Mistaking the CEO for a Gigolo Chapter 614

"Ugh, this sucks!" Nicole glared at Evan coldly.

Evan was bewildered. "What happened?"

"You have to cheek to ask me? What exactly do you want? Sir Musgrave is my life savior, and yet you just cruelly chased him away."

Evan was irked at her outburst. In his mind, her fury was pure vindication that she had feelings for Stephen.

"Seems like someone really wants to meet Sir Musgrave."

The emphasis on "really" unnerved Nicole. Stammering, she frantically explained that she merely viewed Stephen as a parental figure.

But her explanation simply fell on deaf ears. Evan was already too upset by her current behavior to care about any attempted verbal defense.

With a menacing smirk plastered on his face, he enunciated each word slow, "Well, it doesn't matter what he is to you now. You will not have a chance to ever meet him ever again anyway."

Nicole was struck dumb.

What did he just say? I can never meet Sir Musgrave again? This bas*ard must have threatened him or something.

Something else also bothered her, the fact that she would not be able to repay Stephen. She literally owed him her life.

She lashed out at Evan, "What right do you have to do this? Don't you remember that Sir Musgrave literally saved my life?"

"Simple, it's because you're my wife and the mother of my children! I have every right in the world to interfere in this budding relationship of yours and severe any ties before things develop further!"

Nicole was once again left wordless.

B-Budding relationship?

Absolute nonsense.

"Evan Seet, you're an ungrateful jerk and hypocrite!"

Her heart thumped fiercely against her chest as fury boiled within her.

But once again, her words had no effect on Evan. He was unbothered by her rebuke.

Refusing to engage him any further, Nicole lay down on the hospital bed and buried herself underneath the blanket.

The heated exchange left Evan with one conclusion, Nicole really cared a lot for Stephen.

She cared for him so much that she was willing to throw such harsh words at me.

This made the man even firmer about never letting the two meet again, even if it meant that Nicole would hate him.

Five days following the argument, Nicole finally felt well enough to move about freely.

Joining her in the ward were four little pairs of waddling feet.

One asked, "Mommy, are you still in pain?"

The other said, "Mommy, do you want me to hold you?"

Meanwhile, Maya tottered before Nicole and stuck out her little tongue sheepishly. "Mommy..."

"Yes, Maya?"

Oh, it seems like Mommy hasn't realized.

Maya tried again. Stared at Nicole with puppy-like eyes, she hoped that her mother would notice something.

But her attempt was to no avail.

Since when did Maya become so hesitant? She wasn't like this before.

Nina, who was watching her act on the side, decided that Maya would never get anywhere at this rate. Pointing at the girl's stomach, Nina said, "Mommy, Maya wants you to notice that she has become skinnier."

"Skinnier?"

The surprised mother took a closer look at her daughter. Indeed, it seemed like Maya's stomach was no longer as big as before.

Her little coat was also not as tight-fitting now.

Nicole felt a wave of guilt. She spoke in a gentle voice, "Mommy promises that I'll treat Maya to lots of good food after I get better, alright?"

Maya's gave an unexpected reply instead. "No Mommy, I want to go on a diet."

Nina decided it was time to reveal the context before the conversation became even more confusing. "Mommy, Maya has been eating very little these days because she thinks that she's responsible for the car accident." She could not help but add a jibe, "Well, given her evident weight loss, a diet plan certainly seems plausible now."

Nicole's heart wrenched upon hearing that. "Maya, it's not your fault. Please don't think that way, alright?"

Maya rubbed her hands together nervously and nodded animatedly. "Daddy said the same thing."

Her statement prompted a protest from Nina. Interjecting vehemently, she claimed that while Evan was biased towards Maya. "Daddy didn't scold her, but he reprimanded me instead! It was so bad that I ended up crying afterwards. Daddy's a meanie!"

Nicole had been simmering with anger for the past few days over the whole Sir Stephen affair.

Now, Nina's complaints provided the perfect avenue for her to rant about her husband.

