

No Chance 1851

[Chapter 1851 Bidding](#)

Elisa didn't say anything, but Gareth knew she had heard him.

He turned and walked downstairs.

Elisa listened to the door close, and his footsteps faded away. She exhaled heavily, lying on the bed with the incident earlier still fresh in her mind.

Elisa had every right to feel angry at Gareth, and she did. But even as she thought about why she should be angry with him, an odd twinge of guilt emerged.

She struggled to pinpoint the source of this guilt, caught off guard by her conflicted emotions.

She was profusely shaking her head, trying to eradicate these complicated thoughts from her mind.

Why am I feeling guilty? If anyone should feel guilty, it should be Gareth!

After waiting around ten minutes, the power finally came back on. Gareth went back upstairs and saw that Elisa had locked the door.

He had thought about saying something but wasn't sure if Elisa had fallen asleep, so he decided to keep quiet.

In the room, Elisa turned her back to the door, staring at the moonlight pouring in through the window.

The footsteps outside the door caught her attention, and she got lost in her thoughts.

Later, the property management company apologized, saying they messed up the power while digging for a water pipe.

But Gareth didn't care about that; he appreciated the blackout.

Despite everything, Elisa hadn't kicked him out; she let him stay. Did that mean he still had a shot?

Embracing this thought, Gareth attempted to close the emotional gap between him and Elisa.

But Elisa had seemingly picked up on his intentions well in advance. She adjusted her daily routine almost entirely to avoid him.

When Gareth woke up in the mornings, Elisa had already headed to work.

She burned the midnight oil at night, staying up until the clock struck twelve before finally retreating to her room, stifling yawns.

A few times, Gareth contemplated loitering in the living room to catch some TV and await Elisa's return. But seeing how utterly worn out she was, he couldn't bring himself to hinder her much-needed sleep.

This pattern continued for about a week, straining their progress in their relationship.

Gareth took the indirect route and asked Bella, eventually learning that their company was swamped. They hustled to secure a new partner, and late nights had become the norm.

Though technically, it was a concern for the project team, something that Elisa shouldn't have been directly involved in.

Yet, there she was, taking the initiative to stick around and support her co-workers during these overtime stints.

The gesture had touched all the employees; with their boss grinding alongside them, slacking off was out of the question.

However, Gareth's mood wasn't precisely a sunshine-and-rainbows affair. And so, another week sailed by until the tipping point finally happened.

Bella and Elisa casually walked into the building, holding documents, fully prepared for the bidding session.

Unbeknownst to them, a surprising turn awaited – the legal representative from the host company happened to be none other than...

On this end, Gareth promptly decided to join them at the bidding site.

As the meeting room filled with participants, Elisa's astonishment was vivid when she spotted Gareth.

Her eyebrows shot up in a charmingly puzzled expression, clearly taken aback by his unexpected presence.

Elisa initially thought Gareth was there to bid as well. Still, it soon became apparent – he had arrived alone, without a team or bidding documents.

Later, Elisa learned that Gareth was a close friend of the boss.

During the introductions of the participating companies, Elisa and Gareth shared a fleeting glance mid-air.

Elisa discreetly stole a glance before swiftly shifting her gaze away as if pretending she didn't know him.

In contrast, Gareth's gaze remained fixed on Elisa, almost as if he was captivated by her presence.

"Look! Our esteemed guest is here to visit his beloved wife. What a sweet surprise!"

Jimmy playfully teased. Gareth maintained his silence, his lips curving into a gentle, affectionate smile.

[Chapter 1852 Offering Concessions](#)

As if he'd encountered an extraterrestrial, Jimmy was utterly dumbfounded, repeatedly clicking his tongue in disbelief as he observed Gareth's unexpectedly gentle demeanor.

This was an entirely novel side of Gareth that Jimmy had never witnessed before.

With the official commencement of the bidding, the competition now featured a roster of five companies.

Elisa had conducted her preliminary evaluation, which conclusively identified Z Tech Corp as the sole formidable contender.

True to prediction, after the initial round of presentations, the remaining three companies were politely and temporarily excused from the proceedings.

The second set of presentations rolled in. This time, Bella assumed the lead presenter role and had to take the stage herself.

"Relax," Elisa turned to look at Bella, who was wiping her sweaty palms.

