

# He Stole My Ticket, I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky\_High Novel

## Chapter 61

What is not said guides the scene as much as what is spoken. What the Past Brings In Earlier choices and old tensions shape how people act here. History does not repeat, but it limits and nudges. The present is easier to read when the past is kept in view. Where Relationships Move Trust, distance, and leverage shift by degrees. Roles adjust, and the space between characters changes shape. By the end, connections are not exactly what they were. Details That Mean More Objects, gestures, and setting notes do quiet work. They mirror the mood and hint at motives.

One was called "Ripples," based on water elements—a ring with an overall teardrop shape, the main stone at the center surrounded by cascading waves. The other was "Nebula," a brooch shaped like an irregular star cluster with an opal at the center like the nebula's core, titanium framework outlining the contours, dotted with diamonds and colored gems. Voting lasted three days. Rachel sat in the study, her tablet showing the competition's voting page. "Ripples" was her latest work. Water-looks weak but can cut through stone; looks calm but can create tsunamis.

So this piece represented gentle yet unstoppable power. Right now, "Ripples" was steadily climbing, getting dangerously close to Sophie's "Thornbird." But another piece was no joke either—"Nebula" was running neck and neck with "Ripples." The platform used anonymous voting, so except for Sophie's public entry, nobody knew who created what. Made the voting totally fair. And ironically, both "Ripples" and "Thornbird" were her pieces. She found herself curious about whoever made "Nebula." She lightly tapped the screen where those designs were displayed, her finger making soft clicking sounds.

Her phone buzzed—Nicolas had texted: "Sophie's trying to dig up info on the 'Ripples' creator, but don't sweat it. She won't find jack." Rachel was kinda surprised Sophie had moved so fast. She texted back "ok" and walked to the window. This whole anonymous thing felt incredible—nobody knew she was the Leroix heiress, nobody knew she'd even entered this competition. Just had to wait for that moment when everything got revealed.

She remembered what they'd said at the Leroix house: "Without this family, you're nothing." 13.55 He Stole My Ticket, I flew Private Revenge Served Sky High 54.19 Chapter 61 But hey, dear brother, you seeing this? Without the Leroix name, my work can still claim the crown. On the final voting day, "Ripples" had almost caught up to "Thornbird." Rachel watched the numbers constantly updating when she spotted

something sketchy- "Thornbird's" vote count had suddenly jumped by 200,000 between 3 and 5 AM! "She's buying votes!" Rachel immediately found Nicolas.

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Nicolas checked the data and asked, "Bust her now?" Rachel shook her head: "If we call her out now, she'll just claim someone's setting her up. Let's wait till the final results drop, then let the numbers do the talking." Nicolas flashed this knowing smile: "Smart move." Let the drama unfold. Seemed like that hotheaded kid had finally learned some strategy. Meanwhile, Sophie was still stuck in the hospital, frantically watching the data. Shit! Shit! Shit! She'd already bought nearly 800,000 votes but still couldn't pull ahead decisively! That damn "Ripples" piece was breathing down her neck!

Plus, she'd just gotten another call from the vote-buying company saying "Ripples" was climbing too fast and suggesting another 500,000 votes. "Do it!" Sophie screamed into the phone. "I don't give a damn what it costs-we're keeping first place!" She glared at that water-themed ring, anxiety creeping up her spine. Who the hell made "Ripples"? Why couldn't they find any info on this person? In this world, if you threw enough money around, you could uncover anyone's secrets. But this author? Complete ghost. She stared at that design. This style, this way of handling water elements...

a terrifying thought crept into her 13:56 He Stole My Ticket. I Flow Private: Revenge Served Sky-High 54.3% Chapter 61 head. "No way..." she whispered. "That loser should've given up ages ago... just three days, she couldn't have..." She zoomed in, studying every detail of "Ripples." The ring was sleek and sophisticated but packed with intricate details. The wave patterns on the band looked like they were actually moving, the sapphire catching light like ocean swells. This design approach, this attention to detail... Sophie's hands started trembling. Who... was this person!

Once midnight hit, voting closed. The nail-biting voting phase was finally over, and Maëlys's studio quickly dropped the top ten results. This time, Maëlys herself went live on the studio's account. Even though it was the middle of the night, hardcore fans were wide awake and ready. "Huge thanks to all the designers who participated, and to everyone who voted..." Maëlys had this smooth, intellectual voice. She wasn't rushing anything, keeping everyone on the edge of their seats. "Time for the final results.

Tenth place goes to..." Preliminaries picked ten finalists who'd compete live to choose three designers for the studio. Maëlys was all about quality over quantity. She wanted the cream of the crop, so only three spots. She'd even said she'd rather take one perfect commission per year than compromise on standards. Numbers didn't matter to her. She announced rankings from bottom to top, revealing the designers behind each piece. When she got to the top three, she paused dramatically, grinning: "Third place is..." Rachel was glued to her tablet, watching the livestream.

"Nebula' by Yara Adams!" "Second place goes to..." she dragged it out, "the piece 'Ripples'! Created by... anonymous contestant 13:56 Chapter 61 'Daughter of the Sea'!" The chat exploded: [Anonymous entry? That's so badass!] [Now THATS a real artist!] [Ripples' is absolutely gorgeous, totally earned it!] Sophie's smile died on her face. She never would've guessed someone entered anonymously! "This can't be happening!" Sophie shrieked. The stream kept rolling: "Before we announce first place, we need to address something important.

Our tech team found massive amounts of suspicious voting activity. After cleaning up the data, some vote counts have changed significantly." The screen behind Maëlys lit up with comparison charts-"Thornbird's" votes nosedived while "Ripples" stayed rock solid. Sophie went white as a sheet. "Per competition rules, purchased votes are void, so Sophie's 'Thornbird' is now tied with 'Ripples'!" The second she finished talking, the chat went absolutely mental: "Wait, what? Sophie cheated?" "Kick Sophie out!

Disqualify her ass!" "Sophie's results should be thrown out!" Outside the livestream, Sophie collapsed on her hospital bed: "No fucking way..." Then she spotted the wave patterns on that ring-those familiar curves hit her like a freight train. "It's... it's her..." Sophie muttered. "That worthless bitch..." 12-56 What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not. Something has shifted, and the next step will have to meet it. The feeling is unfinished on purpose. What Likely Comes Next Expect tighter tension and fewer safe options. Hidden truths may press forward.

The path ahead should feel earned and a bit sharper. Questions to Carry Which choice will echo the longest? Who revealed the most by saying the least? How might today's restraint become tomorrow's turning point? Context That Raises Stakes Rules, memory, and the setting frame each decision. Inside that frame, even small moves gain size. The chapter belongs to its world as much as to its people. One-Line Exit With this chapter done, the story steps forward-quieter, clearer, and ready to show what those choices mean.

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A The trending topics were already exploding with #Sophie BoughtVotes. The comments were filled with pissed-off users: 【This is what passes for a rich heiress?】 [Disgusting, buying votes while acting all innocent!] 【So her "first place" was just bought with money!】 Sophie's fingers trembled as she scrolled down, suddenly spotting a comment: "Am I the only one who thinks 'Ripples' is way more sophisticated than 'Thornbird'? Those wave patterns are incredible!" This comment had thousands of replies, mostly agreeing. Sophie felt dizzy. No... this wasn't the outcome she wanted!

