

Coolest Girl in Town Chapter 601

Chapter 601 What Gives You the Cheek To Fancy Her?

“How noisy,” Elise said, lifting her phone up impatiently to check the time. “You’ve got two minutes left—not too late if you guys run away right now.”

Speaking in a calm and imperturbable voice, she had an unpredictable aura around her.

The leader of the ruffians let out a disdainful sneer. “That’s my line, you little girl! It’s you who should be running away. Judging from how you look, I reckon you’re a student at Tissote University. I have the most respect for cultured people, so I’ll give you a chance to turn back. Hurry and go back to school, or it’s gonna be too late.”

Elise was unfazed, though. Her gaze rested upon Sheldon, who was wrestled to the ground, before she turned to the unconscious Elliot. The next instant, a piercing gleam flickered in her eyes as she peered at the ruffians’ leader and asked snappishly, “Who beat him unconscious?”

“I did.” An infuriated ruffian moved a step forward arrogantly. He said in a filthy language, “So? What are you gonna do, you f*cking b*tch? Wanna have a fight with me too?”

“Geez,” his leader interjected with a drawl just then. He said meaningfully, “How many times have I told you guys to be gentle when speaking to ladies? Why wouldn’t you remember that? Don’t you want to take a wife anymore?” Then, he turned to Elise and asked maliciously, “Say, little girl, what about I set you up with a date or something?”

“Sure.” Elise happened to be buying time. As her fingers interlaced, she replied with amused interest, “Let me say this first: I want a faithful lover who’s capable of protecting me. Also, he better have a bit of brains.”

“Sure! He’ll be absolutely faithful to you!” The leader turned around and put his hand on the shoulder of the ruffian who had just spoken offensively to Elise. Pulling the ruffian to the front, he beat his chest and guaranteed, “This is Devan, who’s been one of my men for a few

years now. Not only can he easily fight three men on his own, but he's also good at being a snob. I guarantee you that it won't put you at a disadvantage to be his woman."

Listening to the leader's words, Devan unconsciously held his head up and puffed out his chest, as if he really thought of himself as a decent lover who was extremely hard to come by.

"Bah!" Just then, Sheldon hauled himself to his feet with his hands on the ground for support. "What gives you the cheek to fancy her?!" He didn't know much about how outstanding Alexander was, but he knew that the man chosen by Elise herself mustn't be inferior. These guys can't even hold a candle to my brother. What gives them the right to lust after Boss?!

"What did you say?! You haven't been beaten enough, have you?"

"F*ck you, you son of a b*tch! How dare you look down on us!"

Enraged, the gang of ruffians turned around and raised their clubs at Sheldon again.

"Enough!" Elise hurriedly said in an effort to silence Sheldon. "Shut up, Sheldon!" They share the last name Keller and are blood brothers, but while Jamie is so smart, why is Sheldon so dense? Can't he tell that I'm trying to divert their attention?

Sheldon was stunned right away. Is Boss really gonna sacrifice herself for us?! I'm so touched! "No!" He gazed affectionately at Elise with tears in his eyes. Then, as if he was ready to sacrifice himself, he said, "Boss, you're the one who should run away! I'll always remember our friendship in my heart. From now on, you, Elise Sinclair, are my one and only boss!"

Elise was rendered speechless by Sheldon's response. No, that's totally unnecessary.

Meanwhile, one of the ruffians was sharp enough to catch the key piece of information. "Boss, he just called this woman Elise Sinclair!"

At once, the man leading the gang of ruffians looked at Elise with murderous eyes. "You're Elise Sinclair?"

Elise raised an eyebrow while feeling somewhat helpless. Oh, Sheldon! I came to save you, but you blew my cover. Could it be that you're actually in league with these guys? She let out a sigh before saying nonchalantly, "Yeah, I am. So?"

"So, you're Elise, huh? Well, that saves me another trip!" The man gave a sinister laugh. Then, he turned his head and said to the lackeys behind him, "Catch that lady and slash her face, the few of you!"

As soon as he said that, five knife-wielding ruffians behind him walked straight toward Elise.

"Boss, run!" Sheldon tried to go after the group of ruffians to protect Elise.

However, as soon as he got up, a ruffian lifted his foot and kicked him down again. Then, he bent down and grabbed Sheldon by the throat right away, threatening, "Keep still, you b*stard!" With that, two other ruffians crouched down and grabbed Sheldon's hands and feet before smashing their rock-hard fists into Sheldon's gut.

