

Extraordinary 721

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“Ms. Warhol, do you know when will the president of the Piano Association be coming?”

Olivia was taken aback when she realized Ashlyn had taken the initiative to talk to her. She blushed with embarrassment, looked at Ashlyn in admiration, and replied respectfully, “I'm afraid I can't give you the details since I'm not sure myself, Ms. Berry.”

How Olivia wished she could give Ashlyn an answer. I should have been more prepared!

Had I known she would approach me with the question, I would have prepared all the information in advance for her!

Olivia was disappointed in herself because she did not get to answer Ashlyn's question.

At this point, she got even more jealous of Charlotte. How could she be so lucky? How could she maintain such a good relationship with Ms. Saunders?

Olivia felt her heart burn with envy when she noticed the necklace that Ms. Saunders gave Charlotte.

I'll be on cloud nine if only Ms. Saunders notices me.

I must work hard to become someone that will leave a long-lasting impression on her mind!

I would be overjoyed if Ms. Saunders could give me a gift. I'll cherish it forever!

Olivia lowered her eyes and looked at her hands.

Look at all the blisters on my hands. I've worked so hard for the winning title of this competition.

It's all because I want Ms. Saunders to remember who I am!

Meanwhile, Penelope was stunned to see how respectful Olivia was.

Olivia is an arrogant woman with a big ego. Yet, she's willing to come off her high horse and greet Ashlyn so respectfully?

What's going on? Are my eyes deceiving me?

Penelope glared at Ashlyn and said, “Why are you asking about the president? Just so you know, the president is willing to grace this event with his presence only because my uncle invited him.”

Ashlyn did not even bother to look at her. Instead, she turned around and patted Charlotte on the

shoulder. "Stay calm, and do your best on stage later."

When Olivia walked past her, Ashlyn turned to her and said, "You too."

Ashlyn heard everything clearly when Olivia retorted to Penelope earlier.

Olivia was struck dumb, and she looked at Ashlyn in disbelief.

D-Did Ms. Saunders just give me a word of encouragement?

Although it was just a short phrase, Ashlyn's "you too" meant the world to Olivia.

In fact, it meant so much that her hostility toward Charlotte had also somewhat dwindled.

Olivia returned to her seat with a smile and continued with her makeup.

I must put on a good show tonight!

When Ashlyn was about to leave the room, Penelope walked up to the dressing table next to Hera and exclaimed, "Oh, no! My necklace is missing!"

Upon hearing that, Hera and Jenny immediately looked over. "How did it go missing? What necklace is it?"

"I saw Ashlyn gave Charlotte a necklace earlier. Could it be that she stole your necklace and gave it to Charlotte?" Jenny stood up and stopped Ashlyn from leaving. "You'd better return the necklace to Penelope now if you took it. Don't forget you're Mrs. Nolan now. How can someone of your status do something like this?"

Arrogance was written all over Jenny's face when she gave Ashlyn a disdainful look.

Upon hearing that, Charlotte walked over.

The other contestants, too, turned their attention to Ashlyn.

Some of them recognized Ashlyn and were surprised to see her there. "Isn't she Ms. Saunders, one of the judges? Did she steal something?"

"That's what I heard. I heard she's also Mrs. Nolan? That means she's Lucas' wife, right?"

"I guess rich people have some weird hobbies, huh? Like stealing things they're not entitled to."

Ashlyn would have gotten to the audience's and judges' seats had she stepped out of the door.

Yet, Jenny got in her way.

Ashlyn arched her brows and swept a glance at Penelope. She had no idea what necklace Penelope was talking about.

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Charlotte stepped in and defended Ashlyn. "Ashlyn is not a thief. How could you accuse her when you don't even have any evidence?"

I won't allow anyone to bully Ashlyn!

In the past, Ashlyn was the one who always had her back, but this time, out of nowhere, Charlotte found the courage to defend Ashlyn.

She did not want anyone to ridicule and look down on Ashlyn.

Don't you dare try to bully Ashlyn. She's the best person in the world!

Jenny shot a death glare at Charlotte and Ashlyn. She got even more frustrated when she recalled how Lucas chose to eat Ashlyn's food instead of hers.

She was determined to humiliate Ashlyn in public. I'm the one that the elders in the Nolan family have acknowledged as Lucas' wife.

"The necklace that Penelope held in her hands earlier was a gift from her uncle. It's worth millions, and you won't be able to buy them!"

Ashlyn let out a cold snort and said nonchalantly, "Oh? Is that so?"

She spoke with little interest.

