

Surprise 261

Chapter 261 Mommy, What's Wrong With Your Lips?

"According to the previous branch manager, the lady is in her early twenties and very beautiful. She brought the necklace over to ask for the identity of the person who ordered it in our store."

The branch manager's voice came clearly over the line. It was like a jolt of shock to Alexander, waking him up immediately.

He had a woman named Hunter right next to him, so he could not help thinking about her.

However, he quickly eliminated the possibility.

Six years ago, I had no interaction with Courtney whatsoever. How could the necklace end up with her?

As he denied his guess, some memories flickered in his mind.

All this while, he suspected that the necklace was lost by the surrogate woman during that night six years ago. However, his previous butler, Louis vehemently denied it. According to him, he already asked the woman but it was not with her.

After Louis returned from the hospital with Jordan, he resigned immediately. When Alexander asked Josh to investigate this matter, they found out that Louis died in an accident. Apart from that, from the obstacles they faced when they looked into the surrogate woman, he knew that Louis must be hiding something about the surrogacy back then.

Flocks of birds flew past the window and the cerulean blue sky of Melrose City looked alive on this day.

Looking out the window, Alexander was deep in thought.

Then, he tapped his slender fingers on the phone.

"Head over to the ancestral home and ask Harry for the list of employees who worked with Louis back then. Look them up one by one and ask them about the surrogacy; you can pressure, force, or coerce them—do whatever to get the job done."

On the other end of the line, Josh was stunned for a moment before returning to his senses.

"Understood; consider it done."

"Good."

After he hung up the phone, Alexander took his pajamas and walked into the bathroom.

If there was something up with surrogate, what would it take to make Louis—an experienced butler in our family—suddenly resign?

Seeing Courtney, who was fast asleep in the bathtub, Alexander suddenly had a wild thought. It only lasted for a moment before he warded it off simply because of the sheer absurdity.

Courtney slept until noon before waking up.

When she woke up, it was relatively lively outside. Jordan and Tina were both watching the television in the living room. Tina wanted to watch Shay's live concert replay but Jordan did not allow it and switched channels when she was distracted. Hence, the both of them quarreled and fought in the living room.

Oliver was nowhere to be seen, but Alexander was cooking in the kitchen.

Did the sun rise from the west today?

Courtney ruffled her messy hair as she stood by the bedroom door for a while, still looking quite sleepy.

"Mommy, why did you just wake up? You sleepyhead!" Tina ran to her and appraised her curiously.

"What's wrong with your lips, Mommy?"

"What?"

Courtney froze for a moment before covering her lips with her hands right after she returned to her senses. In a muffled voice, she said, "Uh... I accidentally knocked the cabinet yesterday, so it's swollen."

"What? Does it hurt? Let's go to the hospital."

Tina grabbed Courtney's pants, wanting to leave then and there.

"It's alright." Courtney looked extremely embarrassed. "I'll just rest and drink more water. You guys continue to have fun among yourselves."

With that, Courtney avoided both kids and entered the kitchen.

Initially, she was just planning to have a glass of water. However, right after she entered, Alexander looked at her meaningfully.

"Your lips have become swollen due to the knock? Let me see if it's serious."

With that, he took a few steps closer to Courtney, who quickly retreated while blushing.

Face flushed, she mumbled in a low voice, "Stay away from me."

"Let me have a look." Alexander wrapped his huge hands around her waist and pulled her to his chest.

"What kind of cabinet can make your lips swell to this extent? Why don't we remove it?"

"Are you done?" Furious, Courtney struggled to get out of his embrace and punched him hard. "Stop taking further advantage of me!"

"I'm not the only one who took advantage, am I?"

"Hey—" Courtney raised her voice.

Tina's voice immediately rang from the living room. "Mommy, what's wrong?"

"N-Nothing." Courtney quickly explained. "I'm pouring some tea."

When she turned around, she glared at Alexander and warned him, "You better pretend as though nothing happened last night."

Just as Alexander was about to speak, she cut him off, “Don’t ask me anything. I haven’t sorted out my thoughts and I need some time to digest what happened last night. If you still want to stay here, you’d better shut it.”

Alexander stayed silent for a moment, looking as though he wanted to say something.