Bella responded with a bashful smile. It wasn't so much that she was nervous, but this was her first time in the spotlight.

"We've rehearsed this presentation many times – it's foolproof! And the concessions we're putting on the table are super tempting. Just present it like you always do. You've got it in the bag!" Elisa spoke while making a supportive gesture.

Bella nodded earnestly, waiting for the other company to wrap up before stepping forward with a notebook.

The meeting table stretched oblong, its center a hollow expanse. Bella confidently took her place right at its heart to deliver her presentation.

Coincidentally, Elisa and Gareth were seated directly across from her. However, she was clueless whether Gareth had planned it or was a coincidence.

Throughout the presentation, their eyes met intermittently.

Without exchanging glances, Elisa could feel a subtle, lingering gaze fixed on her.

She didn't go out of her way to evade it or react in any particular manner, as his gaze didn't elicit any discomfort or unease within her.

Bella's presentation drew close, leaving Jimmy genuinely impressed by what he'd just witnessed.

Also, Bella's name caught his ear. With Gareth seated next to him, he naturally put two and two together to figure out her identity.

With both the sister and the wife in the mix, the outcome of the bid felt like a no-brainer.

As he was about to lock in his decision, Z Tech Corp surprised everyone by altering their conditions, introducing a one percent concession.

This instantly intrigued Jimmy.

It was apparent that Z Tech Corp was determined to win, their smug glances directed at Elisa's team.

One percent marked their most significant concession yet, hinting that their motivation wasn't purely financial but a quest for recognition and reputation enhancement.

So, if Elisa's team intended to secure the project, they'd need to put forth an even more enticing concession.

The amount remained substantial even with an additional 0.1 percent offer for a five-billion-dollar project.

The demand for cash payment was the deal-breaker.

Most companies simply didn't have such hefty liquid capital at their disposal.

Elisa's firm did, though it only amounted to around six billion. But betting their entire capital on this project was a double-edged sword; any financial issues in their other projects could easily spell bankruptcy.

The absence of any concessions had clearly caught Jimmy's attention.

It appeared that victory was leaning toward Z Tech Corp.

Bella found herself momentarily at a loss, comprehending the high stakes. Her glance shifted toward Elisa, silently seeking assurance.

Elisa, however, remained calm.

Just as she was about to speak, someone beat her to it.

"Mr. Mazel, looks like you're really gunning for this project,"

Stuart beamed, his broad and smug grin almost masking his eyes.

"How cunning!" Elisa muttered under her breath.

Did this Stuart seriously believe Gareth had dropped by to shower him with early congratulations?

One glance at Gareth's smile was crystal clear to her – he was up to no good.

Gareth's expression turned somber as if on cue, and his following words took an unexpected turn.

"But your intentions don't seem all that sincere. Offering a one percent concession so readily raises eyebrows. If it weren't for the competition, who's to say how much profit you're really gunning for? That one percent might just be the tip of the iceberg."

[Chapter 1853 Unscrupulous Business](#)

Stuart's confident smile hit a sudden snag. He'd been wearing a look of smug satisfaction, but the situation had taken a turn for the awkward.

Elisa and Bella maintained their poised demeanor and sophistication. At the same time, their team members couldn't resist snickering, appreciating Gareth's intervention and finding humor in Stuart's awkward ordeal.

Just one sentence from Gareth seamlessly shifted the dynamic and startled the opposing side.

Stuart stood up, stomping and trying to hide his rage.

After a few attempts to speak, he finally regained his composure.

"Mr. Lou, you... you're aware that the other side can't easily undercut our price. Businesspeople can't lay all our cards on the table from the get-go. I'm sure you're familiar with the drill?"

Jimmy maintained his silence, a cryptic smile playing on his lips.

Right then, it dawned on him that Gareth was dedicated to bolstering his wife's bid for success. And it was unfortunate that Stuart was yet to realize this.

At that exact moment, Elisa, silently observing, couldn't suppress her chuckle, causing all eyes to shift toward her.

She quipped, "Hold up, Mr. Mazel, things aren't exactly as you've assumed. Our materials are in different leagues. We're working with 999 fine silver while you're sticking with 925. Our glass is ice seed, whereas you've opted for jadeite. Now, when it comes to pricing... there seems to be a significant gap, don't you think?"