Sheldon gave a grunt of pain as blood trickled out of the corner of his mouth. "Pfft! Cough! Cough! Don't touch her! She's got nothing to do with this! She doesn't know anything, so whatever grudge you have, take it out on me and let her go!"

"Ha! You've got quite a bit of backbone, huh..." The man leading the ruffians let out a snort. "I'd have done you the favor in any other circumstances, but unfortunately, someone has ordered today that the three of you be made sorry for what you did. None of you are gonna get away with this!" he said.

Then, he urged the few lackeys who had gone to catch Elise, saying, "What the f*ck is wrong with you? Have you guys not eaten or something? Hurry the f*ck up! If you guys make me look bad by not getting the job done by the time the police arrive, I'm gonna cripple all of you first!"

Upon hearing this, the few ruffians immediately sped up and ran toward Elise.

Just as they had barely run a few steps, they suddenly heard a series of footsteps from their surroundings. When they stopped two meters away from Elise, they finally realized that the sound of footsteps came from behind her!

Stopping in their tracks in horror, the few ruffians turned their gazes toward the pitch-dark alley behind Elise. A moment later, they started to pull back simultaneously with their eyes wide open.

Angered, the man leading the ruffians kicked down the garbage can beside him. "What's wrong with you guys? How could you guys be scared of a woman? Believe it or not, I'm gonna cripple you all right now!" he said, before stepping quickly toward the few retreating lackeys. As their boss, I'm gonna teach them how to do their job!

However, no sooner had he moved a few steps forward than he saw the true nature of the darkness behind Elise. It was no ordinary darkness, but dozens of black-suited men!

Stunned, he stopped dead in his tracks, unable to raise his feet anymore, as though his legs had turned to lead.

At the same time, Moses' men emerged from the darkness, standing in two rows from one end of the street to the other end with Elise in their midst.

Elise had a petite figure, but as she stood in the midst of these men, she appeared countless times more intimidating all at once.

Seeing such an intimidating display of power, those holding Sheldon down quickly let go of him and hid behind their leader. On the other hand, the few ruffians who were nearer to Elise took to their heels and ran all the way back to their own gang, not daring to stop until they cowered behind the rest of the gang.

"Whose face did you say you were gonna slash just now?" Elise asked nonchalantly with a slight curl of her lips.

The leader of the ruffians gave an involuntary gulp. After composing himself, he turned around and ran with his lackeys, saying, "Retreat!"

With that, the gang of ruffians ran toward the end of the alley. However, just as they were about to run out of the alley, dozens of men in the same suit suddenly rushed out and blocked the exit.

In an instant, the ruffians stopped and looked all around them. Now, they had nowhere to run.

"How boring." Elise smacked her lips. This isn't challenging at all. After adjusting her cap, she ordered, "Catch them all."

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Chapter 602 Extras

Knowing they were no match for these men, the bunch of ruffians gave themselves up right away without putting up a fight. Soon, the dozens of them were marched in front of Elise, kneeling in a row.

Elise stepped forward and questioned their leader, "Who sent you here? Spill it!"

"Um... I beg your pardon, miss, but there are rules in the underworld. We're not supposed to betray information about our employer!" the man replied with a cringe.

"Understood." Elise nodded before turning to Devan. Her eyes narrowed before she wore a thin, fake smile to ask, "I heard you guys came this time on a task to cripple my classmate's leg. Is that true?"

Devan took a glance at his leader. Seeing that the man remained silent, he quickly replied in a servile manner, "It's all a misunderstanding! Miss, please have mercy on us! We're just trying to make a living, so please let us off!"

"Trying to make a living using other people's lives and bodies, huh? Since you guys dare to be in this trade, you should've expected the consequences." The smile on Elise's face vanished all at once and was replaced by a frosty expression. Then, she ordered sternly, "Break one of his legs."

"No! Please don't do that! I'm sorry, miss! I was wrong..." Devan hurriedly gave a kowtow and apologized in fright.

Elise looked cool and unsympathetic, though. After all, had Moses' men not arrived in the nick of time today, Sheldon and Elliot probably would have been ruined for the rest of their lives. It isn't worth it to go soft on people who have no regard for human lives like them.

Moses' men were gangsters, so they showed no mercy toward Devan. After pinning Devan to the ground and covering his mouth, they swung their clubs and bashed his left leg again and again with sheer brute force.

With that, Devan's leg was broken, and so were the clubs, and Devan passed out as a result.

