

Under the Heiress' Facade #Chapter 111 - Read Under the Heiress' Facade Chapter 111

Chapter 111

Samantha paused for a thought. Instead of trying to charm someone, she figured it might be quicker to simply take them out. But she quickly dismissed the idea with a shake of her head.

Then, she remarked enviously, "You defied the powerful, braved dangers, and stormed the Astral Nova Auction tower.

"Plus, you also outsmarted the grandmaster in bidding for the Eclipse Stone and spent nearly 900 million. If your young uncle knew you risked everything for him, he'd be deeply moved and ready to commit."

"Are all men like that?"

Hera suddenly remembered Bernard's assertive words from their previous conversation at the hotel. That was his style.

"Anyone interested in you definitely would be!" Samantha replied.

Hera was momentarily speechless.

Samantha's mischievous grin widened as she leaned in toward her.

"Just go along with it when the time comes," she advised and tried to catch any sign of a blush under Hera's mask.

She added, "Don't try even to insist that you and him are collaborators."

Hera pushed Samantha's intrusive face away.

"I've got some errands to run. You head home. I'll cover your Cartier red diamond."

Moments earlier, Samantha, the diamond enthusiast, had bid 170 million for a Cartier red diamond at the auction.

"Okay, love you. I love you," Samantha chirped and made heart shapes with her hands.

"Let's have a moment of silence for the sucker. I'm out."

Samantha was well aware of Hera's knack for getting others to foot the bill, and Hera's strategy wasn't lost on her either. Whenever Hera had a big expense coming up, she would take on a task to make her sponsor foot the bill.

By keeping the money out of her own hands, Hera effectively hid her tracks. With Samantha's departure, Hera swiftly reached for her phone. She sent a quick quotation to Queenie, then made her way down the stairs to collect the goods.

...

The burly bodyguard, Samson Shaft, had returned to the grandmaster's room after escorting Hera out.

He asked, "Bernard, did you really let her take the Eclipse Stone?"

Seated comfortably behind the bead curtain, Bernard relaxed on the grandmaster's throne with a glass of red wine in his hand.

He casually pushed the ghost mask atop his forehead to reveal his striking features.

He took a sip of wine and asked, "Do you have a problem with that?"

Samson hesitated and considered the gravity of the situation. He knew the Eclipse Stone was Bernard's salvation, yet he had allowed another to snatch it away.

Now faced with Dr. Shadow's demands—the return of the stone, a cure for the illness, and an ambiguous question of friendship—Samson found himself at a loss for words.

Then, he composed a message in the WhatsApp group titled "North, South, East, West".

Samson: "Bernard's having an episode! @Johnson, where are you? Hurry up!"

Douglas: "What's going on?"

Douglas: "Bernard's having another episode?"

Douglas: "Are you guys still at the auction? You have to keep him under control. Keep his identity hidden."

Douglas: "@Johnson, Where are you? Why aren't you answering the phone?"

Douglas: "Does anyone have Ms. Hera's phone number?"

Theo: "Douglas, calm down. Mr. Ludden probably has her number. I'll give him a call."

Samson: "Bernard isn't losing control. He just gave the Eclipse Stone to someone else!"

Johnson: "I'm just getting on the elevator. There's no signal!"

Johnson: "!!!"

Douglas: "!!!"

Theo: "Wait! Is it a woman?"

Douglas: "Samson, stop her now!"

Samson: "Yes, it's a woman. It's Dr. Shadow."

Bernard: "Samson, there goes your bonus for the quarter."

Samson: "Damn!"

Samson forgot there were five other people in the group chat. He quickly pocketed his phone and nervously glanced at Bernard.

"Bernard, are you really okay?"

"What do you think it means when a woman keeps wearing gifts given by a guy?" Bernard countered with a question.

Chapter 112

Bernard held his phone in his left hand and flipped it in his palm as he contemplated the question.

Samson's face was a picture of confusion at this seemingly random inquiry. He wondered about its connection to Bernard giving the Eclipse Stone away.

Samson racked his brains but couldn't make sense of it. So, he discreetly pulled out his phone and quickly Googled the question.

