

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

Chapter 61

Benji took a quick glimpse of his watch and felt his heart skip a beat." Two minutes."

"Hmph." Rickard snorted coldly without showing much emotion.

'Even after such a long time, the person in charge of Lane Holdings still hasn't shown up. I'd like to see whether they'll arrive in the final two minutes or not.'

The man tapped the table lightly with his fingers, which showed that his patience was about to run out.

Finally, just before he completely lost his mind, the door of the conference room pushed open.

"President Lane, you're..." Benji's face was filled with joy, but he stopped instantly before he could finish the whole sentence.

Staring at the person who came in through the door with his mouth slightly open, Benji asked, "Ms. Xanthos? Why are you the only one here? Where's President Lane?"

Renee Xanthos was the person in charge of communicating with him and arranging this meeting, so the two had contacted each other several times.

Renee gave off a sweet smile. "I'm really sorry, but something urgent just came up, and Ms. Lane has to attend to that matter first, so she can't be here for the time being. That's why she's especially asked me to come over to inform Mr. Duval about this."

"But..." Benji frowned.

'We made an appointment, yet this person just changed the plan so casually? Is she trying to make a fool out of us?'

He subconsciously glanced at Rickard.

Sure enough, Rickard's expression had dimmed, and Benji could sense a hint of hostility emanating between his brows.

"Ms. Lane has avoided meeting me a few times. Did something really come up? Or is she doing this intentionally?" Rickard stood up abruptly and straightened his delicate cuffs, his tone turning colder and sterner. "Or does Ms. Lane think that Lane Holdings' business scale is larger than ours and thus, is in the position to make a fool out of our company? Does she regard our company as something that she can use to kill time?"

“That’s not Ms. Lane’s intention...” Renee let off an awkward smile.

Even though she had obtained Hesper’s instruction in advance, Rickard’s aura was still very domineering to her. It was such a brief conversation but already she was starting to feel rather overwhelmed.

Rickard issued an ultimatum directly, “Go back and tell your president that we’ll be here again at the same time tomorrow. If she still doesn’t show up at that time, tell her to expect a contract termination letter at any time.”

After saying so, he turned around and left, regardless of Renee’s reaction.

Benji followed him but then stopped for a split second and said to Renee, “Ms. Xanthos, Mr. Duval has always been a man of his word. If this meeting were to end with the termination of our contract, while the manpower and other resources that we’ve invested in this project are still trivial matters, I wouldn’t wish to see the reputational damage Lane Holdings would suffer, as this would leave an unreliable impression on the public. Don’t you think so too?”

“I understand.” Renee forced a smile.

After sending them off, she immediately called Hesper and relayed the complaint...

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On the other end of the phone call, Hesper remained silent for a few seconds before calmly saying, “Okay, don’t worry about it.”

“Understood.” Renee thought for a bit and asked, “Ms. Lane, are you done with what you wanted to do?”

Something had indeed come up and she was not deliberately avoiding Rickard. Not that she minded leaving Rickard hanging.

She stared at the man who was tied up in front of her and put on a faint smirk. “I’m almost done. Maybe.”

Hanging up the phone, she stepped forward, stopped right in front of the man, and lifted his frightened face with the heel of her shoes.

This is it. This is the man who almost caused me to lose my chastity three years ago.’

“Now shoot, who was the person who gave you the order three years ago?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. Have you gotten the wrong person?”

The man was sweating profusely from fear. He was surrounded by four or five bodyguards, so it was impossible for him to escape the scene even if he wanted to.

He thought about it carefully; he had done a lot of immoral or even wicked things over the years, but he did not remember offending such an intimidating person.

Hesper gave him a cold glare. "Are you still planning to put on an act?"

The man was startled. He immediately knelt on the ground and started begging for mercy. "Ma'am, I really don't know what you're talking about. Perhaps you could give me a hint?"

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Hesper realized something instantly.

'The way I looked back then was very different from how I look now. This sh*tsack has committed so many wicked crimes in the past, of course he wouldn't remember my appearance as clearly as I expect him to.'

Thinking of this, her tone became colder and even a little murderous. "It seems that you've been leading quite a great life all these years, and you haven't stopped harming others throughout these past three years. I'll give you a couple of hints. It was three years ago, and it happened in the Hawson Shopping Mall. Do you still need more clues for things to become clear?"

"Three years ago..." The man's eyes rolled around as he tried to recall the incident. His eyes then widened abruptly in shock as he was overwhelmed by disbelief. "It's you!"

