

Surprise 316

Chapter 316 Let Me Treat You to a Smoothie

The bright lights were still on inside the Citron Apparel designer's workshop.

Bill was busy with his draft and he usually carried out his work during the night. As for Natasha, who was next to him, not only did she have to work as an assistant during the day, she also had to follow him as his apprentice during the night, so she couldn't stop yawning.

Then, a series of footsteps were heard outside, sounding especially clear in the silent night.

"Who is it?" Bill glanced at the door and asked quietly. Beside him, Natasha was woken up by the sound as she rubbed her eyes.

"President Hunter?" Since she was closer to the door, Natasha could immediately see Courtney walking in.

Replying with a nod, Courtney came in, her figure becoming clearer when the lights shone on her. Ever since the birthday party, she never went back home because she knew that Alexander would definitely return home that night. Due to the situation with Belle, Courtney couldn't bring herself to talk to him at the moment. After entering the workshop, she sat on the couch while Natasha poured her a cup of tea.

"Did you just leave the party?" Bill left aside his work and came over to sit opposite to her.

"Yes." Courtney weakly nodded her head.

"What happened?" He frowned and looked at her. "Are you angry?"

"I guess so." Courtney received the tea from Natasha and took a sip before regaining some energy to ask Bill, "I wonder what goes on inside a man's head—do all of you fall head over heels when a girl acts a little weaker?"

"Don't use a few examples to generalize every man in the world, alright?" He could immediately tell what she meant. "I don't know about anybody else, but I've never seen Alexander fall head over heels for someone even though he has all kinds of women jumping on him for his appearance and money."

Upon hearing that, Courtney frowned and muttered, "Are you sure? By the looks of it, not only is he falling head over heels for someone, he is also starting to believe everything she says." He is so stupid to believe every word she says!

"That's impossible." Bill instantly gestured as he countered, "Alexander is an unmeltable iceberg. Other than you, I have never seen him put on a smile for any woman before."

"Why are you speaking for him?" Courtney was infuriated as she took her bag and stood up. "Can't I find a place to be quiet for a moment?"

"I'm not speaking for him. I'm just stating the facts—"

Bill tried to explain himself, not noticing that Natasha was winking at him constantly. Before he could finish his words, Courtney had already left with her bag. I would much rather sleep in a hotel than listen to such bullsh*t from someone who is the same as Alexander!

Upon seeing that, Bill scratched his head in confusion. "What did I do?"

After placing the tea cup in front of him, Natasha explained, "Mr. Dawson, you did nothing, but when a woman wants to talk to you about her thoughts, you don't have to analyze everything rationally for her."

"Then what do I have to do?"

She glanced at him and answered, "You just need to stand by her side unconditionally and help her condemn the other person."

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On that night, Courtney felt as though she was a lonely soul.

Not only could she not return home, she was also angered by Bill when she went to the company. As she walked around in her coat, she stamped her feet to keep herself warm. The Christmas decorations around her seemed to have nothing to do with her, which made her even more miserable.

"Courtney."

Suddenly, a familiar voice was heard behind her when she was stamping her feet. Startled, she turned around and saw a strange man that covered his face with a hat, scarf, mask and sunglasses. By the looks of his simple sports attire, she assumed that he came out for a run at night. If it weren't for his distinctive voice, she would not have recognized Leon.

"Is it really you?" He stepped forward and took off the protective clothing on his face. "I saw you all away from there, but what are you doing outside on such a cold day, Courtney?"

For a moment, she was still in shock. "I just had a meal, so I came out for a stroll. What about you?"

"I came out for a run," Leon answered with a smile. "There were too many people in the hotel's gym and the ventilation there isn't that great, so I decided to come out."

He was staying in a hotel not far away from here, so it wasn't strange for him to come out for a night run. However, after looking at him carefully, Courtney pointed at his protective gear and asked curiously, "I understand that the ventilation in the gym isn't that great, but is it really that much better to come out and cover yourself in all these? Can you even breathe in these?"

"I don't have any other choice." He chuckled and grabbed her arm affectionately. "Let me treat you to a smoothie."

