

Mr. Warner Your Ex-Wife is Brilliant by Paula Chapter 21 -

Chapter 21

Though the storm had subsided and Jane had finally cleared her name, her heart **still** resonated with the echoes of what had transpired at the Warner's residence. The vivid memory of Drake aligning himself with Annie, his involvement in having her searched, clung to her like **an** unwelcome ghost. A pulsating sense of betrayal, raw and palpable, writhed within her. How could he have **ever** believed her capable of such deceit?

A scoff, filled with bitterness, escaped her lips as her thoughts wandered into shadowy territories. "**May** Drake and Annie forever be devoid of the joyful laughter of children," she found herself silently wishing.

"**Bro**, why does Mom look like she swallowed a lemon?" young **Zoe** inquired, hugging her toy robot. Her large eyes blinked at Zane with innocent concern.

"Shh... Mom's just a bit tired. Let's play quietly and let her nap," Zane whispered, his gaze soft on his mother as she draped herself over the couch, resembling a spent sunflower.

"Oooh, then let's prepare dinner for her!" Zoe suggested, a burst of youthful enthusiasm igniting her words. "We don't want her to be tired, do we?"

"You're absolutely right," Zane agreed, tousling his sister's hair. "But remember, let's keep my big competition tomorrow a secret. We don't want to add to Mom's stress, okay?"

"Roger that, Zaney!" **Zoe** saluted her brother, her **face** glowing with trust.

Tomorrow was the highly anticipated day of the Luminary Intellect Arena, organized by the renowned Einstein Elites. It was a competition where the brightest young minds between the ages of three and seven clashed in mental arithmetic. Zachary, too, was expected to participate. Zane wondered if their paths would cross once again.

As the morning sun sprayed golden hues over the cityscape the next day, Zachary, accompanied by his butler, took his place among the participants. He calmly surveyed the other competitors, his gaze cold and detached.

“Zac, where’s your old man?” a small boy in a dashing suit hurried towards him, his eyes blazing with a provocative challenge.

“Save your breath, Bennet,” Zachary replied, an **icy** note seeping into his tone.

This pint-

sized braggart was Jake Bennet, a distant relative **of** Annie and an endless source of mischief. Zachary had never taken a liking to him.

“Come to say hello, and all I **get is** a cold shoulder, eh? Zachary, **I’m** going to outperform you!” Jake **spat**, his cheeks flushing with **anger**.

Zachary raised an **eyebrow**, crossing his arms in sublime indifference. “Dream on, Bennet.” **Their** rivalry **was** well-known. Jake had **always** strived to overshadow Zachary, **but the scoreboard consistently** tilted in Zachary’s favor. **Jake’s** jealousy of Zachary’s superiority plagued him incessantly. It only worsened when his parents constantly drew **comparisons** between them. **Bitterness grew** with each praise **heaped** upon **his adversary**.

“**Well**, we shall see **about** that!” **With** these **final** ominous words, Jake turned on **his** heel, his **eyes** smoldering **with** a dark promise.

Meanwhile, an **anonymous boy** wearing a duckbill **cap observed** the **drama unfold** from **the back** row, **his** attention **keen** as a tack.

The competition began in full swing, and soon Zachary found himself competing against Jake and a few other participants. Zane watched the event from his spot at the back, his heart pounding with anticipation of his turn. Suddenly, Zane’s eyes narrowed. How could there be foul play in this supposedly highly revered competition?

As the contest reached its climax, the judges announced the scores. As expected, Zachary claimed the top spot in his group. However, what happened next was nothing short of pandemonium.

Jake leaped up from his chair, face contorted in outrage.

“Teacher, Zachary cheated!” he roared, his accusation echoing through the shocked hall.

The allegation hit like an arctic deluge, chilling the atmosphere instantly. An accusation of cheating in this prestigious children's competition in Willowshire, where the results could earn recommendations for renowned schools, was scandalous. Outrage erupted immediately and thunderously.

Indignant parents leaped to their feet, pointing fingers at Zachary as a storm of indictments pummeled him.

