

## Don't Beg for Love Chapter 551

A Spoonful of Sugar: Don't Beg for Love Chapter 551

"Okay." Hesper grinned. However, despite how good it looked on her face, her smile looked fake. "Then I'll start working on my draft, Mr. Lynch. I don't think you'll need my help with company matters, right?"

"No, I don't," Benji said through gritted teeth.

Renee sighed helplessly. It was evident that Hesper was teasing Benji, but she found it ridiculous how Benji fell for it despite being smart most of the time.

"Alright, I'll excuse myself now." Benji turned around. After receiving Hesper's instruction, Renee went out as well.

Although Benji was very familiar with the company's affairs, it would still be somewhat difficult for him to handle everything alone. Luckily, Hesper's studio had just started, so she and Jessie were enough to handle things over there even if Renee was not around.

Hesper lowered her head and looked at her draft for a moment in silence.

She had not even started designing for Elise, Rickard was currently on his deathbed, and she had yet to solve the matter regarding Juniper, so she could not possibly go back to Fredonia for the time being.

She could only finish things ahead of time there and figure out a solution later. With that thought in mind, she had a bit of a headache. She hoped that Juniper would act quickly so that she could resolve things early on as well.

\*

Meanwhile, Juniper had been in a slump at home for several days. Carter disappeared without a word for a few days, probably fooling around with some young lover. Juniper could not be bothered to care.

Her mother's betrayal was something she never expected. It was a completely unforeseen event that dealt a heavy blow to her. Since she was young, she had relied on her mother, who was her only support. She never thought that her mother would one day abandon or betray her.

It was all because of Hesper. She was the one who took everything from her. Juniper hated her to the bone.

“I’ll make you pay, Hesper. For everything you did to me, I’ll make you pay!”

Juniper hysterically swept everything off the table and looked at her distorted reflection in the mirror. Sometimes, she did not understand how she had become like this.

But now that she had come so far, there was no turning back anymore.

With this thought in mind, Juniper reached out and smashed the mirror in front of her. Her right hand was already bloody and mangled, but she did not care. In the shattered pieces of the mirror, her face looked even more distorted.

‘Hesper... Don’t you cherish your child the most? Aren’t you trying to drive a wedge between me and my mother...? Well, I’ll make you feel the pain of losing a child. Just you wait!’

Juniper sneered and closed her eyes while taking a few deep breaths.

‘You made me do this.’

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Nothing happened for the next few days.

While Juniper didn’t do anything, Carter indulged in his romantic pursuits every day. There was something that Hesper did not understand. It should not be a problem for someone to indulge in a hedonistic lifestyle. If Carter was really reliable, he would not have fallen to the point where he had almost been replaced by his father’s illegitimate child.

Hesper enjoyed the peace and quiet. When having her office renovated, Benji clearly followed Renee’s suggestions, as the style suited Hesper’s tastes. Drawing in such an environment every day seemed to improve her mood a lot.

Rickard was still in a coma. With the deadline approaching in a month, Hesper became even more silent at home, for she was afraid that her son would ask her questions that she could not answer.

\*

Juniper had been lingering under Hesper's apartment for many days.

Originally, she thought that Renfrew would eventually come out, but unexpectedly, he had not even taken a step out of his house. The people that Juniper sent out to watch did not catch Renfrew leaving the place at all.

Juniper did miscalculate one thing. Renfrew studied and tested his programs at home every day. Whenever he came out, he would be accompanied by either Hesper or Jessie. Recently, Jessie had been busy with the studio, while Hesper was at the Duval Group. Renfrew did not want to bring trouble to them, so it went without saying that he would not come out himself.

When Juniper thought she would leave empty-handed again that day, she was surprised to see a small figure carrying a school bag, cautiously surveying the surroundings before walking out of the unit.

"It seems like luck is on my side today..." Juniper said as a smile played around her lips. Then, she burst out laughing boisterously, "See, Hesper. Even the heavens are helping me."

Meanwhile, Renfrew had just left the unit. Even though Hesper did not tell him anything, he knew that Rickard was in a critical condition. Although Hesper had contacted Myriade and asked for her help, it was obvious that nothing was resolved and they were trapped in a deadlock situation.

