

Heiress 431

Chapter 431

Asher frowned. "It's late. Are you going to exercise?"

"Yeah, Ash. I'm in a good mood, so I thought I should go kayaking around the back." Bella looked up at him cheerfully.

"It's dark out. What if you fall into the river? You're not a strong swimmer."

Asher pinched her waist. "Don't you know it's nearly sub-zero outside? You'll freeze in that outfit of yours."

He turned to Steven. "Bella doesn't have anyone else but you. Why can't you do a better job watching over her?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Asher. It was my negligence." Steven apologized.

"Enough, Ash. Don't blame Steve. He reminded me, but I wouldn't listen to him."

The siblings sat on the sofa, hand-in-hand. Bella rested her head on her brother's wide shoulder. "The editor-in-chief of Mint called me and worked out the details of the events. Thank you, Ash, for bringing in such a high-value resource. I love Mint. I've read the magazine. growing up. That's my inspiration to get into fashion design."

The editor-in-chief of Mint, Alice, was a living, breathing prominent figure, like in the Devil Wears Prada movie. It was clear that the woman was highly influential in the industry when a frown at a fashion show could be detrimental to a brand name.

Yet, the figure personally gave Bella a call.

Only God knew how nervous Bella was, despite speaking eloquently on the phone.

“All that matters is that you’re happy, Bella.”

With a tender smile, Asher grazed the tip of her nose with his finger. “I was afraid you might be frustrated because the Salvador Corporation stole Ada from you. I know you like to keep busy, so I gave you something to do.

“You won’t have a lot on your mind when you’re busy.”

“Tsk. I’m not that fragile. I’ve been eating and sleeping well. That incident didn’t leave a scratch on me.” Bella pouted, her voice soft and sweet.

Steven bit his lip to slow down his racing heart. He fixated on Bella’s sweet smile.

Bella would only show her adorably spoiled side when she was with Asher.

Steven did not want to look away now that an opportunity had presented itself.

“Eating and sleeping well? Your eye bags look heavy to me.” Asher sighed and ran his coarse fingers along the delicate skin under her eyes.

“It’s all that Oh, that reminds me, Ash. How did you know Alice? You must be close because she has the confidence to leave the event in my hands.”

Bella’s eyes sparkled with curiosity. “Mint has never held a charity event in Savrow,”

“I’m not close with Alice.” Asher looked indifferent.

“Huh? Why-”

“She has had a crush on me for a decade, I believe.”

Bella and Steven exclaimed, “What?”

Asher uttered indifferently, “I have turned her down several times, but she has been persistent. I just ignored her and let her be.”

Alice, the fashion mogul, was pushing fifty.

Asher was 30 years old, so there was a huge age gap. Talk about. progression.

“That’s tragic. Utterly tragic...” Bella sighed.

“You’re right. It must be stressful to have a 50-year-old suitor.” Steven nodded in agreement.

“What did you say? I’m talking about Alice.

Bella glared at Steven. She was a fan of Alice, so of course, she was going to have her back. “Age is not an issue. She just picked the wrong man. She’s like the icy editor-in-chief, Miranda Priestly, in ‘Devil Wears Prada’. Where is she going to find romance with an indifferent man like Ash? I can’t imagine sparks between two icy personalities.”

Asher was speechless.

Steven was also at a loss for words.

Chapter 432

Time flew by, and it was soon the day of the charity jewelry auction held by the KS World Hotel.

As the event was associated with charity, the local media drummed up public attention without KS and Mint putting much effort into advertising.

Mint was an internationally renowned fashion magazine that A-listers would kill to grace the front cover. It was an iconic magazine.

It was bustling outside on the day of the star-studded event.

Celebrities, working together with the security team, greeted fans and swiftly entered the venue to prevent potential stampedes.

A stretched limo pulled up near the crowd, which caused quite a commotion.

A bodyguard opened the door, and Shannon and Bethany got out of the car in glamorous evening gowns

Other attending heiresses and socialites would take the back door or

VIP lane, but old habits died hard for Shannon and Bethany. They lived for their 15 seconds of fame.

“Hey, look! Isn’t that Rosalind’s aunt?”

Despite the distance, Shannon heard someone shouting in the crowd, and her expression turned ashen.

