

Master of Time 177

Chapter 177 A Game of Life POV

It feels like mister Max is actually asking everyone in the restaurant where the Queen of Heart is, and even after a while, no one answers him.

There is only silence in the restaurant as no one has said anything all.

What everyone is doing is continuing to stare unblinkingly at mister Max, who is looking at me, waiting for me to speak up. He didn't bother to pay any attention to anyone else in the restaurant even if it is really, really weird for people to stare at him like this.

At least I think so.

It is also very difficult to breathe, as if the air somehow becomes really thick and heavy, but it isn't like this morning when I was unable to breathe properly due to the sharp pain in my chest.

I don't feel any more pain in my chest thanks to mister Max, but I feel very uncomfortable sitting here in this restaurant with him while everyone nearby is staring at him.

Not everyone is looking directly at mister Max though. Like me, some of the people are looking at the four facedown cards on the table in front of him. It is as if those cards symbolize something important.

I wonder what.

But I guess that they have seen those cards before. Maybe they recognize the Hydra emblem depicted on the back of each card somewhere before.

I would too if I have seen the emblem before because it is really easy to remember.

It could also be because they want to join in on the game.

I have played this card guessing game with my daddy before, and I always get it right. It isn't that hard to keep track of one of the cards when it is being shuffled, especially when I concentrate really hard.

"What's wrong, Christina? Did I shuffle the cards around too fast for you? Should I do it again?"

Mister Max asks with a smile.

I shake my head in response. It isn't because of that since I was paying attention when he was shuffling the cards. I actually know where the Queen of Heart is.

Ah. I just forget that I am not supposed to answer mister Max like that. I should speak up to give him my answer, not nodding or shaking my head because it is disrespectful. Mister Max doesn't like anyone who is being disrespectful.

I look up at mister Max, matching his eyes before answering his question.

"No, mister. It isn't. It's... it is just that everyone in the restaurant is staring at you strangely."

I whisper the last part so no one else but mister Max can hear me, but I think many people still heard since they avert their eyes from our table before resuming chatting and eating just like they did when mister Max and I entered the restaurant.

The atmosphere in the restaurant return to normal soon after, letting me breathe normally again.

"Oh, is that so? I guess they couldn't help it because they are wondering how someone like me get to have a date with pretty and cute girl like you, Christina."

Mister Max tells me, making me blush a little. He thinks that I am pretty and cute.

And even though I don't think that I am, his praises still make me really happy.

I try not to look at mister Max anymore and refocus my attention onto the four cards on the table. As I have been paying attention, I know exactly where the Queen of Heart is amongst the four facedown cards.

It is actually the card on the far right. I am very sure of it.

I think that the people who are still looking at the cards also know where the Queen of Heart is as well, and they are looking at the same card as me.

Mister Max nods and flips the card over right after I choose it.

It is the Queen of Heart, making me happy again. Just two more times and I will get something special from mister Max.

Ah. I shouldn't be so greedy because I already get to have delicious Sushi for dinner. But still, I am very curious to what mister Max will give me if I get it right two more times.

I can't wait.

"Very good, Christina. But let's make it a bit harder this time, okay? Can't let you beat me too easily."

I giggle because mister Max implies that I will beat him.

I do hope that I can.

Mister Max flips the Queen of Heart back, so it is facing down again. He then shuffles it amongst with the other three cards on the table, but much faster this time around.

Sometimes, I notice that he didn't really shuffle them even though his hands run across them.

He is feinting it.

Daddy do it all the time, but he isn't really good at it since he accidentally caused the card to move when he didn't really mean to.

But even so, I manage to choose the right card again. The other people who is playing with me from a distance give a nod because they also choose the same card as me, at least in their mind.

I think they are curious than actually interested in the game like me.

"You do have a keen eye, Christina. Just like a lot of people here, but this time, I am sure that you will not be able to choose the right one so easily."

Mister Max announces before flipping the Queen of Heart, so it is facing down again. He then shuffles the four cards on the table, slowly at first, but faster with each swap.

He is swapping card so fast that I am unable to tell if he did or it is just a feint.

None of the cards seem to move even a little when his hands slide over them.

Mister Max stops shuffling the cards a few more times, but even if he didn't do that, I wouldn't know where the Queen of Heart is.

And I think he knows as well because he smiles victoriously at me.

"I guess it is a bit too fast for you, Christina."

Mister Max tells me, and I nod in agreement. The shuffling was really fast.

And since he did not ask me a question, I don't think that I have to speak up to answer him. I speak up anyway because I like talking to him.

"Yes. I couldn't see your hands at all, mister. Can you do it again?"

Mister Max chuckles and shows me where the Queen of Heart is, causing many people who are paying attention to smile. They could keep track of where the Queen of Heart even if mister Max shuffles the cards so fast to the point that the cards don't seem to move at all.

"Alright. Pay attention carefully, Christina. I will only do it one more time."

I immediately stare at the four cards sitting on the table. All the noises in the room drown out as I am fully focused.

Mister Max shuffles the cards on the table as fast as he did before, and I only manage to keep track of the Queen of Heart for a little. It is just too hard since he switches the card so fast.

"So, where do you think the Queen of Heart is, Christina?"

Mister Max asks me once he finishes shuffling the card. I do not know, but the people who are playing appear to know where it is. This is because they are smiling proudly. Maybe even smirking as well.

"I don't know, mister. It was too fast."

I response dejectedly.

I cannot ask him to shuffle the cards again because he said it was a one-time thing. It is also unfair if I keep asking him to reshuffle because I am unable to keep track of where the Queen of Heart is.

