

Under the Heiress' Facade #Chapter 161 - Read Under the Heiress' Facade Chapter 161

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"You want me to thank Hera?" Mildred chuckled coldly in response.

Was she expected to thank Hera for bringing her bad luck? Was she meant to be grateful to Hera for getting her hospitalized in the first place before causing the Everetts' bankruptcy?

"Yeah. She used acupuncture to unclog your artery. Once the artery is unclogged, the symptoms of the other health problems you suffer from are greatly alleviated," Oscar explained kindly.

"Really?" Mildred looked stunned.

So, that brat was really equipped with medical skills after all?

"Of course! Your granddaughter is extremely talented, you know! She's able to perform the 13 Needles of Death so skillfully despite her tender age! She's destined to be a great doctor one day!

"May I ask for her contact number? I'd like to hire her as the chief physician of Pineview Hospital."

What? Chief physician?

Mildred's jaw went slack from the shock. She even thought she was hearing things.

To think that Oscar, the director of Pineview Hospital as well as an influential individual in Jadonia's medical world, had showered Hera with such praises!

He also wanted to hire her as the chief physician, for crying out loud!

The rank of a chief physician was the highest rank any doctor dreamed of attaining!

Lilith was shocked as well. She knew that Hera was good at acupuncture, but she never thought that Hera was that skilled.

Gino was the only one wearing a smug look. "I told you Hera's medical skills are outstanding! You refused to believe me back then!"

Lilith managed to snap out of her trance. "Thank you for your wonderful compliments, Dr. Bloom. But my daughter's still studying at the moment. She needs to focus on her studies for the time being, so she can't take on any shifts at the hospital."

"That won't be an issue! If she can't take any shifts, she can remain as an expert in name. The base of her annual salary will start at a million dollars."

Then, Oscar passed his business card to Lilith. "Please give your daughter my business card and tell her to think this offer through. Pineview Hospital needs her extraordinary talent."

Hera's annual salary would start at one million dollars?

Back when the Everetts were still rich, Mildred thought a million dollars was a huge figure. Now that the Everetts had gone bankrupt, Mildred needed the money a lot more than before.

She never thought that Hera was worth that much money.

Lilith was still hesitant about the offer, so Mildred accepted the business card right away.

"Dr. Bloom, there's no need for Hera to think about the offer. I'm her grandmother, so I can decide for her. I'll accept the job on her behalf."

"Mom!" Just as Lilith uttered that word, Mildred turned to shoot her a glare that screamed "shut up".

"Dr. Bloom, don't listen to her. My sister is still a minor. But I'll pass your offer to her," Gino spoke up immediately in a mature manner.

Oscar had gone through a lot in life, so he could see through Mildred's scheme right away. Still, he opted not to expose her. Instead, he just patted Gino on the shoulder gleefully.

"Age isn't a problem here. We can afford to wait for her response. Please convey our offer to your sister, child. I'll be waiting for your good news."

Celestial Gardens was an affluent residential area located right next to Skyview Heights. Every villa in Celestial Gardens was named after a constellation in the sky.

The atmosphere in a villa named Ursa Major was extremely tense and eerie at the moment—two rows of bodyguards clad in dark suits and sunglasses occupied both ends of the living room. Three middle-aged men could be seen kneeling on the floor while begging the man seated on an armchair for mercy.

The man wore a ghastly mask and was dressed in all black. His legs were parted slightly as he sat on the armchair, whereas his right hand was propped leisurely against the arm of the armchair. There was an engraved thumb ring occupying his thumb, the faint outline of a dragon streaking across the surface.

An intimidating bearing surrounded the man, making him resemble a king overseeing his subjects.

A pair of alluring eyes hid behind the mask, though they were currently trained on the men prostrating in front of him at the moment. His gaze was cold as if he were looking down on pests instead of actual human beings.

"Grandmaster, please forgive us! We were blinded by greed back then, so we ended up making these mistakes!"

"We truly are in the wrong, and we acknowledge that! We won't commit the same mistakes anymore! Please give us a chance to change our ways!"

"Please allow us to atone for our sins by devoting ourselves to Starry Lights!"

The men proceeded to grovel in front of the masked man—also known as Bernard—even more.

"Those who betray the grandmaster are met with only one fate!" Samson declared from his spot next to Bernard.

Then, he ordered his subordinates, "Cripple these men. They'll spend the rest of their lives slaving away in Astenia."

When the men heard the verdict, they felt as though they were about to pass out. They'd rather die than succumb to that fate.

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"Grandmaster, please! We're begging you! Please spare our lives!"

The men began groveling even more to the point that they began smashing their foreheads against the floor, causing their heads to bleed.

At that moment, a phone's ringtone cut through the atmosphere.

Bernard picked up the ringing phone casually. When he saw the caller ID, a hint of warmth surfaced on his cold-looking face.

He parted his thin lips to utter, "Keep it down."

The three men grasped onto the final line of hope, thinking that they could still reverse the situation. They looked up at Bernard eagerly, waiting for his next line.

Little did they know that Bernard was talking to the bodyguards this whole time.

