

Extraordinary 661

[Chapter 661](#)

Somehow, Lucas' cold yet handsome face had reappeared in her mind.

Right then, Naomi, who was done with her scene, waved at her. "Ashlyn!"

Her voice was crystal clear, and the smile on her face made her seem like a lively girl.

Moreover, the clothes she was wearing for the character made her seem cheeky and adorable.

Ashlyn pointed at the bottles of water beside her and said, "Come and have a drink."

Right as Naomi took a step forward, a wave of dizziness struck her.

She halted in her tracks and tried to shake away the dizziness. However, her vision blurred even more, and slowly, she lost focus on the sight in front of her.

She swayed to the side and began falling to the ground.

The moment Jonathan, who was behind her, saw that, he quickly reached out to grab her waist. With a tug, he pulled her into his arms.

"Naomi, what's the matter?"

"I..." Naomi panted. Just as she tried to reply to him, darkness crashed into her, and she passed out.

By then, Ashlyn and Greg had already hurried over to them. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know. She suddenly passed out!" Jonathan said, an anxious look on his face.

A bad feeling settled in the pit of his stomach, and something in the back of his mind told him that her condition was related to the drug Helena had given to her.

But it's already been so long... When we went to the hospital for a checkup, the doctor said that there was a dormant period before the drug took effect. Is it now taking effect?

Ashlyn lowered her eyes and crouched down beside Naomi. She then reached out her fair fingers to gently press down on Naomi's wrist.

Almost everyone was staring at her. It was the first time the members of the film crew saw Ashlyn in her other role as a doctor.

She was serious when she was working, and her demeanor while taking Naomi's pulse somehow

convinced every anxious person at the scene to calm down.

A moment later, she uttered, "Send her to the hospital. There's poison in her. It must have taken effect."

Jonathan's heart sank. So I was right...

At the hospital, Ashlyn joined the medical team for the checkup. When she saw the results of the checkup, she froze.

However, in the next second, she pushed open the ER's door and stepped out.

When she raised her head, she spotted a familiar tall figure.

Lucas...

He had appeared in front of her so suddenly her heart skipped a beat. As if he had heard her footsteps, he turned to look at her. There were no visible emotions in those dark eyes of his.

When their eyes met, it felt as though time had stopped.

Ashlyn closed her eyes and forced the misery to the recesses of her mind.

For reasons unbeknownst to her, the things that happened between her and him kept replaying in her mind.

Ashlyn lowered her eyes and crouched down beside Naomi. She then reached out her fair fingers to gently press down on Naomi's wrist.

He had lost so much weight after she was cured of her poison, and yet, she had been so foolish; she never realized that he had been so grievously injured for her.

"How's Naomi?" came the man's hoarse voice, which echoed in the quiet corridor.

"The poison in her is starting to take effect, but we don't know what this poison is, so her case is a little tricky," Ashlyn told him. "There might be side effects."

"What side effects?" Lucas frowned.

"She might temporarily lose her sight or hearing. In fact, it might be other kinds of side effects... We'll have to wait for her to wake before we can do a full body checkup. Now that she's currently unconscious, we can't test how well her senses are."

A tired look crept onto Ashlyn's face.

She had always seen Naomi as her little sister, so she could not help but feel terrible to see Naomi on the bed, seemingly lifeless.

Although Ashlyn had a cold demeanor, she was not cold-blooded.

“Helena said she doesn't know what kind of drug it really is. Apparently, a mysterious individual gave it to her.” Lucas lowered his eyes as he stared at Ashlyn. There was something indescribable in the way he was looking at her.

“A mysterious individual... Ha,” Ashlyn sneered.

What a gesture of love from that mysterious person. If I was the one who had drunk the water back then, I would have been the one on the bed now.”

[Chapter 662](#)

At the Chapman residence, Hera was seated in a room in front of the piano.

As she anxiously looked at the middle-aged man in the room, she said, “I'll be joining the piano competition's preliminaries. Mr. Underwood, I still haven't thought about which piece to perform.”

Coincidentally, the international piano competition was located in Lake City, so all the best pianists had flocked to the city.

There would always be someone better than her.

Although Hera had won some awards in the past, there were plenty of master pianists in the world. Thus, she was rightly nervous.

Moreover, she knew quite a few of the master pianists who were about to join the piano competition, such as Olivia from the Warhol family.

“Just play the piece I taught you—Sounds of Ranging Winds. That piece is one of its kind, and as long as you master it, I'm sure that you'll be able to get a place in the rankings,” Michael confidently cheered Hera on.

He was an international piano teacher who had many students.

The Chapman family had spent big bucks to hire him to guide Hera. Hence, he gave Hera one of the pieces he had gotten a few years before to perform.

Bob Chapman, who was Hera's paternal grandfather, was famous in the world of piano. Hence, Michael was thrilled to find out that he was going to be teaching one of the Chapmans.