She spent years rebuilding herself to shed the shadow of her past as an overhyped celebrity and mistress-turned-wife so that she would only be seen as the distinguished wife of Salvador

Corporation’s chairman.

In the end, because of Rosalind, Shannon was known as the notorious whore’s aunt.

Although Shannon was indeed Rosalind's aunt, it felt more like an insult than an honor.

"Oh, it's really her!" Another person echoed.

"Wasn't she investigated because she was involved in bribery or something?"

"That's right. She was later released. Tsk, tsk. The capitalists run the city."

"She can't erase her criminal past on the internet. She has the nerve. to show herself. Gregory could do a better job keeping his wife in check."

"I'm brought back to Rosalind's birthday party when I see her. She bragged about her niece, but Rosalind broke character right there and then. That must have been a shocker."

"She went blank at the time. I laugh every time I see that face. Hahaha."

Shannon grimaced, her feet rooted to the ground. If Bethany had not. held onto her, she would not be able to walk.

She thought the past was behind her.

It dawned on Shannon that Rosalind had trampled on her fragile ego.

Amid the jeering, Shannon and Bethany hurried into the hotel with their tails tucked between their legs.

"You might want to try and be discreet, Mom. Best not to make public appearances."

Bethany pursed her lips frustratedly. "I was laughed at because of you. That was embarrassing."

"Bethany! You are an ingrate. How can you say that your mother embarrassed you?"

Shannon pinched Bethany's arm exasperatedly, which hurt her badly. "I was pregnant with you when I made myself known to the Salvadors. was insulted and humiliated, but I didn't let it bother me. How can you disrespect me? If I hadn't put away my dignity and pestered your dad, you wouldn't be living the lavish life of the heiress of Salvador Corporation. You ungrateful brat!"

Chapter 433

Putting her hand over her bruised arm, Bethany could not wait to get away from Shannon's lecture.

Growing up, Bethany benefited from her mother's influence over her father, which opened doors for her future. However, despite her mother's role in her easy life, Bethany secretly looked down on her for her lack of sophistication and culture.

Shannon was vulgar in comparison to socialites like Zoe's mother and Mila Larson. It was not as if Bethany could choose her parents anyway.

The event was split into two segments-the banquet and the auction.

The venue was packed with A-list celebrities and renowned artists, as if every star in the industry had graced the event with their presence.

As the general manager of the hotel and organizer of the charity event, Bella was stopped by the press for live interviews.

She carried herself with poise in front of the cameras.

A journalist asked, "Ms. Thompson, Ada Wang has chosen the Salvador Hotel for her wedding venue. Now that you are hosting at charity auction for Mint magazine, are you trying to level the playing field with Salvador Corporation?"

"I understand why you would think so since we have been competing with Salvador Corporation."

Bella added with a faint smile, "But Mint magazine contacted us. about the event, so the timing is just by some strange chance. There's nothing sinister behind the event."

"It has been reported that Ada selected the KS World Hotel to have her wedding. Why did she change her mind and pick the Salvador

Hotel instead? Did something happen in between?"

Bella responded, "As the information is confidential and proprietary to the hotel, I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to share that."

The same journalist inquired, "She dropped out of the deal with you and opted for Salvador Corporation after the leak of her wedding plans. Is that the reason that contributed to the change of heart?"

Bella remained unfazed, but her eyes turned chilly.

The journalist was likely here to stir trouble.

In a corner, Zoe sipped on champagne and smiled wickedly as Bella faced a barrage of questions from the relentless press.

She planted the nosy journalist who could not take a hint.

Despite the minimal impact on Bella's career, Zoe hoped to bait Bella into controversial responses and draw criticism toward her.

Shannon and Bethany drew close.

Reigning victorious, Bethany was no longer intimidated by Bella. In fact, she became cocky..

“You’re right. That was the case.” Bella’s smile faded, and her expression turned solemn.

The crowd went wild.

Zoe furrowed her brows. It never occurred to her that Bella would answer the question honestly without dodging and shutting the journalist up with a random excuse.

That was one thing Zoe had not prepared for.

“Stop putting Ms. Thompson on the spot. She’s been swamped with work after the breach of contract.”

