

Mr. Warner Your Ex-Wife is Brilliant by Paula Chapter 17 -

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Chapter 17

Observing the untouched **rock-sugar** snow pear **dessert** in Annie's hands, Drake could make an educated **guess** about what had transpired.

Tears shimmered in Annie's eyes, her gaze flickering with a barely disguised scorn. Yet, when she lifted her face to Drake, her eyes mirrored only a victim's hurt. She wiped away a stray tear, sniffled, and recounted her ordeal.

"Zac isn't the villain here," she said, her voice thick with emotion. "He's still learning what's right and wrong. But Jane..." Annie's voice trailed off. She hastily brushed away her tears, and when she was sure Drake wasn't watching, her eyes hardened. "Jane manipulated him and took advantage of his innocence during those tutoring sessions. Now, Zac, he's choosing her over me. She even turned my son against me, making him take the side of an outsider!" Annie's voice wavered with hurt.

"I've been supporting you and Zac for the past five years. I understand him better than anyone else." Her voice trailed off there, her head lowered as she wiped away fresh tears. Yet, her eyes, hidden from view, blazed with suppressed contempt.

Drake gently patted Annie's back, a hint of dry amusement flashing in his eyes. He understood all too well that Jane's intentions were far from noble.

Upstairs.

"Today's lesson is over, Zac. I'll be back tomorrow afternoon, so remember to behave yourself, all right?" Jane announced, rising to her feet as her alarm signaled the end of her visit.

Zac got up quickly, reluctance was evident on his face, but he put on a petulant pout. “Yeah, yeah. Just make sure you’re here tomorrow, **or** my dad will cut your pay.” Attempting to mimic the assertiveness he saw trending on the internet, he parroted Drake’s attitude. His words came out with a stern edge, despite the childish pitch.

Jane chuckled, playfully pinching his nose. The mischievous heir of the Warner family was turning into quite the obedient **student under** her watch, although he was still a handful at times.

As Jane descended the staircase, she found Drake and **Annie** engaged in a tender moment in the secluded corner of the living room. She rolled her **eyes** and looked away, a wave of indifference washing over her.

Seeing them together evoked nothing **in** her, but a sarcastic **thought** did cross her mind beauty paired with a beast forever. A chilling **smirk** tugged **at her** lips. She wondered how she had once been so blind, so naive, to fall for that sleaze ball Drake. How had she loved him so passionately? Madness, absolute madness.

Quickening **her pace**, she **pushed** down her repulsion, yearning to leave as soon as possible.

“Leaving **so** soon, **Miss Bentley?**” Annie taunted, leaning **deeper into** Drake’s embrace, her **eyes** alight **with a** provocative challenge.

Driven **by her** single–**minded** desire **to** leave immediately, Jane **didn’t** even bother to look at **her**. **Every second** in that woman’s **company** made her skin crawl.

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Jane **wouldn’t** have lost her mother if it **weren’t** for Annie. **She** wouldn’t **have had to** endure such misery.

Drake noticed Jane’s departure. Once upon a time, **her** eyes always **found** him. **But** now, she didn’t even spare him a glance, igniting a strange unease in **his** heart.

Detecting Drake’s shift in demeanor, Annie reeled in her jealousy, instead adopting an even more miserable look, effectively distracting Drake.

Just then, Zac appeared at the top of the stairs. “You will come back, right?” His voice wavered slightly, but his posture radiated a certain confidence. Haunted by the fear that Jane might disappear without a trace as she had done before, he eagerly awaited her

answer.

“Yes,” she responded without skipping a beat.

A bright smile spread across Zac’s face. “Would you stay for dinner then?”

Despite his rehearsed aura of aloofness and coolness, Zac was still a child, his youthful innocence and energy shining through.

The sight of Zac’s pure joy seemed alien to Annie and Drake. But Annie’s initial surprise was quickly replaced by a surge of jealousy.

Given

his position in the household and Jane’s efforts in tutoring Zac that afternoon, Drake felt compelled to extend an invitation. His voice turned icy. “Aunt Lea will set an extra place at the table. You’re welcome to join us for dinner.” The offer sounded more like an order than an invitation.

“No, thank you,” Jane declined, offering Drake a quick, icy glance before bidding Zac goodbye and leaving without a backward glance.

Annie watched, a triumphant smirk hidden behind her tear-streaked face. She tightened her grip on Drake, playing the part of a fragile woman clinging to her man. “Drake, it’s getting late. Jane should get back to her family. Let’s have our dinner.”

Her words seemed to hit a nerve. Drake’s expression darkened, and he roughly pushed her away. He was still unable to accept the reality of Jane’s new life with her husband and child. The thought of her returning home to a happy family meal stoked a fury in him, threatening to choke him. “Eat by yourself. I’ll go to the company.” Leaving behind a curt remark, he stormed out, the door slamming shut behind him.

Stunned, Annie stared at the closed door. Once alone, she stomped her foot in frustration, sending echoes throughout the empty mansion.

The next day.

Drake woke up in his office to his assistant's anxious voice. "President Warner, our company's internal website has been hacked! Even the head of Cyber Security Department can't solve it!"

"What?" Drake shot to his feet, a storm brewing in his eyes.