

What makes a power couple

Chapter 56:

A sense of intrigue mixed with disbelief spread through the room as the guests tried to piece together the situation, wondering what kind of boldness it took to provoke someone of Lula's stature.

Lula, her finger trembling, pointed directly at Nicole, her eyes blazing with hatred and accusation. "It's her!" she cried out, venom dripping from her words.

In that moment, Lula completely lost her composure, her cries turning into frenzied screams, like someone unhinged and desperate to make their voice heard. "I'm not what they're saying! Nicole schemed against me—she's the one who trapped me in this mess!"

Her rage unrelenting, Lula shot Nicole a glare so fierce it seemed to burn through the air. "I didn't do anything wrong! The marks you see? They're from a full-body massage. You, Nicole, with your filthy mind—knew about the treatment and twisted it to humiliate me. How could you be so heartless?"

Lula's finger shook as it pointed accusingly at Nicole, her fury palpable. Had she been dressed, there was no doubt she would have stormed over and slapped her across the face.

A massage? The crowd exchanged doubtful looks, glancing toward Nicole, their confusion palpable. Then, they paused for a brief moment as the realization dawned on them.

Wasn't Nicole the one everyone had been admiring just moments ago? The dazzling star of the night, the one who had commanded all eyes upon her?

Lula's sobs grew even more desperate, her pleas now wrapped in a facade of vulnerability.

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Nicole, however, remained unmoved. She sat poised, her fingers idly playing with one another, the glossy black nails reflecting the soft light as they gleamed against her pale skin. Her calm, deliberate movements held an aura of cold elegance, as if the swirling drama around her were nothing more than a distant echo.

Beneath her youthful appearance, an undeniable air of control radiated from her. It was clear—Nicole was not one to be easily rattled.

Emil's blood simmered with rage as he observed Nicole's unfazed attitude. With each step, his anger intensified, and in a few long strides, he was right before her, his voice a low growl. "Why did you do this? Why deliberately tarnish Lula's reputation in such a malicious way?"

His hands clenched into fists, his knuckles pale from the tension, and his whole body was coiled, ready to strike if Nicole didn't apologize.

But Nicole remained as composed as ever, her gaze unwavering. She lifted her chin, meeting Emil's fiery stare with one of her own, her voice unhurried, controlled. "Mr. Gray, shifting the blame isn't a wise choice."

Nicole's words cut through the tension like a blade aimed straight for the heart. Her eyes, cool and sharp, narrowed slightly, radiating authority and calm confidence.

She was still young—barely in her twenties—but carrying herself with the poise of someone far older, someone who had endured enough to understand the weight of power and its subtleties. She held her ground, never flinching, matching Emil's fiery presence beat for beat.

The crowd watched in silence, instantly understanding the subtext in Nicole's words. It wasn't Lula who was the victim here—it was Nicole herself.

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Chapter 57:

Nicole's words cut through Emil's defenses, exposing his bias for all to see. Who was he to judge her when he so blindly protected his own family, no matter the circumstances?

Squall's brow furrowed ever so slightly as he observed the escalating tension, his gaze flickering between the two.

Emil's face flushed a deep crimson as his fury took hold, his finger pointing sharply at Nicole. "You have quite the tongue, don't you? But if it weren't for you, would Lula have fallen down those stairs?"

Nicole's intent had never been to make a scene. She had simply hoped to teach Lula a lesson, one that would remind her to stay within bounds. Out of respect for Analia, who had a close relationship with Jade, Nicole had kept her actions measured.

However, since Lula had insisted on complicating things further by hiding behind her father's power, Nicole saw no choice but to let the consequences fall where they may.

Nicole's expression remained calm as she tilted her head, her voice smooth and collected. "Oh? I was walking ahead of her, with everyone watching. She was behind me. So, please, tell me—how exactly did she manage to fall?"

A ripple of disbelief moved through the crowd as realization began to settle in. If Lula had stumbled in front of Nicole, it would've been easy to blame Nicole. But behind Nicole? That painted an entirely different picture, one that left little room for doubt.

Lula's face contorted with frustration, and Emil's anger began to wane, his mind slowly piecing together the truth.

For a moment, Emil appeared ready to redirect the situation, but one simple remark from Nicole sent it spiraling into chaos. If he pushed too hard, Lula's reputation could be shattered beyond repair.

In a fit of rage, he barked, "What are you all standing around for? Get this conniving, toxic girl out of here!"

Just then, a calm, steady voice broke through the rising tension. "Quite the temper you've got, Mr. Gray." Aidan's words were measured, the sharpness evident as they sliced through the noise.

