

Under the Heiress' Facade #Chapter 141 - Read Under the Heiress' Facade Chapter 141

Chapter 141

Seeing Bernard requesting a kiss with his eyes closed, Hera couldn't help but wonder if he truly saw himself as a sleeping prince. Her cold expression softened slightly with a hint of joy.

With Bernard's condition finally stabilized, Hera could now find solace in a peaceful rest. Despite taking a brief nap after completing the surgery, she found herself plagued by dreams of Bernard in the operating room, disturbing her sleep.

"Your brain isn't fried, is it?"

Hera touched Bernard's forehead with the back of her hand, confirming that his temperature had returned to normal.

Sensing her hand on his forehead with his eyes closed, Bernard suddenly felt her presence drawing near, catching a whiff of her faint fragrance. Then, he felt a gentle touch of soft, warm lips lightly pressing against his forehead.

Bernard promptly opened his eyes, only to see Hera turning around and calmly heading toward the door. He couldn't help but wonder if that kiss was merely a figment of his imagination.

"Where are you going?"

He let out a loud groan.

He propped himself up, accidentally aggravating his wound and causing a sharp pain that nearly made him faint.

Hera immediately turned around and gently pushed him back onto the bed.

"Stay put if you don't want to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair!"

"Yes, ma'am," Bernard replied with a smile, appreciating her care.

He couldn't help but notice the blush on her face, confirming that the kiss had indeed been real.

"What are you smiling at?"

Hera noticed his smile.

"You can't just flirt and run off like that. You've got to take responsibility," Bernard teased.

He reached out a hand and lightly tugged at the hem of Hera's uniform, which she had been wearing for two days straight. His pale face had a pitiful look that was reminiscent of a helpless puppy.

Hera stared at him silently, her cheeks flushing even more deeply as she remembered the impulsive kiss she had given him on the forehead.

Pulling his hands away, Hera retorted seriously, "Professor Killian, I'm leaving because you didn't trust my medical skills. Nothing more."

Hera believed that Bernard's lack of trust was evident in his decision not to inform her about his injuries. It suited her fine since she didn't fully trust him either. Ultimately, their relationship was simply a partnership.

"Tiramisu is alone at home, so I'm going to check on it. Take careful of yourself."

With that, Hera left the ward.

As Bernard watched her depart, the pain in his leg suddenly intensified.

He should have explained that he had kept his injuries from her because he didn't want to worry her, not because he doubted her skills.

After Hera left, Johnson and Aaron entered the ward.

"Bernard, what did you say to Hera? She seems a bit upset," Aaron asked.

"Who told her?" Bernard countered.

Johnson placed the consommé and medicine on the table, then pointed at Aaron.

Aaron slowly raised his hand and admitted, "Your life was at risk. I was worried you wouldn't make it, so I brought her to see you—"

Before Aaron could finish his sentence with "for one last time", he felt Bernard's icy glare bore into him like daggers, sending a shiver down his spine.

"Get ready. I'm going back to Norburgh now," Bernard announced.

He pushed himself up despite the pain.

"No, Bernard. You need to rest after the surgery," Johnson quickly interjected.

"That's right. Hera specifically told us to keep an eye on you, making sure you stay in bed and rest properly," Aaron added.

"Don't make me repeat myself!"

Bernard's tone was stern, his expression cold.

Sensing his fury, Aaron and Johnson acquiesced.

"I'll arrange it immediately," Aaron said, hurrying out of the ward.

Bernard's insistence set everyone in motion, but none of them understood why he was adamant about returning to Norburgh in such haste.

However, Bernard knew that if he didn't depart for Norburgh soon, a scoundrel might capture Hera's affections before him.

Chapter 142

The final Belle & Hunk election showdown was a speech contest. It was scheduled for 2:00 pm at Cavenridge International Academy.

Early that morning, the teacher overseeing the contest, Wanda Walker, posted a notice on the school forum and bulletin board: "Finalists from the auditions, please report to the backstage of the school auditorium at 1:00 pm this afternoon."