With shaking hands, she closed the app and tried to dial a familiar number, her fingers slipping on the screen several times. "Yvonne! You're supposed to be good at digging up info, right? Find out who this 'Daughter of the Sea' really is!" she screamed into the phone. A hesitant voice came through: "Babe, not gonna lie-I started investigating the moment Maëlys announced the list. I tried everything, but..." "But what?" "This

'Daughter of the Sea' person is protected way too well. I can't find any leads." No leads... And coincidentally, Rachel had no traceable info either.

Could it really be her? 13:56 0 \$5.0 He Stole My Ticket, I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky-High Chapter 62 Was the world really this full of coincidences? Sophie slumped to the floor. Why... why did Rachel have to show up again even after leaving the Leroix family! "Babe, is there any chance... that Rachel actually is 'Daughter of the Sea'?" Before Yvonne could finish, Sophie hurled her phone to the ground and let out a shriek: "AHHH-" She grabbed everything within reach and threw it all on the floor. When she ran out of things to smash, she started clawing at her own hair.

"Why..." she clutched her head, "why do you keep haunting me..." Yvonne heard the commotion and called out worriedly, but got no response. When she tried calling back, it just rang and rang. The livestream continued. Maëlys's voice echoed through the stream, calm but with an edge of cold steel: "After careful consideration, we've decided to keep Miss Sophie's qualification. After all, artistic creation itself is pure..." The tablet still streaming nearby made Sophie's body go rigid. 'She grabbed it in disbelief, staring at the screen. She hadn't misheard, right?

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They were keeping her in the competition? But before she could get too excited, the chat absolutely lost it. Comments flooded in like a tsunami; [How much did the organizers get paid?] [Vote buying and she still gets to compete? Is there any fairness left?] [The 'Ripples' creator got screwed over by this nepotism bullshit.] 【Wait, didn't you guys notice? Sophie broke the rules from the start and still got to compete. Vote buying is nothing compared to that. If you know, you know.】 Sophie sat dazed on the floor, the phone screen's glow reflecting off her pale face.

She watched those brutal comments, feeling like she couldn't breathe. Suddenly, one comment caught her 13:56 He Stole My Ticket I Flow Private: Revenge Carved Sky High just kicking her out..." She shot upright, staring at that comment. Yeah, why was Maëlys doing this? She didn't know Maëlys well, but word was she was decisive and ruthless. With her personality, shouldn't she have just disqualified Sophie outright? She completely missed whatever Maëlys said after that. The livestream finally ended with viewers still cursing up a storm. The moment the stream cut off, Maëlys called Nicolas. "Mr.

Rothschild, per your instructions, I let Sophie advance and exposed all her little 'tricks.' Can you finally tell me why we're doing this?" "Mm." Just a cold response came through, like he couldn't care less about any of it. After waiting forever for more explanation, Maëlys knew she wouldn't get the answer she wanted. When Nicolas didn't want to talk, nobody could pry his mouth open. After hanging up, Nicolas tossed his phone aside. He really didn't give a damn about Sophie. With his personality, he'd just crush her completely. But this was all Rachel's idea.

She wanted to keep Sophie around. Outside the floor-to-ceiling windows, New York sparkled with lights, but none could match the dark intensity in his eyes. "Knock knock-" The bedroom door was gently pushed open as Rachel walked in carrying coffee. These past few days living here, she'd gotten into the habit of just walking into his bedroom without waiting for permission. Today she wore a cream knit sweater, the soft fabric hugging her slender waist. Nicolas's gaze lingered on her for a second before casually looking away.

13.56 Chapter 62 Rachel set the coffee in front of him, her voice soft: "Thank you." Nicolas picked up the cup-the handle still seemed to carry warmth from her fingertips. He unconsciously traced it a few times. "You sure you want to do this?" He looked up at her. "I could make her disappear forever." Rachel shook her head: "Making her disappear would be too easy." Her gaze drifted to the window: "I want her to watch everything she cares about crumble, piece by piece." Nicolas's lips curved into the faintest smile.

He loved seeing her like this-like an elegant cat who could kill with one strike but preferred to toy with her prey instead. "Aren't you worried she'll bite back?" "With you here, what do I have to worry about?" Rachel realized how suggestive that sounded the moment she said it, her ears turning pink. Nicolas set down his coffee and stood, walking over to her. His tall frame towered over her as Rachel caught his subtle cologne. "You really know how to use me," his voice was low and dangerous. Rachel looked up to meet his intense gaze: "So would Mr.

Rothschild mind being used by me?" Nicolas leaned down until they were close enough to feel each other's breath. His long fingers tilted up her chin: "I'd be delighted." Rachel opened her mouth but no sound came out. She could feel Nicolas's breath on her cheek, burning hot. "Nicolas, it's getting late, you should rest..." she said stiffly. "Hmm?" Nicolas's tone lifted slightly. His eyes flicked to the coffee cup with a teasing glint: "Didn't someone just bring me coffee? I thought you didn't want me to sleep." 13:56 He Stole My Ticket 1 Flew Private Revenge Served Sky High.

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¶ Nicolas's thumb was still pressed against her jaw, applying just enough pressure to force her to tilt her head at an even more vulnerable angle. Seeming to notice her trembling body, he chuckled softly, his Adam's apple vibrating: "Your hands were so steady when you brought the coffee, so why are you shaking all over now?" Just as Rachel was about to argue back, her lower back suddenly hit the desk edge. The coffee cup rippled with dark brown waves, some even spilling over. Nicolas reached out to steady it, but his palm ended up covering her hand that was clutching a tissue.

"Don't move." He pulled away the crumpled tissue, the slight friction sound particularly clear in their intimate atmosphere. Rachel held her breath, watching the man's pale fingers clean the table with deliberate slowness. But as she watched those movements, her mind started wandering in ways she couldn't control. Those hands were really beautiful, "You got some here too." Suddenly, Nicolas spoke, then his fingertip traced across her collarbone with the faintest touch. But there was no coffee stain there at all.

Rachel raised her hand to push him away, but her palm pressed against his rapidly rising chest. Nicolas let out a muffled groan, his breathing suddenly rough: "Rachel." "What?" Her voice trembled. Nicolas's Adam's apple rolled heavily, and just as he moved to cradle the back of her head, Rachel suddenly turned and bit his earlobe: "Nicolas, your heart's beating so fast." Nicolas hadn't expected Rachel to turn the tables on him and suddenly laughed softly. Rachel gripped the back of his shirt, the expensive fabric bunching up in her palm.

The feeling of taut muscle under her fingertips made them tingle, and before she knew it, Nicolas's knee had 13:56 Ife Stole My Ticket. I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High 55.9% Chapter 63 pressed between her legs. "Nicolas..." her voice took on an unfamiliar softness even to herself, "the coffee's getting cold." The man suddenly stepped back half a pace, casually straightening himself out. Before Rachel could find her balance in the void, he swept her up in his arms. "Then we'll make fresh." Nicolas kicked open her bedroom door, dark currents surging in his eyes.

