but I’m not that good or I wouldn’t have been eliminated so soon.”

Hesper wanted to say something but there was a commotion in front. Hesper and Celine’s conversation was cut short as they looked up and saw Michelle.

“Michelle?”

Hesper wasn’t expecting that at all and couldn’t help but frown. “What is she doing here?”

In comparison, Celine was much calmer as if Michelle hadn’t bullied her. “The Duval competition ended, so I guess she has time to join this one.”

But she already won that one and made a name and brand for herself. Now if she joined this competition, it would look... terrible.

Hesper was like Celine. She didn’t give a huge reaction when Michelle suddenly showed up. She just thought that Michelle shouldn’t have joined because the Lane Competition wouldn’t be as lenient as the Duvals’.

Michelle wouldn’t get good results this time.

The front part of the bus was hyped because of her appearance. Hesper and Celine minded their own business and stopped talking.

The competition venue that Lane Holding chose was a small town between Genecity and Salt City. It had a clean environment and was famous for its livability. It was a tourist city that had green buildings and ancient ones.

It was the perfect place to inspire creativity.

“The Lanes really are rich.”

After everyone got off the bus, they looked at the venue, which took a few days to build, and were astonished.

Hesper was part of this project but by the time it came to the details, she was already out of it. Matthew took over the decision-making, so she was surprised too.

Inspired by the Duvals, this competition also had a reality show part to it. Since the hype from the Duval Competition was still ongoing, a lot of people who never knew much about the industry started getting interested. When the Lanes took over, it was great to grab everyone’s attention.

Celine’s luggage was slightly bigger than Hesper’s, but since she got on the bus earlier, it was at the bottom of the pile and it took her a long time before getting it.

“There’s a shuttle bus later. Let’s rest here.”

Hesper looked at Celine’s petite frame and pulled her over. “The air here is really fresh. Genecity could never compare.”

Celine nodded. “My hometown’s air is fresh too. Genecity is too developed.”

“That’s true,” Hesper and Celine talked for a while. Celine was a shy person and Hesper wasn’t talkative, but she couldn’t help but have a full conversations with her.

Michelle kept her eyes on them both. She was annoyed to see the two people she hated bonding with each other.

“Since when does Hesper know Celine...” Michelle rolled her eyes when no one was watching, but she didn’t know that the cameras were already rolling.

Hesper thought that something was off, so she checked her watch. They had been there for a few minutes but no one was there to get them.

Based on the efficiency of the company, five minutes was too long and this wasn’t something that would happen, especially not at a competition as important as this.

So... Was it intentional?

## Chapter 256

Realizing that, Hesper looked up sharply and looked around for a camera of sorts, but she wasn't familiar with the place, so she couldn't figure out where the cameras would be hidden.

"This contestant is so sharp. Look at number 23!"

"By the way, why did Michelle Sullivan roll her eyes? What's on her mind?"

"Yes, 23 seems to realize that there are cameras, haha."

Everyone's phone had been taken while they were on the way there, but since Hesper usually wore a watch, she knew the time. When they had been there for seven minutes, Hesper walked back and stood

next to Celine.

"What's going on?" Celine didn't know what was going on, but she was observant and could guess that Hesper probably realized something based on her reaction, so she lowered her voice and looked at Hesper with doe eyes.

Hesper leaned closer. "The organizers might have something planned. I suspect that there are some hidden cameras around and they must be live streaming."

Coincidentally, when she said that, there was a hidden camera next to her that clearly caught their voices. There was excitement on the live chat.

"She's incredible!"

"I knew she would be when she was looking around for the camera."

"Hesper Rivera, remember that name. I hope that she's do well during the competition. She's so pretty!"

"It's probably scripted."

Among the messages flooding into the live chat, there was one that wasn't so friendly, but it quickly disappeared after others came in.

Juniper was very unhappy when everyone was praising Hesper because she thought that Hesper wouldn't know how to find the cameras on her own, so there was nothing to be excited about.

The viewers were too naive.

Carter noticed that Juniper was focused on her phone and wasn't listening to him, so he moved closer to her screen. "What are you watching, baby?"

“Don’t look at my screen-” Juniper acted cute. “Give me some space.”

However, Juniper didn’t try to move away after saying that and instead showed him. “Here, it’s Hesper. You know I hate her. I’m just watching this for fun.”

Carter watched Hesper on Juniper’s phone. Hesper was in a white dress and golden specks glinted in her eyes under the hot sun. Her beauty shone through the cameras.

The live chat was flooded with praises for her beauty. Carter snapped back to reality. “Why are you watching it if you hate her? My baby shouldn’t get angry.”

Even though he was saying sweet nothings, Juniper thought that something was off and she felt uncomfortable. “I just want to. You know how I am. I’m just evil. Don’t stop loving me.”

But Michelle Sullivan joined this competition too, so it’s going to be interesting.”

Juniper looked at Hesper on her screen with contempt.

Chapter 257

You better not try to stand out.

By the fifteenth minute, everyone was growing tired. Hesper sat on her luggage bag and guessed that by that time, someone would probably be there to get them soon.

