

Surprise 241

Chapter 241 The Heart That Forever Beats For You

After reading the message, Courtney laughed and swiftly replied, 'Gale deserves it. You, on the other hand, should probably gird your loins.'

Gale had a tendency to skip on the important details whenever he gave out secondhand information. It seemed as if nothing good could ever emerge from giving him the information in the first place—he was a born troublemaker.

As amused as she was by that thought, she knew that whatever happened today had nothing to do with his ineptitude and Alexander was aware of it as well. He had never encountered a situation in which he was forced to admit his mistakes and he simply needed an outlet for the resentment that he felt.

At the end of the day, Courtney knew better than to expect an apology from him.

The next day, she returned to Melrose City with the tender notice for Sakura Group in hand. Tobias' intervention had led her to abandon all prospects of a private partnership, so she could only hope to collaborate with Sakura Group through normal means hence her attendance at the tender.

She showed Bill the requirements that they would need to comply with in order to submit a valid tender and he nodded after he read through them.

"It wouldn't be hard to come up with a design for the uniforms and we are able to meet all the other requirements," he responded. "As long as no one tries to mess things up for us, we should be able to succeed in the tender."

"Then, I shall thank you in advance," Courtney said.

"Don't worry about it." He gave her a dismissive wave before he put the measuring tape that he was holding away. He appeared to have recalled something. "Oh, right. When is Cameron leaving?"

"The day after tomorrow," she answered after counting the days in her head. "She said she would leave at the end of the month, which would be the day after tomorrow. Are you going to see her off?"

"No," Bill replied with an air of finality. "Tell her to come back as soon as she recovers from her illness. She might even make it in time to compete against me for the position of chief designer. If she can't make it back before that, then I guess she'll just have to settle as my assistant when she returns."

Courtney smiled and shook her head in mock exasperation before curiously eyeing Bill with a mischievous grin. "Bill, is it true that you used to pine for Cameron when the both of you were studying in St York University?"

"What? Who said that?" he sputtered as his face turned crimson and he glared at her while denying vehemently. "Don't be ridiculous. Why would I pine for someone as crazy as her?"

She nodded, pretending to be in thought. "You're right. I mean, I also heard that she was pining for you for the longest time before you finally agreed to date her, but you broke up with her three days later. I guess she really wasn't your type after all."

Upon hearing that, Bill stiffened. "Did she tell you that?"

"Yes, she did. She said that getting you to date her was one of the hardest things she ever had to do, but at the end of the day, you told her that her designs weren't good enough. You broke up with her after the both of you got into a huge fight."

There was a long pause. When he did not respond, Courtney glanced up at him and saw that his gaze was lowered as he pretended to be busy with the measuring tape. He looked like he was in a trance.

"Bill?"

He snapped out of his thoughts and looked at her. "Huh? Oh. I broke up with her because she was temperamental. It just didn't work out for me."

"Oh," Courtney answered breezily, smiling as she walked away.

She knew that men rarely meant what they said. If Bill did not have the hots for Cameron, he would not have given his contact to her when he left Melrose City back in the day. Why would a loner like him try so hard to keep in touch with Cameron despite moving someplace far away? To say that he had never loved her would be a blatant lie.

However, there was no way for Courtney to find out about the misunderstandings and slip-ups that unfolded throughout Bill and Cameron's relationship, so she gave up pestering him on that matter.

Two days later, Cameron was flying off to America to undergo medical treatment and Gale was accompanying her throughout the trip.

Courtney dropped them off at the airport.

"Cameron, remember to keep in touch when you get there," Courtney said gently as she threw her arms around Cameron and she was surprised at how much weight the latter had lost. She could not help but panic, but she put on a brave front nonetheless for her friend's sake.

Meanwhile, Cameron was tearing up at Courtney's words. She was no longer as tough as she used to be, making her more susceptible to sentimental thoughts.

Courtney could not bear to see her cry, so she turned to look at Gale with a somber expression. "I'm warning you, Gale—if you so much as make her cry, I'm going to fly over and kick your butt. You still owe me for what happened the last time, in case you've forgotten about it."

Gale swallowed and dutifully nodded. He cast a curious glance toward Elijah—who was standing next to him—and grumbled, "I wouldn't dream about hurting Cameron when he's with us. Didn't you say that he owns half of Wall Street or something?"

Courtney rolled her eyes at him. "No one's forcing you to get along with Elijah, so you don't have to sound so annoyingly perplexed by him. You're going to lead Cameron astray with your ridiculous thoughts."