Olivia, who was doing her makeup halfway, went over to take a look upon hearing a commotion. She shot daggers at Penelope and said, "It's just a necklace. Is it really that big of a deal?"

"That's a necklace by X Corporation, and it's worth a lot of money. I can even buy a house in a Tier-Three or Tier-Four city with it! Besides, that necklace has to be ordered two months in advance. It's a gift from my Uncle Ryan. If you refuse to return the necklace to me, Ashlyn, I'll have to call Uncle Ryan to come over!" Penelope sounded condescending.

Ashlyn flashed a faint smirk.

Indeed, the prices of X Corporation's products from the affordable range were equivalent to that of a residential unit in a Tier-Three or Tier-Four city.

On the other hand, the company's limited edition and products from the high-end range would be worth more than a standard housing property.

“Charlotte Lynch, the necklace you're wearing now is mine!” Penelope pointed at the necklace that Ashlyn gifted to Charlotte earlier and bellowed.

Everyone turned their attention to the necklace that dangled quietly on Charlotte's smooth chest.

Penelope approached Charlotte with a grim expression. She then grabbed the necklace and lifted it as if she was going to pull it away from Charlotte's neck.

However, she froze for a moment when Charlotte unexpectedly defended herself. “This is not yours! Ashlyn gave it to me!” the woman exclaimed in anger.

Although Charlotte did become more cheerful and courageous recently, she was still a little afraid of the crowd.

She wished to defend Ashlyn, but fear eventually took over her. She began to take a few steps back and had no idea how to handle the situation anymore.

“Don't be afraid of her! She can't do anything to you!” Olivia went up to Charlotte and nudged her shoulder to give her confidence. “I believe in Ms. Berry. Why don't you take the necklace off to prove that it's not Penelope's!”

Charlotte was dumbfounded. She froze for a bit and stared at Olivia. I-I thought she hated me?

Isn't she Uncle Lochlan's fiancée? Why would she defend Ashlyn and encourage me?

I guess she's quite a nice person, after all. It just feels weird to think differently about a person.

Hera rolled her eyes and said, “What is there to prove? Ashlyn must have stolen the necklace!”

Jenny echoed, “Exactly! No matter how she defends herself, a thief is a thief!”

Meanwhile, Ashlyn looked calm, but there seemed to be an inexplicable expression on her gorgeous face.

She gazed into Penelope's eyes and asked, “Are you sure this is your necklace?”

Penelope took another glance at the necklace. The design was similar, but the jewelry piece on Charlotte's neck was obviously more high-end than hers.

The diamonds that dotted the necklace reflected rays of the dazzling light in the room.

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The back of Charlotte's necklace pendant had a unique double X logo. The larger X represented X Corporation, and the smaller X meant the necklace was Director X's design.

Everything Director X designed had this double X logo, be it clothes or jewelry.

Almost everyone who kept up to date with news about X Corporation knew about this detail.

Why does Ashlyn have a necklace designed by Director X? How is this possible? It even has a big star-shaped diamond. Could it be a fake?

Penelope did not dare to say Charlotte's necklace was hers.

However, she could not admit her mistake in public either, as it would be embarrassing.

Caught in a rock and a hard place, she was aware that she would be humiliated no matter which choice she made.

Just then, a velvety voice sounded from the entrance to backstage. "Your necklace is here with me."

Everyone could not help but turn toward the voice.

They saw a tall man in a white suit and dark red tie walking in.

He looked elegant and imposing. The streak of blue hair above his forehead was especially eye-catching.

"Uncle Ryan..." Penelope bit her lower lip and looked at Ryan as he approached her.

Ryan had a diamond stud on his left ear. It was brilliantly eye-catching.

His eyes were ice-cold as he turned to Penelope. Then, he unfurled his palm, revealing a delicate necklace.

The necklace had a thin chain and a tiny diamond. As it was a Brand X necklace, it had exquisite workmanship. Still, it paled in comparison to the necklace around Charlotte's neck.

The crowd was astute and instantly saw the marked difference between Charlotte's necklace and Penelope's necklace.

Penelope felt humiliated as she took the thin necklace from Ryan. She forced herself to smile and said, "Uncle Ryan, why is the necklace with you?"

"You dropped it in my room after you got off the plane last night. I only saw it this morning." Ryan looked down at Penelope and was displeased with her shameful behavior.

Ashlyn narrowed her almond-shaped eyes and said in an icy tone, "Penelope, you caused a scene and framed Charlotte and me for no reason. Don't you think you should apologize to us?"

Penelope's face turned pale as she stood rooted to her spot. She felt thoroughly humiliated.