“What’s with that expression?” Courtney frowned. “Do you think that I’m being unreasonable?”

Alexander arched his eyebrows slightly as he said in a low voice, “I just wanted to ask you—do you want a sunny side-up?”

As soon as she heard that, Courtney’s expression immediately changed and she felt as though the air was closing in on her. “Ahem... A-Anything goes.”

With that, she poured a glass of water before quickly leaving.

As Alexander watched her leave hastily, the amused expression in his eyes deepened.

If she wants to take it slow and think it through, so be it. I have all the time in the world to wait for her.

Since the interaction between them was about the same as before, it was only a matter of confirming their relationship. Hence, he did not care about that.

Sometimes, Alexander even suspected Courtney liked the feeling of a secretive relationship. If so, he did not mind indulging her for a while.

But only for a while.

After lunch, Bill requested Courtney to attend a meeting at the company.

Hence, she had to leave both the kids in Alexander’s care.

Before she left, she put her card and some cash on the coffee table. “You can bring them along to buy anything else that’s needed.”

Alexander froze when he saw what she was doing. However, after a short moment, he let it slide. After all, he was the one who said that he was broke last night., so he could only accept this momentarily. “Alright.”

“The pin number for the card is Tina’s birthday.” After she finished speaking, Courtney suddenly froze. Then, she told him the number directly, avoiding his eyes the whole time.

Truth was, she was quite nervous because when Alexander once asked when Tina’s birthday was, the date she told him was two months in advance.

Perhaps he doesn’t remember it anymore. I can only hope for that.

“Oh, and Bill probably has some urgent matters to discuss with me, so I’ll have to make a move.”

With that, Courtney quickly took her bag and walked to the door to put on her shoes.

After staring at the money on the table for a while, when Alexander saw the card, he quietly repeated the pin that Courtney told him just now. However, he immediately frowned and raised his head to look at her back after she hastily turned around.

“Tina’s birthday is in March? I remember you told me it’s in January,” he asked, feeling perplexed.

Courtney’s body slightly froze as blood drained from her face.

“Really? Didn’t I say it’s in March?”

With her back to Alexander, Courtney tried to conceal her discomfort.

“No. You said it was January.”

Then, she heard Alexander walking toward her.

“I-Is that so?” Courtney could hear her own voice trembling. “Why don’t I remember that? When did that happen? You probably remembered it wrong.”

Alexander was already standing right behind her.

“Impossible. You clearly told me it was January. Jordan’s birthday is also in March, so if you told me that Tina’s birthday is in March, I would surely remember because the date you just mentioned is the same day as Jordan’s birthday.”

Chapter 262 Malicious Rumors

Once Alexander’s question reached her ears, Courtney clenched her fists tightly. As her fingernails sank into her palms, she tried to calm herself down. However, she knew that once she opened her mouth, her trembling voice would betray her.

“I’m relieved.”

Alexander suddenly chuckled.

“Seems like you have always been very vigilant toward outsiders.”

Courtney froze and looked at him without thinking. After seeing the teasing look on his face, she finally heaved a sigh of relief.

She avoided his gaze and spoke in a low voice. “Yeah. Back then, I still didn’t know you well; of course I couldn’t tell you everything.”

“It might rain today. Remember to bring an umbrella along.”

With that, Alexander took an umbrella from the umbrella stand and passed it to her.

“Thank you.”

Courtney lowered her head and pursed her lips. She still felt the lingering fear left behind from their encounter just now.

After walking out of her house, her heart continued to thump non-stop. She had a feeling that if she did not come clean with Alexander, based on his intelligence, he would quickly find out the truth. What might happen by then, she simply could not predict.

The reason Bill suddenly rang Courtney up was because of Sakura Group's bid.

During the past two days, there was a sudden surge of rumors online about Courtney being the sole legal inheritor of the Hunter Group. They also said that she received a huge amount of inheritance from Lucian and a huge part of it came from the loopholes of the Hunter Group's finances. Hence, it was equivalent to Lucian using a legal yet unethical method to transfer the inheritance to her.

The Hunter Group was an immense corporation that had thousands of employees. When it suddenly stopped all its operations, many people had to sit around and wait. Because of the auditing process, not a single cent of the wages was paid even after two months.

