

Love beyond the mask (Whitney) Chapter 96-99

Ludwik flicked off the main lights, enveloping her in silence and his undeniable warmth. Sensing something was not right, Whitney's cheeks flushed as she caught a glimpse of his toned midriff under the covers. Yet, he made no further moves, merely gazing at her with a bemused expression as she lay there, stuffed and nearly delirious from the hearty barbecue dinner. He gently tapped her forehead and murmured, "Time to sleep."

She smelled wonderful. Nestled beside her, he finally had a good night's rest.

The comforting scent that lulled him to sleep was a mystery, reminiscent of the girl who had saved him that night years ago, magical almost.

His phone screen lit up silently as he was about to drift off. He switched it to mute—it was a call from Elaine.

Ludwik propped himself up slightly, causing Whitney to murmur in discomfort before turning over to continue her slumber.

He smiled softly, tucking her in before stepping onto the balcony and closing the door behind him to take the call.

"What?" Elaine only called for work-related matters, he knew.

On the other end, Elaine detected his icy tone and felt a mixture of relief and a tinge of jealousy. She had intentionally called at this hour, hoping to interrupt intimate moments. But his voice betrayed no hint of such activities. Had he really not touched Whitney again?

Elaine's frown eased as she got to business, "I'm sorry to bother you this late, Bro, but there's something about Whitney. She turned down the two vendors you recommended for her. Maybe she doesn't want your help, or she's looking for someone else?"

Ludwik paused mid-drag of his cigarette, his brows furrowing as he exhaled into the night.

He said nothing more than a curt, "I see."

Elaine could sense his displeasure. “Do *you* want me to find out which vendor Whitney’s in touch with?”

“Yeah,” Ludwik responded before ending the call.

He put out his cigarette and returned inside. His towering form approached the bed where Whitney lay; her delicate features softened in sleep.

The furrow between his brows deepened. He had good intentions in helping her; why had she refused?

He did not understand. She had not mentioned it in the car earlier. The Imperial Gem Corporation was already a rival to Skye Gem Ltd. He had lowered his pride to assist her.

Did she not trust him? Was she afraid her small business would be harmed?

He gently pinched her cheek, his expression still tender. Perhaps it was time to let her get to know him better and dispel her suspicions.

The next morning, Whitney awoke to prepare for work.

Ludwik finished tying his tie, his imposing figure emerging from the dressing room, his masked handsome face portrayed seriousness in the early light.

He was off to work, but before leaving, he tossed her a smile and said, “Come by my office after work.”

“Wow, you’re letting me know what you do now?” Whitney was surprised.

“There’s a lot to my business. I don’t mind you knowing some of it, seeing what I’m up to.” He flicked a business card her way.

Whitney looked down at it: United Realty Corporation, complete with an address.

22.21

Chapter 95

United Realty Corporation was the largest real estate firm in the country! Almost every upscale mansion in Banyan City was built by them.

Holy cow, was her husband really this loaded?

Whitney did a mental calculation. Skye Gem Ltd. was worth 20 billion dollars, but the market value of United Realty Corporation was beyond her comprehension.

With her heart in turmoil, Whitney arrived at the office and shared the news with Tiana.

Tiana was stunned. "United Realty Corporation is one of Banyan City's most mysterious companies, aside from Imperial Gem Corporation and Skyfaith Electronic Tech, the technology giant! I can't believe United Realty Corporation is your husband's. Madam, you've got my respect!"

"What do I do? Suddenly, him being so wealthy seems kinda hot. I think I'm falling for him," Whitney confessed, touching her cheek.

Tiana's lips twitched. "Whitney, your love for money is so blatant!"

"But I love the person too, okay? He even joined me for a barbecue dinner last night... When I first met him, I had no idea how wealthy he was. Didn't you call him a thug leader?"

"How much do I have to pay you not to snitch to 'L'?"

Whitney burst into laughter. "Enough, I'm hanging up. I've got an important partnership to discuss today." She immediately dialed her college buddy, Cooper, who had handed her his business card at the bar.