The bodyguards paired up immediately and approached the men. One person was in charge of covering his target's mouth and strangling him, while the other took on the responsibility of crippling said target.

Three resounding snaps of bones being broken could be heard coming from the men. The poor men were in so much pain that they couldn't utter a sound. Darkness swam around their vision, threatening to consume them whole.

At that moment, Bernard answered the call. "Sweetie, are you coming home soon?"

One of the bodyguards, who was in charge of beating his target up, happened to overhear Bernard's affectionate nickname for Hera being spoken in such a gentle manner. He shuddered immediately and lost control of himself for a moment, resulting in him almost killing the target.

Was this really the cold and ruthless grandmaster of Astral Nova?

Who on earth was the one calling him?

The poor man fainted on the spot from the intense pain after letting out a few soft groans.

Meanwhile, Samson was left feeling speechless and awkward.

If only he could remind Bernard to keep up his intimidating front as the grandmaster of Astral Nova...

On the other hand, Hera's breath was lodged in her throat the moment she heard Bernard's voice. For some reason, it managed to strum her heartstrings.

Bernard had last called her "sweetie" 11 years ago. Back then, she was still living with the Killians. "Sweetie" was Bernard's favorite nickname for her.

"Nope. I'm not done with my business yet," Hera replied after regaining her senses. "I just wanted to remind you to take your meals regularly. Don't forget your meds."

"I thought you missed me," Bernard replied while sounding pitiful.

Another bodyguard shuddered at the response. He ended up knocking out his own target, who crumpled to the floor with a loud thud.

Hera didn't say anything on the other end of the line.

The truth was, she was a little worried about Bernard's injury.

"Is there someone else with you at home?" She could hear the thud coming from Bernard's end of the line.

"Nope. I'm alone here. Right, Tiramisu's with me too," Bernard answered smoothly.

Samson and the bodyguards were speechless, to say the least. Were they not supposed to exist?

"I've ordered food for you. The server will arrive soon with the food. You have to pay attention to the doorbell, alright?" Hera said.

"Got it. You're so meticulous, sweetie. I'll wait for you to come home."

After Bernard ended the call, the hint of gentleness dissipated instantly. His demeanor became icy once again.

He shot a frosty glance at the three men, who slumped on the floor before ordering, "Deal with them accordingly."

"Yes, sir," Samson responded before waving at his subordinates.

A few bodyguards propped the men out of the villa.

Once Samson and Bernard were the only ones left in the living room, Bernard removed his mask.

"We're going back to Skyview Heights."

Samson hurried over to help him up on his feet. At the same time, Douglas brought out a wheelchair from a room.

As the grandmaster of Astral Nova, Bernard couldn't let anyone else find out about his injury.

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It was 2:00 pm in Nathan's office at the police station.

"Ms. Youngworth, I have good news and bad news for you."

Nathan took a deep drag from his cigarette before snuffing the butt against the ashtray.

Hera waved the smoke away, a look of disgust apparent on her face. Before she could speak up, Nathan's voice cut her off.

"The good news is, we finally found Isabella and her mother."

His words elicited a frown from Hera immediately. If Nathan chose to start with the good news instead of the bad news, that could only mean that the bad news carried more weight in this case.

"What's the bad news?" she asked.

"We found their corpses." As Nathan spoke, he pulled out a case folder from his drawer and passed it to Hera.

Hera lowered her gaze slightly, her long and thick eyelashes fanning out from her eyelids, as she gazed at the brown paper envelope.

Even though she was already mentally prepared for the bad news after receiving Nathan's call this morning, she was still saddened by the news.

Hera was only acquainted with Isabella briefly, so she didn't care about Isabella. In fact, Isabella was the daughter of the driver who had killed Daphne back then.

Still, Isabella was still a human being. To think that she'd die just like that.

Did she go missing just because she had mentioned Robin back then? Did that lead to her death?

"The authorities found the victims' bodies in a dam located near Southburrow a week ago. By the time the bodies were fished out of the water, they were already severely decomposed.

"Back then, the forensic doctor had deduced that the victims were dead for over a dozen days, so the authorities weren't able to determine the victims' identities.

"Three days ago, the local police department issued a notice for the other police departments to help investigate the victims' identities. After I received the news, I traveled to Southburrow right away. After running tests on the bodies' DNA, I was able to determine the victims as Isabella and her mother."

Nathan took a sip out of his coffee mug before continuing, "The cause of death is the sudden influx of liquid into the victims' airways, which caused asphyxiation to occur. In other words, they drowned.

"The victims' time of death had taken place far too long ago, not to mention a few storms had occurred since their deaths. This resulted in the severe destruction of the crime scene.

"Of course, the public security camera installed near the road outside the dam was down during those three days. The authorities aren't able to deduce if murder, suicide, or an accident is on the table here. But in the end, they wrapped up the case after labeling it as an accidental death."

"This is against the rules, right? You're in charge of missing people's cases. Now that they found the missing victim's body, shouldn't you be the one launching a thorough investigation before wrapping it up?"

Hera raised her head to look at Nathan calmly.

There were too many abnormalities surrounding Isabella's disappearance back then. Typically speaking, since Isabella's case was lodged in Norburgh, the police in charge should be the ones closing the case.