Since I don't have anywhere to go and I probably won't be able to fall asleep even if I find a hotel, I should follow him to pass the time. In the end, she giggled and answered, "Alright."

There was a smoothie shop nearby. While queuing in a line, Leon was stared at by the store clerk for a long time. Courtney felt that the clerk might have already recognized him, but since his entire face was tightly concealed, no one dared to call him out.

"Sir, do you want to drink it now or later?"

"Now," he replied.

Instantly, the store clerk blushed as she whispered when handing him the smoothie, "Are you Leon?"

"I'm not." He shook his head vigorously.

"You are!" She wasn't giving up. "Can I please have your autograph?"

If he gives her his autograph, we probably won't leave here anytime soon. Quickly, Courtney pulled Leon behind her and smiled. "You also think that he sounds a lot like Leon, right? Sorry, but he's just my little brother and he hurt his face recently."

After that, the two of them took their smoothies and left.

However, the store clerk was probably a fan of his, so she quickly came back around and screamed, "It's Leon!"

Since it was the weekend, many people were out at night. Listening to her scream, everyone immediately turned toward the man in question.

"Leon! It's Leon..."

For a moment, Courtney was left startled, but Leon was quite experienced in dealing with this sort of situation, so he quickly grabbed her hand and said, "Courtney, what are you doing standing there for? Run!" After that, he dragged her and ran down the street.

Before she could even come back to her senses, she was already dragged far away, leaving the smoothie shop behind.

It was possible that the information of which hotel Leon was staying in was already leaked to the public, which was why many of his fans were wandering around the place. As soon as they heard his name, all of them began to chase after him to a point where he couldn't get rid of anyone after running down several streets.

Courtney could no longer keep up with his speed, so she hurriedly pulled him into a nearby shop.

"Courtney—"

"Hush!"

She covered his mouth as they leaned against the wall. After the chasing fans were all gone, she finally let go of her hand.

"Let's wait here for a while." She bent down and held her knees while panting.

However, she was confused as to why Leon wasn't saying anything to her, so she lifted her head and saw the dazzling array of adult products displayed in a cupboard in front of her. Her expression changed in the blink of an eye.

Initially, she saw that the shop was quite hidden, so she entered in a hurry. Unexpectedly, it was a shop that sold adult products.

Just then, the greasy voice of the shop owner came from behind the counter. "How may I help you two?"

Chapter 317 Everyone Has to Live For Themselves

There was an ambiguous and erotic aura lingering in the cramped space. Looking at the shop owner's scrutinizing eyes, Courtney immediately blushed as she opened the curtains and ran away embarrassedly.

"Why is she running away? We are all adults here. Hey, don't you think your girlfriend is a bit—"

Before he finished his words, he was instantly rendered speechless by Leon, who had his entire face concealed like a mummy.

It seems like this guy is even more sensitive. It's ridiculous to cover his entire face like that!

Leon's face was completely concealed by his mask and sunglasses, so the shop owner couldn't see his expression underneath. After giving the owner a gentle nod, the former opened the curtains and caught up with the woman who had run far away, while his eyes behind the sunglasses were filled with joy.

They were different from the charming and innocent eyes he used to deal with all kinds of women in the past. Even though no one could see them at the moment, only Leon knew that this was his most sincere gaze for so many years.

"I'm sorry." When he caught up to Courtney, she awkwardly apologized to him. "I didn't know what shop it was when I ran into it."

"It's fine," Leon said with a smile on his face. "But can you not talk as if you are leading a bad example for a child? I'm an adult too, you know?"

It's because you are an adult that makes this situation even more awkward! To prevent being surrounded by his fans again, Courtney decided to follow him to his hotel. Since she needed a room to stay in for the rest of the night, she simply decided to stay in the hotel he was staying in.

"There you go, miss. This is the card for your room."

After receiving the room card at the front desk, Courtney entered the elevator by herself.

Even though the hotel had rules stating that the guests' information shouldn't be revealed, it was impossible to keep everyone from talking about it, so in order to avoid any unnecessary trouble, Leon had already gone upstairs first.

Since it was winter, the public balconies on each floor of the hotel were empty.