It seems like the rumors are true in that the Chapman family is slowly losing their power... Still, they're

rather rich.

Nevertheless, Michael intended to teach Hera properly. Although she was not overly talented, she was better than the other participants.

The difficulty level of Sounds of Ranging Winds would allow her to win against ninety percent of the participants. With his guidance, Michael was sure that Hera would be able to make swift improvements.

Even if she could not perform the piece as wondrous as he, she could still show the audience the intensity of the piece.

Therefore, Michael was sure that Hera would be able to at least make a name for herself at the international piano competition with the quality of her performance.

For the sake of the competition that would take place the next day, Hera kept practicing and practicing.

"It's just the preliminaries tomorrow, so there's no need for you to be that nervous. Just play the piece as you usually do," Michael reassured her. "I've given you three pieces with ascending difficulty levels. They're meant for the preliminaries, the second round, and the finals."

"I got it, Mr. Underwood," Hera quickly replied.

At the same time, at the Warhol residence, Olivia was leisurely sipping her tea.

Mabel sighed. "My dear daughter, what's the matter with you? The preliminaries are tomorrow, so why aren't you practicing now?"

"What's the point in that? Will I be able to improve by doing last-minute practices? Moreover, my piano playing is not bad in comparison with my peers in the country. Even my teacher said that I'm one of the best." Olivia took another sip of her fruit tea. "So, Mom, you don't need to worry about it at all. I'll definitely be able to get a good result."

Nevertheless, Michael intended to teach Hera properly. Although she was not overly talented, she was better than the other participants.

"There's always someone better than you, Olivia. You can't let your guard down. If you get good results from this competition, the other socialites will surely admire you. Look at Hera Chapman. The painting she made sold for hundreds of thousands. Many families were jealous," Mabel said, trying to convince Olivia to start practicing.

"Oh, right. Mom, she's in the piano competition as well. I heard that she's not supposed to qualify for it, but she asked for a favor from Mr. Hoffman and his wife to join it." A look of disdain then crossed Olivia's face. "Why should I envy a woman like her? Watch me defeat her!"

When Mabel realized her daughter was not going to heed anyone's advice, she shook her head in disappointment.

The next morning, the participants of the competition woke early in the morning and headed to the site of the event.

It was held at Lake City's theater.

The theater was wide and had the capacity for tens of thousands of people. Thus, music lovers from various countries in the world came together to watch the competition.

A global competition like this would naturally catch the attention of many.

Many media companies of varying countries had come to record the scene as well.

[Chapter 663](#)

After resting for the night, Ashlyn woke up in the morning. She then picked a set of clothes before matching her makeup to her chosen attire.

Once she was done, she drove her Land Rover to Lake City's theater.

Upon reaching the theater, she realized that tons of luxury cars were already parked in the parking lot.

After getting out of the car, Ashlyn headed straight to the registration counter.

The staff there would supposedly hand her a card meant for judges. Unlike the other judges, she did not have an assistant, nor was she a representative of a company.

Two women were sitting by the registration counter. One of them adjusted her glasses before glancing at Ashlyn. Instantly, a look of surprise flashed past her face.

This contestant's beautiful! The participants this year are all so attractive!

"Your ID card."

Ashlyn handed them her ID card, but the two women then rolled their eyes and hissed, "Your name isn't here."

Almost in the blink of an eye, they had lost interest in Ashlyn. "Are you an imposter? Security!"

"I'm not here to join the competition," Ashlyn said, shaking her head.

"Then why are you here at the registration counter? Are you trying to stir up trouble, or do you find it fun to waste our time?" one of the women questioned, glaring at Ashlyn as she threw her pen aside.

Her shrilly voice was loud, so she caught the attention of many around her.

Instantly, the crowd around began commenting on Ashlyn.

“What's going on?” Right then, Ashlyn heard a voice dripping with displeasure coming from behind her. Instinctively, she turned around, only to see Eric Hoffman and his wife walking toward them.

The one who spoke was none other than Eric.

“Sir, this woman here is trying to stir up trouble. She's not here to join the competition, but she came to the registration counter to register her name,” one of the two women behind the counter cried out.

“Here to stir up trouble?” Eric narrowed his eyes as annoyance showed in his eyes.

He was the director of the theater, and for someone to raise hell on his territory meant that someone was trying to humiliate him.

His irked gaze then drifted in the direction the woman behind the counter pointed to, and soon, his eyes landed on the figure of a tall woman.

The woman had her back facing him, so he could not see her face. Thus, he adopted a cold tone and uttered, “Kick her out right away. Why are you making a fuss instead?”

Just then, the organizer, Gabriel, ran over and politely greeted the tall woman, “Ms. Saunders, what's going on?”

His words were like a bolt from the blue that left the crowd flabbergasted.

Everyone had heard about Madeline Saunders.

Initially, Gabriel was about to supervise the setting up of the competition. However, a glance to the side made him realize that someone was trying to put Ashlyn in a tight spot. He was startled by what he had seen, and he nearly dropped his phone in shock. No one knew how tough it had been for them to invite Madeline Saunders to the competition.