Cooper had returned from overseas to start a precious gemstone business, and Skye Gem urgently needed new supplies after recalling a batch of fake jewelry. Whitney naturally thought of him.

Cooper picked up promptly when she called, and the conversation took an unexpected turn. "Whitney, the thing is, I'm just the director, a small fry. Our chairman heard I was closing a big deal with Skye Gem and wants to oversee it personally. He'll be joining us for lunch."

Whitney's mind raced, instantly switching to professional mode. "If the chairman is coming, I should pick a different restaurant. How about the Lotus Clubhouse? I'll prepare thoroughly."

“No need. Our chairman prefers to keep it *low*–key. Just come as planned,” Cooper chuckled.

After a polite goodbye, Whitney hung up.

Cooper turned to his boss, the tall man standing by the desk, with a slight smile.

Whitney arrived early at the Lotus Clubhouse, *only* waiting a few minutes before guests arrived.

Cooper entered first, and as Whitney stood to greet him, she froze at the sight of the refined man trailing behind him.

Bryce wore a sharp, dark gray suit that accentuated his distinguished air. His handsome features complemented his tall stature and outstanding demeanor. His eyes lifted in surprise, a smile creeping in. “Ms. Valentine?”

“Mr. Lutz?” Whitney was genuinely surprised.

Cooper glanced at the boss, instinctively asking, “Whitney, *you* know our CEO?”

Whitney was modest and did not want to boast, so she did not know what to say momentarily.

Thankfully, Bryce’s deep gaze locked on her, and he said first, “I’ve met Ms. Valentine once before because of my mother’s situation.”

His voice was warm and pleasant, quite approachable.

23.391

pter

Whitney quickly extended her hand with a smile. “Mr. Lutz, I had no idea you were Cooper’s boss.”

“Small world, isn’t **it**?” Bryce returned the handshake, maintaining a cool and courteous demeanor, yet the softness of her hand caught his attention as he looked down.

She withdrew her hand gracefully, calling out, “Mr. Lutz, Cooper, please, everyone, take a seat!”

Once seated, Whitney presented the contract, highlighting the details of the gemstone supply partnership.

Bryce was seated across from her, resting his chin on one hand, his eyes glancing at her several times.

Whitney was nervous, worried she might have undercut the price.

Unexpectedly, he waved, locking eyes with her, “Skye Gem is impressive. I’m sold on your designs, and the price is fine by me. Cooper, whatever amount of gemstones Whitney needs, we’ll supply.”

Whitney’s eyes went wide, astonished at how smoothly the deal progressed.

Cooper, ever observant, stood up to gather the documents. “Since we’re set on the partnership, I’ll head back

and finalize the contract. Whitney, will you stay and finish the meal with Mr. Lutz?”

Whitney nodded, relieved, her thoughts drifting to the jewelry design she had in mind for Claire.

“Mr. Lutz, I actually have been meaning to discuss something with you as well ...”

“Ms. Valentine, have you found inspiration for the jewelry piece for my mother?”

They spoke simultaneously, Whitney startled, and Bryce followed with a chuckle.

Chapter 97

The more Elaine pleaded Whitney’s case, the more it implied a harsh truth: Ludo had his heart on his sleeve yet was cast aside by Whitney while Bryce, the man who never clicked with him, effortlessly stepped in.

Was she not acting exactly like a social butterfly, skirting just shy of scandal? Yet here she was, lying through her teeth!

Ludwik's inner fury was stoked, the seeds of doubt tumbling into an abyss.

Staring through the window at the woman on the phone, lost in a daze.

She hastily returned to the booth. Perhaps it was feigned clumsiness, but suddenly she stumbled forward, her **cry** cut through the air as Bryce played the hero, catching her delicate hand. She looked up, bashful in profile, while Bryce's eyes held a deep, melting gaze.

Ludwik watched, an icy chuckle escaping his lips.

His phone met the wall with a shattering force.

The man turned, his expression frosty, slamming the car door behind him. His Bentley roared away, leaving nothing but dust in its wake.