The blue collar workers were not alone in creating a scene at the building site—even the white collar workers who were in the office could not hold it in anymore. Once the rumor spread, everyone followed the trend and bashed Courtney alone. Fortunately, Citron Apparel had not been affected yet.

In the conference room on the second floor of Citron Apparel, Courtney zoned out as she looked at the maple leaves outside the window. The voices that rang beside her simply blew past her ears like a gust of wind.

"Based on the recent rumors online, we need to discuss with the relevant social media platform to immediately block the content. Otherwise, at this critical time, it might easily affect Sakura Group's vote for us. We have to take immediate action now."

As the company had been formed not long ago, the PR manager, Lionel Greenwood seemed to be waiting for a long time for an opportunity for him to shine. Fortunately for him, it had now arrived. He looked quite excited and pumped up at this moment, and he was the first person to discover the malicious rumors about Courtney online.

"What do you think, Miss Hunter?"

After Kai's voice rang in the conference room, Courtney finally returned to her senses.

"What?" She looked slightly confused.

After all, she had been brooding on the incident that just happened at her house, so she had not been listening to the meeting attentively.

Bill, who was seated to her left, reminded her about their discussion when he saw her blank look.

"Mr. Greenwood's suggestion was to quickly suppress the rumors before the netizens could look it up, so that it won't affect the bid of Sakura Group. However, I think that if we use social media platforms to censor related topics, it might cause a rebound and show that we are guilty."

Bill had spoken just in time, effectively reminding all of them about the incident. But all in all, it merely seemed as though Bill added some of his thoughts into it.

Courtney understood what he meant and focused on the issue right at hand.

“That’s right. We can’t just solve this problem using social media alone; we need standard operating procedures of our own. It’s impossible to block the current tsunami, so we have to think of ways to divert it.”

With that, they brainstormed for the next five minutes. Since Lionel Greenwood was quite young, he was quite quick in offering a suggestion.

“Miss Hunter, how about this—let social media block some vague rumors that seemed likely and leave the most outrageous and ridiculous parts be?”

When he said that, everyone was confused at first. However, they quickly understood what he meant.

Lionel’s plans were to achieve the opposite effect by over-exaggerating the current situation.

Most of the stories that netizens would believe would be average stories that seemed very likely to be true, even though the explanation seemed ridiculous and did not bring upon a huge impact. It would be better if they would just release a huge ‘bomb’ online to catch people’s attention for them to discuss. When the malicious rumors went too far, the average person who could think straight would not believe them anymore.

Lionel’s plan was approved unanimously by everyone in the meeting.

After the meeting ended, Courtney went back to her office. Her newly hired assistant, Natasha, followed behind her to send some documents that required her signature to her office. Then, she also put an invitation card on Courtney’s desk.

“Miss Hunter, we just received it this morning—it’s an invitation from AW Group for the beer-tasting session at the end of the month.”

The light blue invitation card had the characters ‘AW’ printed on it in cursive. If Natasha did not clarify that this was an invitation for a beer-tasting session, Courtney might have mistaken it for a wedding invitation.

“Who sent it?”

“President Lewis’ assistant.”

Upon hearing that, Courtney froze. Casey is pretty free, huh? He even asked his assistant to personally send the invitation card over. Seems like his life has been pretty good.

After she opened the invitation, she saw a few brief words written elegantly with a fountain-pen.

‘The more Shay wants you to come, the more I don’t want you to appear. —Casey’

Courtney laughed out loud.

Perplexed by Courtney’s reaction, Natasha looked confused. “Will you be attending, Miss Hunter?”

“Of course I will.” Courtney closed the card and placed it aside with her eyebrows arched. “Since he has already invited me so earnestly, it would reflect badly on me if I don’t attend.”

Even if I don’t make friends with the elites from our industry, it’s interesting enough to annoy Casey.

Since Citrus Apparel had just been formed, she had to personally close the sales and collaboration with other companies. Apart from the orders from Sakura Group, Courtney also planned to have a discussion with Casey. After all, he had plenty of resources in the business.

After her assistant left, Bill knocked on the door and entered immediately.

“Is there anything else?”

“About the malicious rumors online—don’t you think that it’s too much of a coincidence?”

Bill placed a stack of newly printed designs on Courtney’s table. “Look at this. Oliver just sent it to my email.”