I am the granddaughter of a Count. These lower-class people have no right to demand an apology from me! They are not even worthy of being my servant and can only hope to look at me from afar!

Penelope stood still and refused to speak.

The atmosphere grew tense as everyone focused their attention on her.

Previously, Jenny never cared about piano competitions. She only came this time due to Penelope's invitation. Penelope also paid for her ticket and said they were there to cheer for Hera.

Although Jenny knew Ryan, the Piano Prince, was Penelope's uncle, she never expected to find him that good-looking in person.

He is absurdly handsome!

Therefore, she could not help but want to make a good impression before Ryan and lashed out at Ashlyn to defend Penelope. "Aren't you too much? Penelope did not mean it. Since it was an honest mistake, you should treat it as a joke and forget it. Why do you insist on making her apologize?"

On the other hand, Ryan could not stand it anymore. He furrowed his brow and looked at Penelope with a displeased expression. Why is Penelope friends with someone like that? That woman is shockingly lacking in morals and principles!

"Ms. Ashlyn is right. The Yates family does not tolerate something like this. Penelope, apologize to her," Ryan ordered sternly.

Olivia pursed her lips and smirked. "Mr. Yates is just and wise. One could not let certain people ruin the reputation of the Count's Mansion."

Many contestants among the crowds and their family members could not help but voice out their thoughts. "That's right."

"Precisely. You should apologize for wrongly accusing someone."

[Chapter 724](#)

Ever since Penelope followed Mary to live in the Count's Mansion, people flattered her wherever she went. As such, she had never suffered such indignity as of now.

Furthermore, she had forgotten her unsavory past in H Nation, especially about her constantly changing boyfriends.

She chose to forget her past and only remembered that she was the Count's granddaughter. Thus, setting herself on a high pedestal.

Penelope turned to Ryan and hoped that he would say something to help her.

However, Ryan's expression remained stern. His eyes looked as cold as the diamond stud on his ear.

“U-Uncle Ryan, I...” Penelope stuttered.

“You did not grow up in the Yates family, so you have never received our strict upbringing or know our customs. If something like this happens in the Count's Mansion, your grandmother would have punished you and ordered you to kneel for three days in the memorial hall!” Ryan said coldly.

Penelope has a lot of problematic behaviors that need to be dealt with. Otherwise, she would cause us shame. Then, the Yates family would become the laughing stock of Maredania's aristocrats.

Ryan felt furious as he thought about this.

Meanwhile, Penelope's face burned with anger.

She believed Ryan was only treating her like this because he was disgusted by the fact that she grew up in the Bery family.

That must be why he's scolding me before the crowd. How could he humiliate me like this?

Her face turned pale as she thought about her situation. She began to feel dizzy from anxiety.

However, she remembered Ryan saying she had to kneel for three days in the memorial hall. Thus, she glanced at the scene before her and decided quickly.

Since Uncle Ryan already disdains me, Granny would probably hate me even more if she finds out about this. I can't get kicked out of the Yates family. I guess I have no choice but to do as Ryan says.

Penelope gritted her teeth as she came near Ashlyn and Charlotte before saying, “I'm sorry. I was too rash just now. My Brand X necklace was a gift from Uncle Ryan, so I really treasure it. Since Ms. Lynch's necklace looks similar to mine, I thought it was mine. It was unintentional. I didn't expect something like this to happen.”

Brand X's prestige was not limited to necklaces. Even a small-sized brooch from this brand would cost a hefty sum.

Therefore, anyone would be anxious when they lost something from Brand X.

Although Penelope looked apologetic, she still sounded like she did nothing wrong.

Everyone in Lake City knows the Fraser family had adopted Charlotte but has later disowned her. So why would she have the money to buy a Brand X necklace? I'm sure the necklace is fake.

Although Charlotte had autism before and had an innocent personality, she was not stupid.

She smiled and said, "Ashlyn gifted me this necklace. I cherish every gift from her. Even if it's a sheet of paper or a flower plucked from the roadside, I would still be happy to receive it because Ashlyn gave it to me with a sincere heart. I am honored and thankful to receive her gifts."

Charlotte paused and continued, "It does not matter how much the gift costs. Besides, what makes you think that Ashlyn can't afford to gift me a brand X necklace?"

Joseph stood at the entrance and wanted to rush in when he noticed people surrounding Ashlyn and Charlotte.

However, Fae stopped him and shook her head. "Lottie needs to learn to be independent. No one can help her with this. Instead, she needs to pull herself out of the situation"

Joseph, who was worried about Charlotte, was stumped upon hearing Fae. "But Mom..."

