

Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter

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Since Matthias couldn't be convinced, Nikolai didn't continue persuading him. The latter didn't want to meddle in his cousin's way of solving the problem either. Matthias' stubborn personality was no secret to anyone who knew him—Nikolai knew that all too well, but he was sure that Matthias would eventually come up with a perfect solution.

It was getting late and Matthias was still in his office; Nikolai wanted to keep his cousin company but his offer was rejected. The man was brainstorming for a way to resolve the issue, and he had to let Myra know about this as soon as possible. His forehead furrowed deeply as he came to a conclusion at last—Heather was indeed the best candidate to help him out.

Considering how badly things had gotten between them, Matthias wasn't sure how he could face Heather. Moreover, deep inside, he hadn't forgiven her as well.

He rose from his seat and drew the curtains as he looked outside. Is she still spending time with that man right now?

Just then, a sarcastic smile crept up his face. At that moment, he felt like a worthless criminal; he despised himself even more than ever.

"Heather and Myra aren't the only women in this world—there are plenty more fish in the sea, so why am I still holding on to the past?" Matthias muttered to himself. At times, he really couldn't bring himself to think positively of his own worth. Why am I like this?

Eventually, he let go of the curtains—the flashing bright lights outside had nothing to do with him. He rarely enjoyed his life; instead, he'd spent most of his time in self-deprecation.

As he reminisced about his past, he recalled that he had never once stopped forcing himself to hone his skills so that he could become a successful person one day. In the end, what he earned from those years were simply dirty tricks and betrayals.

At the thought of that, Matthias clenched his fists. He must make a decision, for midnight was approaching soon. The air was cool and breezy tonight, signifying the start of the fall season. All of a sudden, a sense of loneliness filled Matthias' heart. Indeed, was there ever a place that he could call home?

He had never truly been a part of the Locke Family; at the same time, he never considered them his family either. Ever since his mother passed away, he lost his one true home.

It was precisely this lack of familial love that made Matthias so hungry for the affection a romantic relationship could offer. However, his hopes were all in vain.

At that moment, the harsh reality snapped him out of his thoughts. He hastily dialed a number on his phone and the call got through at once. A kind and gentle voice came from the other end of the line; Nikolai was preparing to go to bed, but he immediately picked up his phone as soon as he saw that Matthias was calling him.

"Find someone to personally send Heather the photos." Matthias couldn't bring himself to meet Heather in the end. More than that, he didn't want to witness Heather being together with another man.

After debating his choices, Matthias decided that this was the best solution. Nikolai responded to his request quickly—he was told to get it done as soon as possible, but where was he going to find a messenger at this hour? Nevertheless, Nikolai ended the call bitterly and immediately got to work.

In truth, Nikolai wanted to personally pass the photos to Heather. He wanted to see her face, for her every expression and gesture never failed to put a silly smile on his face.

Sadly, he couldn't carry out the job on his own since Matthias wasn't willing to expose his identity as the sender. Therefore, it must be done discreetly without a trace.

Right now, Nikolai was pressed for time. He had to settle the issue quickly and find a messenger as soon as possible—preferably a stranger on the streets. He decided on that idea and prepared to entrust the errand to a random passerby. As he gave it another thought, he found that this method was full of flaws.

These days, a person's trust was as fickle as a candlelight, so Nikolai decided to find someone who was more reliable. Just then, he thought of someone and immediately contacted the person; after all, they could be asleep if he were a second later. If that happened, it wouldn't be easy to find another helper.

After briefly going through the instructions with that person, Nikolai let out a pent-up exclamation on his bed—finally, he was halfway done with the job. It was then that he realized something extremely important—the photos were still with Matthias, not him. Before he could reach for his phone again, Matthias was already calling him.

"I'm right outside your lobby; come downstairs." Matthias was simple with his words. Meanwhile, Nikolai peered out his window and noticed that Matthias' car was parked outside.

As a result, he hurried downstairs immediately. Matthias was leaning against his car with his arms crossed over his chest as he waited for Nikolai, and he didn't seem like he was in a rush.

"The photos," he said as he passed Nikolai the photos.

"Have you found our messenger?" Due to his taller stature, Matthias emitted a condescending air as he looked down at Nikolai.

"Don't worry, he'll be here very soon." Nikolai was relieved that he had found someone in advance; he was often caught off guard by Matthias' sudden requests.