"I agree with you, Nina. Your father is a terrible person. Frankly, I want to beat him up sometimes." Then, a mischievous idea crossed her mind. "Hmm... how about we gang up on him?"

Mistaking the CEO for a Gigolo Chapter 615

The other children widened their eyes in horror.

Gang up on Daddy? A-Aren't we a family? Why are we fighting amongst ourselves?

Nina entertained the proposal and replied, "You can do the punching, Mommy. I'm not in a good position to do so because he's still Daddy after all. But I can help you with some plans."

"Hmm... I think he's stronger than both of us if we were to fight him. What about we play a prank on him?"

"Yes! I approve of this idea." Nina cheered.

The other three bystanders wondered, Should we warn Daddy about this?

As if she could read their minds, Nicole immediately warned that if anyone revealed this plan to Evan, she would strip the culprit naked and post the nude photos on social media.

The kids shuddered in fear at the merciless threat.

Sighing, Kyle promised that they would not spill any beans.

Juan, on the other hand, was looking forward to the plan. "Daddy had been really moody and oddly aggressive recently. We literally don't dare to go near him. I think he deserves this prank."

Maya was still stunned by the thought of being stripped naked. To show her commitment of keeping the plan a secret, she covered her mouth and said, "Mommy, I won't say a word."

Now that everyone had sworn secrecy, Nicole and Nina shared a meaningful look and gave a mutual thumbs up.

The pair soon got into action. Chasing the other children to the side, they began their secretive discussion.

Watching their exchange, Juan suddenly suggested, "Why don't we join them?"

Kyle returned a look of disbelief. "Daddy will go after our heads!"

"If Nina isn't scared of Daddy, why should we be?" rebutted Juan.

"Nina is a girl, so Daddy won't hit her. Therefore, she has no reason to be afraid."

For a moment, the two boys had intense envy for the opposite gender. If only we were born as girls...

They turned to the quiet Maya and asked why she did not participate in the prank.

The girl explained that she did not wish to prank Daddy who had always been very nice to her.

While the three children were talking, Nicole and Nina were already wrapping up their discussion. "Does everything sound okay?" asked Nina.

Nicole gave her the green light. "Of course, go ahead."

"Okay."

Nina then left briefly and returned with some tools needed for the operation. "Is there anything else you need me to do, Mommy?" Nina enquired.

"Nope, everything's settled."

"Yay! Don't forget to send me the photos later on. I can't wait to see his reaction."

Her excitement brought a smile to Nicole's face. "Don't worry honey, Mommy sure will!"

While the mother-daughter pair rejoiced in their newly-formed scheme, another scheme was in the making along the hospital walkways.

Evan stood before John. There was a trace of ruthlessness flashed across his face.

"She's the mastermind?" Evan was in disbelief.

"Yes! Lady Musgrave wanted to get rid of Mrs. Seet and would resort to any means."

Evan always suspected that the people at the estate had something to do with Nicole's incident. Hearing John's confirmation only made him even more livid.

His gaze grew frighteningly cold. There's only one fair approach to this issue, an eye for an eye.

"How easy is it for one of our people to enter the estate?"

"That's not difficult at all. However, laying a finger on Lady Musgrave is a whole other challenge unfortunately. Moreover, the risk is very high. If our plan fails, we would most certainly be dead on the spot. But even if we do succeed, they would go after us for the rest of our lives."

This placed Evan in a dilemma. He did not have the heart to send anyone on this dangerous mission.

After some deliberation, a suitable candidate came to his mind.

"He can go."

"Who?"

"Jeremy!"

In K Nation, Evan trusted Jeremy the most. The man even had an important role to play in the company's future development in the country.

John was surprised at his president's determination to seek was revenge for his wife. To the extent of sending out the very capable Jeremy. Wow!

He replied, "Okay, I'll see to it!"

"Make things difficult for Sir Musgrave too. Mess up the estate, harass his wife, and let him experience what agony feels like."