Stuart's temper flared, and he jabbed his finger at her. "Enough with the nonsense!" He spat out. Gareth's gaze turned chilly, honed in on Stuart's pointing finger.

It appeared he was teetering on the edge of snapping it.

However, Stuart remained oblivious and carried on his argument with Elisa.

On the flip side, Elisa remained unperturbed. She simply shrugged, responding nonchalantly, "Well, we can claim our products are the best, but an inspection would tell the truth."

Stuart persisted in his denial, yet his anxious demeanor had already betrayed him. Seeing Stuart's continued resistance, Jimmy played his hand.

He acted as if he were poised to delve into an investigation, comparing the samples Stuart had brought with the inventory in the warehouse.

If both samples fell short, it wouldn't be a big deal; they were merely attempting to rake in some extra cash.

However, if it turned out that the samples and the warehouse inventory were of differing quality, it would amount to fraud. If this news spread, the company's standing would be utterly tarnished.

Stuart was well aware of the stakes, and sweat trickled down his forehead.

"How about this? Can you let my reps into your warehouse for inspection?" Jimmy urged, turning up the heat on Stuart.

A sudden chill ran down Stuart's spine. After weighing the options, he chose to bow out of the bidding.

When weighed against the destruction of the company's reputation, this was the lesser of two evils.

However...

He glared at Elisa with malice and cursed, "You damned b*tch from god-knows-where, you and your b*tch of a mother! I wish I could kill you and your..."

Before he could finish his words, Gareth's fist knocked out one of his teeth.

Blood kept flowing from his mouth.

Jimmy calmly watched everything unfold and instructed the security to escort Stuart out.

Poor Stuart came in swaggering and left being dragged away like a limp rag.

His employees were left stunned, frozen in place, only to watch as their boss was hauled away before they could react.

Jimmy beamed a composed smile as he quirked an eyebrow, "Aren't you guys going to chase after him?"

Finally jolted back to reality, they darted off after Stuart, their enthusiasm waning.

Without a doubt, in the end, Bella scored the contract.

[Chapter 1854 Repayment](#)

Bella's hands trembled as she approached to sign the contract, like leaves quivering in the wind. Even after clutching the official document, a feeling of light-headedness lingered.

It took a moment for Bella to realize the urge to share this moment of joy and accomplishment with Elisa.

However, as she looked around, Elisa was nowhere to be seen.

Bella was perplexed and promptly dispatched her colleagues to locate Elisa.

Simultaneously, Elisa had just exited the restroom, wiping her hands and casting her gaze downwards. Just as a shadow loomed over her, she looked up too late and collided with a solid wall.

"Ouch!"

Elisa winced, stepping back and rubbing her throbbing forehead. Then, she met the eyes of the person standing before her—none other than Gareth.

Gareth stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at her indifferently.

Elisa's eyes were drawn to his lips.

"What? Not even a thank-you?" Gareth quipped a playful note in his voice.

Watching his lips move as he talked, she couldn't help but recall the kiss they'd shared a couple of weeks ago.

Taking a small step back, she put some distance between them and regarded Gareth cautiously. He seemed to be jesting, but his expression lacked a smile.

Keeping her silence, she held his gaze as if contemplating something.

Eventually, she broke the quiet, "Thanks, Mr. Wickam."

As those words hung there, she turned to leave, but a hand got in her way.

It was a hand with distinct knuckles. Following the arm upward, Elisa met the gaze of the person it belonged to, who gave her a playful grin.

There was a hint of disappointment on his face, his brows slightly furrowing. "That's it? I did quite a favor for your company, and you're just going to breeze past it with a casual thank you?"

Elisa found herself gazing at Gareth again, where his eyes held an intense and profound expression.

She toyed with the idea of shutting him up by giving him a heads-up that she was on top of things – and seriously, he should know that already.

She was confident she could handle this situation just fine without needing his backup.

Elisa let out a small, resigned sigh, finally giving in and turning her attention to Gareth. "Fine. What do you want me to do for you, exactly?"

Before Gareth could respond, a voice she recognized piped up. "Look! It's Ms. Benett!"

Gareth turned to see who it was. Elisa did the same.

Turned out it was her co-worker.

More people rushed over in no time, barely noticing Gareth and forming a circle around Elisa.

Gareth got nudged to the side, somewhat pushed aside.

