

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

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"You should go first. I'll go and get the car parked, and you can order anything you want." Nathaniel pulled over in front of the restaurant. "Their food is rather spicy, so if you can't handle the spice, you could just

tell the owner."

Hesper didn't really like spicy food, so she nodded and walked into the inconspicuous, tiny restaurant.

Hesper truly had no idea how Nathaniel got to know about this restaurant. She looked around the area while they were on the way here, and there was not even a single means of transportation within a few miles from the place, let alone any passerby.

The small shop was hidden behind a grove. It already looked very inconspicuous during autumn, so the whole restaurant might be completely concealed behind the trees when all the leaves grew back during

summer.

A small string of wind chimes made out of shells was hung on the door frame of the entrance. When Nathaniel walked into the premises, it gave off a crisp chime.

"Hello?"

Once inside, no one could be seen. Hesper poked her head in, took a look at the interior of the restaurant, and found that there was no one there. The small shop lot looked clean and beautiful, and the log decorations seemed to be in line with the design of a cabin in the forest. The beams of the house were covered with unknown greeneries, looking very engaging.

...But there was nobody there!

“Are we having guests?”

A person suddenly appeared behind her. Hesper was taken aback.

She then saw a teen boy in an apron come out of nowhere, looking at her while rubbing his eyes.

“You’re Nathaniel’s friend, aren’t you? You can sit by the window. And if there’s anything that you want to eat, you can scan the QR code for the menu.”

The boy did not give Hesper much of a chance to speak, answering everything that Hesper wanted to ask

in one go.

‘He’s never met me before, so how does he know that I’m Nathaniel’s friend?’

Hesper was a little puzzled, but she walked to the seat by the window without any hesitation. She then found that there was a book on the table with a line of unfamiliar words written on the cover. After reading it for a while, Hesper felt like it was written in one of the western languages; however, just when she was about to take a picture to look up the meaning of some of the words, the teenager appeared behind her again.

“This is Nathaniel’s book. It’s been laying around here since he came here last time. I forgot to put it away.”

The teenager closed the book and tapped on the QR code on the corner of the table.

“This is the menu. Do you eat spicy food?”

Hesper shook her head. The boy nodded, yawned, and left.

‘He’s quite a weirdo, huh...? This teenager looks extremely young, but everything he does makes him look frustrated, and he’s very elusive too...’

Hesper scanned the QR code, skimmed through the menu, and ordered two traditional Genecity dishes,

thinking that there would be no going wrong with them, then waited for Nathaniel to park the car and

come over.

When Nathaniel walked into the restaurant, Hesper was staring at the plants in the room with her head lifted, revealing her fair neckline.

“You’re here.” Hesper noticed Nathaniel’s arrival and waved to him. “I only ordered two dishes. You

should take a look at the menu and see what you want to eat. It just so happens that there isn’t anything in particular that I want to eat.”

Nathaniel nodded and sat in front of Hesper. “Mr. Seth Tucker knows what I want to eat. Isn’t the environment here great?”

The environment was really nice, and though it was obviously a restaurant, there was no one else in the building except them, not to mention how silent and still the atmosphere was.

“His name is Seth Tucker... Is he a relative of yours?”

Hesper vaguely remembered that Nathaniel did not have any siblings.

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Seth came out with the dishes and chuckled when he heard Hesper’s speculation.

“...What’s the matter? Did I say something wrong?”

Nathaniel shook his head as Seth served the dishes and left.

Hesper looked a little bewildered, so Nathaniel helplessly explained, “Don’t worry about him. That’s how he treats everyone. Seth is indeed my younger brother, but he likes to cook and he’s rather introverted, which is why you haven’t heard much of him.”

Hesper nodded with a hazy notion. Nathaniel pushed the dishes she ordered closer toward her while she was still a little confused and said, “Try them. His cooking is comparable to a professional chef’s.”

After the two of them had dinner, Nathaniel sent Hesper back home.

As dusk fell, Hesper could not help but sigh as she stared at the breathtaking but fleeting scenery outside

the window.

“What’s the matter? Are you tired?” Nathaniel’s voice came from the left.

Hesper shook her head slowly and said after a short pause, “I’m still thinking about pursuing something that I like. Isn’t that a little too extravagant for someone of my age?”