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"Coffee for all-night conversations should be slowly brewed in a siphon pot." At the same time, Sophie was doxxed for being hospitalized, with people posting the exact hospital address. Left with no choice, the Leroix family brought her home overnight, with the family doctor handling her recovery. Sophie curled up on the couch, her eyes red and swollen from crying. Joanne sat beside her, gently patting her back. "Sophie, stop crying," Joanne's voice was full of heartache. "It's just a competition. We don't have to participate." David stood by the window, his brow deeply furrowed.

"What the hell happened? How did this turn into such a huge scandal?" "Dad!" Sophie lifted her head, her voice thick with tears. "It's Rachel! It has to be her! That 'Daughter of the Sea' is definitely her!" "Nonsense!" David spun around sharply. "Your sister left the Leroix family ages ago. How could she possibly enter the competition?" "It IS her!" Sophie screamed hysterically. "That design, that attention to detail-only she could do it!

I've studied her work for years, I know her better than anyone!" Joanne quickly hugged Sophie: "Okay, okay, stop talking.

Your sister..." Before she could finish, Sophie cut her off: "Why does sister have to compete with me for everything!" David's expression instantly darkened. "Enough!" Arthur slammed his hand on the coffee table. "Look at yourself right now!" 13.56 Chapter 63 Sophie froze. She'd never seen her father this angry. Joanne quickly stood up to mediate: "Alright, alright, everyone stop fighting. Sophie, go to your room and rest." Sophie bit her lip as tears flowed again. A She couldn't argue with David, so she could only nod and head upstairs with Arthur's support.

Joanne sighed, looking at David: "You didn't have to get so angry." David rubbed his temples: "This is completely unacceptable. This incident has totally embarrassed the Leroix family." "You're the one who spoiled her," Joanne muttered under her breath. David didn't respond. He walked to the window, looking out at the night. The media was going crazy, all reporting on Leroix family drama. And people had already dug up Rachel's public break with the family at the funeral-everyone was waiting to see the Leroix family's downfall. He suddenly remembered the day Rachel left.

It wasn't that he hadn't looked for her, but she couldn't be found. "Joanne," David suddenly spoke, "do you think we made a mistake?" Joanne was stunned: "What do you mean?" David shook his head without answering. Forget it, no point dwelling on this. Anyone who embarrassed the Leroix family was definitely in the wrong. The next day. Jaxon stood at the Leroix mansion entrance, his long fingers pressing the doorbell. The door opened, and Joanne enthusiastically brought him inside, then pointed upstairs and sighed: "Sophie's in a bad mood. Maybe...

you could go see her?" Jaxon set down the fruit basket he'd brought and nodded. Going upstairs, he walked to Sophie's room and knocked. 13:56 O He Stole My Ticket. I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High Chapter 63 A loud crash came from inside, followed by Sophie's voice: "I said I'm not seeing anyone!" "Sophie, it's me." Jaxon's voice was calm and patient. The room went quiet for two seconds, then moments later, the door opened. Sophie appeared in the doorway with red, swollen eyes. & She wore a wrinkled nightgown, her hair disheveled, completely lacking her usual polished appearance.

"Jaxon..." her voice was tearful as she threw herself into his arms. Jaxon gently patted her back, but his gaze moved past her shoulder to the design sketches scattered across the living room floor. On those papers, the wave patterns of "Ripples" were clearly visible. "Don't be sad." He gently patted Sophie's back, then supported her, guiding her downstairs to sit on the couch. Joanne had already left to give them privacy. She wouldn't be any help staying anyway-better to leave it to Jaxon. Sophie curled up on the couch, hugging a pillow. "Jaxon, I'm finished..." she sobbed.

"Everyone knows I bought votes, I..." "But you weren't disqualified." Jaxon said, his voice gentle but firm. "Since the organizers gave you this chance, why not try?" Sophie looked up at him through teary eyes: "But the online comments..." "Do those comments

matter?" Jaxon sat beside her. "What matters is the finals. If you can prove yourself in the finals, those comments will naturally disappear." Sophie bit her lip, hesitating, then suddenly grabbed Jaxon's hand. "Jaxon, I think...

I think that 'Daughter of the Sea' is sister!" Jaxon's fingers trembled slightly, a hard-to-catch glint flashing in his eyes. 56.5% What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not. Something has shifted, and the next step will have to meet it. The feeling is unfinished on purpose. What Likely Comes Next Expect tighter tension and fewer safe options. Hidden truths may press forward. The path ahead should feel earned and a bit sharper. Questions to Carry Which choice will echo the longest? Who revealed the most by saying the least?

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You know how it is with sisters-after all these years, you pick up on things." Facing Jaxon always made her feel guilty. Not just because of the whole design mess, but because she'd never told him about Rachel being locked up at the Leroix house. And she knew damn well he'd been looking for Rachel. Thing was, she didn't want him to find her. So she'd kept her mouth shut on purpose. Jaxon studied her shifty behavior, fighting to keep the chaos inside him under control. Was that anonymous contestant really Rachel? All this time searching, and not a single trace!

Never would've thought she'd enter some competition and make such a splash. "Even more reason to go to the finals then." His voice was quiet. "I'll come with you." Sophie's face lit up instantly. She practically launched herself into his arms, squeezing him tight. "Thank you, Jaxon... God, you're amazing." Jaxon rubbed her back gently, but his eyes were already looking past her shoulder, up toward that corner room upstairs. His mind drifted back to Donald's funeral. Rachel standing there in all black, looking pale as death.

The way she'd walked away-so final, like she was done with everything. That was the last time he'd seen her. "Jaxon?" Sophie's voice snapped him back. "Yeah?" "What's going through your head?" Jaxon looked down at her, managing a soft smile. "Just thinking about the finals." Sophie nestled against his shoulder, eyes closed. 13:57 He Stole My Ticket, I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High 56 8 Chapter 64 "As long as you're there, I'm good." Jaxon didn't say anything back, just kept stroking her hair. Rachel, looks like we're finally gonna see each other.

Finals were in three days, downtown at the Grand Theater. Rachel was up with the sun. No sign of Nicolas-probably already gone. A She threw on a simple white dress, left her

hair loose over her shoulders. Quick wash-up, grabbed her bag, and headed out. Downstairs, there was Matt by a black car, holding some fancy gift box. "Morning, Miss Leroix," Matt said with a smile. "Matt?" Rachel blinked. "What are you doing here?" "Mr. Rothschild's got this huge meeting today-can't make it to the finals with you." Matt held out the box. "He wanted me to bring you this." Rachel took it and peeked inside.

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A pale blue dress. The bottom had these detailed wave patterns that caught the light just right. "Oh, and this." Matt handed over a smaller box. Rachel opened it, curious, then just stared.. A ring. Her own design-"Ripples." The wave patterns were catching the sunlight, throwing off this soft glow that matched the dress perfectly. Rachel's hands were actually shaking a little as she picked up the ring. There was something engraved inside: "To my muse." "This is..." She looked up at Matt, voice catching, Matt grinned. "Mr.

Rothschild figured since it's your design, you should be the first one to wear it." "He also said," Matt went on, "he hopes it brings you luck." 13:57 He Stole My Ticket. I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High \$7.0% Chapter 64 Rachel slipped the ring on-perfect fit. She stared at those wave patterns, couldn't help but smile. "Matt," she said quietly, "tell him thanks for me." Matt chuckled. "You can tell him yourself. Oh, and he said don't stress about it." Rachel went upstairs to change. The pale blue dress hugged her just right, showed off her figure without being over the top.

