

Chapter 458 You're Jealous, Aren't You

Mark gazed toward the door, a guess about the identities of the visitors forming in his mind. "Think you're in the wrong room," he commented dryly.

Chandler, with his distinctive square face and prominent ears, stood out like a thumbtack on a blank canvas next to the younger girl accompanying him. In his hand was a photograph. Comparing its image to Mark, he ran fingers through his thinning hair. "This is odd; it looks just like you."

Chandler's hesitation was apparent. The girl, Elaine Shaw, quicker on the uptake, sprang into action.

Elaine, an art student, had the world at her feet.

Bright-eyed, energetic, and talented, she was the epitome of youthful promise.

Yet, she knew the entertainment world wasn't kind; without a helping hand, she could spend decades in obscurity.

Aligning herself with Chandler was a gamble.

Elaine's eyes sparkled upon seeing Mark. He

He was soft and stunning.

He had an air about him that turned every woman's head.

With grace, she poured a glass of water, placing it into Mark's hand.

"I've heard so much about you from Mr. Lewis. I'm a big fan," she cooed, sliding her fingers along the back of his hand, hoping Chandler wouldn't notice.

Mark just offered a knowing smirk. Back in the day, he'd navigated these waters countless times.

Instead of indulging her, he set the glass aside.

"What brings you here?"

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Chandler, always alert, shot a warning glance at Elaine before addressing Mark, his voice quivering.

"I regret how I've treated you before, Mr. Evans. I've been set straight by Peter. I need your help to restart the mine in the northwest. My family's struggling; my kids' school fees are sky-high."

Mark shot Elaine a playful look.

"Kids in junior high school grow up that fast these days?"

The air grew thick with tension.

Mark seemed relaxed and at ease.

Chandler, on the other hand, took a moment before regaining his composure.

His gaze landed on Elaine, noting her youthful beauty and her knack for handling situations smoothly.

The idea of presenting Elaine to Mark weighed heavily on Chandler; sometimes, though, sacrifices had to be made for the greater good.

He'd heard of Mark's reputation, and if Chandler hoped to sway him, he'd have to play into Mark's known desires.

With a deep breath, Chandler approached Mark.

"Mr. Evans, this VIP room looks nice, but it feels a tad lonely. Wouldn't it be better with someone like Elaine around? She's top-notch at taking care of people."

Elaine held back a reaction, her lips pressing into a thin line.

Chandler's direct approach was just what she'd been hoping for.

Mark's eyes met hers briefly before addressing Chandler.

"So, what's this about? Trying to win me over or catch me in a trap? Keeping her here isn't in line with my principles, especially since I have a family to think about."

Chandler was taken aback; he'd thought any man would find Elaine irresistible.

In Chandler's mind, all he'd invested in Elaine should have guaranteed Mark's compliance, but the reality proved different.

His shock was evident, his jaw dropping slightly.

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But before he could recover, the door opened, revealing Cecilia with Olivia and Edwin in tow.

Cecilia's eyes darted between Chandler and Elaine.

She recognized the rising actress and deduced Chandler's role in her life.

Despite not being a significant figure in showbiz, Cecilia, as the Fowler family daughter, knew she stood a class apart.

Yet her gaze towards Mark held an edge of disdain.

Mark, previously lounging, straightened up as they entered.

He lifted Olivia into his arms and ruffled Edwin's hair. "Your grandma sent over some treats. Want a bite?"

With her baby teeth, Olivia eagerly took a cookie, nibbling it with delight.

Mark carefully wiped away her mess, and then he soaked a cookie in milk; handing it to her.

Olivia was drawn to its aroma.

Edwin, on the other hand, bit into his cookie with force, his gaze fixed on Elaine. She felt a chill down her spine from his intense stare.

Mark patted his son and addressed Chandler, "Like I said, I have a family. It's time for you to leave."

The family unit was content.

Chandler knew he was out of place here. He thought of seeking help from Peter.

Elaine, still somewhat disoriented, was suddenly tugged by Chandler.

Once they reached the hallway and the door behind them clicked shut, Elaine quickly pulled away from his grasp.

With a mocking smile, Chandler asked, "Lost interest in me after seeing him?"

Elaine chose not to respond.