This way, he wouldn't have the time to think about Nicole.

John noted the orders and the two parted ways. Evan had faith that things would go well- Jeremy was extremely capable after all.

He returned to a groaning Nicole on the bed.

Worried that something had happened, Evan dashed to her side.

Mistaking the CEO for a Gigolo Chapter 616

The man soon realized that something was wrong. His legs felt heavy, as if someone poured lead into them.

That was when he realized in horror that the floor was covered in glue, rendering him immobile.

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He narrowed his eyes. "Are you having fun?"

His voice was inordinately deep. Nicole stared back with an innocuous expression, pretending that she had no clue what was happening.

Evan could have easily removed his footwear and left the scene. But he waited. He waited to see what other tricks she had up her sleeve.

Seeing that her husband made no further moves, Nicole got down the bed.

Is the glue really that adhesive?

Or is he such a big germaphobe that he doesn't want to touch the ground with his bare feet?

If that was the case, Nicole reckoned that this was the perfect opportunity to do whatever she wanted.

Tiptoeing and pinching his well-defined face, she cooed, "Oh Evan, I must thank you for your help these past few days. You have gone to such great lengths to care for me in every way possible. You even got me my favorite dish – 'anything'."

The man picked up on the sarcasm in her tone and knew she was going to start an argument.

And he was all ears for it. Let's see what you're unhappy about.

"Well, you ordered 'anything', so of course I'd do my best to satisfy your cravings."

Very literal of you.

"When I was too weak to do anything, you barred entry to all my male friends. They couldn't even enter my ward. Do you realize that you're essentially robbing my freedom to make friends?"

"Yes, I think I'm justified to limit your freedom to make boyfriends."

Seriously?

Boyfriends? They are just normal friends!

Nicole could not tolerate Evan's actions. Not only did he bar Stephen from visiting the ward, but he also even made sure that the person delivering the hospital meals were all female.

She scoffed, "At this rate, I will end up with zero male presence in my life."

"And you should be grateful for that! I'm making sure that you don't fall into a scam or something. I can't wait until you return back to your home country. Life should return to normal after that."

That was news to Nicole. "Huh? When am I going back?"

"Three days later. There will be a special helper tending to you there."

"Three days later?" That's fast.

Her hesitation did not escape Evan's eyes. "You have a problem with that?"

She knew Evan was being jealous again.

She pouted indignantly. I'm just surprised at how tight the schedule is! Don't give me that judgmental look!

Then, a spiteful thought struck her. Since you can't stop assuming that I have a thing for Sir Musgrave, then I'm going to make your assumptions come true.

"Hmm... Before I depart, I think it's polite to visit the estate and give a farewell notice to Sir Musgrave. After all, his blood literally flows in me right now, so I think it's not very nice if I just left without a word."

Evan narrowed his eyes.

Well, letting her witness the aftermath would be good too. By then, Jeremy should have wiped out the whole estate.

"Sure, I'll follow you too," he replied.

Nicole did a double take. He actually agreed?

His easy consent came as a surprise considering how Evan had just sworn never to let the two meet again a few days ago.

His odd attitude raised some alarm. He must be hiding something, she thought.

"Evan, if you're scheming anything, just remember that Sir Musgrave has saved my life! If you hurt him in any way, you're basically betraying his kindness, and I will never forgive you!"

Evan was rendered speechless by her outburst for a moment.

Processing her words, he gave to a sobering verdict. So you still care about him after all!

Shooting her a cold gaze without saying a word, he removed his footwear and strode out of the room.

Everything happened so quickly that Nicole did not react in time.

He walked out barefoot? And wait... No! Don't go, I'm not done with my punishment yet! Come back!

Watching the door shut, she sighed. Looks like Nina's props will have to wait... Perhaps tomorrow would be a better time. Regardless, there will be a chance in the future, I suppose. Watch out, Evan!