Elisa felt a bit overwhelmed as the group started chatting and joking animatedly. She rubbed her temple, sensing a headache coming on.

"Whoa, whoa, hold on a sec,"

Bella interjected with a grin, "Since this is our first major victory, how 'bout I throw a celebratory dinner for us all? Let's make it a blast! And, of course, our stay of the show, Ms. Benett, has to be there!"

Elisa was about to decline, but seeing how everyone was putting in overtime these days, not just the project team but other departments too, and her co-workers' excited faces, she looked around.

In the end, Elisa gave a nod. "Sure thing."

Cheers erupted, "Yeay! Hip-hip-hooray for Ms. Benett!"

Caught up in the lively mood, Elisa couldn't help but smile.

"But..." Elisa's tone shifted.

[Chapter 1855 I Want to Go Too](#)

The crowd murmured as all eyes turned toward her.

Elisa gave an elusive smile and suggested, "How about a celebratory banquet? But I'll be the host this time, and we'll have it on a yacht. After all, this achievement goes beyond just our project department; other departments, including top executives, have also worked hard for several late nights."

There were no objections.

Bella blushed and sheepishly said, "I apologize for not thinking it through. Indeed, everyone has worked hard during this time."

Elisa smiled and replied, "Alright, everyone, let's get ready!"

The crowd dispersed with palpable excitement and reverberating cheers.

Bella, Elisa, and Gareth were the only ones remaining, but Gareth had been previously pushed aside.

At that moment, Bella noticed Gareth and exclaimed, "Cousin!"

Gareth, who had been overlooked all along, gazed intently at Elisa and said, "I've decided on my reward."

Elisa looked at him with soft eyes, prompting him to continue.

"I want... to join your celebration banquet."

Elisa's brow furrowed, and her stomach churned at the thought of him joining.

After all, having outsiders at the company's celebration banquet might not be appropriate.

As Elisa hesitated, Gareth exasperatedly continued, "You talked about thanking me, but now you won't let me attend the celebration banquet. Sigh."

Bella added her support to his request.

"Ms. Benett, Mr. Wickham also played a crucial role in our success, right? So, why not extend an invitation to Mr. Wickham as well?"

Since they put it that way, she had no room for refusal.

Eventually, she gave in and agreed.

A grin spread across Gareth's face as he was finally invited to the banquet.

Elisa felt as if she had fallen into a web of his mischiefs.

And thus, the matter was finally settled.

The celebration banquet was set for three days later, on Saturday at four in the afternoon, aboard the luxurious Princess Cruise.

Elisa was momentarily dazed by the guest list Bella had handed her.

There it was—Paul Grayson.

It was a surprise that Mr. Grayson was also going to attend.

As the departments were busy with their tallies, the unfortunate oversight of not including Mr. Grayson led to a considerable outburst of anger.

Mr. Grayson had never attended such a celebratory banquet, so no one bothered to extend an invitation to him.

Yet there he was, standing in front of the cruise entrance.

Bella stood frozen, her voice caught in her throat, but she finally mustered her courage and announced firmly, "This is a banquet to celebrate hard work and gratitude. However, Mr. Grayson seems to be not on the guest list."

In truth, Bella wanted to say that Mr. Grayson did not deserve to be here.

However, Elisa would not tolerate any unfavorable comments about the higher-ups. She firmly believed in leading by example and fostering a positive work environment.

Elisa lightly tapped the tabletop with her fingers, taking a moment to decide.

She closed the list and set it aside.

"Let him come if he wants to. It's not a big deal," Elisa said.

Bella pouted and murmured, "The key issue is that it's not just one person; he also wants to bring Rochelle along."

Elisa heard her but didn't change her decision.

Upon seeing this, Bella gathered and discussed the list with the cruise organizers.

After Bella left, Elisa's thoughts wandered as her fingers paused typing on the keyboard.

She hesitated momentarily, then picked up her phone, carefully scrolling through her contacts.

In the message conversation, the last message was from a few days ago when Gareth had asked her what time she would get off work.

However, Elisa hadn't replied to that message.

Elisa hesitated, her fingers hovered over the keyboard. Just then, her phone buzzed softly.

[Chapter 1856 Celebration](#)

It was from Gareth.

'How long will the celebration banquet be? And don't forget to invite the benefactor.'