"Did you not notice how she is? She has matured a lot and has surprised us with her growth. I believe she will amaze us even more in the future!" Fae looked affectionately at Charlotte speaking in the middle of a crowd.

Somehow, Charlotte's demeanor vaguely reminds me of Ashlyn. Could it be my imagination?

"Charlotte, do you have no shame?" A sharp voice interrupted Fae and Joseph's conversation. They looked in the direction of the said voice and saw Jenny shoving Charlotte.

"You're wearing a fake Brand X necklace. I can't believe you have the audacity to sound so righteous still. Besides, everyone knows you're just an adopted daughter of the Fraser family, and everyone knows they've already chased you out. Thus, you are now homeless like a stray and have no qualification or social standing. So how could you afford to wear expensive jewelry? I don't think you can even afford to pay for a gram of gold!" Jenny scolded.

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Hearing that, Joseph was so furious that his chest hurt.

He desperately wished to rush there and send Jenny flying with a kick.

On the other hand, Charlotte's face turned pale. The wound that was wrapped with thin gauze throbbed with pain. She did not know whether the necklace Ashlyn gave her was expensive. But even if it was cheap, it was still a sincere gift from Ashlyn. Therefore, it was still a priceless treasure to Charlotte.

“How can you measure the value of a gift with money? Sincerity is priceless!” Charlotte argued.

“Only the poor would talk about the thoughts behind a cheap gift... Furthermore, why would anyone give something that expensive to a lowly person like you? You mistake a fake necklace for a treasure, yet you dare to blame others? Isn't this too unreasonable?” Jenny looked down at Charlotte and mocked, her gaze filled with disdain.

She is twisting the truth and forcing her logic. It was Penelope who started accusing Ashlyn and me for no reason. Now, Jenny made it seem like Ashlyn and I are in the wrong.

Charlotte trembled with fury.

Suddenly, Olivia raised her hand and slapped Jenny's face hard.

“Do you even know how to recognize a Brand X Jewelry? Have you ever seen one before? The Holt family is nothing compared to the Warhol family! Moreover, Charlotte is my rival in love! Anyone who dares to bully her amounts to offending me!” Olivia said and glanced at Ashlyn as if seeking her approval.

Did I perform good enough?

The crowd was stunned.

No one expected to witness such an intense scene.

They were excited to see what would happen after Olivia slapped Jenny in public.

Meanwhile, Jenny widened her eyes and stared at Olivia in disbelief.

She could feel her cheeks burning with pain, and her head felt dizzy from the force of Olivia's slap. Since people knew she was the daughter of the Holt family, it felt even more humiliating to be shamed before the public.

“Olivia, you crazy b*tch! How dare you hit her?” Hera could not help but shout.

“How could you hit her? Can't we talk in a civil manner?” Penelope was shocked by the slap and immediately came out of her daze.

It seemed the confrontation had gone out of control.

Just then, Eric, one of the organizers, rushed toward Ashlyn and the others. Lucas came over with him too.

Soon, Lucas' tall figure caught everyone's attention.

Although he wore a simple black shirt and pants, he seemed intimidating as he glanced at the crowd. One could not help but shudder from his piercing gaze.

“What is happening here?” Eric felt his temple throbbing when he saw the crowd gathered backstage. He had a bad feeling when he saw the ever troublesome Hera.

Why does this woman from the Chapman family always cause trouble?

The crowd turned silent. No one dared to speak.

Suddenly, Ashlyn smiled and said, “Every jewelry that Director X designed has a double X logo. The logo is a big X with a small X beneath it.”

After saying that, she helped Charlotte unfasten the necklace and showed it to the crowd.

“Please look closely. There is a small X underneath the big X.” Then, Ashlyn narrowed her eyes at Penelope. “Since you have met Director X through your uncle's recommendation, how can you not know about this? Furthermore...”

Ashlyn turned to Ryan with an amused smile. “Mr. Yates, everyone knows that any guest who met with Director X would receive a handkerchief Director X embroidered personally. It is the same for every guest, regardless of social standing or gender. Mr. Yates, since you have met Director X, did you receive a handkerchief? Can you show it to us?”

Penelope's face grew red as she listened to Ashlyn.

She was so embarrassed that she wished the ground would swallow her.

When she lied just now, she did not expect Ashlyn to confirm the truth of the matter with Ryan.

Ryan's expression darkened upon hearing Ashlyn. Fury burned in his chest.

He glared at Penelope, livid. Never in the history of the Yates family has anyone humiliated the family reputation this way.