When Courtney reached that place, Leon wasn't there yet. When she felt the chilling breeze, she instantly regretted agreeing to meet him outside.

"Courtney!" Then, his voice was heard from behind. Perhaps due to his upbringing abroad, Leon's English wasn't that great but for some reason, the name 'Courtney' came off his tongue very comfortably. As she turned around to look at him, she could see that he had changed to a thick coat with a scarf in his hand. It seemed that he went back to his room first before coming here, which explained why he was late to meet her. "It's too windy outside. You should put this on."

After that, he wrapped the brown cashmere scarf around her shoulders.

The unique woody perfume on the young man's body was especially clear and pleasant while she felt the warmth of the scarf wrapped around her.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome," Leon said with a smile.

Without the mask and sunglasses, he could no longer hide his youthful face, and it made him look rather boyish when he smiled that way.

Courtney always felt that Shay already had a very youthful aura, but when compared with Leon, he seemed to be more mature.

The way Shay pronounced her name was more simple and flamboyant, but since Leon's English wasn't that great, the latter would usually pronounce her name with more stress, giving his voice an innocent feeling, as if he was her son.

When realizing this small detail, Courtney coughed awkwardly while avoiding Leon's gaze.

However, he didn't seem to notice anything wrong, so he handed her the smoothie.

"Here you go."

"You still have it?" She looked at him in surprise. "Did you keep it in your arms all this time? You didn't spill it?"

He nodded his head and winked. "Luckily, the store clerk didn't have time to open the bottle for me."

As the stars shone brightly, the two of them leaned on the lounge chairs side by side, a wrought iron round table between them while they kept on chatting.

"Leon, it doesn't matter whether you can let go of your past or not because life always moves on. Time does not stop and if your heart lingers in the past for too long, it will be difficult for you to face the present or the future one day."

Courtney looked at the sky and her eyes slowly grew tired.

Meanwhile, Leon secretly glanced at the half-empty cup of smoothie on the table that she had drunk from. At that moment, the particulate matter precipitated on the bottom as the balcony light shone on it.

"Courtney, I can see that the people around you must all be nice." He slowly lifted his head and stared at the sleepy body next to him with eyes filled with mixed emotions. "Why do you trust others so easily?"

Meanwhile, Courtney felt her head getting dizzier and in the end, she gradually became unconscious while leaning on the chair.

It was late at night and the bedroom of the hotel suite was dimly lit, which was why the murmurs from the balcony outside the bedroom felt especially clear in the silent night.

“It’s all done. I’ll send you the photos tomorrow morning. After this, I won’t owe you anything, and I hope that you don’t forget what you promised me.”

After hanging up the phone, Leon took a huge puff of his cigarette. When the cigarette was burnt out, he simply threw it into the trash can outside before re-entering the room.

The moment he came in, the sudden breeze caused the person on the bed to shiver. The naked shoulders that were exposed in the air dazzled Leon, so he went over and pulled the blanket to cover everything under her chin.

“I’m sorry, Courtney. Everyone has to live for themselves.”

The next morning, Courtney felt her head hurting when she finally regained consciousness. It felt as though her body was weighed down by a thousand-pound stone, so she didn’t even bother to move.

As soon as she opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was the white ceiling with its European-style skirting on the corners. The room was a little dark, but from the light coming in through the gaps in the curtains, she could tell that it was daylight outside.

Bang!

The sound of the door slamming against the wall was heard and a series of heavy footsteps slowly approached her. Then, a pair of shiny leather shoes appeared at the bedroom door that wasn’t closed tightly.

Before Courtney could react to it, the door was pushed open by a big hand, and the light outside lit up the entire bedroom.

“Alexander?” She furrowed her brows and instinctively raised her arm to block the sunlight.

However, as soon as she removed her hand from the blanket, she felt a sudden breeze and instantly realized that something was wrong. And so, she turned her stiff neck, only to stare at her bare arm in a daze.

She wasn’t wearing any clothes.

Alexander stood at the door and the anxiousness in his eyes disappeared completely when he saw her. Shock, anger, and other intolerable emotions started piling up in his eyes.

