

Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter 418

A hush descended upon the room and the air grew thick around them. It was surprising that Matthias could hold his ground despite the immense pressure that seemed to have come from everyone else's disapproval of his suggestion.

Seeing as this had nothing to do with her, Heather sat silently off to one side, a placid smile playing about her lips. Matthias, on the other hand, gazed at her with dark eyes. He was likely thinking of ways to throw her under the bus, but others might perceive the expression on his face as one of endearment.

The stifling silence in the room went on for what felt like forever and when Matthias saw that none of the board members had anything to say, he continued, "Do any one of you know who this lady next to me happens to be?" His question made everyone fix their gaze on Heather, making her shoot him a deadly glare.

Why does he always have to cause a distraction? She bristled at the sudden attention that was cast upon her but she wasn't one to be perturbed by a situation like this. Having regained her composure just as quickly, she ignored the collective appraisal from the board members and maintained a nonchalant front.

It wasn't until after the board's interest was sufficiently piqued that someone responded to the question. Heather was taken aback by this because as it turned out, Matthias did not seem to command that much authority in the Locke Group.

Her lips curled into a thoughtful smile as she took in the board members' grim expressions and doubtful remarks—it seemed as if Matthias was not as formidable or esteemed as the rumors made him out to be. She was amused by how these board members were treating him with something close to disrespect, even though he was supposedly the youngest person to ever become director of the Locke Group.

Now that I've found out just how much power he actually holds over the rest of the company, he probably hates himself for dragging me along to this board meeting in the first place, Heather thought to herself, extremely pleased to see that he wasn't faring well before the board.

In all honesty, if Matthias truly did live up to the rumors in terms of his capabilities, she would need to start worrying about how she was going to take him down. The Locke Group was a titan in the business industry with a long history, after all. In contrast, she had yet to set up her own enterprise, and she knew it was unlikely for her to ever wield command over the Langston Group.

Heather bristled at the thought of her family business. There was no doubt that the torch would be passed down to her eldest brother, Blake, despite his philandering ways.

Needless to say, she did not hold him in high regard. She might not be a feminist but she supported women's rights to some extent. As such, she found her brother's womanizing ways to be derogatory and repulsive, and was affronted by how easily he could move on from one woman to another.

Hunter, on the other hand, was the second-eldest sibling and while he was a devoted romantic, he was a hopeless one nonetheless. Unfortunately, he wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed and he would most probably end up with a cushy, unimportant job that made little to no substantial contribution to the business.

Given how problematic both her brothers were, Heather found herself fretting over the future of the Langston Group. She was caught in the misogynistic web of her family's old-fashioned mindset—as far as they were concerned, a daughter of theirs would only serve to be married off someday.

Realizing that the chances of her taking over the company were slim to none, she decided to abandon the thought of succeeding the Langston Group and grew eager to set up her own enterprise. That way, no one could tell her how to run her business and she could do whatever she liked.

Startled by how her thoughts had snowballed within such a short span of time, she quickly snapped out of her reverie, just in time to hear Matthias introducing her to the board.

"This is the beloved daughter of the Langston Family and she also happens to be Chairman Langston's favorite granddaughter," he said with a knowing smile. Upon hearing that, the board members were shocked to hear this and gaped at Heather in disbelief.

She had no idea what Matthias was planning to do by making such a bold declaration, but she maintained a courteous smile nonetheless as she played along, wanting to see just where he was going with this.

"I think we can all agree that a well-established behemoth such as the Langston Group is far more valuable than the Stark Group," Matthias added as he glanced at her meaningfully. She was suddenly overcome with the feeling that she had been roped into some twisted game.

The looks on the board members' faces were making her squeamish. Having heard how Matthias had described her family business, Heather felt the urge to disagree with him. To her, the Langston Group was not as influential as he thought. Surely a titan like the Locke Group—otherwise known as one of the most elite corporations in the country—would not need to curry favor with other businesses.

"I've been in talks with the Langston Group recently and we're considering the prospects of a partnership," he drawled in a thoughtful tone, sounding as though he wanted others to read more into the situation.

Upon hearing this, Heather turned to look at him with admiration. Though she had unknowingly become a pawn, she had to admit that this was an excellent maneuver on his part. She was impressed with how Matthias had successfully distracted the board from the matter of the Stark Group and lured them into paying more attention toward the idea of a partnership with the Langston Group instead.

Presently, the board members' eyes lit up as they stared at her with what seemed like anticipation. She grew slightly self-conscious at this and wondered what the Locke Group was after. Are they trying to take over Bradford City? If they truly are planning to take over Bradford City, can they really avoid an eventual collaboration with or competition against the Hart Group? Heather pondered upon this and weighed all the potential outcomes. At the end of the day, when it came to Bradford City, the Hart Group remained on top of the food chain. Furthermore, the Langston Group focused its business and operations on the market overseas.

After the meeting ended, Heather linked her arm through Matthias' and whispered into his ear, "You should thank me for not calling you out in front of all those people." There were no talks of partnership between him and the Langston Group and she was thoroughly amused by how he had so smoothly come up with that lie.

"It's only a matter of time before our companies form a partnership anyway," Matthias answered her easily as he cast her a sideways glance. In truth, he had been surprised at how well she played along with the lie he had spurned too.

“Our company focuses on the consumer market overseas; are you perhaps steering your business toward the same as well?” She inched closer to him and Nikolai’s heart twisted at the sight of this. So this is what jealousy feels like, he thought glumly.

“Well, obviously I would need help from the Langston Group if I were to target the consumers abroad, but I want to take over the Bradford City market too,” Matthias explained, channeling an air of infallibility.