Lifting her chin, Bethany said with an arrogant smile, “But don’t feel discouraged, Ms. Thompson. You can do better next time. The incident with your hotel serves as a cautionary tale for the Salvador Corporation. We won’t make the same mistake as you. We are committed to maintaining the strictest confidentiality of all customer information.”

Chapter 434

Bethany’s comment drew the attention of many.

That was quite the bombshell she dropped.

First, Bethany revealed that KS World was at fault for violating the contract with Ada.

Second, Bella was quick to host an event for Mint, likely a damage-control move after the breach of contract with Ada to prove that the hotel was a popular destination for events.

Third, under Bella’s leadership, KS World Hotel had failed to meet the customers’ needs and protect their privacy. It was serious negligence on her part as the general manager.

Ada's change in decision was proof that the Salvador Hotel was better than the KS World Hotel in every way.

The press descended on Bella like a pack of wolves, snapping out questions with relentless intensity.

Bella knew that this was coming.

Bethany stirred the pot to use the media against her and the hotel.

Bella turned to Bethany and Shannon. Even the exquisite makeup could not hide the smug looks on their faces.

They were such clowns..

Ada and Alice, the entertainment and fashion moguls, entered the venue together.

They saw Bella being ridiculed by Bethany and swarmed by the press.

Alice, looking chic and unapproachable in her sunglasses, looked at the unfazed Bella and nudged Ada. "I think you shouldn't have given up the collaboration with Ms. Thompson."

"Why?" Ada asked with a raised brow.

"Her brother is an outstanding man, and I'm not exaggerating. Asher is the most handsome man I have ever seen in my entire life."

Alice's eyes sparkled behind the black lens at the mention of Asher." He's the man of my dreams."

"What does her dreamboat brother have anything to do with my contract with Bella?" Ada looked confused.

Alice replied earnestly, and her tone softened. "Can't you see it in your heart to give Ms. Thompson another chance for my sake? She might be my sister-in-law some day."

Ada was speechless. Was that supposed to be an emotional plea?

No one took notice of the second floor.

Justin stood still by the banister. His dark eyes were fixed on the scene happening downstairs.

With his burning gaze falling on Bella's composed face, he curled his lips with intrigue.

He knew that she would not go down so easily.

Bella never shied away from a fight.

"Mr. Salvador, the young madam is mobbed by the press. These reporters will give her a bad name without knowing the truth."

Ian looked down with worry. "Can't you figure something out to help the young madam?"

"Nah."

Justin turned aloof. "Even though Bella is being framed, I can't come forward and stand up for her. I belong to Salvador Corporation, and my interference will make things messier than they already are."

"I believe she's ready for it. I can't go out there and disrupt her plans."

Ian nodded understandingly. Bella doesn't go by the playbook. We best stay out of her way."

Most importantly, Bella did not trust Justin. He would only get on her nerves by getting involved.

“I need you to do me two favors, Ian.” Justin’s voice was husky.

“Do tell.”

Chapter 435

“I want that journalist, who had nothing nice to say, to disappear from the news scene.”

“Sure thing.”

“Call the group’s PR team and get them to monitor the comments online. Any bad press about Bella and KS World Hotel should be cleared from the internet right away.”

“Of course.”

Ian turned away to carry out his boss’ order.

Standing there, Justin stared at Bella’s stubborn face as his gaze softened.

He thought, ‘Bella, just do all you want. You don’t have to thank me, and I’ll sort everything out for you behind the scenes.’

The commotion downstairs went on.

“Ms. Thompson, we at Salvador Corporation find it a pity that you didn’t manage to secure the partnership with Ada.”

Shannon tore into Bella, not wanting to turn her back on a chance to berate her. "You're young and inexperienced in management. I'm sure you can be negligent in managing tasks, but things will get better with time.

"We have all been there and done that. The most important thing is that you own up to your mistakes."

"That's right. It was my oversight to let others with ulterior motives get away with it."

Bella narrowed her eyes. It was hard to read any emotions from her smile. "I will take adequate precautions from now on. It's a lesson. learned."

Shannon sneered in disdain.

"Are you saying that you were framed, Ms. Thompson?" One journalist asked in surprise.

"The charity auction is about to begin. We should move to the venue."

Instead of answering the question, Bella led everybody to the next venue.