"Bro, wait for me..." Elaine called out desperately, but a sly smile crept across her face as she turned.

"Whitney, you've dug your own grave splendidly."

Back in the booth.

Whitney entered, still shaken by L's call. A misstep twisted her ankle; pregnant and cautious, she reached for a chair to steady herself.

Bryce was quick to lend a hand, and as she found her balance, she immediately put space between them, "Thank you, Mr. Lutz," she said, and he quickly withdrew his hand.

Outside the open door, waitstaff bustled about.

Whitney let out a sigh, settling down to finish the half-drawn design. Despite her unease, she powered through the rest of it.

She was eager to finalize the necklace design, so once Bryce reviewed the entire draft, they discussed the details and decided on a precious emerald; the deal was set. She could start crafting it.

The rest was a matter of earrings, studs, diamond rings, a few bracelets, and brooches.

“My mother adores your style,” Bryce said. “I’m afraid I’ll need to impose on you a bit longer due to this personal matter. But there’s no need to rush like today; my mother can wait.”

His ulterior motive was clear: he yearned for more time with the woman who stirred his heart.

Yet Whitney was oblivious to his intentions. Their conversation had been strictly business, and Bryce had impressed her with a gentlemanly demeanor. Her guard was lowered, especially when he considerately handed her a wrapped piece of velvet cake as she left.

“Perhaps you’ll enjoy this?” he offered with a smile.

Surprised and delighted, Whitney recognized the cake from her favorite bakery—a detail L had not even known yet.

Of course, it was only because they had just started dating. She never intended to keep it a secret from him.

“Thank you, goodbye,” she said, parting ways.

Exiting the Lotus Clubhouse, the chill of December’s approach was biting, darkness falling early in the suburbs.

A yearning for L’s broad chest, towering presence, and inherent warmth bubbled within her.

Whitney’s lips curled into a smile as she drove toward United Realty Corporation, nestled in the heart of Banyan City’s bustling center.

Upon arrival, she entered the imposing building, its grand lobby a beacon of light amid the late hours, its staff a flurry of elite activity.

Yet at the front desk, a haughty secretary stopped her, “May I ask who you’re here to see?”

“...” Whitney stuttered, realizing she had yet to learn her husband’s name, and offered, “I’m here to see your president”

The secretary eyed her skeptically, accustomed to women seeking Mr. Lippert’s attention. “Sorry, our president isn’t in. Without an appointment, you can’t see him.”

Not in? Impossible. L had asked her to come to United Realty Corporation, promising to show her his world.

Frustrated, Whitney dialed his number.

No answer.

Persistence won on the third attempt; a chilling voice crackled through the line.

Before she could speak, background revelry betrayed his location—a bar.

Her brow furrowed. “L, why did you hang up earlier? You said to come to the office, and now I’m here.”

Silence, then a mocking laugh.

Was he laughing at her?

A cold shiver ran down her spine. She softly pressed, “Where are you? Sorry, I got held up tonight. Did I make you wait? I’ll come to you.”

His scornful laugh was a dagger to her ear. “Why don’t you spend the night at the Lotus Clubhouse?”

“What?” Confused, Whitney heard a woman’s cooing voice, followed by Elaine’s tender tone, “Bro, don’t drink their toasts. Whitney will be heartbroken. Here, let me help you...”

A sudden silence fell over Whitney, her mind going blank.

He was at a bar, with women, with Elaine.

”

A fiery surge of indignation rose within her, “L, are you playing around? You stood me up, made me come here for nothing, you...”

“Since when do you have the right to question me? Who do you think you are? Do you really think you’re my wife?” His voice was a drunken, icy deluge, “A woman full of lies...”

The call ended before she could grasp his last words.

Whitney stood frozen, warmth from the heater unable to penetrate the cold that gripped her. She had been berated and belittled for no reason, her heart pierced by his cutting words. They were dating, yet she had no right to question him. He could break promises and hurl insults with impunity.

This mercurial man, how could he be so cruel?

