

Happiness 661

Chapter 661 Chatting Happily

Although Natalie was well aware that being a socially responsible company could help to bolster Dream's image and build the company's brand, she still preferred to keep a low profile.

Indeed, Yandel was much better at socializing than her.

Remaining deep in thought, Natalie took a sip of her champagne and sighed.

However, right after she let out the sigh, a teasing voice suddenly sounded next to her.

"Why are you sighing? You're gonna sigh away all your good luck!"

Natalie turned in the direction of the voice and saw the familiar face with a devilish expression on it. "Christopher!"

"Why are you here alone?" Christopher took a sip of his wine to mask his awkwardness. "Where's the man who snatched you away? Is he not worried about leaving you here all by yourself?"

Even though Christopher sounded slightly snarky, Natalie was very certain of the man's character. After all, they had been through so much together.

"Samuel has to work. He's on a business trip," she replied smilingly. "Besides, I'm already a fully-grown adult. Why would he worry about me? Don't forget, I'm already a mother of four."

Christopher knew that Samuel had Franklin and Sophia. As such, he couldn't help but sympathize with Natalie for having to take on the role of the kid's stepmother.

"Natalie, honestly, those two kids from the Bowers family are quite a handful, aren't they? What is it like being their stepmother? Are you suffering?"

"Hey, don't try to sow discord between us!" Natalie glared at Christopher before continuing, "Who told you I'm their stepmother? Franklin and Sophia came from my belly as well, and we are getting along incredibly well."

"What?"

Christopher could hardly believe his ears. He was so shocked that he almost spilled the wine in his glass.

"Does that mean... you're the biological mother of the twins from the Bowers family too?"

"Yes."

"Quadruplets?"

"Yeah. Do you have a problem with that?"

Christopher had previously concluded that Natalie had chosen Samuel over him because Samuel knew her earlier than he did.

He had always thought that the couple had met each other at most three months earlier than he knew Natalie. He did not expect them to have met way back, in fact, so far back that their kids were already so grown up.

Christopher said with mixed feelings, "Four in one go... I wonder if you or Samuel should get the credit for that..."

Although Natalie could tell that the man was jealous, she did not mind at all. "Mr. Collins, why are you acting jealous over that? After all, child-bearing ability is not the only thing Samuel is better than you at."

"Natalie Nichols!"

"What's up?"

"Haven't we decided to treat each other like family?" Christopher huffed, pretending to be angry. "If you were really my sister, you'll definitely drive me mad!"

"Well, aren't big brothers supposed to be bullied by their sisters?" Natalie winked cheekily.

"If that's the case, I'll definitely go crazy."

Christopher and Natalie laughed heartily.

While the two of them were chatting happily, Shawn of the Watsons family spotted Natalie and approached her.

"Natalie."

"Shawn! It's been a long time!" Natalie greeted the man warmly and asked, "How's Grandpa?"

"He's as healthy as a horse!" Shawn fixed a gentle gaze on her and continued, "He was just complaining to me recently that you haven't visited him in a while, saying that if you don't show up soon, he would think of a way to meet you instead. He was even asking me how to do it in a way that doesn't seem too intentional."

"He won't have to worry about that if I visit him first." Natalie chuckled.

"All right. I'm going to hold you to that. You'd better visit him soon, Natalie."

"I will."

Shawn and Christopher had known each other previously through business dealings. However, with Natalie around, the two men were talking about deeper topics and getting to know each other better. They felt like they could empathize with each other and wished that they had known each other earlier.

Even though Natalie wasn't the most eye-catching person that night, with Shawn and Christopher surrounding her, everyone started noticing her.

As for Yara, even though she was approached by numerous heirs of wealthy families, none of them were at the caliber of Shawn or Christopher. The woman could feel anger building up inside her as her smile grew stiff.

Chapter 662 Walked Past Her

After Yara exchanged customary pleasantries with those men, several extremely attractive women gathered around her.

Naturally, when women got together, the first thing they would do was start gossiping.

It was inevitable that the other female guests at the charity event would be jealous of Natalie, given that Shawn and Christopher were giving her their full attention despite her plain looks.

“What’s that woman’s name? Is it Natalie... Nichols?”

“Natalie is such a common name! However, her face is even more common than her name. Look at how ordinary her facial features are, not to mention those ugly freckles that are almost spreading across her whole face! It seems that no amount of makeup can cover them up.”

“Tsk, tsk... How could she attend Shine Charity Gala, such a prestigious event, in a suit? Is her brain even working fine?”