"She's not just yours. She's ours," Gale retorted sharply and glared at her.

“Do you have any proof to support your argument? All you have are empty words, you punk. It’s not as if you could just claim her as your own because you’re dating her; nobody agreed to it. Besides, Elijah, Bill and I are Cameron’s family. We won’t just let you get away with this so easily.”

Cameron stood between the both of them and watched their rapid-fire exchange with amusement. There was something familiar about the scene; it used to be her who bantered with Gale and now the peace-loving Courtney was taking over her place instead. How the tables had indeed turned.

Thinking about that made Cameron’s heart wrench and she choked as she interjected, “Okay, it’s getting late. We should be heading through security by now.”

“Let’s wait out here for a while longer.” Gale tugged on her arm to hold her back. “Alexander’s not here yet.”

At the mention of Alexander’s name, Courtney stiffened.

He ought to be here to see Gale off. After all, there was no telling when he would return from America, but they had been at the airport for nearly half an hour now and Alexander was still nowhere to be seen.

She wondered whether he was avoiding her.

Cameron lowered her head and glanced at her watch. “Maybe he’s preoccupied. We shouldn’t wait around anymore or we wouldn’t be able to make it for the flight.”

“Just a little while longer,” Gale pleaded insistently.

Five minutes later, a familiar figure sauntered across the airport’s international departure hall. Upon seeing that person, Gale took off like a rocket and tore through the crowd. “We’re over here!” he cried out excitedly.

Courtney exchanged an exasperated look with Cameron, but before they could make good-natured remarks about the public display of bromance, Gale ditched Alexander and came running back toward them.

He was out of breath by the time he reached them; he clearly overexerted himself. Cameron was about to pull him toward the gate when he suddenly got down on one knee before her.

It drew the attention of the many passers-by in the lobby.

“What are you doing?” she asked with widened eyes. “Stop fooling around. People are watching.”

“Cameron, there’s something I’d like to say to you before we go through the gates and it has to be now—right here in front of everybody.”

Gale brought his hand up—and nestled within his palm was a black velvet box in the shape of a heart. The box snapped open to reveal the brilliant diamond ring tucked within. The cut and clarity of the rare diamond were astounding to behold. Under the lights, the diamond looked as though it had an ember pulsating from within, gently encircled by the delicate band of the ring.

“I know this isn’t the first time I’m saying this to you and I know that you’ve turned me down multiple times in the past, but please know that I’m not trying to force you into saying yes. You can still turn me

down today, but I promise you that it will be different this time. I won't give up on you and hide away just because you've turned me down. I'll stay by your side forever, even if you never say yes."

Gale's voice reverberated throughout the hall and all the onlookers were moved by the sincerity of his declaration. Cameron, on the other hand, was already tearing up as she gazed at the man kneeling before her. Words could not describe the emotions that were rushing through her.

"I had this diamond custom-made for you. It's called 'The Heart That Forever Beats For You.' Cameron Miller, will you marry me?"

Cameron swayed slightly at the proposal. Courtney gazed at her and reached out to clasp her hand in hers.

She understood better than anyone else the joy and conflict that Cameron was feeling.

Chapter 242 I'm His Wife

All the onlookers were holding their breath after listening to Gale's sentimental proposal.

For a long time, Courtney had her doubts on his relationship with Cameron, but she conceded after what he had done. He had been taking care of Cameron for the past couple of months and in light of her upcoming treatment in America, he was willing to leave his carefree life behind in order to go with her. His commitment extended far beyond that of his role as a boyfriend and that alone deserved praise.

Courtney did not think she would be able to refuse him if she was in Cameron's shoes.

However, Cameron stayed true to her nature. She did not waver at the sugarcoated, heartfelt proposal and instead turned him down with tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry, but I can't marry you."

Upon hearing that, Gale's face fell and the hand that carried the ring awkwardly hung in mid-air. He looked torn, as though he could not decide whether he should give her the ring anyway or if he should tuck it back into his coat pocket. Even Courtney cringed at the sight of his conflicted expression.

Cameron drew in a deep breath and appeared dead calm as she explained, "Look at me, Gale. It means a lot to me that you're willing to go with me to America, but honestly, I would never have asked that of you. This is my whole life now—unpredictable and always spiraling out of control. No one knows how I might become tomorrow. You, on the other hand, are nothing like me. You aren't obligated to take care of me, so why would you drag yourself into this mess?"