She did not spare Shannon and Bethany another glance.

The mother and daughter did not get the kick out of crushing their opponent.

"The bitch thinks she can turn the tide by being vague. Well, she has another thing coming." Shannon stared menacingly at Bella's back. and spoke in a vicious tone.

"Hmph! Did you see that? She didn't even bother to explain herself. She's accepting defeat."

Bethany clung to her mother's arm excitedly. "Once the event is over, I should get the media to hype Bella up so that everybody can see what. an incapable leader she is."

“Mrs. Salvador! Bethany!”

Timing it perfectly, Zoe came out of hiding and approached the mother and daughter with grace while holding the hem of her skirt. Good evening.”

“Hello, Zoe.”

Shannon held her hands warmly. “I’ve been looking for you. I thought you may not have made it.”

“I have got news for you, Mom.”

Bethany smiled at Zoe gratefully. “We were able to get Ada to sign with us, thanks to Zoe.”

“Oh, Bethany. It was the least I could do. It was no trouble at all.” Zoe grinned shyly.

“I won’t forget what you have done for us, child.”

Shannon smiled and caressed the back of Zoe’s hand. “Just ask if you need anything. I will do my best to help you.”

Chapter 436

The guests filed into another hall in preparation to take part in the auction.

Bella withdrew from the media, getting away from the spotlight to take a breather in the hallway.

“Ms. Bella!” Steven rushed to her side worriedly. “Are you alright?”

“It’s just a few bothersome reporters. What could have happened? How much could they have done?”

Bella was calm, but she frowned slightly. “You shouldn’t be by my side right now. You should be in the hall, taking care of things.”

“But... I was worried about you.”

Steven’s voice was anxious and hoarse. “Those reporters clearly came prepared. They were deliberately sent to make things difficult for you! They kept harping on our mistakes to make you look bad!”

“Isn’t that pretty normal? Do reporters have to come over to sing your praises and exalt you just because you’re hosting a charity event?”

Bella crossed her arms, still looking calm. “And anyway, what they asked wasn’t wrong, was it? It’s true that there was an oversight in my management, which was taken advantage of by certain flamboyant fowls. I can’t blame others for that.”

Flamboyant fowls.

An image of Shannon and Bethany rose to the front of Steven’s mind.

“But you said something I don’t agree with. Those reporters were sent by someone not to ruin me, but to help me.”

Bella leaned against the wall as she tapped her shoulder. “Just let Bethany Salvador enjoy herself and make a scene. I’m best at making my opponent fall from their pedestal and defeating them completely just when they think they have the world in the palm of their hands. Haha! How interesting.”

Steven watched Ms. Bella’s gaze slowly darken. When she got vicious, she was just like Asher, and Steven could not help but shiver in fear.

This rose was indeed beautiful, but it had thorns and was poisonous!

Steven, as the general manager's secretary, was needed inside the hall to ensure things ran smoothly, so he quickly ran back inside.

Bella had been working hard the whole day for this auction and had only had a simple breakfast. She had not eaten lunch or dinner and had not even had a sip of water.

Her stomach growled as she collapsed weakly onto the sofa and kicked off her heels, revealing her pale feet.

She curled up pitifully. She was so hungry that her stomach was twinging.

"I'm starving..."

Bella murmured weakly as she slowly closed her eyes. Suddenly, she could faintly smell the mellow aroma of chocolate.

She thought she was having hallucinations because she was so hungry. Her nose twitched as she sniffed the air like a cute little puppy.

"Are you just going to smell it and not eat it?"

A pleasant, baritone voice spoke, though the tone was cold.

Bella's heart trembled, and she suddenly opened her eyes.

Her stunned, widened eyes met Justin's beautiful, dark eyes that hid multitudes.

It was hard to deny that this beautiful and shocking pair of eyes were indescribably lethal to her, no matter when or where.

At that moment, Bella was lying on her side on the sofa, watching Justin, who was kneeling on one knee in front of her, holding a chocolate cupcake in his hand.

The hands that were holding her empty stomach could not help but clench.

They had been married for three years, but Justin had never bent himself or lowered his head once.

Even during that period of time when she loved only him and ran toward his light like a moth to a flame, she was the one who would humble herself and cry in grievance.