Christopher took a screenshot of the notice and sent it to Hera but received no response. He couldn't help but wonder why she hadn't been replying to his messages since the previous day.

Believing he had a valid reason to contact Hera, Christopher scrolled through his contacts and called the contact that was saved as "Goddess" for the first time. However, the call didn't go through, indicating Hera's phone was switched off.

Concern gnawed at him. Christopher couldn't help but wonder if Hera was in trouble. He hurried to the teacher's faculty to find Kerry Lane, the homeroom teacher of junior year Class K.

"Hera messaged me two nights ago, saying she needed two days off for personal matters," Kerry remarked as she checked her phone for the message.

For over a week now, Hera had been heading to the lab shortly after she arrived in the classroom every day.

While Kerry had been willing to overlook Hera's classroom absence, she disapproved of her skipping the speech contest.

Kerry tried to persuade Hera to return to school many times, but Hera didn't respond to her messages. Kerry had even tried calling her, but Hera's phone remained switched off.

"Ms. Lane, Christopher, you can't reach Boss—uh, I mean Hera—either?" Katie interrupted, having overheard their conversation. She was there to submit the homework on behalf of her class.

"I can't reach her either!" Katie added, placing the large pile of workbooks on Kerry's desk.

She thought Hera had deliberately ignored her because she found her too bothersome.

"Is she in some kind of trouble?" Kerry asked, her tone tinged with concern.

A shiver ran down Katie's spine as a worrisome thought crossed her mind.

"Could she have been kidnapped? I mean, Boss is beautiful..."

Christopher pondered silently for a moment before speaking up.

"Please contact her parents, Ms. Lane."

"Of course. I'll do that right away."

Kerry nodded.

While they were preoccupied searching for Hera, a gossip post titled "Hera Taking Leave Possibly to Avoid Competition" emerged on the school forum and quickly gained traction as the most popular post of the morning.

"Taking leave to dodge the competition? What game is she playing at?"

"Wasn't she busy flirting with Christopher two days ago? Did she strike out?"

"Obviously! Our Christopher wouldn't fall for her."

"Go, Christopher!"

"What the heck? Is she chickening out? Then why bother campaigning?"

"I smell a conspiracy behind the people pushing Hera's campaign."

"Who posted this? Do you have any evidence? Delete this now! Hera wouldn't skip out on the speech contest!" Katie responded to the post.

"Katie, are you Hera's lapdog or something? I've noticed you always defend her."

"Lapdog and lackey, I'd say. I really don't get why the mayor's daughter is so sycophantic toward a country bumpkin like Hera. What's in it for you, Katie?"

"Katie, my source is solid. Hera won't be participating in the contest this afternoon."

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It was 1:00 pm. The audition finalists reported to the backstage of the auditorium promptly.

Lily, the first finalist to arrive, stood at the registration counter, counting the finalists who came to sign in.

Once all the finalists had registered, she couldn't help but feel disappointed and scornful that Hera hadn't shown up. It confirmed the gossip post on the school forum about Hera's decision to skip the contest.

Chapter 143

Although Lily had been covertly rallying votes for Hera, secretly hoping to witness Hera embarrass herself, Hera's decision to withdraw from the contest pleased her nonetheless.

She believed that a country bumpkin like Hera, who hadn't had much exposure to the world, would be intimidated by such a grand contest.

"Is everyone here? Gather around, please. We're going to draw lots to determine the contest order," Wanda announced, clapping her hands to gather everyone's attention.

"Ms. Walker, we're one person short. Hera hasn't arrived yet," reported the student responsible for the attendance list.

"What? I clearly stated that we were meeting at one," Wanda replied.

She glanced at her watch to confirm it was already 1:10 pm.

"Ms. Walker, could we please wait a little longer? I believe Hera is on her way here," Christopher said, capturing everyone's attention.

The others stared at him in surprise. They were puzzled by his unexpected defense of Hera. After all, they had assumed he had rejected her advances, as indicated by the gossip post on the forum.

"In that case, let's wait another five minutes," Wanda announced, reluctantly agreeing to Christopher's request.