It was hard to refute her when she was being sensible like that, but Courtney felt bad for him nonetheless. After all that he had done for Cameron, she still could not trust him enough to walk with him for the rest of her life.

If Courtney was that upset, she could not imagine how terrible he was feeling.

"I-I understand," Gale kept the ring as he said before he added softly. "It's fine. I can wait. I can wait until after you've recovered."

The air grew heavy and everyone could feel their hearts tugging with sympathy for him. Elijah appeared to be the only sensible one as he looked at the time and pointed out, "It's getting late. We have to go through security now."

There was a soothing undertone to his voice and his calm demeanor was juxtaposed with the forlorn one that was shared between the star-crossed lovers next to him.

Courtney reached out and took Cameron's hand in hers, giving it a gentle squeeze. "I'll stand by your decisions, no matter what they may be, but remember how you once told me you wanted to experience and take on everything this world has to offer? All I ask is for you to live your best life. There are places you haven't seen and food that you haven't tried."

Cameron nodded. "I know."

"Take good care of her," Courtney said as she took Cameron's hand and placed it in Gale's before looking at him meaningfully. "Time can change everything and maybe one day..."

She trailed off, but she knew that Gale understood what she meant. Time could change everything and as long as he kept trying, there would be a day where his wish would be realized.

"I know," he murmured with a smile, taking Cameron's hand and clasping it in his. He glanced at Elijah. "We'll head over to the security and let you guys talk."

Having said that, he walked toward the airport security with Cameron in tow. Elijah, on the other hand, turned his attention back to Courtney and took out a bluish-grey velvet box from his pocket. He then handed it over to her. "This is for you."

Courtney graciously beamed and took the box.

Standing at one side, Alexander grew grim as he watched the exchange.

Elijah looked at her. "There are a lot of things to attend to in America, so I won't be seeing you for a while. Take good care of yourself until then, okay?"

"I will," Courtney promised as she nodded her head. "I would have brought Tina along to see you off, but she has to attend school."

"It doesn't matter. There are still plenty of chances for us to meet in the future," he replied kindly. His eyes darkened and he added after a pause. "Give me a call immediately if Tina feels unwell. I have a friend back in America who knows a doctor specializing in this particular field. I can bring Tina over for a check-up the next time I return."

"Okay," she answered.

The both of them were still talking when Alexander's voice drawled, "The plane's about to take off."

She turned to see that Alexander was standing a couple of steps away from them; his towering figure looking as stoic and stiff as a lamp-post. He was glancing at the watch on his wrist and when he lifted his head to look at Elijah, his face was impassive. "Weren't you asking Gale and Cameron to hurry into the boarding hall earlier? Do the normal rules of catching a flight not apply to you?"

Courtney's brows furrowed at his words. He doesn't usually talk this much.

"Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Duncan, but I didn't ask Mr. Langley and Cameron to enter the boarding hall because I was worried that they might miss the flight. I was worried that they might miss the best time to check into the ward upon their arrival; there is a limited number of beds at the rehabilitation center and any delay on their part would be problematic if it means Cameron missing out on a private room. My delay, on the other hand, would be of no concern at all."

Elijah was unfazed as he spoke and his patience was a stark contrast against Alexander's irritable countenance.

Upon hearing his words, Alexander's eyes dangerously narrowed. "Does this mean that you don't actually plan on leaving?"

Is he really trying to pick a fight right now? Courtney's frown deepened as she hissed, "Alexander, what do you think you're doing?"

"Don't get me wrong. I was only asking," he retorted lightly as he shot her a look. Past events had taught him a lesson—albeit a painful one—and he was more than inclined to stick to it, which was why he was now trying hard to suppress his anger.

The corners of Elijah's eyes crinkled as he smiled affably. "I really don't want to leave. This trip hasn't been long enough. I haven't been able to spend much time with Tina because of all the time spent on work and I couldn't help Courtney with what happened at work either. However, I'm sure you would compensate for my absence by taking care of Courtney on behalf of Mr. Langley and Cameron—right, Mr. Duncan?"

There was a deeper meaning behind Elijah's words—one that Alexander dreaded to dissect.

Courtney saw him as a gentleman who was making polite conversation with Alexander.

Alexander, on the other hand, took it as an outright challenge. Elijah made his stance perfectly clear on the matter when he asked him to take care of Courtney—not on behalf of their past relationship, but on behalf of Gale and Cameron.

The more Alexander thought about it, the more he was convinced that Elijah was being deliberately evasive of his past relationship with Courtney.