As her thoughts drifted through her mind, her eyes reddened quietly, and her breathing started to become erratic.

Justin maintained his posture of kneeling on one knee, but he frowned slightly when she did not respond. "Weren't you complaining you were hungry? Why aren't you eating? This is your favorite-chocolate-flavored. Don't worry, it's not poisoned."

"I'm not eating it."

Bella's throat choked with unexplainable emotions. She felt bitter and sad.

"I heard from Wilma that you have stomach issues. It's not good for you to stay hungry too long."

"I said, I'm not eating it!"

Smack-!

Bella suddenly waved her hand with red eyes, and the cupcake in Justin's hand was instantly sent flying.

"Bella! You-!"

That cupcake dropped to the ground, some distance away, and crumbled thoroughly.

Justin's dark eyes stared at her fixedly. The fire burning in his heart rushed to his head even as disappointment spread from the top of his head to the tips of his toes like a bowl of cold water had been poured over his head. A bone-chilling coldness spread through him.

It was not just the cupcake that had crumbled-his heart had too.

"What's wrong with you, Bella Thompson? Don't you know what's good for you?!"

Bella slowly sat up, no longer feeling hungry, as she was filled with a mess of emotions and resentment. "I hate you, and I hate you even more for being attentive to me out of the blue! Justin, do you know that the way you're treating me now is no different from insulting me?"

Chapter 437

"What on earth are you talking about?" Justin raised an eyebrow, only feeling that she was unreasonable.

"I want you to stay away from me. I don't need you to be nice to me. Not even a single bit."

Bella endured the pain in her stomach as she stood up, her face pale. "Is it because Rosalind Gold has left you and your excessive passion has nowhere to go now? I'm not a garbage bin, so don't settle for second best here. You might be willing to humble yourself, but I'm not willing to lower my standards!"

Justin clenched his fist tightly, the great humiliation and indignance making his eyes redden.

He only wanted to give her a cupcake because he saw that she was hungry and in pain. He wanted to ease her hunger. How could she demonize him and verbally attack him with such hateful words?

Bella put on her high heels, straightened her back, and stormed off.

Justin picked up the cupcake, watching her heartless back go, almost unable to catch his breath.

The Bella of today would no longer smile at him like a blooming flower.

Their failed marriage was a deeply painful memory for her.

It made her seem like a soldier who had a near-death experience on the battlefield, which left her with post-traumatic stress disorder. If he were even a little bit nice to her, she would resist it wholeheartedly with suspicion.

Justin's thin lips trembled as he endured the intense pain in his heart, crushing the cupcake further in his palm.

A perfectly fine person and a perfectly fine relationship. It seemed he had ruined it all.

In the hall, there was still some time before the auction started. Alice and Ada Wang were the two giants from the fashion and entertainment industries, respectively, present tonight. Thus, they were the stars of the event. The media constantly followed them around to interview them.

Shannon had gone to chat with and establish connections with the other rich wives, while Bethany and Zoe both had their own plans.

Bethany wanted to take a photo with Ada Wang and receive another wave of questions from the reporters. After all, she was the one who managed to seal the deal, so she hoped she could publicize this to show off her capability.

Zoe, on the other hand, wanted to get a photo with Alice to increase her own trendiness, which would be beneficial to her future career in the fashion industry.

"Ms. Ada! I didn't expect you to wear this necklace to the auction today. It looks like you really like it!"

Bethany saw that Ada Wang was wearing the necklace she gave her tonight, so she used this as an excuse to start a conversation.

The reporters surrounded the two, the lights of their cameras flashing nonstop.

“Of course, I like it very much. This is Alexa’s work, after all.”

Although Ada Wang did not like Bethany’s superficial personality,

Bethany had given her the necklace. Plus, Salvador Corporation was her wedding organizer, so she could not be too cold to Bethany.

Thus, Ada put an arm around Bethany’s waist and generously took a photo with her.

When Bethany saw that the international superstar’s attitude had softened toward her and even pulled her closer, she was elated!

“Ms. Ada! Do you plan to bid on an item as your contribution to the charity, or do you plan on donating an item to be auctioned off at tonight’s charity auction?” The reporter asked.

“Tonight, I plan to donate a piece of jewelry as my contribution to the charity,” Ada Wang replied with a polite smile.

