

Heiress 371

Chapter 371

Despite Bella's absence, she knew everything that went on in the hotel.

"Mr. Salvador and Mr. Iverson are here to see you, Ms. Bella. What do you think...?"

Steven pressed on his Bluetooth earpiece and turned around to speak in hushed tones.

The two men straightened their backs, their nerves on edge.

"See me? Why? Are they hoping I'll give them a discount?"

"Ms. Bella, they refuse to leave until they see you. I can't call security on them." Steven was put on the spot because Justin and Christopher were not the easiest people to deal with.

"Ask them why they want to see me." Bella's voice bore no emotion:

"Ms. Bella asked the purpose of your visit," Steven said peevishly.

“I want to ask Ms. Thompson out for dinner to thank her.”

Christopher smiled and pushed his gold-rimmed glasses up his nose.

“I have mailed Christian’s autographed album to my mother, and she loves it. She told me to treat Ms. Thompson to dinner, or she’d feel bad getting the gift for nothing.”

He gave Justin the side-eye.

Christopher assumed that Bella was too kind to turn down his invite.

Besides, even if Bella had no feelings for Christopher, he was better than the cold-hearted two-timer who once hurt her.

Steven turned to Justin.

The man responded indifferently, “It’s work-related.”

Christopher frowned.

Bella paused for a moment before instructing Steven. “Take Mr.

Salvador to see me.”

Christopher and Steven were shocked.

Justin curled his lips.

He could not hide the joy on his face. It was as if he was picked first.

during a children's sports game.

"Please lead the way, Mr. Lovett."

Steven turned around angrily. "Follow me."

As Justin walked away, Christopher hid the darkness in his eyes.

behind his glasses. Rage consumed him.

When Christopher returned to the basement parking lot alone, his

secretary knew things did not go well and said nothing but ushered him into the car respectfully.

Sitting in the back seat, Christopher closed his eyes for a rest. However, his tensed jawline exposed his brewing rage.

Bella called Justin away.

The never-before humiliation overwhelmed Christopher's every being. It felt like Bella had slapped him in the face in front of his rival.

"Where to, Mr. Iverson?" His secretary asked cautiously.

Christopher uttered in a chilling voice, "Did I say you could speak?"

The secretary hung his head low in fright and broke out in a cold sweat.

It took a while before Christopher opened his eyes. He gripped his fingers until his knuckles popped.

"Investigate Ryan Hoffman's sister and her present relationship with Justin."

"Does Ryan Hoffman have a sister?"

Christopher's eyes flickered with a cold glint.

"I'll get right to it now." The secretary was scared out of his wits.

Christopher closed his eyes. "Drive to Pivotage."

Pivotage was a private club he established in his secretary's name five years ago.

The woman managing the club was his key to navigating Savrow's social circles.

However, she might come in handy now too.

With that in mind, Christopher nudged his glasses up and smirked

sinisterly.

Steven led Justin to the back kitchen of the hotel.

Justin clutched his Windsor knot and glanced to the side to check.

himself out on the reflection of a metal surface.

He had never been so nervous when he was commended in the army, or when he hosted his first organizational meeting as the president of Salvador Corporation.

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“Ms. Bella said you can enter.” Steven stepped aside as if he might catch something from Justin if he got too close.

“Thank you.”

Steven scowled without hiding his resentment toward Justin. “Don’t thank me. Ms. Bella is gracious to you. If it were me, I would beat the

crap out of you.”

He opened the door to the back kitchen before walking away.

After taking a long exhale, Justin stepped inside.

The KS World Hotel's kitchen was sparkly clean, like a sterilized surgical theater, gleaming stainless steel and white.

The space was quiet, and the only thing Justin could hear was his breathing and beating heart.

After a turn, he saw a lithe figure working behind a stainless-steel counter. The wide and tall counter made her frame tiny.

Bella took his breath away once again.

Clad in a pristine chef's uniform with her hair tucked under a hat and her face masked, she sculpted the dough with a pair of scissors.

She was so focused on the task at hand that she did not notice his

presence.

Justin's eyes welled up as he remembered Wilma's words.