In any case, he had to go and see his daddy. If not, he would not feel at ease.

However, just when Renfrew took a few steps forward, a strange scent came. Before he knew it, he lost consciousness.

Juniper waited until Renfrew had collapsed on the floor before she went forward and picked him up. Seeing his sleeping face, she felt extremely satisfied and exclaimed in her heart how effective the medicine Carter gave her was.

She just scattered the medicine through the wind, and Renfrew fell unconscious after inhaling a small amount.

Juniper stuffed Renfrew into a sack and casually threw it into the back seat before driving away from the residential area.

She was in no hurry to inform Hesper of Renfrew's disappearance, nor would she tell her that he was with her. Juniper wanted to see how anxious and angry Hesper would become. The more urgent and furious Hesper was, the happier she would feel.

Just the thought of that scene excited her immensely.

As Juniper tapped the steering wheel with her index finger, unbeknownst to her, a manic smile appeared on her own face.

\*

By the time Hesper discovered Renfrew's disappearance, it was already night time.

Benji could not locate Renfrew either, so Hesper had no other choice but to ask for the camera footage from the security guard.

The cost of maintaining the residential area was high, and the cameras were regularly serviced. Despite this, for some unknown reason, a small segment of the footage had been erased.

Hesper was initially taken aback but quickly came to the realization that Renfrew could be responsible. However, Renfrew was not the type to disappear without a valid reason, which left Hesper wondering why she had not heard anything from him yet.

"Something must have happened."

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Renee grasped Hesper's arm tightly, but Hesper remained remarkably composed.

If Renfrew had come out on his own, he would have certainly gone to the company to search for her or Rickard. However, since he was not found in either location, there was only one possibility.

Someone took him away. But who would target Renfrew in Genecity?

Hesper attempted to sift through her memories, but a multitude of people flashed through her mind. Over the years, both she and Rickard had not exercised much restraint in their actions, making it possible for numerous individuals to target Renfrew, especially during such a tumultuous period.

These thoughts led Hesper to blame herself. Why hadn't she detected Renfrew's abnormal behavior earlier? Why hadn't she recognized the danger that surrounded her in Genecity? How could she have allowed Renfrew to stay home alone?

"Don't worry, Ma'am. I'll go call Benji now." Renee comforted her and then went to contact Benji, asking him to dispatch his men to look for Renfrew as soon as possible.

Renfrew's disappearance was no trivial matter. Even if Hesper were to go missing now, she would have the ability to protect herself. However, Renfrew was different. Despite his talents, he still needed at least a phone or computer to do his magic. The person who had kidnapped Renfrew would not have given him those things, so he had no means to fight back at all.

Hesper became more and more anxious as she thought about it. Renee sighed with a furrowed brow before sending a message to Nathaniel as well.

Hesper was no longer one of the Lanes, so Renee's resources were quite limited. However, the silver lining was that Nathaniel was in Genecity too. He was sent there by Matthew so that he could step in whenever she needed help.

Nathaniel rushed over immediately after receiving the call. Hesper was sitting blankly on the couch. She had sent all her men to look for Renfrew. She wanted to go with them as well, but Renee stopped her.

If Hesper went out now, there was a possibility that she might get taken away as well.

"Don't worry too much, Hesper." Nathaniel approached and took Hesper's hand. "I've already sent people out to search for him, and I'm also trying my best to restore the footage from the afternoon... I believe there will be results soon."

From the moment she received the news of Renfrew's disappearance, Hesper had been on the verge of collapse. She blamed herself for not thinking about it earlier. Renfrew was her biggest weakness. How could those people not lay a hand on him?

However, it was already too late. Nothing could be changed even if she regretted it.

"I'm sure the kidnapper wants something from you or Rickard since they took Renfrew away, so he'll be safe before you receive the kidnapper's call," Nathaniel said, squeezing Hesper's hand as he tried to comfort her. She felt a glimmer of hope from his words. Nathaniel was right. Whoever had taken Renfrew, they must want something from them. They just needed to wait for the time being.

As Hesper was comforting herself, her phone suddenly rang. She tried to calm herself down and answer it, but her fingers trembled as she pressed the button to answer.

"Hello?"

