

Surprise 127

Chapter 127 There's Someone I Like

"And what about Courtney?" Britney was heartbroken, and her voice trembled as she pressed on, "Do you think she would be a better mother to Jordan than I would?"

Alexander's brows furrowed. After a moment of thought, he let out a hum and nodded. "Yes."

Efficiency was key when it came to solving problems, and Alexander knew this principle well. He also knew that the answer he just gave Britney would bring a swift end to their conversation, and seeing as he owed her no obligation to elaborate further on his deepest thoughts or feelings, his monosyllabic response sufficed.

As expected, and this was clearly much to Britney's dismay, she pressed no further.

Britney's fists were clenched as she marched her way from Alexander's office to the elevator. As far as she was concerned, she would have been Alexander's top choice for marriage if it weren't for Courtney.

The elevator doors were closing when a clear, youthful voice called out, "Wait!"

She reached out instinctively and pressed on the button to hold the doors open. Her mind tried to work out why the voice sounded familiar, and when she looked up, she saw the towering figure of a young man saunter into the elevator. He turned and nodded at her. "Thanks."

Upon seeing his face, Britney faltered. Her panic would have been obvious to the man if she weren't presently wearing shades.

"You..." she gasped.

"Yes?" He looked at her questioningly. "Do you know me?"

Britney's fists tightened at her sides. With her hat and shades in place, her face was almost entirely hidden from view, hence she denied it. "No, I don't know you at all."

She was well aware of the existence of doppelgangers, but the person who was currently in the elevator with her looked exactly like the missing Benjamin Ford.

But from the looks of it, he didn't seem to recognize her.

The elevator doors slowly opened with a 'ding', and Britney watched as the young man left without even turning back to look at her. She snapped out of her thoughts and walked toward the front desk, whereupon she asked, "Who was that guy? I thought the hotel was not receiving any more guests at the moment."

Penelope was working at the front desk today, and having heard Britney's question, she glanced over at the man who had just left. "Do you mean Oliver? He's a friend of Miss Hunter's, and President Duncan arranged for his stay here. He's not really a guest."

As far as the Sunhill Hotel staff were concerned, Oliver was staying at the hotel as a friend of President Duncan's, who had made the arrangements personally. They had no idea who Oliver really was, and

given that he was usually incognito, there weren't more than a handful of people who knew about his memory loss.

Britney's frown deepened.

How could he be a friend of Courtney's? He was clearly Benjamin Ford!

What if he had told Alexander about all the sleuthing he had done on Louis?

Britney paled at the thought of this and hastily made a call. "Jason," she said anxiously into her phone, "I think we may have a problem. I just saw Benjamin Ford."

Courtney slept through the entire day, and it was dark outside by the time she woke up. The light that came from behind the partition basked the bedroom in a warm glow. Her eyes fluttered open, and she was still drowsy with sleep when the faint smell of cooking wafted through the air.

She shuffled out from behind the partition and saw that Alexander was eating alone at the dining table. Her eyes fell on the spread laid out before him, which comprised three dishes, a large bowl of soup, a fruit platter and two dessert choices. "Why didn't you wake me up?" she asked accusingly.

"You woke up anyway," Alexander said as he lifted his gaze, an impish grin playing on his lips. "Much like how puppies and kittens do when they smell food."

"I can't believe you just compared me to puppies and kittens," Courtney grumbled, glaring at him as she pulled out a chair for herself. "You know, humans wake up on their own too when they smell food."

Alexander offered no argument. Instead, he ladled out a small bowl of soup and placed it in front of her. "Try this. It's chicken soup."

"Did you make this?"

"Sort of."

Courtney gaped at him. She had only asked as a matter of courtesy, and she certainly had not expected for a person like him, who had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, to make soup for her.

Seeing her astonishment, Alexander gave her a lopsided smile and clarified, "I had the kitchen make it."

At this, Courtney rolled her eyes. "If you think that means you've 'sort of' made soup, then you might as well rebrand the entire restaurant menu as 'the President's Special' the next time you decide to advertise the hotel. I'm sure all the women in Melrose City would line up at our doors just to cheer you on in your culinary endeavors."

Alexander smiled pleasantly, then asked, "Are you saying you're jealous?"

"J-jealous?" Courtney stuttered, then flushed as she realized what she had just told him. She scoffed in awkward denial before retorting, "Do you really think there are women out there who would line up for you? Don't flatter yourself. I was only exaggerating. I have nothing to be jealous of!"

"I certainly have no idea how many women would line up for me." Alexander looked at her in bemusement. "You, on the other hand, have plenty of men lining up for you. Don't you think you should explain yourself?"

He switched topics so abruptly that Courtney couldn't catch up with him. She blinked. "What are you talking about?"

He crossed his arms and stared at her assessingly. "Fifteen years old, then twenty-five. Do you have a thing about bringing a man home every ten years?"

Courtney's eyes widened when she finally made sense of what he was saying, and she sputtered, "I don't have a 'thing' for bringing men home. You know as well as I do that those were accidents!"

"Oh no, I'm well aware that the punk staying in my hotel was an accident, but how about the other guy? He's been getting on my nerves recently."

"Shay? Why is he getting on your nerves? The man's on a variety show!"

"Seems like you've been really busy these days. Take a look." Alexander's expression was bland as he clicked into a video on his phone and propped it up in front of her. If he was upset, he certainly didn't show it.

Confused, Courtney fixed her eyes on the screen and saw that it was a video clip taken from the variety show in which Shay was starring. It was a clip of his interview, and he was sitting in front of the camera wearing blue-and-white checkered pajamas.

The reporter asked, "You're only in your twenties. In light of your agency's public announcement that you are currently single and your recent clarifications on the dating rumors, would you mind sharing with us the qualities you look for in a woman?"

"I'm not really looking for anything in anyone right now," Shay answered in all seriousness. "There's someone I like."

"Is there?" The reporter grew excited and pressed on eagerly, "Who is it? Is she someone in the industry?"

"No, she's not. She took me in when I was a kid."

"She took you in? Is she your adoptive mother?" The reporter did not bother hiding his astonishment.

"No, of course no. She's only three years older than me, so she's more like a sister. We're not related."

Nothing more was said after that.

Courtney shrugged, then drank her soup nonchalantly as she explained, "It's no big deal. He's probably joking, as always. Even as a kid, he would tell others that I was his fiancée. I mean, you can't take him seriously—I'm practically an older sister to him!"

"Are you?" Seeing how unaffected she was, Alexander clicked on the return key and suggested plainly, "Why don't you read the caption for this news clip?"

Courtney swallowed another mouthful of soup and glanced at him curiously.

On his phone was a three-minute news clip with a caption that read: 'Shay Spencer reveals that he's been groomed since young, and that he's in love with his adoptive mother!'

Soup sputtered out of her mouth as she began to choke. In between coughs, she demanded incredulously, "Who is this reporter? This is ridiculous! Adoptive mother? Groomed since young? Who—"

"Do you still think this isn't a big deal?" Alexander asked dryly as he handed her a tissue.

Still coughing, Courtney took the tissue and hastily wiped her mouth. She looked up at Alexander sheepishly. "So, what do we do about it?"

"I've had all relevant clips and articles removed from all trending searches before I came over," he replied, his deep voice echoing off the walls.

Courtney stared at him in surprise. Slowly, she let out the breath she had been holding and finally said, "Thank you, and I apologize on Shay's behalf."

Seeing as Shay was signed under Alexander's agency, Courtney grimaced inwardly at the thought of how much resources had gone into putting out this fire that he had started.

However, Alexander's eyes darkened as he mused, "I find your apology and your word of thanks to be rather insincere."