At the estate, woes plagued Daphne. Her long discussion with the psychologist whom Lady Musgrave recommended left her with the disheartening realization that Hector had ulterior motives for getting close to her.

She mocked herself for being so foolish for thinking that the man was her Mr. Right who she was ready to spend the rest of her life with.

Now that Hector had returned, her agony only compounded. She had to see the man and be constantly reminded of her unrequited love. Only time could heal her current pain.

Mistaking the CEO for a Gigolo Chapter 617

Daphne practically spent two days sulking on her bed. Her emotions were laced with both anger and lingering feelings towards Hector.

She knew that he had other motives. But deep down, she still wanted to be with him despite everything. I'm seriously going crazy, she thought.

She tried to rationalize that she was feeling this way out of spite. It's because I hate him! And because I want vengeance, I will make him fall in love with me intentionally and make him go through the same torture and betrayal I've felt.

But honestly, she knew her logic did not make sense. If she really hated him, she would have let things be a long time ago. All this rationalization was nothing but self-deceit.

The only truth that remained was that she still loved him.

She loved him so much that she had no qualms in taking drastic actions to eliminate her biggest rival, Nicole.

She called out loud, "Can somebody come?"

A servant appeared. "Yes, Ms. Ankins?"

"Get Andy here."

After a while, the man arrived. He was her trusted aide whom she entrusted him with the following orders – keep an eye out for Nicole at the hospital and find an opportune timing to take her life. If he could make Hector lose his memories, that would be even better.

This way, Hector would belong to no one else but her.

"I can pay you as much as you demand, so long as you execute your mission properly," said Daphne.

"Don't worry, Ms. Ankins. I will do my best."

Andy left Daphne's room beaming, relishing in the idea that he would soon be a wealthy man. The joy was so overwhelming that he had a definite spring in his step.

That was when he bumped into Jeremy.

Jeremy did his research prior to arriving at the estate. He paid particular attention to Daphne's room because Evan's hit list included Daphne and Portia. That was why he was in the area.

Noticing Andy's peculiar attitude, the astute Jeremy knew that something was up.

He wasted no time in digging out the man's background information. Then, he proceeded to get the alcoholic drunk. With that, Jeremy managed to get to Andy to spill the beans in the end almost effortlessly.

Daphne's plan dismayed him. What a terrible woman. I really should teach her a lesson.

That night, the skies were pitch black. The usual tranquility was destroyed by chilling gusts of wind.

A shocking affair had shaken the entire estate. Portia was almost assassinated. If not for the doctor's efforts, she would have been gone.

What was even more surprising was that Andy was identified as the culprit, while Daphne was identified as the mastermind.

When they were called for questioning, Daphne was completely dumbfounded.

"Uncle Stephen, Levant, please believe me. I-I didn't instruct him to kill Aunt Portia!" cried the lady.

"Andy, is that true?"

But Andy was so wasted at that point in time that he had no idea what exactly happened. He did not even remember how he ended up at the crime scene.

"Be honest, Andy. Is this your own idea, or are you acting upon Ms. Ankins' instructions? Be truthful if you wish to have your life spared."

Weighing the pros and cons, Andy took the path of betrayal and shoved the responsibility to Daphne.

Daphne was taken aback. "Nonsense! Why would I order you to hurt Aunt Portia?"

Believing Andy's confession, Levant's gaze turned menacingly cold. "Daphne, did Aunt Portia mistreat you in any way? She literally treats you like her own daughter. Does your conscience not hurt when you were plotting this?"

"N-No! It's not that. I didn't plot anything!" Daphne desperately defended herself.

"Andy went to your room this afternoon, so that means you did communicate something to him."

At this point, Daphne decided that owning up to her original plan was far better than being accused of plotting her aunt's death.

And since Nicole was still safe and sound, this meant that her hands were still clean.

"I instructed Andy to go after Nicole! I never told him to hurt Aunt Portia. Uncle Stephen, Levant, you must believe me! I never intended to do anything to Aunt Portia!"