Elise glanced sideways at Devan. Shaking her head in resignation, she then walked up to the ruffians' leader again. "Can you spill it now?"

"I'll tell you! I'll tell you now!" The leader knew full well that Elise had just punished Devan as a warning to him, and that if he still refused to cooperate, he would be the next to suffer. He hurriedly made a clean breast of everything, saying, "In reality, I don't know who hired us either, but I know their user account on Bloodthirsty Manor. If you check them out on the website, you can probably find out who that person is!"

"Bloodthirsty Manor?" Elise hadn't heard of the name before.

The man explained, "It's an underground website set up several years ago where you can post any request or take up jobs. Jobs to murder people are common on the website, but we dare not commit murder, so we only accept jobs to get revenge or hurt someone. Even if we get caught for that, the punishment won't be severe—"

"And the website's address is?" Elise asked, getting straight to the point.

"It's on my phone!" The man frantically fumbled for his phone. After some tapping and swiping, he offered up his phone with both hands. "This is Bloodthirsty Manor's interface where you can see the order history here. It really wasn't me who wanted to reckon with you guys!"

Elise took the man's phone and glanced at its screen, only to find that what the man had said was true. The user account that had hired the ruffians was very special; it had only logged onto the website once and placed only one order. Presumably, it was an alt account set up expressly to hide the user's identity.

After pondering for a moment, Elise jotted down the website's address and tossed the man's phone back to him. "You hurt my classmates, and I broke the leg of one of your lackeys, so we're even. Now, get lost with your men."

Having his life spared, the man put his palms together and repeatedly kowtowed to Elise. "Thank you, miss! Thank you, boss! Thanks a bunch!"

"Hmm?" Elise cocked her left eyebrow. Why do I feel that the last sentence he says sounds rather offensive?

The frightened man shuddered before running away on all fours with his men, dragging the unconscious Devan with him.

Seeing that they had run out of sight, Elise turned around and dismissed Moses' men. "Alright, you guys may leave now. Tell your boss when you go back that it's not necessary to send so many people here for such displays of power next time."

One of the men replied, "Hehe, it's nothing! Like Boss said, you're his madam, so it's our duty to be at your service!" With that, the group of men let out a chuckle and left in all directions in groups of two or more.

Clamping his hand over his wound, Sheldon stood next to Elise, his jaw dropping in astonishment at the sight of Moses' men, all of whom looked even stronger than a bear. "Boss, aren't you a bit too well connected? Are you friends with gangsters too?"

"Huh? Nope, these guys are all extras," Elise lied with a straight face.

Sheldon raised his eyebrow. "Boss, do you think I look like an idiot?" Are there extras who are all 180 centimeters in height and very muscular? Well, their uniform attire does make it sound plausible that they're extras, though.

"Um..." Elise rubbed her chin with a thoughtful expression. After thinking about it for a moment, she replied with a straight face, "No, you don't look like an idiot. You are an idiot." Who else is the idiot here if not him? He nearly spoiled my plan just now, after all. With that, she turned to examine Elliot's injury.

Elliot regained consciousness after Elise did a quick checkup on him and pressed his philtrum. "Oh, my gosh! You actually came?!" When he opened his eyes and saw Elise, he immediately sat up with a start. Then, he took her hand and ran, saying, "Run!"

Elise felt like crying. "Open your eyes and look around you! They're gone!"

He stopped after running a few steps. After looking around him, he let go of Elise and scratched the back of his head. "Hehe, you're right. Where did they go?"

Sheldon was just about to speak, but Elise beat him to it, saying, "Sheldon fought them off."

"Huh?" Elliot's eyes widened in astonishment. After a moment's pause, he jumped with excitement, saying, "Holy cow! Sheldon, you're terrific! Turns out you've got a few cards hidden up your sleeve, eh? I declare that you're my idol as of today!"

Sheldon turned his face away with a slight frown without answering.

On their way to escort Elise back to her dorm, Elliot pestered her with questions about the details of how Sheldon had fought off the gangsters, to which Elise responded by spontaneously making up a story about a rare martial arts genius who fought off an overwhelming number of opponents on his own.

Elliot was so totally engrossed in her story that he didn't find any holes in it at all, but Sheldon felt bad while listening to it, so he merely followed behind them without saying a word along the way.

Soon, they arrived at the dorm's entrance. Noticing that Sheldon was unhappy, Elise took him aside and asked, "What's wrong with you? Why are you unhappy now that we've beaten them?"

