

# **Under the Heiress' Facade #Chapter 101 - Read Under the Heiress' Facade Chapter 101**

Chapter 101

"No. You're an Everett, not a Killian. This isn't a scene out of a forbidden love drama. You're free to date whoever you want."

Samantha held Hera's phone. Her unique blue eyes blinked with curiosity as she pouted her rosy lips.

"Come on. Show me his picture. I want to see the guy who's got my little angel head over heels."

Samantha appeared as lovely as her name suggested, with cascading waves of light brown hair framing her face.

Her high nose bridge gave her a distinct Euranian appearance, further accentuating her sapphire- like blue eyes.

She resembled a porcelain doll straight out of a display window. It would be difficult for anyone to refuse a request from someone as adorable as her.

However, Hera wasn't falling for it. She retrieved her phone and set it aside.

"No, you're wrong. It's not happening."

"Why not? From what you're saying, it sounds like he's really into you."

Samantha looked puzzled.

"You're not trying to use 'I don't want to date yet' as a lame excuse, are you?"

Hera pondered Samantha's words. She recalled the numerous occasions when Bernard overstepped boundaries before. She didn't know if he was genuinely interested in her or was simply messing with her.

"Unfortunately, I'm just a kid in his eyes."

Hera sipped her coffee.

"A kid? Why would he make those flirtatious gestures if he sees you that way? The last guy who pulled that on me was my ex," Samantha said.

She slapped her hand on the coffee table.

As if recalling something, she added casually, "Oh, and the jerk at the bar who thought he could hit on me."

Hera silently admitted Bernard was indeed a jerk. He had flirted with her, only to disappear into the lounge with another woman. If that wasn't behaving like a jerk, then what was?

"But your 'young uncle' isn't like that, right?" Samantha asked.

"Could it be that you're the one who dislikes him?"

Hera lowered her gaze to her coffee, pondering Samantha's question. She couldn't deny that she had once harbored feelings for Bernard when she was younger.

However, that affection, akin to that of an older brother, was not the same as what Samantha was implying.

Moreover, Bernard had changed. Although he appeared refined and cultured, he had an underlying coldness that kept people at a distance. He also possessed an air of mystery that was hard to decipher.

He could be tender and attentive with her. Yet, he also seemed capable of wearing different masks depending on the situation, which made her hesitant to trust him fully.

After all, he was a Killian. Until she uncovered the truth behind Lucius' framing and Daphne's murder, suspicion loomed over every member of the Killian family.

At Hera's silence, Samantha continued, "If you don't like him, why do you care about his well-being?"

"Besides treating his illness, you also plan to attend tonight's auction to bid on the Eclipse Stone for him. Do you realize how many people are vying for it tonight?"

"I'm simply honoring our initial agreement," Hera defended herself.

"Are you certain about that?"

Samantha eyed her skeptically.

Hera replied impassively, "Without a doubt."

At that moment, her phone chimed with a WhatsApp message. She glanced at it to find Bernard's profile picture and immediately tapped on it.

A selfie caught her attention. He was biting on his shirt collar in the photo. He held the phone up to the mirror while his other hand pulled down his pants to reveal his muscular physique.

She couldn't help but notice his eight well-defined abs and sleek abdominal line.

However, her eyes were drawn to a deep brown scar across his left waist. It was startling, yet it added a ruggedness to his otherwise flawless body.

The photo was strategically taken. It showcased his attractive physique while cleverly obscuring his face with the phone. To a stranger, it might appear to be a model's picture from the internet.

But Hera recognized that scar as Bernard's. She had once accidentally seen his back covered in scars when he was changing. The impact of the image caused her ears to turn red.

What could he possibly mean by sending her such a photo?

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“Wow! What a jaw-dropping physique. Let me see”

Samantha accidentally caught a glimpse of Hera's phone screen and immediately pounced over to grab it.

She added, “Is this a selfie of the “young uncle‘ you were talking about? my gosh! He's the definition of perfection. With a body like that, his looks must be off the charts.

“Are you sure you dislike him? If so, introduce him to me. I'm all in for that body,”

Hera blushed and tried to snatch her phone back.

“Out it out and give me back my phone.”

Samantha deliberately refused and pointed at the photo mischievously.

“Do you find this body type attractive or not? Tell me the truth.”  
Hera hesitated before admitting, “I do!”

Her ears turned even redder.

With a physique like that, who wouldn't like it?