“How ambitious of you! Are you sure you’re not getting in over your head here?” A wicked look flashed in Heather’s eyes and she couldn’t wait to see how things would play out for him. She had grown numb to the drama of corporate rivalry, having been exposed to it from a young age.

He chuckled at her remark and said breezily, “You know how we business types are—we go where the money is.” Truth was, she couldn’t help but agree with this.

Then, he swiftly changed the subject and offered, “Anyway, I should thank you properly for your help today. I’ll buy you lunch; how does Japanese sound?” He hadn’t realized how hungry he was until he had brought up lunch, and it was only then he recalled that neither of them had eaten since that morning.

“I don’t like Japanese. Let’s go get pasta instead,” Heather countered brightly. “Oh—and get your assistant to come along too.” She wanted Nikolai to come along, because lunch was an open gambit for her to figure out the dynamics between these two men.

“You seem interested in my assistant,” Matthias grumbled in a displeased tone. Deep down, he didn’t want her to get too close to Nikolai.

“Is there anything wrong with that? You were the one who said you wanted to thank me, and I’m only asking for this small favor.” Heather had made up her mind and she was adamant that Nikolai join them for lunch.

“It’s no problem at all. It’s just that I seem to recall you saying you hate pretty boys. I’m just worried that my assistant would...” He trailed off and eyed her meaningfully, expecting her to understand what he was implying.

Heather was perceptive and she threw him a wink as she mused, “Don’t worry. People change, after all. Whatever I used to hate happen to be some of my favorite things now.” That much was the truth.

The both of them were bantering in their own bubble, and it was as if their chemistry was evidence of some private joke shared only between them. Nikolai was presently marching ahead of them, walking quicker than he normally would as he wanted to save himself the heartache of seeing how close Matthias was with Heather.

“Please don’t tell me you’re actually interested in my assistant.” Matthias was only half-joking when he said this. He weighed the possibility of this happening but from what he knew, Heather would never fall for someone like Nikolai.

Conversely, Nikolai appeared to have actual feelings for her and Matthias worried for him. The rest of Nikolai’s days were as good as doomed if he were to have any romantic intentions for her. If only Matthias had known that she could be so alluring, he would have abandoned his plans to set her up in the first place, then she wouldn’t have met Nikolai. Alas, it was all too late.

The course of things had already taken place and it wasn’t as if he could march up to Nikolai and order him to give up on his feelings for Heather. Besides, there’s no conclusive proof that he likes her at all. If I were to approach him with such an outrageous demand, he might just hate me forever.

However, when Matthias noticed that Heather seemed really interested in Nikolai, he grew even more uneasy. If she truly had any romantic feelings for the man and decided to act on them, Matthias hated to think how things would turn out should they ever get together as a couple. He shuddered as he muttered under his breath, “Cousin-in-law.”

“What?” Heather looked at him quizzically as she could not hear his incoherent mumbling.

“Nothing. As you wish,” he replied hastily, then turned to glance at Nikolai, who was already a distance away ahead. “Nikolai!” he called loudly.

Surprised that Matthias would call for him all of a sudden, Nikolai spun on his heels and met the former’s gaze, but in doing so he inadvertently met Heather’s appraising one as well. She flashed him a smile and he found himself drawn to her sparkling eyes.

“Let’s have lunch together,” Matthias said flatly. He didn’t like the interaction between Nikolai and Heather, and he felt his heart twist with dark sentiment. He cast a grim look at the woman next to him, clearly unhappy with how she had eagerly initiated the idea of having lunch with Nikolai.

“Specifically, let’s have pasta together,” she quipped now, elaborating on what Matthias had said. He felt a twinge of jealousy at how friendly she sounded when she addressed the other man.

Upon hearing this, Nikolai pointed at himself. “Are you inviting me to lunch?” he murmured, feeling rather stunned as he didn’t think that a goddess such as Heather would pay any attention to him.

Heather hummed in response and nodded her head solemnly. “You should come with us, though I don’t know if you like pasta.” There had been a time when she did not care for pasta as well but she had grown to like it over the years.

“I do,” he replied, nodding his head earnestly. In fact, he didn’t mind the food as long as he could be in Heather’s company.

While watching their exchange, Matthias could tell that Nikolai really did have feelings for her. He saw how the latter’s eyes had lit up when she spoke to him. There’s no denying that he really likes her.

“Then you should definitely come with us!” Heather said cheerily. There was a coquettish edge to her voice that, for some reason, was non-existent during the times she had spoken to Matthias. He grew sullen at this and wondered at the double-standard.

The jealousy that budded within him was making him irritable. He thought he would be more worried for Nikolai but as it turned out, he was more aggravated by Heather’s display of affection for other men.

Meanwhile, Nikolai was blushing furiously. Finding him extremely adorable, Heather let go of Matthias and strode over to him, then took his hand as she dragged him toward the door. It was as if she was pulling a younger sibling along with her, and she liked the shy and unassuming way with which he carried himself.

Matthias watched this with wide eyes, feeling utterly incredulous. How can she hold his hand when she hasn’t even held mine?

Infuriated by how brazen she was, Matthias trailed after them in thunderous silence. Nikolai, on the other hand, was so happy that he had to resist the urge to jump up and down, and he even began to feel nervous. Holding hands with her was something close to a biblical

experience, and he could only imagine how glorious it would be if they were to move on to something more intimate than this.

“Come on, let’s ditch Matthias,” Heather teased childishly. She noted how smooth and supple Nikolai’s skin was and she grew envious of him.

Matthias was outraged at the scene before him. He hadn’t thought that she would have such siren-like qualities and he truly regretted ever letting the both of them meet in the first place. Now that things were getting out of hand, he was going to have a much harder time.