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*Was her heart destined to tread this path again, a cycle of love that ends in pain? Each tender moment, a fleeting lie, leaving her to wonder, to question why. Could it be fate, cruel and unkind, or the echoes of doubt within her mind? Was she cursed to watch love slip away, to stand in shadows where others stay? Her heart whispered softly, fraught with fear, "Will I always lose what I hold dear?"*

The large room buzzed with activity as Olivia flitted from one cluster of people to another, her infectious laughter and bright personality lighting up the space. Despite being surrounded by friends and family, her face lit up even more when she spotted Estelle.

"Estelle!" Olivia's voice rang out with excitement as she pushed through the crowd. Her radiant smile brightened her already glowing face. Without hesitation, she enveloped Estelle in a warm hug. "Oh my goodness, look at you! You're glowing!"

Estelle blushed, her mind instantly darting back to the moments Ryan had worshipped her body. She

remembered the way his touch had traced every inch of her, awakening something wild within her. It was as if he had unlocked emotions she hadn't even known she was capable of feeling. Her blush deepened, and Olivia's knowing smirk only grew.

"Uh-huh! Is there something beneath that glow? You know, you've got that post-something glow?" Olivia raised an eyebrow, making it dance in a teasing way.

Estelle shook her head, a laugh spilling past her lips at the ridiculous expression on Olivia's face. "Oh, stop it! You're making me blush for no reason. I think you're mistaking me for yourself," she countered, her cheeks still flushed. "You're the radiant one, Olivia. You're practically shining. I've never seen a more radiant bride-to-be."

Olivia seemed satisfied, her grin widening. "You're right. I am glowing, aren't I? But that doesn't mean I'm not stressed." She chattered as she pulled Estelle toward her suite. "You have no idea how crazy things have been. The flowers were delivered late, Alex's suit wasn't tailored properly until last night, and don't even get me started on the caterers. Oh, and did I tell you Alex's mom wanted to change the entire seating arrangement? Absolute madness!" She chattered ceaselessly as

Estelle helped her into her intricately designed wedding gown.

Estelle chuckled as she adjusted the delicate lace on Olivia's shoulders. "Sounds like Alex owes you big time for the stress."

"Oh, he does," Olivia agreed. "But then, I owe him my heart, so I guess we're even."

*Aww!*

When Olivia finally stood before the mirror, her reflection took her breath away. She clutched her hands to her chest, her eyes glistening with tears. "Is that... me?" Olivia's voice trembled, her eyes focused on her reflection.

Estelle stepped back, admiring her handiwork. Her designs were always masterpieces, but this was more than that. Maybe it was Olivia - her brightness added a stunning effect to the dress. "It's you, Olivia. You're absolutely stunning."

Olivia reached out to touch her reflection, her voice thick with emotion. "I can't believe this is happening," she said, her voice quivering. "I'm getting married tomorrow. To Alex. Can you believe it?"

Estelle smiled, understanding Olivia's emotional

state. It was said brides got really emotional around their wedding dates. She herself had probably felt the same way as Olivia when she was about to marry Hunter.

"I've loved Alex for as long as I can remember," Olivia continued, her voice soft. "And for the longest time, I thought he'd never notice me. But just when I was ready to give up, it was like magic. He finally saw me." She turned to Estelle, her teary smile breaking into a laugh. "Aren't I the luckiest woman alive?"

Estelle nodded, her throat tight. "You are," she said, but her mind drifted to Hunter. She had loved him with the same intensity Olivia described. But unlike Olivia, her love story hadn't ended in magic - it had ended in heartbreak. She thought of the pain, the broken promises, and the endless nights questioning what she had done wrong.

But as she looked at Olivia, she realized something. Her love for Hunter hadn't been foolish. It wasn't her fault for loving so deeply. It was simply fate's plan. Perhaps she wasn't meant to be lucky with Hunter, but she knew now that she was worth loving. Some man - her man - would be lucky to have her someday.

Later in the day, Estelle found herself still by

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+5 Points

Olivia's side, surrounded by a small group of bridesmaids. She hadn't seen Ryan since the afternoon, after their heated moment. She figured he was busy with the groomsmen, preparing for the groom's party happening that night.