“How so?” Nathaniel asked in a relaxed tone, then elaborated. “You’re already doing a lot better than most people, so of course you have the right to do whatever you like.”

“By the way, this is the surprise I wanted to give you. I didn’t have a chance to bring it up till now.” Taking advantage of the traffic, Nathaniel took out a business card from his pocket and handed it to Hesper. This is Roberto Sanchez’s contact information. He’ll explain the details to you.”

‘Roberto Sanchez?’ Hesper lowered her head in disbelief. ‘Isn’t that the most famous designer in Montequinto?! I only mentioned that I love Roberto’s design once before this. I didn’t expect him to remember it!’

“I originally wanted to get him to design and customize a dress for you. I remember you saying that you love his design very much,” Nathaniel said. “It was only later that I learned that you actually studied fashion design, so I thought I should just pass you his contact information directly.”

‘With my current ability, it’s impossible for me to get in touch with a big-name designer like Roberto. Designers like him are very arrogant, and to them, money has never been something to be put into consideration when picking jobs, so to be able to get such an opportunity...’

Hesper had not even dared to think about it before.

“You’ve earned this opportunity yourself. I showed him some of your previous designs, and Mr. Sanchez claimed that you’re very talented and wanted to know you too.”

The car slowly drove toward Hesper’s house. When they arrived at the destination, Nathaniel turned his head toward the front passenger seat. His facial outline was a little blurred under the dim street lights.

“I’ll see you next time, Hesper.”

Hesper had not even recovered from the shock, but when she heard his voice, she felt that she owed Nathaniel too much. "Thank you for what you've done. I'll treat you to dinner next time."

Nathaniel's eyes beamed with delight. "Okay. I look forward to it."

Rickard stood in the night as the evening breeze brushed against him. Who knew how long had passed

before the lights in Hesper's room went dark.

He subconsciously grabbed a cigarette and fumbled for the lighter in his pocket, only to realize that his hands were shaking.

"Mr. Duval, that person was Nathaniel Tucker. He's in a marriage agreement with Ms. Lane."

Benji's phone call had come through. While talking, he tried to hear if there were any unusual emotions coming from the other end of the call.

'An hour ago, Mr. Rickard suddenly said that he wanted to talk to Ms. Lane, but then just ten minutes ago, he called asking for me to look into someone's background.'

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"And the things that I managed to gather almost scared the crap out of me. I'm guessing that not only did Mr. Duval not get to see Ms. Lane, but he actually got to meet his love rival instead? Maybe Ms. Lane was even getting a little steamy with Nathaniel there. After all, they're actually in a proper engagement agreement, so they could do whatever they want..."

Thinking of this, Benji could not help but inwardly say a prayer for his boss.

Rickard stood under the tree for a long time after that. The cigarette hanging between his lips was not lit, and he himself did not even know what he was thinking about.

In the end, Benji felt that something was not right, so he called Zikmund and asked him to drive over to Hesper's place to pick Rickard up.

"Does she really not like me anymore?" Rickard asked Zikmund directly.

Looking at his haggard friend, Zikmund could not help but sigh.

"I've heard about the recent incidents. To be honest, Hesper's attacks are freaking ruthless; that means that she obviously wants to corner both you and Duval Group." Seeing Rickard's appearance, Zikmund felt a little irritated by how his friend was not living up to his full capacity.

“We’ve known each other for so long, so how could I not know you well enough to know what you’ve been up to? Although Lane Holdings and Hesper do have the capital and capability to launch those attacks, those moves are definitely not merciless enough to push you to where you are now.”

Rickard lowered his head, and Zikmund let out a long, heavy sigh. “It’s not that I want to reproach you for your actions, but judging from where you two are right now, I think it’s impossible for you guys to go back to how you were before. And if you think I sound too sure of myself, explain this to me. Whether it’s your mother or your sister, which one of them didn’t try their absolute best to force Hesper into a corner back then? And have you resolved the issues that Juniper started? Apart from that, have you let go of your pride and made it clear to Hesper that you still love her?”

Zikmund sounded extremely reasonable, not supporting his best friend only to make him feel better. These days, after learning about the incidents that had happened between Rickard and Hesper before this, he couldn’t help but feel that Rickard was a dumb and confused bastard.

Recently, Rickard had been carefully going through the room where Hesper stayed with him, only to realize that he could not find any trace of her having lived there before.