The two of them had a brief conversation before Nikolai headed back inside without noticing that Matthias was walking with him as well. He was surprised to find Matthias right behind him as he turned around again, so he stared at the man with an odd look in his eyes and asked him why he'd followed.

"Do you have wine at home?" Matthias wanted someone to drink with; the last time he had drunk to his heart's content was with Heather. In hindsight, Heather was a great drinking buddy.

With her, he could drink without any worries and they could talk about anything and everything—Heather was knowledgeable about all sorts of things. One could tell that there wasn't a dull moment in her life just from hearing her speak, and Matthias wanted to share a conversation with her once more over some drinks.

If they were to overlook their disputes, the time they spent together was pretty intriguing. If only there wasn't that irreparable disparity between them, then perhaps...

Matthias quickly shrugged away these ridiculous thoughts in his mind. For the past few days, he would inadvertently think about Heather, so much that he was confused by his own mind.

He remembered the time when he'd met Myra all those years ago; he used to think about her day and night, fantasizing about getting together with her. These days, Matthias came to enjoy spending time with Heather instead.

Whenever he was alone with Heather, he would stare at her from time to time—the fondness he had for her was similar to his feelings for Myra back then. Their relationship which originated from an intense rivalry had somehow become something else; for some reason, his hate for her had gradually turned into admiration and even attachment.

"Matthias," Nikolai called out to him as a reminder. He wasn't sure what made him so lost in thought that he wasn't walking out of the elevator.

"Huh?" Matthias looked up and stared at Nikolai.

He finally realized that the elevator doors were open—Nikolai was holding onto the button, yet Matthias remained standing inside, seemingly unaware of it.

As a result, Matthias hurried outside as a sense of awkwardness filled his face. Nikolai glanced at him briefly—he rarely saw his cousin act this way. He speculated that Matthias was still concerned about Myra. Either that, he was thinking about Heather.

Other than women, Nikolai couldn't think of any other reason for Matthias' disorientated state of mind. Matthias wasn't fond of bringing business affairs out of the office; he usually

wouldn't get off work if he had unfinished tasks, so there was no way he could be thinking about work.

After unlocking the front door, Nikolai headed straight into his house. Their relationship was much more casual in private, for they were no longer superior and subordinate after office hours.

They were cousins at the end of the day, and their relationship was no different than a pair of brothers' in private. After returning home, Nikolai plopped onto the sofa—the firmness of the fabric cushion was just right for him.

Meanwhile, Matthias swiftly pulled over a stool and sat down in front of Nikolai. It seemed that he was planning to have a long drink tonight.

“You might not like what I have here,” Nikolai said a little stiffly. Matthias was awfully picky with his alcohol; Nikolai's collection consisted of gifts he'd received from others, so he wasn't even sure of how they tasted.

“What do you have?” Matthias didn't feel like being alone tonight, and he didn't want to go home to his villa either. He just needed someone to keep him company.

Nikolai stared at Matthias helplessly before his gaze shifted to a bookcase nearby; several bottles of wine were displayed there.

Matthias followed his cousin's gaze before he got up and walked over to the bookcase. As he looked through the bottles, he found that there indeed wasn't anything that suited his taste.

Nevertheless, he wasn't too fussy about it tonight since he was already in the mood to drink. Thus, he casually picked up a bottle of dry red. Nikolai's alcohol tolerance wasn't the best—Matthias knew that, so he chose this variety of red wine which had a relatively lower alcohol content.

Nikolai got up from the sofa. He preferred to use the dining table if they really ought to drink; after all, he wasn't fond of drinking on the sofa.

Meanwhile, Matthias carried the bottle of wine to the table as well—they seemed to be on the same page. At the table, Nikolai said with a smile, “It's no fun drinking wine on its own, Matthias. Hold on, I'll get us some snacks.”

Matthias narrowed his eyes slightly; he wondered how Nikolai was going to bring them drinking snacks out of nowhere. Unexpectedly, his cousin came out of the kitchen with a bowl of roasted peanuts in no time.

Matthias raised a brow at him; sure enough, nothing was lacking in Nikolai's home. The latter stared back at Matthias with a triumphant look on his face.

“Why do you have freshly roasted peanuts in your kitchen?” Matthias asked in confusion. Nikolai let out a mysterious chuckle and said, “My kitchen has everything—I have other snacks as well. Just tell me if you want anything else.”