The fact that the authorities of Southburrow closed the case so haphazardly could only mean one thing—something fishy was going on.

"That's the reason why I invited you over to my office."

Nathan rose from his chair and moved to stand by the window. He cracked the window open slightly before lighting another cigarette.

The reason why Isabella's missing person case could be built was because she was a few days away from reaching her 18th birthday. That meant she was a minor during her time of disappearance, thus fitting the criteria of filing an underaged victim's missing person case.

Once the case was built, Nathan took Queenie back to the station for questioning, seeing as she was the biggest suspect then. But Queenie was able to prove her innocence, so she was released after that.

Nathan had no choice but to lead his team on a search for Isabella. Unfortunately, all his efforts were for naught.

A few days later, Isabella officially turned 18 years old. Since the police couldn't find any other clues that suggested the possibility of abduction, Isabella's case became a regular missing person case.

Hence, her case was no longer labeled as a case meant for the criminal investigation department. This meant Nathan couldn't use the force's resources to aid his investigation regarding the case.

He could only use his spare time when he was off duty to continue looking for clues regarding Isabella's disappearance.

It wasn't until Nathan saw the notice issued by Southburrow's police department three days ago that he found out the truth. But Isabella and her mother's deaths resulted in a new case being built in Southburrow instead.

"Southburrow is taking part in the Urban Utopia Competition as a contestant. The higher-ups of the Southburrow police department doesn't want to escalate this incident, so they decided to close the case prematurely."

After Nathan was done speaking, he inhaled another lungful of smoke silently.

Cold wind blew through the gap at that moment. Hera felt the wind slapping her cheeks and toying with her locks.

She understood the situation right away. Isabella and her mother were just two regular people without prominent backgrounds. If the police chose to label their deaths as accidental deaths and close the case just like that, no one in this world would demand the case to be reopened.

Even if someone did do that, there were still people powerful enough to override this decision. Besides, it was hard for regular people to demand a case to be reopened anyway. That was unless the person making the demands had strong connections and an influential background that allowed them to fight back against the authorities and the government.

"Thank you, Captain Olson," Hera said while rising to her feet.

Isabella was the only clue that could lead to a breakthrough in Hera's investigation of Daphne's accident. But now, this lead was gone.

All Hera knew was that she was heading in the right direction. Daphne's death was no accident—it was a premeditated murder.

The cause of Isabella and her mother's deaths was definitely murder, too.

Hera's role as an investigator was most likely revealed to the mastermind. The bad thing was that the mastermind lurked in the dark while she remained unaware of their identity.

"If you want to keep investigating, you can start by investigating the Gaskell family," Nathan stated all of a sudden.

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Hera paused in her actions of opening the door and leaving the room upon hearing Nathan's statement.

Nathan continued, "Robin used to work as the Gaskells' driver prior to the accident."

He wanted to continue investigating Daphne's case, but at the end of the day, he was just a public servant of the bureaucratic system. He wouldn't be able to do anything to the Gaskells at all.

"Thank you," Hera replied coolly before exiting the office.

At the same time, she pulled out her phone and dialed a number.

"Hey, Mr. Annoying. Your family still owes me a favor. It's time for me to cash it in."

Hera ended the call sometime later and walked out of the police station. The driver stopped the car in front of her before getting out to open the back seat's door for her.

"Ms. Youngworth, are you returning to Skyview Heights now?" he asked.

Hera glanced at him coolly before replying, "Yeah."

...

After the meeting, Gideon decided to leave the company. He scrolled through Instagram while waiting for the elevator to arrive.

That was when he saw Gino's latest post, which was posted at noon. "I've decided to forgive her, seeing as she has specifically brought me a gift."

The image that came with the caption showed two bars of chocolate.

"How childish," Gideon muttered under his breath. Then, he snapped a screenshot of the post before sending it to Hera.

He texted, "You can't just show affection to your younger brother. You need to shower your older brother with love too."

There was a pitiful emoji pasted at the end of the message.

Meanwhile, Hera was playing on her phone in the back seat when she saw a WhatsApp notification pop up. After tapping on it, she saw Gideon's screenshot and message.

She fell silent at the message.

The chocolate bars were meant to coax Bernard into taking his medicine in the first place. That was why she had extra chocolate bars lying around in her pocket.

After that, Gideon sent Hera another photo. It was a photo of his left hand with his sleeve rolled up to reveal his wrist. His skin was particularly fair and smooth.

Hera texted back, "What?"

Gideon didn't hesitate to bombard her with more texts.

"Don't you think my wrist is quite bare? You didn't even give me a present last time!"

Hera didn't know what to reply.

That wasn't a gift at all. It was just a piece of red string that she didn't want.

Coincidentally, the car sped past a shopping mall. Hera happened to see a branded outlet selling men's accessories.

So, she said to the driver, "Pull over for a bit."

After the driver stopped the car, he took a photo of Hera walking into the outlet before sending it to Bernard.

"Ms. Youngworth has left the police station. We were on the way home when she decided to go shopping. It'll take us half an hour to return to Skyview Heights," he texted.