Hesper had always been extremely cautious and did not buy many personal belongings. So in addition to cooking at home, she also cleaned the rooms. Sometimes, she would even wipe a small item several times before putting it back in its original place.

Rickard used to always find Hesper annoying, but now, he had lost her forever.

“Okay, if you’re a man that takes accountability seriously, think about the situation that you’re in now. You should at least step up for those people who work for your company. They’re other people’s lovers, parents, and children too. If the Duval Group were to collapse now, what would happen to them?”

Although Zikmund was usually a little bit of a jerk, when needed, he could look at major issues from an objective point of view.

In his eyes, it was impossible for Rickard and Hesper to get back together ever again. Instead, in the future, they would be rivals. And although Rickard might not understand this truth just yet, he would have

to, sooner or later.

When they arrived at the Duvals’ residence, Zikmund patted Rickard on the shoulder. “For real, think about

it.”

Rickard suddenly lifted his gaze and said, “I’ve already figured it out.”

Zikmund was speechless as he stared into Rickard's eyes, feeling that what the man understood was definitely not what he wanted to express.

'I'll tackle the issues that Juniper created and not defend the Duvals anymore. I'll hold Hesper's hand and risk all I have, even my life, to make her see that I really do love her.'

Rickard placed his palm on his chest pocket, where a photo of Hesper lay inside... It was a possession that had a ridiculous backstory-he got his hands on it by cutting it out of their divorce certificate, which was the only item that Hesper had left behind.

Zikmund had no idea of just how many crazy things Rickard would do over a long time in the future only because of the words that came out of his mouth that night. He only knew that Rickard started to fight back from that day onwards and had since gone into a business war with Hesper.

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Ever since Rickard started to fight back, Hesper instantly realized that Rickard had been giving in deliberately before. But why would that matter? The use of others' feelings for her was also a means of business. It was not that she could not use it, it was just that she could not be bothered to use it.

Nathaniel came to Genecity only to deliver things to Hesper. Since he had done everything that he wanted to do, and Hesper was busy with work every day and did not have time to entertain him, he returned to Emperion.

"There will be a charity auction tomorrow night. I've rejected a few events of such nature on your behalf before this because the company hasn't officially stabilized and gone on track." Renee updated Hesper on an invitation. "But this is different. The organizer specially sent an invitation letter here, so do you want to attend the event?"

When she was in Emperion, Hesper often followed Matthew to various auctions, which were always great opportunities for companies to socialize with each other. After all, she only knew a handful of entrepreneurs in Genecity, so this would be an excellent chance for her to get to know more.

"Okay, make it happen. I remember that there's a meeting tomorrow night. Bring it forward to tonight."

"Alright."

After Renee left, Hesper leaned back in her chair and rolled her dry eyes wearily.

Long hours of high-load work was starting to make her feel a little powerless. After all, she was only human, not a machine that was in perpetual motion, working non-stop as

long as there was still fuel. Looking back at her recent lifestyle, the last time she felt relaxed during this period of time was when she went out to dinner with Nathaniel.

Speaking of that diner—

Hesper sat up straight, opened her eyes, and took out two business cards from her drawer. One of them belonged to Roberto, and the other was stuffed into her hand by Seth when Nathaniel left earlier to pick up his car the other day.

Seth looked very strange as a person. Rather than being introverted, Hesper kept on feeling that he was trying to hide something from others on purpose.

Even though that was her first time meeting him, Seth somehow felt very familiar to her... Hesper was sure that she had never met this person for as long as she was old enough to remember. But the sense of familiarity was inexplicable.

After giving it some thought, Hesper dialed the phone number and called Seth.

“Beep—”

After only a single beep, the other party picked up the call.

Hearing the steady breathing that was coming from the other end of the call, Hesper could not help but speak first to confirm. “Is this Seth?”

The other side was silent for a while, then a strange yet familiar voice sounded. “Are you looking for Seth? That’s a pity. He hasn’t woken up today.”

The voice from the other end of the call sounded very vague as if it was answering the call at a place with strong wind.

Hesper took a glance at the time.

It’s already two o’clock in the afternoon, yet Seth still hasn’t woken up? What’s more, even if they’re very close to each other, why would Seth hand his phone to another person for safekeeping?”