With a smirk, Chandler continued, "I brought you here for a reason; not for you to live lavishly. Do you recognize that woman? She's from the prominent Fowler family in Duefron, and she's Mark's former spouse. I overlooked her significance earlier and now she's upset because of you. Let me be clear; don't get on her bad side. If things go south, we'll both pay the price. Not

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only will your acting career be at risk, but you might also find doors in the industry shutting on you."

Elaine, trying to mask her disappointment, questioned, "So why introduce me to Mr. Evans?"

Chandler chuckled. "He wasn't even intrigued by you."

"Had his former wife not shown up, he might have been. He did smile at me," she retorted.

Chandler only responded with a dismissive look.

He ran his fingers through his hair, stating, "You can't simply deduce his intentions. Just a heads up; don't cross me. Inform Simon that you're on board for that supporting role. Not only do you need to play your part, but you also need to keep Miss Fowler content. Mr. Evans tends to prioritize her wishes."

Elaine remained skeptical.

Chandler's temper flared, and he delivered a sharp slap to Elaine's face before storming out with a string of muttered profanities.

Tears welled up in Elaine's eyes.

She looked over her shoulder at the closed door, resentment building up against the cruel twist of fate.

Inside the room, the children had finished their meals.

Edwin tackled his school assignments, while Olivia reveled in the affection from her father, Mark.

She was quite fond of him. She loved curling up in Mark's embrace.

Engaging him in conversation was one of her favorite pastimes.

With her baby teeth still emerging, her speech was a tad unclear. And whenever she laughed, her adorable dimples were on full display.

Her wavy brown locks had hints of auburn, adding to her youthful charm.

Mark, while amusing Olivia, glanced over at Cecilia.

She was engrossed in her script.

She hadn't probed into the earlier incident, yet Mark felt compelled to break the silence. "Aren't you curious?"

Without shifting her focus from the script, Cecilia let the silence answer for her.

She didn't want to delve into complicated discussions, especially in the kids' presence.

Mark grinned.

Olivia grabbed Mark's face and planted several affectionate pecks.

Observing Olivia, Mark remarked gently, "Cecilia, our Olivia will be quite the beauty as she matures."

Cecilia, still concentrating on her reading, retorted, "However striking she may become, she won't hold a candle to the woman from earlier."

Mark's gaze met Cecilia's.

She was seated on a chair adjacent to the bed, her head lowered, and her glossy black hair casually tied back. From his vantage point, he noted her perfectly sculpted nose.

Her skin was impeccable.

Mark was momentarily mesmerized by her elegance. After a brief pause, he said, "Olivia and that woman are worlds apart. It's unfair to even make a comparison. I'd rather not hear such remarks."

Lifting Olivia, he settled her onto his lap.

He playfully tweaked her cheek.

Olivia was the center of attention for many; her brother, in particular, was exceptionally fond of her.

Born into the esteemed Evans lineage, Olivia was a princess in the eyes of both the Fowlers and the Evans.

Cecilia acknowledged this with a nod, but Mark, ever persistent, teased, "Feeling a twinge of jealousy, are we?"

"Why should I feel any envy towards her?" Cecilia shot back. "If she's to your liking, keep her close. Perhaps she'll brighten your days."

Mark chuckled at her response.

Irritated, Cecilia shut her script. "I'm taking Edwin and Olivia home for dinner."

"We have a meal prepared here," Mark noted.

"Waylen's been trying his hand at new recipes," Cecilia replied. "They're delightful. I promised I'd taste his latest creations tonight."

Mark raised an eyebrow, puzzled.

Today was just an ordinary Tuesday.

Why was Waylen at home cooking instead of at his office?

As Cecilia gathered Edwin's belongings, she said, "Waylen's taken a week off. He coordinated with Jazlyn so he could spend more time with the children."

Her statement had a clear undercurrent of annoyance.

With that, she ushered the children out.

Once they were gone, Mark collapsed onto his bed, deep in thought.

He began to think that perhaps Waylen posed the most significant challenge to his romantic aspirations.

Mark muttered under his breath, labeling Waylen with a few choice words.

He was still miffed that, because of a mere disagreement over stock in a project, Waylen had resorted to such tactics.

From Cecilia's viewpoint, Waylen's decision to take time off for the kids was commendable.