More to the point, one look was often all it took for one man to size up another in order to determine whether they were friend or foe. It was almost always the case when it came to women.

As far as Alexander was concerned, Elijah did not come with friendly intentions. "Of course," he answered nonetheless, although his eyes were burning with a dark fire as he regarded Elijah with a hostile gaze. "While our past alone would have been a sufficient reason, I would have taken care of Courtney anyway even if it wasn't on behalf of Gale and Cameron. After all, Jordan and Tina get along really well."

He was not planning on bringing that up, but the male ego was a funny thing and it was now too late to back down. See if you can one-up that!

However, Elijah was impervious and his voice was light as he remarked, “Children tend to get along easily. Jordan happens to be the same age as Tina and she always had a pleasant personality. So, she’s able to get along with anyone.”

“Well, yes, but it’s mainly because Jordan is really fond of Courtney.”

It seemed as though their conversation was taking a turn and Courtney was losing track of what they were saying. “I’m sorry, is this a parent-child conference? Why are you both talking about the kids all of a sudden? Elijah, you don’t have to keep up with the small talk—just go and get through the security check before you’re late!”

Elijah smiled. “Right. I’ll head off then.”

Courtney waved as she watched him leave. “Text me when you get down from the plane.”

He said nothing, but he lifted his hand and waved goodbye without turning to look at her.

There was a ditch between Alexander’s brows as he mumbled unhappily, “Are you his mother? Why does he have to give you a text when he gets off the plane?”

She turned to glance at him in amusement before breezily responding, “I’m his wife.”

Chapter 243 I Never Broke Up With You

Her words rang in his ears; it felt as though a thousand little needles were poking his eardrums. “What did you just say?” he demanded as he grew flustered.

She turned to look at him with a raised brow while feeling emboldened. “A marriage of convenience is still a marriage nonetheless. I am legally acknowledged as his wife.”

“You’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you?” Alexander asked through gritted teeth. She’s saying this to deliberately provoke me.

“Doing what on purpose?” Courtney looked at him with curiosity while feigning confusion about what he meant by those words. “I’m telling the truth. Is there anything wrong with what I said?”

He frowned. “Then, what about us?”

“Us?” She crossed her arms as she appraised him from head to toe. Then, she shrugged casually. “Isn’t it obvious? We’ve broken up and now, we’re nothing more than former lovers.”

Alexander’s icy demeanor had shifted after returning from Shanghai; he had requested for flowers and food to be continuously delivered to the Citron studio for the past couple of days.

However, Courtney knew better than to fall for his sugar-coated tactics. After all, he was in the wrong—he had yet to apologize to her and it did not look like he would do so anytime soon. Even if he did, she was not sure whether it would be enough for her to reconcile with him.

In the absence of an apology on his part, they would remain as nothing more than former lovers.

Alexander, on the other hand, seemed to disagree as he argued, “You appear to have forgotten that I never broke up with you in the first place.”

“Is that so? I seem to recall hearing that you told the cops that night that we were not a couple.”

On the night they broke up, she had called the cops out of anger and he denied that he had any relationship with her when he was hauled into the police station. If it was not for his background, he would have been charged for attempted rape and be taken into custody.

While that was in the past, Courtney could not help but hold a grudge against him. “Be a man and own up to your words. You can’t just take something back like that, you know,” she sneered.

Alexander simply gaped. He clenched his fists and grumbled, “I’m going to kill Josh.”

She sighed. “You can’t blame Josh for everything. He wasn’t the one who told me about this,” she clarified. Then, she gave him a withering look as she mocked. “It’s no wonder that you’ve been usurped—you don’t even know who told me about what you said at the police station. I guess you’re not that brilliant after all.”

Upon hearing that, Alexander’s expression soured. Is she going to hold that against me for the rest of her life?

Seeing as he had nothing to say in response, Courtney stopped mocking him and instead briskly said, “There’s something that I need to attend to, so I’ll be going off now.”

“I can drop you off,” he offered in a heartbeat.

“No need,” she answered in polite dismissal and gave a perfunctory smile as she explained. “I drove here. Besides, it wouldn’t be convenient for you to drop me off.”

Courtney knew that they needed to calm down before they could decide if they were truly compatible with each other. Between the both of them, it seemed as if she had a lot more to figure out than he did.

The few arguments they had were either triggered by the topic of the kids or the secret of her past and it was the latter that she needed to sort out before she could make up her mind about Alexander.