The second after that thought came to her mind, party poppers went off in the sky.

After some cheering, the shuttle buses showed up to get their bags while confetti floated to the ground. Some fell on Hesper’s shoulder and hair. Celine looked at the confetti and her eyes were shining.

“It’s so pretty. It would be so nice if we could record it.”

Hesper looked at her, then smiled. “Don’t worry, someone is recording.”

The Lanes went all out on the budget. They prepared a luxurious hotel and the producers led them to the concierge for keycard collection. Hesper and Celine were at the back of the group following along at a casual pace.

Michelle was walking in front of the crowd, but when she saw the two hanging at the back, she slowed down and fell back.

“Hello, Hesper.” Michelle greeted her then acted as if she had just seen Celine and beamed at her. “Oh, Celine is here too. I haven’t seen you in so long since the other competition.”

Celine told the truth. “It’s only been half a month. Not that long.”

Hesper tried not to laugh, then spoke seriously like Celine. "It's just been two weeks. Not too long."

Michelle felt humiliated because she wasn't expecting Hesper and Celine to be so blunt and tried to cover for herself. "Well, people say absence makes the heart grow fonder. I'm so glad to see you here."

Celine nodded but didn't speak. Hesper walked beside her and Michelle didn't want to set herself up again, so she walked quickly to the front and blended into the crowd.

"Hmm... why do I have a feeling that Michelle Sullivan is a little fake? I don't think Celine Campbell knew her very well previously."

"Michelle knows number 23? Everyone seems to know someone except 23."

"Michelle previously framed Celine. Why is she pretending to be her friend? Haha."

"You're all just haters. Michelle was the winner. She doesn't need to play any games."

"Michelle is the best!"

After everyone got their luggage, the organizer handed out reprogrammed phones. They couldn't be used for any form of communication, but everything else functions as usual.

"Can we transfer what we have on these phones to our phones after the competition?"

Hesper was curious as to why Celine asked that. Whether or not it was allowed, she had authority to allow it, so she nodded. "Yes."

"Great!" Celine smiled and looked happy. "I love taking pictures. This is such a beautiful place. After the competition, I'll at least get to bring something home with me."

Hesper thought she had other ideas, but if it were just pictures, it wouldn't be a problem at all, so she nodded and stretched out her hand to pat her head.

It was so soft and nice to the touch.

Celine's eyes were really clear and that made Hesper like her more.

Let's go see our rooms."

Chapter 258

The initial room distribution was more humans because the designers were somewhat kom tw wasn't the need to make it into a show, so two people shared a room, and there was a baboony inward

room.

Hesper and Celine were given the same room. Since they were among the last few to get their room cards, the room was in a more secluded area which they both wanted

The more quiet and less disturbance there was the better for them.

Their room was on the second floor with plants on the balcony they could see beyond the compound. Even though it was no longer green at the wind of autumn it was still very pretty.

When the cameraman saw that they were almost done unpacking their bags he went over to remind

them.

"There'll be an interview session for each person. Since some designers have never been in front of cameras, the Lanes have arranged for professional makeup artists so that everyone will have some simple makeup done."

of the

Hesper had never been on camera before, but she could do her own makeup. She had light makeup on since that morning and it still looked fresh. Celine had the experience during the Duvel competition and was fine with it, so she just nodded.

The cameraman and producer were slightly nervous at their calm replies because it was a live broadcast. The other designers were trying to sound interesting or funny so the audience would pay more

to them.

The audience wouldn't be interested if they were so calm.

"Can you give us some personal space please?" Hesper remembered that the cameras were still pointing at them. Even though there wasn't anything to hide and she knew that the cameras weren't ever there she still felt uncomfortable.

Celine looked over when she heard that. The producer was expecting her to say something to change Hesper's mind because if the cameras were shut off, they would have less screen time. However, she

nodded too.

"So, there really are cameras? Please switch them off."

Hesper and Celine had the same idea, so everyone else didn't have the right to interfere. Since it involve the contestants' privacy, they would need approval to keep filming

Only the two of them asked to stop filming, ignoring how it could help with their popularity

After Rickard finished work, he remembered that he hadn't visited Ernest in a while, so he drove over

Ernest didn't seem to be very welcoming because of what happened between him and Hesper Rickard knew that his grandpa was unhappy with what he did in the past. Ernest was a stubborn man, so to avoid aggravating his condition, Rickard rarely visited.

The helpers opened the door for him without alerting Aunt Curie and Ernest. When he walked into the living room, he saw the two people's heads close together, watching something.

"Why is the screen black? What do you think about the other girl?" Ernest didn't sound happy. "Why are they showing the black screen? All the other rooms were fine. Why are they making it difficult for Hesper?"

"I think Hesper asked to stop filming," Aunt Curie said. "Look, when the competition starts, the firing wi

resume too."

Neither of them noticed Rickard. They were sitting on the couch like a pair of normal old people watching a show about their own children.

Rickard stood behind them silently for a long time. The room was quiet and the old people's eyes were glued to the screen, so they never noticed him showing up and leaving.