"Young Master Justin, the dessert wasn't bought or made by our chef. The young madam made it for you. The chef said that the young madam cooks better than him. You enjoyed it so much, but you have no idea the amount of effort the young madam put into this tiny dessert. She locked herself in the kitchen all day to make the food for you. She didn't complain once about her body aches."

A wave of emotions washed over Justin.

For the first time, he got to witness Bella in the kitchen. So that was how she spent her three years in the Salvador household.

She poured all her love, blood, sweat, and tears into the food, but he

never once cherished or showed any appreciation for it.

He was a fool who had wiped away any affection she had left for him.

With furrowed brows, Bella sculpted the dough into shapes. She was making pastries for Ada to bring back to her mother.

It was a difficult dessert to make. It took Bella the whole afternoon

just to sculpt four doughs.

“Phew! All done.”

Bella heaved a sigh of relief as she stared at her fifth sculpture. She

raised her arm to wipe her sweat with her sleeve.

That was when she heard a munching noise.

Dumbfounded, Bella looked up.

She gasped sharply as her eyes widened. She let out a cry..

“Justin! W-W-Why...”

Justin met her gaze and continued munching.

There were only three of the four pastries left on the plate.

“Who said you could eat it? Spit it out now!” Bella’s cheeks flushed in rage. She was tempted to punch him in the face.

However, the man remained oblivious as he took another bite. The

food was yummy.

“You don’t deserve my food, bastard! Stop it!”

Seeing red, Bella tried to snatch the half-eaten pastry from him.

Justin stuffed the remaining pastry into his mouth in a fluster.

“Damn you, Justin!”

Bella yelled. She was fuming.

The kitchen floor had just been mopped, so it was still wet. She slipped and crashed into the man’s firm chest.

Thud!

Hitting his back on the counter, Justin grimaced in pain. He spread

his arms to hold Bella before she hurt herself.

As his grasp tightened, her breathing turned heavy.

It felt like time froze on them.

Bella's luscious lips, pressing through the barrier of the plastic mask,

met the man's in a kiss.

Justin and Bella had no words.

The man narrowed his gaze, and his lashes fluttered.

Despite his self-restraint, he could not stop the intensity in his loins.

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Bella pushed Justin's firm chest away to get up. She swiftly shot back

and pressed her back against the freezer door.

She inhaled sharply, her eyes darting. As a flush crept across her

cheeks, she sweated profusely.

Though her lips were shielded by a mask, Bella could still feel the lingering heat from his lips.

'Goddamnit! Why did she feel so...' Bella heaved heavily with a

blushing face and removed the mask to hurl it to the ground.

She could not possibly use it anymore. The mask was sullied.

Justin slowly rose to his feet before resting his hips on the edge of

the counter. His brows were relaxed as he pursed his crimson lips.

Even though he looked like he had his act together, he could not

ignore his racing heart.

“Doesn’t your back hurt?”

Justin looked dazed, still lost in the accidental kiss. Still, he kept up

with his appearance and spoke in a flat tone.

“That’s none of your business.”

Bella gnashed her teeth, furious because the man ate her dessert. Why did you eat my food without permission, Justin? I toiled away the

whole afternoon not to waste it on you.”

“It’s been a while since I’ve had anything you made. I want to enjoy

your cooking. I remember that you used to make pastries for me.”

Justin was not one to live for food. He often went without food and

drinks when he was busy.

However, he was tempted by the food when Bella poured her heart and soul into making it. The resentment and temptation drove him to

eat it.

He was not thinking when he grabbed her dessert. All he knew was

that he would not get another chance if he let it slip by.

“Ha! That’s in the past.”

Still angry, Bella said harshly, “I cooked and cleaned for you when your

were my husband. But you mean nothing to me now. Who are you to

eat my food? I’d rather feed it to the dogs than you. You don’t deserve

my cooking.”

That hurt a lot.

Justin’s eyes darkened as her words got to him.

He tried his best to look into her eyes.

However, he could no longer find the woman who once toiled away all

day in the kitchen to make him delicious food.

Was the love really gone?

Was there really nothing left?