“Who are you?”

Hesper frowned. A strong gust of wind could be heard coming from the other end. She could still hear the other party breathing before, but now she could not hear anything except for the wind, and that hindered her from catching hold of the other party’s emotions.

“It doesn’t matter who I am. The important thing here is Seth... You know him by this name, don’t you? Anyway, he can’t answer your question today, and I won’t disclose anything to you.” The man’s voice went farther and farther away until it was completely inaudible.

“Hello? What do you mean by that?”

The other side became silent for a long time, and Hesper felt inexplicably uneasy. She could not help but feel that something had happened on the other side, where she could not see.

“It’s nothing interesting, but it’s not the time for you to know more about him just yet.” The voice sounded again on the other end. “We’ve already met, and I believe we’ll meet again, so don’t worry too much, Ms. Lane.”

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Before Hesper had the time to say anything, beeping sounds started to ring in her ear, signaling the end of

the call.

‘If Seth slipped his business card to me secretly, it means that he doesn’t want Nathaniel to know about

this.’

Hesper was forced to listen to those incomprehensible words and felt that the matter was getting more and more dubious. Nathaniel was most likely to know something about this, but Hesper had an inexplicable intuition deep down.

‘I guess I shouldn’t ask Nathaniel about this matter first, at least not now.’

Letting go of her doubts for the time, Hesper reminded herself not to think about those complicated

matters.

‘The most urgent task on my hands at the moment is to make it impossible for Duval Group to recover, and then get Renfrew’s custody back, and lastly, make sure that Lane Holdings settles down in Genecity smoothly. There are still too many things to focus on, so I have no time to think about all these illusory affairs.’

Hesper put her phone down, and her fingertip landed on the news that she had just gone through.

Juniper’s name was impressively edited in the title of the news, so Hesper tapped on it. Juniper, whose face had fully recovered, was wearing a slim-fit suit and smiling brilliantly in front of the camera.

‘Juniper Wight... It seems that she hasn’t appeared in front of the public for a long time.’

It was not hard to see that ever since Juniper made full recovery, she had gone back to her previous job again, and she looked so proud of herself that it seemed she had almost forgotten about Hesper's existence. But Hesper still remembered the time when someone tried to harm her in Salt City.

Later on, Renee sent many men out there to investigate the young man who had a mole under his right eye, but they had found nothing so far. Salt City was covered in chaos during that time, so it was impossible to find witnesses who saw what happened,

Moreover, all the surveillance facilities in Salt City had also been destroyed at that time, so it was not difficult for the killer to deliberately avoid the cameras. In addition to that, the other party was also very experienced in this matter and did not leave any traces behind.

At the end of the day, the characteristic of having a mole was still too indistinct, so trying to find the murderer based solely on this characteristic was tantamount to finding a needle in a haystack.

However, even though the killer had not been caught, Hesper still had a feeling that this person must have been hired by Juniper.

"Juniper Wight..." Hesper tapped on Juniper's smiling face on the phone, and a trace of disgust flashed across her eyes. "It doesn't matter whether you were behind it or not. The most important thing is that I'm not feeling too happy recently. So why not take some time to polish up my skills with you?"

Juniper was looking at her new evening gown in the mirror.

'Ever since I was poisoned by Hesper, I haven't attended any banquet ever. It's been too long. And let's not forget how that b*tch Hesper caused me to lose face the last time I had a chance to go to a banquet. That's why I have to stand out among all the female guests this time around. I have to show off my

beauty so that I can impress Rickard and make him change his mind."

Ariana looked at Juniper from the doorway and sighed faintly.

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In the past, my Juniper was proud and beautiful, and even though she could be a little arrogant at times, she was kind deep down. I don't know when it started, but I feel like I don't know my daughter so well

anymore.'

Juniper had already seen Ariana in the mirror. Recalling all the previous clashes that she had had with Hesper before this, Juniper felt rather aggrieved.

'Hesper is the one who stole the man who originally belonged to me, so why would my own mother talk to me like how she did the other day?'

Thinking of this, Juniper turned around and coquettishly sashayed up to Ariana's side. "Mom, do I look good in this?"

Juniper's dress was specially designed by a famous designer. Its sole purpose was to impress and stun anyone that saw her in it.