“So, who was just playing tough, saying it's only a collaborative relationship?”

Samantha finally found a way to tease Hera. She laughed hysterically.

Hera managed to retrieve her phone. Then, she realized that she had accidentally sent a flirty emoji during their struggle.

Her eyes widened in disbelief. She quickly tried to long-press to delete it. But before she could, she noticed that Bernard had deleted the photo. He also sent her a text reply.

“I sent the wrong thing. Do you like it? Beg me, and I send it again.”

Hera fell silent, and her mind raced with questions. She wondered if she was the intended recipient of that message and considered if he perhaps wanted to send it to Camille instead

The mere thought of it made Hera’s blood boil.

“What a complete jerk!” she thought inwardly.

Meanwhile, on the other end, Bernard narrowed his eyes as he stared at the emoji Hera had sent.

He muttered, “Her phone wasn’t hacked, right?”

It turned out that he didn’t mistakenly send the photo. He had actually sent it on purpose.

After Bernard parted ways with Hera that day, he suddenly received a brief emergency mission from the military. So, he had to leave Norburgh for a few days.

While on the mission, Bernard was too busy to get in touch with Hera. Surprisingly, she didn’t reach out to him either.

Feeling frustrated by her apparent lack of concern, he glanced at the chat window where it read, “Hera is typing “He was eager to receive her response.

However, the typing indicator disappeared after a minute, and even the flirty emoji was deleted

Bernard was speechless but convinced that Hera’s phone hadn’t been hacked

At that moment, Johnson knocked on the study door before entering.

“Bernard, the car is ready. We can head to Astral Nova.”

Bernard responded with a grunt. He remained fixated on his phone and showed no intention of getting up.

Johnson paused for a moment, then asked, “Should we pick Ms. Hera up?”

“No.”

Bernard suddenly stood up

“Why?”

Johnson was puzzled. Hera had requested to find the Eclipse Stone, so he thought she should be informed about it.

Bernard remembered Hera’s words from before.

“Once we find the Eclipse Stone and cure your illness, our relationship is over.”

He couldn’t understand how their relationship could be over that simply after locating the Eclipse Stone.

## **Under the Heiress' Facade #Chapter 103 - Read Under the Heiress' Facade Chapter 103**

Chapter 103

Before heading to Astral Nova, Hera stopped by a mansion on the outskirts to change into a different attire. She then rode with Samantha.

During the journey, Samantha fluttered her thick lashes at Hera.

"Why don't you invite your young uncle along and let him shower you with money?"

"No, thanks. I can earn my own money."

Hera had calmed down, though she suspected Bernard was hooking up with other women at that moment.

She also didn't want him to learn more about her identity.

"Hera, you can't always be strong and independent like this. You must play up your feminine side to bring out a man's protective instincts."

Samantha wagged her finger.

She added, "And it's great that you can make money, but you shouldn't flaunt it. Otherwise, you'll end up like me—only capable of attracting gold diggers."

"Although the men are sweet, I always feel like they're not interested in me but in my money. I just want a normal relationship. Why is that so hard?"

Hera's gaze swept over Samantha's head, and she noticed the sparkling diamond hair clips. Samantha's ears gleamed with 25-carat pink diamond earrings, and a ruby necklace adorned her neck.

She was also dressed in a custom-made exclusive gown, accessorized with a stunning 150-carat diamond ring on her index finger and a top-grade gold bracelet on her wrist.

Hera hesitated before remarking, "Maybe try toning down the diamonds and cease your habit of buying drinks for everyone at the bar every time you go out."

"I can try to cut back on the drinks, but diamonds are my passion. I can't give them up," Samantha said while caressing her diamond ring.

She continued, "And trust me, I've already restrained myself. I used to have every finger adorned with diamonds."

Hera was left speechless.

They continued chatting away until they reached Astral Nova.

Astral Nova was located adjacent to Dusk City. It boasted a stunning garden and architecture reminiscent of the opulence of the Gilded Age.

Its majestic design and old-world charm made it feel like a palace straight out of a fairy tale. But what truly set it apart was its renowned auctions featuring treasures from around the world.

The founder of Astral Nova was always a mystery. Rumors suggested ties to the founder of Dusk City or involvement with a secretive organization.

While opinions varied, one thing was clear: Astral Nova had significant influence and shouldn't be underestimated.

The gates shone brightly at the entrance while luxury cars filled the area. Security guards stood sentinel and kept the media reporters at a distance with caution tape.