He selected a response and tentatively said, "Maybe it means the girl likes the guy... and that she values the gifts he gives..."

"I think so, too," Bernard replied with a smirk.

It turned out that Hera was the anonymous miracle doctor he had been searching for all this time.

She also deliberately lied to him about not attending the auction. He wondered if she was planning to surprise him and if he should keep up the pretense.

Sensing something amiss, Samson observed Bernard's strange behavior.

Suddenly, the door burst open with a loud bang.

Johnson dashed in.

He panted and asked, "Where is Dr. Shadow?"

He idolized the miracle doctor.

When Samson saw him, he hurriedly pulled Johnson aside and whispered, "Dr. Shadow is gone. Quick! Check on Bernard. Is he alright?"

Then, he steered Johnson toward Bernard.

At that moment, Bernard was sitting on his throne with his legs crossed. Johnson saw Bernard leisurely sipping his red wine. He didn't look sick at all.

"Bernard, why—"

Bernard interrupted him, "Johnson, schedule a time for me to meet with Dr. Shadow."

Johnson hesitated. He realized Bernard wasn't talking about a formal meeting.

"Are you receiving treatment? Don't you have Ms. Hera?"

Johnson recalled their decision to forgo seeking out the miracle doctor upon meeting Hera. After securing the Eclipse Stone and entrusting it to Dr. Shadow, the sudden urgency for another meeting hinted at something more significant.

"Are you falling for someone else?"

Bernard took a sip of his wine.

"You single lads wouldn't understand."

Johnson and Samson exchanged glances.

They mused, "What's that about being single, Boss? Aren't you still flying solo?"

...

After Samantha parted ways with Hera, she returned to the fifth floor and happened to see someone exiting Room 509.

The individual was wearing a red cloak and a golden mask.

"I'd love to see who you really are, imposter," Samantha muttered to herself as she strode toward that individual.

"Hey, miss."

"Hello?"

Camille eyed Samantha warily. She looked at Samantha's sparkling appearance, like a porcelain doll covered in diamonds.

She remembered Samantha, the international movie star who was with Dr. Shadow earlier.

"That mask of yours looks really nice. Might I take a look?"

Samantha smiled and leaned toward her.

Camille cautiously took a step back.

"Sorry, it's not convenient."

"Why not?"

Samantha blinked innocently, but her approach was anything but harmless.

In a voice audible only to both of them, she asked, "Is it fun to imitate others? Imposter."

Camille's face under the mask paled instantly, and she immediately pushed Samantha away.

Samantha seemed to have anticipated her actions. She raised her hand and forcefully pulled off Camille's mask, then pushed her back.

Camille couldn't keep her balance and fell to the ground. Her face turned pallid.

"You..."

Aurora, who was coming down from the sixth floor in search of someone, happened to witness the scene. She rushed forward to help Camille up.

"Are you okay, Ms. Chime?"

She looked at Camille's face and was somewhat surprised.

Chapter 113

Aurora and Camille had crossed paths at various social gatherings but weren't close.

"I'm fine, thanks," Camille calmed her inner panic and smiled.

"Why did you shove her all of a sudden?"

Aurora glanced at Samantha.

The auction ended, so guests began to spill out of the private rooms. Their curious gazes lingered on Samantha.

Since she didn't want to make a scene, Samantha disdainfully glanced at Camille. With a smirk, Samantha thought she had done Camille a favor by unveiling the imposter's true face in front of everyone.

Samantha tossed Camille's mask into the non-recyclable trash, clapped her hands, and gracefully made her exit. Unbeknownst to her, her actions didn't reveal Camille's true identity. Instead, her mistake led everyone to believe Camille was Dr. Shadow.

Samantha would later regret her mistake deeply.

"What's up with her?"

Aurora glanced at Samantha's departing figure and was speechless by her actions.

Camille calmly observed the curious glances from everyone around and smiled.

She explained, "Don't worry. She is just messing around with me."

With a single statement, she turned the tension into friendly banter.

Aurora glanced at the room number beside them, which happened to be 508. She remembered it was Bidder 508 who had claimed the Eclipse Stone from the grandmaster and stolen all the spotlight that day.