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Juniper was born with a delicate and captivating look, so as long as her beholder did not deliberately try to find fault in her appearance, she might even look a little innocent and artless.

"You look nice." Ariana nodded. "However, I'm here to tell you to not go to the charity gala tonight."

Ariana's gaze and expression still looked gentle and amiable, but what she said did not seem to leave Juniper with any choices.

Juniper's expression turned cold instantly, and she stared at Ariana in confusion.

"Why? I've been preparing for this event for a long time, and I only want to be there to..." Juniper's eyes wandered out of focus for a split second, and she exclaimed with a frown, "I don't care. I must attend the function tonight. If you don't want me to go, shouldn't you at least give me a valid reason?"

Ariana nodded. "Rickard and Hesper will be attending the banquet tonight too, so I don't want you to go.

This is the reason."

'Nowadays, there's been so much ruckus going on between the Duvals and the Lanes, putting aside our family and company, even smaller companies are able to feel the tit-for-tat momentum between the two huge families. The commotion is showing a trend of becoming more and more intense recently.

'Speaking of which, Hesper is also no longer someone Juniper can easily frame and overpower only out of jealousy of her. She's now someone who stands on the same level as Rickard and can even go against him by attacking his company. She and Juniper no longer belong in the same class anymore. So why can't Juniper understand that?'

"I'll definitely attend the gala today, Mom... So don't try to talk me out of it anymore."

Juniper let go of Ariana's arm, turned around, and was about to leave, but Ariana stretched out her hand and grabbed her, not wanting her to leave and go out there to do something stupid like pestering Rickard

again.

"Juni..."

"Stop!"

"

As soon as Juniper exerted force and jerked her arm backward, Ariana was pulled forward and lost her balance, her forehead hitting the corner of the cabinet as she fell.

"...Mom, mom!"

Blood gushed out of Ariana's forehead in an instant, while Juniper stood beside her, covering her mouth. It took a while before she recovered from the trance, knelt down, and helped Ariana up. "Mom!"

Ariana had completely lost consciousness. Juniper, at a loss, finally remembered to yell to summon a

servant after some time.

"I've called an ambulance and it should arrive soon, so don't worry, Ms. Wight."

Juniper looked at Ariana, whose eyes were tightly closed, and bit her lower lip as if she had made up her mind in that instant. She then turned her head and said to the servant, "You must watch over my mother until she wakes up. I have something to do, and I have to go now. Call me if she wakes up!"

"Ms. Wight?" The servant was a little shocked.

However, after saying so, Juniper let go of Ariana's hand, turned around, and went downstairs with her clutch purse in her hand.

At the entrance of the banquet, Rickard sat in his car watching Hesper get out of her car in a bright red

gown.

Because she did not come with a male companion nor did she need the companionship of a female, Hesper came to the gala alone that day. However, she did not look very lonely, because as soon as she got out of the car, many people who had been waiting for an opportunity to approach her immediately walked up to her and surrounded her.

With Hesper's current status and capital, it was expected that many young masters in Genecity would flock to her.

Sitting in the car, Rickard saw Hesper being surrounded to the extent where she completely disappeared from sight. He then opened the car window to let the smoke out.

"Damn, holy sh*t, bro. Exactly how much have you smoked?" Zikmund suddenly appeared out of nowhere, stretched out his hand, and fanned the smog in front of his face. "I wonder how you've been so quiet all this while. I thought you'd taken Hesper off your mind. Dude, why are you smoking so much?"

Zikmund would never skip such events, but on the other hand, Rickard seldom showed up. He would at most have Benji deliver something to the venue on his behalf.

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When Zikmund heard that Rickard was attending the event this time around, he guessed that he must have come to see Hesper. After all, the organizer had already announced Hesper's attendance, so many people who wanted to get to know Hesper decided to attend too.

'Is Rickard worried that Hesper will gain more connections in the business circle, or is he afraid that Hesper will fall for someone else?

Zikmund pulled Rickard out of the car, only to choke on the smell of the smoke inside and begin sneezing. In the past, Rickard would only light a cigarette when life was not going his way, but something like this had never happened before.

Zikmund sighed.

"What else can I do? He's still my best friend, my brother. I can only help him out.'

"I've arranged something for today," Rickard said indifferently..

Zikmund was a little confused.

'What arrangement is he talking about?',

Without any further explanation, Rickard walked straight into the venue.