"It seems that you still have an impression of what happened. This will make things a lot easier."

Hesper hooked her fair, tender fingertip slightly, and the bodyguards who were standing by on both sides immediately started beating the

man up.

"Thud! Thud! Thud!" The sounds of fists hitting the man's body

penetrated the air one after another, accompanied by the man's loud and shrill screams.

"Help, please stop hitting me! Please stop!" The man climbed forward in extreme discomposure. His face was already severely bruised. "Ma'am, just tell me what you want from me. I'll do anything as long as it calms your wrath."

"Very good. Glad to hear that." Hesper pursed her scarlet lips slightly,

and the aura that was enveloping her was extremely intense. "As long as you disclose the person who was behind the incident, this matter will no longer have anything else to do with you."

The man thought about the pros and cons of the whole situation, all in a split second. He carefully probed under the threatening gazes of the bodyguards. "Ma'am, is that true? Will you really stop troubling me as long as I tell you the mastermind behind the incident?"

"This offer may change in a matter of seconds if you continue to give me such nonsense."

"Don't! Please don't! I'll talk!" The man huffed a long and trembling breath, no longer caring whether he offended somebody else.

'From the look of things, if I insist on keeping my mouth shut, I might leave this place on a stretch or in a coffin.'

"It was Sophia Duval, the daughter of the Duvals!"

Hesper squinted her eyes. She had guessed the answer a long time ago, but she continued to ask, "How are you so sure that it was her? Would Sophia be so stupid as to contact you directly?"

"It seems that you don't know her..."

It turned out that Sophia led quite a chaotic lifestyle when she was in college that she even got acquainted with a group of gangsters on campus. In order to better make them obey her orders, Sophia chose to declare her identity from the very beginning to put some pressure on them.

She was in such a hurry to hire someone to drug Hesper back then that although she did so through a handful of middlemen, he still managed to find out that Sophia was the person behind the whole scheme after inquiring around for a bit.

"Ma'am, I've told you everything I know. I was blinded by the attractive payment. I also had a very ignorant mind and failed to recognize your

identity, which was why I dared to make a move on you. Please show me some mercy, ma'am. Please let me go."

"Okay." Hesper's thin lips curled upward as she put on a malicious smirk. "But since you admit that you made a mistake, you'll have to pay the price. I'll naturally let you go after I think you've learned your lesson."

"You... How can you go back on your promise?!" The man, not having expected her to do this, cursed at her furiously.

Seeing this, one of the bodyguards on the side grabbed the rag on the table and shoved it into his mouth.

“Ms. Lane. What should we do next?”

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A hint of coldness flashed across Hesper’s long and narrow eyes. Since the truth has been revealed, it’s only natural for me to expose it to everyone else. Tie him up and sack him. It’s time to give that lady a huge gift.”

”

The bodyguards moved immediately; her wish had always been their command.

These men were all carefully selected by Matthew to stay by her side and serve her, so Hesper always felt very relieved with them around.

At the Duvals’ residence.

Sophia dressed up meticulously, ready to go out on a date with her best friends. Just as she was about to leave the villa, a van suddenly stopped in front of the Duvals’ residence, and a few tough-looking bodyguards pushed a sack out of the van.

“What the f*ck! What are you guys doing?!”

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Frightened, Sophia retreated back toward the living room immediately.

The man, breaking free from the knots and sticking his head out of the sack, saw Sophia at a glance.

The moment their gazes met, Sophia became shocked and stuttered nervously, “You, you...”

“Ms. Duval, please save me!” The man grabbed her thigh, hugging it tightly, and started yelling, disregarding Sophia’s dimming expression. “You’re the one who bribed me into drugging Ms. Rivera back then, and now she’s returned. She located me and retaliated against me. You can’t just leave me out there to her. I offended her only because I followed your orders, so you must keep me safe!”

“What nonsense are you spewing?”

Sophia’s expression looked as gloomy as the night sky. In just a short while, many servants in the villa had been attracted by the commotion, and many of them even heard what he said just now.

Sophia gritted her teeth angrily. "I don't know you at all, so don't you dare give me this nonsense here! Someone, get this lunatic out of my sight!"

At the same time, she lowered her voice and whispered in the man's ear, "You'd better get lost and stop spitting all this bullsh*t here. Aren't you afraid of offending me?"

However, that man was not someone who would give up so easily. He was indeed afraid of offending Sophia, which was why he did not confess or sell her out even when he was caught by the police three

years ago.

But Hesper had now come back and even sought revenge on him.