Then there was Samantha, the international movie star, who shared the same room. Aurora couldn't help but connect the dots, especially with Camille's nonchalant comment hinting at a familiarity between them.

Looking at Camille's red cloak and the discarded golden mask, Aurora began to suspect Camille was the anonymous miracle doctor. Camille was born into a prestigious medical

family and had shown extraordinary talent in medicine since childhood. She was hailed as a medical prodigy.

Aurora's excitement surged as she concluded that Camille was the anonymous miracle doctor everyone whispered about. The revelation felt like stumbling upon something precious without even seeking it.

"Congratulations, Dr. Shadow, on acquiring the Eclipse Stone. I'm the CEO of Carson Pharmaceutical Company. I hope we can collaborate sometime."

At that moment, a portly bald man smiled and handed a business card.

"Dr. Shadow, I'm from Farcen Emporium. Could I schedule an appointment with you to have my father treated?"

"Dr. Shadow, here's a business card from the Liam family. Thank you for accepting it."

"Dr. Shadow, could I get your contact information?"

"Dr. Shadow, would you consider selling the Eclipse Stone? I can offer one billion."

...

A crowd of curious onlookers swarmed around Camille. She wanted to explain that they had mistaken her for Dr. Shadow.

But she hesitated before the words could escape her lips. She might not be Dr. Shadow, but she did know medicine.

Just as she was hesitating, the bodyguard Aurora had summoned came to Camille's rescue and ushered her out of the crowd.

Inside the elevator, Camille expressed her gratitude.

"Thank you, Ms. Killian."

"You're welcome. I just didn't expect you to be the anonymous miracle doctor we were looking for," Aurora replied as she eyed Camille intently.

Camille understood the implication behind Aurora's words as a fleeting moment of guilt flashed across her eyes.

"Does someone in your family need medical attention?" she asked.

"You're indeed perceptive. I won't hide it from you. My grandmother and I were after the Eclipse Stone tonight, but when she saw your bid, she deliberately backed out of the bidding."

Aurora's words hit the nail on the head. Just like Hera had said earlier tonight, it all boiled down to money—who couldn't afford it?

The Killians' decision to back off from the bidding competition gave Hera the chance to compete with the grandmaster and ultimately secure the Eclipse Stone.

But Camille wasn't Hera, and she didn't deny it.

As the elevator approached the ground floor, Camille smiled and handed Aurora a business card.

"Let's sit down for a chat when you're free. I have to go for now."

Aurora looked at the business card with a glimmer of hope in her eyes. Finally, there was hope for her illness.

Chapter 114

At Gaskell Corporation, a group of young people sat in the conference room staring at their computers.

Seven or eight were yawning, while another four or five were struggling to keep their eyes open. None dared to succumb to sleep, not with Queenie casting her ominous presence at the front of the room.

At noon, Queenie got a reply from Raven that made her forehead vein pop. It was a deal worth six hundred million, yet they were being so casual about it.

But with the company's firewall system at stake, Queenie rushed to the office. She had to prepare and gather all the computer experts in the company into the conference room.

"I need you all to track down the other party's location through the network."

The computer experts could only respond in unison, "Yes."

After Queenie sent the task request, they waited for hours in the meeting room until they finally received a reply at 10:00 pm.

Raven replied, "Task accepted. 1.05 billion. Get ready and transfer the funds to this account within half an hour. No delays."

Queenie had skipped going to the Astral Nova Auction. She had waited anxiously for the entire day, only to receive a shock when she finally saw the figure—1.05 billion.

In just a few days, Raven's price had skyrocketed from 300 million to 1.05 billion. Queenie suddenly realized she might have been scammed.

Ever since the surveillance footage was leaked, it seemed like she had been lured into a trap.

"Find their location now!"

Queenie slammed her hand on the table and stood up.

The hackers sprang into action and swiftly tracked down the coordinates.

After a flurry of keystrokes, one of them reported, "Found them. 66°34' S, 160° E."

"30° N, 20° E"

"34° S, 151° E"

As everyone reported their findings, they looked at each other and finally came to one conclusion— they had been counter-surveilled.

