

Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter 417

When the car rolled to a stop outside Skylark Tower, Matthias stepped out of the vehicle and chivalrously opened the door for Heather. It was as though he had become an entirely different person since leaving the house.

"I suppose you have some twisted plan in the works, Director Locke, seeing as you're putting in this much effort," she pointed out darkly. The alarm bells went off in her head and she had a feeling that something was wrong, but she knew it was too late for her to turn around and make a run for it.

"Afraid of wicked schemes?" He smirked in amusement and there was an intimate edge to his gestures.

"Better to be safe than sorry, right? I'd rather have my guard up around you," Heather answered curtly, though she berated herself for being so impulsive earlier; it made it harder for her to get off her high horse.

Matthias offered her his arm, silently indicating for her to take it. She shot him a quizzical look and muttered, "Surely there's no need for us to put up such an act?"

It was as if she could smell a scheme lurking around the corner. Biting down on her lip, she gave him a wary look and her skin prickled at his odd lack of respect for personal boundaries.

"I've told the board that I will be bringing an important guest with me today, so we have to look the part." He arched a brow at her. This was the only chance for him to lure her into a perfect set-up and if he didn't deal her a harsh blow this time, it would only be harder for him to do so in the future.

Much to his surprise, the odds were in his favor this round, but he would not always be so lucky as to have the upper hand every time. Knowing Heather, she would not be tricked so easily the next time.

Nonetheless, Matthias was sure that after today, she would not be able to clear things up between the both of them. He beamed at the thought of this. Now that he had successfully blurred the lines between himself and Heather, his next run-in with Myra would not be as awkward as the last; he found himself still pining for the latter despite all the time that had passed.

For as long as Tony had not officially been declared as the one for her, Matthias would not give up on his feelings for Myra. He would always try to come up with ways to get closer to her.

Presently, Heather took his proffered arm with heavy reluctance. She looked formal in her cocktail dress, and those who didn't know better would assume she was going to attend a dinner party.

She was still holding onto his arm upon their arrival at the 28th floor of the building and their presence turned heads. Everyone regarded them with curiosity and where the women were jealous of Heather, the men were envious of Matthias. There were also those who were trying to assess their dynamics.

Heather was indifferent as she allowed their appraisal of her, having been used to such attention since young. Her pretty eyes seemed to fall upon everyone and yet, it was as if she was not really looking at anyone in particular at all. She was an enigma, indeed.

"Sorry to keep you all waiting. We were held up in traffic," Matthias explained politely. He might be the one who was holding the reins in the Locke Group but his position as head of the company was a precarious one. He needed to fortify his authority with the support of the elders in the board, hence his courteous front when addressing them in the company.

A brief moment later, his assistant, Nikolai, stepped forward and informed him dutifully, "Everything is ready, Director Locke. The meeting may begin now." Heather appraised the assistant with interest. He was a young man with delicate features and he had a rather feminine air about him.

Who knew Matthias would have such an eccentric taste? She subtly raised her brows as her gaze darted over to the man next to her. I used to mock him for his lack of masculinity back in the day.

She found it amusing how he had managed to acquire an assistant who looked every bit the archetypal pretty boy, if not prettier. A small laugh echoed in the back of her mind. Looks like those days of relentless teasing have left him quite traumatized.

Meanwhile, Nikolai was eyeing her thoughtfully. He had never seen a woman as charming and attractive as her. He felt his face grow hot and wondered if this was love at first sight.

He stiffened at this thought. He didn't think he would fall for someone who could very well be Director Locke's girlfriend. A pang of sorrow seized him, dousing out the initial spark he had felt for her. What was I thinking? A woman who shines as brightly as her would never spare me a second glance.

While Nikolai shrunk back into his shell, he failed to notice that Heather's gaze was still lingering upon him. The more she looked at him, the more he reminded her of a younger Matthias.

She had only just taken her seat at the table when she leaned close to Matthias and asked, "What's your assistant's name?" She had spent a better part of her adulthood abroad, where she had encountered more than her fair share of men. Now, she began to find that pretty boys made for good eye-candy as well, and they boasted a rather refreshing appeal too.

"Nikolai Archibald," Matthias answered as he threw her a puzzled look. He was surprised that she would even take notice of his assistant in the first place.

While this was happening, the board members were casting curious looks at them, zooming in on the slightest of their interactions. Matthias had always been distant and perfunctory—it was rare to see him being so intimate with a woman in public, much less deliberately arrange for her to be seated next to him.

The blurred lines between them piqued everybody's interest. Heather was an elusive character after all, and the board members were all trying to guess who she might be. Her unexplained presence was like a pebble thrown into a pond, creating a ripple effect.

Once in a while, Nikolai would sneak glances at Heather from where he stood next to Matthias. However, he did not expect her to look up at that moment and when their eyes met, she flashed him a smile and nodded at him in acknowledgement.

He tore his gaze away as blood rushed to his face, and Heather clapped her hand over her mouth as she sputtered at the sight of this, thoroughly entertained by his shy demeanor.

She couldn't remember the last time she had seen a boy so pure and so easily flustered. She felt like she was transported back to the simple, puppy-love days in high school. He's really good looking, she admitted to herself.