"It wasn't me who beat them. Why let me take credit for it instead?" Sheldon was upright and honest, so he wouldn't covet things that he hadn't earned.

Seeing the young man's spoiled demeanor, Elise let out a sigh. "Just think of it as a favor to me. I don't want to draw too much attention. Could you understand that?"

He nodded with half-comprehension. Jamie said that the more capable a person is, the more low-key they are; that's probably the case with Elise, he thought. "Don't worry, Boss. Your secret will be safe with me." All of a sudden, he felt as though his blood was boiling again.

"Thank you, but it's really getting late now. You two should quickly go back."

Elise then returned to her dorm.

When Elise returned to her dorm room, Mica was already asleep. Creeping quietly into bed, Elise logged onto Bloodthirsty Manor and got a brief understanding of how the website worked before falling asleep. As a consequence, she succeeded in getting up late the next morning.

She didn't get up until Mica woke her quite a few times, and by the time they arrived at the classroom, Martin was already giving his lecture on the platform. Even Mica was reprimanded for this, and it wasn't until they gently apologized that he let them in.

The instant Elise entered the classroom, she acutely sensed the hint of surprise that flashed visibly across Sophie's eyes when she saw her. She seemed surprised that Elise would turn up today.

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Chapter 603 A Frog in Boiling Water

Without a change in countenance, Elise sat back and silently texted Bloodthirsty Manor's URL to Joseph, asking him to look into it.

After class ended, Elise caught up to Martin to ask him for a leave of absence. "Mr. Kamp, I've got something personal to deal with today, so I need to take a day off. Could you please write me a note of permission?"

Martin frowned impatiently. "Miss Sinclair, do you want to skip your lessons just days after joining the class? If you really have no intention of focusing on your studies, you should speak to the principal to withdraw from the Elite Class instead of dropping in and out of lessons in front of me!"

This lecturer must be bipolar or something. Never mind, I'm not gonna argue with a psychiatric patient, thought Elise. With this thought in mind, she tried her best to maintain her composure, saying, "You've got the wrong idea, Mr. Kamp. I really want to learn some stuff, but I had promised my friend a few months ago to be there today, and I think we should keep our promise. Don't you think so, Mr. Kamp?"

"I don't care whether you promised your friend a few months or a few years ago—whenever it was, it happened without my knowledge. I'm not your servant, and besides, what made you so certain so long ago that I'd definitely do as you say right now? What are you gonna do if I don't allow you to have a leave of absence?" Martin looked as though he had nothing to lose and wasn't afraid of the consequences.

"Well, in that case, I have no choice but to ask the principal for that." After giving Martin a nod of acknowledgment, Elise turned around and headed toward the principal's office.

Martin shouted at the top of his voice behind her, "Yeah, just go to the principal. You're best at exercising your privilege, aren't you?"

These words weren't spoken with emphasis, but the sarcasm in them was so unmistakable that Martin might as well just say explicitly that Elise was nothing without the principal's backing. Of course, by 'privilege', he wasn't only referring to the principal but also to Kenneth.

Elise stopped in her tracks on the spot. She really had enough patience with Martin, but this man's way of thinking was simply too much for anyone to put up with. He's as small-minded as an ant despite him being an adult man. We aren't enemies, but he keeps passing ill judgment on me. Does he really want that much to have a wicked person around him?

She took a deep breath and was just about to argue reasonably with Martin when someone spoke before she could. "Is that so? But I feel that the way you use your privilege puts everyone else to shame, Mr. Kamp."

This voice... Could it be Alexander's? Elise turned around, and sure enough, Alexander was walking up to them from the stairs nearby with his hands behind his back.

"Who are you?" Astounded, Martin staggered back half a step. "How did you get in here?!" I spoke to Mr. Haas last night to get the janitors to have an iron fence installed at the gate downstairs. Not only that, but they're supposed to lock the gate and forbid anyone from going in and out of the building half an hour after class starts!

"Oh, you mean this?" Alexander pulled his hand out from behind his back to show the iron chain he was holding before throwing it at Martin's feet. "I've cut it for you, though you don't have to thank me for that."

Martin was filled with rage when he looked down at the iron chain, which was broken into several pieces. Pointing at Alexander, he swore, "H-How dare you vandalize the school's property! Stay where you are! I'm gonna call the security guards now!"

"Oh, don't bother." Alexander brushed the dust off his hands. Walking toward Elise, he said leisurely, "Just take a look downstairs. It was those security guards themselves who let me in." Then, he took Elise's hand and interlaced his fingers with hers right in front of Martin.

