

I QUIT, MR. SHAFFER BY ISABELLA SYMONS

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After enduring a terrifying car chase the previous night, Isabella couldn't shake off the lingering trauma. She maintained a vigilant posture as she sat in the car during their journey. When they arrived at the nursing home, the driver stopped outside while a bodyguard got out of the car with her.

Stopping in her tracks, she calmly said, "I can go in alone."

"Jordan asked us to follow you and keep you in our sight."

Initially considering Jordan's excessive caution, Isabella reconsidered. She acknowledged that those behind the staged car accident might be up to anything.

After explaining the situation to the bodyguard, she asked him to stay in the courtyard and not let Victoria discover him. Out of options, the bodyguard agreed and called Jordan, the moment she looked away.

Feeling somewhat helpless, she entered the nursing home and went to the director's office first. Seeing that she had brought men with her, Zachary

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found it a little odd but didn't comment on it. Instead, he brought her directly to Victoria.

The nursing home had an innermost courtyard that was independently set up, and this was where Victoria and another elderly lady lived.

Isabella approached slowly, her steps measured as she caught sight of Victoria, a middle-aged woman seated on a bench in the corridor. Despite Victoria's calm expression, her lips moved in a continuous whisper as if engaged in a quiet conversation. However, she wasn't speaking gibberish and seemed more like she was talking to somebody.

A wave of disappointment washed over Isabella. This scenario was all too familiar, etched into her memory from over a decade of past experiences.

Summoning a smile, she tried to make it as genuine as possible before approaching Victoria and calling out, "Hey, Mom."

Victoria was startled and turned around. She initially thought her ears were playing tricks. After seeing Isabella walking toward her, Victoria stood up with a slightly lost expression on her face. "Bella, what brought you here?"

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Walking over to her, Isabella hugged her mother with a regular face and

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swaddled her. "I'm here on a business trip and came to visit you since I'm free now."

After releasing her, Victoria scrutinized Isabella, sensing something amiss.

"Did Dr. Hart say something, and you came here on purpose?"

Shaking her head, Isabella lowered her head and unbuttoned her jacket, saying with a laugh, "Look what I'm wearing underneath."

"This dress is pretty..." Victoria seemed a little confused.

Isabella lied to Victoria, who had no clue, saying, "It's a gown."

"A gown?" Victoria blinked, reaching out to touch the red material of her dress.

Helping her mother into the building, Isabella said, "I just attended my boss' daughter's birthday and decided to visit you since I have some time off."

Suddenly, Victoria realized it wasn't even 8.00AM yet. Holding Isabella's hand,

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she gently stroked her face. "You stayed up all night, didn't you?"

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Snuggling into her mother's palm, Isabella fought back her tears and smiled.

"It's okay. I'll sleep on the plane later."

"Are you leaving right away?" Victoria couldn't bear to see her daughter go

because she hadn't seen her for a few months.

Isabella felt guilty, blaming herself for not being a good daughter. She fought back tears by clenching her jaw. "I just want to earn enough for an early retirement." Hugging Victoria's arm, she swung it side to side. "Just a few more months, and I'll resign. Then, I'll take you on a holiday abroad."

Victoria, delighted by the prospect, exclaimed, "Really?"

"Of course."

Victoria's mood brightened, knowing her daughter was capable. She continued chatting with Isabella, showing no signs of auditory hallucinations. Isabella concealed her true feelings as they talked for about an hour.

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Afterward, Isabella joined Victoria for breakfast.

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A little past 9.00AM, Isabella saw the bodyguard gesturing to her repeatedly. Finally, she had to tell Victoria that something had come up at work.

Despite Victoria's mental illness, she was understanding and promptly urged Isabella to go. Victoria held her daughter's hand and guided her to the nursing home entrance.

In a heartfelt embrace, Isabella remained silent for a while, discreetly wiping away tears out of Victoria's view. "Mom, take care of yourself," she mumbled.

With a smile, Victoria patted her back, appearing nothing like a person with a mental illness. Encouraging Isabella to leave, she departed from the nursing home. Isabella first exited in front of Victoria and then discreetly entered Zachary's office through the back door.

After discussing Victoria's condition with him, he sighed. "Actually, your mother's condition has been stable for the past few years, but it tends to act up during this period."

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Isabella reckoned that there must be a special reason for this. Despite that, Isabella had no idea what Victoria had gone through when she was young and could only ask Zachary to pay more attention to her mother.

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Before leaving, Zachary looked at her seriously and advised, "Mental illnesses can run in families. Given your high-stress job, it's crucial to keep it in check." She knew what he was implying and laughed bitterly, "Thanks for your concern."

After bidding Zachary farewell, Isabella left the nursing home with a troubled mind. The black sedan that dropped her off was still there, but there was another car behind it.

Stunned, she was about to approach when the second car door opened.

Jordan climbed out and nodded at her. "This way, please."

Isabella paused in her steps. With Jordan in between, she saw from the side the man sitting inside.