“Oh? Is it a precious piece of jewelry? Could you tell us more about it?”

“That’s a secret. You’ll know when the time comes.”

Elsewhere, Zoe was looking for an opportunity to approach Alice.

She waited until Alice finally finished her interview and mustered her courage, quickly stepping forward to greet her.

“Ms. Alice! Please wait!”

Alice stopped in her tracks

d in her tracks when she heard someone call her name.

She looked at a smiling Zoe coldly from behind her sunglasses.

That

Naturally, Alice did not recognize Zoe, who was wearing an evening. dress that was in a style and color that did not suit her at all, despite it being from this year’s fall/winter couture collection. Alice felt that

Zoe was a person with mediocre taste who only looked at the price tag and did not consider if the outfit was right for her. Thus, Alice felt even less like interacting with her.

“Ms. Alice, I grew up reading Mint magazines. I’m a loyal fan!” Zoe’s

round little face blushed as she poured her heart out to Alice.

“Grew up? Ha. Am I that old?” Alice smiled perfunctorily.

“N-no! You’re not old at all!”

Zoe was so embarrassed that she was sweating. She hurriedly

explained, “What I meant is that I really admire you! I really like you! I-

Can I-”

But before she could finish speaking, she saw Alice brush past her hurriedly without even giving her a single glance!

“M-Ms. Alice!”

Zoe picked up her dress and hurriedly turned around. In the next moment, her eyes widened, and she paled.

“Ms. Thompson! I’ve been waiting for you for a long time!” Alice smiled and walked towards Bella excitedly.

It looked as if they were close friends who had known each other for years.

Chapter 438

The surrounding celebrities and reporters cast shocked gazes at Bella.

“Ms. Alice, I’m sorry. I didn’t know you were waiting for me.”

Bella was somewhat surprised by the attention, and her usually calm. face was blushing a little.

Alice’s eyes held an affable smile behind her sunglasses. “It’s fine. You’ve been working hard tonight.”

She put an arm around Bella’s shoulders, acting like they were as close as sisters, as she smiled at the reporters. “Everybody, please. take some photos for us.”

Bella looked slightly stunned.

The crowd collectively thought in shock that they had finally lived to see the day the arrogant fashion diva, Alice, was actually enthusiastically taking the initiative to get a photo with someone else.

Bella was no ordinary person to achieve this feat. She was emanating charm and attracting countless admirers.

Bethany's and Zoe's expressions crumbled.

Zoe, who had been left hanging in place, felt a sense of humiliation surge from her feet to her head.

'Why? Why?! Had Bella's body been smeared with honey? Was that why all these famous and influential people swarmed her like bees. and butterflies, all rushing to her?' Zoe did not understand what made Bella so charming.

Bella and Alice took a picture with their arms around each other..

Though Bella did her best to restrain her expression, the excitement in her heart was like a boiling kettle that had been on the stove for a hundred years.

The reputation that Bella had previously lost was more or less recovered by this moment.

After they finished taking the photo together, Bella and Alice went to a quiet place to talk.

"Ms. Alice, thank you very much for earlier."

Bella said honestly, "As you can see, I did run into some trouble tonight. You taking a picture with me is a show of acknowledgement to me and has helped me regain some reputation."

"Ms. Thompson..."

“I know that we’re kind of in the same boat because I’m the organizer, so you helped me for the sake of making sure the event goes well.”

Bella smiled in embarrassed self-awareness. “But I’m very thankful to you regardless.”

“No, Ms. Thompson. The reason why I helped you has nothing to do with whether or not we have a working relationship.”

Alice looked at her with the kindness of an elder. “It’s because of your brother, Asher. He asked me to help you and watch over you as much as possible during this event.”

Bella’s eyes flickered in shock, secretly surprised.

Her brother was such a worrier. Asher always worried that Bella would be bullied, so even if he did not appear himself, he would help her prepare for every eventuality and arrange for every scenario.

But Alice’s feelings for her brother were not platonic.

Bella thought, ‘Ash, you know she has a crush on you, but you still use this opportunity to use her... You’re not a gentleman!’

“Ms. Thompson, I know Ada has canceled her contract with you, which has left quite a big impact on you.”