“Ms. Yara, do you know something we don’t? Is that woman really the chairwoman of Dream Corporation?”

After listening to the other women’s mocking remarks about Natalie, Yara swirled the wine in her glass and replied, “Yes, she is. Even Yandel is her subordinate. She owns Dream.”

Those socialites and celebrities glanced toward Natalie when they heard what Yara said, their eyes burning with jealousy.

“That woman is indeed...”

“I bet she’s a schemeful woman! Maybe she’s the mistress of some rich old man, who gave her the capital to establish Dream.”

“Yeah! I’m sure that’s the case!”

Yara could not help but feel amused at the women’s absurd guesses.

If they knew that Natalie was Samuel’s woman, they would probably drown in their jealousy. However, Yara could not be bothered to waste her breath talking to those women, who only knew about fashion and nothing else.

Seeing that Natalie was alone at the charity event, Yara was determined to let her experience hell that night.

She did not believe that Samuel wouldn’t mind if Natalie was defiled by another man.

After finishing her champagne, Yara smiled gracefully at those socialites and celebrities.

“Please carry on. I will make a move first,” she said before leaving the main event hall.

Yara went to a corridor with no one else around and made a call to Martin.

When the man heard about Yara's plan over the phone, he couldn't help but feel the excitement building in him.

"Martin, since your current status in the Jackson family is lower than your sister's pet dog, you should make good use of tonight's opportunity to turn the situation around. This is the best I can do for you. Everything else depends on yourself."

"Don't worry, Ms. Yara," Martin replied in a ruthless and bloodthirsty tone. "You've already helped me a lot. I'll be responsible for everything that happens from this point onward. Nothing I do would concern you."

"All right. I was indeed right about you." Yara complimented the man coldly before continuing, "I'll forward the details to you in a while. Remember to delete the message after reading it."

"Yes, of course..."

After hanging up, Yara folded her arms across her chest as a devious glint appeared in her eyes.

Just when she was about to head back to the main event hall, she spotted Shawn and Christopher walking in her direction.

When the two men saw Yara, they were instantly stunned.

Meeting the men's astonished gazes, Yara was silently smug. She tucked some loose hair behind her ear gracefully and flashed an alluring smile at them.

However, it was that smile that snapped Shawn and Christopher back to their senses.

They realized that the woman in front of them was not Natalie who had removed her hyper-realistic mask and changed into an evening gown but Yara instead.

Although the two women were almost identical in terms of looks, they were, in fact, worlds apart.

No matter how much they resembled each other, Yara would never be able to replace Natalie.

Shawn and Christopher exchanged a knowing glance and smiled at each other, shaking their heads.

Yara had initially thought that the two men would hit on her. However, they merely walked past her without saying a word.

Chapter 663 Glad That You Are Single

Yara stomped her heels on the carpet forcefully, creating a dent in it.

Shawn Watsons and Christopher Collins... The two of you must be blind!

Even if Natalie was the chairwoman of Dream Corporation, her face should have already been ruined from the fire five years ago. Even with cosmetic surgery, Yara was convinced that her sister would never be as beautiful as her.

Logically speaking, men should be flocking to her instead of Natalie.

As such, Yara could not understand why the heirs of both the Watsons and Collins families were so eager to seek Natalie's company but were not even willing to acknowledge her. She was confident that given her impeccable make-up and attire, she was definitely the most eye-catching woman at the event.

As Shawn and Christopher walked further and further away, disappearing from Yara's sight, her eyes turned bloodshot with jealousy and hatred, filled with murderous intent.

"Natalie, five years ago, I've already said right from the start that only one of us should have been born! Since the world already has me, your presence is not needed!" Yara muttered to herself.

After she was done, her expression changed immediately as she walked back to the main event hall. Once again, she had reverted back to that graceful and gorgeous daughter of the Nichols family.

That evening's Shine Charity Gala was organized by Diane, the wife of Nikolai.

Both Nikolai and Diane were philanthropists who were well-known globally. Although Nikolai was a count from a noble family, he did not have any interest in politics or foreign affairs. He and his wife had been focusing on charity work in recent years and had helped many disabled children through their efforts.

As the event organizer, Diane was also present that night.

The woman had a natural charisma and her entire being exuded elegance.

There was a round of thunderous applause from the crowd when she arrived.

Everyone was trying to butter up Diane, hoping to be acquainted with her. Having a photo taken with the woman would be the greatest achievement for anyone that night. The guests were all waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike up a conversation with Diane, and Yara was not an exception.