Elisa looked at her phone and chuckled softly.

The esteemed Mr. Wickham, making such a fuss over a spot on a luxury cruise, would be ridiculed if this leaked.

A mischievous idea crossed her mind.

'Sorry, all spots are filled.'

After a brief silence, when Elisa thought there might be no response, Gareth messaged her.

'Oh, really? That's too bad. Well, it seems like Ms. Benett will have to make it up to me personally.'

Her stomach dropped, and an icy current went down her spine as the memory of the kiss with Gareth flashed vividly.

Elisa shook her head to dispel those unrealistic thoughts.

Finally, she mustered the courage and pressed the send button.

'Saturday at four in the afternoon, Canarby Wharf, Princess Cruise.'

She set her phone aside.

Time flew swiftly, and before she knew it, Saturday had arrived.

On this special day, Elisa embraced the rare pleasure of staying home, away from the hustle and bustle of the office.

As such, Gareth wouldn't miss this perfect chance to bond and stay home with Elisa.

Unfortunately, the two didn't engage much. Elisa spent the whole morning in her room, busy with her tasks.

Elisa would only emerge from her seclusion during mealtime and retreat to her room immediately after eating.

His heart couldn't help but sink a little, feeling disappointed.

Nevertheless, there was a silver lining as they soon embarked on their journey to Canarby Wharf together.

At around one in the afternoon, Gareth and Elisa left for the Canarby Wharf in Gareth's newly purchased McLaren.

Throughout the drive, an air of awkwardness lingered. Elisa and Gareth exchanged glances, unsure of how to break the silence.

Gareth noticed that Elisa's face had turned slightly pale and looked unwell.

He quickly opened the convertible's roof, welcoming the gentle caress of the breeze that embraced them both.

As the wind played with her hair and the sunlight kissed her skin, the paleness in her face faded, and she started to look a bit better.

Elisa was grateful for Gareth's gesture and softly murmured, "Thank you."

The car continued to move steadily; Gareth knew Elisa would be the focal point of the celebration banquet. Thus, he decided to strike up a conversation with her.

"I heard Paul is coming."

Elisa stared at him blankly.

"Says who?"

Gareth chuckled and clarified, "Don't get it wrong; it definitely wasn't Bella. She's become tight-lipped now; hard to get anything out of her. I'm just relaying what I've heard from rumors."

He knew it irked Elisa.

If Thomas had been spreading this everywhere, he would have been fired.

No one except for Elisa knew about this.

Elisa's shoulder finally relaxed as she nodded.

Gareth sneered, "Why would this old timer crash a party for the youngsters?"

Elisa's face hardened as she replied, "He has a young fling."

Gareth smirked, "Fooling around so much, isn't he afraid his wife will find out?"

Elisa pondered momentarily before replying, "Paul's wife seems devoted to him. She used to work in a state-owned enterprise but left her job to become a stay-at-home wife for him. She's probably heard some gossip. I haven't met her yet, so I can't say for sure about her stance. But who knows?"

Elisa's words trailed off.

Gareth caught her drift.

In any case, she wasn't someone to mess with.

No wonder Rochelle was arrogant and aggressive.

The two fell silent again.

As they approached their destination, Elisa asked him to drop her off on the roadside and walked the rest.

"If anyone sees me leaving your car, it might raise some questions," she said curtly.

[Chapter 1857 Between You and Me](#)

This time, Gareth wasn't up for complying with Elisa's request to slow down; instead, he pressed down on the gas pedal, picking up speed.

He kept going until they reached the pier.

Elisa glanced at him, her lips sealed. She didn't immediately step out of the car, but her frustration was palpable.

Observing Elisa's pouty face, Gareth couldn't help but find it amusing. He was on the verge of tucking the hair strands behind her ear, but she skillfully evaded his reach.

Gareth's arm hung there for a beat, awkwardly suspended.

He retracted it with a sulky expression and said apologetically, "I noticed some folks were arriving. If you had left the car partway, it might've seemed suspicious. It would be better if we both get out together when we reach the pier. That way, it won't attract too much attention, and no one will start unnecessary probing, don't you think?"

Elisa remained silent, but her demeanor had softened a bit; there was a hint of warmth in her expression.

With the chilly tension dissipated, Elisa unbuckled her seatbelt and stepped out of the car.

Gareth followed suit.