Astral Nova prioritized guest privacy and safety. Only those with verified identities could pass beyond a checkpoint, as external vehicles were not permitted entry.

As Samantha's car trailed behind a Rolls-Royce, Hera prepared to exit the vehicle.

However, her attention was inadvertently drawn to the car's license plate in front, which read "KIL8888". It was a customized plate for the Killian family, one of the four influential families.

This sight caught Hera off guard, though she wasn't entirely surprised by the presence of a Killian family member at the auction. Still, the coincidence was unexpected.

She narrowed her eyes and focused on the car ahead, where a woman in her 30s assisted an elegant, elderly woman with silver hair out of the vehicle.

Hera instantly recognized them. The elderly woman was Albert's widow, Ember, and the other was Aurora Killian, daughter of the current family patriarch.

"The Eclipse Stone must be very valuable if even the Killian matriarch is here," Samantha remarked as she looked at the figures ahead.

She added, "It seems like everyone's after it tonight. Hera, you'll face some serious pressure later."

When Hera remained silent, Samantha turned and noticed Hera's cold gaze fixed on the two women before them.

"Should we wait for them to enter before we exit the vehicle?" Samantha asked.

Although Samantha wasn't aware of Hera's past experiences, she knew Hera harbored a deep hatred for the Killians.

## Chapter 104

"No," Hera said to Samantha as she withdrew her gaze.

She took out a specially prepared golden mask and put it on before stepping out of the car.

It was mid-October, and the Norburgh weather had already turned chilly.

Hera draped herself in a red cloak, wearing a golden mask.

As she stood before the security guards, who were dressed uniformly in suits, she seemed out of place yet oddly fitting against the backdrop of the palace's red walls and green tiles.

Once their invitation was verified, a female attendant ushered Hera and Samantha into the venue.

At the front, Ember walked slowly while being supported by Aurora. As the courteous attendant guided them forward, Ember smiled and nodded in response to the greetings.

However, her attention was momentarily captured by a figure in red passing by. She paused, and her eyes instinctively followed the red silhouette.

Aurora noticed her distant gaze and asked, "Granny, what's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing."

Ember snapped out of her thoughts.

"It's just that I'd heard that Dr. Shadow once attended an international medical research conference wearing a bright red cloak and a golden mask."

"Wait, you mean that was Dr. Shadow?"

Aurora suddenly looked up, but the red figure had already disappeared from sight.

Their goal for this trip was to obtain the Eclipse Stone, but they had also heard rumors that the anonymous miracle doctor might attend the auction. So, they wanted to seize the opportunity to meet him.

"I'm not sure."

Ember shook her head. Then, she turned around and noticed another attendant escorting someone wearing a red cloak and a golden mask past them.

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The main auction venue was located in a tower in the center of the palace.

The tower had seven floors, and each floor served as an independent viewing platform. Each floor symbolized the guest's prestige, with higher levels denoting greater importance.

Hera was on the fifth floor, while Samantha was on the fourth. Not wanting to be alone, Samantha quietly slipped away after the attendant left and sneaked up to the fifth floor to find Hera.

As Hera welcomed her in, they noticed an attendant escorting another individual.

The mysterious figure was dressed in a red cloak and golden mask. She stopped at Room 509 next to Hera's.

In that brief moment of eye contact, Hera sensed the avoidance in the other person's gaze before she entered the room.

"Is that a coincidence, or is she copying your style?" Samantha mused.

She considered knocking on the door to investigate.



The golden mask and red cloak had become Hera's trademark attire for attending international medical research conferences.

While she couldn't dictate what other people wore, seeing someone imitate her outfit at such a prestigious event raised suspicions.

"The auction is starting soon. Let's not cause a scene," Hera advised and stopped Samantha's impulse to investigate.

The bold imitation suggested that the other party was well-prepared. Hera grew curious and wanted to unearth the imposter's plans.

Although Samantha was irritated, the unfolding commotion inside the tower diverted her attention. Seated in the stands, they both observed as everyone turned to look at the seventh floor.

"Oh my gosh! The seventh floor is occupied!" Samantha exclaimed.

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There was only one viewing platform on the seventh floor. It was solely reserved for the grandmaster of Astral Nova. For years, it had remained vacant, but now it was occupied.

Excitement rippled through the auction venue as attendees realized the mysterious grandmaster had arrived.

"Tonight's auction highlight, the Eclipse Stone, is truly a precious treasure. It has even drawn out the mysterious grandmaster of Astral Nova to make a public appearance."