Mark, feeling vexed, tossed and turned.

It became clear to him why, despite everything, Waylen had won over Rena.

In Mark's view, Waylen had quite the audacity.

Grabbing his phone, he hastily dialed Peter. "Check the contract with Exceed Group," Mark instructed. "Waylen might have reservations. Rework it; perhaps sweeten the deal for him."

With his frustration peaking, Mark flung his phone aside, musing about Waylen's cunning moves.

Later, Cecilia arrived at the lavish residence of Waylen and Rena.

Upon opening her car door, the haunting melody of a piano met her ears.

Alexis was the one playing.

Edwin hopped from the car, greeted by Leonel near the entrance. Both boys

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shared a mutual love for many things.

Cecilia, with Olivia in tow, walked towards the grand hall.

Alexis, engrossed in a piano piece, had Rena providing guidance from beside her.

When Olivia caught Alexis' attention, the lure to play was unmistakable;

Olivia was far more entertaining than Elva, in Alexis' eyes.

However, Waylen, Alexis' dad, was busy with his laptop, exuding an aura of acute alertness from the couch.

Elsewhere in the room, Marcus was engrossed in block-building with Elva.

Their tower was precarious, and with Olivia's approach, it collapsed.

Without a hint of irritation, Marcus just adjusted Olivia's position and started anew.

Elva, meanwhile, was busy weaving braids into Olivia's hair.

Observing this chaotic household, Cecilia felt a mix of amusement and exhaustion.

But Waylen and Rena seemed to bask in the joy.

Waylen, despite the bustling environment, looked dapper. He always said he aimed to remain enticing for Rena, not wanting to seem as if age was catching up to him.

As Cecilia settled in, Waylen threw her a casual greeting.

He was about to start cooking when his phone rang.

It was Peter.

Eagerly expecting this call, Waylen excused himself to the garden.

"Peter, what's the news?"

Despite his relaxed demeanor, Waylen was adept at reading people. Peter, likewise, was cunning.

Wearing his signature grin, Peter began, "I've reconsidered our last contract discussion. There's a glitch."

In the dimming light, Waylen's features remained striking. "Oh? What's the issue?"

Trying to sound genuine, Peter confessed, "Our finance team made a blunder; added an extra zero by mistake. It's a major discrepancy in our financial report. I've let go of that accountant. We can't have such negligence. Another expert's handling it now. Consequently, your firm's looking at an added 2% profit margin. We both stand to gain from this."

Waylen offered a quiet smile, letting Peter fill the silence.

"Accounting errors have tied us up unnecessarily," Peter sighed. "How about this, Waylen? I'll visit the Exceed Group tomorrow, and we finalize our intent with a signature?"

Considering the proposal, Waylen replied, "I'll come to your firm instead."

Express my gratitude to Mark for the business opportunity. Children's expenses nowadays aren't cheap, especially given that we have many at home."

Peter, fully aware of the enormous financial gains Waylen would gain from the deal, found his casual mention of children's expenses absurd.

He responded with composed grace, "Indeed, children are an investment. Mr. Evans understands that, which is why he had me reach out."

"Extend my regards to him."

"Will do."

Ending the call, Peter mused that Waylen would finally step into the corporate environment the following day.

He recognized Waylen's cunning; the man was more astute than both Rena and Cecilia.

Meanwhile, Waylen savored the moment.

Opting not to head indoors immediately, he lit a cigarette in the parterre, lost in the fiery hues of the sunset.

Finishing his smoke, he made his way to the kitchen. A dinner promise awaited.

As he prepped mandarin fish, Rena's soft embrace enveloped him from behind.

"Do you enjoy the aroma of fish that much?" he inquired, turning slightly to face her.

Dodging his question, Rena posed her own, "Did you take a week off just to

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get on my uncle's nerve?"

Acknowledging her sharp intuition, Waylen neither confirmed nor denied.

Aware of Rena's astuteness, especially given her time as the president of the Exceed Group, he wasn't surprised she had deduced as much.

"Does it bother you?" he ventured.

"Not in the slightest," she replied, her fingers tracing a light pattern on his abdomen.

"I'm merely curious about your motives. Care to share, Mr. Fowler?"