As Dexmed Pharmaceutical was an established name in the pharmaceutical industry, the company was also greatly involved in charity work.

Yara figured that if she managed to have a photo taken with Diane and share it on social media, it would no doubt garner positive reactions from the public, benefiting both the company and herself.

While everyone else was still hesitating, Yara stepped forward and introduced herself to Diane graciously. "Lady Diane, please allow me to introduce myself. I am—"

Diane sized Yara up and interrupted her with a warm smile on her face.

"There's no need for an introduction. I already know who you are," Diane said in a friendly manner, holding Yara's hand affectionately. "Are you still single? My son, Yohan, still misses you a lot. Would you consider giving him a chance?"

"Uhh..."

At first, Yara had thought that it would require some effort on her part to get to know Diane.

After all, even though Diane was very passionate about charity work, she was also known to be rather cold and unapproachable.

That was also why numerous socialites and celebrities did not dare to speak to the woman, who was right in front of them, despite their desire to.

Yara could hardly believe that she had managed to get acquainted with Diane without any difficulty.

Because of that, any unpleasant feelings she had earlier on from being ignored by Shawn and Christopher dissipated instantly.

It seemed like not everyone was as blind as those two men, who only had eyes for Natalie but not her.

"I'm still single, Lady Diane," Yara answered politely, biting her lips.

"You're still single? I'm so glad to know that!" Diane had a wide smile on her face after hearing Yara's reply. "If you're attached to someone else, I would have trouble breaking the news to Yohan! I tried introducing other women to him, but he refused to meet any of them, insisting that you're the only one he wants. You have no idea how troubled I have been over that!"

Chapter 664 A Smug Substitute

"Yohan has feelings for me?" Yara furrowed her brows upon hearing Diane's words, bewildered.

She had heard about Nikolai and Diane's son, Yohan Kennedy.

When it came to having heirs in noble families like the Kennedys, tradition dictated that the more the merrier.

However, Nikolai was unlike the rest of his brothers—he couldn't bear to let his beloved wife become a baby-making factory. Hence, after Diane gave birth to Yohan, Nikolai underwent a vasectomy to shut up any bossy relatives who were itching to criticize them.

As the sole heir to his father's legacy, Yohan did not disappoint.

He lived up to his parents' expectations and always stood out with his brilliance, even among royalty. He was the epitome of a man of culture and intelligence.

Yara never imagined, not even in her wildest dreams, that the stellar Yohan Kennedy would have a crush on her, let alone be obsessed with her.

"That's right!" Diane affirmed. "Why do you think I chose Chanaea to hold the charity dinner? There are many other cities internationally that would be suited for the Shine Charity Gala, but I went with Chanaea because of you!"

Yara was elated to hear this news, but at the same time, she was still painfully aware of the hold Samuel had on her.

Suppressing her excitement, Yara thanked Diane, "I appreciate your kindness, Lady Diane. But I'm afraid my heart belongs to another."

"Your heart belongs to another?" Diane repeated incredulously. "Aren't you still single? Doesn't that mean that Yohan still has a chance? Of course, I can't sway your feelings, but shouldn't you at least give Yohan a fair chance?"

Anxiety tinged Diane's voice. As English was not her native language, Diane stumbled over her words when she grew frantic.

To be asked to be a countess' daughter-in-law was a great honor. Glee coursed through Yara, and every fiber of her being seemed to hum with unadulterated joy.

"Since you've asked, then I can't possibly reject."

"That's great! You have no idea how glad I am to hear that." A broad grin stretched across Diane's face when she got the answer she wanted.

At this moment, Natalie returned from the restroom to see Diane and Yara engaged in a conversation.

Oh no! Natalie thought in horror.

Diane was visiting from Irethiel and did not know that Natalie had an identical twin sister. Diane must have mistaken Yara for me!

Just then, a waiter proffered a glass of champagne to Natalie.

"No, thanks."

Natalie was not in the mood for a drink. With everyone's gazes riveted on her, she strode toward Diane and Yara.

"Lady Diane," Natalie called out, her frown deepening when she saw the bright smile on Diane's face.

Diane did not recognize Natalie at first glance and assumed that Natalie was just another woman looking for an opportunity to butter her up. "That's rather rude of you. Can't you see that I'm talking to a friend?" she said coldly.

Diane had lived in the palace for more than twenty years, and Nikolai constantly showered her with love. Hence, below her elegance was a strong character that demanded respect.

Yara glanced down at her hand, which Diane was clasping warmly, then at Natalie, whom the countess was berating. Triumph bubbled up within her. She felt thrilled that Diane was taking her side.