There was a noisy sound on the other end, followed by a familiar voice.

"Hi, Ms. Rivera." It was 013's irritating voice, laced with a smirk. "It's been a long time."

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"Have you been sleeping well during my absence? I mean, will you be able to sleep well tonight?"

"Give Renfrew back to me," Hesper said, her voice icy. "Don't force me to do something irrational to you."

Upon hearing Hesper's words, 013 let out a soft chuckle, his voice sounding flirtatious. "What irrational thing do you want to do to me, Ms. Rivera?"

He deliberately emphasized the three words “irrational thing.” There was a playful tone to the edge of his voice that would make others think of something else. However, Hesper was not in the mood to joke around with him. She asked him about Renfrew’s whereabouts, her voice thick with impatience.

“Don’t force me.”

013’s voice was tinged with pleasure. He knew Hesper must be very anxious right now and deliberately teased her with a playful laugh.

“Is Renfrew with you?” Hesper clenched her fists at 013’s voice. “If you have a problem, just come to me. Don’t touch my Renfrew. I’m telling you, if you dare to lay your hands on Renfrew, I’ll chase you to the ends of the earth!”

Sensing that Hesper’s emotions were getting out of control from her voice, Nathaniel patted her back and looked at her inquiringly about what had happened. Hesper turned her head and looked at Nathaniel. Just when she was about to say something, 013 spoke up with a smile.

“Don’t ever tell Nathaniel about me. I’m sure you don’t want your cute little boy to die just like that, right?” Hesper frowned and forced herself to calm down.

“Tell me, what do you want from me? I’ll say yes to everything as long as you’re willing to release Renfrew,” Hesper said through gritted teeth. “Even if it means risking everything, Renfrew is the only person I care about in this world. If something really happens to him...”

“Alright, Ms. Rivera. You don’t have to tell me these things,” 013 said impatiently. “I only want one thing from you, and it’s not your life. Doesn’t that sound like a good deal?”

‘He doesn’t want my life?’

Hesper was a little surprised. After all, at the beginning, 013 had shown intention of only wanting her life. Later, he had told her proactively that he was born in this world to kill her.

She did not know why, but she had a bad feeling.

“What do you think, Ms. Rivera?”

Nathaniel could not hear the voice on the phone, but seeing Hesper's hesitation, he comfortingly patted her wrist as if to tell her that he was there and for her not to be afraid.

Although she did not know what 013 wanted, and she had an intuition that what he wanted her to do was definitely not a good thing, he had Renfrew in his hands now, so she had to agree to his terms first no matter what.

"Okay. Just tell me what you want me to do."

"Very well." 013 chuckled. "This is what I want you to do. I want you to kill Rickard now."

\*

Meanwhile, Juniper slowly came around to her senses in the swaying back seat of the car. It took her a while to react before sitting up straight. She looked around at the car windows that were surrounded and anxiously tapped on the dashboard.

"Who are you? Where are you taking me to?"

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"If I were you, I'd stop wasting my energy." The dashboard lowered, and Juniper looked at Carter in surprise.

Carter typically wore suits that made him look charming, which was one of the reasons why Juniper was initially attracted to him. However, he was now dressed entirely in black, causing him to almost disappear into the darkness. Juniper couldn't help but feel that this change in appearance had somehow altered Carter's personality, making him seem like a completely different person despite having the same appearance.

"Carter?" Juniper could not remember what she was doing before she passed out. It took her a while before she came to her senses. "Where is Renfrew? I just caught him before I passed out. Where did you take him?"



A smile appeared on the corner of Carter's lips. "I thought I had no more use for you, but unexpectedly, you got Renfrew in your hands before your time to die. You really helped us a lot."

"Before my time to die?" Juniper's heart trembled. Only now did she realize she was a bit weak. There was a faint rolling sound coming from the trunk; she knew that Renfrew must be in there.

Carter hummed in pleasure. "I thought Big T would punish me severely since I failed to acquire the Duval Group. I didn't expect you to bring Renfrew with you, giving me the opportunity to redeem myself."

"Big T? What are you talking about, Carter? I don't understand a word." Juniper struggled desperately, but she couldn't use any strength. "What did you feed me?"