"We've traced the bank card information. It's the account used for payments at the Astral Nova Auction," someone said.

"Immediately find out what was auctioned tonight at Astral Nova for 1.05 billion and who the buyer was," Queenie ordered.

Then, she turned to her secretary.

"Prepare the car, we're heading to Astral Nova!"

"Got it."

The secretary hurried to catch up with her.

"Do we need to settle the payment for the request?"

Queenie wanted to refuse, but the saying "time waits for no one" made her hesitate. After all the trouble, they couldn't just give up.

Their company's firewall system couldn't afford to wait for them to find someone else. They also considered the transaction's legitimacy since the account belonged to Astral Nova.

"Pay it! But only at the last minute, and keep a record of the transfer," she said with a sly smirk.

The secretary responded, "Got it."

Half an hour later, Queenie arrived at Astral Nova. By the time she showed up, most of the auction attendees had already left, and the security guard at the entrance stopped them.

"I'm sorry, but the auction is over. No one else may enter."

"What?"

If this were any other place, Queenie would have barged in. But this was Astral Nova, so she held back.

She opened WhatsApp and sent a message to Raven.

"Are you at Astral Nova? I happen to be here, too. Do you want to meet up?"

There was no reply.

"Madam, the payment has been made," the secretary said whilst on the phone.

She hung up the call she was on and continued, "Also, I discovered that tonight's auction highlight was the Eclipse Stone. It was auctioned off with the highest bid at 880 million, and Dr. Shadow purchased it."

Chapter 115

Queenie's secretary said, "1.05 billion might sound like the price tag for a few items. Over a dozen treasures were auctioned off tonight.

"Based on the price algorithm, the total price of the items successfully auctioned added up to 1.05 billion. There were five groups who won the bids, but the bidder's information couldn't be traced. So, we can't rule out the possibility further."

The algorithm seemed too complex for Queenie to attribute it to a bidder.

If it wasn't a bidder, then the most likely scenario remaining was that the receiving account belonged to Astral Nova, and Raven was associated with them.

At that moment, a message popped up on her WhatsApp. She immediately opened it.

Raven replied, "Payment received. Mission accomplished."

Following the message was an image file.

Queenie clicked on the attached image. It was a screenshot showing Raven's response to a task on Cyber Web.

"Mission accomplished."

Her frustration bubbled up. She couldn't believe that all that effort and anticipation was all for them to receive a two-worded response simply. She wondered if it had really cost her 1.05 billion for such brevity.

She asked, "Is this it? Have you completed all the requests I sent you? You're asking for 1.05 billion from me. Do you think I wouldn't report you for fraud?"

Queenie rattled off a bunch of words in her text. As expected, there was no response from the other end.

The silence was so cold it made one suspect they were dealing with an automated customer service bot.

At the sight of Queenie's dark expression, the secretary asked weakly, "Mrs. Gaskell, do you think we might have stumbled upon a fraud syndicate?"

Even the secretary felt like she was dealing with a scammer.

Queenie became even more suspicious and wondered if she had really been cheated. But even if she reported it to the police, their chat records wouldn't be enough to prove that the other party was a fraudster.

Instead, it would show her actively trying to get the other party to complete assignments and send money. Queenie's reputation as a savvy person would be ruined if this got out. So, her intention of reporting it was merely to scare the other party.

At that moment, the secretary's phone rang again. She picked up the call, and whatever was said on the other end of the line made her face light up with joy.

"Really? Okay, okay."

She hung up the phone and immediately turned to Queenie.

"Mrs. Gaskell, the attackers targeting our company's firewall system have all ceased their activity."

"Really?"

Queenie raised an eyebrow skeptically.

The secretary nodded firmly.

"Yes, it's true. The head of tech just called to report that all the malicious activity suddenly stopped during their efforts to intercept the attacks. Now, they're focused on resolving the bugs."

Another message popped up on Queenie's WhatsApp.

Raven texted, "Inspection complete. Transaction completed."

The swift completion of the inspection stunned Queenie. Mere minutes had passed, and it was already over. The efficiency was unnerving.

Hence, she rushed back to the company and focused on ensuring the security of the firewall system before sending a message to Raven.