He strode into the bedroom and quickly opened the bathroom door, checking behind the curtains, as if he was looking for something.

“What are you looking for?” Courtney held onto the blanket and sat up with difficulty. Her brain couldn’t function properly at the moment, so she asked him out of instinct.

Not long after, Alexander came out of the bathroom with heavy footsteps and held an expensive men’s watch in front of her.

“Tell me what this is.”

Chapter 318 You Don't Get To Decide

As Courtney looked at the mechanical watch in Alexander's hand, she felt her face gradually turn pale.

She lowered her head and wanted to lift the blanket to make sense of what was going on, but she didn't have the courage to do so.

What happened last night? Last night...

"Tell me who this belongs to." Alexander's eyes were raging with flames as he fiercely threw the watch onto the bed.

Courtney had a blanket protecting her, but the impact of the watch still hurt her ankle.

And so, she grunted and gritted her teeth. "I don't know."

As for what happened last night, she couldn't remember any of it at all, and she didn't even know when she came back to her room. She only remembered chatting with Leon on the public balcony while drinking a smoothie.

Smoothie?

Her expression changed at that thought. "Leon."

With a thunderous expression, Alexander brushed her forehead with his huge hand and buried his fingers into her dark hair. While grabbing her, he growled in a chilling tone with eyes filled with rage, "Where is he?!"

Courtney was so frightened by him that her shoulders trembled while she looked at him in fear.

"I'm asking you where he is!" At that point, Alexander was staring at her with almost bloodshot eyes.

"I don't know." She held onto the blanket tightly and stuttered, "Last night... But that's impossible! You need to calm down. There is definitely a misunderstanding. I'll ask the attendant."

Just as Courtney was about to lift the blanket and get out of the bed, she suddenly realized that she was completely naked, so she clenched the corners of the blanket tightly.

Meanwhile, Alexander looked at her emotionlessly before leaning forward slightly to grab a corner of the blanket with one hand.

Her eyes instantly widened as she held the blanket tightly to cover her chest. "No!" she shouted, her eyes full of reluctance.

"Don't you want to ask the attendant? You have to get out of bed to ask," he uttered coldly before lifting the entire blanket with a little force.

This caused Courtney to scream and in a panic, she pulled up the rest of the bed sheet to cover her body. "Alexander Duncan, you b*stard!"

Meanwhile, Alexander stood beside the bed, his eyes full of disgust as he threw the blanket aside. The lights coming from the bathroom behind him elongated his shadow to a point where it completely engulfed her. "Before asking others, why not ask yourself what exactly have you done?"

"I told you that I don't know anything!" Courtney roared as her eyes turned red.

After taking a deep breath, he looked at her with his cold eyes and said, "As long as you can look me in the eye and tell me that nothing happened in this room last night, I will believe you."

Looking at the coldness in his aggressive eyes that felt as though they would sweep her away, she slowly calmed herself down. "You don't look like you believe me," she countered. "How did you know I'm here? How did you manage to get in? Don't you think this is all a bit too perfectly timed? I can't believe I jumped straight into this obvious trap!" She laughed at herself and continued, "What else do you want me to say? By the looks of it, you've already made your mind up on what's going on. I don't want to lie to you either, but I don't even know how I got here last night. You can blame me for all this, but who else can I blame?"

If I didn't see Belle at the party and argue with Alexander, I would not need to wander around homeless in the middle of the night, never mind meeting Leon on the way and staying in this hotel. In the end, who can I blame?

While covering herself with the bed sheet, Courtney got off the bed and picked up her clothes one by one before going into the bathroom.

However, Alexander immediately grabbed her arm and asked, "What are you saying?" Since he was now filled with rage, he wasn't able to think carefully about the vague things she just mentioned. All he had in mind at the moment was her bare shoulders and the naked body he just saw after lifting the blanket.

"You won't understand!" She took a deep breath and pretended to be calm. "At this point, what else can you do?"

The eyes that were staring at him directly were starting to become watery and he could see the grievance in her gaze. Yet, Courtney refused to lower her head given the embarrassing situation she was in because she was still determined to hold onto the remaining dignity she had left.