Samantha stood and glanced up at the seventh floor. She could see a figure but couldn't make out any details. She was disappointed and returned to her seat.

"Hera, it seems like your plan for tonight might be going south. And since you're not particularly fond of your young uncle anyway, why not just give up?"

The grandmaster's presence threatened Hera's plan as he held the authority to double the highest bid on any auction item at will.

While Samantha fretted, Hera remained unfazed. She lounged in her chair and casually played on her phone as though she had everything under control despite the grandmaster's appearance.

Samantha couldn't resist asking, "So, tell me, how much do you have on you for this auction?"

With the grandmaster suddenly showing up, Hera's calm demeanor made her the only unfazed individual in the room.

"We'll see how the bidding goes," she replied calmly.

Samantha was surprised by Hera's answer.

"So, are you aiming to make a serious profit here?"

"Do you want to know?"

Hera glanced at Samantha and deliberately let her words hang in the air.

Samantha nodded eagerly.

"After the bidding starts, someone will foot the bill."

Hera lifted her phone.

Hera's mischievous smirk caught Samantha's eye, and a thought crossed her mind.

She wondered, "Could it be that some sucker was swindled by Hera again?"

Upon entering Room 509, a woman with a fair complexion helped herself to a glass of cold water. It turned out to be Camille.

She had heard about the Eclipse Stone, the highlight of the Astral Nova Auction, but it didn't pique her interest.

Her expertise lay in modern medicine, and the Eclipse Stone was rumored to be a remedy in alternative medicine.

Since Bernard would be there, Camille decided to attend as well. To her surprise, the anonymous miracle doctor was also present at the auction. She had expected him to be abroad instead.

She vividly remembered encountering the miracle doctor at a national medical conference last year, where the chairman had introduced her.

The anonymous miracle doctor, wearing a red scarf and a mask, was seated at the head of the conference stage.

The miracle doctor eloquently shared her experiences navigating both modern and alternative medicine in flawless Terranish. Camille couldn't help but be impressed by the miracle doctor's presentation.

"Welcome to Astral Nova. The auction is about to begin. Congratulations to each of you for joining us tonight in the company of the grandmaster of Astral Nova."

The host's voice broke Camille's reverie. She placed her glass of water down, stepped off the platform, and took a seat.

Her presence immediately caught the attention of the Astral Nova female manager on the seventh floor.

Standing before the man in the grandmaster's seat, the female manager asked, "Grandmaster, Dr. Shadow is among those two women in red. Shall I bring them up?"

The man, donning a ghost-faced mask, lounged in a sandalwood chair with lazy ease. His black boots were casually propped up on the table.

A dragon-patterned ring adorned his index finger. It was the mark of the Astral Nova's grandmaster.

With a deep, magnetic voice emanating from behind the mask, he declined the offer.

The manager's heart fluttered at his voice. She couldn't resist stealing another glance at the man.

Despite eight years of working there, she had never seen the grandmaster in person. She had imagined him as an older gentleman but was surprised by his youthfulness.

Even behind the mask, his sharp eyes, strong jawline, and pleasing voice hinted at his undeniable handsomeness.

As the grandmaster rarely made appearances, the manager wanted to leave a good impression.

So, she stepped forward and suggested, "Dr. Shadow's whereabouts have always been mysterious.

"Since we're gathered here today, it's a good opportunity for you to meet and perhaps exchange contact information for future needs."

"Are you trying to teach me how to do my job?"

The man's icy gaze felt like a dagger to her heart.

The female manager shivered. Then, a burly bodyguard wearing sunglasses grabbed her by the neck and forcefully threw her out of the room.

"Don't let the grandmaster see this woman again!" the bodyguard instructed those guarding the door.

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The burly man clapped his hands and returned to the room.

He respectfully informed the grandmaster, "Bernard, the issue has been resolved."

Bernard grunted in response.

The auction was already underway. He adjusted his posture, grabbed his phone, and launched the WhatsApp chat with Hera.

Their last conversation concluded with the message, "Beg me, and I'll send it again."

Unable to believe that she had ignored him, he tapped on the screen and sent her a message.

Meanwhile, on the fifth floor, Hera wasn't interested in anything except the Eclipse Stone. So, she put on her headphones and focused on the matching tiles game.

Suddenly, a WhatsApp notification popped up on her phone screen, so she clicked on it.

It was Bernard asking, "Where are you?"

