

Becomes 132

Chapter 0132

Serena's POV

Bill and I stand in front of my apartment, the warmth of the Malibu sun still lingering on our skin. The breeze from the ocean is in my hair, and I can still feel the soft grit of sand on my legs. I fish my keys out of my bag, the sound of metal against metal breaking the comfortable silence between us.

"Did you have fun today?" Bill asks. His smile has that boyish charm, the kind that makes him look so carefree. It's different from what I'm used to seeing he's usually so stressed with all his responsibilities as a CEO.

I smile back, feeling a flutter in my chest. "I did. It was a fun date."

Bill's eyes light up, and he points at me with a playful glint. "Aha! So it was a date."

I roll my eyes. "Just between friends, Bill."

He chuckles, the playful glint in his eyes deepening. "Friends who hold hands and watch sunsets together?"

feel my cheeks heat up, but I keep my tone light. "Yeah, those kinds of friends."

He steps closer, his smile turning a bit more mischievous. "Well, if that's what a friend's date is like, can't wait to see what a real date would be." *www.NovEl(w)OrM.Com*

I place a hand on his chest, feeling the solid muscles underneath his shirt. The contact sends a jolt through me, stirring thoughts I'd tried to push away. I imagine what it would feel like if he pulled me closer, his arms around me, and his lips are all over my neck.

"Shouldn't you be thinking about the shareholders meeting next Friday instead?" I say, trying to change the subject, my voice a little breathless. *W(w)W.novélwOrM.cOm*

Bill's expression shifts, his eyes focusing as if a switch has flipped. "Right. Busy week ahead," he says. "And you too. Didn't you say you have an interview with a fashion influencer on Tuesday? Who's it with again?"

"Yeah. Taylor Vanderbilt will interview me regarding the Max situation and other stuff," I reply.

"Oh, you know Taylor?" Bill's eyebrows lift slightly, and his eyes widen, a hint of surprise playing at the corners of his mouth.

"Uhm yeah, she was in the shop the day Eden came in," I explain. "She helped me out when Eden's group was causing trouble. We hit it off and decided to collaborate on a few projects."

"I see. Glad you're getting along," Bill says.

I can't help but wonder if he knows Taylor better than he's letting on. "Have you met her before?" I ask.

"Only twice. Her parents are good friends with my mom."

Of course, they're both pretty wealthy, so it's not surprising they've met before. Still, it's odd that Taylor never mentioned knowing Bill to me. *www.NovEl(w)OrM.Com*

1/2

+15 BONUS

Bill shifts slightly, his gaze lingering on me. "I should probably get going," he says, though he doesn't move. The air between us is charged with unspoken words and lingering tension.

For a moment, I see it in his eyes – the desire to kiss me. My heart races, and I can tell he's holding back, probably because I avoided it the last time.

He steps forward, hesitates, then wraps his arms around me in an awkward hug. I can feel the tension in the way he holds me, like he's holding back something he really wants to say or do.

"Goodnight, Serena," he murmurs as he pulls away.

"Goodnight, Bill," I reply softly.

I sit at my work table, sifting through the Polaroid photos Bill took to inspire my summer collection. *www.NovEl(w)OrM.Com*

Each photo captures a moment from our day at Malibu Beach, filled with sun, laughter, and the beauty of the ocean. One photo stands out a candid shot of me, looking so happy with a sparkle in my

–

eyes. I didn't know Bill took it. In the photo, my hair is tousled by the breeze, and I'm laughing at something just out of frame.

Just as I start sketching ideas for my new jewelry pieces, my phone buzzes with a new email notification. It's from Taylor. I open it and read:

Hey Serena,

Hope you're doing well! Attached are the questions for our interview next Tuesday. Looking forward to chatting with you about everything.

XoXo,

Taylor

I glance at the attached document, knowing I need to prepare for this. "Time to get to work," I mutter to myself.