Matthias used to be like that—soft-spoken and hesitant. Indeed, he had been pure and innocent back in those days and she regretted how horribly she had treated him. She wondered if things would turn out differently if she had shown him just a bit of kindness then.

Is winning that important? Her heart clenched as she asked herself that question, but she quickly repressed the guilt that rose within her. Matthias' cunning ways were honed out of resentment and it probably brought out the best in him, however twisted he might be.

Upon seeing how strategic he was being, she couldn't help the fascination she had for him. As it turned out, men who took their work seriously were irresistibly charming.

As Heather stared at Matthias' fine-looking side profile, she marveled at how much he had changed. He had filled out his frame and was no longer the delicate boy he used to be.

While he kept his extraordinary good looks, there was a masculine edge in the way he carried himself that had not been there before. How did he even give himself such a makeover?

The image of his bare torso flashed in her mind. She thought about his defined muscles, his chiseled abs and strong pectorals, as well as the deep grooves that cut above his hips. He clearly had muscle coiling beneath his lean, towering build.

There was nothing flawed about his looks or his physique. In fact, if they weren't such rivals, she might even develop a crush on him.

On the other hand, their rivalry was made more exciting now that she realized how cunning he could be. It was as if she had finally met her match and the stronger he was, the more driven she became. He made for a very worthy opponent, indeed.

Oblivious to Nikolai's lovesick gaze, Heather stared at Matthias while the latter delivered his speech. He sounded like a charismatic leader, his voice steady and carrying.

It seemed as if he had retained the same charisma from his public speaking days. Admittedly, he was a man with brilliant achievements and his accomplishments alone were enough to intimidate her.

“Nikolai,” Matthias abruptly called out, displeased at how absentminded the younger man was.

He followed Nikolai’s gaze and when he saw that the latter was sneaking looks at Heather, he frowned. This is not a good sign, he thought to himself as he assessed the sight before him.

There was no telling how his plans would be affected if Nikolai were to develop actual feelings for Heather. As far as Matthias was concerned, Nikolai was not merely an assistant to him—he was family.

No one else in the company knew that Matthias and Nikolai were cousins. They carried themselves differently after all, so it was only natural that no one would think of them as sharing any family relations.

Their mothers were sisters and they both took after their mothers’ fine looks. There was an old saying that men who took after their mothers had effeminate tendencies, but equally true was the proverb that said the face was the index of one’s mind. As Matthias’ mindset and temperament changed over the years, he outgrew his pretty looks and now, one might describe his features as ‘handsome’ as opposed to ‘delicate’.

Nikolai, on the other hand, had grown up under Matthias’ care. There were times when he could not stand up for himself and much like how the latter had been back in the day, he lacked a firm sense of self-assurance.

Seeing how similar Nikolai was to his old self prompted Matthias to take him in as an assistant. Perhaps he had done so because Nikolai was a mirror of his past, and this was his way of keeping the boy’s naivety from being tarnished by the brutalities of this world.

Matthias grew sour at this thought. If someone had been there to shield and care for him the same way he did Nikolai, he might not have turned out this way and he might not be riddled with such resentment.

However, he was no longer the boy who could be easily contented. He couldn't even remember the last time he had laughed without a care. There was a void in him now that could not be filled with all the riches in the world.

Presently, Heather's gaze flickered over to Nikolai, and she had the feeling that there was a special relationship between him and Matthias that went beyond that of a subordinate and a director.

She did not miss the patience in Matthias' voice when he addressed Nikolai. He did not sound as though he treated the latter as a subordinate—rather, he spoke to him the same way a parent would a child.

This only succeeded in making Heather more curious. If there truly existed a special relationship between them, then Nikolai could be the breakthrough that she had been looking for.

Previously, Matthias had made it seem as though he did not care about anyone, but now might be the time she turned the tables on him. Let's just see how much he cares, she thought deviously. It was one thing to admire him but entirely another to plot against him, and it would require her to suppress whatever fondness she might have developed for him.

"I've called for a board meeting today to go over something important," Matthias said, finally starting to get to the point after he had spent the first part of the meeting talking about company matters.

Heather snapped out of her thoughts when she heard this and she shot him a nervous look. She knew that the matter regarding the Stark Group was an important one, and she would like to see how he was going to bring it up to the board.

"It hasn't been that long since the Locke Group has set foot in Bradford City. Previously, we have been actively acquiring shares from the Stark Group and entered into a partnership with Cameron," he began, giving a recap on how the company had come to work together with the Stark Group.

Then, he wasted no time in delivering his point. "However, in light of the recent downfall in the value of their shares, I am of the opinion that the Stark Group is no longer worthy of our acquisition. As such, I would like to hear from all of you today on how we should deal with this matter." Having said this, he turned and gave Heather a meaningful look, as though silently telling her that he was keeping his word.

The board burst into an uproar after hearing what he had said. After all, Matthias had been relentless in his efforts to convince them to give the green light on acquiring shares under the Stark Group, and he had been the one to facilitate the partnership with Cameron as well.

And now, he was standing before them, claiming to have changed his mind. The board members began to chatter among themselves, obviously displeased by his fickle behavior. Heather was impassive as she watched the discord happen before her. I can't wait to see how he is going to resolve this situation, she thought to herself and she grew delighted at his predicament.