As soon as Queenie hit send, a red exclamation mark reminded her that her message was undelivered.

It was then that Queenie realized that Raven had blocked her.

...

Meanwhile, Hera had returned to the Everett residence. She took a shower and exited the bathroom with damp hair.

Hera chuckled when she thought of Queenie being unable to message her. She picked up the conch bracelet she had placed on the table before showering and began fiddling with it.

She recalled the incident when Queenie broke the herbal remedy jar that Daphne had stayed up late to prepare for Albert.

Not only did Queenie not apologize, but she also soiled Daphne's dress, resulting in Albert's stern rebuke.

The indifference in Queenie's eyes back then as she watched the chaos unfold left Hera with a chill. The recent events were just the beginning of something about to unfold.

Chapter 116

Hera dried her damp hair and got into bed to sleep.

In the dimly lit hallway, the door of the adjacent room crept open. Simultaneously, another figure emerged from the staircase landing.

Two figures stealthily approached Hera's door. Their movements halted when they heard each other.

After a moment of confusion, they both whispered, "Shh!"

The two figures were Gideon and Lilith.

"Why aren't you asleep yet?"

Both whispered in unison. Then, they exchanged knowing glances toward Hera's door.

Light seeped out from under the door, but there was no sound from within to confirm if Hera was asleep.

"Hera came back alone in a taxi," Lilith said.

At noon, Hera mentioned she had plans with a friend and wouldn't be back for dinner. She had gone out and unexpectedly returned only in the early hours of the morning.

"Yeah, I know."

Gideon refrained from mentioning the black Audi following Hera's taxi. He was wary of exacerbating Lilith's concerns.

Once Hera disembarked and entered the gate, the Audi parked at the corner. It waited there until she went inside and only left after a considerable time had passed.

"It's good that she's returned."

Lilith breathed a sigh of relief.

"Did Hera used to come back this late before?" Gideon asked with a slight frown.

"No, not when she lived at home. But after moving out..."

Lilith recalled Giselle mentioning the photo of Hera with a young guy, which left her feeling uneasy. Yet, she also worried about coming off as nagging if she prodded too much.

"What's wrong?"

The tightly closed door abruptly swung open and startled Gideon and Lilith.

At the same time, a thud echoed from the other end of the hallway. It took them a moment to adjust to the light spilling from the room.

Following the noise, they spotted a small figure scrambling up from the floor and dashing nervously toward the room.

"Gino?"

Gideon flicked the hallway light on.

"Gino, why aren't you asleep yet? Are you worried about Hera, too?" Lilith asked.

The sudden brightness left Gino momentarily disoriented.

"Who cares if she comes back or not? I just got up to use the bathroom."

After saying that, he didn't bother to find his other slipper and hastily returned to his room with one foot bare. He nearly stumbled and left the slipper behind in the hallway.

"I could've sworn there was nothing wrong with the bathroom in Gino's room..." Lilith muttered to herself as she hurried to catch up.

"Gino, let me see if you're hurt."

Gideon grumbled, "Spoiled brat."

Hera was speechless at the scene.

"Is there anything else?"

She looked at her brother as he lingered by the door, not intending to leave.

Gideon cleared his throat and asked, "Where were you tonight? Did you get yourself into any trouble?"

She glanced at him again with a fleeting hint of caution in her eyes. She wasn't sure why he suddenly asked these two questions.

"Just went to a party with friends. What's up?"

Gideon noted her reaction and realized she likely wasn't aware of being followed.

"Call me if you're out past ten. I'll pick you up. It's not safe for you to take a taxi back this late," he said.

His sister was undeniably beautiful, and he felt a need to watch over her.

Hera paused and thought he knew something. But she realized he was simply concerned for her well-being. When she returned home that night, she found the living room softly illuminated yet empty.

Assuming everyone had retired for the night, she quietly went upstairs, unaware that they were all waiting for her return.

A warmth stirred within Hera's heart. It was a gentle sensation that thawed her usual indifference toward the world.

Chapter 117

This was how she felt after losing her home for over a decade.

Hera hummed in agreement.

