

40.

"One day, when your daughter grows up and truly sees you for who you are, I pray she finds someone to show her what real love looks like."

"Get away from her!" Carla spat, yanking Mara back harshly. I told you not to go near that woman! Her voice was loud and vicious, cutting through the murmurs of the other guests and silencing their conversation as she shook Mara furiously while the little girl burst into tears.

Estelle rose slowly, her face pale but composed. "You'll hurt the child," she said.

Carla spun around sharply, her eyes blazing with fury.

"Don't tell me how to handle my child when you've never had one!" She snapped, her voice filled with venom. Estelle blinked.

That hit a deep nerve, but Carla wasn't done.

"Oh, wait," Carla's lips curled into a malicious smile. "You did once, didn't you?"

Estelle's body tensed, and Hunter froze as well. Even Ryan took a step forward, but Estelle

stopped him with a hand on his arm, her gaze fixed on Carla with unsettling intensity.

"Yeah, you had a child once..." Carla continued with that malicious smile still dancing on her lips. "But your carelessness cost you that, didn't it?" Carla's voice dripped with cruelty, her smile growing wider. "You killed your child, and now you think you can come near mine?"

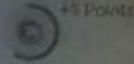
Gasps erupted from the crowd, followed by a stunned silence. The words hung in the air like poison, and for a moment, time seemed to freeze. Estelle stood motionless, her face unreadable, though inside she was unraveling, icy pain tearing at her with ferocity.

No one knew about the accident that took her child, except for the boardroom attendees that day when they had overheard her and Hunter's conversation. She had been assured that the information wouldn't leak. But now... how did Carla know? Her gaze flickered at Hunter, just briefly, but long enough for him to see the flash of pain and suspicion she tried to hide.

Did he tell her? Just how low could he sink?

Hunter's chest tightened, torn between anger and disgust. How could Carla—how could she say

40.



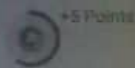
something so cruel, so thoughtless? He had known Carla was capable of venom and despicable acts, but this was a new low, even for her. And how the hell did she know about the baby? He didn't remember telling her, or had he? Even if he did, maybe before he knew her full

[Ads-free >](#)

capacity for cruelty, it didn't give her the right to mention it in such a heartless way.

"You're pathetic," Carla continued, her voice rising as she glared at Estelle. "A broken, childless woman. So do me a favor and stay away from my family!"

40.



"That's enough!" Hunter's voice boomed, shocking everyone, even himself. His eyes flashed with anger as he stepped forward. All eyes were now on him.

For a moment, he hadn't even realized he was defending Estelle. But the shock on Carla's face when she spun around made it clear, and for the first time ever, he didn't seem to care, even as she whispered, "What did you say?" with her face twisted in shock.

"You heard me," Hunter snapped. "How dare you say such vile things to her? You don't know what she's been through, and you certainly don't have the right to throw it in her face like that."

The room turned icy, every eye now on Hunter and Carla, watching the drama unfold with Ryan's arms, unconsciously wrapped around Estelle's wrist.

For a moment, Carla was speechless, her face contorted with fury and disbelief. "Are you serious right now?" she whispered, her voice shaking with both rage and humiliation. "You're defending her? In front of everyone?"

Hunter clenched his jaw, dumbfounded. What could he say? How could he explain the strange

40.

impulse that had taken over him—the instinct to defend Estelle even with Carla standing right there? He wasn't even sure what he felt anymore, only that something had shifted, irreversibly. His eyes slid to Estelle, who was already staring at him as if she could see straight through him. There was no triumph on her face, no smug satisfaction. Nothing. And somehow, that blank look she was giving him twisted something painfully inside him.

"After staring at her all day..." Carla's voice interrupted his thoughts and Hunter's gaze snapped to her in surprise. "Oh, you think I didn't see it?" She hissed. "You think I didn't see the way you stared at her the whole time? You haven't taken your eyes off her since we walked in!" She jabbed a finger into his chest, her voice rising in pitch.

Hunter gritted his teeth, shame creeping up his spine, worsened by the eyes of the crowd upon them and the low hum of murmured gossip circling the room. *Carla shouldn't be doing this here, with all eyes on them.*

"Carla, stop—" he muttered, his voice strained with frustration.

"Don't tell me to stop!" Her voice cracked, but it

was sharp enough to make Mara whimper in fear.

Estelle's gaze flicked to the trembling child, sniffing between tears, and her expression softened as she crouched down in front of Mara, Ryan's hand slipping from hers. The little girl shuffled back a little, clearly affected by her mother's harsh warning, but Estelle smiled against the storm raging inside her. "I'm not a bad person, sweetheart," she whispered to Mara, her tone tender and soothing. "Sometimes people say things that aren't true... because they're hurt."

Carla glared daggers into Estelle's head, but Estelle ignored her, focusing on the trembling child. "I'm sorry you had to hear that, but you don't need to cry, okay?" she said softly, brushing a tear from Mara's cheek.

Mara stared at her wide-eyed, sniffing, before nodding shakily.

With a soft smile, Estelle rose to her feet, her expression hardening as she locked gazes with Carla. In a cool, deliberate voice, she said, "The only thing more pathetic than losing a child is using it to hurt someone. I may have lost a baby, Carla... but you've lost your humanity. That's why your words don't hurt me anymore. They only show the world what I already knew—that no


40.

amount of lies and deceit can hide how small and cruel you truly are. And one day, when your daughter grows up and sees who you really are, I hope she has someone to show her what love looks like. Because it sure won't come from you."

Carla's face flushed red, her mouth opening and closing in shock. But before she could retort, Estelle turned and walked away with Ryan, her head held high, leaving Carla fuming and humiliated. And soon enough, the event carried on as if nothing had happened, although some still felt the tension still lingering in the air.

 17
Comments

 50
Vote

 Watch videos get points (0/20) >