The one who spoke was none other than Eric.

“Sir, this woman here is trying to stir up trouble. She's not here to join the competition, but she came to the registration counter to register her name,” one of the two women behind the counter cried out.

Yet, those foolish people were trying to stop her from entering the place.

“It's fine. I'm just having a little trouble with getting the judge's card,” Ashlyn muttered nonchalantly.

The arrogant woman who had assumed that Ashlyn was one of the participants was dumbfounded. The colors rapidly drained from her face.

“Y-You're Madeline Saunders?”

No wonder I can't find her name in the list of participants! She's one of the judges, Madeline Saunders! Who would've thought that the renowned Madeline Saunders is such a young woman?

The way she was described as a master pianist made everyone assume that she was a middle-aged woman.

By then, Eric had figured out what was going on. A smile quickly found its way to his face as he walked toward Ashlyn and said, “Ms. Saunders, my sincerest apologies. This was all just a misunderstanding.”

He then stretched out his hand, about to shake Ashlyn's hands, but just as he lifted his head to look at her face, he froze.

The woman in front of him had delicate features and a pair of cold eyes.

Her red lips made her skin fairer than it already was.

Her face and her aloof demeanor... Isn't this Richard's godsister? Why is she suddenly Madeline Saunders?

Eric's hand froze in midair. He did not know whether to retract it or to continue shaking her hand.

Nevertheless, Ashlyn only gave him a brief glance. “My pleasure.”

[Chapter 664](#)

“Y-You...” Eric mumbled, not quite knowing what to say. He prided himself on being worldly-wise, but even he had never gone so red in the face before. “Will Mr. Shaw be coming too?”

“It's only the preliminary rounds,” Ashlyn scoffed, her gaze cold and distant.

Eric's expression immediately darkened. What Ashlyn had meant was that something as insignificant as the preliminary rounds didn't warrant the presence of both her and Richard.

“Yes, yes,” Eric replied. “You're right...”

Oh, my goodness. Me and my big mouth! I should've kept it shut instead of asking such dumb questions. D*mn it!

In fact, never in Eric's wildest dreams did he think that Richard's godsister would turn out to be the

famous Madeline Saunders.

He couldn't help but think of the Chapman family again, a memory that left him shaking his head dejectedly.

My luck has been on a downward spiral ever since I got involved with the Chapman family. I really ought to keep my distance from them!

A while later, the receptionist from before politely handed Ashlyn a judge's card. "My sincerest apologies, Ms. Saunders. I didn't mean to offend you earlier. I hope you can forgive me."

There wasn't anyone in the music industry who didn't want to get to know Madeline Saunders, yet the receptionist was blind to have made things difficult for her. The feeling of regret began to sink in fast.

As the receptionist was a lowly employee in the theater, it had taken her a great deal of bootlicking to clinch the task of issuing passes to the contestants.

Alas, she never expected that she'd mess with the wrong person.

Madeline Saunders is someone I absolutely couldn't afford to offend.

Meanwhile, Gabriel was about to accompany Ashlyn into the theater when the latter saw the Chapmans waltzing in with Hera.

As soon as the sharp-eyed Sisley saw Ashlyn, a look of disdain appeared on her face.

Hera had dreaded bumping into Ashlyn, and now that she did, she felt even more awful.

After all, she hadn't told anyone in her family that Ashlyn was none other than Madeline Saunders.

Unsurprisingly, Lydia, the wife of the second eldest son of the Chapman family, had also noticed Ashlyn. "Wow, I guess any Tom, Dick, and Harry are allowed to participate in this competition. Do people not know that this is a prestigious, international competition meant only for the world's best pianists? Why are there still deluded individuals who think they're in the same league as the professionals? It's all so ridiculous!"

Anthony's brother, Benjamin Chapman, also had a scowl on his face. "How annoying! It's such a killjoy to run into a jinx!"

It was clear that the Chapmans hated Ashlyn with a vengeance, and anyone could tell that they were mocking her.

The crowd, however, was silent as they gaped at the Chapman family.

Goodness gracious, has this family gone stark raving mad? Or do they not know the real identity of Madeline Saunders?

People like Eric were still reeling from the slap in the face, so naturally, they couldn't wait to see how Ashlyn would deal with the Chapmans.

As such, no one even bothered to warn them.

Knowing that their family had produced generations of scholars and accomplished pianists, the Chapmans continued to act all high and mighty.

Madeline Saunders is someone I absolutely couldn't afford to offend.

Hera was the only exception, her face hot and flushed as she looked on in dread.

Unfortunately, she had no guts to tell her family the truth and had no choice but to make her way to the registration counter.

To everyone's surprise, Ashlyn merely shot a cold glance at the Chapmans.

She barely acknowledged them and seemed completely unfazed by their words.