Natalie, on the other hand, appeared unfazed by Diane's harsh remark.

Diane's response only solidified Natalie's suspicion that Diane had mistaken Yara for her.

Natalie did not take Diane's attitude to heart. However, the fact that Yara was impersonating her to garner Diane's affection irked Natalie.

Ever since Yara used Franklin and Sophia as gambling chips to get closer to the Bowers, Natalie could not stand to see Yara taking advantage of others.

The more smug Yara grew, the more determined Natalie was to expose the woman's ugly nature.

Realizing that Natalie had no intention to leave, Diane's expression grew hostile. "Why, do you not understand my words? Can't you see that I'm talking to—"

“Lady Diane, has Sir Nikolai’s migraines gotten better recently?” Natalie interrupted calmly as her almond eyes met Diane’s.

Chapter 665 Tell Her Everything

The young woman’s voice was silvery and soft, but the words she said jarred Diane’s ears, leaving the countess stunned.

Nikolai’s throbbing headaches were not a new occurrence, but he had never made it known to the public. He loathed the unsolicited attention on his health condition.

Only Nikolai’s close friends and family were privy to this knowledge, along with his personal bodyguards.

“Who are you?” Diane questioned, thoroughly confounded.

Natalie replied cordially, “Lady Diane, nice to meet you. I am Natalie Nichols, the chairwoman of Dream Corporation.”

“You...” Diane’s eyebrows knitted together as she tried to process the information. “You’re Natalie?”

“That’s right,” Natalie confirmed, a small playing on her lips.

Diane was floored.

Her eyes darted between Natalie and Yara as she tried to make sense of the situation.

“What’s your name?” Diane asked frostily, her eyes settling upon Yara.

Gone was the warmth in Diane’s gaze, and its place was cold distrust. Diane subconsciously loosened her grip on Yara’s hand as she reverted to being the lofty countess that was feared and respected.

Yara felt like she had plummeted from cloud nine.

Wasn’t Lady Diane just treating me like an old friend just now? She even said that she wanted me to be her daughter-in-law! Why did her attitude shift so suddenly?

Yara gnawed on her lip.

“Why aren’t you answering me? I’ll ask just once more. What’s your name?” Diane’s imposing aura was no different than that of male royalty.

Yara felt her heart skip a beat, and she replied timidly, “Lady Diane, I am Yara Nichols from Dexmed Pharmaceutical.”

“I beg your pardon,” Diane said, her tone far from apologetic. “I have trouble recognizing faces, so I mistook you for someone else. Do enjoy the rest of the banquet.”

The woman that looks exactly like the girl from my memories is not called Natalie. Instead, Natalie is the average-looking girl in the white suit. And both of their surnames are “Nichols?”

Although Diane stayed out of the complicated royal politics, living in the palace meant that she was exposed to the environment regardless. Despite her confusion, Diane was quite certain that the lady in the white suit was the person she was looking for.

“Lady Diane, I...” Yara tried to explain herself.

However, Diane paid her no heed and instead turned to Natalie. “Do you mind if we have a quick talk?”

“Sure,” Natalie agreed with a polite nod. She then trailed behind Diane to the premium lounge next to the banquet hall.

In the lounge, Diane scrutinized Natalie with a frown. “Natalie... Your name is Natalie, and you know that my husband gets migraines, but you look nothing like the Natalie that I remember!”

“Lady Diane...”

As she spoke, Natalie peeled off the hyper-realistic mask to reveal her real features.

Natalie was a carbon copy of Yara. With her exquisite features, sparkling eyes, and impish grin, she was a stunner.

At this point, Diane was positive that the lady before her was who she was here for.

“Y-You look perfectly fine. Why do you need to wear something like that?” Diane asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

“It was to hide my identity before, but I eventually got used to it,” Natalie answered with a nonchalant shrug.

Frowning, Diane muttered, “Well, how am I supposed to find you with that hyper-realistic mask on? I even mistook someone else for you and told her things she shouldn’t have known! In hindsight, I messed up pretty badly.”

Diane’s distressed state piqued Natalie’s curiosity.

“Lady Diane, if I may ask, what did you tell Yara?”

With her hands covering her face, Diane mumbled through her fingers, “What else could I have said? I told her that Yohan is still into you and that he’s a goner. I told her everything.”

Chapter 666 A Mother Of Four

“And what did she say to that, Lady Diane?” Natalie prompted.