Meanwhile, Alexander was rooted in the same spot and his brows were drawn together as he watched her leave.

He was beginning to understand what Gale had said before he left, “Women hold grudges and they will bring up your past mistakes during your fights. If she hasn’t done that, it means she’s waiting for the right moment to use them against you. You’ll be rendered speechless by the end of the day.”

So that’s what it feels like, Alexander mused bitterly.

He had said those things out of anger when he was at the police station. He certainly did not expect Courtney to use his own words against him.

He brought it upon himself and he knew he deserved it, even if it killed him to admit it.

After a week’s worth of hard work, Bill and his team of designers managed to brainstorm with the final design for the workers’ uniform.

Prior to officially submitting their tender, Citron Apparel held another meeting about the project.

As the executive manager for Citron Apparel, Martin had already analyzed all aspects of the project. “All the tenders submitted will be internally reviewed by Sakura Group. The votes from the executives will account for thirty percent of the final decision whereas employee votes will account for the remaining seventy percent,” he informed dutifully.

“So, the main decision makers would still be the employees in Sakura Group?”

“If all is fair during the tender, yes,” he answered with a knowing look flashing across his face.

While it was known that the employees in Sakura Group would account for seventy percent of the decision making, there was no guarantee that there would not be any schemes or attempts to rig the votes prior to the review.

After all, the employees would probably think of the design of their uniform as the most important aspect of their work, but for fashion enterprises who were submitting their tenders to Sakura Group, the workers’ opinions mattered more than anything else.

As such, one could not discount the possibility that someone would try to bribe the employees to steer to odds in their favor.

Martin continued grimly, “We need someone to keep an eye on whatever happens within Sakura Group during this crucial time. The moment anyone starts rigging the votes, we need to be ready to deal with it—swiftly and effectively.”

As soon as Martin was done speaking, the whole room burst into an uproar as everyone began to discuss in earnest. “Why do we need to keep an eye on the votes? Do we really have to go to the extent of spying?”

“Who would be able to pull off something like this?”

“I hear you can hire a professional for this.”

Just as the room descended into a frenzy, Courtney’s phone rang. She glanced briefly at the caller ID and rose from her seat, saying, “I have to take this call, but the rest of you may continue with the discussion.”

When the door to the conference room was closed behind her, she was once again enveloped with silence.

She picked up the call and pressed the phone to her ear. The crisp voice on the other end was that of a young man, who said, “Courtney, I’m done with the investigation. I’ll arrive in Melrose City in the afternoon.”

“That was quick,” she remarked, taken aback by the report.

Oliver had went to nearly half of Otharia just to look into Jordan’s accident. He tracked down all the nannies who worked for the Duncans during that specific period of time and his investigation was akin to looking for a needle in a haystack. He thought that it would be New Year’s Day before he actually found anything interesting, but he ended up getting all the information he needed within two months.

“I’ll tell you the details when I’m back, but for now, all I can tell you is that Jordan’s accident was deliberately set up, and…” Oliver trailed off hesitantly before he continued. “And Alexander probably knows all about it too.”

Upon hearing that, Courtney felt her heart drop to her stomach and she asked in a low voice, “I’ll pick you up from the airport. What time is your flight?”

“There’s no need for that. I’ll see you at your place.”

“Okay.”

With that, she hung up on the call. She was not quite sure how to feel about any of that, but she knew one thing for sure—if what happened that year had anything to do with Alexander, then there was no way she could let Jordan stay with him any longer.

Meanwhile, at the Duncans’ villa, the nanny reminded Alexander to pick up Jordan from school. Upon hearing that, he looked at the time and closed the newspaper that he was reading before standing up to head toward the garage.

However, before he could leave, the chef came out from the kitchen and called for him, stopping him in his tracks. “Mr. Duncan, Little Master hasn’t been eating well. Does he dislike my cooking? What does he like to eat?”

Alexander frowned and shook his head. “Trust me, you can’t make what he likes.”

The chef grew exasperated by what she heard.

To say she was frustrated would be an understatement—after all, she was a certified nutritionist who had turned down many lucrative job offers. However, from the very moment she started working for the Duncans, her cooking could not appease the two masters of the home.

The streamlined sports car emerged from the garage; its sapphire-blue coating looked all the more majestic as it glimmered under the brilliant sun. Alexander stepped on the accelerator and drove out of Royal Park.