Leaving Justin rooted to the spot, Bella swiped up the last pastries

with a scowl and tucked them safely away in the cabinet.

She was wary of him.

“It was rude of me. I didn’t think the food was important to you. I’m sorry.” Justin admitted to his mistake. Since he was in the wrong, he was willing to accept the reproach.

Bella’s emotions were apparent in her fluttering lashes. She turned

her back toward Justin and washed her hands in the sink. She asked

curtly, “Didn’t you say you’re here to talk business? Speak up. You can tell that I am busy, and you’re keeping me from my work.”

As his throat hitched, Justin calmed himself. “I came to tell you that I

am no longer in charge of Ada’s wedding planning.”

Bella paused from scrubbing her hands and chuckled. “What’s wrong

with that? Ada has already signed the contract with KS World Hotel.

The only thing you can do now is keep tabs on the comments that could give your hotel a name.”

Ignoring her taunts, Justin said, "Gregory has left Bethany in charge now."

Bella finally turned to face him with a scowl.

"You're smart. You know there's more to that decision," Justin said in a husky voice, his eyes observing the worry behind hers.

"So you came all the way to tell me this? As expected from you.

You're still the same selfish man."

Bella put her hands on her waist and smirked. "You're bitter about losing, so you're telling me about it so that I'll deal with Bethany for you.

"We all know Bethany plays dirty. Even if she's trying to play me, she's not smart enough to be a match for me. She's got the IQ of a gnat.

Maybe she'll stand a chance in another life."

Tension loosened in Justin's jaw as he smiled tenderly.

He realized that Bella's vile comments were adorable when they were not directed at him.

"Even so, Bethany is not a dummy. She has Shannon's support for ideas."

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Justin added, "Shannon is manipulative and cunning. I'm worried they will harm you, so I came to give you a heads-up."

Hiding the emotions behind her eyes, Bella turned away from him.

"That's all I want to say. I shouldn't keep you from your work."

Justin took a long, hard look at her back before turning to leave.

"Hold on, Justin." Bella stopped him.

With his heart skipping a beat, the man turned back around.

"Why are you telling me this? You, of all people, understand the grand scheme of things. Anybody from the Salvador Corporation can boost

the Salvador Hotel's influence and reputation by winning Ada over.

That was what you have been planning."

Bella looked at him skeptically. "So why are you doing this now?"

"I want you to win."

Justin stared at Bella with clear and sincere eyes. Having been in the

business for over a decade, the sentiment was a rare sight.

"Why do you want me to win?"

"We were once married, after all."

Bella sneered in disdain. "You weren't nice to me in the three years we

were married, and now that we're divorced, you want to talk about commitment? Are you kidding me, Mr. Salvador? Bye now. Don't hit

your head on the way out."

It still hurt as bad the second time around.

Justin cleared his throat, choking on the piece of dessert stuck there. He could barely breathe.

Night fell at the Hoffmans' residence.

Zoe gave Bethany a call, telling her to come over to her place. She

had an important matter to discuss.

The ladies arrived at Zoe's private piano room and shut the door

behind them.

"Why did you want to see me so late, Zoe?" Bethany asked curiously.

"It has been five days since KS World Hotel announced their

collaboration with Ada. Have you figured out a way to get the bitch?"

Folding her arms in front of her chest, Zoe asked sternly.

Bethany was a snobby princess. Only Shannon could speak to her with that tone, so she did not take it well when Zoe came at her. She

murmured peevishly, "It's only been five days. I'm not God. Ideas take

time."

"Tsk... You're lost without me."

Zoe gave Bethany a contemptuous look, but she loved to be superior intellectually. Clearing her throat, she went to her piano, lifted the cover, and pulled a document from under it. She threw it near

Bethany's feet.

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Though insulted, Bethany dared not show it on her face. She gritted her teeth and picked up the document.

Attached was a picture of a young woman and her personal

information.

“Who is she?” Bethany was confused.

“She’s Xena Gordon, a reporter for an online news portal, Headlines.” Sitting behind the piano, Zoe pressed the keys absentmindedly.

“Headlines? I never heard of it.”