Matthias waved a dismissive hand at him. He only wanted to have a quiet drinking session, and he wasn't interested in eating snacks. The two of them sat facing each other at the table as Nikolai propped his head up with his hands. He had been feeling sleepy since earlier, but he couldn't go to bed with Matthias' prolonged disruption.

“You really need to work on your alcohol tolerance,” said Matthias as he popped open the bottle of dry red.

Nikolai wasn't really interested in alcohol, and he hadn't thought about increasing his tolerance for it. He had always been following behind Matthias during meetings and such, so there wasn't an instance where he needed to attend a gathering alone. With Matthias around, Nikolai only needed to engage in some light drinking.

“You know I don't like to drink.” Nikolai stared at the red liquid in the half-filled wine glass—it looked like a glass of fresh blood. The color itself was so disturbing that Nikolai became quite uncomfortable at the sight of it.

“How can you survive the corporate world without a certain tolerance for alcohol?” Matthias argued. To a businessman, it wasn't a matter of likeness or not when it came to drinking

alcohol.

“I don’t need to drink much with you around, Matthias—just some light drinking will do.” Nikolai had always been very dependent on Matthias, so it gradually became a habit that he couldn’t shake off.

“What if I’m not around anymore?” Matthias swirled the wine in his glass as he observed the smooth movements of the liquid against the glassy surface; for some reason, he felt a sense of satisfaction from watching such things.

Nikolai’s expression darkened at his words. “What are you talking about? Didn’t we make a promise? I’ve told you that I’ll always follow you around.” He recited those words with such determination and righteousness that Matthias couldn’t help but laugh.

“You’ll have to face the world on your own someday; no one wants to be a follower all their life.” Then, he took a sip of wine as his eyes remained fixed upon Nikolai. The latter became uneasy under his cousin’s piercing gaze.

“Let’s talk about something else.” Nikolai didn’t want to linger on the subject any longer. Matthias was acting a little strange today—the things he said were oddly intimidating, and Nikolai had a bad feeling about it.

“Then...” Before Matthias could finish, a knock sounded on the door. Nikolai jolted in response upon hearing that, so he jumped to his feet and went to open the door.

Matthias stared thoughtfully at Nikolai’s back as he rushed over to receive his visitor. His cousin was probably the only one who treated him with such sincerity; perhaps all those years of looking after Nikolai were not in vain.

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Nikolai settled the matter in the blink of an eye without even letting him inside—he simply shoved the envelope of photos into the man’s hands. In truth, Nikolai already possessed the ability to face problems on his own even though he was still overly dependent on Matthias. Oftentimes, Matthias gladly let Nikolai handle things for him with no worries. Meanwhile, Matthias didn’t seem anxious at all; he was calm and composed as he gently swirled the glass of wine in his hand. Nikolai could never be sure of what was going on in Matthias’ head.

It seemed that Matthias wasn’t holding back tonight—he drank glass after glass without waiting even for Nikolai to return. The latter frowned as he noticed what was happening; he was only away for a moment and Matthias had already finished half the bottle.

“Slow down, Matthias. I bet you haven’t even had dinner!” Nikolai said out of concern. However, Matthias turned a deaf ear toward him and continued drinking on his own. As a result, Nikolai was unhappy; he went up to Matthias and grabbed the wine glass from his hand.

“Are you really here to drink with me? Or am I only supposed to watch?” Nikolai complained in exasperation, for Matthias was gulping down wine like it was plain water.

“Do you like Heather?” Just then, Matthias looked up at Nikolai with his tired eyes which were bloodshot-red. Since when had he become this frail and haggard?

This sudden query stunned Nikolai momentarily and he couldn’t react in time. Even though he did have feelings for Heather, he couldn’t possibly admit it in front of Matthias.

“Go after her if you want.” Matthias’ rationality was crumbling under the influence of alcohol, for there was no way he would urge Nikolai to pursue Heather in a sober state.

In Matthias’ eyes, Heather was a dangerous threat—he would never let Nikolai take the risk. If too many things were gathered in one place, Matthias might just go crazy.

“I think you’re the one who likes Heather!” Nikolai exclaimed as his face fell instantly. Matthias’ increasingly odd behavior these days was evidence that he had feelings for Heather.

At this moment, Nikolai could see that Matthias’ suppressed feelings weren’t directed at Myra but Heather; it seemed that his cousin’s feelings for Heather were much stronger.