"You two..." Martin's expression froze as he looked at the couple's interlaced fingers. For a moment, he found himself at a loss for words.

"Is it illegal for us to hold hands, Mr. Kamp?" Alexander intentionally raised his and Elise's clasped hands before them for display.

Martin let out a contemptuous sneer while looking at Elise with even greater disdain. I've really underestimated this girl. Not only does she make Kenneth fall head over heels in love with her, but she is also involved with another man, making the school a place for her to pick up men! As the anger went to his head, he finally came to his senses. Bending over the railing, he yelled at the security guards downstairs, "What are you guys waiting for? An outsider has broken into the Elite Class! Come over and chase him out of here!"

However, the head of security replied, "No, we can't chase him away, Mr. Kamp! He's the guardian of one of the students!"

"Her guardian?" Martin looked back at Alexander and Elise's intimate interactions. In what way could he be considered a guardian? Obviously, they are a couple!

"Technically, I'm her legal guardian." Alexander looked at Elise with tenderness and affection written all over his face. "I'm Elise's husband, so I think I have the right to know how she's doing at school."

"You're her husband?" Martin got even more confused. I'm not yet married, and yet my student is showing off her husband in front of me?

Alexander explained slowly, "Seems like you're unclear about our country's policies, Mr. Kamp. Undergraduates can register for marriage as long as they reach the legal age to marry, and they can get bonus credit for doing so. Well, it looks like you haven't gotten the bonus credit awarded to my wife yet."

"Whether your wife should get the bonus credit or not isn't up to you." As Martin found Elise an eyesore, he considered Alexander a pain in the *ss. "I'm only asking you why you forcibly broke in while I was giving lessons. Do you know you'd disrupt my teaching plan by doing so?"

"Broke in?" Alexander looked at him with a smirk. "Don't you feel ashamed of using such words at school as a lecturer? Since when does a school building have to be chained up and armed like a prison? Are those inside the building your students or your prisoners, Mr. Kamp? Is it unreasonable of me to suspect that you're not carrying out some teaching plan but are imprisoning the students to satisfy your desire for control?"

"That's a trumped-up accusation!" Martin retorted. "The Elite Class is different from ordinary classes in the first place, and I have my own teaching methods. If you're not satisfied with that, you can bring this up to the principal or talk to me, but you shouldn't force your way in without permission like a thief!"

"Well, in that case, Mr. Kamp, I also have a question for you." Alexander raised his voice all of a sudden. He said with a nonchalant air, "Did you get the students' permission or ask for their parents' opinion before sealing off the school building and having an additional iron gate installed without permission? Did all the students' parents give you the right to treat their kids like prisoners?"

As Alexander spoke, he was gentle in tone and manner like a total gentleman, making it seem to an outsider that he and Martin were just having a normal conversation. However, only Martin knew how confrontational the man's words were. He reduced Martin to silence in a tit-for-tat way akin to boiling a frog in hot water.

Amid the silence, the man wrapped his arm around Elise's shoulders and continued coolly, "This will be your first and last time doing so, Mr. Kamp. I hope that if you come up with another brilliant 'teaching plan' in the future, you'll learn to listen to other people's opinions. Also, as Elise's legal guardian, I'm aware and approve of all her plans for outings, so you don't need to be sarcastic from now on." With that, he pursed his lips politely and left with Elise without looking back.

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Chapter 604 Mistaken

Martin was so beside himself with rage that he crumpled the lesson plan in his arms. This Elise girl doesn't behave like a student at all! Not only did she get in through the back door, but she openly mixes with several guys and gets into a complicated relationship with Kenneth afterward.

And now, she's presented us with a husband! Just how many more men does she have around her?! On top of being unfriendly toward her classmates and disrespectful of her teachers, she keeps making trouble. What order is there to speak of if the world is full of students like her?! This is bad; I can't wait another month. I've got to find a way to bring the monthly tests forward to get rid of Elise—that rotten apple—as soon as possible!

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Meanwhile, Elise took a drink from the almond milk that Alexander had prepared beforehand in the car before it occurred to her to ask, "What brings you to the school today? Didn't you have something to do last night? Why get up so early?"

Alexander replied, "Joey said you'd be flying to Landred City today, so she had me drive you to the airport and see you off since she feared she might not have time for that."

"Joey?" Elise was surprised. "How did she learn that I'd be going to Landred City?"

"Mr. Fassbender told her that, I guess," replied Alexander.