Her heart skipped a beat. Her first instinct was to check if he knew she was at the auction. She casually glanced around, scanning her surroundings.

However, she couldn't spot him on the same level or any level below her. The floors above the sixth were out of her sight.

She recalled mentioning the Eclipse Stone to Bernard before, so she expected him to be there. With that in mind, she replied with another question instead of an answer.

"Where are you?"

Even though she was in disguise and unlikely to be recognized, she felt it was wise to know his location as a precaution.

Bernard responded, "Skyview Heights. Aren't you returning?"

He added a pitiful face emoji at the end.

Hera was left speechless by his response. Instead of putting her at ease, it only fueled her anger that he wasn't present at the auction venue.

She wondered if it was because she hadn't emphasized enough about the Eclipse Stone's potential to improve his condition. She even considered that he was perhaps simply not interested in regaining his health.

He messaged again, "Where are you now?"

She was annoyed and curtly texted her response, "Everett residence."

She hit send and almost immediately received an invitation to video call him.

Her heart skipped a beat in fright. She hastily declined the call, though she couldn't shake off the uneasy feeling.

So, she quickly added, "In the shower."

On the seventh floor, Bernard's faint smile broke out as he read her reply. The tension he had felt over her words dissipated at last.

He was relieved she hadn't attended the auction. Without acquiring the Eclipse Stone, she wouldn't be able to leave him.

As time flew by, the auction drew to a close.

"Next up for auction is the highlight for tonight—the Eclipse Stone!"

With the host's announcement, a staff member approached and placed a brocade box on the display table.

The table was equipped with a camera, and it broadcasted the Eclipse Stone's image to tablets on each viewing platform for bidders to examine.

As the box opened, a translucent, egg-sized water droplet crystal with a black pearl floated in the center. It was known as the Eclipse Stone, and its beauty captivated all who beheld it.

## Chapter 107

The host said, "The Eclipse Stone was sourced from the depths of the Netherworld. It was believed to ward off evil spirits and cure ailments. Hence, it was deemed as a rare treasure.

"Bidding starts at 50 million, with at least one million increments. Let the bidding begin."

"Bidder 111, 51 million."

"Bidder 102, 53 million."

"Bidder 203, 60 million!"

"Bidder 132, 65 million."

"Bidder 501, 75 million."

"Bidder 306, 80 million."

"Bidder 402, 85 million!"

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Everyone in the room lowered their heads to input their bids on their bidding devices while two coordinators sequentially announced the bids.

The bidding price at the venue kept increasing.

"Come on, Hera. Enter your bid."

Samantha handed the bidding device to Hera.

Hera calmly breezed through the latest levels of her game, then put away her headphones and phone.

"Bidder 406, 100 million!"

"Bidder 501, 101 million."

"Bidder 502, 110 million."

"Bidder 666, 150 million."

"Bidder 622, 151 million."

"Bidder 688, 152 million."

"Bidder 666, 155 million."

"Bidder 611, 156 million."

"Bidder 688, 157 million."

"Bidder 666, 160 million."

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The Eclipse Stone was a highly sought-after treasure. As the bidding reached billions, the number of prospective buyers decreased, and the bid increments became smaller.

Eventually, only four bidders remained—bidders 611, 622, 666, and 688. They have been fiercely competing for half an hour.

"Bidder 611, 199 million."

In Room 666, Aurora was entering her bid of 210 million dollars on the bidding device. Her hand was sore from bidding in one-million increments over 30 minutes. She decided it was time to make a significant price jump.

"Aury."

Ember's weathered hand intervened and stopped her granddaughter.

"Granny?"

Aurora looked up and was puzzled by her action.

"Give it to me. Let me take over."

Ember took the bidding device from Aurora and entered a string of numbers.

She added, "The Eclipse Stone must belong to us tonight."

Aurora was wondering about the price Ember entered, when the host declared, "Bidder 666, 250 million."

The crowd erupted in uproar as bidding reached an unprecedented level. Adding 50 million in one go was aggressive.

If the grandmaster also wanted the Eclipse Stone, doubling that bid would take it to half a billion. Half a billion for a single stone was extravagant.

"250 million going once..." the host said.

Silence filled the room as everyone awaited the historical high bid.

The host deliberately took a deep breath before glancing at the coordinator.

He continued, "250 million going twice..."

Aurora held her breath. She knew that the Eclipse Stone would belong to them as long as the grandmaster didn't outbid them.