"Get some rest. Goodnight," Gideon said with a smile.

"Goodnight," Hera replied.

Gideon didn't immediately go to sleep when he returned to his room. Instead, he made a phone call to a friend who worked as a police officer.

"Felton, did you find anything on the license plate number I requested?"

He was referring to the car's license plate number that had followed Hera home half an hour ago.

"Yeah, I found something. The car belonged to the general manager of a Killian Corporation branch in Norburgh," the voice on the other end confirmed.

"And who was the general manager?" Gideon inquired.

"Bernard Killian."

"Alright, thanks."

After exchanging a few more words with Felton, Gideon hung up.

He breathed a sigh of relief when he realized it wasn't a dangerous person tracking Hera.

However, the thought of Bernard gave him a headache.

Hera was still underage, and Bernard, who was in his 20's, was clearly exploiting her youth.

Unfortunately, Bernard's influence was too great, and the Everett family was powerless against him.

Gideon realized he needed to work even harder to earn money for Hera's sake.

...

On the Cavenridge forum, Giselle's scandal as the fake heiress and the notice of the Everett family's bankruptcy had been prominently featured on the front page for over half a month. However, it was finally buried under the announcement of the new round of selection activities for the academy's new Belle and Hunk.

Previous editions of the Belle and Hunk selection process were spontaneous activities organized by students. But this time, it was initiated by the academy, which was a rare occurrence.

The winning Belle and Hunk would represent the students and perform a recitation on the stage of Cavenridge's 80th-anniversary celebration, which would be broadcast nationwide.

The selection process began with students nominating others or recommending themselves. The top ten males and females with the most votes would automatically advance. The winning Belle and Hunk would be determined through a speech competition organized by the academy.

"Kate, should we all support Boss in the selection of the new Belle?"

Several classmates gathered around Katie's seat.

"Absolutely! With Boss' ethereal beauty, she's bound to shine!"

"I agree! I'll go talk to the class president."

Katie immediately went to fetch the class president.

When Katie brought the idea up, the class president pointed to the forum request on the phone screen.

"Are you guys idiots? Didn't you read the requirements? The academy requires the new Belle to be a beauty and a scholar. Do you want to embarrass Boss before the entire academy?"

Hera might be as beautiful as a celestial being, but everyone was well aware of her academic achievements.

They were the only class whose teachers were allowed to teach solely in Jadonish. So, the prospect of reciting in Terranish was daunting for them.

"In this world, is there really someone who embodies both true beauty and intelligence?"

"There is—the legendary Professor Killian."

"Christopher and Zylar aren't that bad either."

"But they're not on the same level as us."

Just then, Hera arrived. She sighed heavily when she noticed Katie and the others gathered around her seat.

"Boss, you're here. We were just lamenting your missed opportunity to secure the Belle title," Katie said, pulling Hera to her seat.

"What? Belle?" Hera asked in puzzlement.

At Hera's confusion, Katie realized she hadn't checked the academy forum. She proceeded to explain, thinking Hera would share their disappointment, assuming every girl enjoyed flaunting their beauty.

However, Hera simply responded nonchalantly, "Oh, I'm not interested."

Chapter 118

Katie was left speechless.

It was hard for her to comprehend that Hera, who was beautiful, didn't seem to value beauty that much.

"Boss, can't you pretend to be upset with us at least?" Katie implored.

"I'm too busy for that," Hera replied.

She set down her backpack and grabbed a small canvas bag before leaving.

The class president and her other classmates felt as though they had been snubbed by royalty.

Hera left the classroom and headed to the laboratory building.

Christopher leaned casually against the wall at the entrance of the chemistry laboratory on the fourth floor. He was carrying his backpack and reading a book while waiting for someone.

This particular chemistry lab was rarely used, and the hallway was deserted except for him.

Footsteps echoed from the stairwell. Christopher looked up to see a tall figure approaching.

Hera had her black hair tied in a ponytail. With a cold expression on her stunning face, she exuded an air of aloofness that kept others at a distance.

Her tall figure and long legs turned the plain gray uniform into a fashion statement.

Christopher's heart skipped a beat as he quickly put his book away and stood up straight.