Yesterday, everything seemed fine. The man who shared a spicy barbecue with her. The man who soothed her to sleep at night. The man who, in the morning, said he wanted her to really get to know him. The man who, after a fight, promised they would make their love work. It was all him, his words, his actions!

And now, he mocks her, saying, “Do you really think you’re my wife?”

Was this what he truly thought? Had he been playing her all along?

Whitney’s face drained of color as she crouched down, feeling deeply wounded yet utterly confused.

At that moment, the receptionist, seeing Whitney’s defeated look after her phone call, promptly summoned a pair of security guards to escort her out

Whitney glared coldly at the secretary, lost in a haze and unwilling to speak. She walked out into the biting wind, stood for a moment, and then drove back to the villa with a stony expression.

Inside, Natalie was resting in the single-story wing, and Taryn asked her if she had eaten dinner yet.

Whitney pressed her lips and turned away, nearly on the verge of tears in that instant.

Exhausted, she shook her head slowly and trudged upstairs. Opening the door to the master bedroom, she was greeted by its chilling emptiness—a stark contrast to the previous night when he had held her as they slept.

“He must be crazy,” she thought.

“Even someone with schizophrenia isn’t as split as he is.”

After a day of running around, she was simply too exhausted. The last thing she wanted was to call him and listen to his scolding. Curling up under the covers, she quickly fell into a restless sleep.

In the private room, Ludwik stared at the phone he had just hung up.

In a sudden rage, he hurled his brand-new smartphone, bought just this afternoon, at the glass table. Expensive bottles of liquor rolled onto the floor, smashing to pieces!

Chapter 98

“Scram! The man’s mature features twisted into a sneer as he glanced over the women.

The gaggle of simpering women scattered like leaves in the wind.

Nolan

shook his head. These were the ladies he had invited to liven up the evening.

He turned to Parker, exchanging a look of mutual resignation, before addressing Elaine, “What’s gotten into Ludwik?”

Elaine sighed heavily and said, “Ludwik’s had a misunderstanding with Whitney over something”

Another misunderstanding? Nolan’s eyes flickered with curiosity as he gave Elaine an extra glance.

He

wasn’t sure what had transpired, but he couldn’t help commenting as he caught sight of the

brooding man, whose furrowed brow looked like it could crush a hundred flies,

“Ludwik, if Whitney keeps getting under your skin, why not just show her the door?”

The man’s gaze was terrifying as it met Nolan’s. “What did you say?”

Nolan recoiled slightly while Elaine clenched her fingers, watching the storm brewing in Ludwik’s eyes. “He’s anxious for Whitney,” She thought.

Parker voiced Nolan’s concerns, “Haven’t you noticed? Ever since you’ve been with Whitney, you’ve become so unpredictable, Ludwik. You’re too easily swayed by her.”

“Have you really fallen for her?” Parker leaned in close to Ludwik, whispering.

Ludwik let out a cold laugh, his dark eyes unreadable, offering no reply.

Parker sighed and moved towards Nolan, speaking in a hushed tone, “Even though we both are satisfied with Whitney, the way she’s affecting Ludwik... I’m unsure if it’s good for her to stay.”

“Yeah, Whitney has no idea how tough Ludwik’s childhood was, leaving him with that volatile temper. How can she constantly provoke him?”

“Since Ludwik and his mother left the hellhole that was the Lippert family, he’s been engrossed in work, cold and reserved. His heart has only held space for the little girl who saved him back then. His emotional troubles haven’t surfaced in ages, and his night terrors are also a result of his traumatic past. Why can’t Whitney see that and be gentle with Ludwik?”

“She doesn’t know, and their relationship isn’t yet close. Ludwik would never tell her,” Parker concluded in silence.

A man would not confess such a terrifying condition to a woman he cared about.

But these two simply could not manage to have a normal relationship. At this rate, Parker was really worried that Whitney might trigger Ludwik’s condition.

Their conversation was cautious, not wanting Elaine to overhear, but that did not stop her from catching bits and pieces.