The next moment, Ashlyn strode into the theater with Gabriel accompanying her.

A look of contempt returned to Sisley's face. "Isn't she just another contestant? What gives her the right to have Mr. Watson accompany her?" she scoffed, as though it was beneath her to talk about Ashlyn. "Haha. Some people are so shameless that they'd use their good looks and youth to get ahead in life!"

Again, everyone was stunned by Sisley's words.

Wow! She's brave! Then again, who wouldn't want to accompany Madeline Saunders? As much as we want to, we aren't good enough to be seen with her!

The truth was, Ashlyn couldn't be bothered to deal with the eccentric Chapman family.

They might look refined and sophisticated on the outside, but deep down, they were all selfish brutes who'd resort to any means to gain personal benefits.

Bob was the best proof of that.

He remained in the hospital till this day while Anthony ended up in prison.

As it turned out, Anthony had acted so rashly and hurt his father because Sisley had been sowing discord relentlessly.

[Chapter 665](#)

There was no doubt that Sisley was a cruel, ruthless woman.

She provoked Anthony into committing a crime so that he could be sent to prison, thus resulting in one less person fighting over the family inheritance.

Who knew what other evil plans Sisley had in mind?

Ashlyn didn't want to care about the Chapmans at all. If it weren't for Bob, she'd have rounded up the entire family and thrown them into a foreign country.

Try as she might, she never could feel any closeness with them.

After settling into her seat where the panel of judges was seated, Ashlyn held her forehead as she felt a headache coming on.

There were five judges on the panel, all of whom were world-renowned master pianists with numerous accolades to their names.

Soon, the audience had filed in and packed the auditorium to capacity.

International competitions usually had seats set aside for the press, family, and friends. Thanks to that, Sisley and the rest of the Chapmans could sit in the dedicated area.

Unfortunately, they had only just taken their seats when the Warhol family waltzed in and sat beside them.

"Oh, my! What a coincidence!" Mabel exclaimed while turning to smile at Sisley.

"Indeed! Hera loves playing the piano, and so does Olivia. Hera signs up for the competition, and Olivia follows suit. Isn't that uncanny? It almost seems like your family's copying us!" Sisley replied sarcastically.

Mabel had long known what Sisley was like and tried her best to keep her anger in check. "In that case, all these other contestants who've learned piano and come for the competition must have followed in Ms. Chapman's footsteps too! Wow, Ms. Chapman had better win the competition. Otherwise, she'd be letting down everyone who copied her!"

Sisley was so livid that she almost choked on her breath. In the end, she managed to force an awkward smile. "Oh, Hera is a very skilled pianist. She's not like those who lack a strong foundation because they've only picked it up recently."

"But if she's so good, why hasn't she reached her grandfather's level? Ah! Sorry! I accidentally blurted out the truth," Mabel exclaimed before covering her mouth apologetically.

Sisley had only wanted to show off and seek Mabel's attention, but alas, all she got was fury surging through her.

Too angry to speak, she turned her gaze to the judges' panel. I heard that Ryan Yates, the Piano Prince, is one of the judges. Now, that's exciting!

However, as soon as she did, her eyes almost popped out of her head.

She suddenly grabbed Mabel's hand and stammered, "A-Am I seeing things? I-Is that Madeline Saunders?"

"Yes, and she's very young. Olivia told me that Ms. Saunders was in charge of creating and producing Lake City's National Day Gala Night. Thanks to her, the gala was a resounding success."

Since she was unaware of the relationship between the Chapmans and Ashlyn, Mabel happily continued, "What's even more shocking is that Madeline Saunders turned out to be one of the most popular influencers, Ashlyn Berry! Isn't that amazing? Who'd have thought of that?"

Sisley and Lydia stared at each other as they felt their faces burning up.

Sisley was so livid that she almost choked on her breath. In the end, she managed to force an awkward smile. "Oh, Hera is a very skilled pianist. She's not like those who lack a strong foundation because they've only picked it up recently."

No one but the two women could hear the crisp, loud slaps on their faces.

The pain was intense, and they were in absolute agony.

Not only was Ashlyn one of the judges, but she was also Madeline Saunders.

It was all so unbelievable, and yet, it was the truth.

After all, they could see Ashlyn sitting at the seat for the judges' panel, looking confident but humble.

When they recalled the awful things they had said to Ashlyn earlier, Sisley and Lydia wanted nothing more than to have the ground open up and swallow them whole.

They had foolishly thought they could embarrass Ashlyn in front of the crowd, but in retrospect, they realized that everyone might have been laughing at them instead.

Soon, the other judges showed up one after another.

Ashlyn was still poring over the competition schedule when she noticed the chairs on either side of her

getting pulled out.

A man and a woman took the seats at the same time.

On Ashlyn's left was Laylah Maag, a fifty-year-old famous pianist from Maredania. Despite her age, she was still full of energy, as evidenced by her red dress which exuded so much enthusiasm and passion. In fact, no one would be able to tell her age from just her appearance.