Stephen's face blackened the moment he heard Nicole's name.

He could not believe that Daphne wanted to hurt his own daughter. This lady is going to pay for her actions.

Levant was equally surprised and exclaimed, "Daphne, I wouldn't marry you even if Nicole doesn't exist! There's no point going after her!"

Mistaking the CEO for a Gigolo Chapter 618

Daphne sniggered upon hearing that.

"Hold on. Do you seriously think I'm going after Nicole because of you? You're overestimating your own appeal! I'm doing it to get her husband, who's far more superior than you. Tsk... That's why that Nicole has no feelings for you. If I'm in her shoes, I won't pick you either!"

Levant was rendered speechless by her words.

Every syllable was like salt being rubbed on his wound. His fists clenched involuntarily.

After all that I've done, Daphne still fell for Evan? What's so good about that man? In what way is he better than me?

Stephen took note of Levant's reaction, convinced now that he did indeed develop genuine feelings for Nicole.

If Evan isn't in the picture, they would have made a great pair. But sadly, God likes to play tricks on mankind.

Stephen was well-aware that Nicole chose Evan over Levant when she left that day.

Since she already made her decision clear, the old man wanted to respect it. After all, as a father, all he wanted was for his daughter to be happy. He had already lost Rosalie, so making Nicole unhappy was the last thing he ever wanted.

If you can't give up your love for her and go on the wrong path please don't blame me for not taking your side, Levant.

Stephen caught himself drifting away with his thoughts and immediately halted. It was more important to deal with the fiasco unfolding right before him first.

Shooting a glare at Daphne, he roared, "The estate does not tolerate such wickedness!"

"Trust me, Uncle Stephen! I-I really didn't intend to do anything to Aunt Portia! I only sent Andy to deal with Nicole- Aunt Portia is with me on this plan! She wants to get rid of that vixen too!"

Daphne was still under the impression that Stephen did not trust that her prime target was Nicole and not Portia. She thought that admitting to harming Nicole was much less consequential. Unfortunately, she was very wrong.

Stephen regarded Nicole more than anyone else- including Portia.

"Regardless of who your target was, your intention to harm others already warrants an eviction! Leave the estate now!"

Daphne had never seen Stephen so angry before.

Thoroughly intimidated, she decided that leaving the estate for now was the best option. She could get her family to speak up for her afterwards.

What she did not know was that she had pushed Stephen beyond his limit. After she left, Stephen ordered people to go after her.

It would be hard to explain to the Ankins family if something happened to Daphne while she was in the estate. But stepping out of the estate grounds, anything that happened to her was none of his business.

This is the price you're paying for wanting to harm Nicole.

Jeremy finished executing Evan's orders on the second day of arriving at the estate.

He found a chance to meet up with Evan to convey all that had happened.

"But Lady Musgrave is still alive?" asked Evan coldly.

Only Portia's death could appease him after what she had done to Nicole. Evan was surprised that Jeremy seemed to have shown mercy on her. It was very unlike his usual way of doing things.

But Jeremy had an explanation for it. "Mr. Seet, death is an easy way out. Think about it, wouldn't it be better if we prolong her suffering before actually taking her life?"

His argument was fair enough. There was indeed no rush into ending Portia's life. Jeremy isn't so merciful after all.

"Daphne is thrown out from the estate?" Evan asked.

"Yes, she was. But there's something I don't understand. After she left the estate, she was drugged and turned into a lunatic. I snooped around and to my surprise, it turns out that it was Sir Musgrave who ordered the attack!"

Evan was surprised. A lunatic? I can't believe that old man is capable of this.

Jeremy offered his two cents on the situation. "I suspect that Daphne met such a tragic fate because she wanted to go after Nicole."

"You mean... Sir Musgrave ordered the execution to protect Nicole?"

Evan spoke his thoughts. "Yes! After all, you can't enact any more harm if you've lost the mental capacity to do so."

Hearing this, Evan's face darkened.