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The room shifted in response as everyone turned to see Aidan entering with deliberate calmness. His lips curved into a faint, icy smirk, and his narrowed eyes carried an unspoken chill that swept through the room, sending a shiver down everyone's spine.

With a calm, distant air, Aidan scanned the hall. He noticed everything, yet his eyes never rested on anyone.

Not a sound moved through the room. The sight of him left people speechless. His jawline cut sharp like stone, and his face held the kind of symmetry that made heads turn. When his gaze finally lifted, it carried a cold detachment that somehow made him seem untouchable.

A hushed voice near the back asked, “That’s Aidan Moore, isn’t it?”

People knew the stories. Aidan’s health had always been a delicate matter, with whispers that he wouldn’t live long. But no one was reckless enough to speak against him. The Moore family held Ariosa in the palm of their hand. Just the way he addressed Emil made it clear. He wasn’t pleased.

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Chapter 58:

Confused glances passed between guests. Why would Aidan choose to stand with Nicole?

Leaning against the staircase in silence, Nicole stood still, offering no words. Still, her chest tightened with each breath. That cold presence Aidan carried sent a chill straight through her spine. She wondered about the intention behind his words.

Emil tried to recover, stepping up with a forced smile. “Mr. Moore. It’s been a long time. I was just—”

Aidan walked past him as if he didn’t exist, stopping in front of Jade instead. His voice was respectful, but distant. “My grandmother mentioned you not long ago, Mrs. Gray. I hope everything’s been going well for you.”

Heat crept up Emil’s neck like a slap he never saw coming. The tension in the room pressed down on him, tightening his stomach with discomfort.

One look at Nicole told Jade all she needed. A sinking feeling took hold—years had taught her to spot unspoken truths. Aidan’s move wasn’t made on impulse. He was protecting Nicole—for reasons that clearly ran deeper than anyone realized.

Jade said calmly, “I appreciate your concern. I’ve been well. Just didn’t expect tonight to be so... unexpected.”

Aidan turned his head back toward Emil, the corner of his mouth lifting just slightly. “When the truth’s left hanging, it stains more than your name. It stains the entire family.”

Tension rippled across Emil’s face. This wasn’t the Aidan he knew. Aidan didn’t dip his toes into drama, didn’t waste time with scandals. The fact that he was now involved? That spelled serious trouble.

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Waiting any longer wasn’t an option. If he stalled, his daughter’s reputation would be crushed beyond repair.

Jaw clenched, Emil turned toward the butler. “Why are you just standing there? Get Lula out of here.”

However, Lula refused to let it go. She shoved the butler’s hand away and shot Nicole a furious glare, her voice shaking with rage. “You’re heartless, Nicole! I invited you as a courtesy to Marissa, and this is how you repay me? You pushed me down those stairs. You humiliated me! I’m not leaving until you apologize!”

Cold and steady, Nicole’s dark eyes locked onto Lula. When she spoke, her voice was low, sharp, and cutting. “Miss Gray, are you sure I actually pushed you?”

The chill in Nicole’s gaze made Lula’s breath catch. That look held no bluff. It was a silent threat, and it told Lula one thing—speak with care, or suffer the consequence. If Lula kept spinning that tale, she’d end up cleaning up the mess on her own.

The blood drained from her face. She gulped down a lump in her throat, though that streak of pride refused to back down. “So first you shove me, and now you’re threatening me? Has the world just tossed fairness out the window?”

Nicole said nothing. With unshaken poise, she stepped forward into the middle of the hall. Standing with calm authority, she exuded the air of royalty, while the rest simply stared, holding their breath.

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Then she reached down, pinched the edge of her dress, and drew it upward, revealing a pair of flawless, long legs.

It was as if the whole room hit pause. No one dared to blink. They were too busy trying to make sense of it.

Panic flared in Lula's voice as she screamed. "What is this? Nicole, are you trying to play some game? You think showing your legs proves anything?"

Nicole didn't spare Lula a glance. Her focus cut straight to Emil, eyes sharp, voice cool and composed. "Mr. Gray, if I can prove my innocence, shouldn't you and your daughter both apologize to me?"

A hush fell over the hall, tension crackling in the air. Every head turned, curiosity piqued.

How was Nicole going to prove it?

Marissa leaned toward Squall, faking concern. "What if she's just bluffing?" Squall's eyes, however, hadn't left Aidan—noting how his gaze had been fixed solely on Nicole all along.

"Squall?"

He finally looked back at her, his voice flat. “If she’s just bluffing, she’ll have to face the consequences.”

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Marissa exhaled, reassured. Sure, Nicole looked stunning tonight. Squall might have glanced her way—but in the end, Marissa convinced herself that no matter how dazzling Nicole seemed, she was still irrelevant in his eyes.