"Maddy, we meet again!" Laylah exclaimed as she gave Ashlyn a big hug.

They had met at a large-scale piano competition and quickly developed a mutual admiration for each other's work.

Knowing how passionate foreigners could be, Ashlyn promptly returned the hug.

[Chapter 666](#)

All of a sudden, a sonorous voice rang out. "Maddy?"

Stunned, Ashlyn let go of Laylah and looked to her right.

To her surprise, she saw a handsome man staring at her with a sharp, probing gaze.

He had attractive eyes, a straight nose, and blue streaks in his hair which were particularly eye-catching and fashionable.

The one thing that stood out the most, though, was the diamond stud on his left ear that sparkled brightly.

Ashlyn couldn't help but cock an eyebrow. Wow. Who knew there'd be such a stylish pianist?

Before she could say anything, the man smiled and extended his hand. "Hi. I'm Ryan Yates."

"I'm Ashlyn Berry," Ashlyn replied as she shook his hand. Their wrists were equally slender and pale, yet they looked so beautiful under the illumination of the light.

After the brief handshake, both of them withdrew their hands almost immediately.

Shocked, Ryan didn't know why his heart had skipped a beat earlier before it started hammering away in his chest.

He could feel the excitement surging up through him.

How is her skin tone just like mine?

Everyone in the Yates family had always had porcelain white skin, but this was the first time Ryan had met a woman as pale as he was.

Well, well, well. I must say Ashlyn Berry sounds even more intriguing than Madeline Saunders!

Ryan had, on several occasions, pictured how his first meetings with Ashlyn might go, but never once did he imagine it to be like now.

He almost thought he had merely met a woman with the same name.

According to what Ryan had heard from Mary and Penelope, Ashlyn was the epitome of evil. Not only did she bully them incessantly, but she was also capable of committing acts of unspeakable depravity. Despite that, they claimed that they continued to treat her with love and respect.

However, the woman in front of Ryan looked nothing like the monster Mary and Penelope had described. Instead, she was as pretty as a doll, with sparkling almond-shaped eyes and a calm, steady gaze.

Before long, the host had stepped onto the center of the stage.

It was common practice for big competitions to be recorded and streamed, going so far as to partner with various broadcasting platforms to get the content out.

Because of that, the host had no time to waste. After formally introducing the judges and making his opening speech, he started the competition without further ado.

Olivia would be lying if she said she wasn't nervous. She had seemed calm in front of Mabel the day before, but that was all just an act.

However, as more contestants got to perform their pieces, Olivia gradually relaxed.

After all, she had heard a lot of flaws in their playing.

It might have been thanks to the recent intensive training, but Olivia could now more or less make out each contestant's piano skill level.

More importantly, Olivia knew she had to deliver a perfect performance. The Frasers had shown up to support her, and knowing that Kate and Lochlan were watching and cheering her on, Olivia couldn't afford to make any mistakes.

He almost thought he had merely met a woman with the same name.

The contestants took to the stage to perform one after another.

Coincidentally, Hera and Olivia found themselves lined up together.

Soon, it was Hera's turn, and she walked onto the stage confidently in a pretty pink dress.

Once she sat down at the piano, her fingers glided gracefully on the black and white keys as she started playing her song.

Melodious music instantly resonated through the theater.

Olivia listened intently backstage, her face getting paler with every second.

What? How could Hera have improved so much? Didn't we use to be on the same level? H-How is this possible?

Just as her imagination continued to run wild, Hera returned backstage with a pass to advance to the next round.

Olivia took a deep breath to calm her nerves and stepped onto the stage.

“Warm greetings to the honorable judges. The song I'll be performing is First Crush,” she announced before taking a bow.

When Olivia raised her head, the lady sitting in the front row caught her attention.

Despite looking elegant and refined in her white dress, the lady's face was void of expression, making it impossible to read her.

Nevertheless, Olivia felt a chill run down her spine.

[Chapter 667](#)

Ashlyn Berry! Madeline Saunders! That's her in the flesh! Oh, my goodness!

Olivia's lips began to tremble. For some reason, she didn't want Ashlyn to look down on her.

Seconds later, Olivia regained her composure and sat down at the piano.

With both her hands on the keys, a rich and smooth melody soon followed.

As soon as the piece ended, Olivia couldn't help but stare nervously at the judges.

Ashlyn was the first to give a score of seven point five.

The other judges, too, gave Olivia a score of either seven or eight.

That might not be anything to boast about, but her score wasn't low either.

If Ashlyn had given a low score, Olivia's initial plan was to file a complaint against her for abusing her power to avenge personal grudges.

To her surprise, Ashlyn's scoring was fair and sensible.

Olivia was still trying to make sense of the situation when Ashlyn's crisp, cold voice rang out.