Zoe wagged her finger. “It’s just shitty media. That’s not the point, -though. Take a closer look at the woman’s family information.”

Bethany blinked and read the document with a frown.

“Xena Gordon. Her father is Michael Gordon. Michael Gordon... That

sounds familiar. Where have I heard the name before?”

“Michael Gordon is the former vice president of KS World Hotel. He

conspired with Zeke Gold to embezzle the hotel’s procurement funds, but Bella caught him and sent him to jail. He got less than two years,

but his career is gone,” Zoe said with a smile, propping her chin over

her hand.

“Woah. The grudge runs deep.”

It then hit Bethany, and she jolted up from the sofa. “Xena must be

bitter about it. I bet she resents Bella.

“Her father wouldn’t be ruined and jailed if it wasn’t for that bitch.”

Zoe sighed and glanced at Bethany in disdain.

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Two weeks remained until Ada’s wedding.

Bella had been swamped with work lately, altering the plans to Ada’s preference, overseeing the venue setup, and verifying materials, costs, and staff members. She only had three hours of sleep on her

most exhausting day.

Still, she enjoyed doing it. With a clear and profitable goal in mind, she was highly motivated to work.

After a morning meeting with the team, Bella sat in her office, munching on a piece of sandwich while going through paperwork.

Steven knocked on the door and came in to deliver coffee. Although

working herself to the bone, Bella still looked adorable. Steven shook

his head with a helpless smile. "It's unhealthy to eat while you work."

"I don't have time. I have a fashion event to attend later." Bella took

another bite of the sandwich, her gaze never leaving the document.

"Why is your schedule packed today? I saw that you'd finally have a

break this afternoon and wanted to book you a spa treatment to

relax." Steven felt bad for her.

"Leave that until after Ada's wedding. I can't relax when there's so

much on my mind."

Bella held the coffee mug up and looked up. "Anything on Bethany

and Shannon in the last few days?"

"I have been keeping an eye on them, but they have been quiet. I don't

see anything out of the ordinary."

Steven uttered in contemplation, "With our planning going full force,

they might have just given up since they can't stop us."

Bella reflected on the conversation she had with Justin the other day

and smirked. "I think we shouldn't let our guard down. Now that

Bethany stole a chance to shine from Justin, she couldn't possibly

back down without a fight. What would she say to Gregory? She

wouldn't give up so easily."

There was a knock on the door.

The administrative secretary carried a white, exquisite-looking gift.

box into the room.

"Here is the dessert from the back kitchen, packed and ready as

requested, Ms. Thompson."

"Thank you. Leave it on the coffee table."

Once the secretary was gone, Steven walked to the coffee table and opened the box. The beautifully sculpted pastries reminded Steven of

Bella's dedication to baking. He curled his lips.

"Get ready, Steve. We're leaving in a minute."

That afternoon, Justin returned to his office after a meeting.

“Mr. Salvador, you received an invitation to today’s jewelry fair a week ago. Ada will be there. We don’t have to...”

Before Ian could finish, Justin declined without hesitation. “I’m not going.”

“Uh... Are you sure?”

Ian blinked. “The company was embarrassed when Ada chose KS Group over us. If we choose not to attend the event, the public will only be left to speculate on our absence. The press will have a field. day, saying that we refused to attend because we’re jealous of the KS World Hotel for getting Ada’s wedding. We are going to be called

petty.”

“Bethany will be there. She’s responsible for winning Ada over.”

Unfazed, Justin taunted, “Like attracts like. When there’s a bustle, you can count on Bethany to be there.”

“Ahem. I just received word that the young madam is there right now.”

The man’s dark eyes flickered.

“I need a change of clothes, and bring the car around.”

Ian snickered to himself. Justin always acted on his feelings when

Bella was concerned.

The luxury jewelry brand AX held a show at the Savrow International

Convention Center.

Many influential figures in the fashion industry and A-list celebrities arrived on the scene, gracing the red carpet like it was the Oscars.

The international star, Ada Wang, stood out among the crowd. She was not just the biggest celebrity but also the ambassador of AX in

As the heiresses of Savrow's conglomerates, Bethany and Zoe were on the list that other D-list celebrities cracked their heads to get onto.