She knew about Ludwik's temper—his suspicion, sensitivity, and quick anger. These were exactly the weaknesses she planned to exploit. Whitney would soon dig her own grave.

In the villa, Whitney woke up in the middle of the night, shivering from the cold. She glanced at the other side of the bed—still empty.

He had not come home

A stifling sensation grew in her chest. Her body felt icy as her phone suddenly rang

Tiana messaged her on Facebook, (Whitney, have you seen Elaine's latest post? Why **is** L partying hard with her

at the bar instead of being with you, his pregnant wife? I thought you two had patched things up and were in a lovey dovey phase?)

Whitney immediately checked the feed. Elaine had gifted baby clothes last time, and they had added each other, along with Tiana, as mutual friends.

She scrolled to Elaine's selfie in a lavish private room, her arm raised, capturing half of a man's enticing chest and a luxurious wristwatch. He leaned back on the couch, seemingly drunk.

Even without a full face in the picture, Whitney recognized L by his mature build—she could never mistake him.

Parker and Nolan were also in the frame.

Elaine's caption read, [Work's been hectic, but drinks are delightful~]

It seemed innocuous, devoid of flirtation, and with three men in the photo.

Yet Whitney could tell from the joy in Elaine's eyes that she was boasting, especially since L had just berated her and was now not home but drinking late into the night with the female vice president.

Showing off a subtle threat, Whitney felt it all.

Her heart stung as if pierced by needles.

Tiana's

concerned message came. [Did you and L have another fight? This high-class temptress is moving in at the first sign of weakness. Can't you see it?]

[I didn't fight with him; he just lashed out at me out of nowhere today.] Whitney recalled his heartless words, her heart trembling.

[L's not a madman] Tiana could not believe it. [Did you do something to upset him again? Men like him, all high and mighty. They don't spell things out. They wait for you to realize and apologize. Don't tell me there's been another misunderstanding with Simon?]

Whitney had not seen Simon at the company at all. A misunderstanding? Jealousy?

Suddenly, she paused, remembering the abrupt end to their earlier phone call and his accusations that evening, "All lies..."

A realization struck her—

she had mentioned meeting a female supplier. Could it be he did not believe her?

[Whitney, you can fight like an animal but clueless in love. Elaine's the type to strike without making a sound, and if you keep giving him the cold shoulder, aren't you just pushing him toward her? They're already so close at work. You can't let this continue. Why is he so moody, going back and forth? You need to confront him and clear the air.]

And she was right—

Elaine's subtle post essentially confirmed her designs on L, but it was crafted so men

would not catch on.

Who knew what Elaine might be whispering to L in that private room...

Whitney glanced at the time; it was 4 AM, and they were still out drinking.

Here she was, carrying his child, scorned and left alone at home.

For a moment, Whitney's pride would not let her yield. She felt a seething rage, flopped back into bed, and decided to ignore him completely.

The next day, she went to work as usual.

On the third day, he still had not come home.

By the fourth day, Whitney could not stand it any longer. If she let things continue this way, she would be doing exactly what Tiana warned against—pushing him right into Elaine's arms. After all, they were already inseparable at work.

Whitney decided she could not go on like this. She had to find out why he was so temperamental and kept

flip-flopping. She needed to confront him for answers.

Whitney had heard through the grapevine that United Realty Corporation was hosting a swanky soiree at Joyful Manor tonight—an event teeming with business moguls and influential players. He, the head honcho of United **Realty**, would surely be in attendance.

Whitney had wanted to attend the event on personal grounds but realized her business card would not cut it. Thus, she dolled up in a gown and managed to get her name on the list under the guise of representing Skye

Gem.

As dusk fell, Whitney made her grand entrance into the opulent ballroom of Joyful Manor.

Beneath the glittering chandeliers, a stream of the business elite made their grand entrances. Whitney lingered in the shadows, scanning the room, when a commotion at the entrance caught her attention.

There he was, the man of the hour, masked in silver, a towering presence in the crowd. His black tux clung to his frame in such a way that it seemed tailored by the gods. Even partially concealed, his profile was striking—chiseled, commanding attention, exuding an aura of authority that was impossible to overlook.