Carter was in a good mood, so he explained to Juniper patiently. "Do you still remember the software you used to contact 013? That's our organization's website."

'013? Carter is in cahoots with him?' Juniper was horrified. After all, Carter had always looked like a carefree playboy, and the Wilsons had nothing to offer. She thought only those outlaws would resort to such murderous acts.

"You don't know anything..." Carter sneered. "But you don't need to know anything now. You'll die soon, my dear wife."

She had thought of a hundred possibilities, but she never expected Carter to suddenly appear at this time and deliver another blow. Why did these things always happen when she was hopeful?

Everyone treated her like a fool. While they knew all the schemes and intrigues, she was always a step behind.

The dashboard slowly rose, as if blocking Juniper's unfortunate and foolish life. Tears of resentment rolled down her face, but she did not even have the strength to wipe them away.

There were two compartments in the car; it took all of Juniper's effort to turn around. Inside the trunk was Renfrew, who was still unconscious and bundled up in a burlap sack. Juniper began patting herself down, and when she found her phone on her person, she laughed.

After kidnapping Renfrew, Juniper had already searched his body, so she had already gotten his phone out. After all, she had heard that he was a computer genius. There was no way she would leave this potential threat to him.

Carter had certainly searched Renfrew as well and made sure he had no means of communication, but he had overlooked Juniper. Perhaps it was arrogance on his part, thinking that even if Juniper had her phone, she would not be able to do anything.

The dashboard completely separated the front and back spaces. Juniper struggled to turn around and opened a small hole in the burlap sack containing Renfrew before throwing her phone inside.

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Juniper had exhausted all her strength after she had finished everything. She sat on the leather seat and gasped for air.

At the moment, Renfrew was their only chance if they both wanted to survive. When the realization hit Juniper, she could not help but laugh at herself. If Renfrew did not wake up when they arrived at their destination, Carter would discover the phone and they'd be done for.

Juniper laughed silently with tears streaming down her face.

It was quite ironic that despite her cunning and belief that she could outmaneuver anyone, her survival now hinged on a young child who had not even fully developed his teeth yet. The more she thought about it, the more ridiculous she found it to be.

\*

Amidst everyone's watchful eyes, Hesper abruptly ended her phone call and sped off towards the apartment where Rickard resided.

"Hesper, please tell us what's going on. We can only help you if we know," Nathaniel implored from the passenger seat, observing Hesper's abnormal

behavior as she struggled to maintain a calm facade despite her trembling hands. However, this was not a testament to her strength, but rather to her barely-hanging-on state.

Hesper remained silent, biting her lip and shedding tears. Then, at a red light, Nathaniel surprised her by taking control of the steering wheel, causing her to comply and swerve the car to the roadside. Her mind reeled from the unexpectedness of Nathaniel's actions.

"Are you mad?! If another car appeared just now, we'd be dead!"

Fortunately, there weren't many cars on the road at night. Hesper's heart pounded rapidly. Nathaniel looked directly at Hesper and said, "Me? You're the one who's mad. Do you know how fast you were driving just now?"

Hesper fell silent for a moment and wiped the tears from her face with the back of her hand.

"Renfrew can't wait any longer. He's always been taken good care of since birth. He's the young master of the Duvals and the apple of Rickard's eye. He's never suffered any injustice." As she spoke, Hesper's self-blame grew stronger. "How can he handle those people from Daybreak?"

Nathaniel gently patted Hesper's back. A myriad of lights flitted across his black eyes under the streetlights.

"Renfrew can take care of himself. You don't have to worry too much about him."

Hesper rested on the steering wheel for a few seconds, then her phone suddenly vibrated. She pushed her messy hair aside and answered the call. It was from Renee. "What? You've found Renfrew?"

Nathaniel looked over at Hesper with a frown. Hesper felt a sudden relief, as if she had been given a breath of fresh air. She took a few deep breaths to calm down. Her tone also instantly became calm. "Okay, I'll go back now. Prepare a list of all the deserted areas with buildings."

"They've found him?" Nathaniel asked in surprise.

Hesper nodded in relief. "Fortunately, Renfrew managed to get a hold of a phone from somewhere and sent Renee his location. Although the phone will

probably be discovered soon, the message clearly indicates that they are close to their destination.”