Back in Skyview Heights, Bernard was in the midst of going through the project files that Theo had brought him when he noticed his phone screen lighting up. He tapped on the phone to glance at it momentarily before closing the files.

"I want you to amend the proposal later. That's all for today. Restore the living room to the way it was before you leave."

Theo and Douglas exchanged knowing glances with each other.

That meant Hera was coming home soon.

One of them wheeled Bernard back to his room while the other tidied up the living room swiftly. After that, both of them hurriedly left.

Bernard lay on the bed leisurely while zooming into the photo the driver had just sent him. When he noticed the outlet, he couldn't help but smile.

He wondered what sort of gift Hera would pick out for him.

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The sky had already gone dark by the time Hera returned to Skyview Heights.

She opened the front door, soon realizing that the lights in the living room were turned on. Tiramisu came bounding toward her merrily before nuzzling against her legs.

"Tiramisu, has your dad been behaving himself today?" Hera picked Tiramisu up and changed into her indoor slippers at the doorway before entering the living room.

Tiramisu grunted in response. If it could speak, it would've complained to Hera that Bernard kept misbehaving throughout the day. Not only did he leave the apartment, but he also brought other visitors with him and kept Tiramisu locked up in its pen. Because of him, Tiramisu couldn't even play in the living room.

Hera spotted Bernard, who was sitting in his wheelchair. He was still wearing the same silk pajamas from this morning. The light cast down on him made him seem a lot fairer than usual. He didn't even bother putting on his slippers, judging from his bare feet on the wheelchair's pedestals.

"Why did you get out of bed?" Hera asked as she put Tiramisu down.

Then, she removed her jacket and hung it on the coat rack. She made sure to fetch an extra cardigan from the rack so that she could drape it on Bernard's shoulders.

Even though the heater was already turned on, the fact that Bernard had just recovered from his illness still stood. It'd be very easy for him to catch another cold since he was only wearing thin pajamas.

Bernard ran his fingers across the fabric, a small smile already playing on his lips.

"I want to be the first person you see the moment you walk into the apartment."

Hera fell silent at his sappy words.

Bernard scanned her up and down thoroughly before turning to look at the doorway. Strangely enough, Hera didn't return with a shopping bag.

"Where's the gift?" he asked. His eyes glinted as he turned to look at Hera hopefully.

That word again!

"What gift?" Hera asked coolly as she walked into the kitchen to check the ingredients in the fridge.

This time, it was Bernard's turn to stay silent. A moment later, realization dawned on him.

Ten minutes ago, the driver had informed him that Hera had gotten out of the car with a shopping bag. How was it possible for the gift to disappear in just ten minutes?

Did Hera give that gift to another man behind his back?

When Bernard recalled the scene where Christopher had given Hera a bouquet of flowers at the gateway of the residential area yesterday, his eyes darkened instantly, followed by his expression.

He pulled out his phone and drafted a text message for Andrew.

"You'd better keep a leash on that son of yours," he wrote.

Of course, Andrew was extremely confused when he received the message.

"Is the Everett residence the only place you've been to today?" Bernard asked while wheeling himself toward the kitchen.

Hera was in the midst of clearing out the rotten vegetables from the fridge. She didn't bother to look at Bernard.

"Don't you already know the places I've been to today?"

Hera would never believe that Bernard had hired the driver randomly.

On the other hand, Bernard was surprised to see that Hera was smarter than she looked. Since she didn't get mad at him after exposing his lie, he decided not to put up any pretenses anymore.

"I can help you with the case," Bernard stated.

"No need for that," Hera rejected immediately.

Isabella and her mother were already dead. Hera wouldn't be able to extract any clues from their bodies, so she could only change her focus on the investigation.

Bernard was silent after getting rejected. Did Hera not trust him?

"So, who's the gift for?" he asked again.

Hera didn't say anything for a few moments.

Why the hell did the conversational topic return to the gift?

"Take a guess yourself!" she snapped.

Bernard didn't say anything after that. Instead, he secretly cursed the lucky man out.

...

At the same time, Gideon attended a gathering which was introduced to him by a friend.

He had just opened a branch company in Jadonia, so he needed to make new connections. It so happened that someone also wanted to collaborate with him in business. It was safe to say that

both parties would benefit from this gathering.

The moment Gideon opened the private room's door, his close friend quickly approached him and hooked an arm around his neck.

"Hey, you're here! Everyone, Gideon's here! Let's get to know each other, yeah?"

"Sorry for being late. Something came up just now," Gideon said while removing his jacket.

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Someone happened to notice the watch strapped around Gideon's left wrist. When he approached Gideon to shake his hand, he commented, "You have great taste in watches, Gideon! That's a four- million-dollar Rolex watch right there! It suits you really well!"

"Wow! You really are generous when it comes to the good stuff! This watch is the only model in the whole world, you know! I can't believe you actually got your hands on it!"

"As expected of Gideon! You really have remarkable taste!"

When the first guy began kissing up to Gideon, the few others who wanted to collaborate with him followed suit.

"Is that so? Thank you," Gideon replied with a smile.