In response to my answer, mister Max chuckles and shakes his head.

"I suppose that it is, at least for you, Christina. But do you know? Sometimes in life, you just don't have the leisure of knowing for certain which option is the right one. Sometimes, you just have to make do with your gut. What does your gut tell you, Christina?"

Mister Max asks.

"Um. It tells me that I am hungry?"

I answer him, puzzlingly. Gut is just another word for stomach from what I remember. But then again, why did he ask me about my stomach when we are playing a card game?

Mister Max laughs, making me giggle as well. I really don't know why he is laughing at what I had just said, but it could be because he is hungry as well.

Most people usually have dinner around 6pm to 7pm, and it is already passed 9pm. I have dinner at 8 since daddy often comes home late from work. Even when he does come home early, I still have dinner at 8pm.

"Heh. I don't really mean your stomach or belly, Christina. And yes, I am as hungry as you. I wonder when they will bring out something to eat, and hopefully, it is edible."

Mister Max looks around the room briefly, trying to find someone. Aside from other customers, there is no one else he can call.

"Anyway, I mean your intuition, Christina. Um. It is a feeling of sort, and it doesn't need to be right or wrong. It just needs to feel the most correct to you. What I am trying to say, Christina, is that you often don't know the correct choice in life, so sometimes, you will just have to go with what you feel like the most correct one. In other word, you just have to take a leap of faith without hesitation."

Mister Max tells me as he taps on each of the facedown cards.

"Can you do that?"

He asks.

I nod before speaking up, telling him that I can.

"Good girl. You also have nothing to lose at the moment and everything to gain, so think very hard to yourself where the Queen of Heart is and give me an answer. It is just a game, after all."

Mister Max smiles as he said that. And somehow, I don't think he is just talking to me. It is as if mister Max is talking to everyone, which is sort of weird.

His eyes remain completely on me though. He is asking me to choose a card even if I don't know where the Queen of Heart is. He tells me to take a leap of faith.

I understand what a leap of faith is. It is one of those special phrases. It means to believing something without reason.

I think mister Max is telling me to believe in myself and my choices.

And with confidence, I pick a card that I believe where the Queen of Heart will be. It is just a guess, as I honestly do not know where the Queen of Heart is.

The people nearby shake their head lightly, telling me that my choice is incorrect. Unlike me, they are able to keep track of the Queen of Heart during the shuffling, thus they know exactly where the Queen of Heart is.

I frown slightly and about to change my mind.

"This one, huh? Are you sure, Christina? You can change your mind right now, but do you really want to?"

Mister Max asks, almost cryptically.

I blink at his question. Didn't he said that I have to take a leap of faith without hesitation. And if I was to change my mind now, it wouldn't be called a leap of faith. I think so.

But if I am wrong, I would lose... actually, I don't have anything to lose like mister Max has said. This is just a game right now. I do have something to gain though. Something special from mister Max.

And while I want to win, I don't want to win by cheating. I want to win on my own.

"Yes, mister. I choose this one."

I answer mister Max with confidence.

He nods and lifts the card up for me to see. It is the first time that he did, as he only flipped them over on the table in all the previous round.

The Queen of Heart stares at me, making me so happy. I didn't think I have chosen correctly, honestly.

The other people look questioningly at the revealed card. They appear to be rather surprised. I didn't expect everyone to get it wrong since they seem to be so certain.

"Certainty huh? Nothing is truly certain until it happens. If you have changed your mind just because of other people, Christina, you would not appreciate the victory that you have earned. I am glad that you stick to your gut in the end because what appears to be the right choice, isn't necessarily the right choice."

Mister Max places the Queen of Heart back on the table faceup. He then flips each of the other three facedown cards, revealing each of them to me. Two of them are Queens, but one is a Joker.

That is strange because I had saw him taking out four Queens from the deck.

Also, it is not like any joker card I have seen in a deck of card before. The joker on this card is a depiction of a jester who sticks out his tongue as if he is making fun of something.

The unveiling of the Joker has caused a lot of chatters amongst the people in the restaurant. They are more shocked than surprised now. And I wonder why. Is it because the card is where they thought the Queen of Heart to be?

"To be honest, Christina. I did cheat a little bit too, just to see what kind of choice you will make. I am very proud of you, for making the right choice. And if you are feeling down for whatever reason in the future, you can take out this deck of card and remind yourself of the choices you have made.

Mister Max tells me as he puts the cards back into the deck and handing the deck to me.

I accept it with both hands, feeling the metal container on my fingers. Like I have thought before, the cards are made of metal instead of paper or plastic.

The edges of the cards are blunted so I will not cut myself.

Yumiko also brought out some of the dishes that we ordered, so we didn't have anymore time to play another game even though I want to play one more.

But there is a problem.

"What's wrong, Christina? I thought you said that you are hungry?"

Mister Max asks when I am fiddling with the deck of card instead of eating.

I am counting how many cards there are.

There should be 52 cards in total, excluding the two Jokers.

"Um. I think one of the Queen is missing from the deck, mister."

I answer his question even though I am unsure if he had taken out four Queens in total or just 3 Queens and a Joker. My gut is telling me that he did indeed take out four Queens from the deck. That means one of the Queen is currently missing.

With all the Queens, it is not a complete deck.

"One of the Queens isn't missing. She is no longer around."

Mister Max comments with a smile and passes me the missing Queen of Diamond. He seems to expect that I would ask for it.

And strangely enough, his statement causes the room to become eerily silence again.