Despite her annoyance, she couldn't afford to disregard the Dean's son.

"Chris, are you still in contact with Hera?" Zylar approached Christopher, asking in a hushed tone.

"Uh-huh," Christopher replied casually, glancing at his watch as he anxiously awaited Hera's arrival.

Observing Christopher's nervous demeanor, Zylar felt frustrated, realizing that Christopher had ignored his earlier advice.

"Chris, Hera isn't as good as you think—"

"Zee, we're done being friends," Christopher cut him off.

Zylar's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Chris, what are you saying?"

"I've made it clear before. If you insult Hera again, our friendship is finished."

With that, Christopher walked away, putting some distance between them.

Zylar was stunned by Christopher's directness and resolve. He was unable to believe that Christopher would end their six-year friendship over someone like Hera, whom he had only known for three months.

He wondered about what Christopher saw in Hera. To him, she was nothing but a Money Fly.

Zylar couldn't wait for Hera to show up so he could prove to Christopher that she was a gold digger. He was also determined to win the Hunk title, dazzling everyone and making Christopher regret ending their friendship.

"Ms. Walker, I don't think we should wait any longer. I saw a post on the school forum stating that she had quit the contest," Lily raised her hand to speak.

Cindy Fry turned around, giving Lily a puzzled look.

Hadn't Lily campaigned for Hera earlier? Why was she now speaking against her?

"When was the post made?"

Wanda's expression darkened, displeased that Hera hadn't informed her of her decision to drop out of the contest, resulting in everyone's time being wasted.

"It was posted this morning. Everyone has been discussing it since then," Lily said with a hint of regret.

"I had hoped that Hera had truly turned over a new leaf, but—"

"Some people never learn. Ms. Walker, Christopher, perhaps we should stop waiting for her."

"Agreed! Let's proceed with drawing lots. With 20 of us here, every five minutes wasted equals a hundred minutes of lost time! We can finish the contest in that time."

"Even if she does show up, she'll probably end up in last place anyway. I don't see the need to waste our time just for her."

"It's her fault for not being punctual in the first place."

The students began to echo their agreement.

Glancing at her watch, Wanda noted that the promised five minutes had passed. She decided not to wait any longer.

"Let's draw lots. If Hera arrives, she'll be the last to take the stage. Otherwise, she will be disqualified," Wanda announced.

This was the greatest favor she could offer Christopher.

Chapter 144

The speech contest began promptly at 2:00 pm. The auditorium was packed with students, while six teachers sat as judges in the front row.

Lily, the first contestant to take the stage, seemed particularly nervous. Despite the chilly early November weather in Norburgh, she stood on the stage in a sky-blue strapless dress, facing the vast audience.

Her voice quivered uncontrollably, perhaps due to the cold or her nerves, prompting laughter from her peers.

However, being a member of Class A for two consecutive years, Lily possessed a solid grasp of Terranish, though her pronunciation wasn't flawless.

Despite some stumbling due to her anxiety, she managed to complete her speech. The judges awarded her a score of 80, given that she was the inaugural contestant.

Aware that her chances of winning the Belle title were slim, Lily found some comfort in her score of 80, considering her nervous performance. She believed that other contestants might not fare as well.

However, as she watched the contest unfold from the backstage prep room, her expression darkened as she realized that her score remained at the bottom.

When Christopher, contestant number 17, took the stage in his impeccably tailored black suit and styled hair, he immediately drew screams from the female audience.

Despite being recognized as the top student in the school, Christopher had put considerable effort into improving his Terranish over the years, aided by his frequent travels to Terrania, resulting in his clear and fluent pronunciation.

Delivering his speech with natural poised and emotional depth, Christopher captivated the audience with his clear and readily comprehensible content, prompting enthusiastic applause.

"Thank you, Christopher, for the wonderful speech. And the score he received is... 95! Ladies and gentlemen, that's the highest score we've seen today!" the host announced.

Once again, the audience erupted into applause, cheering for Christopher to be crowned as the hunk of the year.