After looking at them, Courtney immediately frowned. “Isn’t this your earlier design? Wait... Isn’t this—?”

“It’s 70% similar to the designs we sent to the Sakura Group. If they made their samples according to the designs, their samples would be pretty much the same as the ones we just sent over.”

“Which company is this?” Courtney took a deep breath with a grave expression on her face. “This is plagiarism.”

“We don’t have any evidence and they seemed to have sent it to the Sakura Group earlier than us. It’s Ivory Apparel,” Bill explained darkly.

Ivory Apparel and Designs was one of the top three clothing stores in Melrose City that specialized in online marketing. This time around, they also joined the bid for Sakura Group. Their most common tactic was to hire talented people from small companies and copy their ideas. Since the small companies could not afford to offend them, they could only stay quiet and suck it up.

“They have their eyes on us this time around?” Courtney frowned.

“You were introduced to Sakura Group by the chief editor of Vivi Magazine. Citrus Apparel is only an unknown small business. Strictly speaking, we are no more than a workshop, yet we have the capabilities to join the bid this time. Hence, they are quite defensive of us.”

Chapter 263 Betrayer

“From Ivory Apparel’s perspective, they want to nip all uprising and potential competitors in the bud. Once those small businesses make it big, they will hinder Ivory Apparel’s progress,” Bill said with a grave expression on his face.

This was the harsh reality of the business industry.

“How long can Mr. Greenwood’s PR solution last?”

“No idea.”

Bill would never give vague answers. If he was unsure about something, he would say ‘no idea’ directly.

Before they could think of the next steps to solve this incident, someone from the PR department arrived. “Miss Hunter, there’s bad news. We are in trouble now—someone published a long article online that has gone viral. They even found out that you are the boss of Citrus Apparel.”

Courtney immediately stood up. This happened right after our meeting. Just like what Bill said—it’s too much of a coincidence.

Hence, they held an emergency meeting immediately.

The headline of the article was ‘All you need to know about the inheritor of Hunter Group, Courtney Hunter’s new business’.

It was published on Facebook by a famous page with millions of followers. Within one afternoon, the article appeared on the trending page.

It revolved around three points, the first being the most ostentatious one—the suicide of the employee who jumped from the top floor of the Hunter Group headquarters.

The second was the massive retrenchment and temporary unemployment of thousands of employees because of some finance loopholes in the Hunter Group.

The third was the conclusion drawn from the two points above with relatively harsh and rude descriptions. The blame was pushed entirely to Courtney; as she was Lucian’s daughter, she got the most amount of private inheritance from him that was built on others’ misfortunes.

Even though the article seemed logical and accurate, it did not even touch on the key points. It just combined all the rumors online and formed an even larger rumor.

On top of that, it even fabricated a false rumor of Lucian transferring all his money and assets to Citrus Apparel, the company that Courtney was managing right now.

It clearly discussed Citrus Apparel and Courtney’s relation with it.

“Found it.”

Summers, who was in the IT department, raised his head and reported solemnly, “The article’s IP address is not far from us. It’s Ivory Apparel indeed.”

Courtney and Bill exchanged glances. Sure enough, it’s them.

The PR Manager, Lionel, had obviously realized how serious this matter was. He blanched as he said, “It’s all my fault. I didn’t resolve this incident earlier even though I said I will get the facts out before them. In the end, they still took the lead.”

Courtney glanced at him profoundly.

“Don’t blame yourself—it’s not your fault. Right now we should think about how to resolve this. I’m afraid everyone has to stay back tonight to think of the way out.”

In this era where information and data dominated everything, it was more than easy to make a small company go bankrupt.

Hence, when they first started the company, Courtney immediately set up a public relations department. Even though Lionel did not have the required experience and capability, she believed that the incidents they faced would quickly shape him.

She did not mind spending money and effort in training talents. However, she was worried about internal betrayers.

Courtney's gaze fell on the person next to Lionel—the administrative manager, Martin Brooks.

“Mr. Greenwood, first you should write a proper document that clarifies the entire situation. Get it stamped and published online. Then, control the direction of the online conversations. Notify all reporters from different news companies that we are planning to hold a public press conference to clarify everything that has been going on recently.”