Judging from the demeanor that she was exuding, it was obvious that she was now someone that he couldn't trifle with. If he were to

choose to not do anything, he would die an even worse death.

When a few servants came over to pull him away from Sophia, the man immediately started struggling,

"Ms. Duval, you can't just leave me out there to die! Your personal enmity toward Ms. Rivera was the reason you wanted me to tarnish her reputation. Now that she's putting all the blame on me, how do you expect me to survive out there?!"

"Shut your trap. Just shut the f*ck up!" Sophia was so furious that she dashed up to him and slapped him.

The man scurried around the villa to escape from her, causing a lot of ruckuses all of a sudden.

"Thump!" The man hit a hard chest out of the blue.

Rickard's keen glare looked so gloomy that he was on the brink of being able to kill someone with it. The hostility emanating from his body caused everyone to subconsciously remain silent.

"What did you just say?" he uttered with extreme aggressiveness.

Sophia's heart skipped a beat and hurried forward to explain herself. Dick, don't listen to this lunatic's nonsense. I suspect that he's not in his right mind and he's come here to stage this play in order to obtain benefits out of this matter."

"You, shut up!" Rickard glared at her with his vicious gaze then pointed at the man in front of him. "You, speak up now."

The man was taken aback by his appearance, but he also knew that Rickard had a very powerful background, so he could only bite the bullet and go all out.

“A few years ago, Ms. Duval bribed my brother and me into drugging

Ms. Rivera, hoping that we would tarnish her chastity so that she would be driven away from the Duvals. But we didn’t succeed, as someone managed to save Ms. Rivera.”

“However, Ms. Rivera found me today and said that it’s time for me to pay the price. But I only did it because Ms. Duval instigated it. That’s why I’ve come here-to discuss countermeasures with Ms. Duval.”

Rickard was astonished by the belated truth.

“I see...” After calming down, he instantly remembered what Hesper said to him back then.

‘She told me that someone must be framing her. She even begged me to help her investigate the incident. But I chose to listen to Sophial and blamed her for everything that happened to her.’

“It’s all my fault...” Rickard muttered to himself, and his chest was instantly filled with guilt.

The man did not know what was wrong with Rickard. He only wanted him to save himself, so he begged, “Mr. Duval, I’m begging you. I know that what happened back then was my fault; I even went to jail for it. So even if Ms. Rivera wants to get revenge, she should go to the mastermind of the whole incident, not me!”

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Only then did Rickard realize, and his eyes narrowed instantly. “What do you mean? Hesper found and met you?”

“Yeah, she came to me earlier today. She went directly to my house with a few men, seemingly her bodyguards...”

“Are you sure that it was her?” Rickard was shocked. He had been going around searching for her whereabouts for so long, but he had yet to hear of any news of Hesper.

‘That woman seemed to have disappeared, completely receding from my life, and she just reappears out of nowhere without any warning.’

For a moment, Rickard doubted whether it was true.

The man’s words brought him back to reality.

"I can swear to God, Mr. Duval, every word I said is true, Ms. Rivera also said that she'll make those who hurt her before pay the price!"

"Dick, don't listen to her nonsense!" Sophia could not sit back any longer and rushed forward to interrupt the conversation between the two men. "Hesper already left the country for so long, so why would she come back suddenly? And she now has bodyguards working for her? This is impossible as long as we think about it!"

Rickard looked away, and just when he struggled to make up his mind, a soft voice suddenly sounded behind them.

"Is the person you're talking about my mommy?"

Rickard turned around, looked up, and saw Renfrew standing behind him quietly. A trace of anticipation could be seen on his tiny face.

Rickard felt a jolt in his chest cavity.

Regardless of whether it was true or not, now that he had obtained news about her, he must search for her in order to be at ease.

"Benji." Rickard summoned Benji and ordered, "Send someone out now to look for Hesper's whereabouts, and report it back to me as soon as there's any news."

"Dick!" Sophia stomped her feet angrily. "Can you stop being so dumb?! Are you telling me that you truly believe in what this lunatic says? Why would you bring all this hassle onto yourself?"

Plus, Juni has been waiting for you for three years. If she were to know that you're looking for Hesper at this time, can you imagine just how sad she would be?"

"You shut your mouth up." Rickard glared at her with an annoyed look. "I haven't even started teaching you a lesson about the drug incident. Now that there's a witness, you'd better watch out once I prove that what he just said is true."

"Dick..." Sophia panicked, but Rickard did not even give her a chance to speak again. He ordered someone to bring the man into his study for a proper interrogation.