Jordan’s picky eating habits were a continuous problem. The worst part of it all was that Courtney had indulged him. Now, he refused to eat anything other than what she made. The only meals he ate were the ones that Tina packed for him for lunchtime at school. He would not even so much as look at the food that the chef whipped up at home.

Chapter 244 I’m Not Hiding From You; I’m Just Avoiding Any Suspicions

After leaving the community, Alexander stepped on the accelerator while his usual cold face looked annoyed. That woman was quick enough to break up with me and swiftly leave the house, but she still left me a huge mess for me to deal with. God damn it.

It was almost 5:00 PM in the fall and the sky became dark earlier as the temperature slowly dipped. Since the kindergarten had dismissed the students half an hour earlier, there was no vacant parking bay for him to park his car by the time he arrived at the gate at 4:30PM.

Just as he drove around the school to look for a place to park, he saw a red car that was parked on the right under a huge tree in front of him and a familiar figure was alighting from the car.

Honk! Honk!

Thinking about what the chef told him, he angrily honked at her twice.

As soon as the light purple figure turned her head and saw Alexander's face from the car window, she furrowed her brows. "This is a school. Please don't press on your car horn."

They were still a car's distance apart, so she had to raise her voice to show her imposing manner.

However, Alexander remained calm as he uttered unhurriedly, "I don't think there's any place left for me to park here. I'll park my car at a place further away, so please help me to pick up Jordan first if he comes out."

Naturally, Courtney was obliged to pick up Jordan, so she immediately agreed to do it.

10 minutes later, Alexander returned after parking his car. Then, he found her at the end of the line at the school gate. "I have something to tell you."

"Huh?" She glanced at him vigilantly. "What is it?" If he wants to be together with me again, I'm not negotiating with him.

"Jordan hasn't been eating much lately." He went straight to the point. "Other than the lunch you ask Tina to bring over in the afternoon, he wouldn't eat anything else. What do you think I should do?"

Courtney suddenly looked a little anxious. "Is he really refusing to eat at home?"

Her reaction actually surprised Alexander. Come to think of it, after breaking up with me, she doesn't need to hold any responsibility toward Jordan and she could have ignored all of this. I can't believe that she really is concerned about him.

"Yes." He nodded. "I've already changed three chefs, but he still won't eat."

Initially, he did not plan to mention that to her because he did not want her to think that he was asking for pity, but there was no other way now. If this continues, it'll be bad for the kid's health. I can't allow that to happen.

"I can ask Tina to bring his breakfast and lunch to school. As for dinner, why don't I bring it here every day so that you can bring the meal home and reheat it for him?"

Seeing that she was open to talk, Alexander's eyes darkened. "We can do that during school days, but what about the weekends? We can't starve him for two days, right?"

Courtney's brow tightened even more.

While staring at the side of her face, he murmured, "Why don't you come to my place during the weekends to cook for him like before?"

"No." She instantly refused. Back then, all of this started with me cooking at his house. If I go there again, am I not sending myself into the lion's den? I can't keep on being entangled with him.

“Then, are you going to watch him starve for two days?” Alexander insisted.

“What about this?” Courtney thought of a way that satisfied everyone. “You can send Jordan to your grandpa’s place and I’ll go there to cook for him. It’s not far away from my house and there’s a lot of people there, which helps to avoid any suspicions.”

She knew that Scott had a lot of complaints toward her recently. With that suggestion, she actually felt that it was more appropriate for her to take care of Jordan under Scott’s watch.

However, Alexander frowned his brows as he looked impatient. “Why are you hiding from me?” I’ve been living for more than 30 years and it’s always others who are pursuing me. But, why does it seem like I suddenly have a soft spot now after meeting Courtney? Now, I’m the one who tries to get along with her even though she always ignores me.

“I’m not hiding from you. I’m merely avoiding suspicions.” Courtney reiterated her words. “We are now exes and your grandpa dislikes the idea of us being together. Mr. Harry told me about it. If your grandpa learns that I’m still hanging around with you, he may try to retaliate against me. I’m just protecting myself.”

“I think you’ve been watching too many television series.” Again, he furrowed his brows. “Do you really think my grandpa has the free time to mess around with you?”

“You can’t be too sure.” Courtney rolled her eyes. “Some people are worse than the television series.”

“What do you mean?”

“For example, your childhood sweetheart. When asking me to leave you, she left immediately the moment we came into conflict and she didn’t even pay for her drink. I can see that everyone around you are all unreasonable and deceiving people.”