“She said that her heart belongs to another.” Diane cleared her throat and admitted, “I even begged her to give Yohan a fair chance! I can’t believe I had the wrong person. This is so embarrassing!”

Natalie mulled over Diane’s words, deep in thought.

If Yara said that her heart belongs to another, she must mean Samuel. Yara has never rejected any advances from other men, but she has also never wavered when it comes to her feelings for Samuel.

“Natalie...”

“Yes?”

“What about you? Surely, you’re not in a relationship too, are you? Can you give Yohan a chance?” Diane implored. “I’m not saying this just because he’s my son, but I’m sure you can feel the sincerity of Yohan’s feelings for you.”

Natalie shook her head gently.

“I’m afraid I can’t.”

“Why not?” Diane was crestfallen.

“I’m with someone else, and he’s the love of my life.” Natalie took a dainty sip of her champagne. “Moreover, perhaps you and Sir Nikolai do not know this, but I have already given birth when I was only nineteen. I’m now a mother of four,” Natalie revealed, her eyes twinkling with unconcealed love for her family.

She paused intentionally to emphasize the weight of her statement. Her eyes bore into Diane’s as she continued, “I assume that even if Yohan insists on pursuing me, you and Sir Nikolai will not approve of this marriage. Am I right?”

Natalie spoke with tenderness, but each word she uttered was a blow to Diane.

“Y-You’re a mother of four?”

“Yes!” Natalie’s lips curved upward at the thought of her children. “They are fraternal quadruplets! They’re intelligent for their age and absolutely adorable. I’ll bring them over to meet you and Sir Nikolai when we get the chance!” she boasted like the proud mother she was.

“Fraternal quadruplets!” Diane exclaimed.

That’s such a blessing! Too bad that Natalie’s children aren’t Yohan’s. If they were, Nikolai and I would have four lovely grandchildren.

The thought of it alone made Diane green with envy.

Shaking her head, Diane marveled, “Indeed, the best women get snatched up quickly! It’s a shame that Yohan wasn’t fortunate enough to meet you earlier. If not, he would definitely make you his wife!”

“Lady Diane, our fates are in the hands of the universe. Yohan had to miss me to meet his soulmate in the future,” Natalie pointed out sagely.

“Oh, you. Not only are you skilled in medicine, but your emotional intelligence is remarkable as well, I see.”

Diane lamented that Natalie was just a passerby in Yohan’s life. A wonderful woman like her by Yohan’s side would put a mother’s heart at ease.

The two women continued their merry conversation in the lounge.

Meanwhile, the Shine Charity Gala event hall was a cacophony of discussions.

“Ms. Yara, what did Lady Diane say to you? Both of you seemed to be enjoying the conversation just moments ago. What happened? Why is she talking to Natalie of Dream Corporation now?”

“Who exactly is Natalie Nichols? Why would royalty like Lady Diane invite her to the private lounge?”

“How long have they been in there?”

“More than twenty minutes!”

“And they still haven’t left? They must be having a great chat. Either they clicked instantly, or they already knew each other from before. Who would have known that Natalie had such great connections?”

Yara’s moment in the spotlight barely lasted mere minutes before she faded into the background once again, forever living in Natalie’s shadow.

Frustrated, Yara tuned out the animated chatter around her and downed drink after drink.

I don’t understand! Natalie and I are identical twins! Furthermore, Natalie’s face was marred from the fire five years ago, and her cosmetic surgery was an absolute disaster. How am I not better than her?

Chapter 667 Not The Only One Jealous

Yara dwelled on the matter as she knocked back more alcohol.

I’m the best-dressed person at this charity event, yet I still lost to Natalie, who’s just in a plain business suit! Everyone’s talking about her, while I’m just an accessory that no one cares about! How unfair!

Flushed scarlet with indignance, Yara sent a text message to Martin.

I want you to make sure that everything goes to plan tonight!

Soon, she received a message that read: Of course.

A malicious smirk crept up Yara’s face as she quashed the churning hatred and jealousy within her.

Diane and Natalie talked about Nikolai’s health and some Irethiel politics before finally returning to the main event.

The crowd swiveled to look at them when they made their entrance, and Natalie naturally became the center of attention for being with Diane.

Yara was not the only one jealous of Natalie’s popularity, it seemed, as the princess of the Lancaster family, Jacqueline Lancaster, was seen gripping her wine glass so tightly that her knuckles turned white.

“She’s hideous! Who is she?” Jacqueline scowled in distaste.