Chapter 259

"You're leaving already, sir?"

The helper was going to bring a pot of tea in but saw Rickard coming out while carefully closing the door.

"Yes." Rickard nodded. "Don't tell him I came here. How is he? The doctor said he's better, but I'd like to

know from you."

The helper nodded. "He is a lot better and is very much in stable condition. He doesn't wake up in the middle of the night anymore all thanks to Mrs. Duval's medication..."

The helper realized that she had made a mistake when she mentioned Hesper, so she corrected herself. "I mean Ms. Rivera."

"It's fine. Thank you." Rickard didn't have more to say, so he said, "Grandpa and Aunt Curie are old, so don't let them watch live streams too late into the night. There'll be a rerun after that."

"Hmm?" The helper didn't understand. A live stream? What was he watching?

She was still confused as she watched Rickard disappear around the corner. She looked at the pot in her hands then turned to change it to ginger tea to bring over to Ernest and Wendy.

When she walked in, the two were watching something on the phone. It was getting dark but the lights weren't on, so the light from the screen cast colors on their faces.

"Sir, ma'am?"

The helper called out to them and turned on the lights.

Were they like this when Rickard was there? They looked like they were addicted to the internet. They were discussing the show which seemed quite interesting.

"Oh, Yann, cover over here." Ernest even put on his reading glasses. When he heard Yanis's voice, he waved his hand at her. "You're young enough so I'm sure you know more than us. Look, the screen is black. Does that mean we can't watch this anymore?"

Yanis walked over and saw Hesper covering the camera and immediately understood why they were so interested in the stream. Even though she didn't know what had happened previously, she guessed that Hesper was going to sleep and so she covered the cameras, and that was why the screen went black.

"Yes, there's nothing to see anymore. Ms. Rivera is probably going to sleep." Yanis remembered what Rickard said so she explained. "There'll be a rerun. The live stream takes a lot of time and Ms. Rivera isn't always on screen. You can wait till the edited version is out."

Ernest nodded and nudged Wendy, who was sitting next to him. "There's nothing more to watch. Let's wait till tomorrow."

Yanis placed the teapot down and left feeling different.

She worked for affluent families for a long time and there was always family drama, people framing each other. It was rare to see such a wholesome scene among rich families.

Chapter 260

The first day was just for unpacking and getting to know each contestant better.

The organizers prepared breakfast and there were snacks in each room, with fresh meat and vegetables in the fridge. Most of the contestants couldn't cook or didn't want to cook first thing in the morning, so they all went to the cafeteria for breakfast.

Celine woke up to the smell of food.

Hesper made breakfast and removed the covering on the camera. Celine got ready and when she walked out, Hesper was sitting at the bar and checking her phone with two sets of breakfast in front of her.

"I don't know if you like this, but I figured that since I was cooking anyway, I might as well make two sets." Hesper didn't really like the food prepared by the organizers. She usually woke up early to watch business news, so after checking out what they had in the fridge, she decided to cook.

The food smelled nice. Celine nodded. "Thank you."

The two sat across each other and finished breakfast. By then it was seven-thirty sharp. Since the organizers didn't provide a schedule, most of the contestants were still sleeping.

Hesper watched the news. There was no way to get in touch with the outside world and she didn't know what the response was for the first day of the competition. However, if they live-streamed the entire

process, it would attract a lot of viewers and hype it up. It was a good choice.

"Number 345 seems to be very disciplined. I would usually wake up early only if I have to attend classes. When I started watching, they were already having breakfast."

"Yes, me too! I'm snacking while watching them have breakfast, LOL!"

"It's nice to be in school. I'm already at the office."

"Didn't know that Hesper could cook. It looks delicious even though it's just basic bangers and mash. I'm craving!"

Very few people would start watching the live stream so early in the morning, but students and some office workers were already watching. Since they weren't getting messages, Hesper and Celine didn't know that waking up early became a topic of discussion.

After she finished watching the news, Hesper remembered that Celine was sitting across from her and wasn't doing anything.

"Did I wake you up from the noise of cooking?" Hesper asked.

Celine shook her head. “No, I usually wake up around this time. Your food smelled really good.”

Hesper was glad she didn't wake her new roommate up. She gave a sigh of relief and said, “I wonder what the plans for today are. I think we're free to do anything at this hour. Do you want to go for a walk?”

Celine nodded as they both looked out the window. The sun was shining.

“Looks like great weather!”

Michelle put on makeup in her room and went downstairs for breakfast.

The Lanes had a generous spread of food. Michelle and the others went to expensive restaurants together before, but other than the nice plating, there was nothing special about the food. They were all shocked when they saw the bili.

The pastries that the Lanes provided were as good as the ones found in cafes.

When eight-thirty came, everyone was having breakfast. The producer went in and saw Michelle, the fan favorite, walking around the cafeteria, so she went over

“Michelle, you're up early.”

Michelle was taking a look at all the tasty pastries and jumped when she heard the voice. She almost lost control of her expression in front of the camera.