An hour later, Rickard came out of the study and could not help but go to the bedroom where Hesper used to live.

Not many changes had happened here. All the arrangement of her furniture and decorations had been perfectly preserved.

Rickard rarely came here in the past three years, but after learning about the truth of the past, he could not help but feel guilty and regretful at this moment.

'She tried explaining to me, but I didn't listen. I even deliberately ignored her call when she was experiencing the incident.'

Thinking of Hesper's look when she asked him whether he did not answer her phone call on purpose, Rickard felt a sense of ache in his throbbing heart..

I'm... I'm truly an *sshole.'

At this time, Sophia panicked and went to Madam Duval immediately.

"Mom, I'm doomed. Dick already knows about the thing that I did

back then! He'll definitely not let this slip!"

"What are you panicking about?"

Madam Duval was wearing a glamorous dress while she was working on her bonsai in the garden. However, her calm expression did not even change at all after hearing Sophia's words.

"It's just Hesper. We were able to deal with her with ease in the past, so what's the problem now? Even if she's returned here for real, so what?"

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"But Dick..." The person that worried Sophia the most was Rickard.

'Ever since Hesper left, although Rickard hasn't been bringing the matter up too frequently, he's been rather depressed all the time. Apart from that, he's also been ignoring Juniper's courtship all these years.

'Judging from all these signs, it's really difficult for me to not suspect that Dick has actually fallen for that b*tch, Hesper!'

At a glance, Madam Duval instantly knew what she was thinking. She then picked up a pair of scissors, trimmed off one of the branches menacingly, and said angrily, "What are you afraid of? You and Rickard are brother and sister, and you're the daughter of the Duvals.. I'll see to it personally if anyone dares to lay a finger on you!"

Having heard Madam Duval's guarantee, Sophia felt slightly relieved.

The two went on talking about possible countermeasures, and she gradually forgot about the threat that Hesper might pose.

"Daddy, can I come in?" Renfrew's voice came from the bedroom door.

Rickard turned around and saw a tiny kid standing at the door; he did not know how long he had been there.

“Why are you here?” Rickard waved at him, motioning him to come nearer. The boy scurried over with his short legs, but his usually lively face now looked a little empty and lost.

“Daddy, were you guys talking about mommy just now?”

Rickard remained quiet for a moment and then nodded. “Yes.”

“I heard that uncle saying that mommy has gone to meet him. Does that mean that mommy has come back here? Can I see her soon?”

Rickard’s heart ached.

‘I rarely talked about Hesper with him these few years, and this little rascal has always acted so unconcernedly all this while. This is my first time discovering that he’s always been thinking about his biological mother.’

“I promise you that I’ll find Mommy as soon as possible so that you and Mommy can meet each other and be together.”

“Thank you, Daddy...” The little fella nodded sullenly and wrapped his arms around that of his daddy. In this silent bedroom, the father and son leaned against each other, thinking about the same person.

At this time, Hesper was on the phone with Julian.

“Hesper, why did you go back to Genecity without even giving me a call beforehand? Have you forgotten how Rickard tortured you back then? If he were to find out that you’ve gone back, perhaps...”

“Don’t worry, I’m no longer the old me. I won’t let others walk all over me anymore.” Hesper’s gaze looked calm, and she was even giving off an abstruse smirk. “What’s more, I came back for revenge this time around. Even if he doesn’t come looking for me, I’ll go looking for him too. Sooner or later, we’ll eventually bump into each other.”

“Hesper, you...” Julian sighed, he sounded obviously very disapproving, and finally said helplessly, “I know you just can’t get over what happened back then, but even if you want revenge, you should’ve called me to go back with you. You’re going to face those bastards from the Duvals alone. How do you expect me to be at ease?”

“Aren’t you going to follow Professor Miles abroad to study in a medical institution? This is a great opportunity for you, so I can’t pull you back with my plan.”

“No matter how good the opportunity is, it’s not as important as your safety!”

Hesper felt a surge of warmth in her heart.

Throughout these three years, Julian and Matthew took meticulous care of her as if they were her elder brothers; that was how she made her way through those difficult days and nights.

Now that she had grown stronger, it was time for her to give back to them.

“Ian, you’re Professor Miles’s best student. So many people have tried to get their hands on this opportunity, but Professor Miles values you more than all those people and picked you to go with him. If you were to reject his invitation at this juncture, he’d be very disappointed.”

Thinking of his professor who had devoted his whole life to medical research, Julian’s attitude softened a little. “You’re right. But please remember that you must come back safely.”