Backstage, Zyler grew even more confident about surpassing Christopher's score. While Christopher might excel academically, Zyler knew his Terranish were superior.

As Cindy prepared to take the stage, she glanced toward the hallway, still no sign of Hera. It seemed she couldn't make it after all.

Adorned in a creamy feathered dress, Cindy walked onto the stage gracefully, her fair skin radiant under the lights.

Passing Christopher as he descended from the stage, she greeted him with a blush, "Congratulations on the highest score, Christopher."

"Where's Hera? She's up after the next two contestants..." Christopher hurried past her, pulling out his phone to make a call.

Feeling slighted by Christopher's oversight, Cindy took a deep breath, reassuring herself that the Belle title would be hers if she could achieve a score of 95.

As Cindy stepped onto the stage, the male students in the audience showered her with whistles. As a member of Class A, Cindy's Terranish pronunciation was almost as fluent as Christopher's.

In the end, her graceful performance and well-written speech won her a 95 score—the highest among the female participants.

Hearing the audience cheering for her to be crowned as the Belle of the Year, Cindy smiled confidently, assuming that the title was hers to earn.

Meanwhile, Lily, who remained in the prep room, felt embarrassed upon realizing she had earned the lowest score among the female contestants.

Nevertheless, she consoled herself with the thought that she wouldn't be in last place. Even if Hera were to show up for the contest, Lily was confident that Hera couldn't outperform her.

Zyler, the last male contestant, had a long history of participating in various piano competitions and performances since childhood. As a result, he had a keen understanding of stage lighting.

For his performance, he specifically opted for a bright red suit, styled his hair into a mature pompadour, and applied makeup to his face.

As he stepped onto the stage, his features appeared strikingly attractive under the bright lights, eliciting screams of admiration from his fangirls.

Chapter 145

Zyler's Terranish pronunciation was impeccable, thanks to his piano teacher from Terrania who had guided him since childhood. Confident in his accent, he believed he could surpass Christopher in this aspect.

However, a stir arose during his speech as Tim Smithon, the prominent professor from Cavenridge's Linguistics Department, appeared in the audience.

Rumor had it that Tim was scouting for talented students, so the audience couldn't help but wonder if he was here for Zyler.

Zyler was also convinced that Tim was here to watch his performance since he was the last to take the stage. This thought rattled him, causing a momentary lapse in his speech, but he quickly regained his composure and continued.

When Zyler finished his speech, he was showered with enthusiastic applause. He was confident that he could achieve a score of 99, with only 1 score deducted for his momentary lapse.

Considering that even Tim Smithon honored him with his presence, Zyler believed he would be crowned the Hunk of the Year.

"Thank you, Zylar, for the excellent speech. The score he received is... 94!" the host announced.

Zylar's smile froze upon hearing his result, unable to believe he had only scored 94.

"Zylar's Terranish was fluent, and his pronunciation was excellent too. However, there's a minor grammar issue in his speech.

"Additionally, his performance came across as a bit exaggerated, and he could have maintained better focus. Don't lose heart! There's always next time!" the host reassured Zylar, noticing his puzzled expression.

Although Zylar was tempted to mention that Tim's sudden appearance had thrown him off, he refrained from speaking out, assuming Tim had specifically come to see him—since Hera, who was supposed to be the last contestant, was nowhere in sight before Zylar took the stage.

"Thank you, Zylar. Please remain backstage while we welcome our final contestant, number 20, to the stage," the host concluded.

Disheartened by his score, Zylar exited the stage as instructed. Seeing Hera's continued absence backstage, his mood lifted slightly. Though he hadn't secured the Hunk title, at least Christopher had discovered Hera's true nature.

As the stage remained vacant for a minute, the six judges exchanged glances while the students began to whisper among themselves.

"Enough waiting! Contestant number 20, Hera Youngworth, has dropped out of the contest. Let's announce the results already!" a male student exclaimed, sparking a wave of discussion throughout the venue.

"So, she really did drop out!"

"Hmph! That country bumpkin couldn't handle the pressure, huh?"

"What a joke! If she was too scared to compete, why did she even bother auditioning?"