"Hera, you're here," he said while hurriedly extracting a lunchbox from his backpack and handing it to her.

"Have you had breakfast? I brought this for you."

Without looking at the lunchbox, Hera demanded, "The key."

Unperturbed, Christopher reached into his pocket but didn't hurry to pull the key out.

"Are you planning to conduct an experiment?" he asked.

Before leaving that morning, Andrew had given him a key to the lab to hand over to Hera.

Anticipating his encounter with Hera, Christopher promptly requested the chef to prepare an additional breakfast meal.

"It's none of your business. Don't ask," Hera said.

She reached out her hand, signaling him not to dawdle.

"I just wanted to say—if you need help, you can call me anytime," Christopher offered, placing the key in Hera's hand and looking at her with hopeful eyes.

"There's no need for that," Hera said, unlocking the lab door and coldly shutting Christopher out.

She needed a quiet, undisturbed lab to separate the Eclipse Stone from the Aquabladder.

She had discussed it with Andrew over WhatsApp, and he had promptly arranged the space for her.

Rather than feeling upset about being turned away, Christopher felt secretly delighted.

He was ecstatic to encounter Hera and even have a conversation with her.

He made a firm decision to intensify his efforts in his studies to match Hera's pace.

...

Meanwhile, in Class K, Katie addressed the entire class from the platform.

"Hey, everyone! We all know how gorgeous Boss is, and we'd love to see her as the Belle in the upcoming Belle selection. However, she's not keen on joining. So let's respect her wishes and not nominate her."

"Why give up without even trying?" a pregnant woman in her 30s standing at the classroom door remarked.

She was their teacher, Kerry Lane, who had come to discuss the matter during break time.

Chapter 119

"The activities organized by the academy should be actively participated in. Our class has many good-looking students. You also don't need to worry about the speech competition. If you actively sign up, I will find ways to improve your Terranish proficiency!" Kerry passionately promised.

"This is a rare opportunity for our class to shine in academy activities. We must bravely toss our hats in the ring and participate. We need to prove that although our academic performance may not be as good as the other classes, we are not worthless," she added.

Katie was the first to stand up and politely decline, "No, Ms. Lane. We are quite self-aware. We don't want to bite off more than we can chew."

"Yeah, miss. We just want to live our lives peacefully," another student chimed in.

Several eager female students who considered participating changed their minds when they learned about the additional tutoring. They were only there to obtain the Cavenridge International Academy certificate and didn't want any extra hassle.

"Oh damn! Someone just nominated Hera!" a student suddenly exclaimed in the class.

Katie immediately pulled up the forum page on her device, asking, "Who nominated her?"

"I don't know—it was anonymous."

"Damn. Wasn't the anonymous feature disabled last time? Why is it back?"

"I heard someone hacked into the academy's system and played a prank, but the academy programmers fixed it."

"What a mess! It's much better with real names, so we can weed out the imposters."

The classroom erupted with complaints.

Meanwhile, in Class A, a voice exclaimed, "Hera from Class K signed up!"

"Oh, she's that rich girl from the countryside. She's pretty, but can she handle giving a speech in Terranish?"

"Let's not vote for her, lest she publicly embarrass the academy on its anniversary."

"Yeah. Let's vote for our class president instead."

"Right. Our class is the true representative of Cavenridge students."

Cindy Fry, the class president of Class A, ranked first academically among sophomores. She even scored an impressive eight out of ten in terms of attractiveness according to the boys' aesthetic standards.

She was currently comparing her vote count with the male candidates for the title. Christopher and Zyler were neck and neck, both leading by a wide margin among the boys.

Cindy herself was also leading among the many other girls who were participating.

She was fantasizing about performing on stage at the anniversary celebration with Christopher when Hera's entry immediately tied her vote count.

Just then, the discussions among Cindy's classmates gave her a new surge of hope. She was about to speak up when she was interrupted by her deskmate, Lily.

"Hera's eagerness to participate is a display of her courage. We should applaud her bravery in trying," Lily remarked.

Her unexpected defense of Hera drew curious glances from many classmates.