“Alright. I promise.” Hesper chuckled.

However, after hanging up the phone call, the hilarity in her eyes faded little by little.

‘Not only will I return safely, but I also want those people to pay for what they did to me in a hundred folds.’

Chapter 66

Hesper took a glimpse of the time.

‘It’s almost time. My second gift should’ve already been delivered to that person.’

“Juniper Wight, what will your reaction be? This is so exciting...”

At Leneriv Apartment.

When Juniper, who had just gone through a celebratory banquet, came back to her place, the guard of the apartment told her, “Ms. Wight, there’s a parcel for you.”

“Oh really?” She had drunk some wine, so she did not look as sober as she usually was, and her steps were a little wobbly.

Seeing how she looked, the guard suggested, “Why don’t you come down and retrieve it tomorrow?”

“There’s no need for that.” Juniper waved her hand, thinking that the special gown she bought had arrived.

‘In the past three years, I’ve shown my affection toward Rickard in every possible way, but he’s been so indifferent in return. I refuse to believe that he has no feelings for me.’

'All men can't stand temptation, so I specially ordered this online. I plan to find a chance to wear it when I see him privately.'

Thinking of this, Juniper could not help but feel a little excited. Her cheeks blushed and she quickly left the guard house with the parcel.

When she got home, she could not wait to open the box. She was still imagining Rickard's appearance when he saw her in this gown, and she had already thought about what kind of expression that she

would put on and what she should say when the time came.

However, when the box was opened, the only item sitting inside it was a barbie doll covered in blood, lying in a strange and distorted posture, its eyes wide open. The whole package looked extremely terrifying.

"Aaaaaah!"

Juniper screamed in fright and quickly threw the box aside, but she seemed to have switched something on, as a mean voice came out of the Barbie doll/ "She? She's nothing more than just a whore, a b* tch who dares to confront me, I'll surely make her life a living hell!"

"Who?! Who's talking?" Juniper looked left and right in fear, but she was the only one in the luxurious apartment, and she did not see anything suspicious.

It was at this time that Juniper realized something belatedly.

'This voice... It sounds like mine!'

Something flashed through her mind quickly. Juniper swallowed her saliva and cautiously approached the horrifying Barbie doll.

The voice was still looping, and the tone of voice had not changed, but it felt that with each sentence, the tone just got meaner and

meaner.

Juniper mustered some courage and picked the Barbie doll up, only to see that there was a card laying under it.

She picked it up and looked closer at it, and a sentence that made her heart skip a beat appeared right in front of her eyes.

"It's been a long time, Juniper. Do you still remember me?"

Below the sentence, there was a signature, and it was the capital letter "H".

“H? H...? Hesper!”

“It’s her, it’s Hesper!”

She remembered everything.

‘I did say that to Sophia in private three years ago. Hesper had not left Genecity yet at that time, but how did she get her hands on a

recording of what I said?’

Juniper was confused, so she quickly took a picture of the scary doll, sent it to Rickard, and then called him, “Rickard, someone wants to harm me!”

Rickard was dealing with some official businesses in the study when he received a photo. He zoomed in on the photo and did not give off any expression through his stern face. “Perhaps it’s your competitor’s doing. If you’re really afraid, you can always call the police.”

“No, it’s not!” Juniper’s voice was trembling and it sounded as if she was about to weep. “Look at the card; it’s signed by Hesper. Apart from her, no one else would talk to me like that! Rickard, please come over and take a look. I’m really terrified.”

Hearing Hesper’s name, Rickard put more attention to the card. He knew Hesper’s handwriting, and that was indeed hers.

But he knew that Hesper would not do something like this if it would not do her any good.

‘First, the man was left in front of the house, then Juniper received a package that threatens her. She’s clearly planned all this out.’

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Rickard’s expression became serious immediately. “If that’s the case, what actually happened between you? Why would she say this to you?”

“I...” Juniper felt guilty for a few seconds but then chose to conceal her guilt with tears. “I don’t know why she’d doing it either. She used to target me in every possible way when she was still living here, and she always felt that I wanted to harm her. So perhaps she thinks that I’m the one who caused her to leave your side.”

This reason seemed reasonable. If this was her explanation back then, Rickard would have surely believed it.

However, he just learned the truth about some things earlier, so he could not help but hesitate and think more about what Juniper just said.

'If Hesper didn't lie about that man, then her accusations toward Juniper from three years ago might be true too.'

He squinted his eyes, his deep black eyes looking calm and slightly murderous. "Are you sure?"