The venue erupted into a chorus of criticism.

"Gino, did your sister really drop out?" Xyla Yonder asked, her hands holding a large bouquet of flowers. She had come to accompany Gino to watch Hera's speech.

"Beats me," Gino replied embarrassedly, standing beside her in puzzlement.

He couldn't help but wonder why Hera had suddenly changed her mind again.

Chapter 146

"But if your sister doesn't show up, we won't be able to give her this bouquet," Xyla remarked, her eyes casting a pitiful glance at the large bouquet of pink roses cradled in her arms.

Xyla Yonder was Gino's classmate. When Gino invited her to watch the contest with him, she happily accepted.

Before heading to the auditorium, they stopped by a nearby florist, where Gino bought the bouquet and handed it to her.

Thrilled by Gino's unexpected gesture, Xyla couldn't help but assume that Gino might have feelings for her. As she began to imagine their future weddings and children, Gino's words shattered her dream abruptly.

"After my sister finishes her speech, you can give it to her." Gino muttered softly, "I'll look ridiculous carrying that big bouquet around."

Xyla was left speechless, realizing that Gino had only invited her to deliver the flowers on his behalf.

As Gino debated whether to dispose of the flowers since Hera was absent, a female voice suddenly echoed through the speaker.

"Hello, everyone. I'm Hera Youngworth. My apologies, I was caught up in some personal matters so I'm late—"

The audience quickly hushed, turning their attention toward the stage, which remained empty.

Nevertheless, Hera's voice continued to resonate through the speaker.

"I'll be there in five minutes. However, I don't want to keep everyone waiting, so I'll start my speech here online—"

The audience exchanged puzzled looks, whispering among themselves. Perplexed by the sudden development, the judges turned to the host for clarification.

The host quickly radioed the sound system crew, asking, "What's going on?"

"The sound system is connected to an unknown external device. We've tried to disconnect it, but it's futile. Unless we unplug the power—"

"Don't interrupt her. Let her finish her speech with this unconventional method," Tim intervened, taking the intercom from the host.

The host was taken aback. He had assumed Tim was here for Zylar, but apparently, that wasn't the case.

As Hera's Terranish speech emanated from the speaker, the chaotic venue gradually settled. Even the six judges instinctively sat up straight, marveling at her fluent native accent.

They had heard rumors about Hera's rural upbringing and dismal academic performance, especially in Terranish.

Yet, as they listened to her speech, her Terranish pronunciation appeared flawless, her grammar natural and engaging. She even included advanced vocabulary in her speech, sounding indistinguishable from a native Terranian.

In contrast, Zylar's earlier impeccable pronunciation now seemed rigid and grammatically awkward.

All the contestants were taken aback at the prep room by Hera's fluent Terranish—except for Christopher, who seemed deeply impressed.

Upon recognizing Hera's voice, Zylar and Lily were dumbfounded by her flawless speech.

Zylar, in particular, was stunned. He couldn't fathom how someone like Hera could speak Terranish so fluently.

"Impossible! How can a country bumpkin speak Terranish so flawlessly? This must be an edited audio!"

Chapter 147

Lily exclaimed in disbelief, "With today's advanced technology, Hera could easily create an audio that sounds exactly like her!"

"That's cheating! If she's too scared to show up, she should just withdraw from the contest instead of playing games!"

"You can't accuse her of cheating without evidence!" Christopher retorted, his expression darkening.

He detested the mention of "cheating" as it reminded him of his past humiliating experience. But what he detested even more was hearing others humiliate Hera in front of him.

"But it's undeniable that she didn't deliver the speech in person," Lily argued softly. Frightened by Christopher's solemn expression, she turned to Zylar, pitifully pleading for his support.

Feeling a surge of protectiveness at the sight of Lily's pleading gaze, Zylar's discontentment with his score of 94 intensified.

"Christopher, why do you always defend that country bumpkin? Have you forgotten that she copied your test paper during the entrance exam? Has she bewitched you or something?" Zylar interjected.