Bethany and Zoe walked the red carpet, posing endlessly in front of

the cameras. The press was annoyed with their extended airtime.

If the host had not invited them into the venue time and again, they would probably have rooted themselves on the red carpet.

"Jesus, get a life. Don't they own carpets? It's embarrassing that they keep hanging around and refusing to leave."

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The reporters complained about Zoe and Bethany, who were on the

red carpet.

“I would have just let it go, but they came out later than Ada. They think too highly of themselves to be fashionably late.”

“I didn’t take a single photo. I don’t want to waste my storage space.

on the worthless.”

“Bethany is the heiress of Salvador Corporation. I heard Zoe is the

sister of Ryan Hoffman, the ‘Prince of Savrow’. These women aren’t

famous, but they’re made of money. I bet they bought their order of

appearance.”

Thinking they had gotten their 15 minutes of fame, Bethany and Zoe

happily walked into the venue.

Once there, they realized that the press either interviewed big stars. like Ada or fashion designers. No one asked about them.

“Damn it! Are these reporters blind?”

Getting the snub, Bethany stamped her foot in rage. “How dare they ignore us! They must be blind. They won’t be able to work in this city

again if they cross me.”

“Those reporters are snobs. They will circle you like sharks if you’re famous, capable, and influential.”

Furious, Zoe took it out on Bethany by putting her down.

“Yeah. My mom won’t let me interact with the media, and it’s not a social circle I hang out in. She said it’s beneath wealthy people to

associate with the lower class.”

Bethany might be working together with Zoe for her own purpose, but she was not going to let Zoe push her around.

Pulling a harmless look, she mocked, “But Zoe, you’re a socialite and the apprentice of a top pianist. I can’t believe no one came to interview you. That’s just rude. I’m angry for your sake. Why don’t I pull a few reporters over to interview you, so it won’t look

embarrassing?”

“Ha! That isn’t necessary. I prefer to keep a low profile. I don’t like to be surrounded by reporters like a monkey in a zoo.” Zoe scoffed.

The frenemies rolled their eyes and turned away from each other.

A flurry of footsteps came behind them.

“Look! It’s Ms. Thompson!”

“Wow! I didn’t see her on the red carpet, so I didn’t expect her to be

here. She's so elusive!"

"The Thompson heiress is discreet. She's successful at managing hotel and winning Ada Wang over. She's beautiful and capable!

unlike most heiresses, who only spend money and hang around r

carpets."

Even though the press did not name anyone in particular, Bethany and

Zoe felt their cheeks burning.

The press swarmed toward Bella.

Among them, two reporters did not look where they were going and bumped into Bethany and Zoe. They staggered, nearly falling to their

feet.

"Hey! Are you blind?" Bethany shouted angrily once she stopped

herself from falling.

Zoe shook in rage. Her complexion was flushed as the press crowded.

over to Bella.

"Ms. Thompson, you have won the contract to organize Ada Wang's wedding, defeating the Salvador Corporation. What are your

thoughts?" A reporter asked loudly.

"It's an honor to work with Ada. I am grateful for her trust in the KS World Hotel. I want to make it clear that KS Group and the Salvador Corporation were competing for the same opportunity, but that doesn't mean the Salvador Corporation is any less because we won the contract. The Salvador Hotel has a longer history in Savrow than

the KS World Hotel, setting the standards in the industry. I hope you

don't hold the outcome against the Salvador Hotel. It doesn't change. KS Group's business relationship with the Salvador Corporation."

Even though Bella had won a major victory, she knew when to be humble. She would never gloat, make enemies, or belittle the Salvador Corporation because it would be an ugly look on her.

"Oh, my! Ms. Thompson is so charismatic. I'm falling for her."

"Yeah. She's humble even when she has won. She's so nice. I found

her underhanded before for swooping in on the project, but I don't

think so now."

The crowd expressed their praise for Bella.

Zoe's eyes were bloodshot with resentment, and her clenched fists

trembled.