Evidently, Matthias liked Heather a lot—she was someone incredibly special to him.

“Me?” Matthias pointed at himself. It was as though someone had seen through his disguise right then. He could firmly admit that the woman he liked was Myra, but when it came to Heather, he didn’t have the courage to come to terms with how he felt about her. “You told me that you like Myra, but you have no chance with her anymore. In other words, you already gave up on her since the beginning.” Nikolai didn’t wish to see Matthias in such a confused state anymore; even though he was interested in Heather as well, his rationality was telling him that Matthias was a better match for her.

“Wake up—Heather is the one you like. You’re just holding onto the version of Myra in your memory. Can’t you see it? After so many years, you, Myra, and even Heather have all changed. You guys are no longer who you were all those years ago, so why would you let the past control your present? Just go after Heather openly if you like her.”

Matthias turned his face away and looked elsewhere. Before he knew it, Nikolai had grown up from the little boy he once was to a full-fledged man. He was already an adult who could analyze things from a logical point of view.

“Perhaps the woman who touched your heart has always been Heather, but you’re just unwilling to admit it.” Nikolai had never spoken to Matthias in such a way, yet it was as if he was possessed tonight—he had to give Matthias a wake-up call no matter what.

Just then, Matthias’ heart dropped to his stomach; no one had ever told him that before, and he never thought of things that way either. Perhaps Nikolai was right.

“You’re a lot smarter than I am, Nikolai.” Matthias was so used to taking care of Nikolai and pointing him in the right direction that he’d just realized his younger cousin was a lot more perceptive of the situation than he was.

“You told me that I remind you of your younger self. If that’s the case, maybe you once had feelings for Heather since I’ve also taken interest in her as well.” Nikolai hadn’t experienced what Matthias went through; he was making wild guesses at this point. However, he couldn’t keep it in anymore—he didn’t want Matthias to miss the opportunity to realize his own emotions.

The feeling of falling for someone would always remain in one’s deepest memory even with the passing of time. Back then, Matthias was too young to understand the nervous thumping of his heart whenever he saw Heather. Was fear really the only reason behind it? Perhaps... he was feeling something else as well?

Was impressing Myra with a more successful version of himself the only goal behind his endless grinding all these years, or was he desperate for Heather to stop looking down on him? Out of all people, why did he care so much about her opinion of him? He obviously hated her...

Nikolai took away the bottle of wine on the table and said slowly, “Don’t let hate cloud your feelings; it’s time to let go of the past. If you like her, you should appreciate it and take your chance.”

Matthias suddenly felt even smaller than Nikolai. He let out a self-deprecating cackle—just how much time had he wasted all these years? He’d been living in his own lies, afraid to even come to terms with his feelings for someone else. After all this time, Nikolai finally exposed his secret that he’d been hiding for years.

“You’re encouraging me to go after Heather? She’s the woman you like, though,” Matthias pointed out knowingly. It seemed that Nikolai was running away from reality.

“I do admit that I’m interested in her, but I know I’m not the guy she wants. Besides, the way she looks at you is different.” Just then, Nikolai recalled that one time in Matthias’ home when Heather and Matthias were chatting merrily over some drinks. The two of them were birds of a feather, and they were the rightful couple.

Matthias stood up and went up to Nikolai. He took a moment and stared at his cousin who was awkwardly holding a wine bottle in one hand and a glass in another before he extended an arm and ruffled his hair casually.

“Don’t be so sure of everything. Just speak up if you like her, and we can have an even battle.” Matthias grinned cheerfully as he spoke. He’d been competing with himself all his life, and it was finally time to do something he actually liked.

He used to think he wanted nothing more than to become a man who was worthy to be with Myra, but now, he decided to just follow his heart.

Letting go of his grudges of the past meant starting all over again. He decided that he wouldn’t suppress his longing for Heather anymore; if he liked her, he should pursue her with all his heart. At the very least, he wouldn’t have any regrets even if she rejected him in the end.

“My mother won’t like it if I date an older woman.” Nikolai put on a gentle smile; he was happy that Matthias finally took his advice. Perhaps he would be able to see the two as a couple very soon.

Nikolai mocked himself in silence for blatantly encouraging his romantic rival to go after the woman he liked. Objectively speaking, though Nikolai had feelings for Heather, he didn’t have a strong desire to get together with her.

Sometimes, the romantic interest in someone could remain as mere feelings; as he watched and admired the woman from afar, he came to realize that they might not be a good match after all.

