

Mr. Warner Your Ex-Wife is Brilliant by Paula Chapter 26 -

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Zoe's eyes, twin pools glassy like morning dew on an autumn leaf, clung to Zachary's for **an eternity before** she **finally** agreed with a nod.

Suddenly, her charming innocence unfolded before Zachary, painting his cheeks the vibrant hues **of** a setting sun.

The simmering competition between them, with Zane as the unfaltering referee, soon ignited. But it was a massacre. Rounds of combat passed like quicksilver, and Zachary found himself on the losing side. Having prided himself on his self-proclaimed superiority, Zachary never expected to be trounced by Zoe's uncanny mastery of robotics.

"Different strokes for different folks, buddy. Don't get disheartened. You've got your own bag of tricks," Zane consoled, patting Zachary's shoulder with a comforting air of brotherhood.

Zachary's lips curved into a half-smile as he reached for a glass **of** water. "I don't grudge Zoe her skills," he confessed, "what I do envy is having a sweet little sister like her and a mother as loving as yours."

His knowledge about the Warner family allowed Zane to imagine Zachary's upbringing—plush yet emotionally barren. Despite being bestowed with wealth, the love he received from his family felt as remote as a star in the night sky, and his mother's nurturing presence resembled that of a barren desert. Despite having all the material comforts, Zachary still yearned for the warmth and affection of a loving parent.

Zane knew Zachary was his half-brother, but revealing **this** truth was a door he wasn't ready to open. He pursed his lips, letting his little chubby hands rest reassuringly on Zachary's shoulder. "But you're loved too, you know? And with my mom and me in your life now, **consider** us your extended family."

His heart pounding in his chest, Zachary exhaled a sigh of relief. "Thank you," he mumbled. **Never** one for sentimentality, he felt a wave of unfamiliar emotions crash over him.

He **had** once reveled his status as the Warner family's golden boy, the apple of his grandmother's eye. But with Zane and Teacher Jane, **he** was free to be just Zachary.

"What's got you two looking like a pair of old philosophers?" Jane called out, breaking their bubble as she emerged from the kitchen with a plate of braised fish. The sight of two five-year-olds acting like they carried the weight of the world of men thrice their age on their shoulders tickled her, a chuckle escaping her lips.

"**It's grown-up stuff, Mom,**" Zane responded. Always the little gentleman, he offered to help **her set the table**.

"Zoe, time to pack **up the** robot, honey. Let's get ready for dinner." Jane chuckled, her eyes twinkling **with** affection.

After a quick clean-up, the quartet **settled** down for a heartwarming dinner.

It **was still** early, **the clock** teasing **eight**. Jane reclined on the **sofa**, engrossed **in her computer**, crafting a new design pattern. **The** children lounged **nearby, their eyes glued to** the television **screen**.

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An unexpected wave of contentment washed **over Jane**, making her smile. The **evening** was **tranquil**, a **soothing** balm **to** her **soul**. But it was a calm shattered by the shrill ring of **her phone**. **Drake's** name flashed **on** the **screen**. She couldn't help but roll her eyes before **answering**.

"How's **Zac? Behaving** himself?" a voice, smooth like molten chocolate, enquired.

Jane's **eyes** darted to the children and back to her phone, her voice calm yet distant. "**He's** doing **fine**, Mr. Warner. You needn't worry."

Listening to Jane's detached tone, Drake sighed. Standing by the French window, his gaze lost in the vibrant red roses blooming in his courtyard. The ember of his cigarette flared and dimmed rhythmically in the evening stillness. "Jane, I know I wronged you in the past, and **I can't** make amends. But can't we at least ease this tension now that we both have our own lives?" His voice, icy at the edges, lingered in the silence.

Unmoved by his words, Jane kept her tone flat. "I think we've covered everything important. I need to go." Without waiting for a reply, she ended the call.

"Who's up for a bit more TV before bedtime?" Jane addressed the three children, putting her laptop aside.

"Mom, I'm sleepy," Zoe confessed, rubbing her eyes.

"Well, off to bed, you go, sweetheart. I'll warm up some milk," Jane said, disappearing into the kitchen, only to return with a tray bearing three steaming cups of milk.

After the children finished their milk, she collected the cups and reminded them, "Bedtime now. Zane, help Zac get settled."

"I want to sleep with my brother and Zac," Zoe's plea was soft and endearing.

Jane smiled, pleasantly surprised by Zoe's request. She was usually wary of strangers and took time to warm up to them. But it seemed that she had formed a quick bond with Zachary.

Soon, the house fell into tranquil silence. Jane tiptoed into Zane's room, where the trio was nestled in a single bed, looking as docile as lambs. She leaned in to plant a soft kiss on Zane's and Zoe's forehead.

On the inside, Zachary watched the **scene** unfold, a cocktail of anticipation and disappointment coursing through him.

The familiar goodnight kiss was a ritual alien to his life back home. No one **ever** tucked him **in** or kissed him goodnight. Witnessing Jane's affection for Zane and Zoe, a tiny flame of hope flickered in his heart. **He** yearned for Jane's motherly touch.

But his hope **of receiving such** affection was a pipe dream. After all, Jane wasn't **his** mother.

But then, he felt it. **Just as** his **eyes** dimmed with resignation, he felt a shadow cast over him, **followed** by a **gentle**, warm **kiss** on his forehead.

Zachary's eyes **snapped** open, his heart **thumping** against his ribs as **he clutched** the blanket **tightly**. She had **kissed** him too!

"Sleep tight, kids!" Jane **whispered**, tucking them in **before** slipping out of the room, gently **shutting the door behind her**.

His **emotions spiraling**, Zachary lay **awake**, his **mind** spinning. He turned to Zane, **whispering**, **"Zane, are you asleep?"**

"Nope," Zane responded.

"Do you ever feel envious of me?" Zachary's words hung in the silence, his **curious eyes** sparkling in the dim **light**.

A smile **crept** onto Zane's face as he answered, "I do." He then added in his voice tinged with pride, "I'm envious that you have a friend like me."

Zachary burst into laughter. "True. I'm lucky to have you as my friend." Underneath the glitz of being the Warner family's little prince, Zachary harbored a loneliness known only to him. Perhaps Zane would become the most significant friend of his life.

Their whispers faded into the night, replaced by the soothing rhythm of their collective breaths, lulling them into a peaceful slumber.

The morning sun peeked into the room. Jane prepared breakfast and gently roused the trio.

"Teacher, can I stay a little longer before I leave today?" Zachary asked, his cheeks tinged pink as he bit into a corn cob. Being the little prince, everyone catered to his whims. However, with Teacher Jane, he had to shed his airs and fears, afraid she might find him off-putting.

"Sure." Jane smiled warmly. Their time together had softened Jane's perception of Zachary, and she found herself strangely connected to him.

"May I visit often?" Zachary asked, his eyes shimmering with anticipation.

Jane looked at him, a wave of sympathy mingling with her fondness. His life lacked the warmth only a family could provide. But she hid her feelings behind a composed smile, fearing he might discover something he shouldn't. Conscious of Zachary's yearning for companionship, she replied with a cautious nod. "We'll see."

After breakfast, Jane hopped into her car and headed to her company. She had bought a car when she returned to the country, as having her own was the most convenient option.

While she drove along familiar lanes, a sudden movement in her rearview mirror disrupted **her thoughts**. **Her gaze** suddenly turned alert as she detected something unusual.

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