“Your performance style is pretty good and expressive. My only wish is that you had picked a song that suited you more. If you don't think you can showcase your skills through a difficult song, pick something easier that gives you a chance to shine. You can also remind yourself to slow down when you're playing. It's normal to feel nervous when you're on stage, and your playing speed inadvertently increases along with your heartbeat. Therefore, if you don't make a conscious effort to slow yourself down, you'd only become more prone to making mistakes. Don't fall into that vicious cycle.”

Olivia's eyes widened as she listened intently.

Ashlyn's advice was professional and pertinent, and she had carefully dissected Olivia's strengths and weaknesses.

After hearing all that, Olivia felt a moment of clarity and enlightenment.

Madeline Saunders, huh? She truly has lived up to her reputation.

“Thank you,” Olivia said before taking a bow and going offstage.

Hera, who had gone to sit with her family in the auditorium, glared at Olivia in annoyance.

When her performance ended earlier, Ashlyn neither commented nor paid much attention to her.

It was awful enough that Hera had to be judged by Ashlyn, but the latter only made a short comment that Hera had done fairly well.

That was the last straw for Hera.

Skilled pianists often find themselves trapped in a vicious circle when they try to perfect their techniques. And more often than not, all they needed was for someone to point out their mistakes and enlighten them.

Olivia was the best example of that.

In any case, Hera and Olivia had successfully advanced to the semi-finals, much to the delight of the Chapmans and Warhols.

After all, given the reputation of their families, it'd be a total embarrassment if the ladies had gotten kicked out in the first round.

Even if they didn't win the competition, they could still take comfort in knowing that they were good enough to be sent to the semi-finals.

Olivia's eyes widened as she listened intently.

Ashlyn's advice was professional and pertinent, and she had carefully dissected Olivia's strengths and weaknesses.

Just then, the host announced, "All right. Let's welcome our next contestant!"

The next moment, the audience saw a thin girl walking onto the stage.

She wore a princess dress that perfectly accentuated her figure while bringing out her young, feminine charm. Naturally, everyone was eager to see her face and find out how beautiful she was.

Alas, when the girl finally lifted her head and let the spotlight shine on her, the audience felt their breath hitch in their throats.

The girl's face was wrapped tightly with bandages, and no one could deny that it was a terrifying sight.

Most of her face was hidden, revealing only her forehead and a pair of bright, sparkling eyes.

Even though they were the eyes of a young girl, they told stories of the cruel world and the vicissitudes of life.

Beneath all that, however, remained a trace of warmth and hope.

The more they scrutinized her, the more the audience felt an uneasiness in their chest.

Ryan, on the contrary, clenched his fists tightly.

As soon as he laid eyes on the girl, the sense of familiarity he had when he saw Ashlyn washed over him once again. It didn't even matter that he couldn't see the girl's face—he felt it all the same.

That was such a strange feeling, yet he had already experienced it twice in one day.

[Chapter 668](#)

He did not understand what was happening.

When he saw Penelope and Mary, he had never experienced this kind of feeling. On the contrary, he

would feel that the mother and daughter's greedy and foolish acts were repulsive. Their actions make him feel disgusted.

Meanwhile, Ashlyn narrowed her almond-shaped eyes slightly. The figure on the stage seemed too familiar to her.

Even though her face was wrapped in bandages, Ashlyn could recognize who she was.

It's her? Why did she join this competition as well? Shouldn't she be overseas?

Just then, the girl on stage began to introduce herself as she said, "Hello, everyone. My name is Charlotte. I hope everyone likes this piano piece I'm going to perform. I compose this myself, but I haven't given it a name. I especially like this song because it gives me strength during the toughest period of my life. Till now, it has always accompanied me."

Ashlyn stared motionlessly at the girl on stage. She didn't know that Charlotte could play the piano.

Meanwhile, Joseph, seated in the third row of the audience seat, gave the girl on stage a thumbs up.

Charlotte, who was previously anxious, curled her lips slightly.

After she calmed herself down, she sat down at the piano.

Kate and Lochlan came to watch the competition as well.

She was particularly fond of Olivia. Thus, since Olivia had participated in the competition, it was natural for Kate to give Olivia her support.

When she saw Charlotte on stage, she could not help but sneer, "Does she think she could perform well? Olivia is the one that can play very well."

Lochlan was shocked to see Charlotte on stage. I know Charlotte could play the cello, but when did she learn to play the piano and compose songs as well?

As he was often busy with work, he did not have the time to ask much about things related to Charlotte.

Did she learn it while I was busy?

After a while, he still couldn't find an answer to the questions in his mind. However, he was currently not in the mood to give it more thought.

He only wanted to listen quietly to her girl playing the piano.

Thus, he focused his gaze on the young girl on stage, wanting to see her shine.

As Charlotte was seated at the piano quietly, she closed her eyes slightly.

A range of musical notes started to appear in her mind while she started to play a captivating melody that sounded as if it had a life of its own.

Her delicate and elegant fingers moved across the black and white keys quickly. Upon hearing the melancholy in the piano piece, everybody in the room quieted down.