"What about you, then?" Elise diverted the subject. She asked with some anticipation, "Wanna go to Landred City with me?" After all, Alexis was originally a surprise she had prepared for Alexander, though the latter was still unaware of it even now.

To her disappointment, though, Alexander replied apologetically, "It's true that I'll be going to Landred City, but I'm afraid I won't be able to go with you. I have to fly to Riverdale before that to take care of something else."

"It's okay. Business before pleasure, right?" Well, it's better for him to find it out on his own. The brand is there and isn't gonna disappear, anyway, she thought to herself.

Alexander left after driving Elise to the airport.

An hour later, Elise's flight touched down at the airport, and Tom came personally to pick her up as they headed straight from the airport to the venue for the jewelry design competition.

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The annual jewelry design competition was an unprecedentedly spectacular event, and the venue was overflowing with crowds that extended everywhere from the entrance to the centermost part of the conference hall. Designers who would otherwise have seemed aloof and unapproachable in magazines now came to life, becoming living advertisements as they moved actively around their respective works.

Frostine and Tina waited for Tom and Elise to arrive before the four of them stepped into the conference hall together. As soon as they entered, Tina started taking deep breaths. She mumbled to herself, "Can we set the world on fire on such a grand occasion?"

Tom gave her hand a gentle squeeze. "Relax. We should believe in Miss Murray's skills."

Upon hearing this, Frostine pursed her lips and looked away impassively.

"I do believe in Frostine, of course, but today's really gonna be a contest among the best designers in the field. See the woman dressed in fur who has just gone over there?" Tina jutted her chin toward the person ahead of them on the left. "That's Fiona Shepherd, the winner of last year's jewelry design competition. All her designs in the past year have been featured on Diamond Weekly's covers."

"Diamond Weekly, you say? That's just a third-rate magazine published by some self-proclaimed media outlet to draw public attention. I can get you featured on their covers if you like," Tom joked.

Tina responded by giving him a dirty look.

The pair had a jolly time exchanging glances with one another, making Frostine seem all the more lonely by comparison.

Back when the four of them were still at the entrance, Elise had noticed that Frostine looked low-spirited like a zombie. She thought about it for a moment, but just as she was about to speak to Frostine, the latter's eyes suddenly lit up, and she anxiously shifted her gaze in a particular direction as if to search for something. "Are you alright?" Elise asked.

Frostine's brows furrowed. After a long time, she said hesitantly, "I-I think I just saw Clemence go over there..."

"What? Clemence is here?!" Elise instinctively followed Frostine's gaze, only to see no sign of the woman. Well, it's not like I've held out much hope for that, anyway. How could someone who had gone missing for several years possibly show up all of a sudden? Still, the unexpected little episode made her somewhat disappointed.

In fact, it was justifiable for Clemence to be present at such an occasion. On the surface, Clemence was the wife of a physics professor and a meek and virtuous full-time housewife, but in reality, she was a uniquely gifted jewelry designer with an extraordinary passion for jewelry design.

Frostine was soon discouraged. "I was mistaken. I only sensed that she was nearby, and I hadn't felt like this for a long time. Perhaps I was just imagining things." With that, the light that had just kindled in her eyes at last dimmed all at once.

Elise put her arm around Frostine's shoulders, gently patting the latter to comfort her.

Meanwhile, the emcee was urging the contestants to have their entries in the competition put on proper display as soon as possible.

Although anyone who had produced a work of their own was, in principle, welcome to participate in the competition for the sake of promoting diversity, in reality, there was a bias toward more well-known designers, which was shown in the form of where their works were being put on display. The works of renowned designers were displayed in visible locations, whereas little-known designers could only draw lots to choose from the rest of the available locations. In reality, though, it made little difference whether they had drawn lots or not, as no one would go to the secluded corners.

As Tina stood at their booth looking at the works of renowned designers in the distance, she had a feeling that there was an insurmountable gap between them and these designers that they had no hope of closing. "We sure got 'lucky' drawing this spot. As long as we manage

to make a name for ourselves, the location of the booth doesn't matter—is that the mindset I'm supposed to have right now?"

"Alright, let's not give up all hope just yet. Why don't we go see if there's any strong competitors?" suggested Elise.

Tom and Tina had no objection to it, but Frostine was uninterested. "I'll pass. Someone's got to keep watch over the booth, anyway."

Elise didn't force her to join them either. "Suit yourself. You're the one who designed the products, anyway, so no one understands them better than you do," she said, before leaving with Tom and Tina right away.