Courtney gave a few orders about the emergency measures to Lionel, who nodded profusely, not daring to neglect any of them.

When everyone was treating this incident seriously, only Martin looked like he was in a daze.

“Everyone, stop everything you are doing right now and think about how to resolve this incident. Those who come up with a good idea will be rewarded.”

It was a long meeting and everyone involved thought long and hard about the adequate measures. However, Martin was the only person who looked nervous. Half an hour into the meeting, he could not stay seated anymore and stood up.

“Mr. Brooks, where are you going?”

“To the washroom. I'll be right back.”

Martin looked slightly off.

Seeing his leaving figure, Courtney tapped on the keyboard on her phone and sent a message. ‘Martin is going out now. Keep an eye on him.’

The other person replied immediately, ‘Got it.’

Within the headquarters of Life Entertainment Media, in the office of the chief editor, a woman was apologizing profusely on the phone. Even though she was already in her fifties, she took good care of her appearance and only looked like she was in her mid-thirties.

“Yes; I got it. I'll ask them to take it down immediately. Don't worry, Mrs. Somerfield. This incident originates from the entertainment department. I really didn't notice it. You have to keep in mind that we have hundreds of news going on every day.”

She heard the voice at the other end replying to her.

“No, no; I'm not trying to shirk my responsibility. Don't worry; we will definitely check the fake news strictly and we will take the news down immediately.”

Nevertheless, the voice on the other end continued speaking.

After she hung up the phone, the chief editor's face darkened. When she raised her head and saw her assistant standing like a statue in front of her, anger suddenly surged within her.

"Who the hell is this Courtney Hunter? It's just some small news, yet so many people called in relation to this. Do you know how many calls I've picked up this morning?"

Ever since Courtney's news made the headlines, as the biggest news media in the country, Life Entertainment Media had been receiving calls non-stop. Usually, the chief editor need not entertain these calls, but the people who called today were so important that she had to answer their calls personally.

The former president of Sunhill Enterprise and the only son of the Duncan Family, Alexander Duncan, immediately called the media company to question them. Right after him was Casey Lewis, the president of AW Group and the chief editor of the famous fashion magazine, Vivi Magazine. Apart from that, even the wife of the former chief of Tax Bureau rang her up with an unfriendly tone.

Her male assistant looked uneasy as he reported in a low voice, "Based on the documents, she's the young lady of the Hunter Group but she's not popular. For many years, she has been living abroad alone. Apart from that, the Hunter Group is facing bankruptcy now, so where does she have all these connections? Even President Duncan from Sunhill Enterprise also stood up for her."

"Stood up for her?" The chief editor's face darkened. "Would you call Alexander Duncan's actions 'standing up for her'? If there wasn't a phone between us, he would be stepping on my face! Apart from that, how did she have connections with people from the Tax Bureau? She even knows Mr. Somerfield, who just returned to Kyoto!"

The chief editor's assistant also did not understand what was going on. "Do we still take the news down?" he asked tentatively.

"Take it down?"

The chief editor laughed coldly. "Of course we are taking it down, but we are only doing that tonight, when it has reached the peak of its popularity. When that time comes, even after we take it down, we would have achieved the greatest publicity; the rest can only pick up our remnants. Also, send some people to follow Courtney Hunter and find out more about her. What exactly is her background that makes her so powerful?"

"Noted." Her assistant could sense a huge gossip piece coming up. "I'll arrange for some reporters to follow up on this."

The entertainment department of Life Entertainment Media was famous for not succumbing to power. Every time when people called to complain, they would oblige through the phone but it did not affect the way they handled things. No matter what, the higher-ups of the media company would protect them if anything happened.

Chapter 264 Are We Sharing a Room Tonight?

After an entire night of discussion about the PR measures to be taken, the rumors online seemed to take a turn for the better after the company posted the public disclaimer online. They worked overtime right till midnight before everyone from Citrus Apparel finally called it a day.

Courtney walked down the stairs with Bill, only to find that Oliver had been waiting for her for a long time.

When Bill saw Oliver, he nodded as a form of greeting. Then, he told Courtney, "I'll take my leave now. Take care."

"Okay. Thanks for all the hard work."