Even though it was still early, a few had already arrived.

They were hanging around and passing the time nearby. As soon as they saw Elisa, they excitedly huddled around her and chatted animatedly.

"Ah, Ms. Benett, you're here! I can't believe that we are going on this fancy cruise!"

"You might find it hard to believe, but this is my first time on such a luxurious cruise; it looks awe-inspiring." The girl who spoke sounded a bit shy.

The girl next to her nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, thanks to Ms. Benett, we get to experience it for the first time!"

The girls playfully bantered back and forth, making Elisa uneasy.

And to top it off, she had just stepped out of the car, and her stomach, which had settled after its earlier upset, was starting to act up again.

The girls' animated chatter was starting to make Elisa feel queasy.

Sensing her discomfort, Gareth stepped up to help her out.

Using his height advantage, he interjected and skillfully guided Elisa out of the crowd.

The girls looked at Gareth, perplexed.

Only then they recalled seeing their boss, Elisa, emerging from this man's car.

They began to speculate about his identity.

Gareth said, "I'm sorry, everyone. Ms. Benett and I need to have a chat. You can go ahead and board the cruise. Just give your names and show your IDs; there will be staff to assist you."

He nodded and said, "Please excuse us." then led Elisa away, boarding the cruise in advance.

Gareth's arm was gently draped around Elisa's shoulder throughout this process.

Observing his protective and intimate gestures, the girls continued their chatter and deliberation about the man's identity.

Seeing Elisa so close to a man was a rare sight for them.

"I'm guessing he's her brother. Ms. Benett is pretty much this accomplished, no-nonsense, workaholic type—she's not the sort to date anyone."

"Who's to say? Maybe she's the one wearing the pants in this relationship."

"Well, that's not entirely implausible."

Subsequently, when Bella turned up, they started filling her in on the unusual incident they had just witnessed.

When she heard about that, Bella immediately knew who the man was and chuckled. Then, she brushed off the girls, remarking, "Honestly, it doesn't matter who that guy was. Let's get on the cruise and party time!"

The girls were influenced by her and decided not to dwell on the topic any longer.

Meanwhile, Gareth guided Elisa towards the railing.

As Elisa took in the fresh air, she began to feel better.

They exchanged glances, and after a beat, Elisa relaxed and said, "By the way, thanks."

Gareth looked at her earnestly as if attempting to see through her thoughts. Elisa didn't flinch; her gaze locked onto him with fearless determination.

His eyes mirrored the sea and said, "No need for thanks between us."

[Chapter 1858 Fashionably Late](#)

Elisa remained silent.

As if struck by a sudden idea, Gareth piped up, "You know... You're only a few years older than Bella. Whenever she's overwhelmed or upset, she lets it out through tears, using them to release her stress. She allows herself to be vulnerable when she needs to. You... don't have to be strong all the time. Just saying..."

Gareth wanted Elisa to know that he was there to support her no matter what.

But ultimately, he couldn't muster the words.

Elisa chuckled, a trace of teasing in her smile, yet it held a captivating beauty.

Beside her, the sunlit waves seemed to hush momentarily, allowing her presence to shine.

"I'm not trying to force down this bitter pill. Honestly, these things don't faze me in the slightest."

With that, Elisa walked away, starting to greet everyone.

One after another, people started boarding the cruise. Almost all were on time by four in the afternoon and had shown up.

Except for Paul and Rochelle.

As Bella emerged from the captain's quarters and navigated through the crowd, she chanced upon Elisa.

She mentioned, "The captain is asking if we could set sail now. If we delay any longer, we might not reach the central island before sunset."

This time, their festivities weren't confined to the ship alone; Elisa had also organized a celebration on a central island.

Embarking after nightfall would carry some risks.

However, if they set sail promptly, Paul wouldn't pass up the opportunity for a snarky comment or two.

Elisa didn't hesitate to decide.

"Let's get going. Also, arrange a small fishing boat for those two. They're welcome to join us; if not, they can find their way there."

Elisa's expression soured, revealing her impatience.

Clearly, Paul was trying to assert his authority by keeping everyone waiting for him. However, his efforts were futile.

Much to Paul and Rochelle's chagrin, the cruise ship had raised its anchor and departed from the dock.

Paul had arrived late, accompanied by Rochelle in a car.