When Olivia invited her to join the bridal party,

Ads-free >

Estelle hesitated. It felt strange to be included in such an intimate gathering as more than just the designer. But Olivia was insistent, and soon Estelle found herself preparing alongside the other women. The ladies laughed and joked as they got ready for the night, their energy infectious. It felt

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really different being surrounded by women who knew and shared the same jokes - not the usual oppressive talk common among the wealthy. On her bridal night, Estelle had been surrounded by friends who only wanted to talk about their latest collections.

"Remember when Olivia tripped at the art exhibition trying to avoid Alex? Never did we know it was because the two kissed the night before," one woman teased.

"And she blamed it on the floor being slippery!" another chimed in, sending the room into peals of laughter.

Even Estelle found herself smiling, though her thoughts strayed to Ryan. She hadn't seen him since, and a part of her longed for his presence.

A few hours later, the group prepared to leave the hotel for the bridal party. As they stepped into the reception area, their chatter was interrupted by the presence of a striking woman who exuded wealth and confidence.

Her flawless skin radiated, complementing the designer dress she wore. Her red lips curved into a dazzling smile as she approached Olivia.

"Congratulations, Olivia," the woman said, her tone

polished but cool.

Olivia forced a smile in return. "Thank you, Anastasia."

The woman's eyes flicked to the group before landing back on Olivia. "Where's Alex? I've been trying to reach Ryan, but his number's unreachable. And we both know Ryan wouldn't be far from Alex."

"I wouldn't know," Olivia replied smoothly. "Probably off doing whatever men do before weddings."

The woman's smile faltered, but she said nothing more. With a final congratulatory remark, she walked away, leaving a trail of curiosity in her wake.

"Who was that?" Estelle whispered to herself, but it seemed Olivia caught her words because she sighed and said, "Trouble, that's who. Let's just get to the party."

As they left for the party, Estelle couldn't shake the woman's image from her mind. Who was she? And why was she looking for Ryan? He'd never mentioned anyone else in his life. By the looks of it, almost all the ladies knew something, judging by the way they kept whispering among

themselves after encountering the woman.

The bridal party was held in an exclusive lounge, decorated with shimmering lights and floral arrangements. The atmosphere was lively, filled with laughter, music, and champagne.

The women indulged in games, including a hilarious trivia quiz about Olivia and Alex, and shared stories about their own relationships. Estelle felt a pang of loneliness amidst the joyous camaraderie but reminded herself to stay present as she watched a few ladies twirl around in their dresses on the dance floor, laughing.

As she sipped her drink, snippets of whispered conversations reached her ears.

"I don't like that woman," one lady said, her tone laced with disdain. "Ryan could do so much better."

Without anyone telling her, Estelle could piece it together - the nameless woman they were talking about was Anastasia.

"What did Ryan even see in her?" another added. "After all those years of celibacy, and that's who he chose?"

"But she's gorgeous and rich," someone replied. "



Why wouldn't he?"

Estelle's stomach churned. The pain of hearing those words was sharp and familiar. It was like history repeating itself - falling for someone only to discover there was someone else. Why was fate playing with her over and over again?

Lost in thought, Estelle barely registered the laughter around her until a loud shout jolted her back to reality.

"Estelle, duck!"

She turned too late. A ball from one of the games hit her squarely on the head, hard enough to knock her off balance.

Laughter turned into concerned murmurs as she pressed a hand to her forehead as if that would alleviate the pain she was feeling.

*Who in the hell throws a ball at a bridal shower?*

"Estelle?"

She looked up to find Olivia standing over her, concern etched on her face. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Estelle lied, forcing a smile.

"Are you sure?" Olivia asked, removing Estelle's hand from her forehead. A gasp escaped Olivia's

lips as she saw the red, swollen patch on Estelle's forehead. "Oh my God! I'm so sorry, Estelle."

"I'm fine, really, although I'd be glad if I could have some ice to press on it."

Olivia nodded and came back almost immediately with an ice pack. The party resumed its full swing soon after, and Estelle couldn't have been more relieved as all attention deviated from her once again.

However, the night was overshadowed by whispers and unanswered questions in her head. Was history repeating itself? Was she once again falling for someone who would ultimately choose another over her?

Her heart ached at the thought, but she forced herself to push it aside. Tomorrow was Olivia's day, and she wouldn't let her personal insecurities ruin the fun.

But as the party continued, Estelle couldn't shake the image of the stunning stranger or the whispered words.



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