Then, he flipped his hand around to show his inner wrist. "What do you think about this cufflink, then?"

The people fell silent after glancing at the cufflink.

Wasn't it just an ordinary cufflink? It looked dull when compared to the four-million-dollar Rolex watch. Heck, it even looked extremely cheap.

But the guests were charismatic and knew their way around a human's heart, seeing as they wanted to work with Gideon. The fact that Gideon was asking them such a question meant that he was doing it on purpose.

So, they wasted no time in complimenting the cufflink.

"The cufflink might not be as expensive as the watch, but the one who picked it out for you has amazing taste!"

"Just look at the cufflink's design! It's extremely intricate! This cufflink is definitely designed just to complement you, Gideon!"

"Precisely! This cufflink matches your appearance well, Gideon!"

Gideon was in a good mood despite knowing that the other guests were just saying all those things to butter him up. "My sister was the one who gave me the cufflink."

The guests swapped looks with each other. They had all heard that Gideon chose to stay in Jadonia and start a branch company here for the sake of his younger sister. Hence, they collectively breathed mental sighs of relief.

Thank goodness they didn't overdo the whole buttering up thing.

...

Yana walked into the living room of the Gaskell residence with an armful of shopping bags. Eugene trailed behind her quietly.

It turned out that Yana was Queenie's cousin. She visited the Gaskell residence regularly so that she could suck up to the Gaskells. That was why she knew her way around the manor.

Queenie smiled at the sight of the things Yana had brought. "Oh, Yana! It's great to see you here! Why must you insist on bringing this many gifts every time you visit?"

"It's nothing," Yana replied while placing the items on the coffee table. "I heard that Mr. Gaskell Senior's condition has improved by leaps and bounds. It just so happens that I've bought some supplements as well as elderberries from Jenville for him to nourish himself.

"Queenie, your gifts are fish oil pellets imported from Inkvaria and collagen pills from Jenville. They are meant to preserve your youthful beauty while keeping your skin smooth and dewy.

"This Montblanc fountain pen is a gift for Zylar. I hope it'll act as a good luck charm for him to emerge as the valedictorian in his SATs next year. As for this..."

Queenie watched as Yana listed out all the valuable gifts she had prepared for every member of the Gaskell family. Obviously, Yana needed the Gaskells to help her out with something. Why else would she prepare such lavish gifts otherwise?

"You really are thoughtful and generous, Yana," Queenie said smilingly.

Then, she turned to look at Eugene, who was seated on the couch while playing a game. "How are Eugene's grades as of late?"

"Eugene, hurry up and greet your aunt." Yana nudged Eugene gently.

"Hi, Aunt Queenie," Eugene greeted before returning to his game.

"Oh, Queenie. Frankly speaking, Eugene got himself into a bit of conflict with his classmate some time ago. That classmate's older sister seduced the dean and managed to convince him to expel my sweet Eugene from the school!" Yana lamented.

Queenie was both surprised and intrigued, to say the least. She asked, "Just who on earth is that charming to be able to seduce Dean Ludden?"

As far as Queenie knew, Andrew had always been an upright and stern man. To think that there existed a woman who was able to seduce him...

"You know that girl too. She's Hera Youngworth, the Everetts' actual daughter whom they had brought back from the countryside some time ago," Yana replied.

"What?"

"Holy sh—what?"

Zyler happened to walk down the stairs at that moment, so he overheard Yana's words. He and Queenie were equally stunned to hear Yana's answer.

"Zyler!" Yana visibly lit up at the sight. She nudged Eugene once again. "Eugene, hurry up and greet your cousin."

"Hi, Zyler." That was when Eugene put his phone away.

"What happened?" Zyler asked with a sullen expression.

Not only did Hera seduce Christopher, but she also seduced Andrew?

Yana began filling Zyler and Queenie in on the exaggerated version of what happened in the infirmary that day.

"That brat's at it again!" Queenie glowered darkly.

But Zylar looked pleased. "Is what you said the truth?"

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"Of course! Why else would Dean Ludden personally deal with the situation, if not to back the filthy bitch up?"

Yana was very confident that Hera had seduced Andrew.

Hera had stirred up a ruckus at the Gaskells' family banquet in the past, resulting in them becoming a laughingstock in the upper echelons. Also, their reputation had been endangered since that incident.

Queenie was furious at Hera because of that incident. Of course, it was only natural for her to hate Hera to the core.

Now, all Yana had to do was invoke Queenie's wrath directed at Hera. That way, she'd become Yana's ally in dealing with Hera. Things would definitely be a lot easier after that.

"And here I was, thinking about how to destroy that brat once and for all! To think that her scandalous weakness is presented to me on a silver platter!" Queenie snarled out, her eyes narrowing slightly.

"This time, she has nowhere to escape," Zylar muttered under his breath while clenching his fists tightly.

He had been worrying about how to expose Hera's true colors so that he could patch his friendship with Christopher in order to secure a spot on the guaranteed admission list. Now, that chance had arrived.

"Zylar, since you and Christopher are such close friends, can you help put in a good word for me in front of him so that I can return to Cavenridge as a student? I promise, once I'm re-enrolled into the academy, I'll definitely study hard instead of picking fights with others!" Eugene requested eagerly.