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It is all Penelope's fault that the crowd is questioning our integrity in public!

Ryan clenched his fists as an intense urge to choke Penelope surged within him.

He took a deep breath but could not conceal the fury in his eyes.

Then, he turned to Ashlyn and said, "Ms. Berry, you're right. All jewelry designed by Director X has a double X logo. Therefore, Charlotte's necklace is real. However, I have never met Director X before, nor did I bring Penelope to see Director X. As such, I have never received the handkerchief you mentioned. I apologize if Penelope's words have caused a misunderstanding. It is my fault for not educating her well."

Penelope's face blanched at that. She gripped her hands so tightly that they nearly bled.

She bit her lower lip hard and almost broke through the skin.

Everyone could see the double X logo at the back of the pendant.

It was a big X with a small X underneath it.

Ashlyn looked at Penelope mockingly. "I guess some people like to brag so much that they forget their identity."

Jenny, Hera, and the crowd all had stunned expressions on their faces.

No one expected Ashlyn to gift Charlotte an authentic Director X designed necklace.

Charlotte was also stunned to find that her necklace was an authentic design from Director X. That means that this necklace's value... is much more valuable than the one Penelope has!

"So, Ms. Holt, Ms. Chapman, Ms. Penelope, are you not going to apologize? You falsely accused Charlotte and me of stealing the necklace. Then, you slander us again, saying that the necklace is fake. Since you don't know how to identify a real design by Director X, you should have said nothing. It would have saved you from all this embarrassment!" Ashlyn said.

She looked at Penelope and the others and saw their faces turn pale. It doesn't matter how much they dressed themselves up because nothing could conceal their ugly hearts.

Penelope was bursting with fury. I just apologized earlier. So why do I have to apologize again?

Hera had a puzzled expression. Why should I apologize?

On the other hand, Jenny could not control her fury and shouted, "Olivia slapped me. She should apologize too!"

Ashlyn sneered and said, "You deserved that slap! How can Ms. Warhol not slap you after you said those shameful words? Since your parents did not discipline you properly, don't blame others for doing what your parents failed to do."

Jenny clenched her fists. Her lashes quivered as she said, "Ashlyn, the Holt family and the Nolan family are about to enter into a marriage alliance. Are you jealous that I will be replacing you as Mrs. Nolan? Is that why you're shaming me like this?"

"Oh? Is that so? Lucas is here. Why don't you ask him whether he wants to marry you or not?" Ashlyn laughed as if she had heard the funniest joke. Then, she calmly glanced toward Lucas.

Lucas had not spoken since he showed up. Despite his silence, the crowd could not ignore his commanding presence.

His gaze shimmered. Then, his charming and magnetic voice sounded through the silence. "Ashlyn shall be the only wife I have in this lifetime."

His tone was cold, but it warmed up slightly at the mention of Ashlyn's name.

The crowd stared at Lucas in shock.

He admits it! He finally admits it!

Hera also had a shocked expression as she looked at Jenny. She never realized that Jenny wanted Lucas for herself too.

For a moment, Hera felt humiliated that she had fallen for Jenny's lies.

Why was I so foolish as to believe that Jenny wanted to help me to win Lucas' affection? Lucas is an outstanding man, while Jenny comes from a wealthy family. It should have been obvious that she became an air stewardess for a few years because of him! How can I be so stupid as to not notice Jenny's true intention?

At the same time, Penelope was stunned too. "What did you say? A marriage alliance between the Holt and Nolan Family? No way! You can't do that!"

I am now a member of the Count's family. Thus, I am the only woman worthy of Lucas.

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"Enough! What you did was embarrassing enough! So shut your mouth now!" Ryan growled in anger and addressed the person in charge, Eric, "Send someone to take her back to the hotel."

"Of course, Mr. Yates." Eric quickly ordered the security personnel to take Penelope outside.

"Uncle Ryan... Uncle Ryan..." Penelope cried out pitifully, but the hard-hearted Ryan remained unmoved.

Hera recomposed herself, well aware that her situation at the moment was not to her advantage. She knew that her family background and status were inferior compared to Jenny's.

Even Jenny's reputation was better than hers. That being said, Hera reckoned that after that day, Jenny might become infamous.

I still have a piano competition to take part in. It seems that I'll have to do that if I want to get a good ranking...

Thus, after further reflection, she said, "Ms. Berry, Ms. Lynch, I'm sorry. I spoke too quickly without understanding the situation. I hope you won't mind."

"Oh, but I do mind." Ashlyn's expression was one of impatience. "I accept your apology, but I cannot forgive you."