“Jacqueline, she probably has an influential background. It’s best that you don’t make such rude comments,” Cassidy cautioned. “Plus, look at her interaction with Lady Diane. She’s not even trying to get close to Lady Diane! On the contrary, it seems like Lady Diane genuinely likes her and wants to keep her around.”

Cassidy was the illegitimate child of the Dawson family and also Jacqueline’s friend.

Jacqueline, on the other hand, was the youngest daughter of the Lancaster family.

Both ladies had grown up in prominent families and had learned to read the room as a result. However, their personalities were on two ends of the spectrum.

“Cassie, with so many eyes on her, it’s only natural that she won’t go overboard! But how would you know what she did in the lounge when no one was watching them?”

Jacqueline lifted her chin haughtily, her eyes filled with contempt for Natalie.

“You must be naive to think that she harbors no ulterior motives! She would never pass up on the chance to butter up to someone as important as Lady Diane, especially since Lady Diane rarely comes to Chanaea,” she remarked decisively.

“But even if that were the case, it has nothing to do with us...” Cassidy countered.

“That’s true, but I loathe despicable women like her!” Losing control of her emotions, Jacqueline ranted, “All the prominent families who are attending this charity dinner poured in money to support this event. What right does that woman have to steal all the attention? I’ll make sure that she makes a fool of herself tonight!”

Cassidy felt uneasy about Jacqueline’s decision, but she had no way of convincing her friend otherwise. She stood rooted to the spot, her face twisted into a grimace.

Noticing Cassidy’s reluctance, Jacqueline scoffed, “You’re useless! You’re so cowardly that it’s no wonder your dad’s wife and your sister walk all over you! You only know how to stick to the rules. If that’s the case, what difference do you have from the peasants?”

Jacqueline’s words were an arrow to Cassidy’s heart.

However, Cassidy recalled all the times Jacqueline had helped her when she and her mother were bullied by her father’s legitimate wife and daughter, so she quietly endured the insults.

Jacqueline glanced at Cassidy’s conflicted expression and waved her off. “Don’t worry. I know that you’re a wimp, so I don’t expect you to help me. All you have to do is enjoy the show.”

It was not that Cassidy was afraid of the consequences, but rather, she found no point in it.

That night, Diane had prepared a talent show of sorts to spice up the charity dinner.

This show was what separated the Shine event from other charity galas, which mostly consisted of auctions and award ceremonies. The way the talent show worked was that organizers would randomly pick three distinguished guests to perform in front of the audience without prior notice. It did not matter if the performance was stellar or horrible, as the purpose of the show was to liven up the atmosphere.

Unfortunately, the talent show had the opposite effect. There had been many iconic performances in the past Shine charity dinners, which added pressure to the current attendees.

Many guests, especially women, had spent countless hours mastering a skill before attending the Shine event in hopes of impressing the crowd if they were selected for the show.

When Diane mentioned this show to Natalie, she winked cheekily and said, "To be honest, I'm rather excited to see your performance."

"There are two to three hundred guests present tonight. It's hard to say if I'll get picked," Natalie replied tactfully.

"That's true," Diane agreed with a nod. "It's a one-in-a-hundred chance. The odds are not great. Being the founder of this event, I wish now that I had the power to choose the guest for the talent show."

Chapter 668 The Chosen Three

"Well, Lady Diane, I'm afraid it's too late to change anything now," Natalie said.

Diane sighed. "You're right."

Although there was no concrete evidence, she was of the view that Natalie knew more than just medicine.

Natalie smiled but did not utter any word.

She understood that Diane was a principled person. The latter would not temper with the results of the lucky draw just to get her to perform in the talent show. Besides, there was a huge crowd, and the odds of getting chosen were highly unlikely.

However, the fact that Diane was playing a fair game didn't mean that the others would do the same.

At the moment, a man dressed in a green vest had accepted a cheque from Jacquelin backstage.

"Ms. Lancaster, this is really a lot for what you've entrusted me to do," said the man. However, it was clearly not genuine as he continued to count the banknotes happily.

"Money is not the issue. What matters to me is that you finish the job." Jacqueline crossed her arms and instructed, "I hope everything will go according to plan."

"Yes, of course. I understand. I'll make sure to do it perfectly."

"Good." With that, Jacqueline strode off gracefully in her dress.

When she returned to the event hall, Cassidy asked curiously, "Jacqueline, where did you go?"

"I'm preparing for what's coming. There's going to be an interesting show later..." said Jacqueline. "I've bribed the staff backstage to ensure that Natalie will be chosen. When that happens, we'll be able to witness Natalie making a fool out of herself on stage!"