"Precisely. Zylar, you and Mr. Ludden are good friends, aren't you? Can you speak up for Eugene? My sweet Eugene can't leave Cavenridge, you see," Yana pleaded as well.

This was the purpose behind their visit.

After Eugene got expelled from Cavenridge International Academy, the other elite academies refused to take him in as their student. On the other hand, Eugene's grades were so poor that he could barely qualify for public schools. Then again, he felt that studying in a public school was humiliating, so he didn't want to enroll in any of them.

"Um..." Zylar looked a little troubled.

The thing was, he never told anyone that Christopher no longer wanted to remain as his friend. That was because he was confident that Christopher would soon make up with him. To him, there was no need to tell anyone about the incident, lest others laughed at him instead.

"This isn't a problem at all. Zylar can bring it up to Christopher the next time they meet. Just wait patiently for his good news."

While Zylar was racking his brain on how to refuse Yana and Eugene politely, Queenie agreed to help them out on his behalf.

Naturally, Zylar didn't know what to say.

Yana was elated, to say the least. "Thank you, Queenie and Zylar!"

"Thank you, Zylar!" Eugene piped up excitedly. "My mom told me that Cavenridge will be given two slots in Vardhar University's guaranteed admission list! One of them is definitely yours! She even told me to study hard like you, so that I can get into Vardhar University in the future!"

"Ahaha... You're welcome..." Zylar smiled awkwardly.

He was even more bent on exposing Hera's true colors and patching up his friendship with Christopher. If not, he'd be reduced to a laughingstock among the elite families.

...

On Monday morning, Hera finished her breakfast and got ready to go to school. That was when Bernard wheeled himself out of the room.

"I'll take you there," he offered.

Hera glanced at him. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses was perched on his nose bridge, thus accentuating his flawlessly gorgeous features. His short hair was styled with hair gel, and his appearance was completed with a black suit, which brought out his figure. A gray checkered woolen quilt rested on his lap to ensure his comfort.

If it weren't for the fact that Bernard was seated in his wheelchair, Hera would've thought that he was planning to show up at a red carpet event.

Also, Bernard was still confined to his wheelchair. Was he really taking her to school? Or was she expected to wheel him there?

"It so happens that I need to visit Cavenbridge as well. I need to deal with something there," Bernard explained as though he could sense what Hera was thinking at the moment.

His injuries had significantly healed after his two-day recuperation. So, Hera didn't restrict him from leaving home. She just acquiesced to his request to go to the academy with her.

Both of them left the apartment after that. The moment they reached the gateway of the residential area, they spotted a yellow Ferrari parking right outside. Christopher stood next to the car while gazing into the residential area.

He visibly lit up when he saw Hera. Then, he raised an arm to wave at her. "Hera!"

But when he saw Bernard, his smile faded away slightly.

It seemed that Hera and Bernard really were living together.

After Christopher drove Hera back to the residential area on Friday night, he had witnessed her and Bernard walking into the area together. He even waited at the gateway till midnight after that, yet he never saw Hera exiting the residential area.

Christopher wasn't sure what relationship Hera and Bernard shared, but he subconsciously leaned more toward the possibility of them being relatives. He guessed that Hera had to stay with Bernard to care for him, seeing as he was injured.

"Why are you here?" Hera asked coolly.

Chapter 168

"I just happened to pass by this area. Since you haven't gone to the academy, I might as well stick around and wait for you for a bit. That way, we can go together."

Christopher smiled bashfully at Hera before greeting Bernard politely. "Good morning, Professor Killian. How's your—"

"You must've covered an additional distance of over 30 miles just by traveling from the Ludden residence to here before going to Cavenridge International Academy, right?" Bernard interjected.

His deep and husky voice sounded extraordinarily chilly. Just like that, he exposed Christopher's lie without intending to spare the latter's pride.

Naturally, Christopher was no match for Bernard when it came to courting girls.

Both Hera and Christopher fell silent after hearing Bernard's words. Christopher looked somewhat embarrassed now that his actual intention was revealed.

However, Christopher dared not offend Bernard. After all, Bernard was the seventh son of the esteemed Killian family. He was an individual to whom Andrew and Aaron had to show respect.

Besides, Christopher wasn't sure what the true nature of Hera and Bernard's relationship was.

"Since you're bent on playing the role as our driver, then what are you standing around for?" Bernard asked icily.

He scanned Christopher up and down with his sharp gaze, as though he was looking for a gift given to him by a certain someone.

Christopher was baffled, to say the least.

Hold on, he didn't agree to become Bernard and Hera's personal driver!

Meanwhile, Hera shot Bernard a surprised look. Then, she looked down at her phone, which showed her e-hailing app. It was the morning rush hour, so none of the drivers had accepted her order. She then canceled her request.

"Thanks," Hera said to Christopher.

Left without a choice, Christopher could only open the back seat door. Then, he and Hera worked together to help Bernard into the back seat. The wheelchair was quickly folded up before being placed into the trunk.

On the way to Cavenridge International Academy, the atmosphere in the car was eerily silent. The pair sitting in the back seat were scrolling through their phones quietly.