Her voice was not loud, but it was so clear that everyone present could hear her perfectly. Ashlyn continued, "And you, Ms. Holt, should hurry up as well. The competition is about to start."

As she spoke, it was as if there was an invisible oppressive force emanating from her that overwhelmed Jenny to the point that she felt suffocated.

Coupled with the fact that Lucas was beside her, the crowd could not help but stare at her commanding presence.

Coupled with the fact that Lucas was beside her, the crowd could not help but stare at her commanding presence.

They were a handsome couple, both equally charismatic as well as outstanding in appearance.

In fact, they were a match made in heaven.

"Ms. Holt, it stands to reason that you, a non-competitor, should not appear backstage. This is not the Holt residence, and the competition is not organized by your family." Joseph's voice rang out as he walked in slowly. He appeared together with Fae, and they walked over to Charlotte.

"Well, that's where you're wrong. It is organized by my family! Don't you know that he's my uncle!" Jenny pointed at Eric.

Eric's face fell.

In truth, his real name was Eric Holt. He was Jenny's third paternal uncle. However, the Holts were entrepreneurs while Eric loved dance and literature. He had been an artistic person ever since he was young.

After becoming an adult, he entered the entertainment industry and grew apart from the Holt family. This international piano competition was jointly organized by him, George Williams, and other bigwigs.

Having said that, he had little authority, as he was not the main organizer.

Being suddenly pointed out by Jenny, he was not amused.

Annoyed, he glared at Jenny. "Jenny, if you are here to watch the competition, you should go and enjoy it. But if you're here to cause trouble, I'm going call your dad to come and take you away."

His words was like a slap to her face.

He had shown no preferential treatment to his niece.

Jenny's expression darkened, for she felt that her pride and ego had been trampled by her biological uncle.

Why do you show no consideration for your niece?

This is infuriating!

"Hurry up and Apologize!" Ashlyn raised her eye and glanced at her, her words sounding like an order.

Very reluctantly and unwillingly, Jenny bowed her head and muttered, "I'm sorry."

Her eyes were red as if she was the one who had been slandered, wronged, and humiliated.

Eric heaved a lengthy sigh. This niece of mine is such an undisciplined girl. How worrisome!

He turned to Ashlyn and reminded her politely, "Ms. Berry, the competition is about to start. Please go and join the judging committee."

Ashlyn nodded at him before she fastened the necklace back on Charlotte, and said, "Play well, and don't let anything affect you."

With that, she hugged the woman and said to Olivia, "Ms. Warhol, I'm impressed today. Thank you for speaking up."

Upon being praised by Ashlyn, Olivia blushed, as she was both touched and delighted.

She stuttered, "Y-You're welcome. It's my pleasure to help you. I-I will definitely play hard and do my best! Ms. Berry, I won't let you down!"

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Ashlyn could not help but smile as she turned her gaze on Olivia. Coupled with her alluring eyes, her smile was like a flower blossoming in the springtime, filling the room with the breath of a spring breeze.

Olivia was mesmerized.

What... what a pretty smile. She had never known that a woman could be so incredibly beautiful.

Her heart was pounding fast as she looked at Ashlyn in admiration.

Meanwhile, Ashlyn was rendered rather speechless by Olivia's words.

Olivia's performance in the competition has nothing to do with me. So why would I feel let down? Am I missing something here?

Lowering her head, Jenny bit her lip and left in low spirits, heading for the auditorium, while Hera went back to her seat to continue putting on her makeup.

I must get a good ranking because it's not easy to enter the final.

Seeing that both Hera and Jenny were gone, Fae said to Ashlyn in a worried tone, "Ashlyn, the president of the International Piano Association is here today, as are many city leaders. Will the president of the association form a bad opinion of you because of this? I heard that Ryan invited him here."

"Penelope is a hypocrite. Only she could think of putting up such a show. I believe Ryan is a reasonable man." Ashlyn smiled, grateful for Fae's kind concern.

However, Fae was still worried.

She had heard that the president of the association was very well-known in the music scene. He was not only rich and powerful but also a guest of the leaders of various countries. He was not someone to be trifled with.

Penelope seems too arrogant. If the president and Ryan have a good relationship, wouldn't it be as easy as trampling an ant to destroy Ashlyn's career since she is just a relatively new piano player?

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It was impossible for Fae to not worry.

She was very concerned for both Charlotte and Ashlyn.

If Lottie is targeted because of this, she won't be able to get a good ranking...

Fae's heart was heavy.

She felt as if there was a huge boulder weighing down in her chest.