“You...” Again, he was rendered speechless by what happened with Mikayla as he grew frustrated. In a relationship, it’s always the serious ones who lose out in the end. By the looks of it, she is completely unconcerned about our relationship, which is why she comes up with all these excuses. “Then, I’ll pick you up this Saturday—”

“No need for that. I’ll directly head to your grandpa’s place.” When Courtney saw the line of children walking out of the school, she waved her hand. “Over here.”

Jordan and Tina ran out while holding each other’s hands. Her face was flushed as she waved goodbye to her teacher, but when she turned and saw Alexander, she angrily pouted her lips and released Jordan’s hands.

“Mommy, let’s go.”

Alexander instantly furrowed his brows. At first, he wanted to greet Tina, but his words were now stuck in his throat.

As for Courtney, she went on to caress Jordan’s head. “Jordan, your dad told me that you are not eating well lately. Why are you doing this?”

Jordan exerted his strength to say, “It... doesn’t taste good.”

Upon listening to his response, she sighed. “Do you like to eat the meals I cooked?”

He nodded his head.

“I’ve discussed this with your dad and we decided that I’ll cook for you in your great-grandpa’s house every weekend.”

After listening to what she said, he lifted his head while the light in his eyes flickered, as if he was asking her whether it was true.

“However, I have a condition—if I’m unable to cook for you because I’m busy, you’ll need to be a good boy and eat at home. Can you do that?”

“Yes.” He immediately nodded his head.

“Then, let’s make a pinky promise.” Courtney stretched out her pinky finger. Then, their two fingers were hooked together before it was pulled. “Our pinky promise shall not change after a hundred years as it is sealed. See you on Saturday.”

After that, she left with Tina. Jordan’s eyes, which initially shone with light, darkened as they walked further and further away.

Alexander wanted to hold Jordan’s hand, but his son refused him out of anger. Instead, he angrily went into the car by himself.

“Jordan.” Alexander caught up to him and helplessly adjusted his seatbelt at the back seat.

Every time Jordan returned from school, he would always show an unhappy face toward Alexander. He was smiling happily when talking to Courtney earlier. After she left, his face immediately darkened the moment he turned his head. It changes even faster than the weather.

‘When will you make peace with Mommy?’

Jordan raised his drawing board containing those words while his tender face revealed a pushy expression.

Chapter 245 She Isn’t Even Your Biological Mother

“You little brat...” Alexander wore a gloomy face. “Have you forgotten that you are my son? I’m your dad. She isn’t even your biological mother.”

‘She is.’

Jordan quickly wrote those two words on his drawing board.

Alexander felt as though he was going insane just by explaining the basic facts to a kid, so he did not want to argue any longer. “Sit tight. Tonight, we are having dinner at your great-grandpa’s home.”

“I don’t want to.”

“If you don’t, I’ll call your mommy and tell her accordingly. You just promised her, so if you don’t eat your food, she won’t come this Saturday. You can choose to starve.”

After listening to him, Jordan was immediately frustrated as he stomped his feet with a red face. “Y-You... are bad.”

“Yes, I’m bad.” Alexander glanced at Jordan. “You can just treat me as the bad guy. On the way there, think about whether you want to eat or not.”

After that, he closed the back door of the car and started the engine before driving toward the Duncans’ ancestral home.

He suddenly had a lot of free time since James took control of Sunhill Enterprise. Not only would he stay at home every day to read books and newspapers, he even took over the task of picking up Jordan from Mr. Harry as he tried to be the best father possible.

However, Jordan did not seem to appreciate Alexander’s effort. Every day, the most frequent question he would receive from his son was when he would make peace with Courtney. In Jordan’s innocent eyes, both adults were merely arguing with each other.

On the other side, Tina sat on the back seat of the car while growling like a tiny adult, “Mommy, didn’t you already break up with Mr. Alexander? If that’s the case, the two of you shouldn’t always be together.”

After listening to her, Courtney laughed. “What’s the problem? Didn’t you used to like Mr. Alexander?”

“That is in the past. He is now marrying someone else and he doesn’t even treat you as well as Daddy, so it’s better for you not to be together with him. Mommy, if you don’t like Daddy, we can find somebody else. You don’t need to lock yourself to a tree.”

“Oh my, how does a little kid like you know that saying? Who told you that?”

“It’s Hugo. Hugo told me.”

“It’s Hugo again?” Courtney was startled.

The boy named Hugo was Tina’s classmate who recently transferred to her school. Lately, the number of times in which the name ‘Hugo’ came out from her mouth far surpassed the times that she mentioned Jordan’s name.