Zikmund was still bewildered, so he strode forward and caught up with Rickard. "What's the arrangement that you're talking about? What's the big plan here? Fill me in, man..."

Hesper walked to a corner of the banquet hall with a smile on her face, hoping that when those people who only wanted to chat with her saw her stance, they would know that she did not want to be disturbed by too many people.

In fact, Hesper came here this time around only to meet new people and form connections, but those who took the initiative to walk up to her were not the people that she wanted.

The nature of this charity gala was different. Everyone who came had to bring a small item to contribute to the auction. The money earned from the auction would be used for charity, and the organizer would only collect a small share to pay for the tax.

After thinking about it for a long time, Hesper did not contribute anything too expensive. She only brought an authentic painting by a famous artist that she got her hands on earlier. Its market value was not low, but it was not the highest either.

After all, Hesper did not need to steal the limelight as a newcomer.

However, Hesper only stood in the corner, and her gaze moved casually from corner to corner, surveying her surroundings. By doing so, she still managed to catch the attention of many people.

There were many ladies present, including some well-known celebrities, socialites, and famous online influencers, but Hesper's appearance still surpassed everyone else's. In fact, Hesper did not even try to dress up for the occasion. She simply matched all her accessories to her gown, but her self-confidence and elegance were something that no one else could imitate even if they tried.

The last person who made people feel this way seemed to be Rickard....

When everyone present thought of this in unison, Rickard pierced through the silence and stepped into

the hall.

'Rickard Duval?'

Hesper was swirling the juice in her glass out of boredom but instantly stopped the moment she saw Rickard.

'Why would he appear at such an occasion?'

Rickard's eyes leaped over the crowd and landed on Hesper with precision. At that moment, the two of them exchanged gazes. And as soon as a beam of emotion flickered in Rickard's eyes, Hesper shifted her gaze away indifferently.

It was as if the momentary eye contact was just an unhappy coincidence.

"Stop staring already. Your eyes are on the brink of sticking onto her body." Zikmund's voice came from the side. "And you haven't told me yet. What's about to happen tonight? From whom did you learn to talk and act so mysteriously?"

Rickard did not say a word but only turned his head slightly. Zikmund followed his gaze, glanced in the direction where Rickard was looking, and saw Juniper, who was glaring at Hesper enviously in another

corner.

“Why is she here?” After Zikmund found out about what had happened in the past, the filter that he once had for Juniper shattered all over.

They were childhood friends who grew up together, but still, he hated most the kind of people who played dirty behind others’ backs.

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What was more, Rickard treated Juniper so well back then, but Juniper only wanted to take advantage of him, then pinned the blame on Hesper when things went south.

If it was not for Rickard’s blind trust in Juniper, perhaps these things would have come to light since the very beginning. Taking advantage of this situation, Juniper should have left immediately, but she was shameless enough to stay and pester Rickard further for so many years.

The former relationship between Rickard and Hesper was no longer a secret because of the blabbermouth, Juniper. So when some attendees who knew about the relationship between Rickard and Juniper saw the posture of the three of them, they could instantly imagine a huge, dramatic scene in their mind.

However, the auction began officially, not giving the imagination more time to develop.

The auction was completely transparent. Everyone sat in the auditorium and would raise their placards to bid for any item that they wanted.

Hesper had seen a lot of exquisite antiques and items in the past three years. So generally, she was not interested in watching such auctions, but she could not just return home empty-handedly. Hence, Hesper paid partial attention to the items being presented on stage and tried to bid for a few small items from time to time.

“The next item up for auction is a piece of jewelry from the royal family of Yoshland. So, ladies, it’s time to divert your attention here.”

Hesper lifted her head. The item on the auction platform was a thin bracelet, inlaid with several gemstones of different shades of blue, making it look like a sparkling wave, radiating under the chandeliers.

It was indeed a pretty bracelet.

This could be regarded as one of the most famous items up for auction tonight. Regardless of the material of the bracelet and the type of gemstone used, the royal family's name was already enough to put the jewelry a level above the other items.

Hesper did not lack good-looking accessories, so although this bracelet looked very beautiful, she did not have the habit of collecting vintage accessories and clothes. She would only buy them for the sake of viewing them at home.

With the host's hyped introduction, the ladies in the audience would surely want to participate in the.

auction.