Nicole, unfazed by Emil’s silence, pushed again. “What’s wrong, Mr. Gray? Or would you rather skip the drama and apologize now?”

Her voice remained calm, but there was no mistaking the sharp edge beneath it.

Emil’s expression tightened. He couldn’t ignore her anymore. “And just how do you plan to prove it?”

Nicole turned, reached behind her, and spread out the train of her dress. All eyes followed. There, streaked boldly across the hem of her pristine white gown, was a smear of shimmery pink and blue. Under the lights, it glimmered unmistakably.

A few women began to whisper, eyes wide. “Wait—is that eyeshadow?”

“It is! That’s from the Fairy Palette by Tangerine Rouge. Best-seller everywhere right now.”

“I’m wearing it tonight too—I’d know those colors anywhere.”

Another gasp. “Hold on... isn’t that the same palette Lula’s wearing?”

Heads swiveled toward Lula. A cluster of women exchanged glances, then nodded in unison. “Same palette, no doubt about it.”

Disdain rippled through the crowd. Judgment followed fast.

The men, even if clueless about makeup, could still match the glitter on Nicole’s dress to the shimmer on Lula’s eyelids.

Nicole turned slightly, her voice slicing through the murmurs. “Lula, how exactly did your eyeshadow end up on the back of my dress?”

Lula froze. Her lips trembled. “W-What are you saying?”

Nicole's smile was cold. "Your shoes already gave it away."

Gasps broke out. Eyes dropped to Lula's heels—and there it was. Pink and blue glitter smeared across the soles, glinting beneath the lights.

It all clicked. Lula had been walking behind Nicole and had deliberately stepped on her dress. But the very thing she had used became the evidence that exposed her. A petty move. And now, a humiliating failure.

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Chapter 60:

The room's energy shifted instantly, the crowd recoiling from Lula like she'd sprouted fangs. Disgust colored their expressions, as if she were something vile they'd found stuck to their shoes.

Realizing her scheme had unraveled, Lula broke down. “Nicole! You set the trap! You tricked me into humiliating myself like this!”

Nicole raised a brow. “I just turned your ill intentions against yourself. That’s all.”

“You—you heartless bitch! I swear, I’ll—”

“Enough!” The sharp crack of Jade’s cane against the marble floor silenced the room. She turned to Emil with a scathing glare, her voice cold and thunderous. “Lula, the truth is plain to see. And you still dare to accuse Ms. Wilson? Are you trying to kill me with shame?”

Jade’s presence hit like a wall—imposing and unshakable. In the chaos, she was a force of order, restoring dignity and justice with a single glare.

Lula stood frozen, disbelief etched across her face. She had never imagined the grandmother who once adored her would side with Nicole, let alone demand an apology.

Tears pooled in her eyes. “I won’t apologize! She humiliated me at school, and that’s why I—”

“Silence!” Jade snapped. Her voice thundered through the room, brooking no excuse.

But the damage was already done. The crowd had seen enough. The truth was clear.

Nicole gave Lula a small, mocking smile. “If only you’d been this honest from the start, we could’ve avoided all this trouble.”

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Lula’s face went sheet-white. She broke down, sobbing again—no longer defiant, just defeated.

Through the crowd, Aidan stepped forward. He stopped beside Nicole, tall and unwavering—like a wall at her back. His voice wasn’t loud, but it carried the weight of iron. “Mr. Gray, you and your daughter owe Nicole an apology.”

The room dropped into stunned silence. No one knew what to make of what had just happened.

Now they were watching Aidan—yes, that Aidan—actually defend Nicole. He hardly ever appeared in public, and yet here he was, standing behind her.

A low murmur spread across the room.

Squall's brow tightened.

Emil, who had ruled the business world for decades, stood surrounded by younger faces. If he apologized now, where would that leave his reputation? He hesitated, then forced a grin onto his face. "Mr. Moore, you know how it is. Kids squabble. A few scratches here and there. No need to make a scene—"

"Kids?" Aidan tilted his head slightly, his voice steeped in sarcasm. "Lula's legal to marry, isn't she?"

Emil's face turned red. "Well—"

Jade's eyes narrowed as she shot her son a sharp glare.

Emil's mouth clamped shut, his stomach twisting into knots.

Aidan swept the room with a calm stare. His voice came low, but every word hit hard. "Nicole came here as my companion to celebrate Mrs. Gray's birthday. I brought her in—she's not leaving with tears in her eyes."

Emil and Lula stood frozen, stunned beyond speech.

Nicole blinked. She had never seen Aidan speak for her like that.

Squall's expression darkened further. Nicole wasn't chasing after him—he had gotten it all wrong.

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