Whitney felt a flutter in her chest. About to step forward, her hand reaching for the hem of her dress, when she suddenly noticed the delicate hand resting in the crook of his arm.

Elaine was at his side, draped in a gown the color of a serene lake at twilight, their entrance together painting a picture of an idyllic couple seemingly made for each other.

A murmur of admiration rippled through the bystanders. "Who would've thought the perennial bachelor of United Realty would show up with such a stunning date! Are they an item? They look like a match made in heaven!"

Frozen in place, Whitney was gripped by a paralyzing stillness.

Chapter 99

The sting at the core of her chest was impossible to suppress.

Elaine nudged the brawny arm of the man beside her, "Bro, look who's here—Whitney!"

Ludwik's face stiffened, his deep-set eyes quickly turning cold and eager as they swept over the diminutive figure approaching them.

"JE IS

His gaze narrowed slightly, a flicker of astonishment passing through.

Whitney had not dressed up, simply wearing a black V-neck evening gown, no high heels, her hair soft and cascading down her shoulders. She stood there like a fairy, her delicate features stunningly beautiful, her skin smooth and almost translucent. A subtle pink blush adorned her cheeks, probably from her blusher.

Just standing there, she had already drawn the attention of numerous men.

Ludwik's expression turned to ice. He had not seen her for days, and the image of her had thinned considerably.

Taryn mentioned she had not been eating well.

Seeing Ludwik

transfixed, Elaine swallowed hard, her hand tightening into a fist.

“Bro, did Whitney come to see you? I’ll go check on her,” Elaine offered with a conspiratorial wink, suggesting she would help him gauge Whitney’s mood.

Ludwik’s approval was evident in his satisfied nod.

Elaine quickly approached Whitney, concern lacing her voice as she said, “Whitney, you finally made it. I was starting to worry about you and Bro. What’s going on?”

Whitney’s brows knitted in concern, but a hidden triumph gleamed in her eyes—she had not missed a thing.

Moving closer, Elaine continued, “Don’t worry, Bro’s been working these past few days with me. That night, he got drunk; it was me who took care of him all night. No other woman took advantage of him!”

Elaine’s playful smile was sharp, her eyes gleaming.

Whitney could hardly miss the hostility. Elaine was finally dropping her harmless facade, her provocations becoming more overt.

Whitney glanced at the cold man in the distance. She would not be fooled. Elaine was trying to incite a fight.

Her eyes narrowed into a chilly smile as she said, “With you taking care of him, I’m quite at ease. After all, L himself told me I needn’t be jealous of anyone, especially you. He sees you as a sister. Besides, you might look after him for a day, but I’m the one who’ll be caring for him for a lifetime. We have endless moments of

affection to count.”

Elaine’s face tightened, but she maintained a placid smile. “That’s wonderful, Whitney. No misunderstanding, then. Bro’s over there; shall I take you to him?”

Her offer seemed kind but was laced with insinuation—‘take her to him.’ Whitney locked eyes with Elaine, a cold laugh bubbling inside her. “Couples meet when they wish; no need to trouble you, Ms. Elaine.”

Elaine got the message loud and clear.

She walked away with a smile, her fists clenched. Whitney was proving challenging to provoke. If Whitney had just slapped her, Ludwik would definitely give her hell tonight.

Nevertheless, Elaine had other plans. Returning to Ludwik, she urged with feigned concern, "Bro, Whitney seems upset, unwilling to talk to me. Maybe you should go and charm her?"

At the suggestion, Ludwik's gaze snapped to Whitney's solitary figure. His face turned stormy, a cold laugh escaping him. "Am I out of my mind? That kind of fickle woman is better off gone!"

Chapter 99

Pride and possessiveness burned fiercely in him, especially for someone of his standing with an ego so formidable.

He could not tolerate **any** hint of flirtation or deceit.

Elaine's spirits lifted **at** his response, her eyes shifting to Hannah, signaling her with a glance.