Then he added, "Lily's right. Hera didn't show up for the contest, so we can't be sure if she's the one giving the speech."

"Bewitched? I wonder who's the one bewitched here," Christopher retorted, glaring at Lily with disdain as he spoke through clenched teeth. "Don't jump to conclusions without verifying the truth!"

As Christopher's and Zylar's eyes met, tension thickened in the air, leaving the other contestants bewildered. They couldn't understand why these close friends were suddenly at odds.

"She's not cheating. It's real. Look!" Cindy interjected calmly, pointing at the monitor broadcasting the stage. The camera had now focused on the audience, zooming in to reveal a tall figure entering the main entrance.

Hera, holding her phone to her lips, continued her speech with a nonchalant demeanor.

Dressed in Cavenridge's gray winter uniform, her slim, long legs could be seen under her pleated skirt. Her long hair was casually tied into a bun at the back of her head.

Even without makeup, her natural beauty effortlessly outshone the other female contestants who had meticulously dressed for the contest.

"Wow!" Someone exclaimed in astonishment upon spotting her presence, drawing everyone's attention to her.

Everyone was stunned as they watched Hera continue delivering her fluent Terranish speech.

Hera slowly made her way to the stage, her speech flowing uninterrupted.

Xyla, tightly holding the bouquet, moved to the side of the corridor and handed it to Hera as she walked past.

"You're amazing, Hera!" Xyla whispered to her.

Accepting the bouquet with a faint smile, Hera resumed her speech without missing a beat. The moment she stepped onto the stage, her speech concluded perfectly.

Hera flawlessly delivered her speech within ten minutes, seamlessly transitioning from another location to the auditorium. Her unwavering focus and flawless delivery were evident, even as she accepted a bouquet without missing a beat.

"Last but not least, I'd like to thank Ms. Lane for providing me with such a wonderful speech." With that, Hera concluded her address.

A hushed silence enveloped the venue as everyone marveled at Hera's mastery of Terranish.

"Allow me to elaborate. While I provided Hera with the speech, she was the one who translated it into Terranish. I must say, her translation is even better than mine!" Kerry stood up from the audience, her voice tinged with inexplicable excitement.

"Well done! Bravo!" Tim rose from his seat, applauding.

The venue erupted in applause, the sound filling the space and echoing for a long while.

Chapter 148

"Thank you, Hera, for the outstanding speech! I wonder how much she scores..." the host exclaimed passionately, reminding the judges not to forget to award her scores.

"Hera, have you stayed in Terrania before?" Tim asked in Terranish, his pronunciation mirroring Hera's.

"No, sir," Hera replied fluently in Terranish.

"Where did you pick up the pronunciation then? It's spot on!"

"I've never had any formal training. However, I used to live next to a Terranian family, so I picked it up from them."

"Good heavens! Your learning ability is truly remarkable!" Tim exclaimed.

Considering Hera hadn't lived in Terrania, nor had she undergone formal training for Terranish pronunciation, she must possess exceptional linguistic talent to speak Terranish like a native.

Andrew was right; Hera was indeed an up-and-coming student.

As the rest of the students listened to Hera conversing fluently with Tim in Terranish, any lingering doubts about her command of the language were swiftly dispelled. It became evident that Hera's proficiency wasn't merely the result of memorizing a script.

Meanwhile, in the prep room, a female student approached Cindy.

"Cindy, why did you speak up for Hera?" she asked in a hushed tone, under the assumption that Cindy had disregarded Hera as her competitor.

"Because she's awesome!" Cindy replied honestly.

Like her peers, Cindy initially underestimated Hera, assuming that her rural upbringing would result in poor academic performance.

However, Cindy was deeply impressed after witnessing Hera's speech and her fluent exchange with Tim!

"Do you two have anything else to say?" Christopher questioned Zylar and Lily.

He then warned, "Hera isn't only proficient in Terranish; she also excels in other subjects. Don't judge her by appearances and jump to conclusions. Your assumptions will only spread false rumors, tarnishing Cavenridge's reputation."