Not too fancy-could wear it anywhere, really. Simple V-neck that showed off her collarbones. Sleeves tapered at the wrists, made her hands look even more delicate. The fabric felt like nothing. When she came back down, even Matt did a double-take. "Miss Leroix, ready to go?" Rachel got in the car, fingers running over the dress fabric. It smelled faintly of cedar-exactly like Nicolas. "Matt," she said suddenly, "got anything to... cover my face with?" Matt caught her eye in the rearview mirror, totally getting it. "Mr.

Rothschild's got you covered." At the next red light, he reached into the glove compartment and handed her another box. Inside was a pale blue silk scarf, same material as the dress. The edges had the same intricate wave patterns. Rachel traced them with her fingers, feeling her eyes get hot. He'd thought of everything. "Mr. Rothschild said if you don't want to show your face yet, you could use this," Matt's voice had this amused tone. "He picked it out himself." Rachel wrapped the scarf around her head a couple times, just her eyes showing. They pulled into the parking garage.

Thought they were early, but the reporters beat them to it. 13:57 HCl.... 57 2h Chapter 64 Soon as they saw the fancy car, journalists swarmed like vultures. Camera flashes going off everywhere, microphones practically scratching the windows. "You a contestant?" "Can we get an interview?" A "What do you think about your chances?" Matt's face darkened. "Miss Leroix, stay in the car. I'll deal with these guys." Rachel

nodded, watching Matt get out. The reporters mobbed him immediately. "Who's in the car?" "Come on, just a quick interview?" Matt smiled, but his tone was steel.

"Sorry, but the lady's not doing interviews." "Why not? She hiding something?" one reporter pushed? "Please focus on the actual competition. My lady's privacy isn't up for discussion. Thanks." Matt was getting overwhelmed, so Rachel opened her door and stepped out. There she was in that pale blue dress, face covered except for her eyes. The reporters froze for a second, then came at her like sharks. "What's your contestant number?" "Why the face covering? You got something to hide?" The questions were brutal. Matt's expression went ice-cold.

"My lady has sensitive skin-can't handle direct sunlight. That's why the scarf." The reporters weren't buying it, shooting each other looks. One of them actually pushed past Matt, shoving a microphone right in Rachel's face. "How about sharing your design philosophy?" Matt threw himself between them, using his arms to block the aggressive crowd. His voice turned deadly serious: "Sorry, but you're looking at Miss Rothschild-of the New York Rothschild family." 13:57 He Stole My Ticket. I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not.

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th Nobody wanted to mess with the Rothschilds, especially when this "Miss Rothschild" clearly wasn't even a contestant. "Sorry, didn't mean to bother you." "We'll get out of your way." The reporters scattered like cockroaches, clearing a path for Rachel. Matt escorted her into the venue, and only relaxed once he was sure no reporters had followed them. "Miss Leroix, sorry about that whole-". Rachel shook her head, eyes

twinkling with amusement. "You did great. The Rothschild name definitely comes in handy." Just then, another black sedan pulled up.

The door opened and Sophie stepped out in four-inch heels, moving with practiced grace. She wore a silver gown with flawless makeup, though it couldn't quite hide the exhaustion in her eyes. The reporters immediately swarmed like sharks smelling blood. "Miss Leroix, care to explain the vote manipulation scandal?" "Do you think it's fair that the organizers kept you in the competition?" "Any truth to rumors about financial backers supporting you?" Sophie's face went ghost white. She stumbled backward, nearly twisting her ankle in those heels. A lean hand caught her waist.

Jaxon stepped out of the car, his gaze cutting through the crowd like a blade, "Gentlemen," his eyes swept over each reporter, "give the lady some space." 13:57 He Stole My Ticket. I flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High 57.79 Chapter 65 The reporters hesitated, but seeing Jaxon's face made them even more excited. "Mr. Rothschild! We've heard about your relationship with Miss Leroix-what exactly is going on between you two?" "Are you here to support her?" "Is it true you're engaged, like the rumors say?" The question made Sophie's whole body tense with excitement.

Jaxon smiled slightly, but his eyes were ice-cold. "Miss Leroix and I are old friends. I'm just here to cheer her on." He paused. "As for anything else, no comment." Sophie froze, managing an awkward smile. Their relationship summed up as "no comment"? Jaxon ignored the reporters and strode toward the venue, keeping Sophie close. The journalists tried to follow but security blocked them. Sophie gripped Jaxon's arm tight, voice shaking. "Jaxon, thank you..." Jaxon glanced down at her, but his gaze drifted past her shoulder, scanning the crowd.

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When he'd gotten out of the car, he'd caught sight of someone in a pale blue dress who looked familiar... "Don't mention it." His eyes kept searching, clearly distracted. Sophie didn't notice his preoccupation, still lost in her own gratitude. "I knew you wouldn't abandon me." Jaxon didn't respond because he'd spotted that figure again-just for a second before she disappeared around a corner. Pale blue gown, silk scarf wrapped around her head like armor, Could that really be... Rachel? Jaxon's heart started racing.

"Jaxon, what are you looking at?" Sophie followed his gaze but only saw an empty hallway. "Nothing," Jaxon pulled his attention back. "Let's go." 13:57 He Stole My Ticket, 1 Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High \$7.99 Chapter 65 He guided Sophie into the venue, mind already working. If "Daughter of the Sea" really was Rachel, then this competition was about to get very interesting. And finally-finally-he'd see Rachel again. After Matt led her to the green room, Rachel pulled off her veil. According to Matt, Nicolas had specifically contacted the organizers to reserve this room for her.

So she'd used his connections to get special treatment. She didn't mind pulling strings. If you had connections, why not use them? She picked up her phone and sent Nicolas a

quick message. "Thanks for the gifts. I love them." Nicolas replied almost immediately: "Glad you like them." She walked to the window, watching the crowd below. The room was on the third floor with a perfect view of the scene outside. Suddenly, she spotted Sophie clinging to Jaxon's arm as they headed upstairs. Sophie's movements looked weak and unsteady-without Jaxon supporting her, she'd probably collapse.

Amazing how much Sophie had worn herself down in just a few days. Knock knock. "Miss Leroix, the competition's about to start," Matt's voice came through the door. "Coming." Rachel took a deep breath, rewrapped the scarf around her head, grabbed her purse, and headed for the door. Matt was waiting in the hallway. Once she emerged, he escorted her toward the competition area. The corridor buzzed with activity. Rachel kept her head down, trying to avoid contact with anyone. Center stage featured ten design stations arranged in perfect rows, each equipped with exquisite tools and materials.

The audience filled every seat, camera flashes popping constantly in the media section. 13:57 He Stole My Ticket. I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High 58.1% Chapter 65 Rachel found a seat toward the edge. Looking around, she noticed Sophie positioned front and center, her gown practically glowing under the lights. "Contestants, please prepare yourselves," a staff member announced. "We're about to begin." Rachel adjusted her scarf, making sure only her eyes were visible.