She noticed that Bella wore a pair of golden rose earrings embedded with red gemstones. She matched the earrings with a red gemstone.

necklace.

It was the red beryl, the most valuable gemstone of its kind.

Bethany stared at the huge red beryl hanging around Bella's neck and took a huge gulp enviously.

Zoe was jealous too, but she quickly noticed something.

As she narrowed her eyes, a plan came to mind.

Bella attended the fashion event today, not to show off or flaunt her status as the Thompson heiress but to accomplish two things.

First, she wanted to respond to the accusation of stealing the project from the Salvador Corporation in an interview with the media. She wanted to set things straight and put an end to the rumors.

Second, Bella wanted to present Ada with a gift, but in truth, she was keeping an eye on Bethany, making sure she had the upper hand in

the situation. Bella refused to allow the scheming woman to ruin

-things for her.

Ada and a dashing middle-aged man in a tailored brown tux walked

toward Bella.

“Ms. Thompson, let me introduce this man to you.”

Ada introduced, “This is Vincent Anderson, the CEO of AX Jewelry.

He’s a good friend of mine.

“Vince, meet Ms. Bella Thompson, the general manager of World

Hotel. She’s a talented young lady.”

Vincent, a native of Inalia, hailed from a royal lineage.

This was not his first visit to Savrow or the country of Orealm. He had

fallen in love with this country a long time ago.

“Pleased to meet you, Mr. Anderson. Welcome to Savrow.”

Bella smiled and extended her hand to Vincent.

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“I’m pleased to meet you too, Ms. Thompson. It’s an honor to have you at our show,” Vincent responded, shaking her hand.

Ada glanced at Vincent and then Bella. Something appeared strange

between them.

They should be meeting each other for the first time, but Vincent and

Bella behaved like they had met before.

The press was stunned.

Vincent, born into privilege and with royal blood in his veins, held

himself above all. Nevertheless, he smiled warmly at Bella, like she

was his daughter.

Bella was something else. Still, she was a beautiful young lady, so it

made sense that she was popular among the men.

“What a coincidence, Ms. Thompson. Fancy seeing you here.”

Holding onto her fancy train, Zoe strutted her way toward Bella.

Zoe looked like an innocent angel with her smiling eyes and cute

dimples.

Bella narrowed her eyes, her icy gaze falling on Zoe.

She proceeded to give Zoe the cold shoulder. Bella said to Vincent

and Ada with a smile, "Let's chat over there."

The snub drove Zoe mad. Her eyes turned bloodshot, and her blood

ran cold.

Her brother was Ryan Hoffman! The nerve of Bella to look down on

her!

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"She's an heiress of the KS Group. Surely, she knows the rules of the

trade."

"Duh, of course, she does. She's probably trying to take advantage of

the situation. Gee, the lengths businesswomen go to get a leg up in

the industry. For all we know, she might have used underhanded

methods to beat Mr. Salvador and gain Ada's trust."

"Tsk, tsk. I was impressed with Ms. Thompson, but she turned out to be shameless and despicable."

Zoe smirked, knowing she had won this round. 'You're one cocky

bitch, Bella. I'll show you your place today. The best way to take you down a notch is to make people question your integrity."

Unbeknownst to Zoe, Justin, who came late, had witnessed

everything she had said and done.

The man hung back in the dark, staring indifferently at Zoe, who was pleased with herself.

Standing tall in his tailored suit with fabric that draped smoothly

across his toned chest, Justin scowled.

"Mr. Salvador, that woman is picking on the young madam." Ian was

anxious to watch.

Justin pursed his lips.

He leaned in and paused.

"Just wait."

"Still" Ian widened his eyes in confusion.

"She's Bella Thompson, not a typical woman. She has her way of dealing with it."

Justin narrowed his eyes. Even he did not realize that his smile was

tender and proud. "Even if she doesn't, she has me."

Ian's eyes bulged as he stared at Justin's side profile in disbelief. Ian

held onto his chest.

Justin added, "She was my woman. No one but me can pick on her.

-No one."

Ian thought, 'Good grief! Is he still the ruthless president that I knew?

Has the world turned upside down? Could this tender look on Mr.