"250 million—"

Suddenly, the coordinator declared, "Bidder 508, 400 million."

The room fell into an eerie silence. It was quickly replaced by a thunderous roar of excitement at the announcement of the latest bid. Another 150 million had just been added to the price tag.

Now, that was a display of real determination.

Everyone craned their necks to locate Room 508. They were eager to see who was bold enough to bid that high.

"What?"

Aurora immediately rose from her seat.

Adding 150 million in one go was either an aggressive bid or an attempt to snatch the item from the Killians.

She glanced at Room 508 and noticed a figure in a red cloak with a golden mask calmly observing everyone.

She recognized the figure instantly.

"Granny, should we counter?" she asked Ember.

Aurora was reluctant to let the prized possession slip away from their grasp just like that.

On the contrary, Ember had already spotted the figure in red. She just wasn't sure if either Room 508 or Room 509 belonged to the anonymous miracle doctor.

She set down the price input device and said, "I'm going over to introduce myself."

Although Aurora wasn't happy about it, she understood what Ember meant and replied with an "okay" before turning to leave.

Meanwhile, Bernard, holding his bidding paddle, paused as he heard the latest bid from the coordinator.

He rose from his seat and cast a curious glance down at Room 508, where a woman adorned in a red cloak and golden mask caught his attention.

Simultaneously, Hera stood up and walked on the platform. As she looked up at the seventh floor, their eyes met.



Amidst the noisy surroundings, it felt as though the world had faded away, leaving only the two of them and the stirring of two different energies, each testing the other's boundaries.

"Any more bids from the floor?"

Hera withdrew her gaze and glanced around.

Even though she was only on the fifth floor, her presence felt like a reigning champion's.

The room fell silent as everyone waited to see if there would be any bids from the sixth floor.

Regulars knew the sixth floor was reserved for the members of the four influential families. If they didn't bid, it would be left to the grandmaster on the seventh floor.

After a brief pause, Hera's gaze shifted to the seventh floor.

She said, "If no one else bids, then it's just between us."

"Who does she think she is, challenging the grandmaster?"

"She's probably going to get kicked out."

"I heard she's Dr. Shadow."

"But Dr. Shadow is always low-key. She's so daring. Are you sure she is not an imposter?"

"Room 509 looks more like Dr. Shadow to me."

"Regardless, openly challenging the grandmaster's authority like this? She's definitely getting kicked out."

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Hera's words stirred up the previously quiet scene at Astral Nova. It caused a commotion among the crowd.

Even the four influential families had to show some respect at Astral Nova. Yet her audacity in challenging the grandmaster was unprecedented.

"Miss, please adhere to Astral Nova's rules," the host reminded through the microphone.

At Astral Nova, the grandmaster held immense power to dictate prices as they pleased.

"Doubling, huh? 800 million, 1.6 billion, 3.2 billion, and so on. Money's just money, right? Who can't afford it?"

Hera chuckled in response.

The host was momentarily surprised, thinking, "What a showoff!"

Yet, he maintained a smile and cautioned, "Let's keep the bidding fair and refrain from driving up the prices."

Hera said, "Okay. How about a little game between me and the grandmaster to keep things fair? The winner takes the Eclipse Stone."

She glanced back up to the seventh floor. Her gaze was firm, and a hint of defiance lingered. She was prepared to up the ante and stand her ground if the grandmaster refused.

Bernard's gaze turned cold. The headstrong woman reminded Bernard of Hera's strong presence. However, he remembered Hera claiming she was in the shower at the Everett residence earlier.

He glanced to the side and signaled to the nearby bodyguard.

The bodyguard immediately understood the meaning behind Bernard's gesture. He turned to head toward Room 508 on the fifth floor and knocked on the door.

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Silence fell as everyone waited to see how Bernard would handle Hera.

Meanwhile, in Room 508, Samantha was admiring Hera's composure. Despite her admiration, Samantha couldn't help but wonder if Hera was stirring up trouble.

Suddenly, someone knocked on the door.

Samantha stood up anxiously.

"Is the grandmaster really going to kick us out of Astral Nova?"

"No. Just open the door," Hera reassured her.

Samantha walked to the door and placed her hand on the knob.

She turned to look at Hera and whispered nervously, "But what if they're serious?"

The thought of being kicked out and becoming the subject of international gossip was too embarrassing for Samantha to bear.

"Don't you still have your royal guard?" Hera teased.