"Of course." Juniper was still trying to put up a show, but Rickard had already noticed something.

He hung up the call without saying another word, and his face was reflected on the dim screen, looking extremely indifferent.

'Just... Just how much blame have I placed on her shoulders back then?'

Rickard felt extremely regretful.

At this moment, Juniper's phone calls came through persistently, but Rickard did not even bother to take another glance at it.

He realized that he seemed to have made a wrong decision back then.

'If Hesper has always been innocent from the very beginning, haven't I been wronging her all along?'

'And those punishments that she had to take on even though she was in poor health...'

"Damn it!" Rickard had never felt this stupid for a moment.

Regretful and guilty were nowhere near enough to describe how Rickard felt at this moment, but the only thing that he could do now was put more effort into the process of locating Hesper.

However, the men who got sent out made it seem like they had disappeared as they had not reported back after such a long time.

Rickard did not sleep all night.

When Benji came to pick him up the next day, he was taken aback by the black circles below his eyes. "Mr. Duval, did you..."

"Is there any news?" Rickard's voice sounded hoarse, and he looked a little tired.

Benji knew what he was asking about and shook his head. "No, but we've obtained the surveillance footage around the man's house. A group of people went to his house yesterday. I've made a copy of the video. Would you like to take a look at it?"

"Good." Rickard nodded, and the footage was placed in front of him.

He stared at the footage without blinking and soon saw a red Maserati parked on the side of the road. A woman in a windbreaker was seen walking down with a group of bodyguards surrounding her. "Pause."

Rickard then zoomed in on the paused image. The woman looked very fashionable; every single piece of clothing or fashion accessory

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“Pause.”

Rickard then zoomed in on the paused image. The woman looked very fashionable; every single piece of clothing or fashion accessory

that she had on looked exceptionally exquisite and glamorous.

Sophistication was something that Hesper did not possess in the past. Apart from that, the woman was also wearing a pair of oversized sunglasses, covering most of her palm-sized face.

Seeing that he could not be sure, Benji had no choice but to say, “Mr. Duval, I’ll increase the intensity of our efforts in finding the young lady, but it’s time for us to depart to meet with the person in charge of Lane Holdings. Shall we...”

“Got it, let’s go.” Rickard pinched the center of his brows, and the moment he put on his coat, he turned back into the decisive and indisputable president of the Duval Group.

Benji was more careful this time around. When they came to the venue, he asked the receptionist standing outside the private room. “Has anyone arrived?”

“Yes, sir. Someone has arrived before you.”

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Benji and Rickard exchanged gazes, and the former immediately opened the door.

Rickard strode forward, only to find that there were already four bodyguards standing in the private room, and the person sitting in the power player seat was sipping tea leisurely with her back facing him.

The anger of being played the last two times erupted at this moment, and Rickard's tone sounded sarcastic. "Glad to meet you, Ms. Lane. I thought you weren't planning to show up again today, but you actually arrived earlier than me."

"Are you mad, Mr. Duval?"

A woman's teasing voice sounded from behind the seat, and Rickard, who was just about to sit down, was shocked.

'This voice... It sounds so familiar!'

"You..."

"What's wrong? We haven't met each other only for a few years, and you already don't recognize me?"

Hesper turned around all of a sudden, and the first few things that caught Rickard's attention were her scarlet lips, dark black hair, full-blown makeup, and her imposing demeanor, which by itself would already be enough to make others not dare to underestimate her.

Rickard seemed to hear his heart skip a beat. He stared blankly at the person in front of him, and it took him quite some time to even react to what he saw.

"It's you."

"Is it so surprising to you, Mr. Duval? Or do you think that I'm

someone who only deserves to be trampled by you people and would never get an opportunity to turn my life around?"

Rickard ignored her sarcasm, stepped forward, and grabbed her by the arm. "Since you've come back, why didn't you tell me? You even tried to play tricks on me? What's with the man from yesterday? And how did you become the new person in charge of Lane Holdings?"

"Mr. Duval, that's a lot of questions to ask someone at once. Which one do you want me to answer first?" Hesper curled her lips upward, gave off a smirk, and pushed him away while he was still in a daze, just like how he treated her in the past.

She then continued with a sarcastic tone. “Mr. Duval, this is a negotiation and I represent Lane Holdings in this meeting, so please show me your professionalism. Otherwise, I’ll really start to wonder whether the famous Duval Group is just all talk.”

Rickard had experienced countless weird and difficult situations, so he managed to calm himself down soon after the initial shock.