Salvador's face melt the Antarctic iceberg? Sigh... It's a shame that

Young Madam could not witness it."

Public opinion was swaying on the other end of the room.

Bella's choice of jewelry started a stir, as promoting another business during a brand event was disgraceful and against the rules.

Hiding behind Zoe, Bethany took delight in Bella's unfortunate

situation.

Bella observed with a calm expression as Zoe stirred the pot. Her unperturbed gaze did not sit well with Zoe.

Zoe expected to see Bella flustered, helpless, and embarrassed.

She had a problem with that.

“Miss.”

Vincent, who had kept quiet thus far, said with a pretentious smile, “I see that you’re wearing AX’s Everlasting Flower collection. It’s a

limited edition with only ten of its kind.”

“Yes, Mr. Anderson. I love AX’s jewelry pieces, and this is my favorite

collection.”

Zoe’s eyes lit up, and her heart raced as she managed to catch the

eye of AX’s CEO.

“Since you love the collection, you should know that the inspiration

for AX’s Everlasting Flower collection came from a talented jewelry designer, Alexa’s Rose of Desire.”

Vincent cocked his head. A flicker of light dancing on Bella’s left rose

gold earring held his gaze.

The look on Vincent’s face was too suggestive from Justin’s

perspective.

He pursed his discolored lips, unable to take the male attention Bella received.

“Ms. Thompson’s jewelry set is Alexa’s Rose of Desire. In other words, without the Rose of Desire, the popular Everlasting Flower collection would’ve never existed.”

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Everybody’s jaw dropped.

Zoe and Bethany were not the only ones shocked. As Vincent’s friend and Alexa’s die-hard fan, Ada had no idea.

Ada could not believe that Bella’s jewelry set was Alexa’s masterpiece. She had heard about the “Rose of Desire” but had never seen it.

For once, Ada envied the rich.

Bella sneaked Vincent a grateful look.

She knew she did not have to explain herself because Vincent would sort out those troublemakers at his show.

There was no need to waste time on unimportant people.

Justin's eyes never strayed away from Bella. He was fuming.

He was certain that Bella knew the man, and they were close.

"Who is that old man?" Justin asked in a chilling voice.

"Vincent Anderson is the CEO of AX. His grandfather was the last Duke of Inalia, and his grandmother was the founder of AX. His family owns the brand, so that's why he's the CEO.

Ian added with a wink, "Vincent inherited the dukedom, and the royal family bestowed him with a huge estate. That's not the only thing. He is one of the top five richest men in Inalia. His net worth is tens of billions of dollars. The young madam is awesome. I can't believe she has royal friends!"

Justin breathed heavily and swallowed hard. He clutched his fingers.

resentfully.

“Wow, Mr. Anderson just stood up for the young madam. Don’t tell

me he fancies her!”

Hit by a realization, Ian exclaimed, “If Mr. Anderson is interested in the young madam, she will have hope of becoming a duchess. She’s a wealthy heiress. If she marries royalty... OMG! The young madam. will be living the life of every woman’s dreams!”

“That’s never going to happen. Vincent is old enough to be her father.. She won’t fancy him,” Justin responded solemnly.

A fan of gossip, Ian could not stop yapping. “Well, you can’t say for certain. The young madam might prefer mature men. Otherwise she wouldn’t have fallen for you. You’re six years older than her.”

Justin shot Ian a menacing look.

Six years and twenty-odd years were a huge difference.

Breaking out in a cold sweat, Ian pinched his lips together and made

a gesture to zip them. He looked comical and pitiful.

His banter got to Justin’s head.

Justin no longer resented her for lying to him again and again.

He started to whine about the outstanding men around her. He was

pushed to the back of the line.

“OMG! The CEO of an international luxury jewelry brand just publicly

admitted using Alexa’s pieces as a reference. This is an

embarrassment to his company.”

“I don’t think so. I think Mr. Anderson is forthright. Besides, he wasn’t using Alexa’s work for reference. He said he drew inspiration from

Alexa’s creation.”

“We did take elements from Alexa’s designs.”