If the situation got rough, she wouldn't hesitate to fight back.

Samantha pondered Hera's confidence and realized it stemmed from seizing opportunities rather than waiting for them to fall into her lap.

It felt like playing with fire, which was daring beyond belief. Yet, she loved the thrill.

With a deep breath, Samantha opened the door to find a burly bodyguard wearing sunglasses outside.

"Miss, the grandmaster requests your presence on the seventh floor," he said.

Samantha breathed a sigh of relief inwardly as she noted the request was for them to go up instead of being kicked out. She quickly looked at Hera.

"Okay."

Hera nodded, and they followed behind the bodyguard.

As Hera and Samantha exited the viewing platform, onlookers immediately speculated if they were being kicked out from Astral Nova.

Everyone knew troublemakers typically met a harsh fate.

Challenging the grandmaster in public and merely getting kicked out? Many felt the grandmaster was too lenient.

Then, the host received the message through his earpiece, and his announcement interrupted the murmurs.

"The grandmaster has accepted Bidder 508's challenge."

"What?"

"The grandmaster actually accepted? That's against the rules!"

"Is the grandmaster being too kind?"

"Can you really pull off something like this?"

The crowd erupted into chatter.

On the seventh floor, the bodyguard opened the grandmaster's viewing room door and motioned for Hera to enter. She nodded and stepped inside.

Samantha wanted to follow, but the bodyguard stopped her.

"The grandmaster only invited her, not you," he stated.

She widened her eyes.

"We're together. Since when do you split guests up like this? You're not trying to separate us to cover your tracks, are you?"

The bodyguard remained silent.

Hera turned back and gave Samantha a reassuring look.

"Wait for me outside," she said.

Samantha reluctantly stepped aside as she watched the door close.

The bodyguard led Hera up the stairs to the grandmaster's room, which was much larger than the one downstairs. It was decorated in a consistent Gilded Age style.

They passed through one room to reach a viewing platform separated by a bead curtain. A tall figure stood facing away from them.

Dressed in sleek black attire that emphasized his tall stature, he stood against the backlight and exuded a mysterious presence.

"Grandmaster, she's here," the bodyguard said respectfully.

The man, wearing a ghost mask, turned around. His eyes were sharp and piercing.

Separated by the curtain, Hera and the man exchanged cold gazes and silently assessed each other.

Finally, he broke the silence and said in a deep husky voice, "Let's hear the rules of the game."

Chapter 109

"It's simple. There should be no unfair bids. We both state our intended price for the Eclipse Stone. Whoever offers the higher amount gets it."

Hera parted the bead curtain to face Bernard.

"And what's the penalty for the loser?"

His eyes narrowed.

After all, there needed to be a bargaining chip when challenging the grandmaster of Astral Nova.

"If you win, I'll pay the bid value. If I win, I'll still pay it," Hera said boldly.

Bernard chuckled lightly.

"Isn't it just money? Who can't afford it?"

Hera fell silent. She hadn't anticipated him using her own words against her. Reading between the lines, she understood that the stake wasn't enough to pique his interest in playing games with her.

"I'll help you save three lives if I win."

Hera changed her bargaining chip.

Life was priceless; that was the miracle doctor's strongest bargaining chip.

"Alright, I'll go first," Bernard agreed.

He picked up the bidding device from the coffee table and entered a series of numbers before handing it to her.

"No need. I brought mine."

She lifted the bidding device from her cloak with her left hand.

As she did, his attention was drawn to the bracelet on her fair wrist. It accentuated her skin's radiance by alternating between pink conch pearls and white diamonds.

Bernard's eyes were fixed on the bracelet. It was a unique piece that held a deep familiarity for him.

The four unique pink conch pearls on it were the result of years of searching across various locations and spending millions of dollars.

After meticulous crafting, they were set together with diamonds to make that bracelet. It was a birthday gift from Daphne to Hera on her fourth birthday.

Bernard raised his eyes slightly and stared intently at the woman before him. Despite her makeup and brown contact lenses, he glimpsed the familiar coldness in her eyes.

A sense of revelation surged within him as if he had stumbled upon a hidden truth. Hera had misled him into believing she was at the Everett residence.

Hera submitted her bid and said, "Let's reveal the final bet."

As she looked up, she sensed a subtle change in Bernard's demeanor. His piercing, previously cold eyes now held a glint of genuine joy behind his mask.

Her heart skipped a beat as she wondered if he had won.