Suddenly, all their joy and sorrow came up in his mind.

Alexander's expression was cold as he clenched his fists to a point where his fingers had turned pale. "Courtney, how dare you ask me what to do after the mess you've gotten yourself into?!"

With her reddened eyes, she murmured, "Let's break up, then. It isn't the first time anyway."

In all honesty, Courtney felt numb when uttering these words. There were so many things happening recently that the insignificant pain of a break up could hardly cause any damage to her heart.

The impact of her bringing up the break-up was incomparable to the fear of not knowing what happened in this room last night.

"What did you just say?" Alexander's eyebrows ticked fiercely as he questioned.

"Let's break up." She kept her head down as she mumbled, "I've made myself clear. You can go find Jordan's biological mother. I believe that she isn't as much of a mess as I am, and her words are definitely more convincing than mine."

After that, Courtney forcefully withdrew her arm from his hand.

However, the next second, she could feel pain surging from her arm as she staggered. Quickly, her gaze moved away from the bathroom lights and reached the ceiling before her whole body fell back onto the bed.

Then, Alexander put one hand on her shoulder and the other by her waist as he looked at her condescendingly.

Upon seeing that, she clutched the only cover on her chest and asked in panic. “What are you doing?”

“It’s easier for you to break up with me than to explain what happened last night, is it?” His thunderous voice echoed inside her ears. As his eyes widened, he gritted his teeth tightly and said, “No matter what happens, breaking up is always your first solution to solving everything, right?”

Of course, Alexander didn’t believe that Courtney would do anything to betray him, but there were always times when people lost control of their emotions. The moment he received that anonymous call in the morning, the first thing he thought of wasn’t Courtney betraying him but whether something had happened to her, causing her to not return home last night.

Therefore, he rushed all the way to the hotel, breaking all the traffic lights. As soon as he opened the bedroom door and confirmed that she was safe, he immediately breathed a sigh of relief. Before he could calm down, however, what he saw made him lose control.

“We’ll talk about this after I look into everything. You don’t get to decide.”

His firm words echoed within the room. Then, Courtney felt a weight lifted from her body and she came back to her senses. Thereafter, she could only hear the door slamming shut, causing the entire room to shake.

Looking at the closed door, she was filled with mixed feelings inside her heart. As she slowly got up from the bed with her fingers holding onto the bed sheet, she felt the tears that she held back for a long while finally slid down the corners of her eyes, much like a bursting dam.

It felt as though her life had been derailed ever since she was born, and she could never predict which direction she would be heading the next second.

Chapter 319 That’s the Only Thing I Can Do

When Courtney was taking a bath, she checked her body before looking at herself in the foggy bathroom mirror. She exhaled a heavy sigh.

Although she didn’t have any impression about last night, she knew that her body wouldn’t lie to her— all the signs showed that nothing happened last night.

After bathing and putting on her clothes, she started searching for clues that would explain what happened last night. The first thing that she found was an expensive branded watch, Vacheron Constantin to be exact. It belonged to Leon if she wasn’t mistaken.

Seems like it was Leon who sent me back to the room last night, but what about my clothes? That’s strange. Without much hesitation, she gave Leon a call.

The ringtone played for a long time before the call was picked up, but the first thing that she heard was the announcement in an airport.

“Leon, where are you?” Courtney asked with a frown.

“At the airport.”

Leon’s voice was way colder than usual and his tone was low, as if he had turned into a different person. “I’m waiting to board the plane. We will be allowed to board in five minutes. I’ve been waiting for your call.”

Upon hearing that, Courtney froze. “What do you mean? What happened last night?”

“Nothing happened. This is the only thing I could do.” From his tone, she could tell that it was tough for him to say this. “Courtney, I can’t tell you much, but you will know soon. All I can say is that I’m really sorry.”

“What?” Courtney intended to ask further but Leon had hung up, and all she heard was a busy tone when she tried to call back.