Just then, Matthias grabbed the bottle of wine from Nikolai’s hand and drank straight from it. Soon, he emptied it all in one long gulp. Due to his clean and lean appearance in addition to his overly scholarly demeanor, a bold and impulsive gesture like that was indeed quite rare from him.

Matthias patted on Nikolai’s shoulder and said, “Thank you.” He’d already understood Nikolai’s intention even during his blind date back then; he just wasn’t willing to take the leap.

After that, Evan had also advised him on the matter, and he even tried to persuade himself as well. Now, Nikolai was supportive of him as well. With that in mind, Matthias finally decided to let his feelings take over. After all, it wasn’t such a big deal to be interested in Heather—how embarrassing could it be?

“I’ll head over to see her right now,” said Matthias confidently. He’d rather take advantage of the mood and tell her everything tonight.

“Good luck.” Nikolai stared at the empty bottle in Matthias’ hand. This fella is quite the drinker.

“But before that, let me help you with some things you don’t need.” As he said that, Matthias started walking toward the bookcase. When Nikolai finally realized what was happening, his cousin had already opened a bottle of brandy.

Nikolai quickly said out of concern, “Hey, this is straight liquor—you can’t drink it on its own.” Is he not afraid of the burning sensation in his throat? Nikolai rolled his eyes; Matthias would get drunk very soon if he carried on like this. Has he lost his mind after getting tipsy? The next second, Matthias was already gulping down the bottle of brandy. Nikolai immediately picked up all the other alcohol bottles he had on display—he couldn’t let Matthias get his hands on them.

“How are you going to talk to Heather if you become drunk?” Nikolai said angrily. There seemed to be no end to his cousin’s drinking spree. At that moment, Nikolai planned to toss his entire collection of alcohol into the trash after Matthias left.

Previously, he thought that it’d be rude to throw away these gifts from others. Moreover, the elegant and fancy bottles looked pretty exquisite on his bookshelf as a form of decoration. After going through this ordeal, however, Nikolai regretted it to the core; if Matthias were to down all that alcohol, he’d probably be so intoxicated that it would warrant a trip to the hospital.

Right now, Matthias reeked of alcohol as an ominous smile hung on his lips. While he stared at Nikolai’s upset and annoyed expression, he was somehow amused by it.

At last, he decided to stop teasing Nikolai. Matthias was fully aware of his cousin's personality; if he continued to fool around, that little cousin of his would rat him out for sure by telling his aunt.

Nikolai's mother, who was also Matthias' aunt, was the younger sister of Matthias' mother. The woman would often check up on Matthias through the phone, albeit in the form of lectures; she was one of Matthias' few elders who truly cared about him.

As he was heading out from Nikolai's home, Matthias knocked on his head all of a sudden.

He just realized something in the midst of his dazed state of mind—it wasn't the right time to visit Heather at this hour. Thus, he decided to spam her with phone calls instead.

It was the middle of the night, and Heather had long since fallen asleep. After all, she finally went to bed after staying up all night yesterday. When her phone suddenly started buzzing endlessly with Matthias' incoming calls, she could only crawl up from her bed to take the call. Since Heather was half-awake, she sounded awfully tired and groggy on the phone.

"Who is it?" Her irritated voice rang through Matthias' speaker as soon as she picked up. On the other end, Heather was determined to teach them a good lesson if they weren't calling because of something important.

She didn't check the caller's identity as she answered the phone hastily. Obviously, she wouldn't have answered if she knew that Matthias was the one who was calling.

"It's me." Matthias' reply was short and simple.

"Who are you?" Heather was about to explode at the response; she was instantly wide awake and took a look at her screen.

To her surprise, it was Matthias. The impulse to kill someone rushed up to her chest, for she couldn't understand why Matthias wouldn't leave her alone. After ending the call in exasperation, she immediately blocked his number on her phone—she was utterly vexed.

When Matthias tried to call her again, he finally realized that his number had been blocked.

As a result, he almost smashed his phone on the ground in anger. Nevertheless, he kept his calm rationally and texted her via Messenger.

"Come outside. I'm outside the Langston Residence."

Heather could no longer fall asleep after this brief interruption. When the text message reached her phone, she tossed it away without a second thought, and her phone crashed violently onto the floorboards. Right now, her phone was the devil—even though she'd completely shattered its screen, she couldn't care less.