"She just happens to speak fluent Terranish! It doesn't necessarily mean she's good at other subjects!" Zylar's expression turned ashen as he exclaimed, refusing to believe that a country bumpkin like Hera could excel academically.

"Stubborn as always!" Christopher's expression darkened, his tone turning solemn. "When Hera arrives, you two should apologize to her. If she forgives you, I'll let this matter slide."

Zylar was taken aback, realizing that Christopher might not be lenient if Hera chose not to forgive him.

Considering Christopher had already severed ties with him for Hera's sake, Zylar was convinced Christopher would take drastic measures.

He remembered the two Vardhar University scholarships that Cavenridge offered annually. Christopher had intended to secure one for him, and they planned to continue their studies together at Vardhar University after completing the SATs the following year.

With this scholarship opportunity in mind, Zylar realized it would be unwise to fall out with Christopher at this juncture.

"If that country bumpkin's grades are really as impressive as you say, why is she still in Class K then? If she manages to get into Class A, I'll apologize to her in front of everyone in Class A!" Lily blurted out.

Her feet stomped in frustration as she grappled with the embarrassment of knowing her score was confirmed to be the lowest among the contestants.

Lily had anonymously recommended Hera to participate in the Belle election with the intention of seeing Hera embarrass herself.

However, her plan backfired, with Lily ending up making a fool of herself while inadvertently putting Hera in the spotlight.

Now, with Christopher expecting her to apologize to Hera, Lily's anger only intensified.

Upon hearing Lily's outburst, Christopher's expression darkened inexplicably.

Everyone present was taken aback by Lily's lack of emotional intelligence, questioning how someone like her ended up in Class A.

Despite Christopher's clear attempt at reconciliation, Lily had chosen to disregard it entirely, showing the scion of the Ludden family no respect. What a foolish move!

Even Zyler instinctively distanced himself a little further from her.

Meanwhile, on the stage...

Chapter 149

Upon receiving Hera's scores from the six judges, the host quickly announced, "Now, it's time to reveal Hera's score."

"That won't be necessary! I hereby declare Hera as Belle of the Year!" Tim interjected.

Glancing at the final result, the host smiled. "Professor Smithon certainly has a keen intuition! Hera's score is... 99! With 1 point deducted due to the unoriginal script."

"Congratulations, Hera Youngworth! You're Belle of the Year! Please share your thoughts with us." The host handed the microphone to Hera.

"I'd like to express my gratitude to Cavenridge for organizing this event and giving me the chance to stand on this stage. I also want to thank those who voted for me in the preliminary selection."

With that, Hera scanned the stage calmly before turning back to the host.

"This stage offers equal opportunity to all. Therefore, I'd like to request an additional chance for the contestant with the lowest score to dance for everyone, a chance to showcase her talent once more. What do you say?" Hera proposed.

Although Hera phrased it as a question, her firm demeanor made it difficult for the host to decline.

"I think that's a wonderful idea. Let's invite that contestant to the stage," Tim egged on.

The audience watched in confusion, wondering what was happening.

"Why should I dance just because you say so?" Lily protested as she was pushed onto the stage.

"I thought you recommended me to join this election because you wanted my support?" Hera countered.

"No one said anything about support!" Lily burst into rage. Dancing wasn't her forte, and performing on stage would only lead to public embarrassment.

"Oh, so you are the one who anonymously recommended me for this election?" Hera pointed out calmly.

In fact, if Hera wanted to identify the person who recommended her, she could easily trace it back using the recommender's code. Yet, she chose to expose her on stage to ridicule Lily.

"Why you—t-that wasn't me! You have no proof!" Lily stuttered, caught off guard by the sudden exposure.

"I'm not sure if Lily was Hera's recommender, but she did ask me to vote for Hera," a student in the audience suddenly said.

"Same here. She mentioned Hera's Terranish wasn't up to par, but she admired her efforts to improve and thought she deserved our support."

"She told me the same thing!"

"Me too!"

As more students in the audience raised their hands in agreement, the consensus became evident.

"So, Hera never even wanted to participate in the Belle election, and Lily deliberately pushed her into it?"