Hesper did not want to join in on the fun.

Sure enough, as soon as the auction started, the bid for the bracelet skyrocketed instantly. It had completely exceeded its original price.

No matter what, it was only a tiny ornament, and the upbringing that Hesper had received since she was a child had taught her to not go all out for something that was not worth it just for the sake of her pride, even if she was rich now.

There was no need for that.

But soon, a familiar voice came from within the crowd. "\$10,000."

Hesper turned her head and saw Juniper raise her chin as she put down the placard in her hand. And as soon as they exchanged gazes, Juniper snorted proudly then looked away immediately.

Hesper was speechless.

'Just how childish can she be?'

Hesper turned her head, leaned back into the couch, and continued to witness the bidding process.

Juniper seemed to be ready to show off in the limelight this time around, which was not beyond Hesper's expectations. After all, Juniper had not appeared in front of the public for a long time, so with the gigantic vanity that she had, it was absolutely impossible for her to stop if she did not get her hands on this bracelet today.

"20,000."

In an instant, the price of the bracelet increased by a fold.

Everyone in the audience looked in the direction of the voice and saw Rickard put down the placard in his hand expressionlessly as if he was not the one who made the bidding seconds ago.

“Wow, I didn’t expect President Duval to join the auction out of the blue,” the host exclaimed immediately, but he was laughing out loud inwardly.

‘This bracelet being sold at \$10,000 was already something that even my words couldn’t preach. However, Mr. Rickard Duval actually just came out of nowhere and doubled the price?’

“\$22,500.”

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Juniper did not expect that Rickard would intervene in the bidding out of the blue and raise the bid to such a high price in one go.

She only had \$25,000 in her possession, which she had managed to scrape together with great difficulty. She had not been working and getting paid for several months and she had never had the habit of saving money, so she was about to spend all the money that she had earned before this.

Ariana was also afraid that she would use the money to commit crimes, so she stopped giving her a large amount of pocket money. Juniper had to save for a few months just for tonight.

Juniper prayed deep down that Rickard would stop bidding. \$22,500 might be nothing to Rickard, but it was basically all she had at the moment.

At this moment, her heart was bleeding deep down, but she still had to maintain her proud smile on the surface.

However, the \$24,000 that Rickard followed up with in the next second broke her fantasy completely.

Juniper could not help but look at Rickard, who was sitting in front of her, but she could only see the back of his head.

“Mr. Duval, can you perhaps consider stopping there? It’s not like the bracelet will serve you any good after you bring it back. I really like it though. So why don’t you... Just give it up for me?” Juniper bit her lower lip and gave off a charming expression. Her pitiful appearance made the men around her pity her, but Rickard did not even turn his head backward, nor did he plan to give in. “Mr. Duval...”

Hesper leaned backward, waiting to witness the drama live, and wondering what kind of show these two fully grown adults wanted to put on.

Rickard did not utter a single word. Seeing this situation, the host did not know whether to move on with the bidding or not, at least not until Rickard asked, "Is that it? Shouldn't you be doing something? I've already placed my bid."

What that meant was he should move on with the bidding process.

The host got the hint and yelled with confidence, "\$24,000 once-"

Juniper did not expect that Rickard would still refuse to give in even after what she said.

'How is this possible? Even if Rickard didn't want to marry me before this, he would never make things difficult for me like how he's doing now!'

'Could it be that Hesper told him something again?'

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Juniper glared at Hesper, who was staring back at her, and she was at a loss for words for a split second.

'Geez, it's not like I'm the one who's competing against her, so why the glare?'

"\$24,000 for the second time-"

Just as the gavel was about to drop, Juniper gnashed her teeth. "25,000! I'll pay \$25,000!"

Rickard stopped bidding. The attendees of the auction were not dumb; it was obvious that Rickard only raised the price to upset Juniper. Although they could not figure out the reason why, they still loved the drama.

Since others could see it, Juniper could too. The host dropped the gavel and exclaimed with a wide grin on his face, "Congratulations on finally winning this lot, Ms. Wight!"

There was also sparse applause coming from the audience. Blood was gushing out of Juniper's heart, but she could only maintain the generous smile that she had on.

