

Love Slave 333

333 Announcing the Winner

"Don't act so nervous. We'll be fine..." Ace whispered close to my ear.

"But you said that we'll never know what could happen until the results are announced..." I whispered back as I recalled his words from earlier.

"I just said that to keep the reporters on the edge of their seat," Ace replied in a low whisper so that his words were for my ears only.

"Even if you say that..." I muttered softly.

There were good reasons why Ace was so optimistic about the result of the competition, and I could understand where he was coming from. I tensed in my seat as my heartbeat quickened. The host kept on speaking but all his words were lost to me. It was apparent that dealing with too much suspense wasn't something that I had a talent for. For our industry, this award was sort of like the Oscars when it came to movies.

"Now, the time that everyone has been undoubtedly waiting for..." the host said before he flashed the audience a bright smile.

A woman dressed in a sparkly gold dress walked onto the stage and handed the envelope that must have contained the verdict of the committee members to the host. The host held up the envelope as if to show everyone that he now had the results in his hand. I could hardly breathe as I got so excited. The anticipation was killing me, and I realized that because I was so desperately hoping and expecting that we would win, I was feeling this mix of torturous emotions. Harboring high expectations could truly be a dangerous thing.

It didn't help that there were so many awards that the host had to dish out before it came time to announce the winner of the competition. After going through a few rewards for creativity and for being environmentally friendly for the production phase, the host began announcing the companies that came in third place.

"That's quite unexpected..." Ace said before he began clapping his hands together quite loudly.

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"I agree. It is indeed quite unexpected," I murmured in reply.

I turned my head as my eyes followed the movement of the CEO of the company that had just won third place in the competition. Both Ace and I were surprised partly because the company was a small and very new one that had just opened less than a year ago. The CEO of the company was also quite young, and he probably wasn't more than a few years older than I was. Once again, there was fresh and young blood making ripples in the creative industry that we worked. It made everything more interesting and exciting but also brought with it a harsh reminder that nothing was steady or set in stone.

"I guess the committee is really out for something new this year," Ace said as he continued clapping his hands together.

"I think so. I have to say that their commercial is very creative although it didn't seem to ring a bell with the majority of the audience. The donation figure that they managed to secure is pretty low," I pointed out while recalling some stats that I've seen from the reports.

"I don't know if that's because of the messaging in their commercial or because they lacked the budget to really generate enough traffic to drive the donations," Ace replied before he turned to grin at me.

"We better keep our eyes on them for next year," I said as I narrowed my eyes slightly.

The host presented the young CEO with a small trophy and a certificate. The young CEO then made a short award acceptance speech where he adequately thanked everyone in his new company. That must have added much-needed publicity to this company. If I were him, I would be super satisfied with what my company had achieved in a competition of this scale.

I didn't have much time to dwell on the results of the other rewards because it was finally time to announce the winner of the competition. All I could hear for a moment was my heart thumping hard and fast in my chest. Unconsciously, my hand reached out in search for Ace's hand in the dimly lit auditorium. As if he was also seeking for my hand, Ace's hand reached for mine and held it. I gave his hand a squeeze as if I wanted to reassure him that everything was going to turn out fine. In fact, I was the one who needed reassurance and comfort.

Nothing was certain but so much had happened leading up to this moment that raised my expectations that we would emerge as the winner of this competition. I had no idea how crushed I would be if the result turned out differently from what I had expected. Ace pulled my hand closer to him before he patted the back of my hand with his other one comfortingly. I turned and tried my best to smile at him but all I could manage was a slight tug of a corner of my mouth which probably helped out a strange expression on my face.

"Thank you everyone for your patience. It is finally time to announce the winner of the Ashford competition for this year. With careful consideration from all of our committee members, I have the honor to announce the winner for this year's competition..." the host said before pausing for effect.

The host slowly opened the envelope which undoubtedly contained the name of the company that was the winner of the competition. It felt like time stood still in that moment as everyone seemed to hold their breath in while they waited for the announcement of the winner. For me it felt like time was playing a trick on me. It felt unbelievable how long that moment lasted and how the host seemed to move in slow motion and everything that he did was too slow for my liking. In short, I was just too impatient to find out the result.

"And the winner of this year's competition is..." the host announced before taking another pause.