Just when Courtney was thinking about it, Tina reminded in a serious manner, “Anyway, don’t go too close to Mr. Alexander or else, it will affect your luck with love.”

“Is it Hugo who told you that?”

Tina nodded her head seriously. “Yes, Hugo knows everything.”

Instantly, Courtney felt a little gloomy. At first, I thought a little girl like her, who has seen the world, won’t be deceived by others that easily, but not long after we returned to the country, she’s already fooled by some boy in class.

She resisted from laughing and asked, "But, what should I do if your brother won't eat at home? I've already promised Mr. Alexander that I'll head to your great-grandpa's house every weekend to cook for Jordan."

"Huh?" Tina furrowed her brows as her tender face frowned, looking as though she was in a difficult situation.

"If you don't want to see Mr. Alexander, then don't go. I'll send you to the company on weekends and you can stay there with Mr. Bill. He can make clothes for your dolls."

"Nope." She crossed her arms. "I want to go."

"Why? I thought you don't want to see Mr. Alexander?" Courtney continued to ask while holding the steering wheel.

"I want to keep an eye on him. If he dares to bully you again, I'll call Daddy and ask him to fly back to protect you."

Upon seeing the little girl's imposing manner imprinted on the rear view mirror, she was first startled before she smiled warmly. "Alright."

Adults always thought that kids did not know anything, but actually, children were more sensitive than adults toward emotions. Even Courtney did not know when Tina started to feel upset toward Alexander. Maybe it started when I first told her that Jordan is her biological brother. Even though I never mentioned it before, her tiny brain probably already figured out that Alexander is actually her biological father. Or, maybe it's because I took her away from Mr. Duncan's house a few times before, so that sadness has deeply imprinted in her mind, causing her to have a bad impression toward Alexander from that time onward.

There were many possibilities, but the changes were too insignificant, so she could not notice in time. By the time she realized that Tina was extremely hostile toward him, it had already been a long time since they argued and cleared their misunderstanding.

When Courtney brought her daughter home, Oliver was already waiting for them at the entrance for a while.

As soon as Tina saw him, she felt really excited. Immediately, she forgot about her gloomy thoughts and buried herself into his arms. "Mr. Oliver, you are finally back."

He carried the little girl and weighed her. "You've gotten heavier. Do you miss me?"

"I do." Her childish voice was so sweet that it almost melted his ears.

Seeing Oliver's luggage, Courtney opened the door. "Come in first. I'll go and buy some ingredients from the supermarket later to cook."

"No need to trouble yourself. I'm fine with anything. I'm just tired, so I want to have a sleep on your couch."

"The couch isn't big enough for you. You can use my guest room." Courtney smiled as she welcomed him inside.

After that, Tina ran eagerly back to her room to open his gift while Courtney took out some noodles in the kitchen to cook. "Please wait for a while. It'll be done in a minute."

"Alright." Oliver lay down on the couch and snored quietly after a while.

She then came out with a bowl after the noodles were done and saw his sleeping body on the couch, but she could not bear to wake him up.

As the dim light shone on his youthful face, his messy bangs covered half of his eyes. I wonder how long it has been since he cut his hair.

Courtney felt a little guilty.

He had been recovering ever since she accidentally knocked into him with her car, but when he finally recovered some of his memories, she asked him to help investigate Jordan instead. Actually, Oliver is still a kid who is younger than 20 years old. Although he is quite mature, I still don't know how I was relieved to let him go that far back then. Looks like I won't be able to repay this debt.

Courtney sighed.

"Huh?" Oliver was suddenly woken up as he sat up on the couch with sleepy eyes. "Are the noodles ready?"

"Yes, it is." She quickly pushed the bowl to him.

The bowl contained shredded pork noodles with pickled vegetables and two golden fried eggs on top.

Oliver smiled, revealing his back teeth. "I've been thinking about eating this for a long time. Don't mind if I do."

With that, he picked up the bowl and loudly sucked the noodles.

After his 'destruction', the bowl was completely empty.

"Is it not enough? I'll go and make you another bowl."

"It's enough," Oliver replied while wiping his mouth. "Courtney, I'm full. Let's talk business." He placed the chopsticks on the bowl, making a crisp sound, as if to indicate that it was an opening to some story. "Three years ago, there were two maids who mainly took care of Jordan. One of them is Sarah Jones, who was responsible for his diet. The other is Maria Connor, who is responsible for his daily chores. The Duncans called them Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Connor."