At the airport gate, Leon glanced at his phone. There was a notification that showed that a sum of money had been transferred to his bank account. He let out a bitter laugh of self-mockery before his assistant reminded him that he should queue up to prepare for boarding. In the end, he exhaled a heavy breath and switched off his phone, thereafter removing his SIM card and throwing it into a trash can.

He supposed that he wouldn’t come to Melrose City ever again.

The plane cut through the sky of Melrose City. Some people impatiently fled, while those who were left behind had no choice but to face the situation head on.

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After Courtney checked out of the hotel, she received Natasha’s call. The latter told Courtney that there was a signing of a contract of a business deal, which she had finally managed to close after a long negotiation, happening in the afternoon. Courtney had to head straight to the golf course located at the outskirts of Melrose City, where the signing of the agreement would be held.

Hence, she directly went home to shower again and changed into another set of clothes.

When she was carefully applying makeup in front of a mirror, looking at her own face that was exquisitely adorned with makeup made her realize that she had become stronger as time passed; she was able to remain calm even after something like that had happened.

Truth was, her thoughts were simple—it was no big deal since nothing had happened.

At 2.00 PM, Courtney arrived at the entrance of the Greenville Golf and Country Club when she saw Natasha surveying her surroundings.

“I’m here.” Courtney rolled down her car window and waved at Natasha.

The latter jogged over and got into the car. All the vehicles that entered and exited the golf course had to be registered, so Natasha wasn't able to enter on her own and had to wait for Courtney's arrival.

From the entrance, there was still quite a long drive to their destination.

"Have you waited for a long time?"

Natasha buckled up her seatbelt and replied, "No. I've just arrived too. The company had been trying to close this deal with Hermès for a long time to the point that even the sales team was a little discouraged. This morning, though, I suddenly received a call from them. They said that they have reviewed our latest quotation and they agreed to sign the contract."

"Did they mention anything else? I heard that Hermès is a tough nut to crack when it comes to doing business with them, especially with their evaluation team. Did they request to visit our office?" Courtney asked in puzzlement, to which Natasha shook her head. "No, which is what surprised me as well. If they send an evaluation team to inspect the company, it will take a long time before all the documents go through their different management levels until they finally agree to work with us and arrange for the factory production to begin. By then, I'm afraid that the whole process would delay the contract signing until next year."

Courtney darted her a look. "What's wrong? Are you afraid that you won't get any leave? That you have to stay back and work over time even during the New Year holidays?"

"That's not true." Natasha chuckled. "I don't mind, but if nobody works in the factory during the New Year holidays and it results in the delay of delivery of goods, who shall bear the consequences?"

As they chatted, the vehicle arrived at the entrance of the club in the golf course.

"Who is the person in charge from Hermès this time?" Courtney asked.

As she wasn't involved in the case, she wasn't clear about the details.

"It's the assistant manager of their product development department, Adam Hyde." After looking around and finding that nobody was near them, Natasha whispered, "He is rather strict and I find him hard to communicate with. I was surprised that he decided to sign the contract here."

Courtney inspected her surroundings. Being the most luxurious golf course in the entire Melrose City, the Greenville Golf and Country Club wasn't a place that anybody could enter. As the assistant manager of the product development department, it was rather bizarre that Adam would organize the contract signing to take place at a golf course instead of their own office.

However, although it was strange, it was not the only strange event in the whole world, so Courtney didn't give it much thought and entered the club together with Natasha.

As soon as they entered the place, they spotted Adam at a lounge area not far away. The latter had a square face with a tall build and similar to what Natasha had described, he appeared strict.

Natasha introduced Courtney to him. "Mr. Hyde, this is our president, President Hunter."

"President Hunter, I've heard a lot about you." Adam held out his hand.

Meanwhile, Courtney shook his hand and murmured, “Mr. Hyde, it’s nice to meet you. Natasha has been leading the team and communicating with you, but I haven’t met you in person. How about this—let’s have dinner tonight to make up for the loss. The dinner will be on me.”

“Thank you for your kind offer, President Hunter—” Adam smiled. “—but I have a friend who is here with me at the moment to play golf, so I’m afraid that it will be inconvenient.”

“No worries, he can join us if he doesn’t mind.”

