

# Nothing Matters, except YOU & Me Chapter 419

On the way to the restaurant, Heather and Nikolai held hands and engaged in cheerful banter. Matthias, on the other hand, was sullen as he trudged along behind them. He felt as if he was caught in the middle and he could neither interject nor ignore them. It wasn't as though he could pull Heather away from his own cousin—that would look bad on him, not to mention unreasonably rude.

Upon entering the Italian restaurant, Heather and Nikolai sat on one side of the table, while Matthias took the seat across from theirs. He eyed them darkly as he grumbled to himself, Is she always this chummy with the people she's interested in?

Throwing her a disgruntled look, Matthias could tell that she was shedding the presence in front of Nikolai. When the waiter came to give them the menu, the latter looked up and upon seeing the baleful gleam in his cousin's eyes, he quickly widened the gap between Heather and himself.

He slid the menu toward her and said courteously, "Miss Heather, you can have the menu." There was a slight note of reverence in his voice and he had an endearing, boyish charm about him.

Heather narrowed her eyes and flashed him an unassuming smile. "I think you may have mistaken something, Nikolai." She didn't like how he had addressed her so formally. He seems to believe that there really is something going on between me and Matthias.

However, just as she was about to explain, Matthias cleared his throat and cut her off, then pulled his chair over so that he could sit next to her. She cringed when he proceeded to wrap an arm around her shoulders and she bristled at their sudden close proximity. Seemingly ignorant of her discomfort, Matthias said close to her ear, "Go on; order what you like." Anyone who saw them would think they were a couple.

Upon seeing this, Nikolai scooted over to the chair on the other side of the table, looking wounded the whole time. Matthias noticed this and immediately felt his heart clench with remorse. He hadn't wanted to keep up the act in front of Nikolai, but he was left with no choice now that the latter had developed actual feelings for Heather. Deceiving him was the

only way to convince him that she was already taken, and only then would he stop pining for her.

“Don’t touch me,” Heather hissed through gritted teeth, completely distracted by the unwanted skinship. Her shoulder tingled where Matthias’ hand was gripping her and she squirmed, wanting to nudge her elbow into his ribs.

The both of them were bickering under their breath. Nikolai lowered his head at the sight of this, feeling sorry for himself as he prayed for the ground to open up and swallow him whole.

Matthias managed a nonchalant smile as he restored the gap between them, then murmured softly next to her ear, “I hear that you’re planning to set up your own enterprise. If you play along, I promise you that the Locke Group will be your very first client.”

He knew that the only way to tempt a woman like Heather was to offer her something worthwhile and profitable. After all, the reason behind all her shenanigans was so that she could start her own business and make a name for herself in Bradford City.

Presently, she turned to look at him in surprise. She wasn’t sure how he had come to know of her plans but she had to admit that his offer was an incredibly tempting and valid one. He was driving a hard bargain.

“Deal,” she agreed after regaining her composure. It would be silly of her to turn down a potential partnership. As far as she was concerned, it was all about what she could gain at the end of the day. “But—” she added as she lowered her voice. She didn’t want Nikolai to overhear their conversation and after she had paused for dramatic effect, she continued, “—I want to know why you’re so protective of Nikolai. Is he someone important to you?” It was imperative for her to figure out the relationship between them before this day came to an end.

“He’s my cousin,” Matthias answered forthrightly. He knew that he had to tell her the truth if he wanted her cooperation and even if he didn’t, he was sure that she would find out on her own eventually, seeing as she was already curious enough to ask. He knew better than to underestimate her sleuthing abilities.

Heather hummed in surprise and she broke into a grin. Aside from the promise of a business deal, she had also acquired the information she needed, essentially killing two birds with one stone.

Looks like I'm getting more than I have bargained for out of this lunch, she thought as she congratulated herself on having such brilliant wit. Things were taking an interesting turn in Bradford City now that the Locke Group had infiltrated the market. She didn't know what might happen after this but she looked forward to it all the same.

Just then, Nikolai raised his voice unconsciously as he unhappily shouted, "Waiter!"

Matthias and Heather pulled away from each other when they heard this, and they regarded him with puzzled expressions as they straightened in their seats.

He flashed them an apologetic look after realizing that he had interrupted them by bellowing for the waiter. He hadn't meant to do so but frustration got the better of him and in that moment, it was as if something in him snapped.

When the unsuspecting waiter came to their table, he was forced to bear the brunt of Nikolai's rage. "Your service is absolutely terrible! Do you know how long we've been calling for a waiter? What took you so long to come and take our orders?"

The poor waiter blinked at him, bewildered that such a fine-looking young man could be so temperamental.

While this was happening, Heather was amused as she watched Nikolai throw a fit. He reminded her of Matthias in his younger days. They're exactly the same, she mused to herself. Matthias used to always sulk and throw tantrums whenever she and Myra hung out, and he would pull all sorts of gimmicks to try and get the other girl's attention.

Cousins, indeed! She appraised Nikolai, then Matthias. The former lowered his head when he met her eyes, looking like a schoolboy who had just been lectured.

She remembered how much she had disliked Matthias because of his tendency to throw hissy fits. He had been so self-centered and emotional, like a child who refused to grow up and face the world. Her impression of him carried over the years and it was no wonder she found it hard to like him even in the present.

Nikolai, on the other hand, was much younger than her. She saw him as nothing more than a junior, to whom she did not attach any specific sentiment. To her, she was supposed to be more tolerant of his tantrum by virtue of the fact that she was older than him.