He sat down across from Hesper without uttering any other nonsense, but his gaze was still locked on her. “Alright, Ms. Lane, since you want to talk about business first, let’s start.”

Hesper pretended not to see his gaze, opened the proposal that Duval Group had submitted to them earlier, tapped on one of the lines with her fountain pen, and pointed out the problem concisely.

“This quotation is too high and the materials that you plan to use are so cheap, it won’t reflect the grandiose design that a president’s office should have, and it won’t match the overall style of the whole building too.

“And below this floor, the creativity that your party showcases here is fine, but the design is quite complicated and it would take too long to complete.

“And this…”

She pointed out several problems in one go, all of which were well- founded and not random and aimless.

Rickard stared at this scene quietly; it was difficult for him to imagine that the submissive woman in the past whose only objective was to please him would have such a resolute and stern side.

If he had not known about her past, Rickard would have thought that she was a professional elite of Lane Holdings.

“Mr. Duval.” Seeing that he had been staring at her for a long time, Hesper could not help but stop speaking, and a faint hint of

impatience could be seen through her indifferent gaze. “I think what I said just minutes ago should be clear enough for you. I need to see the professionalism of your company. If you continue to be this distracted, I can’t guarantee that we can take the collaboration between our companies another step forward.”

“Understood,” the man replied calmly.

Hesper gave off an irritated scoff, leaned back in the chair languidly, and folded her arms. "Since you understand it, you must've come up with a solution already? Why not present them to me now?"

She purposely waited to see him embarrass himself here.

'It's next to impossible for him to come up with a more well-rounded plan by himself in such a short time, not to mention that he clearly wasn't paying attention just now.'

But who knew, Rickard did not look like he was troubled at all. He then calmly placed another proposal on the desktop and pushed it to the opposite end of the desk.

"The solutions you're looking for are all listed in this proposal."

Hesper skimmed through the proposal suspiciously, and the expression on her face, which looked unconcerned at first, became serious gradually.

All the new designs were actually aiming at resolving the questions she just raised.

Chapter 69

"You..."

"Let me guess, do you wish to know how I'd know what to do?"

Hesper did not say anything and only gazed at the man sitting across from her with her cold eyes.

'Even after three years, he still thinks so highly of himself. Seeing him again really upsets me!'

Rickard lifted the corners of his lips and let off a smirk. "Before I

departed here to meet you, I had already reviewed our proposal and tried to perfect it. And it's always advisable to prepare ourselves for everything in the business field, isn't it?"

Hesper understood.

'He's saying that he already suspected that we from Lane Holdings would make his life difficult on purpose, so he prepared himself for this outcome in advance.'

Rickard looked at her displeased look, and a faint hint of hilarity

flashed across his eyes. "Ms. Lane, you're still young. You still have a lot to learn."

Benji, who was standing at the side, wiped the sweat on his forehead.

'Mr. Duval, you spent so much time looking for her all over the world throughout the past three years. Now that she's standing right in front of you, why are you acting so arrogantly? Is this really the right. thing to do?'

Hesper snorted lightly as if she did not care much about it. "In that case, please start to arrange for the project to start as soon as possible. The official opening of the branch is just around the corner, and there's not much time left for your party to complete the project."

After saying so, she got up and was about to leave.

"Wait!" Rickard pulled her back.

Before Hesper could make any move, the bodyguards who came with her immediately stepped forward, looking extremely deterrent.

Benji hurried forward and tried to smooth things over. "Guys, please don't get his action wrong. Mr. Duval and Ms. Lane are old friends; they're just catching up."

Rickard walked up to Hesper and stared at her silently. "Let's talk."

"What's there to talk about?" Hesper rejected him directly.

However, in the next second, Rickard grabbed her wrist and pulled her out of the room.

"Ms. Lane!" The bodyguards dashed forward and were about to follow them out of the room.

But Benji stood in their way deliberately and tried to stop them. "It's okay, it's okay. There are too many people here; they'll just talk alone."

"Get out of our way!" The leader of the group of bodyguards, Isaac Lennon, glared at him exasperatedly and was about to make a move

1.

However, Benji signaled the bodyguards behind him with his gaze, and those men strode forward immediately to help him out. The room fell into pure chaos almost instantly.

Benji took advantage of the mayhem to leave the scene and stopped outside the door to catch his breath.

"Mr. Duval, I've tried my best to delay those men for you. It's all up to you now..."

“Where are you taking me to!” In the hallway, Hesper struggled with every single fiber of her being.