The jewelry design competition's rules weren't complicated. Participants would exhibit their works during the first half of the competition in order to get qualified to participate in the second half of the competition. Finally, the best design would be selected by the judges. In other words, the exhibition in the morning was an open audition, where each admission ticket counted as a vote; only ten entries that received the highest votes by twelve noon would be able to enter the second half of the competition.

Apart from the professional designer judges, most of the votes ended up going directly to the more well-known designers. By judging from the onlooking crowd surrounding each of the entries, one could basically estimate the number of votes received by all entries in less than half an hour into the first half of the competition. Essentially, the most popular entries were all the works of relatively well-known designers, whereas the newcomers had few people around their display booths, resulting in a clear boundary between the well-known designers and the rest.

The display booth featuring the work with the highest votes was surrounded by crowds of spectators. Gasps of admiration broke out from the crowd one after another, making Elise's heart itch. "Come on, let's go and see what kind of design it is!" She picked her feet up and headed in that direction.

"Hold on a minute, Miss Sinclair!" Tom stopped her. "That's Fiona's work. She's signed up with the Saunders Family, so she's our rival now."

"So what if we're rivals?" Elise was amused. "Since they could plagiarize our works, why can't we learn from them?"

Tom was struck dumb with astonishment. Wouldn't that be outright shameless?

It wasn't easy to get into the circle of jewelers. Some pompous money worshippers aside, most jewelers had high principles and thus had nothing but disdain for copycats and knockoffs, which was why Tom had never thought of giving the Saunderses a taste of their own medicine, even though Saunders Corporation had previously driven Shaw's Jewelry Co. to the verge of bankruptcy by despicable means. In his heart of hearts, he felt he couldn't sink to Saunders Corporation's level.

Cooldest Girl in Town Chapter 605

Chapter 605 Timely Help

Reading Tom's mind at a glance, Elise said without pulling any punches, "Mr. Shaw, I'm a businesswoman, and I have every respect for your style and principles, but I won't trifle with my own interests either. I hope you understand that it's an extravagance to talk about style and principles before chasing the Saunderses out of the jewelry industry." In the world, it's always the winners who get to make the decisions, whereas the losers will only be buried forever in the course of history.

After much effort, Tom finally managed to push his way to the front of the crowd while escorting the two ladies. However, when they saw the work displayed at the booth, their expressions froze simultaneously.

To their great surprise, Fiona, the up-and-coming jewelry designer's design looked exactly the same as Frostine's, only that Fiona's design had some accessories and little details added that seemed unimportant and easy to overlook. Even so, her design looked totally identical to Frostine's, so much so that it'd be hard to distinguish between Fiona's design and Frostine's if they were put on display together.

"Isn't this too much of a coincidence?" Tina exclaimed in horror.

Elise wasn't very surprised, though. Soon, she let out a sneer, saying, "This is no coincidence."

On the other hand, Tom was so anxious that he broke into a cold sweat. "This is bad. If such an obvious coincidence is pointed out by anyone, we're absolutely gonna be showered with abuse!"

"But you know deep down that we never did it!" Tina was both angry and resentful. Frostine's design wasn't her work alone; everyone in Alexis had put a painstaking amount of effort into it. It was an intense experience that she had truly gone through herself, so she found it really unacceptable that all their hard work would be labeled as dirty plagiarism all at once.

On the other hand, Tom was burning with anxiety as well. "What's the use of me believing it? The outsiders have to believe it as well! It's fine if they just look similar, but they look exactly the same! There's no way we can explain this!"

Instead of joining the pair's discussion, Elise merely tried to recall what exactly had gone wrong. While everyone else wasn't noticing, she quietly took out her phone and texted Joseph, asking him to look into something.

Meanwhile, Tom said, "How about we get Frostine to put something on top of our design to cover it? My heart's pounding. I have a bad feeling about this..." Taking matters into his own hands, he started to fumble for his phone.

However, as soon as he took out his phone, a commotion broke out in their booth's direction. "Come and take a look, everyone! The work Alexis entered for the competition looks exactly the same as Miss Fiona's!" exclaimed a busybody all of a sudden, drawing attention from the surroundings all at once. As a result, an endless stream of people flocked toward Alexis' display booth.

"Hey, it's true! I just thought it looked familiar. Turns out it's an imitation of Miss Fiona's design, huh?"

"Imitation? No, it's not an imitation. It's a knockoff!"

