Chapter 0005

Bill's POV

No wonder Calvin wants to get out of Mom's house. Aunt Claire and Doris are here.

Calvin has always been an introvert. Dealing with gossip, especially the kind involving women, has never been his cup of tea. Meanwhile, I can handle it better than him.

The women are already enjoying a lavish brunch when I come in. The table is a showcase of gourmet delights. There's a charcuterie board at one end of the table, neatly arranged with various cheeses, an assortment of cured meats, and fresh fruits. Taking center stage on the table is a seafood tower. It's filled with lobster tails, jumbo prawns, and oysters that glisten against the light.

As soon as Doris sees me, her face breaks into a warm, welcoming smile. She's wearing a stylish, designer denim jacket paired with a white t-shirt and jeans.

Doris has a knack for making even casual clothes look elegant. She carries herself with such grace that she could be mistaken for a runway model, no matter what she's wearing.

I greet Mom and Aunt Claire before I turn my attention to Doris. "Looking great, as always, Doris," I say, my smile broadening. "Sorry, I had to leave early last night. Had to check up on Serena.

Mom rolls her eyes when I mention Serena. "She just had to make a scene," she remarks with clear disapproval.

Before I can respond, Doris speaks up. "It's my fault, Elena. I should've been more careful."

Doris glances down quickly, maybe to hide what's going on behind her eyes. Her hands fidget together in her lap, a clear sign of her unease.

Mom puts her hand on Doris' shoulder, offering some reassurance. "You don't have to take the blame, dear. It's all that girl's fault!"

"Honestly, Bill, I don't know what you saw in her," Mom says with a disdainful tone.

"She's a good seductress, I'll give her that," Aunt Claire chimes in. "I'm curious about her secret; maybe it'll work on my husband too."

Mom and Aunt Claire share a laugh as if they're in on an inside joke.

"Ladies, be nice," I interject with a light tone. "You don't really know Serena that well."

"Disrespectful, that's what she is," Mom says, still holding a grudge. "Not letting you tell your own mother about your wedding. Can you believe that?" Her words reveal her lingering bitterness about being left out of our wedding.

Doris and I share a quick look. I subtly shake my head, signaling her not to mention the Vegas wedding. She nods slightly in agreement. It's a secret just between Serena, Doris, and me. If Mom finds out, she would only hate Serena more. I can't imagine how she'd react to her billionaire son having a tacky wedding.

"Anyway, I apologize on behalf of Serena," I say, attempting to smooth things over. "She shouldn't have acted that way. I think she's just really stressed out."

'Stressed out?" Mom says, sounding surprised. "Why would she be? She's got it easy with all your money."

Mom has a point. I find myself wondering what's really keeping Serena on edge. What is she not telling me? I'm starting to think that maybe her asking for a divorce is more than just a hissy fit.

"Bill," Doris's voice cuts through my thoughts, bringing me back to the present. "Are you okay?"

Forcing a smile, I try to appear composed. "Uh, yeah," I respond. "I was just preoccupied with the Johnson and Haines meeting later. Actually, I was thinking of bringing you along. Would you be up for that?"

Doris's face breaks into a beaming grin. Knowing her, she's probably already familiar with the proposal's details. I'm pretty sure she'll be a great backup in closing that huge deal. "Sounds exciting. Count me in," Doris says.

While we're eating, my phone suddenly rings. It's Serena. What now?

Pushing my chair back, I stand up. "Excuse me, I have to take this," I say, stepping away from the table to answer the call.

"Bill, we need to talk," Serena cuts straight to the chase. She didn't even say hello. "I'm not joking about the divorce. I want to talk to a lawyer to draw up the papers as soon as possible."

Oh, no. Not this again. "I'm in Mom's house. Can we talk about this later?" I ask, trying to keep my voice even.

I rub my temple as I feel a headache starting to creep up. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Mom and Doris watching me.

"It can't wait. I'm just tired of you putting me behind everything else," Serena insists. Her voice is trembling.

I take a deep breath, feeling the heat rising to my face. "You can't just put me on the spot like this. What if I was in a meeting?" I say, a bit louder than I intended.

My voice is getting harder to control, and I can tell from the corner of my eye that Mom has figured out I'm talking to Serena.

"Is she bothering you, Bill?" Mom asks. She raises her voice deliberately, ensuring it's audible on the other end of the phone.

"Really, that woman has some nerve. No sense of decency at all," she comments loudly, making sure Serena catches every word.

There's a moment of silence on the other end of the line. I can sense that Mom's words have struck Serena deeply, cutting through her like a knife.

"Serena?' I call out. There's a short beep, and then the call abruptly ends. Wow, did she really just hang up on me?

I close my eyes and take a deep breath. It's the first time she's ever hung up on me.

I approach the table. Everyone's looking at me, waiting for me to say something. "I have to go. I need to prepare for the meeting."

Doris looks worried. "Oh, should I come with you?"

"No, you can come in later. I'll just see you at the office," I reply. It's not that I don't want her to join me, but I could use the drive alone to clear my head.

What game is Serena playing? She's well aware of what's at stake today. Yet, she distracts me with all this nonsense about drawing up divorce papers. What the fuck is that all about?

Comments (9)