"Holy sh*t. Well done, bro. I literally just saw Juniper breathe a sigh of relief. \$25,000 must be the highest bid that she could afford." Zikmund bumped Rickard's shoulder. "But how did you know that Juniper was going to fight for this bracelet?"

"I had no idea."

At first, Rickard only thought this bracelet would look good on Hesper and wanted to buy it as a gift for her. But seeing that Hesper did not intend to participate in the auction, he had guessed that she might not like it and that was why she must not have raised a bid.

Later on, he only did what he did purely to annoy Juniper.

Zikmund was a little puzzled.

'I thought that was the plan that Rickard brought up but had been keeping to himself mysteriously since he arrived. But it turns out that what just happened is only a tiny prelude?'

'So what exactly does this bastard want to do?'

Seeing that the auction was already coming to an end, Rickard turned his head backward and peeped at Hesper secretly a few times. He saw that she was about to fall asleep, so perhaps she would leave before the dinner party was over.

Chapter 210

Hesper was indeed thinking about leaving early. Although there was a dinner party after the auction, she had already gotten the business cards of the people that she wanted to know. She even got to witness Rickard and Juniper's epic fight scene live.

'There's nothing better than getting to go back and rest early.'

Hesper yawned, and through her teary eyes, she saw Rickard looking back at her. His gaze was filled with complex emotions that could not be easily ignored.

However, she did not want to see his gaze, and she did not want to understand his emotions either.

Rickard looked away and then said, "What's going to happen tonight has nothing to do with her, so it's better for her to leave early."

Zikmund curled his lips, wondering when exactly Rickard started to possess the ability to rise above his old self and the characteristic of self-sacrifice.

'Love does make someone go blind.'

Sitting at the back, Juniper could clearly see all the tiny movements between the two. When she thought about Rickard's actions from just now, she could not help but feel aggrieved and furious.

As if sensing Juniper's emotions, her cell phone vibrated all of a sudden. Juniper lowered her head and took a glance at the notification. It was from one of the servants at home, saying that Madam Wight had woken up with a slight concussion.

Believing that she was the one at fault for causing her mother's injury, Juniper felt a little guilty, but she really had to come today.

'I'm right here, and both of them are still flirting with each other. Just imagine what would have happened if I was not here at all!'

In fact, Juniper seemed to be thinking way too highly of herself, as no one actually cared about her at all, but tonight's main character would indeed be her.

Her phone vibrated again, and Juniper lowered her head irritably, only to see a black text message bubble. Startled, she looked around subconsciously and then lowered her head again.

Quietly opening the dark web, Juniper saw the message that 013 sent her. She did not know whether she should tap on it or not.

Since their last chat, 013 had not sent any messages to Juniper. She wanted to urge him for an update. and follow-up, but thinking of who those people were, she did not have the guts to push him. Apart from that, she also recalled that she had only paid him the deposit, and the full payment had not been made, so she temporarily put the matter aside.

'It's just a small amount of money. It's not worth dying for. But 013 actually just took the initiative to contact me...? Will it offend him if I don't read his message?'

Juniper struggled for a while before finally tapping on the notification bubble.

013: You've truly surprised me, Ms. Wight. You actually left your injured biological mother behind just so you could show off at an event.

013: And don't pretend that you didn't see my messages. You're not blind and I'm not dumb.

Reading these two texts, Juniper's heart skipped a beat

'Not only does this person know who I am, but he even knows what I've gone through today.'

Juniper raised her head subconsciously, wanting to see if there was any strange person watching her, but looking around, she did not see any suspicious person.

Memory: How do you know who I am and what I'm doing?

In a corner where Juniper could not see, a teenager played with his bangs and walked past the banquet hall. No one noticed that a person suddenly walked past.

The young man raised his head and took a glance at Hesper's seat. Under the dim lights, the small mole under his right eye was clearly visible.

013: I advise you to leave the hall now. Rickard has prepared a few surprises for you tonight.

Juniper quickly asked, and the teenager frowned impatiently.

'Talking to idiots is really a pain in the *ss.'

013: If not for the fact that you're still useful to me, I wouldn't even disclose this piece of information to

you.

013: Believe it or not, Rickard already knows about what happened back then.

Hesper was staring at the empty seat in front of her in a daze but suddenly felt a jolt of chill shoot up her spine as if someone was watching her from behind.

There are so many guests sitting behind me, but this feeling..."