Hannah immediately slipped into the crowd, intent on Ludwik, having also spotted Whitney. Elaine whispered slyly, "Hannah, I'm only Big Bro's date tonight to keep an eye out for you, but Whitney's here, and his heart seems preoccupied with her. So, you might want to..."

Hannah's fists clenched. She had waited so long for an event Ludwik would attend, and now Whitney was in the way!

"Watch how I deal with her!" Hannah sneered, rallying her clique of socialites.

Elaine crossed her arms, watching the scene unfold. Whitney might not fall for her tricks, but Hannah was a loose cannon.

Whitney stood in a quiet corner, debating whether to approach L. Tiana had advised her not to play hard to get, and she was ready to soften up.

Suddenly, someone shoved her from behind, spilling her drink onto the dress of a nearby socialite.

“Oh my goodness, who did this?” The woman turned sharply.

Whitney, struggling to regain her balance, stumbled into the socialite. “What’s your problem? Looking for trouble, I see. Oh, you’re that disgraced Valentine heiress, aren’t you?” The woman’s displeasure was evident as she recognized Whitney.

Whitney murmured an apology, “I’m sorry, someone pushed me.”

She turned to identify the culprit and, spotting Hannah, understood immediately. Her eyes darkened with realization.

“Ms. Valentine, are you trying to get Mrs. Wendt out of the way to cozy up to her husband?” Another socialite said. Whitney recognized her – Scarlett, one of Hannah’s posse.

This was most certainly done on purpose.

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Wendt glared at Whitney, her husband’s attempts to calm her futile. Convinced of the rumors about Whitney’s scandal, her jealousy was triggered by the beauty standing before her.

In a fit of rage, Mrs. Wendt shoved Whitney, “Ms. Valentine, still trying to seduce my husband? Oh, I’ve got plenty of stores under my family’s name, and I’ve heard you’re back at Skye Gem. Trying to trade favors for contracts, how shameless! Who let such a beaten socialite in here? Someone, get her out of here!”

Hannah could not contain her glee, stepping forward. “Ms. Valentine, it’s understandable you want to talk business, but it’s quite indecent to eye someone else’s husband. You might as well leave and save yourself the embarrassment.”

Hannah had not forgotten how Whitney humiliated her in the club, and Ludwik’s protection of Whitney fueled her jealousy.

Whitney scoffed at their antics, alone and unabashed, her gaze instinctively seeking out L.

The man noticed the commotion at the party, but he was still chatting away with his buddy, cool as a

cucumber.

Whitney's brows furrowed with hurt, and with a cold glance towards Hannah, she grabbed a couple of glasses of wine from a passing waiter. Without wasting words, she doused Mrs. Wendt, Hannah, and Scarlett in succession, their elegant gowns now soaked.

Silence fell upon the immediate vicinity, which was promptly broken by Hannah's shrill scream, "Whitney! Have you lost your mind? How dare you splash us like that!"

2/3

Chapter 99

Whitney cracked a smile, her eyes flashing with reckless danger. "Right, I've gone mad, haven't you heard? Kidnapped and left with a mental scar messed me up. I'm sharp in business but not so much in playing nice, especially when faced with provocations from two-faced sirens. I meet one, and I fight one; if they come in twos, I'll take them on together."

With that, Whitney reached out and grabbed a handful of Hannah's hair.

Hannah was stunned, her strapless gown restricting her movements, making her easy to topple.

Elaine watched the drama unfold from afar, her ears catching every word. Whitney's takedown of Hannah seemed like a stern warning to the rest.

Hannah was her pawn, and clearly, Whitney knew it. This was a slap to Elaine's face, her lips pressing in a cold smirk.

But then she saw Mrs. Wendt and Scarlett jump into the fray, yanking at Whitney's hair.

It looked like a brawl was about to break out when Whitney looked towards L with an icy stare. He turned

around...

Suddenly, a surge of strength emerged beside her, and Bryce's refined hand pulled her to safety. "What in the world is going on here? Ms. Valentine, are you alright?" Bryce asked with concern.

He immediately positioned her behind him, shielding her