Several classmates who were close to Lily knew of her dislike for Hera, prompting them to wonder why she was suddenly speaking up in Hera's favor.

"Well, I just pity her. She managed to reclaim her position in the Everett family, but then they went bankrupt. Isn't that sad? Seeing her still strive in such circumstances is admirable. That's why I think we should support her and not discourage her," Lily explained.

She felt somewhat disgusted with herself for expressing sentiments she didn't truly feel.

While backing Hera was not something Lily would consider, she relished the thought of witnessing Hera embarrass herself in public. She was determined to settle the score for Hera's past humiliation of her.

"Very well said, Lily. I didn't expect you to be so kind," a classmate chimed in, echoing Lily's sentiment.

The response stirred sympathy among everyone as they found Lily's argument reasonable. After all, Hera was undeniably beautiful and seemed genuinely pitiable. Consequently, they all cast their votes for Hera, with some even persuading other classmates to do the same.

Chapter 120

The support for Hera surged rapidly, leaving Cindy far behind in the Belle ranking in just one day. With that, Hera firmly secured the top spot among all female students in the academy.

Cindy felt a mix of jealousy and frustration when she saw herself lagging behind Hera by over a thousand votes. She was especially frustrated as she watched Lily still campaigning for Hera after class.

Cindy couldn't deny Hera's beauty but believed her own abilities surpassed hers. Even if Lily helped Hera secure a spot in the top ten, could she compete in the final speech showdown?

Cindy saw Hera as nothing more than a pretty face. She felt that Hera wasn't suited to compete with her.

She was firmly convinced that she would emerge as the academy's Belle at the celebration.

...

That evening, Katie was shocked to find Hera leading the polls. Fearing foul play, she urgently pleaded on the forum for people not to vote for Hera.

However, her plea backfired as those who hadn't considered voting for Hera before were captivated by her beauty and decided to vote for her.

Despite Katie's efforts, Hera's ranking remained unchanged the next morning. Her votes had even increased. Katie couldn't help but marvel at Hera's stunning beauty.

Zyler entered the classroom and immediately launched the academy forum to check the voting results.

He had never cared much about such matters because the Hunk title always went to either him or Christopher.

Zyler's and Christopher's rankings were always neck and neck across the years. Ultimately, whoever garnered more admirers during the crucial voting period won the title.

Their relationship had always been good, and they didn't let the competition for the academy's Hunk title affect their friendship. So, neither of them cared too much about who held it.

But Zyler overheard many classmates discussing the voting that day and Hera's name was frequently mentioned. He became curious about the events that were unfolding.

Opening the "Academy Belle and Hunk" section of the forum, he was surprised to see Hera ranked first among the female students.

The photo accompanying her profile was a candid shot of her sitting at her desk. She was resting her chin on her hand, eyes lowered as she played with her phone. Her delicate features, elegant contours, and smooth, flawless skin combined gave her a breathtakingly beautiful appearance.

Zyler's first thought when he saw Hera's photo was that she must have entered the competition because she wanted to perform with him at the academy's anniversary celebration.

He understood that the feelings one had for someone couldn't simply be brushed aside, as he himself had experienced with Giselle.

Despite being angry at her for deceiving him, he still found himself thinking of her from time to time.

Therefore, Zyler believed that Hera still harbored feelings for him, although she was involved with Douglas.

Zyler felt a hint of satisfaction at that thought. He even speculated that Hera might be trying to grab Douglas' attention just to make him jealous.

Suddenly, he noticed that Christopher was ranked first among the male students. Zyler's vote count had unexpectedly dropped by 50 votes.

He couldn't understand why someone without credentials like Hera could be at the top. As the heir of the Gaskell family and a piano prodigy with great manners, he felt he deserved first place.

In a fit of anger, he cast a vote for himself.

The voting rules allowed each male and female student one vote. After casting his vote, Zylar turned to Christopher, who was sitting behind him.

"Chris, did you vote on the forum in the Belle and Hunk election?" Zylar asked.

Christopher, immersed in his test papers, didn't even look up.

"No. I'd rather spend my time brushing up on some more questions than waste it on that sort of thing."

"Well then, how about you let me use your account to vote?" Zylar suggested.