"No worries. I would suggest you to be more careful these few days. Ask people to accompany you when you go out, because cyberbullying is not something trivial." After all, Bill had experienced these personally, so he felt worried for Courtney, as though he was the victim as well.

Courtney nodded. "Don't worry."

When she reached home, the lights in the living room were still on but the entire house was quiet.

After she opened the door, Alexander walked out of the kids bedroom.

"They're both asleep?" Courtney asked without thinking.

"Yes." Alexander nodded. "Has everything been resolved?"

"You knew what happened?"

Courtney put her bag down and took off her shoes before going to the kitchen to pour herself a cup of tea.

Even Alexander—who never goes online—knows about this, which means that it's quite a big incident.

"Truth is, it's hard to not know about it. I heard that the blue collar workers of the Hunter Group are making a fuss again. The Hunter Group is only a street away from Sunhill Enterprise, so of course he knows about it," Oliver replied for Alexander as he sat on the couch.

After shooting Oliver a glance, Alexander followed Courtney into the kitchen to help her out.

They poured three cups of tea and placed them on the coffee table before they all sat down.

"How did your investigation go?" Alexander asked as he looked straight at Oliver.

Upon seeing that, Oliver immediately frowned. "What investigation? How did you know that I'm looking into it?"

"Right after you guys submitted the documents for the bid for Sakura Group, someone unleashed malicious rumors about Courtney immediately. After you controlled the direction of the conversation, someone else immediately revealed the relationship between Courtney, Citrus Apparel, and Hunter Group. It's too far-fetched to say that this is a coincidence."

Alexander was a smart person—of course he could deduce this.

“Since you are so smart and you thought about all this, why didn’t you remind Courtney beforehand?”

Oliver looked at him sideways, waiting to see how Alexander would defend himself.

“Even if you stop them from making a scene out of this incident, you won’t be able to prevent everything else. It’s better to take the swift blow and get into incidents like these at the start of the business compared to encountering them after you have already stabilized.”

“Why don’t you just say that we will win when we have nothing else to lose?”

“Rather than wasting time playing word games, why don’t you just tell us what you found out?”

Sure enough, Alexander had the power to bring them back to his main focus in just a few words.

Even though Oliver was not happy about it, he knew that it was not the time to throw a fit. Hence, he announced seriously, “When Courtney sent the message to me, I was already at the door of the conference room and I already bugged the washroom. This is the recording of Martin’s end of the conversation.”

With that, Oliver placed an USB drive on the table. “Based on the signals, we pieced together what the other person said to Martin and the match is more than 90%.”

“Just tell us directly—what is the problem?” Courtney did not bother to listen to the recording as they were short on time. She did not have the luxury to compare and deduce the conversation, and she trusted Oliver’s professional capabilities in this field.

“It is confirmed that Martin is someone from Ivory Apparel. If my guess is correct, he revealed Bill’s designs to Ivory Apparel right from the beginning. I guess he wanted to leave for a long time but there are two possibilities as to why he is still staying with us.”

“Which are?”

Oliver cleared his throat. Just as he was about to flaunt his professional capabilities of making deductions, Alexander’s low voice rang out beside him.

“Either Ivory Apparel asked him to stay at Citrus Apparel to continue to spy on you, or those from Ivory Apparel regretted their promise to him and do not want to honor their initial agreement anymore.”

“Hey, stop snatching my lines!” Oliver glared at Alexander angrily. “Are you done yet?”

“Which is more likely?” Courtney ignored Oliver and asked Alexander directly.

“The latter,” Alexander explained calmly and clearly. “If Ivory Apparel wants him now, they wouldn’t take such a great risk by asking him to stay on in Citrus Apparel. After all, once you find out about his betrayal, it would be a stain on his professional career and he will have a hard time getting around in this industry.”

“There’s another possibility,” Oliver interjected. “The people at Ivory Apparel are delaying the entire process. This shows that he still has value to them, mainly because they still want to use him to spy on Citrus Apparel and they don’t want a person like him to work for them. After all, which company wants someone who might betray them at any time?”

Courtney nodded in agreement. "Exactly."

"So what are you planning to do next?" Alexander asked.

"We'll let Martin be. Since we already know about his identity and Ivory Apparel plans to leave him here, let's just go with their plans."