It was as if there was something magical about Charlotte's performance, and the melody itself could penetrate people's hearts the moment one heard it.

The audience was thoroughly engrossed in the heavenly music.

Even those people, who did not have a clue about music, were fascinated by Charlotte's performance.

Only Hera was stunned. She stared at Charlotte in shock.

This piece she's playing... sounds so familiar.

It was similar to the tune of Sounds of Ranging Winds given to her by Michael. The two piano pieces had similar tunes and notes, but the only difference was that Michael's piece did not give off a sense of melancholy.

Lochlan was shocked to see Charlotte on stage. I know Charlotte could play the cello, but when did she learn to play the piano and compose songs as well?

Precisely because of the melancholy in Charlotte's piece, it was more mesmerizing and wonderful in comparison.

Soon, Charlotte finished playing her piece.

Immediately, rounds of thunderous applause reverberated through the air.

There were even music enthusiasts who whistled and cheered for Charlotte.

The young girl stood up and bowed elegantly to express her gratitude.

"It's wonderful! It's a splendid performance!" Laylah, who was sitting on the left side of Ashlyn, stood up in excitement. She uttered, "I'd immediately guarantee your place in the finals! There's no need for you to participate in the preliminary rounds with your standard."

It was clear that Laylah was overly excited as she had not seen someone with so much potential over the last few years.

In this competition, the judges had the authority to guarantee candidates a spot in the finals. Each of the judges could do so for one candidate.

Laylah was simply over the moon. Her eyes were filled with admiration for Charlotte. "You are exceptionally gifted. When I look at you, you remind me of Maddy. When she was standing in front of me back then, she..."

As she spoke, her eyes lit up brightly as she felt as emotional as the time when she first met Ashlyn years ago. Misty-eyed, she instinctively hugged Ashlyn, who was sitting beside her. "Maddy, I didn't think I would meet someone who has the same potential as you. I am extremely thrilled. Sorry, I know I'm getting emotional," she continued,

[Chapter 669](#)

Ashlyn comforted and patted Laylah. She uttered in a calm tone, "Dear, calm down. This kid indeed is gifted."

Ryan didn't expect Laylah to get so agitated as well. Nevertheless, he was feeling extremely excited too.

He put his pride as the Piano Prince aside and picked up the microphone. "Charlotte, may I ask when you composed this?"

"I composed it when I was sixteen years old. During that time, I had some ideas about composing, but my skills are mediocre... So I know there are many flaws within the piece." Charlotte spoke in a bashful manner.

It was difficult for her to muster up the courage to go onto the stage and join this competition. All credits had to go to Joseph and Fae for encouraging her to do it.

Without their encouragement, she wouldn't have had the courage to stand on the stage.

Fae, who was sitting in the auditorium, was looking at the young lady emotionally, her heart swelling with pride and happiness.

She could not help but hold her husband's hand. "That was so wonderful of Lottie."

James was much calmer in comparison. "The judges have not given their scores yet."

Ryan beamed and looked at Charlotte. Even the blue hair on his forehead seemed exceptionally lively. "The melody was perfect. I like it and appreciate it a lot."

Other judges gave Charlotte many compliments as well.

Except for Hera who was seated below, all the people around her were cheering and clapping for

Charlotte.

It sounded the same as Sounds of Ranging Winds. How did it become a work of Charlotte? She did it when she was sixteen? Is she a genius? Can a sixteen-year-old compose piano pieces? Aren't you taking the joke too far?

There was pent-up anger within her. She rose to her feet all of a sudden and shouted, "She's lying!"

The accusation shocked everyone as they looked toward Hera in shock.

She held her chin high and looked arrogantly at Charlotte as she continued, "The name of this melody is known as Sounds of Ranging Winds. It is the work of my mentor, Michael Underwood."

Upon hearing that, everybody was startled and gasped in unison before gazing at Charlotte in a different light.

"Everything about being a genius is fake after all."

"That's right. How can a sixteen-year-old know how to compose piano pieces?"

"Nowadays, people are willing to say anything just to be famous."

Charlotte's face turned pale. She had never heard of Sounds of Ranging Winds before. The piece that she had played just now was indeed composed by her.

She began clenching her fists tightly as her mind went blank.

No. That is not true.

Suddenly, she met Joseph's encouraging gaze.

It was as if her troubled heart had found some comfort immediately.

He seemed to be telling her not to be afraid and be herself bravely.

In the blink of an eye, her racing heart gradually began to calm down, and her urge to run away slowly dissipated.

It sounded the same as Sounds of Ranging Winds. How did it become a work of Charlotte? She did it when she was sixteen? Is she a genius? Can a sixteen-year-old compose piano pieces? Aren't you taking the joke too far?

You can do it, Charlotte! You definitely can! You just need to express yourself! Voice out your thoughts bravely.

Ashlyn also frowned, feeling worried for the young lady.