“He’s amazing.”

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### A Spoonful of Sugar: Don't Beg for Love Chapter 557

While Hesper appreciated Nathaniel’s compliment about her son, her main concern was still to safely rescue Renfrew. Turning to him, she expressed her gratitude, saying, “We should head back now... I’m grateful for your intervention, Nate. If you hadn’t stopped me earlier, things might have taken a turn for the worse.”

Nathaniel appeared to pause briefly before flashing Hesper a gentle smile. “Don’t mention it. This is what I should do.”

After returning, Hesper followed the location and found an abandoned factory near the target point that looked the most suspicious. It was situated by a river in Genecity.

The place used to be an industrial zone, but due to urban redevelopment, most factories had been relocated to farther areas from the city, resulting in low human traffic in the vicinity.

“This should be the place,” Hesper said as she pointed at the factory. After that, she turned to Nathaniel and Renee. “To avoid them realizing that their location has been exposed, let’s leave early and split up. Renee, you and I will go through the main entrance of the factory. As for Nate, you’re going to lead the team to the riverside and wait for the targets. Is that okay?”

“Okay.”

With a concerned expression, Nathaniel stepped forward and added, “Should a dangerous situation arise, please make sure to prioritize your own safety... Renfrew is their weapon to threaten you. As long as he holds value to them, they won’t harm him easily.”

It went without saying that Hesper understood it more than anyone else. Even though they appeared to be harming Renfrew, the truth was that they were using him as a leverage to restrict her or force her to harm Rickard.

As a strategist, Hesper knew exactly what she should do and how to do it, but as a mother, she couldn't afford to care about anything else right now.

Nobody talked along the journey. Hesper and Renee sat in the cars. Hesper had never told them about anything, but there was an unsettling feeling stirring at the bottom of her heart.

The last time she had this kind of feeling was the day Rickard was poisoned in Antellon. Despite knowing Renfrew's location and bringing along a sizable group of people, she just could not shake off the uneasiness, and she did not know why.

Could it be that she had missed something?

Meanwhile, Renfrew had been exceptionally quiet after he woke up. Both he and Juniper were bound and tossed to the ground, yet he remained composed and did not throw a tantrum like other children. His eyes exhibited a level of serenity that surpassed even that of the adults.

Carter was not surprised. The apple didn't fall far from the tree. He was well aware of what Hesper was capable of, so it was normal for her son to be extraordinary.

"You're late. I thought you failed such an easy task again," 013 said as he walked out of the shadows. When he saw Carter, he said disdainfully, "Why did you bring her with you? You should've disposed of her."

Carter leaned in helplessly. "Trez, you're making it too difficult for me. We're in Halwanest, not Fredonia. Do you really think those people can't find me? I still need to use this identity after everything is over."

That being said, 013's eyes still displayed a hint of disdain. He looked at Juniper and Renfrew on the ground and asked nonchalantly, "Have you searched them? This child had learned from Myriade for some time. You shouldn't underestimate him."

When Juniper heard this, her heart skipped a beat. However, Carter waved his hand and reassured him. “Don’t worry, I handled it. I already searched them as soon as I caught them.”

Juniper breathed a sigh of relief, but then 013 added, “To be on the safe side, search them again. His mother is smart. I don’t think we should look down on him either.”

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Juniper and Renfrew were tied up back to back, so Juniper could not see Renfrew’s expression. His eyes were a little droopy, and he looked as if he had no idea why he was there.

Juniper was filled with despair when she heard what 013 said. Once Carter found her phone in Renfrew’s possession, they would know that she had betrayed them and it would be over for her.

The conversation between 013 and Carter earlier made it abundantly clear that she was nothing but a burden to them, and in the event that they found her phone in Renfrew’s hands, they would kill her without any hesitation.

Juniper closed her eyes as though she had accepted her imminent demise. At that moment, she felt like she was already dead.

“I’ve already searched through them,” Carter grumbled from behind. “Unlike Riley, I’m reliable. The Wilsons’ acquisition failure was unexpected. You have to acknowledge that Hesper was a wild card in this game, don’t you think?”