"You..."

"I can't stand her being in the limelight." Jacqueline pursed her lips. "She may be better at pleasing Lady Diane, but I don't think that she's better than me when it comes to a talent show."

"But..."

"No buts! I've been training for years and you know it!"

Cassidy did not know what else she could say.

Jacqueline had been known to be an arrogant person. However, it also could not be denied that she was a talented singer. Even Sabrina, the international singer, had regarded Jacqueline highly and offered to take Jacqueline in as her student. Because of this, Jacqueline was given the title of “Nightingale,” and not many people could surpass her talent in singing.

If Natalie were to compete with Jacqueline in a talent show, it would be impossible for the former to win.

Moments later, it was time for the talent show.

Diane went up to the stage and pressed the button to initiate the lucky draw. The screen started showing the randomizing process which eventually settled down to the last three numbers printed on the guests' invitation card.

“007, 088, and 143,” Diane enunciated with great enthusiasm. “Can we have our honored guests come up to the stage please?”

The crowd started scanning through the venue to identify the chosen guests.

As Jacqueline already knew beforehand that she would be chosen, she stood up from her seat almost immediately upon the announcement.

Yara looked at her own invitation and realized that she was No. 143. Hence, she put down her glass of champagne and gradually stood up as well.

However, it took a long time for No. 7 to stand up.

Diane frowned. “Can I trouble our crew members to please check who is guest No. 7?”

At that moment, Natalie sighed and stood up unwillingly.

“It's me.”

She had thought that she wouldn't be so lucky, or rather unlucky in her case, to be chosen. But much to her dismay, she was chosen among the two hundred guests that were present. In fact, even Yara was chosen as well. She couldn't help but feel baffled by her luck.

Diane, however, was beyond delighted to find out that guest No. 7 was Natalie. She beamed. “What a coincidence that every chosen guest is a lady! We'll give them some time to prepare, and let us look forward to their wonderful performances!”

Chapter 669 Snobbish Provocation

Yara was displeased to know that Natalie was chosen.

On the flipside, Jacqueline was exuding confidence as she anticipated her victory. She smirked at Cassidy. “Cassie, all you have to do is give me an applause later...”

Cassidy nodded in agreement.

The sequence of their performances was in accordance with their ascending numbers. Yara would be the first to perform followed by Jacqueline and Natalie.

Before the Shine Charity Gala, Yara had been practicing the piano.

She started playing the song “Ambush” gracefully, stirring up ripples of emotions among the audience. Everyone was immersed in the melodic tune, indulging in the serenity it brought to them.

Natalie swirled her glass of champagne as she stared at Yara.

Oh, my dear sister...

If you had the right mentality, you would have achieved much more in life.

Sadly, there’s no “if” in life. One may have the greatest talent or the most beautiful look, but the person will never succeed without the right attitude and mentality.

After the song ended, the audience applauded boisterously.

Outsiders may have perceived Yara’s performance to be flawless, but experts could easily identify the lack of skills and emotions in her play.

Seeing Yara who bowed to the audience and left the stage, Jacqueline smiled triumphantly.

While Yara may have performed at an above-average standard, it was far from perfect.

Jacquelin believed that she would outperform Natalie significantly with her beautiful voice and that the latter would inevitably be overshadowed by her.

After walking up the stage, she made a gesture toward the control room.

Immediately, the most difficult part of the song, “Phantom” was played. Following the melody, Jacqueline started singing with her pure, innocent voice. She managed to reproduce the intricacies of the song perfectly, be it the pitch or the tune.

Immediately, the ambiance turned into the elitist society of the sixteenth century. Everyone could relate to the hardship and loneliness endured by the main character in the song.

“She must be a professional. It’s so good!” Diane could not resist complimenting Jacqueline.

Natalie nodded. “Indeed. She’s really good.”

After conversing with Diane, Natalie looked up and noticed Jacqueline’s provocative and scornful stare.

She knitted her eyebrows. Am I reading too much into this?

Jacqueline rounded up her performance by showing off her impressive mastery of singing techniques, drastically increasing the difficulty of the song. Expectedly, the audience went wild with cheers.

A round of applause filled the air as she concluded her performance.

Someone from the audience yelled, “Bravo!”

Jacqueline bowed to the audience with a triumphant smile on her face.

She was especially pleased when she saw Diane giving her a standing ovation. At that moment, she felt that all her efforts were worth it as she managed to snatch some attention away from Natalie.

Meanwhile, the socialites around Yara started adding fuel to the fire.