Amid the press’ chatter, Vincent admitted, “Ms. Alexa is well aware of

1. We talked in private, and Ms. Alexa permitted us to apply the elements in the Everlasting Flower collection. She has also. participated in the design.”

Everybody gasped in awe.

Zoe’s smug face stiffened,

“So I’m glad Ms. Thompson wore Alexa’s pieces to attend AX’s event.” Vincent glanced at Bella before looking away.

“There’s one more thing you aren’t aware of, Ms. Hoffman.” Bella chuckled and continued, “AX and Alexa have been close partners for many years. There is one rule the VIP members of AX Jewelry know

1.

“They are free to wear Alexa’s jewelry pieces to AX’s events and will be seated in the VVIP section. If that isn’t enough, AX offers free

lifetime maintenance and care for customers who own Alexa’s

jewelry pieces. You’re a fan of AX jewelry. How come you didn’t

know?”

Zoe turned pale. She was speechless.

Although she owned many of AX’s jewelry pieces, the membership

threshold was set too high. Not only did it require a significant

amount of spending history, but there was a strict assessment of the

either member’s wealth and background. Zoe did not pass

requirement despite being Ryan’s sister.

Hence, she did not know about the rule.

Chapter 380

Bethany quietly stepped back, keeping her distance from Zoe. She did not want to be associated with Zoe now that she had made a fool of

herself.

It dawned on the press. They gave Zoe strange looks.

“It’s absurd that Ms. Hoffman pointed her finger at someone else.

when she wasn’t even a VIP member of AX.”

“She should’ve minded herself instead of others.”

“Just because she owns a few jewelry pieces doesn’t mean she’s an

expert. She talks big in front of the brand’s CEO, but he probably

doesn’t even know who she is.

“Tsk, tsk. She certainly doesn’t have Ms. Thompson’s refinement and

grace.”

‘What did they say?! The horrible media listed me, a Hoffman, beneath

Bella.’ Zoe nearly lost it.

She had never been so humiliated.

Without sparing Zoe a glance, Bella walked away, sharing a good

conversation with Vincent and Ada.

The press followed them, leaving Zoe all on her own. The shame

washed the color off her face.

“Oh, no, Zoe!”

Bethany took quick paces to her and grabbed her arm. She murmured

nervously, “Justin is here!”

“Justin? W-Where is he?” Zoe sweated bullets.

“He’s not too far behind you, and he’s looking in this direction. I don’t know when he got here or how much he saw.”

Zoe gasped and stiffly turned her head.

In the shadows, Justin looked coldly at her from the corner.

Zoe felt strangled by an invisible pair of hands.

Her breathing, heartbeat, and brain threatened to stop working all at

once.

“J-Justin...”

Furrowing his brows, Justin shook his head emotionlessly and walked away without looking back. Ian followed him.

As a cold shiver ran down her spine, Zoe staggered backward.

Justin's gaze cut through her, severing any ties between them.

Zoe cried in the washroom. "Sob, sob, sob... Damn it... Why can't the bitch go to hell? I wish a car could run her over."

With her hands over her face, Zoe wailed until her makeup smeared.

Her black eyeliner smudged all over her face.

She cried, not just because Bella ruined her socially.

It was also because Justin caught her giving Bella hell, and Zoe could not talk her way out of it.

"I know, right? Why can't God strike her with lightning?" Bethany ranted with Zoe, but in secret, she was glad.

"Why did you just stand there and watch? Why didn't you stand up for me?" Zoe took her anger out on Bethany.

"I-I'm slow. I didn't know what to say. You've been the one to give me ideas. What can I do? I wouldn't have waited until now to deal with

Bella if I was smart enough," Bethany explained.

Zoe wept and asked resentfully, "Have you gotten a reply from Xena Gordon yet? Still no update? She's useless."

"Take it easy. Good things come to those who wait. The woman hates Bella with all her heart. She will do everything to help us."

Bethany's phone buzzed.

She pulled it out for a look and smiled wickedly. She waved the phone

Zoe. "Speak of the devil! Xena's calling."

2 Zoe gritted her teeth menacingly. "This time, I must make Bella fall

grace for sure."