Alice pushed up her sunglasses, her expression turning serious. “I’ve known Ada for many years and have a good relationship with her. I’ll talk to her about getting you to organize her wedding. I hope I can help you more.”

“No, no!”

Bella hurriedly waved her hands. “There’s no need. You’ve already helped me enough. It’s too much if you help me more!”

“Are you afraid of owing me a favor?”

Alice patted her shoulder with a gentle expression. “Don’t be afraid. I’m doing all this for you willingly. I’ve never wanted anything in return. Asher must have told you before about how much I like him, right?”

Bella pursed her lips, nodding vigorously.

“You’re Asher’s favorite sister and a very important family member to him. Anyone who is precious to him is naturally precious to me too. I’ve liked him for ten years and never wanted anything in return. I’m satisfied as long as he allows me to continue liking him.”

Chapter 439

At the mention of Asher, Alice’s eyes burned with passionate love.

Bella was speechless for a moment. She really wanted to know what

Ash had done to this woman to make her so devoted.

He was truly the master of manipulation!

Outside.

Justin smoked three cigarettes in a row in the smoking area, but he still could not ease his depressed feelings.

But seeing that the auction was about to start, all he could do was bring his heavy heart with him into the hall.

Justin's tall and somewhat forlorn figure walked in from the left side of the hallway.

Meanwhile, from the other end of the hallway, an elegant man walked toward him.

The two stopped in front of the doors to the hall.

Sparks flew as their gazes clashed, an invisible current running between them.

Justin glared at Christopher Iverson coldly.

Justin-glared

Christopher pushed up his gold-framed glasses with a polite smile on his lips. "What a coincidence, Mr. Salvador. Are you also here to contribute to charity?"

Justin was calm as his lips slowly curled into a smile. "I'm not as charitable as you are. I just want to do my part for her."

There was no one else he could be referring to apart from Bella.

Christopher's smile froze on his face as he secretly clenched his fist.

Tonight's highlight, the charity auction, finally began.

There were two ways to take part in tonight's auction. One was by donating something to be auctioned off, and the other was to take part in bidding.

All profits generated would be donated in full to the charity fund set up by the state for charitable purposes. The whole process was to be open and transparent. There was absolutely no room for any backroom dealing.

The charity event organized by Mint was already in its fifteenth year this year, and everyone was speculating whether KS World Hotel's take would be the one that generated the most donations and whether it would break records.

Justin and Christopher entered together, causing a commotion.

But tonight was Bella's night. Out of consideration for her, they both did not want to overshadow her, so keeping a low profile, they sat in the last row as a high-quality backdrop.

Meanwhile, Bella still did not know Christopher had come too. She and Alice sat in front, whispering to each other on occasion and chatting incessantly.

When Zoe Hoffman, who sat quite a few meters away from them, saw this, she was so angry she almost burst a vein.

The actual auction portion of the night began.

The emcee removed the red cloth covering the glass display, and the first item to be auctioned was revealed.

"This item comes from the private collection of the chairman of

Iverson Group's wife. It's a necklace set with a total of five square-cut emerald diamonds! Very rare, truly rare!"

Amazed gasps came from the crowd.

This was only the first lot, but it was already so valuable. It gave

Bella's charity auction a lot of weight.

Bella could not help but be secretly shocked and hurriedly turned around to look for Christopher's figure.

Soon, she spotted his refined and handsome face in the corner.

Christopher spotted her shocked gaze right away and smiled slightly, giving her a small wave.

Bella curled her red lips and waved at him too.

Little did they know, Justin saw their entire interaction.

Justin stared fixedly at Bella's beautiful, smiling face, his throat burning as the bidding paddle in his hand crumpled out of shape.

Chapter 440

The appearance of the emerald diamond necklace made the crowd erupt into excited chatter.

Any clear-eyed person could tell that the necklace was of top quality, from the purity of the jewel to the cut of it. It was probably worth millions!

Iverson Group was indeed generous to offer up such a precious piece of jewelry to contribute to the charity auction.

Right then, an eye-catching spotlight shone on Christopher's elegant and dignified figure.

The crowd's curious gazes followed it. When they saw the refined man, they all made sounds of awe at how good-looking he was.

However, Christopher's beautiful eyes looked openly in Bella's direction, as if he could only see her.