“Yara, she’s outshining you with her performance!”

“That’s right! What a shame!”

“Well, no one could have matched her splendid performance.”

“No wonder you didn’t look so good when you saw that Jacqueline was chosen. Anyone would have looked like a fool in comparison to Jacqueline. If even you ended completely losing to her, I have no doubt that Natalie will be utterly humiliated on stage later.”

Yara ignored their snarky comments, and simply pursed her lips in a contemptuous manner.

While it was not a pleasant experience having to face Jacqueline, Natalie was the main reason behind her frustration.

If there was one thing that Yara was certain about, it was the fact that Natalie would not end up humiliating herself on stage later.

Before long, it was Natalie’s turn to perform.

Jacqueline and Natalie bumped into each other in the waiting area.

“Ms. Nichols, if you don’t have any talents, I’d suggest you pick some modern or children’s song to sing on stage. I doubt it matters what kind of performance you’ll throw since Lady Diane seems to favor you anyway.” Jacqueline blinked innocently while uttering the scornful statement.

Chapter 670 Silence

“I’ll be the judge of that. There’s no need for you to worry about me, Ms. Lancaster.” Natalie narrowed her eyes, staring at Jacqueline icily.

“Oh, I’m not worried about you. I’m merely taking pity on you.” Jacqueline shrugged and sighed. “It’s unfortunate that I was the person who performed before you. It must be really stressful, right?”

Natalie pursed her lips in response and stared at Jacqueline, annoyed.

“Why are you staring at me like this? You look like you’re going to eat me alive. Or perhaps, are you having cold feet and thinking about quitting? If I were you, I’ll think of an excuse to leave and avoid embarrassing myself.”

Natalie glanced at Jacqueline’s mocking gaze. “Are you done? If you are, I’ll be leaving for the stage now.”

“Tsk. How stubborn...” Jacqueline raised the corner of her lips and chuckled. “You should thank me for giving you the opportunity to perform today.”

Hearing that, Natalie froze.

So, it was Jacqueline who engineered this! I knew this was not a coincidence!

She must have planned this so that I would embarrass myself in front of everyone.

We could have left each other alone. But since she chose to pick a fight with me, I shall play along then!

“Thank you.” Natalie smirked, her gaze cold.

Jacqueline was dumbfounded. She did not expect that Natalie would actually thank her. Is she out of her mind? She’s about to make a fool out of herself on stage. Is she acting like this because she’s giving up?

“You...” Jacqueline gritted her teeth.

She glared at Natalie’s departing figure as fury boiled within her.

How dare she speak to me like this! I would love to see what’s so special about her!

Natalie walked to the middle of the stage, and almost instantly, she could feel the crowd’s gazes settling on her.

She recalled that in the past, Yara would always be sick and she had to impersonate her sister to participate in numerous competitions, winning many trophies in the process.

It had been six years since Natalie stood before an audience.

She was joining that night’s event on behalf of Yandel.

As such, she came unprepared, without any song, instrument, or attire.

Skipping the introduction, Natalie stood before the microphone, cleared her voice, and started singing.

The song she chose was the “Melody of Water.”

The full moon is rare as I stood under the tree.

Hoping for your attention.

If I could hold your hand, no time is too short.

So long as we are together, loyal and in love.

The tenderness is all that mattered.

All worries are gone.

It all feels like a dream.

As I stood by myself, I lift my head and stare blankly in the open, enduring the pain alone.

Still hoping that you will come to me.

You frowned, puzzled by what is going on.

Turns out, you are clueless about my feelings.

Perhaps we missed out on so much in our last lifetime.

And now it’s too late.

In the end, we can only meet in our dreams...

Without any background music, Natalie's bare, unfiltered voice resonated throughout the event hall.

Her voice was clear and modulated, without any technicalities. She sang in a local accent and her voice managed to touch the hearts of many. Closing their eyes, the audience could imagine the lyrics coming to life.

Hundreds of years ago, a woman loved a man deeply.

However, she could not get married to him. Devastated, she could only hide under a tree as she witnessed the love of her life getting married to another woman.

She was enduring the pain alone as her feelings were not reciprocated.

The song that Jacqueline sang was way too technical, and such complexity eclipsed her ability to express her emotions singing the song. In contrast, Natalie's singing was just perfect. It was not too technical and everyone could enjoy the rich emotions that she sought to exude.

As the rippling emotions of the girl who had a tragic love story coursed through them, many female guests started tearing up.

The song finally ended.

Silence ensued in the event hall.