It wasn't long after Nikolai had lashed out at the waiter that the food was served. While Heather had only ordered pasta for herself, the men filled their carnivorous appetites with steaks.

She dug into her meal with effortless elegance, her posture and etiquette flawless. Matthias had spent years looking up to her and tried to emulate the same grace with which she carried herself.

However, it was only after he was juxtaposed with her that he realized he lacked the natural-born aristocratic grace that she had. After all, she had been living like a princess from the very moment she was born, while he had had to endure hardships in his childhood, however temporary that might have been.

The three of them were quiet as they ate their meal, and the only audible sounds were those of their chewing. The lunch lasted for over an hour and they took their time as any proper lady and gentleman of high society would. Intermittently, they would lift their glasses and all seemed well between them.

When they left the restaurant, Nikolai insisted on returning to the office alone so that Matthias could drop Heather home. Seeing as Nikolai was so determined to leave on his own, Heather did not try to persuade him to come along with them this time. She was content with all that she had gotten out of her excursion today.

Heather looked so pleased on the way home and it was clear that she was painfully unaware of all the terrible things Matthias had done.

As the car pulled up in front of the chateau-like structure that was the Langston Residence, Matthias got down from the vehicle and opened the door for her in a show of chivalry. If they were going on with the act, then he might as well go all the way and be a gentleman.

He was even more determined to put on a decent front now that they had arrived at the Langston Residence and if he could somehow get past the threshold, then it would be the icing on the cake.

As if reading his thoughts, Heather suppressed a smirk as she glanced over at him. "Don't tell me you're actually angling to get into my house," she mused, the snide tone of her voice implying that she had done her part for the day and did not want to be pestered by him any longer.

He shrugged. "I might not go through those doors today but it's only a matter of time before I pay your family a visit." Matthias was not affected by the subtext of her words and he wasn't one to back down easily; he wouldn't give her the satisfaction.

With a resigned smile, she graciously admitted defeat this time and did not waste another breath on arguing with him. Besides, it wasn't as though she had not gained anything out of this ridiculous charade.

She gazed at him steadily and the contempt was clear in her eyes—she would not back down that easily either. "Well, then; we'll wait for the day you decide to visit us, Director Locke." "On behalf of the Locke Group, we look forward to working with the Langston Group in the near future. If it isn't too much to ask of you, Miss Langston, I do hope that you would put in a good word for me to Chairman Langston," Matthias said perfunctorily, as though he was genuinely excited for the business partnership.

"I'm afraid you're asking the wrong person, Director Locke. My words carry little weight in the Langston Group," Heather countered, having no interest in furthering his ambitions.

On the contrary, if one were to speak of a partnership with the Hart Group, she would be more than willing to help out. It would be the most ideal situation for her family to work together with the Hart Group, seeing as they would complement each other well.

She had done her research on the Locke Group too and while she had considered the value of the corporation as a whole, they were still the Langston Group's competitors nonetheless, and the strife between them outweighed the benefits of a partnership.

Even if she were to allow the possibility of a collaboration, she knew that the Locke Group could not complement them as well as the Hart Group would. The wheels in Heather's mind turned rapidly as she evaluated the pros and cons of working together with either one of them.

Given that she could only choose one, she began to consider the importance of maintaining good terms with the Hart Group, who happened to be rivals with the Locke Group.

"Everyone knows that Chairman Langston trusts you the most," Matthias pointed out, finding ways to keep her from going into the front door. He wanted to make his presence known.

If she won't let me follow her into the house, then I'll keep the conversation going out here. Old Master Langston will surely hear about this one way or another.

"Look—I really have to go in right now. There's a time and place for everything, and I don't make it a habit to take a business meeting on my doorstep," she snapped irritably. Who knows what the maids in the house might think if they saw me talking to him?

"How could you be so heartless after clinging onto me for the whole of last night?" Matthias feigned a wounded look as he teased her.

Heather's face paled when she heard this. She ought to throttle him for saying something like that on the doorstep of the Langston Residence. She glowered at him murderously. She would never partner up with him and she would do everything she could to get in his way instead.

She was resolute in returning Matthias the favor. If a partnership with the Langston Group was what he had hoped for, then she would let him get a taste of devastation.

"Are you done? If you are, I suggest you get out of my sight this instant!" Heather hissed, no longer playing nice. She wanted to slap the scoundrel hard across his smarmy face.

"You're just as feisty as I expected," Matthias remarked as he opened the car door for himself. She felt anger thrumming in her veins when she registered the smug look on his face.

Heather would never forgive him for what he had done to her that morning, and she vowed to teach him a lesson for messing with her.

He flashed her a wicked smile and pulled out a small gift box from his coat pocket. He had chosen this gift for her personally.

"To make up for my behavior today, I got you a gift." Matthias shoved it into her hand and quickly entered the car, thereafter speeding off, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake.

Frowning, Heather glanced down at the box in her hand, sickened by how he had given her a gift right after he had offended her.

Without sparing the gift another thought, she tossed it to the maid who had opened the door for her and said, "Here; you can keep this." Heather didn't want Matthias' gift and she wouldn't so much as spare a glance at it.

It wasn't until much later that she regretted handing the box over to the maid—if she could have foreseen how things would turn out, she would have thrown that box into the trash at the very first opportunity.