She could feel curious stares from the other contestants, but nobody recognized her as "Daughter of the Sea." The stage lights dimmed, then blazed back to life, illuminating Maëlys in the center. She wore a sharp black suit, microphone in hand. "Ladies and gentlemen, media friends, welcome to the finals!" Maëlys's voice boomed through the theater. "After rigorous selection, ten top designers have emerged. Now, let's meet them one by one!" Spotlights swept across the contestant area. Each name called brought a contestant to their feet and onto the stage.

They started from the bottom rankings, building excitement as they worked their way up. Nine contestants had been revealed during the preliminaries, but the author of "Ripples"-Daughter of the Sea-remained a mystery. Everyone was dying to know who she was. But after calling the third-place contestant to the stage, Maëlys didn't follow the expected order. Instead of calling the second-place "Daughter of the Sea," she skipped ahead and announced the first-place winner: Sophie. Sophie blinked in surprise when she heard her name.

She'd been hoping to finally see this mysterious "Daughter of the Sea," never expecting such secrecy. But she quickly recovered, rising gracefully and waving to the audience with a smile. Her gaze swept the media section, then paused at a certain corner. That figure in blue... could it be her? 58.3 13:57 He Stole My Ticket, I Flew Private: Revenge Served Sky High What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not. Something has shifted, and the next step will have to meet it. The feeling is unfinished on purpose. What Likely Comes Next Expect tighter tension and fewer safe options.

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Sophie quickly shut down that thought, tearing her gaze away and walking forward. The media was eating up her every move, and she flashed smiles all around, but inside she was a total mess, her brain stuck on that woman! "Lenty of people had similar builds. Didn't mean it was Rachel. Ius, she was sitting way over on the side-probably wasn't even competing? ust some random audience member. eople could dress however they wanted. Maybe that was just her thing?

elling herself this, Sophie strutted to center stage and claimed her spot without hesitation, though her eyes kept sneaking back to that blue figure. faëlys paused, her voice dropping to this mysterious tone. "And our final contestant-the most enigmatic one of all." veryone knew exactly who she meant, and you could feel the excitement buzzing through the crowd. ut Maëlys was totally milking it, talking super slowly to drag out the suspense. "She entered anonymously as 'Daughter of the Sea,' and her piece Ripples' got ave reviews from online voters during preliminaries.

et's give it up for-Daughter of the Sea!" he place went absolutely nuts. ophie was scanning everywhere for this mystery contestant, but she nearly lost it when the veiled woman actually stood up! achel rose gracefully, those wave patterns on her pale blue dress catching the light like magic. ven with just her eyes showing, she had this undeniable presence. amera flashes went off like crazy, shutters clicking non-stop. eporters were practically trampling each other to get shots of this mysterious designer.

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Holy shit, she's so mysterious!" That whole look is incredible!" Keep shooting-get everything!" Hold up... isn't this the chick we cornered in the parking garage?" one reporter dropped his camera, looking totally confused. What parking garage?" The guy next to him elbowed him hard. "Focus, man. This is our front page!" The first reporter mumbled, "She said her name was Rothschild. Like, the New York Rothschilds." "Wait, what?" Maëlys stood center stage with her mic, keeping that sly smile going. She cleared her throat, voice booming through the theater.

"Everyone, let's welcome our ten amazing designers!" The crowd settled down, all eyes back on Maëlys. But Sophie was still wound tight as a spring, death-gripping her dress while staring daggers at Rachel walking up. The second that woman had stood up, Sophie felt like she was suffocating-like everything was falling apart. Why... why the hell

was it actually her! Her heart was going crazy as she tried to see past that veil. Watching Rachel gather her dress and head toward the stage, Sophie was dying for her to look up. Just once-one damn look! She had to know who this woman really was!

That stupid veil-she wanted to tear it right off step by step... The woman climbed onto the stage slowly, but then positioned herself at the very end! he'd picked the spot as far from Sophie as possible! didn't she want any attention at all? Who... who the hell was she? Was it Rachel or wasn't it? [it was her, why was she competing as "Daughter of the Sea"? it wasn't, why did everything about her seem so familiar? ophie's mind was spinning out of control, her nails digging into her palms so hard she didn't even feel the pain. laelys's voice cut through again. "Today's theme is-Eternity.

ou'll work with whatever materials we've provided. Five hours on the clock. After that, each of you gets five minutes to show your piece to the judges and audience-explain your concept, walk us through your process." he paused on purpose, eyes sweeping the crowd like she was reading everyone's minds. We've got some seriously big names judging this thing-renowned jewelry designers, artists, the works. But we're keeping that list under wraps for now. something to look forward to. ll the final pieces go up for charity auction after the competition.

Everything raised goes to arts education foundations. he whole thing's being livestreamed, so people at home can cheer for whoever they want." ut Sophie wasn't hearing a word about the rules. he was laser-focused on Rachel, trying to pick up any clue from how she moved. ut Rachel just stood there, totally composed, staring straight ahead like she couldn't care less about anything happening around her. lown in the audience, Jaxon had zeroed in on Rachel too. fe'd been lounging in his seat, scrolling through his phone, barely paying attention when Maëlys started rattling off rules.

But then he spotted that completely covered up woman. Wait-wasn't this the same person from the parking garage? Turns out she was actually competing-and she was the most mysterious one of all, the genius behind "Ripples." Daughter of the Sea! Talk about perfect timing. Rachel was listening hard to the competition rules, already strategizing how to pull off a design in such a tight window. To keep things fair, they never announced themes ahead of time, and Maëlys was being extra sneaky by not even revealing who the guest judges were.

Obviously trying to stop contestants from kissing up to judges beforehand. She was as secretive as Nicolas. Thinking about Nicolas actually made her feel less nervous. She had no idea why her brain kept wandering to that man lately. All those stares from the audience were making her uncomfortable. She was about to subtly roll her shoulders when she locked eyes with someone burning a hole through her. Their gares met across the space, and jaxon's pupils went tight. Those eyes-he'd know them anywhere. They looked exactly like Rachel's What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not.

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Those eyes were calm to the point of coldness, treating him like he was absolutely nobody. Jaxon froze, his heart clenching hard. That brief moment of eye contact almost confirmed it-that was definitely Rachel. But those eyes, the same ones that used to look at him with so much love, were now cold as winter ice. No warmth whatsoever. The woman on stage had Rachel's exact eyes, yet she felt like a complete stranger. axon's fingers clenched unconsciously, knuckles going white. He wanted to rush up there, rip off that veil, and see who she really was! Was it really her?

Why were her eyes so cold? Why wouldn't she even look at him properly? hose eyes were so familiar, but the emotion behind them was completely different-reflecting absolutely nothing. No, Rachel wouldn't look at me like that. When Rachel looked at me, there was light in her eyes," Jaxon muttered to himself. hat was the only way he could cope. le desperately wanted it to be Rachel, but also dreaded that it actually was. specially those utterly cold eyes-they were unnerving. le'd only seen that kind of look from one person before: his uncle Nicolas. axon closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

f it really was her, if it really was Rachel... le couldn't bear to think about it. After Maëlys finished announcing the rules, she left the stage, giving the contestants a full five hours to work. tachel didn't rush to grab materials. Instead, she stood still, calmly observing the other nine contestants. They scattered like birds released from a cage, scrambling toward the materials section, terrified they'd miss out on the best stuff. Rachel's gaze swept the materials area, finally settling on a moonstone.