"No way! Aren't they treating us like fools, blatantly exhibiting works they've plagiarized from others? Alexis is going too far!"

The biggest characteristic of Cittadelians was their fondness for gossip and spectacles, so the news of the similarity between Alexis' submission and Fiona's instantly spread far and wide as it made waves among the crowd. In less than two minutes, everyone in the conference hall was startled by the news; such was the speed at which rumors spread.

With more and more people gathering in front of Alexis' display booth, Frostine, the designer, was immediately hustled into a corner, looking weak, helpless, and pitiful.

The designer named Fiona was brought here as well. Despite being a seemingly elegant and poised middle-aged woman decked out in jewels, she managed to keep in shape, and her upwardly slanted eyes and fine eyebrows oozed the aggressiveness of someone who thought justice was on their side. She dashed toward the display booth and studied Frostine's design carefully before her face wore an exaggerated expression. "Oh, my God! To think that someone actually copied my work as it is!"

Now that Fiona herself was here to seek justice, the onlooking crowd became all the more eager to fan the flames.

"Alexis Jewelry Co.? What kind of a lousy company is this? How shameless of them to piggyback on Fiona's success!"

"Where's the designer of this knockoff? Now what? Is she afraid of showing herself?"

In the face of incessant voices of scrutiny, Frostine stepped forward and said, "I designed these two products, but I never plagiarized anyone's work!" Despite her frail appearance, she spoke with absolute confidence and didn't seem dishonest at all.

But who cared? People would only believe what they were willing to believe. It went without saying which was more credible, a little-known newcomer or a famous designer who had once won the competition.

"That's absurd. You didn't copy anyone's work? Are you saying that it was Miss Fiona who plagiarized your work?"

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Miss Fiona has made a name for herself using her own capabilities, and you? You're such a young lady, but you resort to plagiarism instead of putting effort into your work!"

"That's right! What trick did you use to steal Miss Fiona's design sketches? Spill it!"

“Stop playing the victim! The people have discerning eyes, so nobody is falsely accusing you here! Hurry up and come clean about it!”

Having grown up beside Clemence and her husband since her childhood, Frostine spent all her leisure time studying jewelry design, so she was somewhat out of touch with society. Upon being confronted with so many questions all at once, she was instantly at a loss for what to do. “No, I didn’t! I...”

Noticing that some of the people were getting more and more agitated as they spoke, Tom hurriedly thrust his way through the crowd and stepped in front of Frostine, fearing that the young lady might suffer harm. “Everyone! Please listen to me, everyone! I’m the head of Alexis, so please come to me directly if you have any questions. Don’t make things difficult for our designer.”

“You’re the head of Alexis? That means you’re its owner, right? Well, you owe us an explanation for openly plagiarizing Fiona’s work!”

Tom let out a sigh. “To tell you the truth, these products are made by Alexis, and it took us nearly three months of painstaking effort to finish them, and every step of the process is well-documented, so they’re absolutely not some knockoffs. I believe there’s been some mistake here, so please give us some time before I give everyone an exp—”

“Give you guys some time? Who’s gonna give Miss Fiona time, then? It’s almost time to decide on the entries that will make it into the final selection. Are you guys trying to get Miss Fiona disqualified along with you guys? What a wicked scheme!”

“That’s right! Alexis must have been sent by Miss Fiona’s rival to disrupt the competition on purpose!”

“Get Alexis out of here! Get Alexis out of here!”

In the blink of an eye, Alexis became the target of public criticism. All of a sudden, the bystanders who had nothing to do with this incident transformed into crusaders for justice, eager to condemn Alexis to hell.

Tom’s face was flushed down to his neck with anxiety, but he couldn’t think of any solution.

Watching the scene from a distance, Elise wanted to step forward and voice her support for Alexis. However, Tom was still Alexis’ nominal owner at the moment, so it’d be inappropriate

for her to show herself. She thought about it for a moment, but among the people she knew, Kenneth seemed to be the only person in Landred City who was powerful enough to put this matter to rest. However, now that she was already a married woman, she didn't really want to get too close to that guy.

Just as she was still hesitating, a pair of dark-suited men pushed past the crowd in an imposing manner, clearing a path from the entrance all the way to Alexis' display booth. A moment later, Kenneth, dressed in a tailor-made tailcoat, walked in at an unhurried pace under the gaze of the crowd.

At the sight of the scene, Elise involuntarily held her breath. Is Kenneth even able to read my mind now? He showed up just when I was thinking about him. What a timely help!