A sly glint flickered in Courtney's eyes. "But I need your help on this."

Later that night, after Oliver took a shower, he suddenly stopped on his way back to his room. Then, he turned around to look at Alexander, who was still sipping his tea in the living room.

With a frown, Oliver asked, "Are we sharing a room tonight?"

Alexander shot him a look in response.

Oliver continued to frown and raised his chin haughtily. "In that case, I'm going to lock the door. When you have nowhere to sleep, don't even bother knocking. I'm a sound sleeper."

With that, he closed the door and locked it with a crack.

Alexander continued looking calm and finished his tea before he walked to the master bedroom.

Ever since Alexander arrived here, he had no plans to share the same room as Oliver.

In the master bedroom, Courtney had already finished showering. Wrapping herself in a white towel, she sat in front of the vanity to put on her skincare. When she heard footsteps approaching, she glanced at the door with a mischievous glint in her clear eyes.

The round door knob was turned, but it could only move slightly before stopping.

The person outside did not seem to believe this and attempted to turn it again. However, the door knob could not be moved. After a while, someone knocked on the door.

"Courtney, please open the door."

Courtney was happy to hear this. "What's up?"

"I want to take the hairdryer."

"I've already placed a new one in the bathroom outside."

Then, she deliberately yawned. "I'm tired now so I'll go ahead and sleep. Goodnight."

Without waiting for Alexander's reply, she turned the lights off by pressing the switch next to her. The room was only illuminated by the yellow lamp at the side of her bed, making the room look cosy.

Standing outside the door of the master bedroom, Alexander turned his head around mechanically to look at the other room that was also tightly shut.

Even if it was not shut, he had no plans to ask Oliver to open the door. After all, it was a huge embarrassment to him.

The next morning, Tina's biological clock woke her up at half-past six. Yawning, she climbed down her bunker bed with her eyes closed. Halfway through, she suddenly realized that something was wrong.

Looking at the huge figure sleeping on the bed, she exclaimed with wide eyes, "Mr. Alexander, why are you sleeping here?"

Chapter 265 The Anonymous Woman

When they were having breakfast, Tina was speaking non-stop.

"The bed in our room is very small. Mr. Alexander is so tall that his legs cannot even extend completely. Plus, Jordan had to squeeze himself into a small ball."

Oliver almost choked to death on the porridge in his mouth. After laughing for a long time, parts of it even came flying out of his nose.

Upon seeing this, Tina shied away from him "Eww... Gross, Mr. Oliver!"

"I'm sorry, Tina. I didn't mean to do that. Ha!"

Courtney also lowered her head as she tried to hold in her laughter.

She swore that she did not know Oliver would lock Alexander out of the room, and that the latter would sleep in the kids room. After all, the bunker bed was specifically designed for children; at most, it could only hold a twelve or thirteen-year-old.

With Alexander's long limbs, he must have had a hard time sleeping!

"Is it that funny?" Alexander looked at her darkly. "Last night—"

"I've finished eating." Worried that he might reveal some inappropriate scenes in front of the kids, Courtney quickly pushed her cutlery aside and took her bag after standing up, finishing the entire action in one go. "I have to head to the office to deal with the incident. After a night of not watching the news, I bet something must be up."

With that, she left without a backward look.

The door closed with a loud thud and silence resumed in the house once again. After Tina finished her breakfast, she also went back to her room, leaving only Alexander and Oliver at the dining table, looking at each other awkwardly.

"You can't blame me. Last night, you yourself said that you would not be sharing a room with me. Hence, I thought you would rather sleep on the couch than to share a room with me. How would I know that you went to sleep with the kids?"

With an innocent expression on his face, Oliver even winked at Alexander. A vein bulged and twitched at the corner of Alexander's eyes as he held back his urge of wanting to punch Oliver.

After Courtney reached the office, Lionel immediately went to her office to report about the discussion and change in data that happened last night.

“Everything seems to have stabilized now. However, there’s a pause in online data from midnight to five in the morning, so we can’t really analyze this set of data. I’m afraid it will rebound later on. President Hunter, would you like to discuss a backup plan?”

“It’s fine.” Courtney looked calm. “We don’t have to hold any meetings anymore. Just get busy with your respective tasks and be well-prepared for the press conference later. Before that, do continue with your work.”