Since they were going to sign a contract, treating the contracting party to a meal was no big deal. If there were a whole bunch of people here, Courtney still had to treat all of them to a meal, let alone when Adam had only a friend.

Sure enough, Adam nodded. “Thank you, President Hunter.”

“Let’s get down to business.”

“There’s no rush.” Adam waved his hand. “The weather today is pleasant. Would you like to take a stroll around, President Hunter? Golfing in this facility is quite a nice experience.”

Before the contract was signed, she had to tolerate the contracting party. Hence, unable to reject his invitation, she had no choice but to go to the changing room with Natasha to change into a suitable outfit. When they were ready, they exited the changing room and headed to the golf course with Adam.

“Mr. Hyde, do you enjoy playing golf?” Courtney asked casually, trying to make small talk.

“My skills are average, but this friend of mine loves golfing and he is excellent at it. He taught me everything that I know, so he is considered my teacher in golfing.”

“Really?” Natasha smiled. “He could compete with President Hunter, then. President Hunter is quite skillful in playing golf too.”

Courtney had previously brought Natasha over here for some discussion and the latter had witnessed her playing. Although Natasha couldn’t play, she could tell from the amazed looks on the onlookers’ faces that Courtney was well-versed in golfing.

“That’s a good idea. My friend had been complaining that he couldn’t find anyone to compete with lately.”

Adam suddenly looked into the distance and waved. “President Duncan, over here!”

The name ‘Duncan’ echoed in Courtney’s ears for a while, making her heart skip a beat.

Chapter 320 There Are Plenty of Scapegoats

Not far away from them stood a familiar figure in a white golf shirt. However, the moment that person turned to face them, Courtney heaved a sigh of relief—it was James.

Before Adam could introduce them to each other, James walked up to them and looked at Courtney. “Long time no see, wife-to-be of my cousin.”

Courtney frowned. "Why are you here?" she asked with unconcealed disgust in her tone.

With one end of the golf club placed on the ground, James propped himself on it and leaned into her. "Courtney, you seem unhappy to see me. Adam, didn't you tell her about it?"

Upon hearing that, Courtney turned to Adam in puzzlement.

"I thought that you knew, President Hunter. President Duncan is the main reason we are collaborating with Citron Apparel this time. To be completely frank, this would not happen if it wasn't for President Duncan, since Citron Apparel is nowhere near the level of companies that we usually collaborate with."

Courtney was stunned. "You pulled this off?"

"Is that surprising?" James adjusted his glasses, a shadow of a smile playing by his lips as he gazed at Courtney. "Since we will soon become family, it's only natural that I give you a hand. You can take this as a token of apology for the previous incident, Courtney."

As if I'd believe what he says! She didn't buy his seemingly truthful words at all. Upon thinking that they hadn't signed the contract, she sneered. "You put it in such a nice way, as if I'd owe you a huge debt of gratitude. Now that the contract has yet to be signed, you won't pull the same trick by using the contract to ask me to do something for you, will you?"

"Well, I do have one condition, but I believe it won't make you suffer any loss."

He picked up the golf club and appraised it. "However, the weather today is nice and I wish to find someone to play golf with. The condition is simple—if you make fewer shots than me, the contract will be signed immediately."

She looked at him in suspicion with her brows knitted. "For real?"

"Of course, I'm a man of my words."

"Okay." Courtney cast a glance at Natasha and took the golf club from her. "You promised you will guarantee the contract will be signed as long as I take fewer strokes than you. I don't wish to see you finding me another collaborative partner after you embarrassed yourself in the match."

"Of course I won't." James wiped the golf club in his hand and a cryptic smile appeared by his lips.

Courtney had been practicing golf since she was little because her grandfather loved the sport. When she was little and her grandfather had been healthy, he used to bring her to the golf course and their coaches were professional golfers.

The course that they were going to play was a 18-hole course, whereby the total par score was 72. Courtney's best record was 61 strokes, while the best record in the Guinness World Records was 55 strokes. Back when she barely started learning to play golf when she had been younger, the coach that taught her had always praised her as a genius in golfing.