If Ashlyn is really treated unjustly and oppressed by the president of the Piano Association because of this. Or if she cannot gain her foothold in the music industry, I will use all the connections I have to help her. No matter what, I won't stand by and watch Lottie and Ashlyn being mistreated!

Jenny sat down grudgingly with the spectators in the auditorium. As soon as she passed by, members of the Holt and Chapman families could not help but ask, "How is Hera doing?"

"The competition is about to start. When is she scheduled to play?"

The two families knew nothing about what had happened backstage.

Jenny reined in her emotions and forced a smile. "She is well-prepared. So don't worry about her."

Penelope did not return to the hotel but sat next to her.

They glared at each other, their gazes full of resentment.

Jenny calmed herself down, thinking that Penelope's pride had suffered more than hers. As such, she deliberately provoked her, "Penelope, don't pay attention to Ashlyn and the others, your necklace looks much better than the other one."

At these words, Penelope felt even worse.

Just the mention of the necklace infuriated her.

She had heard that the gift that Ryan had given her at their first meeting was specially ordered. She never expected that such a rare and valuable item that was designed by Director X was something Ashlyn could simply dish out as a gift. This really infuriated her.

She felt humiliated.

Sisley, who knew nothing about the backstage incidents, asked in a whisper, "Penelope, I heard that the president of the International Piano Association has been invited here by your uncle. Please try to get in a good word for Hera, so that the president will favor her. We really envy you for having such an excellent family background and awesome uncle."

Penelope was initially down in the dumps, but she cheered up quickly when she heard these words of praise from Sisley.

No matter how embarrassing the situation was that day, nothing can change the fact that she was a

daughter of a noble family.

Her Uncle Ryan was known as the Piano Prince and no matter where she went, she was respected.

Hmph! Ashlyn is nothing but a small fry compared to me!

Just then, Mary arrived. Dressed in a dark purple suit with half-heeled shoes on her feet and a Hermes bag in her hands, she was fashionably late.

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The dignified presence of the woman filled the atmosphere.

Sisley hurriedly greeted her. "Hello, Ms. Canter, it's been a long time."

"Mrs. Chapman." Mary nodded gracefully at her.

In the past, Sisley had been the type of royalty that Mary had to show respect to. Things have changed since then.

Mary Canter was now officially the daughter of an Earl, and her younger brother was the Piano Prince, who was highly respected in the music industry.

Now, even Hera has to rely on the recommendation of my brother.

As these thoughts came to Mary's mind, she could not help the look of disdain that flashed across her eyes.

When she was entering the venue earlier, she heard a few spectators whispering, "I heard that your uncle has managed to invite the president of the piano association to attend the piano competition, is that right?"

These words added to her feelings of pride.

It is indeed great to have a good family background!

"It seems so. My Uncle Ryan always kept a low profile, so I don't really know." Penelope had replied shyly but there was no hiding the smug smile on her lips.

Observing everything from the side, Sisley felt fury surging through her.

This mother and daughter were nothing but lowly wenches that lived in Lake City. It's all thanks to a twist of fate that allowed one of them to become the Earl's daughter, and the other the granddaughter of the Earl. And yet, they had the audacity to look down on me?

If it wasn't for the fact that Hera needed to have a good ranking in the competition, Sisley would never bow down to them. After all, she was the lady of the Chapman family.

She knew that at Hera's level, there was no way she would have passed the rematch. In the end, it was thanks to Mary's connections that helped her pass. Fortunately, during the rematch, Ashlyn did not come to judge for some unknown reason.

The other two members of the judging committee had given Hera her passing marks but Ryan did not.

Sisley was puzzled why Ryan gave a low grade even though she had spent a lot of money.

Unbeknownst to her, it was because Ryan had no idea about the bribery.

In truth, Ryan was an honest man with traditional values despite his flashy appearance. He was a very strict and disciplined person.

Because of that, Mary did not approach him. Instead, she went to the other two judges, who accepted the bribe. Since it was not the finals, it was not difficult for a contestant to advance.

Using her identity as Ryan's sister, Mary was able to get everything done even though she was not in Lake City but Maredania at the time.

She was given special treatment simply because she was Ryan's sister.

As such, it could be said that that Mary was the main reason why Hera could proceed to the finals.

Sisley had to accept this favor from Mary but she did so grudgingly.

There was no one to blame but the fact that Hera was a slow learner.

The news that the president of the International Piano Association would come to Lake City had long been spread to the whole city.

In addition, the internet was full of stories about how Mary, the daughter of the Earl of Maredania who had been lost, was found again in Lake City.