"What was she thinking?"

"So, all this time, she was spreading rumors about Hera's Terranish and urging us to vote for her just to see Hera make a fool of herself in public?"

"Now, the tables have turned."

"Oh, dear. What have I done?"

As the students in the audience discussed fervently, Lily felt a flush of embarrassment and anger wash over her.

Those people had promised not to reveal that she had asked them to vote for Hera, yet they didn't keep their promises!

"Her behavior merits an F," Tim commented.

Tim's comment hit Lily hard, making her wonder whether she would still have a chance at getting into Cavenridge's undergraduate program.

"Nevertheless, it's never too late to acknowledge and rectify one's mistakes. Perhaps you could dance for Hera as an apology and commit to not making similar mistakes in the future?" Tim suggested to Lily.

It seemed that Lily had no choice but to dance in public.

Chapter 150

As the music began to play, Lily recognized it as the tune for bunny dance—a catchy dance that most people had learned in kindergarten.

Standing at the center of the stage in her sky-blue strapless dress and six-inch high heels, Lily was stunned upon hearing the familiar melody. She stiffly swayed her body along with the rhythm, eliciting laughter from the audience at her awkward movements.

Flushed with embarrassment and anger, Lily realized she had become a ridiculous clown. Feeling utterly ashamed, she covered her face and hastily fled the stage.

The laughter in the audience persisted.

"Don't go! Keep dancing! I can't get enough of this. Hahaha!" One of the students urged.

"How ironic. I guess we should probably think twice before recommending someone for the event. You never know who might end up being the clown," Hera's voice echoed from the speaker, her tone indifferent.

The laughter in the auditorium gradually died down until it abruptly ceased altogether.

The students who voted for Hera found the situation less amusing now, realizing that what they had witnessed was clearly a prank orchestrated by Hera to get back at Lily, using the event stage to publicly embarrass her.

Feeling a chill running down their spines, the students couldn't help but feel relieved that Hera had suggested the contestant with the lowest score to dance rather than those who had voted for her.

On that day, Hera not only became the new Belle of the Year but also the talk of the school forum.

Posts flooded the forum with titles like "Hera Wows Everyone with her Incredible Terranish Accent", "Don't Mess with this Belle Unless You Want to Do the Bunny Dance like that Class A Student", "Karma is a Bitch, Proven by My Newest Goddess", and so forth.

While the posts reflected mixed reviews about Hera, they all conveyed a singular message. "Never cross Hera; otherwise, you can kiss your pride goodbye with a bunny dance."

...

After the speech contest concluded, Hera and Tim found themselves alone in the prep room.

"Hera, have you considered Cavenridge's undergraduate program? Perhaps joining the Linguistics Department? We've established a group to study Terranish and Jadonish literature, and we'd be thrilled to have you as a member," Tim asked enthusiastically.

"I'm not interested," Hera replied without hesitation.

"What a shame," Tim lamented. He had declined numerous requests from graduate students to become their mentor, but when he was eager to mentor this promising student, he was turned down instead.

"Which college do you have in mind?" Tim asked curiously, thinking he could recommend her to other colleges, given his extensive network.

"Any college in Jedburgh," Hera replied. In fact, she didn't have a particular college of choice; her main goal was to get closer to the Killian family in Jedburgh.

"Huh? I thought you'd say Vardhar University or Comridge University. Didn't expect you to go for Quantford University or Bradbury University. That's a bit unexpected. May I know why?" Tim was puzzled.

"Because I'm patriotic," Hera replied casually.

Tim was left speechless.

"If that's all, please excuse me." With that, Hera rose to leave.

Shrugging helplessly, Tim gave Andrew a call. "Andrew, she's sure is a talented student. It'd be such a shame if Cavenridge missed out on her—"

As Hera exited the prep room, she crossed paths with Christopher and Zylar in the hallway.

"Hera, congratulations on winning the Belle title. Looking forward to our performance at the school anniversary celebration," Christopher greeted as he approached.

Despite Hera's nonchalant nod, Christopher's face lit up with a bright smile.