As they watched the ship sail away from a distance, Rochelle couldn't help but voice her annoyance, "Is Elisa deliberately messing with us? Doesn't she know we didn't make it in time for the cruise?!"

Expressing her frustration, Rochelle tugged at the corner of Paul's sleeve, her tone a mix of coy and irritation, "I might tolerate her treating me like this, but not when she treats you like this—I bet that woman is trying to assert her authority and shame us in front of everyone!"

Bella's constant poking had stirred up Paul's innate pettiness, and he was seething with rage.

He quickly dialed Elisa's number.

Getting ready to unleash a wave of complaints, he never expected the call to cut off right after dialing—not a busy signal or a hang-up, just a straight-up disconnection.

Paul's frustration was through the roof, about to burst, as he dialed again; this time, the call was answered.

Paul chimed in before Elisa could say anything, probing, "Seriously, what's up with you? Why are you leaving us hanging like this? Are you trying to mess with us? Do you not know we haven't boarded the ship? You..."

Before Paul could finish his rant, the call was deliberately cut off again.

Right beside him, Rochelle's expression was unfolding like a dramatic movie scene.

She went from confusion to disbelief and finally settled into a disdainful smirk.

Paul had a delicate ego and detested being disrespected. Elisa's actions had hit that nerve dead on.

Initially, Rochelle thought she'd have to manipulate Paul into taking on Elisa, but now it seemed Paul was all set on his own course of action; she didn't need to intervene.

Meanwhile, Paul was in a raging frenzy, redialing the number as if the phone could take the brunt of his frustration.

A moment later, just before the call was about to drop naturally, someone responded on the other end.

At this point, Paul's patience was hanging by a thread; the initial outburst of anger had left him drained.

The voice that greeted him was Bella's, tinged with both mockery and amusement.

[Chapter 1859 To Try or Not to Try?](#)

"Sorry 'bout that, Mr. Mazel. Got caught up earlier and missed your call," Bella's voice remained cool. "Ms. Benett is bogged down with social stuff at the moment, can't take calls. She left her phone with me."

Paul reined in his annoyance, querying, "So, what's the plan now?"

Bella explained calmly, "Okay, here's how it goes, Mr. Mazel. Ms. Benett thought it was dangerous to hit the waves after sundown. That's why she set the departure for 4:00 PM. The thing is, you got delayed and missed the ship. Not to worry, though—there's a backup boat ready to roll. Whether or not you're down for it, it's your call."

With that, Bella ended the call abruptly.

At that very moment, a man dressed like a fisherman approached.

As he got closer, Rochelle pinched her nose in apparent disgust.

The fisherman looked somewhat sheepish but asked, "Sorry to bother you. Are you Mr. Mazel and Ms. Matterson?"

Rochelle didn't respond while Paul adjusted his suit, snorting from his chin with an almost arrogant flair.

The fisherman continued, "Ms. Benett arranged for me to give you a lift. If you're up for it, feel free to hop on."

By now, Rochelle had an unsettling hunch.

What kind of boat could a fisherman plan to take them on?

Still, they followed him.

Upon seeing the boat, Paul's jaw dropped. Right there and then, he tugged Rochelle along, wanting to dash off.

To Paul's horror, that 'boat' wasn't even hitting the mark as a legit boat. It didn't even have a canopy, to begin with.

It was a flat-bottomed contraption with no engine, rowed with wooden oars, dependent on human muscles!

Come on, seriously? It was the twenty-first century, and they were stuck navigating in this kind of outdated vessel?

By this point, the larger ships at the dock had all sailed off, leaving them with no option but the flat-bottomed 'boat.'

Rochelle was on the verge of fainting at the sight of the 'boat.' But she clenched her teeth and budged.

After enduring a day brimming with humiliation, she wasn't ready to brush it off. Rochelle had her mind set on a comeback, eager to teach Elisa a lesson or two.

With that determination, Rochelle managed to convince Paul, and eventually, they tagged along on the stomach-churning boat ride.

The boat incessantly rocked back and forth, lacking proper safety measures, and moved incredibly sluggishly.

Every now and then, seawater splashes came dashing in, and the salty sea breeze disheveled Rochelle's delicate hairdo and expensive dress.

Paul wasn't doing much better. They both vowed to make Elisa pay for subjecting them to this ordeal!