These articles went viral together with stories of Ryan the Piano Prince.

Earlier, backstage, when Penelope had admitted that Ryan was the one who invited the president, the news was immediately spread to everyone.

Because of the attendance of the president, all the VIPs in Lake City had come to see him. After all, this was the president of the International Piano Association and not just an ordinary president.

If one was fortunate enough to hear the president play a piece, one could boast about that for years to come.

James had brought several leaders, including some famous entrepreneurs from Lake City, to the gate of the theater early in the morning to greet the president.

When a black Rolls-Royce rolled to a stop in front of the theater, everyone immediately stepped forward to greet it.

A tall middle-aged man came out of the car, wearing a tuxedo and looking very elegant.

His facial features was that of a Eurasianian, which shocked everyone.

After all, they had thought that the president was from Epea. His name did not sound like Eurasianian at all.

James was the first one to recover and he greeted with a smile, "Hello, President Kaleb. Welcome!"

"My mother is a Eurasian who happens to be from Lake City. As such, I have a Lake City name, 'Caleb.' So you can address me as that since it sounds more friendly."

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Kaleb's fluent Chanaean stunned the crowd.

No one expected such down-to-earth behavior from the president of the International Piano Association.

The nervous tension of the atmosphere dissipated instantly.

Then, the group chattered jovially while making their way toward the competition hall.

At the thought of meeting the woman he had eagerly anticipated for some time, Caleb appeared to be in good spirits as he declared, "Frankly, my main reason for being here is to look for a friend. That friend will be the death of me. I've tried every line in the book to convince them to take over my position as president to no avail."

Everyone thought he was talking about Ryan, and a man in the group immediately piped up, "Mr. Yates is right inside. You'll see him soon enough, Mr. Powell."

"He's right. Mr. Yates is a member of the judging committee today. It is a great honor for Lake City."

"I must say, Mr. Powell, we really envy your relationship with Mr. Yates."

Their comments struck Caleb dumb. Mr. Yates? I'm hardly acquainted with him at all! What are these

people talking about?

Alas, they had already arrived at the competition hall, and Caleb lost the opportunity to clarify his words to his misguided companions.

A large audience had already settled in the seating area.

Up front, a row of seats for the judging committee was filled save for the center seat, specially designated for the competition's VIP guest.

Caleb strode confidently toward the empty seat and sat down. Ashlyn sat to his left while Ryan sat to his right.

Almost everyone in the audience had their eyes locked on Caleb.

The handsome man exuded a dignified and poised aura and remained incredibly charming despite being middle-aged. Naturally, he won over the hearts of many ladies in the crowd.

Whispers broke out about his private life. "I heard that he's still single, along with his elder brother, the biggest oil tycoon in the world. What a shame that two handsome and wealthy men like them remain unmarried."

"What about that oil tycoon's daughter? Doesn't he have an heir or something? Her beauty is apparently beyond our wildest imaginations."

"She's probably adopted, right? Or she's an illegitimate daughter."

The audience evidently comprised some people who enjoyed learning about the darkest secrets of upper-crust families.

At the same time, Caleb stared at Ashlyn with mild surprise in his gaze. She wore a nondescript, light blue two-piece set for the event, which seemed to be of excellent quality.

Ashlyn had haphazardly tied her long black hair into a bun, revealing her small, beautiful face. Her features were exquisite, and she appeared even more striking thanks to several strands of hair that framed her forehead.

It was no exaggeration to call her the most beautiful woman in the crowd.

In fact, other women would undoubtedly sigh at the otherworldliness of her beauty.

Her perfection was merely augmented by her graceful motions and indescribably elegant demeanor.

Caleb smiled and whispered to her, "I've found you again."

Ashlyn did not even spare him a glance and stared straight at the stage, where the host of the competition had just arrived.

His voice rang out through the speakers.

“Three, two, one! To your places, please. The competition begins now!”

The final round of the International Piano Competition was covered by various media outlets worldwide.

Music channels in dozens of countries across the globe would broadcast the competition, which was also live-streamed by various broadcasting platforms.

The streams went live once the platforms received word that the host had announced the start of the competition.

It was a globally anticipated finals indeed.

After all, even the president of the International Piano Association had graced the event with his presence.

Music enthusiasts and hobbyists alike eagerly anticipated the live performances of the judging committee members during the competition later.

No one wanted to miss the rare performances from some of the world's finest musicians.

Elegant tunes filled the theater space, mesmerizing the audience to no end.

The first contestant opened the competition with a bang, impressing everyone with a solid performance.