

Becomes 128

Chapter 0128

Serena's POV

The drive along the coast is beautiful, sunlight shimmering on the waves. Bill is focused, hands steady on the wheel of his sleek black sports car, wind tousling his neatly styled hair. I glance down at my outfit – a light blue sundress fluttering in the breeze, paired with simple sandals. Bill wanted us to dress comfortably today, but he hasn't said where we're going. [Ww@noVdWdr\(m\).Com](mailto:Ww@noVdWdr(m).Com)

"Bill, this drive is stunning," I say, leaning back in my seat to soak in the scenery. He gives a quick smile, eyes flicking to mine in the rearview mirror before returning to the road.

"Yeah, this route's always been a favorite," he replies. It's good to see Bill lighten up a bit. He seemed fine when he walked me to work yesterday, but he's been a bit distracted during the ride.

I spot rows of colorful beach umbrellas dotting the sandy shore, surfboards propped up against weathered lifeguard towers painted in bright red and white stripes. Tall palm trees sway gently in the ocean breeze, their fronds rustling softly against the clear blue sky.

These sights... I know exactly where we're headed.

"Wait. Are we going to Malibu Beach?" I ask. Bill nods with a grin, confirming my guess.

"Wow, Bill, I love it here!" I exclaim, unable to hide my excitement. "My dad used to take us to Malibu when I was little, you know, before... before his company went bankrupt."

Bill looks at me, surprised. "I didn't know that," he says softly, his tone sympathetic. "I wonder if we've ever been here at the same time before."

"Maybe," I reply, gazing out at the serene beach. "It's funny how there's still so much we don't know about each other after all these years."

"Yeah, that's true," he agrees. "But I think today is a good start to changing that."

He pulls up to a luxurious resort nestled among the palms and overlooking the pristine beach. Stepping inside, I take in the fancy lobby with its shiny marble floors and artsy decorations. Despite the posh setup, there's no sign of guests or staff.

"Where is everyone?" I ask, looking around. It's weird seeing such a nice place so empty.

Bill grins, looking around the deserted lobby. "I rented the place out for us today to have some privacy,"

he says. www.novelworm.com

"Why would you spend so much on this?" I ask, my eyebrows raising in surprise as I glance at Bill. I've always preferred simpler outings. Extravagant dates like this make me uncomfortable.

"Hey, I wanted to make today special for you," he says with a chuckle. "Besides, they say you can't put a price on a memorable experience like this."

smile, touched by his sentiment. He really went all out for this. How sweet of him.

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"Okay, fine," I say, pretending to still not be totally okay with it. "But I'll let it go if you'll let me cook for you next time."

"It's a deal then," Bill says. He extends his hand for a playful handshake to seal our agreement.

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I shake his hand, smiling widely. Well, if he insists on splurging, at least I can return the favor.

"Awesome, let's hit the beach and find some inspiration," Bill suggests with enthusiasm.

+15 BONUS

As we stroll along Malibu Beach, Bill surprises me by pulling out a vintage Polaroid camera from his bag, its worn leather case showing its age.

"That's a classic!" I exclaim, eyeing the camera with intrigue.

"Yeah, it was my dad's," Bill replies with a grin, adjusting the strap around his neck. "Thought it might be useful today."

We start snapping pictures. Bill captures seagulls soaring overhead, their wings casting shadows on the sand. "These birds make a cool shot," he remarks, shaking the developing photo.

I kneel by a tide pool, capturing shells and seaweed swirling in the water. "Look at these patterns," I marvel, snapping another picture.

Further down, we find a driftwood sculpture shaped by the tide. "This is nature's art," Bill comments, framing it against the setting sun.

spot vibrant wildflowers near the dunes. "I love how they pop against the sea," I say, taking a shot.

Bill moves closer, his eyes lighting up with an idea. "You know, these seashells have some incredible patterns on them," he says. "Why don't we gather some? Maybe you can study them for inspiration for your jewelry designs."

"That's not a bad idea. Thanks for suggesting it," I reply.

"When I was a kid, I used to collect seashells whenever I went to the beach," he says, his eyes sparkling with nostalgia. "I'd spend hours looking for the perfect ones, then take them home and turn them into bracelets and jewelry. I gave most of them to my mom. She loved them, even though they were pretty simple."

He chuckles, shaking his head. "She'd wear them proudly, like they were the finest pieces in the world."

His story tugs at a distant memory, reminding me of a childhood friend. I defended him from bullies once, a shy boy who loved collecting seashells and making jewelry.

"Could he be..." I think, studying Bill's face for any familiar traces. No, there's a one in a million chance that my friend is Bill.

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