The stone was completely transparent with a soft inner glow, like actual moonlight flowing inside. She walked toward the materials section, fingers lightly tracing the moonstone. It felt ice-cold. "Are you sure about this moonstone?" a staff member asked, surprised. "It's extremely hard-very difficult to work with." Rachel nodded. "Yes, I'm sure," The staff member said nothing more and handed her the moonstone. But the moment Rachel's fingers touched the stone, feeling that icy sensation spread from her fingertips to her heart, another hand suddenly shot out and grabbed the other end.

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Rachel paused slightly, looking up at the newcomer. Sophie stood before her with a sweet smile that barely concealed her malice. Her fingers gripped the moonstone tightly, applying pressure. "Excuse me," Sophie's voice was soft but domineering, "I saw this stone first. You wouldn't want to steal it from me, would you?" Rachel said nothing, just stared back silently. Her fingers remained firmly on the moonstone, showing no signs of letting go. Her lips pressed together slightly under the veil, eyes remaining utterly calm. Sophie's smile faltered for a moment, annoyance flashing in her eyes.

She'd wanted to see what materials this "Daughter of the Sea" would choose, then snatch them away! She pressed harder, voice carrying a warning. "This moonstone is extremely hard and difficult to work with. Without enough experience, you'd just waste such good material. Why don't you let me have it instead?" Rachel remained silent, her grip tightening imperceptibly. She didn't want to speak and risk Sophie recognizing her voice—that would ruin all the fun. But her silence only made Sophie's expression darker. Was this girl looking down on her? How dare she be so stubborn!

Sophie's gaze swept Rachel's face, trying to read something from those visible eyes. But those eyes were eerily calm, emotionless even—not showing the slightest anger despite this blatant attempt to steal her choice. Listen," Sophie's voice turned colder, "are you really going to fight me over this? I'm the eldest daughter of the Leroix family. You should know what that means." Hearing that title made Rachel's eyelashes flutter slightly. Eldest daughter of the Leroix family? Amazing how quickly Sophie had claimed that position after just a few days.

But Sophie interpreted her reaction as intimidation. She lifted her chin higher and yanked hard, trying to wrench the moonstone from Rachel's grasp. But Rachel's fingers seemed rooted in place—completely immovable. You!" Sophie was furious, glaring at her. The staff member stood awkwardly nearby, unsure what to do. He hadn't expected two contestants to fight so fiercely over one material. After hesitating, he carefully suggested, "Ladies, perhaps... choose different materials? We have many other high-quality options available." Sophie laughed coldly, staring daggers at Rachel. "No need.

I want this one!" Rachel watched Sophie's aggressive behavior and suddenly felt mischievous. Her fingers shifted slightly, then suddenly released the moonstone, Sophie had been pulling hard and, caught off guard, stumbled backward several steps. Her heels scraped harshly against the floor as she nearly fell. "You!" Sophie steadied herself, face flushing red with rage, "You did that on purpose!" Rachel remained silent, just gave her one calm look—like she was watching some irrelevant drama. She turned and walked to another section of materials, as if the whole confrontation had never happened.

But the reporters below caught every second. Camera flashes exploded, shutters clicking rapidly, capturing Sophie's humiliation in full. "Oh my God, is Sophie literally stealing materials?" "That's so aggressive! She's the one who tried to steal first!" "Keep

shooting-this is front page material!" The livestream was broadcasting everything, and the chat exploded: [Sophie is so arrogant! She's the one who tried to steal someone else's material!] [Exactly! The other person had already chosen it, and she still tried to grab it. Unbelievable!] [Where are Sophie's fans?

Come defend this 'elegant' behavior!] Sophie's fans immediately jumped in: [Our girl was just focused on the competition! She didn't mean it!] [Yeah, competitions are about seizing opportunities-whoever gets it first wins!] [That Daughter of the Sea' is so fake! Letting go on purpose to embarrass Sophie-what a schemer!] But most viewers weren't buying it: ILMAO Sophie's fans are so delusional. She clearly stole first and they're blaming the other person?] [Daughter of the Sea' obviously didn't want to fight with her, but Sophie kept pushing!] [This totally changed my opinion of Sophie.

What a turn-off!] Sophie stood on stage, face cycling between red and pale. He could feel countless cameras focused on her like knives, stripping her bare. He instinctively looked toward Jaxon in the audience, but he wasn't even watching her-his gaze was following someone else walking away. Her nails dug deep into her palms. Miss," the staff member carefully asked, "do you still want this moonstone?" Sophie snapped back to attention, forcing down her rage and managing a smile. "Of course I do!" What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not.

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By snatching her stone, Sophie had forced "Daughter of the Sea" to completely rethink her approach! Meanwhile, Rachel had moved to another section, fingers lightly tracing a pale blue aquamarine. She looked completely unfazed, as if the earlier drama had nothing to do with her. Sophie bit her lip and returned to her design station. The livestream chat was still going crazy.

[Sophie totally embarrassed herself there!] [Daughter of the Sea' is so classy-not stooping to her level!] [Sophie fans need to stop making excuses-your girl's just a spoiled brat!] Sophie gripped the moonstone tightly, her fingertips white from the pressure. Rachel's calm eyes kept flashing through her mind-that cold look made her panic It can't be her..." Sophie kept telling herself. "That waste couldn't possibly have

such composure." But her hands were shaking uncontrollably, dropping her pencil several times. Rachel had been standing in front of the aquamarine for over a minute now.

The stone wasn't impressive-pale color, ordinary quality. Compared to the other contestants' Burmese pigeon blood rubies and Colombian Muzo emeralds, it looked completely unremarkable. She picked up the aquamarine, studying it in her palm. Under the lights, it gave off a gentle glow. Sophie watched Rachel's every move from nearby. When she saw Rachel finally choose that ordinary aquamarine, she couldn't help but smirk. Seriously? That's it?" Sophie thought mockingly. That aquamarine was nowhere near the quality of the moonstone. She had this competition in the bag!

Rachel paid no attention to Sophie's stare. Carrying the stone, she walked back to her design station. After sitting down, she gently placed the aquamarine on the table, then picked up a pencil and began sketching. Her fingers moved gracefully across the paper. Sophie couldn't help stealing glances, feeling vaguely uneasy. She remembered Rachel used to look just as focused when drawing designs before. But she quickly shook her head, pushing down that anxiety. 'It's just an ordinary stone.

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Even the best design can't make miracles happen." Rachel's pencil flew across the paper, creating smooth, precise lines. When she heard the theme "Eternity," her first thought was of Grandfather. After careful consideration, she decided to interpret the theme through a necklace. The centerpiece would be that aquamarine, cut into a teardrop shape symbolizing the passage of time and the continuity of life. Surrounding the main stone would be a ring of delicate diamonds, like stars orbiting the moon-understated yet brilliant.

The diamond arrangement wouldn't be a perfect circle, but would flow in natural curves like rippling water, complementing the aquamarine's ethereal glow. The chain would be platinum with a special matte finish that created a vintage texture, contrasting beautifully with the main stone's soft luster while maintaining perfect harmony. On the back of the necklace, Rachel designed a small mechanism-a gentle press would reveal a hidden compartment.