He had only wanted to see her alone.

"That man is gorgeous! His face is perfect, just like it was carved from marble. Who is he?!"

"He must be Lance Iverson's son. How would he be able to produce such an expensive piece of jewelry otherwise?"

"Lance Iverson's son? Why have I never seen him before?"

"He gave so much support to Ms. Thompson. Are they in that sort of relationship?"

"So what if they are? Ms. Thompson is a first-rate beauty herself. They would be a match made in heaven!"

Their chattering buzzed in Justin's ears like mosquitoes and flies. He thought, 'What did they mean, a match made in heaven?!'

Christopher's pale and clean-shaven face, coupled with that sinister gaze of his, reminded Justin of treacherous courtiers.

"The starting bid for this emerald diamond necklace starts at \$2 million. Please make your bids!"

As soon as the auctioneer finished speaking, the attendees started raising their paddles, one after another.

"\$3 million!"

"\$4 million!"

“\$4.5 million!”

“\$5 million!”

The atmosphere burned with passion, and the competition was just as fierce.

Actually, before the auction started, Bella’s stomach had been feeling uneasy.

But the moment she saw the bids for the first lot rise to \$5 million in the blink of an eye, the results were gratifying, and she immediately stopped feeling tired and sore.

Money cured all ailments.

Meanwhile, Shannon and her daughter were feeling the complete opposite. Their resentment was so deep that it could open a door straight to hell.

They originally came to watch Bella make a fool of herself, but they did not expect the auction to go so well from the start. The plan they originally made to attack her via public opinion now seemed ineffective and meaningless.

“Mom! Christopher Iverson came as a representative of the Iverson Group to support that bitch and even donated such a precious piece of jewelry. He’s definitely put a lot of thought and money into that bitch!” Bethany seethed as she glared at Bella, who was chatting and laughing with Alice.

Shannon sneered, “Why? Are you jealous?”

“How could I not be jealous?!”

Bethany clenched her hands in her skirt as she looked dejected. “No man has ever doted on me like that ever since I was young, apart from Dad. Not only do Bella’s older brothers all dote on her, but even Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Iverson have become her protectors. Recently, even Justin hasn’t seemed as cold to

her as he used to be. I don't understand what's so good about her. Why are those men always revolving around her? With her always overshadowing me, I feel like even the sky is gray when I wake up every morning." up around

She dreamed of living a life like Bella's, with suitors lining up the block and with brothers to go the extra mile for her and spoil her to the high heavens!

But what did she have instead?

All she had was a silly younger sister, who was as stupid as a rock and put her in a bad mood at the very sight of her!

"Wipe away that damned self-righteous and self-deprecating look.

You're my daughter. Why do you always dream so big but undermine yourself? You're such a helpless loser!" Shannon was so angry that she pinched her daughter's thigh.

It was so painful Bethany cried out in shock, which attracted frowns. and sideways glances from the people surrounding them.

"Ryan Hoffman is already soon to be my son-in-law. Your marriage alliance with him is set in stone. No one should even dream of ruining it unless they've gotten tired of living!"

Shannon glared at Bella as she sneered in a low voice. "And as for this Mr. Iverson, you can worry even less about him. It'd be best if

Bella Thompson got together with that useless thing. Not only will that stop Justin from thinking of her, but it also won't spoil our plans. That's killing two birds with one stone!"

"B-But Mom, he's the legitimate son of Lance Iverson. His mother is Chairman Iverson's legal wife. If Bella Thompson really got together. with him, wouldn't that just end up helping her?" Bethany asked with a confused expression.

“Helping her? More like ruining herself.”

Shannon crossed her arms leisurely. “That Christopher Iverson is Chairman, Iverson’s least favorite son. His mother isn’t liked either.

They’re often left overseas, and he doesn’t concern himself about them. All he has is the status of being an Iverson. He actually has nothing else. He doesn’t own any Iverson Group shares or any property. He has no position in the Iverson Group. A useless thing like him suits Bella Thompson the best.”

She sneered, her mind full of treacherous thoughts. “I really want to make sure the deed is done... That way, Bella will never be able to get rid of that troublesome man for the rest of her life.”

By that time, the bids for the emerald diamond necklace had risen to \$ 6 million.