As for Christopher, he could only drive dutifully. He felt like crying on the inside.

To think that Hera and Bernard truly treated him like their personal driver!

20 minutes later, Christopher stopped outside the classroom block where the junior year students primarily studied.

After Hera got out of the car and closed the door behind her, Christopher asked, "Professor Killian, where is your destination?"

Bernard continued looking at his phone screen without glancing at Christopher. "Skyview Heights," he replied coolly.

At that moment, Christopher felt like the biggest clown in the world.

Was Bernard toying around with him?

Besides, the first lesson was about to start soon. If he were to drive Bernard home, he'd definitely be late.

"Professor, we've already reached the academy. Isn't there something you want to do here?" Christopher asked in a roundabout way.

"I'm already done with my business here."

Once again, Christopher was rendered speechless.

Bernard didn't even get out of the goddamned car! How the heck was he done with his business?

"The first class will start in five minutes. Is it okay if I get my driver to drive you home?" Christopher suggested, albeit exasperatedly.

Bernard glanced at his watch. "If you continue to mull over this dilemma for two more minutes, you can get back to the academy just in time to miss the first lesson entirely."

He sounded very firm. Clearly, there was no room for negotiation.

Christopher was starting to get angry, but he dared not show it for fear of offending Bernard. So, he could only turn the car around and drive Bernard back to Skyview Heights.

Sometime later, the Ferrari reached Skyview Heights.

After Bernard got out of the car, he said frostily, "Since you like being a driver that much, you should just apply for a job as a designated driver."

Christopher was so furious that he almost popped a vein on the spot. He finally realized that Bernard was doing this just to mess with him on purpose.

And all of this sparked because Christopher came up with an excuse to drive Hera to school?

Christopher clenched his fists tightly for a moment. He mustered all of his courage to ask, "Professor Killian, may I ask you a question? What's your relationship with Hera?"

Chapter 169

Bernard retorted, "What does that have to do with you?"

...

Christopher sat at his desk in the classroom. His mind was plagued with Bernard's answer, which had been reverberating throughout the morning. He wasn't in the mood for classes at all.

The moment the lunch bell rang, Christopher packed up his stuff immediately. He needed to track Hera down just so he could talk to her.

Zyler called out to Christopher at that moment.

"Why don't we have lunch together, Christopher? I'd like to talk to you about something."

"What do you want to talk about?" Christopher replied flatly.

Zyler felt quite miffed upon hearing Christopher's cold tone. He found himself resenting Hera even more after that.

If it weren't for her, things between him and Christopher wouldn't have gotten this tense.

"I've booked a private room in the Imperial Hotel. Why don't we chat while having lunch together?"

There were too many people at school, making it difficult for Zyler to badmouth Hera in front of Christopher.

"We're no longer friends now, so there's nothing to talk about. I have to deal with some other matters, so I'm leaving now."

Christopher left the classroom after saying his piece.

Zyler stared at Christopher's receding figure, his fists tightly clenched.

...

After classes were done for the day, Hera stayed back to clean the classroom because it was her turn on the duty roster that day. There, she received a phone call from an academy admin, who requested that she pick up her package from the academy mailroom.

Piglet: "Boss, I've mailed you all the alternative medicines you need other than the century-old gurdyroot. The package is quite heavy, so it's best if you get someone to carry the package with you."

Piglet: "There are only two known century-old gurdyroots on the market so far. The first one has existed for 218 years. It currently serves as a relic in the National Auditorium of Jadonia. I can't buy it at all. The other gurdyroot is a part of Astral Nova's collection. It's not for sale."

Piglet: "I'll have my subordinates look for another gurdyroot if possible."

Raven: "Thanks. You don't have to look for the gurdyroot anymore."

Raven: "Keep it on my tab for now. I'm a little tight on money lately, so I need you to start taking jobs for me again."

Piglet: "You? Poor? Boss, didn't you just earn a whopping one billion dollars from the Gaskells some time ago?"

Raven: "I've already spent it all."

Piglet: "Holy shit! How the hell did you spend all that money? You really are something else!"

Piglet: "It just so happens that a few clients want to seek you out for their dealings. I'll filter them out for you before sending you more information."

Hera texted back an "okay" before switching to another alternate account she rarely used. Her nickname on that account was "Shadow".

The second text bubble on the interface showed a user named "Grandmaster of Astral Nova". Hera remembered adding the grandmaster's phone number to her contact list.

Suddenly, she recalled the second condition out of the three conditions the grandmaster wanted her to accept in the past. He wanted to be able to contact her at all times.

Hence, Hera began typing up a text message for the grandmaster.

Shadow: "Are you there? I'd like to discuss something with you. I've had my eye on the century-old gurdyroot in Astral Nova's collection. What should I do in order to trade for it?"

Hera wasn't in a hurry to receive the grandmaster's reply. After she sent the message, she was about to head toward the mailroom to pick up the package when she received an instantaneous reply from the grandmaster.

Grandmaster of Astral Nova: "Everything in Astral Nova's collection is not for trade."