Inside, engraved in tiny letters: "Time flows like water, memories are eternal." This was her understanding of "eternity"-true permanence wasn't about physical preservation, but the inheritance of memories and emotions. Her design had no excessive ornamentation, yet every detail revealed understated beauty. She made a final mark with her pencil, completing the sketch. Setting down her pencil, she looked at the design with a slight smile. On the other side... Sophie was pretty pleased with herself after getting the moonstone.

Sitting at her station, fingers stroking the crystal-clear stone, she was already planning how to turn it into a show-stopping piece. Her design concept was simple-since the theme was "Eternity," she'd express it as directly as possible. Moonstone symbolized

eternal light, so she'd design it as a full moon hanging at the center of a necklace, surrounded by brilliant diamonds representing stars. She wanted everyone to immediately understand her design concept without any complex interpretation. Sophie's pencil moved quickly across the paper.

Her sketch took shape rapidly—the main stone would be that moonstone, cut into a perfect circle symbolizing the eternal full moon. Around it, a dense ring of diamonds would sparkle like stars orbiting the moon. For the chain, she chose classic platinum—smooth surface, no unnecessary decoration. After finishing, she looked at her sketch with satisfaction, her smile deepening. The simpler the design, the more it would highlight the main stone's brilliance. She glanced over at Rachel, who was still focused on her sketching, expression calm. Sophie rolled her eyes. What was she pretending for?

She was probably panicking inside—what could she possibly create with such an ordinary stone? Cameras clicked constantly below, recording every contestant's movement. Sophie looked up, scanning the audience until she found Jaxon's seat. He sat in the front row, impeccably dressed, long legs crossed, but his gaze was fixed unwaveringly on "Daughter of the Sea." His eyes were intense and deep. Sophie had never seen Jaxon look at anyone like that—such focus, such almost obsessive attention made her heart sink. She unconsciously gripped her sketch tighter, crinkling the paper.

Jaxon's gaze was so direct, without any attempt to hide it. His eyes were locked on that silk-scarved woman. A strange irritation rose in Sophie's chest. Jaxon had never looked at her that way. Even during their most intimate moments, his gaze always seemed to lack something—a feeling she couldn't put into words. But now, his eyes held emotions she'd never seen before—like searching, like anticipation, even a hint of... nervousness. Sophie's hands trembled slightly, nails nearly digging into her palms. She looked at "Daughter of the Sea" again.

But the woman never looked up, remaining focused on her work. A strong sense of unease washed over Sophie. She quickly lowered her head, forcing herself to refocus on her sketch. But her hands kept shaking uncontrollably, her pencil creating a crooked, wavering line across the paper. What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not. Something has shifted, and the next step will have to meet it. The feeling is unfinished on purpose. What Likely Comes Next Expect tighter tension and fewer safe options. Hidden truths may press forward. The path ahead should feel earned and a bit sharper.

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The projector light cast shadows across his face, making his features look even more severe. His gaze seemed focused on the PowerPoint, but his peripheral vision kept drifting to the tablet beside him. The tablet was silently streaming the competition broadcast. Whenever the camera swept past "Daughter of the Sea's" position, Nicolas's eyes would linger for a few seconds. Her figure was completely covered by the silk scarf, only her eyes visible. After his subordinate finished reporting this month's performance without getting a response, he stole a glance at Nicolas.

Their CEO was looking at the tablet with a... peculiar smile playing at his lips. The subordinate immediately felt a chill. He'd never seen Nicolas smile like that before! Perhaps sensing his stare, Nicolas glanced at him coolly and responded with a simple, "Mm." Suddenly, a message notification popped up on the tablet screen. Nicolas's fingers paused briefly, then he casually swiped to open it. It was a video from Matt. The video showed Rachel focused intently on her design sketch. Her fingers moved gracefully as she sat quietly, unaffected by anything around her.

Nicolas watched the video for several seconds, then closed the message, pushed the tablet aside, and returned his gaze to the room with its previous intensity. Rachel's fingers gripped the cutting tool steadily, the blade tracing lightly across the stone's surface. Her movements were swift and precise. The gem gradually revealed a teardrop shape under her hands-smooth, rounded edges with clearly visible internal patterns. The five hours passed quickly. When Rachel finally set down her tools, her fingers were stiff and her shoulders ached terribly.

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he gently rolled her neck, looking at the finished piece with a satisfied smile. Staff members carefully collected each contestant's work. The ten contestants would be randomly assigned presentation order-five minutes each. Rachel drew sixth place. Not first, not last-right in the middle. She followed a staff member offstage to the contestant preparation area. Sophie drew third place and nodded, seemingly satisfied with the order. After all contestants had drawn their numbers, Maëlys returned to the stage with a mysterious smile.

Standing center stage, she scanned the audience and contestants, her voice carrying throughout the venue: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'll now reveal our three judges-all authorities in the jewelry design world," She paused dramatically, building suspense, then continued: "Our first judge is Mr. Antonio Rossi from Italy. He's a founding member of the International Jewelry Design Association and multiple winner of global top jewelry design awards." Thunderous applause erupted. Maëlys smiled and continued: "Our second judge is Ms. Isabelle Dupont from France.

She's the dean of the Paris Institute of Fine Jewelry and serves as chief judge for multiple international jewelry design competitions. Her style is elegant and poetic-she's

known as 'the poet of jewelry.'" As for our third judge." she paused. "he hasn't arrived yet." After she finished, the audience sat in stunned silence for two seconds before erupting into chaos. The livestream chat, quiet during the competition, suddenly exploded: [Finally! Five hours felt like forever! Let's see these masters compete!] [Who's the third judge?

Someone that important?] [For us outsiders-what level are the first two judges?] [Put it this way-they're like Nobel Prize winners of jewelry design.] [Interesting! Even more curious about the third one now~] Contestants had thirty minutes to rest. Rachel followed a staff member to the individual prep rooms. Each room was private. After Rachel closed the door, she finally relaxed. Without even removing her veil, she collapsed onto the sofa, closed her eyes, and let out a long breath. Five straight hours had drained almost all her energy.

Her fingers still trembled slightly, her shoulders aching terribly. She rubbed her temples, trying to relax. Suddenly, the door burst open. Rachel shot up from the sofa, looking toward the door with alarm. Jaxon stood there in his impeccable suit, but his eyes held an urgency she'd never seen before. How did he get here? How did he get backstage? Was security really that lax? Jaxon closed the door behind him, staring at her intently like he was trying to read her face. "Who are you really?" Jaxon's voice was low, carrying suppressed emotion. Rachel's heart sank. Had he figured it out already?

Rachel said nothing, just pointed toward the door, signaling him to leave. Jaxon didn't move. Instead, he stepped closer, his gaze sharpening: "Why won't you speak? Who are you?" Rachel's fingers tightened as complex emotions churned inside her. She couldn't speak-if she did, Jaxon would definitely recognize her, but Jaxon was relentless, moving closer, reducing the distance between them. The situation left her no choice but to break her silence. "Get out." Her voice was low and hoarse, forced from deep in her throat. Jaxon's pupils contracted sharply. That voice-he knew it too well.