At this moment, Juniper felt like a beached fish that got thrown back into water all of a sudden. Renfrew was now sitting face-to-face with her since they had released him. Reluctantly, he gave her hand a reassuring squeeze to calm her nerves.

In the beginning, when Renfrew regained consciousness inside the sack, he noticed a phone next to his head and took a moment to process the situation before realizing his predicament.

Cracking the password and accessing the phone was easy for Renfrew. Upon realizing that the phone's owner was Juniper, he knew that something must have gone wrong and this phone was their only chance to escape. Though sending the location was not hard, Renfrew knew he only had one opportunity. Therefore, he thought it through and waited until the car came to a stop before sending out the location.

After doing so, he disposed of the phone.

It was a flawless plan, and Renfrew knew that there was nothing more he could do. Neither him nor Juniper were capable of escaping from the two big men on their own, especially with the possibility of other people lurking nearby. So, waiting for his mother to rescue him was his only option.

"Okay, don't be so paranoid. Have we heard anything from Hesper yet?" Carter had limited interaction with Hesper, so he mostly relied on others to provide descriptions of her.

013 shook his head. Based on what he knew about Hesper, she was not someone who would easily compromise.

While they were in the middle of their discussion, 013's phone rang. He immediately had a foreboding feeling when he saw that it was his boss calling. Upon answering the call, his suspicions were confirmed.

"Hesper is already here."

Upon hearing the news of Hesper's arrival, 013 stood up and turned to Renfrew, nodding with a smile. "Impressive. As expected of Hesper's kid. Despite the circumstances, you were able to send out a message... I'm not sure if it's your intelligence or Carter's lack of it."

"What? How is this possible?" Carter exclaimed, his face turning stern.

This place was not far from the city, and if Hesper really came looking for them, she would be here in less than half an hour.

"Take this brat and run. As for Juniper..." 013 said impatiently. "Bring her with us too. We can't allow her to go around the city spreading rumors about you. It may jeopardize your identity."

Carter cursed and put the hoods back on Juniper and Renfrew.

The restricted terrain made this location unsuitable for any physical confrontation. The only options were to move upstream or downstream along the river. However, anyone who controlled the water source could easily catch them.

“Head downstream,” 013 instructed without elaborating.

Carter was accustomed to following his orders, as despite his young age and dissociative identity disorder, everyone acknowledged 013’s competence.

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Even though they covered Renfrew’s head, he could still hear their conversation. Not only that, but he also had a good sense of direction, so he knew that they were going downstream.

As he followed after them, he hoped that he could find the phone that he had thrown away.

With that thought in mind, Renfrew did not struggle and allowed Carter to carry him. Although Carter sensed that Renfrew was exceptionally quiet and well-behaved, he felt something was off. However, he soon shrugged off the feelings since Renfrew did not have anything on him at the moment.

\*

After arriving at the factory according to the GPS, Hesper and Renee rushed in but found it in disarray. Apparently, the kidnapper had just left with Renfrew.

“How did they know we were coming? We were so close!” Hesper exclaimed. However, they were racing against time.

“This area is sparsely populated, so they can’t have gone far. You go upstream to search while I’ll go downstream to meet with Nathaniel. Let’s message each other if we find Renfrew,” she added.

“Okay, Ma’am.”



Hesper sent a message to Nathaniel, telling him that the kidnapper had left and that they might encounter each other soon. She urged him to be careful, but she did not receive a response.

As darkness crept in and enveloped the sky in a shroud of black, Hesper felt a gnawing sense of worry clawing at her insides.

Although Nathaniel was a grown man and had brought others with him, they did not know how many people they were up against. What if something went wrong? She could not let anyone else get hurt because of her.

With a determined mind, she hastened her steps downstream to meet with Nathaniel, hoping to find Renfrew or at least ensure everyone's safety. The area was sparsely populated and the broken lights cast eerie shadows on the river bank. The forest was so silent that it felt like every footstep was amplified. Hesper and the dozens of people behind her treaded cautiously, their senses on high alert.

Hesper's mind raced as she considered their next move. Had Renfrew's captors gone upstream? It seemed unlikely, but she could not rule it out. As she was about to voice her thoughts, her eyes caught a flicker of light in the distance. Her heart skipped a beat as she realized the only possible source of the light could be either 013 or Nathaniel and his team.