As she was speaking, Bill entered the room. When Courtney saw him, she waved and said, “You came at just the right time. Bill, please close the door behind you—I have something to discuss with both of you.”

Bill shot a glance behind him and saw a figure quickly hide behind the door.

With a cold expression on his face, he frowned as he retracted his gaze and closed the door.

“Courtney is planning to tell the media that she has broken off all ties with Lucian Hunter early in the days. Apart from that, she plans to take her father’s will out to clear the air and clarify that she has nothing to do with the Hunter Group.”

In the washroom, Martin locked the door and reported the PR solution he secretly overheard just now to the person on the other end of the line.

“Alright; understood. Good job.”

“Vice-president Greene, I’ve even gotten their final trump card; can I leave here now?”

“Be patient.” The tone on the other end was quite indifferent. “This is only the beginning. Let’s wait until the press conference in the afternoon is over.”

Upon hearing that, Martin panicked. “No, Vice-president Greene! I can’t wait until the press conference is over. You surely won’t let the press conference be carried out smoothly, will you? If I leave after Citrus Apparel is over, what would others think of me?”

“Since they are going bankrupt soon, it’s only appropriate that you leave after that.”

“No; it’s not like that at all. Hear me out, Vice-president Greene—”

“Alright; that’s all for now. I have other things to do.”

“Hello? Vice-president Greene—”

Without waiting for Martin’s reply, the other person had already hung up. Looking at the screen that showed the details of their call, Martin scratched his head anxiously and he had the sudden urge to break the mirror in front of him.

After all, he was not a fool. Based on the attitude of Vice-president Greene of Ivory Apparel, he highly suspected that they were not planning to uphold the initial promise.

In the afternoon, Josh took some time off from the office to go to a restaurant.

When he saw Alexander eating with the two kids, he did a double take.

“President Duncan, you can just give me orders through the phone. Why do you need to come here personally?”

“The kids want to try out this restaurant. Since this is near your place, I asked you to come over.”

Josh was stunned by Alexander’s reply. It seems like he isn’t here for me at all. He’s just here for a meal and merely asked me to come over.

“About the press conference in the afternoon—how’s the manpower arrangements coming along?”

“I’ve already made the relevant arrangements.” Josh patted his chest. “They are all professional boxers who will be able to manage the situation well. If someone dares to start a fight, they are definitely going to be seriously injured.”

“Okay.” Alexander nodded. “Good.”

“By the way, about the incident you asked me to look up, we are making some good progress.”

“What is it?”

“Six years ago, there were only a few fighters working with Louis. I found two of them who are working as gym instructors at the moment. They said that on the night of June 18 that year, they were looking for someone at the bar.”

“Looking for someone?” Alexander’s gaze deepened. “Who?”

“A woman.”

Josh lowered his voice. However, he did not notice Tina, who was biting on a drumstick, slow down as she listened attentively.

“They said that Louis asked them to look for this woman. Then, they drugged her and blindfolded her before they sent her to a suite at Sunhill Hotel, Golden City Road branch.

Alexander clearly recalled the night six years ago. He had had a little alcohol that night and he did not switch on the lights at all. He did not bother to see what the surrogate woman looked like and the woman seemed to be blindfolded as well. From her enthusiasm, it was clear that she was drugged.

“But they said that they did not find the woman after looking for her for the entire night.”

Josh’s voice pulled Alexander back to reality. “What?”

A shocked expression appeared in his eyes.

During that night six years ago, Louis did not send the surrogate woman to the arranged hotel room. However, Alexander did sleep with a woman that night. Not long after that, Louis reported that the woman was indeed pregnant and eight months later, he brought a baby boy back.

Looking at Alexander, Josh continued, “I asked them several times—both the bodyguards were sure that they did not find the girl that day. In fact, everyone was looking for her. They looked through the entire street the bar was at and when dawn arrived, Louis suddenly told them they didn’t have to look

anymore. What is even more odd is that a month later, he asked them to kidnap a young lady who was about to abort her baby.”

After putting the clues together, Alexander could guess what had exactly happened back then.

The real surrogate woman did not appear that night for some reason. The woman who appeared in his room, however, was an anonymous woman mistakenly sent in by someone else.

No wonder...