Even with her deliberately lowered tone, he could still recognize it! It was Rachel's voice! "Rachel," his voice trembled with barely contained excitement, "is it you?" Rachel's eyes flickered, but she forced herself to stay calm. She couldn't reveal her identity yet-it wasn't time. "You've got the wrong person." But her words had no effect. Jaxon wasn't fooled. His hands shook with excitement. Suddenly, he lunged forward and yanked off her veil with lightning speed! The silk scarf floated in the air, momentarily blocking their vision.

Then it drifted down slowly, gradually revealing the face Jaxon had dreamed about day and night! As the veil hit the floor, Rachel's face was completely exposed. Her expression was calm but carried a coldness that kept everyone at arm's length. Jaxon's hand froze in midair, staring at her face, his voice trembling: "Rachel, it really is you." What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not. Something has shifted, and the next step will have to meet it. The feeling is unfinished on purpose. What Likely Comes Next Expect tighter tension and fewer safe options.

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Seeing that she was already exposed, Rachel didn't bother denying it anymore. She just looked at him quietly. But her attitude hit Jaxon like a bucket of ice water. "Rachel, you..." He opened his mouth, not knowing what to say. Her coldness made his heart race with panic. "Jaxon, if you just wanted to confirm my identity, well, now you have. I'm Rachel Leroux. If there's nothing else, you can leave." As she spoke, Rachel tried to pull her wrist free from Jaxon's grip. It didn't work. Jaxon held on tight, looking at her with emotions she couldn't read.

"Rachel, do you have any idea how long I've been looking for you?" No clue, and I don't want to know." Her words cut deep. Rachel's fingers tightened. She couldn't keep this up-break time was only thirty minutes, and she needed to get her head back in the game for the presentation round. He couldn't let him mess with her competition.. Jaxon," her voice stayed ice-cold, "if you don't leave now, I'm calling security. I don't think you want Sophie seeing this, do you?" At the mention of Sophie, Jaxon's expression tensed, his eyes flickering with hesitation.

Sophie was fragile-if she saw him here, she'd spiral. Plus, he selfishly didn't want Sophie to know Rachel was here. Rachel caught his hesitation and pressed on: "Sophie's in the room next door. She could come over any minute. Jaxon, please leave." After a long moment, Jaxon finally let go. He knew Rachel was using Sophie to force him out, but he couldn't argue with it. His gaze lingered on Rachel's face for several seconds before he took a deep breath. "Fine, I'll go. But after the competition, you're waiting for me. We need to talk. Rachel didn't answer, just stared at him coldly.

Jaxon didn't say anything else, just headed for the door. His hand paused on the handle, and he looked back one more time: "Rachel, don't even think about running from me again. This time, I won't let you disappear." With that, he pushed the door open and strode out. The moment the door closed, Rachel's body swayed slightly as she sank back onto the sofa. Jaxon showing up was completely unplanned-it had totally thrown her off her rhythm. With about ten minutes left in the break, she walked to the mirror, fixed her hair and clothes, and wrapped the veil securely around herself again.

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Then she picked up the water glass from the table and took a sip. The temperature was perfect. The cool water helped ease her exhaustion. Just then, footsteps echoed

outside, followed by Sophie's voice: "Jaxon? What are you doing here? Did you come to see me?" A moment of silence, then Jaxon's muffled response: "Yeah." Sophie grabbed Jaxon and pulled him toward her prep room. After they went in and closed the door, everything went quiet outside.

"Jaxon," Sophie sounded hesitant, "did you see 'Daughter of the Sea'?" "I did." Jaxon usually answered all of Sophie's questions, but this time he was unusually brief-just answering exactly what she asked, nothing more. Sophie didn't notice anything off and finally asked what had been eating at her: "Do you think... she could be Rachel?" Could she be Rachel Leroux? This question had been torturing her all day, especially after seeing Jaxon's eyes glued to "Daughter of the Sea" during the competition! Jaxon's eyes darkened. "She's not Rachel." Sophie's eyes lit up. "Really?"

She felt so familiar, I was starting to wonder." Yeah, she's not." axon poured two glasses of water and took a sip of his own. "I know Rachel. She doesn't have that kind of presence." or some reason, he instinctively wanted to hide the truth from Sophie. ophie breathed a sigh of relief. "Guess I was overthinking... I thought I was seeing Rachel again. Good thing it's not her." You don't want to see Rachel?" Jaxon suddenly asked, looking up at Sophie with a hint of coldness. ophie flinched at his expression, nearly dropping her glass. "No... that's not it! I'm just worried about Rachel.

After all that online harassment, if she showed u ere now, it would be terrible for her!" he was shocked-what was wrong with Jaxon? Why was he suddenly acting like this? hankfully, he didn't pursue it further, and Sophie didn't dare say anything else. he presentation round started quickly. he first contestant's piece was a glamorous diamond necklace with a massive ruby centerpiece surrounded by countless diamonds- absolutely dazzling. he judges nodded but didn't look particularly impressed.

The second contestant presented butterfly earrings with wings studded with colorful gems that looked incredibly lifelike. While the design concept wasn't groundbreaking, her stone cutting and craftsmanship were meticulous. The judges' eyes brightened as they began whispering mong themselves. When Sophie's turn came, she confidently walked on stage, displaying her moonstone necklace. Her design was straightforward and flashy-the moonstone cut nto a perfect circle representing the eternal full moon, surrounded by brilliant diamonds like stars decorating the night sky.

'My design theme is Eternal as the Moon," Sophie's voice rang clear with confidence. "The moonstone symbolizes eternal light, while the diamonds represent stars. Through this necklace, I want to express eternal beauty and brilliance." The judges nodded in acknowledgment of her design, Sophie hadn't expected such a lukewarm response to her work. Her smile faltered for a moment before she recovered her confidence.

She always generated buzz, and as soon as her piece was revealed, online spectators exploded: 【LMAO, thought it was gonna be something amazing, but it's basically identical to the first contestant's-both necklaces, both 'stars around the moon' designs. 】 【This is the level of a 'genius designer'? Please.】 [Are you blind? They're completely

different! Just because they're both necklaces doesn't mean they're the same!] [Sophie fans really can spin anything. Should call you guys detergent from now on.] But Sophie on stage had no idea about the online bloodbath.

After using her five minutes to present her work, she walked off stage, deliberately catching Rachel's eye with a challenging look. Rachel remained expressionless, as if she hadn't seen Sophie's gaze at all. She lightly tapped her right hand with her left, carefully thinking through what she'd say. Finally, it was her turn. What Remains The scene closes, but its pressure does not. Something has shifted, and the next step will have to meet it. The feeling is unfinished on purpose. What Likely Comes Next Expect tighter tension and fewer safe options. Hidden truths may press forward.

The path ahead should feel earned and a bit sharper. Questions to Carry Which choice will echo the longest? Who revealed the most by saying the least? How might today's restraint become tomorrow's turning point? Context That Raises Stakes Rules, memory, and the setting frame each decision. Inside that frame, even small moves gain size. The chapter belongs to its world as much as to its people. One-Line Exit With this chapter done, the story steps forward-quieter, clearer, and ready to show what those choices mean.