Grandmaster of Astral Nova: "That is, unless..."

Hera waited for a while, yet the grandmaster never texted her back.

Shadow: "Unless what?"

But the grandmaster didn't respond to her at all.

So, Hera put her phone away and dropped Katie, her duty roster partner, a message. Then, she made her way toward the mailroom on her own.

...

Zyler exited the mailroom after collecting his parcel. He happened to spot Hera walking toward him in the corridor. His expression fell slightly, thinking that Hera must be stalking him.

Then, he strode toward Hera to block her way. "What the hell are you up to this time?"

Hera shot Zyler a cold glance, her brows scrunching into an annoyed frown. "Why are you everywhere?"

"Hah! You're the one stalking me here! Why would you ask such a question?"

Zyler chuckled coldly. "You think you can get my attention just by playing hard to get after convincing Christopher to alienate me?"

"Narcissism is a form of mental illness. I suggest you go get yourself checked into the psychiatric department. Now, get lost," Hera shot back icily.

Chapter 170

"You..." Zyler was instantly furious.

What audacity Hera had to call him crazy!

Not only did he not move away from Hera, but he also snarled out, "I'll have you know that I have witnesses who saw all the despicable things you did in the past! Just you wait, Hera Youngworth! I'll definitely expose your true colors in front of Chris—"

"Shut up!"

Hera raised her right hand impatiently, revealing a silver needle which was trapped between her fingers. She wasted no time in stabbing Zyler's neck, where the GV 15 acupuncture point was.

Her actions were swift and decisive. By the time Zyler registered her actions, he was shocked that he couldn't emit a sound despite having opened his mouth.

He widened his eyes while rubbing his throat. Still, he couldn't let out a sound.

Zyler grabbed Hera by the shoulders, mouthing angrily, "What have you done to me?"

"If I see you complaining again, I don't mind sealing your voice permanently!" Hera snapped impatiently.

Zyler was shell-shocked, to say the least.

What sort of voodoo magic did that country bumpkin cast on him? How was he unable to speak?

He needed her to undo whatever magic that was right away.

So, Zyler continued gripping Hera's shoulders and screamed silently at her.

"Zyler, what are you doing to Hera?" Coincidentally, Christopher showed up at that moment.

He rushed forward quickly to shove Zyler away from Hera. Then, he turned to look at her worriedly. "Are you alright?"

Zyler didn't expect Christopher to appear at this time. He was very sure that Christopher must have misunderstood him.

Right now, Christopher was clearly head over heels for Hera. If she were to lie to Christopher about what happened, he'd definitely misunderstand Zyler even more.

That meant Zyler's chances of patching things up with Christopher would decrease significantly, and subsequently, he would lose his spot on the guaranteed admission list.

Zyler wanted to explain his side of the story, yet he couldn't make any sounds.

"It was nothing. He was telling me that he could carry my package for me," Hera said coolly.

Upon hearing the excuse, the furious Zyler turned to stare at Hera in astonishment. He didn't expect her to defend him.

He knew it! She had feelings for him!

"Really?" Christopher didn't believe the excuse. After all, he had witnessed Zyler about to strike Hera just now.

Why was Hera suddenly speaking up for Zyler?

Christopher shot Zyler a look. The latter heaved a big sigh of relief before nodding.

Displeasure streaked across Christopher's eyes at that moment. "I can carry your package for you as well."

"Well then, you can supervise him," Hera said.

That was when Zyler realized that something was off.

Meanwhile, Christopher was still digesting the meaning behind Hera's words. Hera used the opportunity to claim her package from the mailroom.

"Carry this package to the chemistry lab on the fourth floor," Hera ordered while kicking the large box. It didn't budge at all from the kick.

Christopher instantly understood what Hera was planning to do. He said to Zyler, "Go on. Carry it."

Zyler remained silent. It seemed that he had stepped into a trap.

In the end, Zyler managed to carry the 50-pound box from the mailroom on the second floor of the administrative block all the way to the fourth floor of the chemistry lab block. Christopher made sure to monitor him the whole time.

As a son of the Gaskell family, Zyler lived a lavish and pampered life. He was never ordered to do manual labor like a lower-class peasant.

Once he finally reached the lab's doorway, he placed the large box onto the floor heavily out of spite. Unfortunately, he didn't control his strength well, resulting in the box squashing one of his hands the moment it landed.

To make things worse, Zyler's hand suffered from multiple fractures.

He cursed. He still needed his hands to play the piano!

...

Hera had gone back to the classroom to finish carrying out her cleaning duties for the day. By the time she returned to the chemistry lab on the fourth floor, she noticed her package being left at the doorway. Zyler was nowhere to be seen.

After opening the door, she dragged the box into the lab before opening it. Countless rare and precious medicinal ingredients packed securely in their own packaging could be seen in the box.

Hera turned on the space heater before taking off her jacket. She spent the next half hour or so unsealing and removing the ingredients from their individual packaging.

Her phone, which was set aside, lit up at that moment. It turned out that the grandmaster of Astral Nova had responded to her.

Grandmaster of Astral Nova: "That is, unless you're my wife."

Hera stared at the message silently, clearly speechless.