



96 Did you leave her to die?

Beca stared at her son, as if trying to refuse to believe something she had heard. But the way her brows knitted together made it clear she was struggling to comprehend the things. 1

Ryan, on the other hand, was growing increasingly uncomfortable. He had expected her to be there, but not seeing her around now filled him with unease. Her words from earlier again came echoing in his mind, refusing to leave.

"Mom, I asked you something. Tell me where Arwen is. You didn't allow her leave, did you?" Ryan asked again, this time with more desperation in his tone that he was trying hard to mask behind his anger.

Beca, however, wasn't surprised by his tone. From the day Arwen broke off the engagement, she knew a day like this would come —when her son would finally begin to realize what he had lost. But even though she had seen it coming, nothing could have prepared her for it.



Taking a deep breath, she shook her head and said, "I never owned Arwen, dear. While you two were together, I had the right to ask her to stay. But now that the relationship is over, how could I possibly have the right to stop her?" She paused, reaching out for the blue velvet box that she had asked the butler to bring earlier. "She came back for something, and after that, she left."

Ryan's gaze dropped to the familiar ring box, and his brows furrowed. "Don't tell me, Mom, you took this from her? How could you? Didn't you give it to her on her nineteenth birthday? As a token of our relationship?"

Beca raised her brows at his son. "So, you remember. I thought that it never mattered to you," she said tauntingly before shrugging. "Well, even if you remember it now, that doesn't change anything."

"What do you mean, Mom?"

"I thought it was obvious. Didn't Arwen explain it to you already?" Beca said as she opened the box to reveal the ring. "This is not any ring, Ryan. It's a Foster family, our family heirloom, meant for



the future mistress of the family. Not everyone can wear it. It is given to the daughters and future daughter-in-laws of the family and since Arwen will no longer become one, she had no reason to keep it. It was only right for her to return it."

"Mom!" Ryan felt his sanity slipping. He couldn't take hearing the same illogical arguments over and over again. "How can you let her say that nonsense? You know what she is trying to do by acting like this, and yet you are —"

"What is she trying to do?" Beca interrupted with a sarcastic smile. "Tell me, Ryan. What is Arwen trying to achieve? Let me hear your perspective."

Ryan gritted his teeth. Running his hand through his hair, he shifted on his feet, looking at his mother, weary from it all. "Mom, you shouldn't have taken this ring back from her. She is still my fiancée and —"

"She broke up with you, Ryan. Arwen broke up with you." Beca raised her voice, cutting him off sharply. She let the silence hang for a moment before continuing, her voice softer but firm.



"You think this is just her trying to make a point, to push you into action." She clicked her tongue and shook her head. "If that was her plan, she would have done it long ago. She wouldn't have come back now, after all these years, just to return this ring."

"But I haven't agreed to the break-up, Mom, I never agreed." Ryan tried to reason.

"And do you think that matters?" Beca scoffed. "You never fully accepted your relationship with her, anyway."

"Mom, I —" Ryan's words caught in his throat. It was true. Even when the families had announced the engagement, he had never openly accepted it. And whenever they were invited to the events together, he either went alone or avoided Arwen entirely.

Because of his actions, their relationship had always been a source of speculation. The only real confirmation the public had was when Beca would be seen parading Arwen around, showing everyone how close they were.

"Even if I didn't publicly accept our relationship, that never stopped you from making her look



like my future, did it?" Ryan snapped, his frustration was leaking through his tone. "So how can you expect me to let her go so easily now? I am definitely not letting her go."

Beca's eyes widened as she stared at her son. The gnawing doubt from earlier resurfaced, stronger this time. She hesitated, her voice trembling slightly as she asked, "Ryan ... did you — did you leave Arwen behind in some accident?" She remembered what Arwen had said before. She couldn't believe it then, but now, she could no longer bring herself to ignore it.

Ryan's brows knitted in confusion. "Accident? Which accident are you talking about?"

Beca clenched her fist as if holding onto the edge of her belief. "I am asking if you left her behind in the accident to die while saving Delyth?"

Ryan's breath caught, and his jaws tightened as if he remembered something. His eyes darted away from Beca, seeking an escape. "Mom, did Arwen complain about that to you?"

"Ryan, answer me. You didn't ... you didn't do any



such thing, right?" Beca's heart raced. She needed to hear him deny it. It was as if her life depended on his denial.

"Mom, she is just exaggerating it. Delyth's legs were important and she ... I had no choice —" 2

Before Ryan could finish his words, the sharp sound of a slap echoed through the air.

Beca's hand had struck his face before she, herself, has even realized it. Her palm stung, but the pain was nothing compared to the searing ache she felt in her heart. "How could you?" she whispered, her voice breaking, Her eyes were wide with disbelief, tears forming at the edges. "How could you leave her?"

Ryan stood frozen, one hand reaching up to touch his cheek, where the imprint of her slap burned into his skin. He had never seen his mother like this —so devastated, so ... disappointed.

Beca's chest heaved as she struggled to breathe through her anguish. "You left her ... for Delyth?" The name dripped from her lips like venom."Arwen —your fiancée, the woman you should protect staking yourself —was trapped



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and dying, and you ran after someone else?" Her voice cracked, growing louder, her emotions finally spilling over. "You didn't look back at her, did you?" 3

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