"Such dishonesty at such a young age! Where are his parents? Is this how they raised him?"

"It's a disgrace! Using underhanded tactics and still securing first place. What a shame!"

"Disqualify him immediately!"

The judges, caught between a rock and a hard place, grappled with the situation. These parents didn't know the child's identity, but they did. Zachary wasn't just any contestant. He was a scion of the mighty Warner family! The repercussions of their decision could be dire.

"Please, let's **all** remain calm. There must be some misunderstanding here," the host implored, attempting to regain control over the increasingly hostile crowd.

"But I saw him using a cheat note!" Jake interjected, his voice sharp with triumph. "Check under his desk!"

The host and the staff promptly inspected Zachary's seat. Lo and behold, tucked away inside the leg of Zachary's desk was a rolled-up note containing solutions to questions strikingly similar to those posed in the competition. The auditorium erupted with a fresh wave of outrage.

"Disqualify him! Expose this to **the** public!"

"This competition is a sham! Our children have worked hard, and this is how you reward **them?**"

"**We** demand justice!"

Amidst the chaotic chorus of accusations, Zachary stood resolute **in his** smart **black** suit, **his voice** steady and **his gaze** unwavering. “I didn’t cheat,” he **declared**, **his** defiance resounding throughout **the venue**.

An uneasy **silence descended**, **the audience** taken aback **by the** unwavering determination in the child’s **eyes**. **But a wave** of scornful laughter swiftly shattered the **silence**. “Yeah,

right! As if a thief **would ever** admit to **stealing!**”

Jake’s heart swelled with triumphant laughter, **yet** he skillfully maintained a facade of contrived **sorrow** and outrage. The irony was delicious, and he savored every second of it.

“He’s not just a cheater! He’s a bully too! He once attacked me **at** our school for no reason. If **my** parents hadn’t been there, I might have ended up in a wheelchair!” Jake’s voice **rose** with escalating fervor, stirring a wave of righteous indignation throughout the crowd.

Zachary, however, witnessed this farcical play with clenched fists. Yes, he had struck Jake **once**. But only because Jake- that snake had found lifting a little girl’s skirt hilarious, reducing her to tears. Zachary had charged forward, fists ready, defending her honor. The audacity of Jake to dredge up that incident!

Meanwhile, Zane observed **the** spectacle of Zachary’s character assassination with icy detachment. A firm line formed around his lips, and he rose, forging a path through the sea of people toward the stage.

As the crowd laughed and jeered, a small figure maneuvered through the chaos toward the stage. Zane approached the host, whispered something in his ear, and then politely took the microphone. His calm demeanor contrasted sharply with the chaos unfolding in the auditorium.

Zachary’s gaze fell upon Zane, wrapped in winter clothing. His forehead furrowed slightly. This person seemed familiar, but from where?

“We didn’t witness Zachary cheating, did we?” Zane’s voice resounded through the hall, not rushing to Zachary’s defense as expected but introducing another layer of doubt into the

mix.

“Did he pay you off? As **the** teacher always says, ‘Seeing is believing.’ I saw it, so don’t try to play advocate here!” Jake interjected.

Zane calmly continued, his voice measured and composed. “We shouldn’t defame an innocent person, but we shouldn’t also let the guilty go free. Determining whether Zachary cheated or not is simple. This hall is brimming with surveillance cameras, practically capturing every angle. I am confident that we have recorded the incident with perfect clarity.”

With that, the host swiftly instructed the backstage staff to project the surveillance footage from the podium onto the large screen. Jake, however, maintained a composed expression, unruffled by the turn of events. He had meticulously memorized the camera positions in the hall and deliberately chosen a blind spot to discard the note. Therefore, the cameras couldn’t capture **it**.

But as **the** staff projected the footage onto the big screen, Jake’s confident smirk dissolved. His foolproof plan began to crumble, or so he realized as **the** video played. Cold dread crept **up** his **spine**, draining **the** color from his face. His eyes widened, and his fists clenched in his **lap**