Meanwhile, Elisa mingled with the group aboard as Bella led the way. Bella couldn't help but picture Rochelle and Paul in their pitiful state, especially after getting off a call with Paul – it brightened her mood.

She had recounted their awkward situation to Elisa, assuming they'd abandon the idea of joining the cruise.

Elisa smirked but kept quiet. She doubted they'd give up that easily, not after such a public humiliation. Given their vindictive personalities, they'd find a way to make amends.

Elisa lingered at the back of the group, with Gareth by her side. Out of the blue, a busybody employee asked about their relationship.

Before Elisa could chime in, Gareth interjected, "We're friends, but I'm trying to win over Ms. Benett. So, keep your fingers crossed for me."

Elisa could see the glimmer in the young girl's eyes momentarily fade and then light up again – a sure sign of a crush on Gareth.

Eventually, the employee gave Gareth an approving smile, commenting, "Good luck. I think you and Ms. Benett would make a great couple."

Elisa found herself surprised by the unexpected remark. Before she could respond, the young girl had already dashed away.

Gareth gave Elisa a playful nudge on the shoulder, "You see, even your employee thinks we're a perfect match. So, Ms. Benett, how about giving me a chance?"

[Chapter 1860 An Invite to Dance](#)

Elisa shot him a once-over and remained silent, continuing to stride forward.

Besides Paul and Rochelle, everyone else had already arrived.

The central island appeared more spacious than anticipated, and Elisa had secured the entire area.

They set sail around six in the evening, then indulged in some fun for half an hour or so. After that, Elisa took charge, leading the group to the restaurant.

The restaurant had been transformed into a self-service dance party setup. Various foods adorned both sides – cooked dishes, sashimi, fruits, and seafood – all incredibly fresh. In the heart of it, all was the dance floor.

"Can I help you?" Her tone was cold, her demeanor distant.

Not far away, Gareth, holding a glass of red wine in hand, had been discreetly watching Elisa. Sensing something amiss, he took a step toward her.

With a touch of shyness, the man spoke, "Ms. Bennett, I'm from the Finance Department. While we might not have interacted much, I've quietly followed your endeavors. By the way, I was also there at the bid award event. I know our victory this time owes a lot to your exceptional contributions. I hold you in high regard and would be honored to propose a toast in your name."

He raised his glass, anticipating Elisa's reaction.

It would be impolite to reject a friendly gesture, especially when the man hadn't crossed any boundaries. Elisa conceded, lifting her glass and lightly clinking it against his.

She took a small sip of the wine and refrained from taking more.

The ensemble of red wine, red lips, and Elisa's gown, with its daring back and subtle slit, commanded attention.

Elisa raised an eyebrow as the man continued to stand there.

"Yes? Is there anything else you need?"

After hesitating, he mustered his courage and said, "Ms. Bennett, I couldn't help but notice you've been sitting here alone. I was wondering if you'd do me the honor of sharing this opening dance with me."

Elisa was taken aback.

This was the first time a subordinate had invited her to dance. She looked around at the curious onlookers, many directing their attention toward them. Those eyes seemed to weigh heavily on the young man.

While she hadn't initially planned on dancing, she didn't want to spoil the atmosphere either.

After briefly contemplating, she was about to extend her hand toward the young man when a more prominent hand intercepted her.

She looked up, and the young man turned to see Gareth, whose gaze was intense and expression somewhat cold.

"Didn't we understand that you'd be dancing exclusively with me and no one else?"

Gareth's voice carried a frosty edge, his tone sharp.

He didn't spare a glance for the young man, yet his demeanor emanated an undeniable air of dominance.

The young man swallowed hard but stood his ground. He murmured, "Excuse me, Ms. Bennett has already agreed to dance with me. You might need to wait for your turn, sir."

Gareth cast him a scornful look, projecting an aura of unwavering superiority.

Despite this, the young man stood his ground.

Elisa's inner sigh was palpable as she massaged her temples. She was concerned the young man might become so overwhelmed that he'd faint. She then gave the young man an apologetic nod and politely declined his request.

Swiftly, she took Gareth's hand and led him toward the center of the dance floor. People around them, both men and women, instinctively cleared a path, encircling them.

Under the spotlight's beam, they occupied the focal point.

An ineffable sentiment seemed to fill the air.