Hesper halted the bodyguards trailing behind her from rushing forward and said to them in a low voice, "Hold on, let's approach cautiously. We can't afford any more mishaps."

\*

"Two adults getting fooled by a kid like some clowns."

As the man took Renfrew from Carter's grasp, he held him like a puppy, almost weightless in his arms. Just moments ago, 013 had rendered Renfrew unconscious to prevent him from contacting Hesper. Now he was completely helpless.

Both 013 and Carter hung their heads, ashamed at the situation they found themselves in. They knew they had been outsmarted by a mere child. But they couldn't blame Renfrew entirely, as he had been coached by Myriade herself. The man's indulgence of Myriade had led to these embarrassing circumstances.

Of course, they couldn't voice such thoughts out loud. The man held Renfrew aloft, and in the dim, flickering light, his gaze fell upon the roiling river beside them.

"If something were to happen to Renfrew here, she wouldn't suspect me, would she?" he mused, his tone laced with uncertainty.

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Carter and 013 simultaneously directed their gazes towards the man, displaying a hint of surprise. Yet, the man's countenance remained devoid of any emotion as he advanced a step, with the turbulent river right beneath Renfrew's feet.

Renfrew was completely unconscious; even if he was aware, he wouldn't have a chance of survival in the swift water.

"Perhaps this isn't a wise idea," Carter said, hesitation laced thick in his voice. "Renfrew is the child of Rickard and Hesper. If he dies, it would be challenging to justify to both the Duvals and the Lanes."

"What have I got to do with it?" the man responded casually, lifting his head. "Explaining is your responsibility..." His voice trailed off.

"Big T?" 013 and Carter looked towards the man, who had suddenly stopped moving. They both had a premonition of impending doom. As they turned around, they saw Hesper standing nearby, observing them intently from across the riverbank.

Both sides were carrying lights, and the distance between them was close enough to make everything visible.

Nathaniel gave a helpless smile as he cradled Renfrew in his arms. Carter and 013 retreated a few steps, astounded by the spectacle that was unfolding before them—a conflict that rivaled the magnitude of a century-long war.

"You're quicker than I anticipated," Nathaniel remarked.

The sound of the wind grew so loud that it was almost deafening. From shock to numbness, the process for Hesper was much faster than she had imagined. She looked at Nathaniel on the other side of the river, feeling like she had never truly known him before.

Was he a friend who always looked out for her, a fiance she was forced to be with, or a liar?

“My people will arrive soon. You can’t do anything to me. Otherwise, you won’t be able to leave either.” Hesper took a few steps forward with a calm expression. “We can peacefully part ways tonight. Just give Renfrew back to me.”

There was no need for them to say too much to each other. From this moment on, all the previous emotions and trust would collapse in an instant. Including Nathaniel himself, from the moment Hesper met him, she had been trapped in this massive deception.

“Okay, since we’ve coincidentally run into each other, I promise I won’t harm your son.” Nathaniel also stepped forward and carelessly tossed Renfrew to Carter, who held onto him tightly and nervously watched the confrontation between Nathaniel and Hesper.

Nathaniel had kept his true identity hidden for years, never expecting to be exposed this way.

“But I still don’t understand why you came down so early.” Nathaniel pushed his glasses up. Gone was the kind and gentle friend who Hesper used to know. “I want to know why. You’ve suspected me for a long time... When did it start?”

Hesper’s laughter revealed a sense of amusement.

“Suspect you?” she repeated, realizing she should have seen the signs that pointed to Nathaniel’s involvement all along.

Every incident that occurred seemed to be linked to Nathaniel’s presence. Why did he always happen to show up in Genecity whenever she was in trouble? Why did Julian warn her to be cautious “around her”? And Seth...

Despite all the suspicion, Hesper never once suspected Nathaniel, the most suspicious of them all. She had even worried about his safety just moments ago.

“I was just afraid you’d die,” Hesper admitted with a hint of vulnerability in her tone. “But I’ve told you everything you wanted to know. It’s my fault for not seeing through your true intentions earlier. From now on, I won’t allow you to harm the people I care about.”

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