Their match began at 2.30 PM. They played until the sky became dim and the outdoor temperature gradually became cooler. Currently, Courtney had taken 61 strokes and she was left with the last hole, while James' score was 63 strokes. Their scores suggested that both of their skills were on par with that of a professional golfer.

As the straight-line distance of the ball from the hole was not far, she estimated that she could end the match with 62 strokes if nothing went wrong.

Just then, James approached her. "Courtney, you are certainly well-versed in golfing. I reckon that you have learned it professionally."

"You asked too much. All you have to remember is that if I manage to get the ball in the hole with this stroke, the contract has to be signed."

"Of course." James chuckled, then continued in a low voice, "You seem energetic today; looks like Leon didn't treat you well last night."

The moment she heard that, Courtney instantly paled and she turned to James in shock.

However, he took a step back to stay a fairly safe distance from her. "Carry on, Courtney; I won't interfere with your playing. I'm afraid that you may blame me for affecting your performance if I stand too close to you."

Courtney's hand that was holding the golf club trembled.

She had never expected that Leon was actually related to James. What did Leon mean when he said that he was sorry? Did he really not do anything last night?

The golf club in her hand slipped a little and the white golf ball rolled toward the hole but stopped right before it.

Natasha heaved a heavy sigh as she stood off at one side. "It was so close!"

After she said that, she suddenly realized that she had said something she shouldn't have, so she quickly covered her mouth. When she raised her head, she was stunned to see Courtney's blanched face.

"President Hunter, why is your face so pale?" James casually asked. "You must be tired, Courtney. The golf match is just a joke and we can always revisit the contract. Why don't we head over to the club to take a rest?" He sounded friendly and polite, but coupled with what he had said earlier, it was no different from making an invisible threat.

It was only at this moment did Courtney realize the true purpose of today's meeting—James had colluded with Adam to lure her here using the excuse of signing the contract, whereby their true intention was to talk about the incident last night.

They headed into a private lounge within the golf club while Adam and Natasha waited outside.

"I wonder if you will be able to continue to stay in Melrose City if these photos were published?"

James produced a stack of photos and gently placed them on the coffee table in front of him before smoothly spreading the photos out. Each and every photo revealed before her was incredibly sensual. Although the bathrobe concealed the important parts, she looked even more arousing that way.

At that moment, it felt as if something exploded in Courtney's head. In a panic, she grabbed all the photos and crumpled them and tore them into pieces. "What do you want, James?" she questioned, her voice trembling.

“You may tear as many as you want.” James leaned back on the couch leisurely as he added, “I’m being serious. You are free to tear them since I have made many copies. Leon must have treated you well last night. Don’t you think that you should thank me?”

Courtney’s head was buzzing when she heard that, and she couldn’t imagine what would happen if the photos got out.

It was true that Leon had told her that nothing had happened, but he had taken the photos and sent them to James. If these photos were to be exposed to the media, who would believe that nothing had happened?

“This is against the law!” She tried to calm herself down, but the flustered look on her face betrayed her real emotions. “If you dare to expose this to the media, I’ll make sure to take you to court.”

Upon hearing that, James chuckled. “There are plenty of scapegoats. Courtney, don’t be naïve. Do you really think that I’ll personally expose the photos when I can easily get anyone to share the photos to the public?”

His words caused her limbs to freeze and her head to stop functioning. She then clenched her fists so hard that her nails dug into her palms. At that point, only pain could make her head clear and allow her to regain a moment’s reason.

“The reason you did all these is for the Hunter Group, but don’t you forget that the company is not under me now. I can’t transfer it to you.”

“I only need you to sell the shares you own to me.” James looked at her, his lips curved into a sinister smile.

“Don’t you know that your stepmother’s brothers aren’t exactly righteous people? They are willing to sell anything at the right price. I’ll be the largest shareholder of the Hunter Group by then. Merger and acquisition is inevitable.”

Looking pale, Courtney tightened her fists while James’ cold voice continued to echo in the room. “I’ll give you some time to think about it, but I can assure you that if the answer is not what I want, the photos will be all over the Internet when you step out of the door and the first person who will receive them will be Old Master Duncan.”