But the man’s grip on her arm got tighter and tighter, and she was starting to feel a dull pain in her wrist.

Out of the blue, Rickard stopped abruptly, and before Hesper had time to react to that, he grasped her hand, raised it above her head, and pinned it against the wall.

“Now tell me, where have you been these few years? How did you become the person in charge of Lane Holdings?”

He lowered his head, and his warm breath brushed against Hesper’s neck, creating a somewhat charming aura for no reason.

Hesper became annoyed from the embarrassment and uttered the most hurtful things that she had on top of her mind.

“It’s none of your business, isn’t it? We’re already divorced, and you have nothing to do with me. Where I go and what happened to me all this while are all my personal affairs.”

“Hesper Rivera!” Rickard said in a low voice, “When I ask you a question, just give me the truth directly. Don’t ever challenge my patience.”

“Pfft.” She gave off a disdainful smirk. “You really haven’t changed at all, Mr. Duval, you’re still as arrogant as you were three years ago. If you think you’re capable of holding me here, I dare you to continue to pester me. My bodyguards will catch up to us any moment now. So be my guest if you’re not afraid of being embarrassed in front of more people!”

Chapter 70

Rickard wanted to say something, but a commotion could already be heard coming from behind him.

Hesper stared at him indifferently. “Do you still want to subdue me here?”

Rickard did not budge at all, and during this short period of hesitation, Isaac had already caught up to them with the other bodyguards and shielded Hesper behind him immediately.

“Ms. Lane, are you okay?”

“Yes.” Hesper shook her head.

She then turned toward Rickard and said coldly, "I'll make myself clear now once and for all. I don't wish to see what happened today happen ever again. So, Mr. Duval, please pay more attention to your future actions!"

She turned around with the men, ready to leave with them.

Rickard was still not reconciled, so he gnashed his teeth and asked, "Even if you have nothing to say to me, what about our son? You've been away for three years. Don't you plan to meet him again?"

Hesper stopped for a split second.

'Why would I not want to see him? I'm the one who gave birth to him. I've never stopped thinking about my baby every second of those three years.'

But she did not look back and straightened her posture. "That's none of your business too, so stop intervening in my affairs."

After saying so, the group of people strode away.

At this time, Benji caught up to Rickard. Seeing him standing alone in

the corridor, he asked cautiously, "Mr. Duval, the young lady..."

Rickard remained silent. The man who had always been aloof could not help but feel an indescribable loneliness at that moment.

Benji thought for a bit and comforted him. "The young lady has changed a lot in the past few years. Perhaps she still hasn't let go of the past, and that's why she still has a very repulsive attitude towards you. I think it'll improve as time goes by."

Thinking of the changes that had happened to her, countless doubts appeared at the top of Rickard's mind. "Go and find out how she became the director of Lane Holdings. And who are those bodyguards who were addressing her as Ms. Lane just now? It's best to get to the bottom of what she's done in the past three years."

"Okay, I'm on it." Benji agreed immediately.

'We couldn't find anything before this, but now that the young lady has resurfaced, it'll be much easier to investigate from now on. But...'

He suddenly remembered something and handed a document to Rickard. "Mr. Duval, we've got our hands on more information about the person who hired those men to drug the young lady back then. Ms. Duval was indeed the one who did it. And Madam Duval... She probably knows about it too."

Because they had found a large amount of money being transferred to that man through Sophia's bank account, and the amount was so large that it was not a number that

Sophia could pay out of her own pocket at the time, that could only mean one thing. There must be someone lending her a helping hand from behind the curtains.

Thinking of his mother and sister doing such a thing without telling him, Rickard shivered for a split second.

'Hesper was still my wife back, and grandfather even showed his full support toward our marriage, yet they still had the guts to do

something like this to her. So what would they do to her if she had no

one supporting her?'

Just thinking about it, Rickard could not help but feel infuriated.

"Let's go, we're heading back home."

Sophia had become more obedient in the past two days, as she was afraid that she would do something to provoke Rickard. She even treated Renfrew a lot better than she used to.

At the moment, she was watching a drama with Madam Duval in the living room, and she was not in the mood to care about Renfrew, who was playing with Wanda at the side. If nothing had happened in the past few days, she would have driven them out of the living room.

"Ma'am, miss, Mr. Duval has come back..." A servant came in and reported Rickard's arrival, but before she could finish the second half of her sentence, Rickard had already stepped into the villa.

When Sophia caught a glimpse of his expression, she subconsciously wanted to get out of the living room but was halted by Rickard." Where do you think you're going?"