Charlotte had experienced severe emotional trauma. Besides, she was disfigured after the incident as well.

Ashlyn could not help but wonder how Charlotte had mustered her courage and strength to be able to stand on the stage and face so many people.

She didn't expect that Charlotte would be accused by someone.

Although Ashlyn had never heard of the piece that Hera mentioned, she instinctively believed that Charlotte did not plagiarize anything.

Ryan also did not wish for the genius to meet her downfall so soon. He hesitated before asking, "What have you got to say, Charlotte?"

The young lady, who had bandages over her face, chewed on her lip. Her eyes were filled with fear. But after some time, she managed to compose herself.

Just as Ashlyn was about to stand up and said that it was not the right time to question Charlotte because the latter had a mental health issue.

However, Charlotte spoke up. Her voice was clear and crisp that carried her own unique charm as she exclaimed, "I did not plagiarize that. I've never heard of Sounds of Ranging Winds. I composed this piece on my own. I-I can confront the person on this matter!"

[Chapter 670](#)

She had the manuscript. After all, she composed the piece without much thought.

She even tore and threw away the manuscript after that.

However, she couldn't bear discarding it, so she retrieved it after that. Since she could easily lose it if she just slipped it in between the pages of a book, she snapped a photo of it too.

After she did all of that, she threw the manuscript away again.

Never had she expected someone would accuse her of plagiarism.

Seeing Charlotte's obstinance, Hera smiled mockingly. "Since it's your wish to be proven wrong the hard way, I'll give it to you!"

With that, she dialed Michael's number. "Mr. Underwood, I'm at the venue of the competition and need urgent help from you. Remember to bring evidence that you composed Sounds of Ranging Winds."

Michael was puzzled. "Didn't I tell you to perform it during the finals? Why did you decide to perform it so soon?"

He had pressing matters to handle, so he didn't watch Hera's performance on-site.

However, the Chapman family had paid him a handsome sum, and he never was someone virtuous.

Thus, Hera's words worked on him. "All right. I'll go there right away."

Michael was running his errand at a location near the competition venue, so it would only take him around ten minutes to get there.

After Hera hung up, she glanced at Charlotte cockily. "I'm telling you, you're dead meat, you thief!"

Charlotte's heart skipped a beat when she met Hera's domineering gaze.

Lowering her gaze, she said nothing.

"You don't have a comeback for this, have you? I feel ashamed for you for resorting to plagiarism to rise to fame," continued Hera viciously.

She couldn't wait to vent her frustration on Charlotte after being humiliated by Ashlyn and Olivia.

Meanwhile, Olivia was taken aback by the fact that there was a dark horse in the preliminary rounds.

Odd enough, the contestant had bandages on her face.

By the way, her name sounds familiar. I think Lochlan's foster daughter goes by the same name. No, this can't be. Hadn't she gone abroad some time ago? Why is she here? How could there be such a coincidence?

Olivia couldn't help but gaze at Lochlan and Kate, who were sitting not that far away from her.

The man had a sullen look on his face and was obviously in a bad mood.

At the same time, Kate was speaking in a moderate voice that could be heard by those around her.

"Does it matter that she knows how to play the piano? Luckily, she had cut ties with our family. Otherwise, she'll embarrass us," she uttered those harsh words in a belligerent tone.

Lochlan cast her a glance. "Quiet, Mom."

"I'm telling the truth! What? Can't I express my opinions? Plagiarism is plagiarism, and it's definitely a

crime!”

She had come to the arbitrary conclusion that Charlotte was involved in plagiarism before Michael had even arrived.

Lowering her gaze, she said nothing.

“You don't have a comeback for this, have you? I feel ashamed for you for resorting to plagiarism to rise to fame,” continued Hera viciously.

The thin girl cast her gaze into the distance while standing on stage, only to see the contempt, scorn, and disgust in Kate's eyes as the latter stared back.

It was as if Charlotte was trash, nor would she ever deserve to be a part of the Fraser family.

Charlotte's heart pounded. As her heart rate skyrocketed, she felt nervous and awful, all the while wishing she could run away from the scene.

Her urge to flee was overwhelming.

Meanwhile, Fae was enraged upon hearing Kate's criticisms.

“Some people sure can be condescending. How dare she deem Charlotte guilty of plagiarism before the other party even comes! She needs to back her claim with evidence! Otherwise, people could always sue her for defamation!”

Fae didn't mince words. Her words were harsh and serious.

Hearing that brought relief to Charlotte's agonizing heart.

All of a sudden, she felt less afraid.

Just when Kate was about to retort, Michael entered the place in a hurry.

When he took in the crowd in the theater and Charlotte, who was standing on the stage, he was befuddled.

Right when he was about to call Hera, he heard her speaking proudly. “He's my piano tutor, Michael Underwood. You must have heard of him! He has taught a lot of students and won countless awards. The song that Charlotte plagiarized was composed by Mr. Underwood!”