The bodyguard beside her also noticed an imperceptible difference in Bernard's behavior and wondered the same thing.

He immediately instructed the coordinator to send the information over. Both parties had entered 880 million. It was truly an incredible coincidence.

"Grandmaster..."

The bodyguard approached and whispered the information into Bernard's ear.

Bernard nodded, gazed deeply at Hera, and said, "You've won!"

The bodyguard was taken aback at Bernard's exclamation.

He muttered, "Wait! Grandmaster, did you mishear me? I clearly said it's a tie. Shouldn't a tie mean we start over?"

The two coordinators who heard this result through their headsets were also shocked. Their eyes widened as they repeatedly compared the two sets of bidding figures.

They confirmed that both were indeed 880 million. It was precisely the same and not even a decimal off.

They couldn't understand how one bid would win over the other when both were of equal value. They started to wonder if they were taught math wrong.

"Point taken."

Hera was somewhat surprised. She thought Bernard was surprisingly honest and willing to accept defeat. A faint smile crept up beneath her mask.

She instinctively rubbed her bracelet.

She had discovered it while sorting through Daphne's belongings. Inside the box was a note that read, "A gift for Hera's fourth birthday." It was a lucky bracelet left to her by Daphne.

She cherished it and rarely wore it out. But every time she did, it brought her good luck.

## Chapter 110

"Lot 608 sold for 880 million. The bidding was intense as it just barely surpassed the grandmaster's offer," the host declared.

The crowd erupted into chatter. Not only did Astral Nova's grandmaster participate in the bidding, but he also lost. They speculated about the grandmaster's final bid.

They questioned why the grandmaster would concede the Eclipse Stone just like that. It was hard to believe Astral Nova would allow such a bold move. If Hera could do it, they surmised they could also do the same.

Hera stated, "If you're fine with the outcome, I'll head down to handle the payment."

With that, she turned and departed.

After all, grabbing what she needed and leaving was her usual style.

"Three lives for three demands," Bernard added.

Hera paused and skeptically glanced at him. Even the nearby bodyguards were surprised and wondered what demand could surpass a life.

"It's a simple request," Bernard clarified.

She raised an eyebrow and asked, "Such as?"

"You can start by sharing your contact information."

Bernard's request almost caused a nearby bodyguard to stumble in disbelief.

Bernard handed his phone that showed a WhatsApp QR code. He maintained a mysterious smirk and kept staring at her.

People would typically log in to WhatsApp with their primary numbers. But Hera remained unfazed and calmly scanned the code as though she had nothing to hide.

"What about the second one?" she asked.

"Keep in touch," he replied as he scanned her QR code in return.

Having now added her as a contact, he glanced at her profile.

Her WhatsApp name was "Shadow", with a plain black and white profile picture. Her WhatsApp updates only featured shares of her medical papers on the Divine Forum.

He was speechless when he realized it was her secondary account.

"What about the third demand?" Hera asked.

"I haven't decided yet. I'll hold onto it for now," Bernard replied.

Hera glanced at him. He had used two lifelines just to exchange contact information and keep in touch with her. She wondered if he was trying to win her over.

After some thought, she couldn't see what else the grandmaster, whom she was meeting for the first time, could want from her aside from her medical skills.

Moreover, the benefits of forming a connection with the grandmaster at Astral Nova outweighed any potential drawbacks for her, so she readily agreed.

"Okay," Hera replied before turning to leave.

As she made her way out, Bernard suddenly questioned, "Who are you planning to give the Eclipse Stone to?"

He was expecting her to brush off the inquiry with a curt response.

He was surprised when she answered cheerfully, "A friend."

He observed her closely and smiled before commenting, "Someone important, huh?"

With a vague nod, Hera opened the door and exited.

Behind her, Bernard reminded her, "Dr. Shadow, don't forget my request."

Hera said nothing. Samantha made a silly face at the bodyguard behind her as Hera stepped out. Then, she hugged Hera and led her to the restroom.

"How did you do it?" Samantha asked excitedly.

She heard the host's announcement that Hera had managed to snatch the Eclipse Stone from Bernard.

"I simply took a chance," Hera replied.

As she recalled Bernard's subtle shift in his disposition and his three demands, she concluded, "Maybe the Eclipse Stone isn't that important to him."



"Really? Is the grandmaster really that easy to deal with? Did you really not have to sacrifice anything, like your looks?" Samantha asked suspiciously.

Hera paused, then responded, "Is that how you see me?"