

Mr. Warner Your Ex-Wife is Brilliant by Paula Chapter 28 -

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“**Again?**” Jane’s eyes danced with intrigue as she reclined in her chair, the piercing glint catching the assistant’s attention, sending a silent warning that a storm was brewing.

“She threatened that **if** you don’t come out, she will accuse you to police that ... that you buy killer to kill her,” the assistant stammered, noticing the stormy sea of emotions concealed within Jane’s eyes.

With a lighthearted laugh, Jane’s expression shifted dramatically. Her eyes transformed into a shadowy abyss, deep with veiled intensity. “Well, let her do it.”

Tsk. Who stood to lose more in this gambit?

Suddenly, her phone rang, breaking her train of thought. Her face crinkled into a frown as she picked up, listened to the caller, and then replied tersely, “Send him in.”

Why now? Was he here to play bad cop?

“I’ll

get back to my tasks, Ms Bentley.” Her assistant nodded, catching the unspoken

dismissal.

With a dismissive wave, Jane refocused on the laptop in front of her, lost in the labyrinth of company reports.

A looming shadow darkened her office, followed by a deep, velvety voice, as soothing as a melancholic cello. “President Bentley.”

Shifting her gaze toward the intruder, she formed a chilly smile on her lips. “To what do I owe the honor, President Warner? Why the sudden visit again?”

Drake's countenance was gloomy, and his bony fingers tapped absentmindedly on the desk with pronounced joints. With an air of lassitude, he said, "President Bentley, I bring a proposal for collaboration between our companies."

Jane's frosty demeanor remained unchanged. "I fear our humble enterprise may not be sufficient for your grand plans."

Her resistance was crystal clear. She had no intentions of entangling herself with this man any further.

If he hadn't manipulated their personal connection to force her into tutoring Zachary, she wouldn't have **even** considered his presence.

Drake's expression grew **even** colder, but soon a hint of indifferent aloofness appeared at the corner of his mouth, as his magnetic voice turned icy and frigid, "I am **here in good** faith, **President** Bentley. I trust you won't let personal grudges cloud your judgment."

Jane held his **icy gaze**. **Her voice** was **as** cold as winter frost, **All** right, **President Warner**, **enlighten** me. How do you **suggest** we collaborate?"

"Our media **department** requires a **vast** selection of costume **designs**. **Your** collaboration would be a **great** honor for **us**."

Jane leaned **back**, **her fingers** drumming **rhythmically** on the armrest. "Our designs **carry a hefty price tag**, **President Warner**."

Unfazed, **he** responded coolly, "**Money** is of no **concern**."

With a sharp nod, Jane scrutinized the **contract**. It appeared fair, **even** favorable, with a few unexpected concessions from his side. Regardless **of** his ulterior motives, she wasn't **one** to let a lucrative opportunity slip. They swiftly concluded the deal.

Drake suggested a celebratory lunch, but Jane declined, citing prior commitments. Alone and unbothered, he exited her office and returned to his own empire.

Daybreak painted the **sky** a soft pink as Zachary and Annie slipped out of their home, the minute hand on the clock **just** past seven.

Zachary, fingers rhythmically tapping his phone, called Zane on his mobile. “Zane, I’m tackling a mountain today—got a climbing competition. Let’s catch **up** tomorrow.”

“A climbing competition?” Zane’s voice hitched, a thread **of** confusion weaving through his words. “At the Pine Ridge locale?”

Zachary blinked in surprise. “Yeah, how’d you guess?”

Sitting in the passenger seat, Annie pretended to be asleep with her eyes closed, but she was actually paying close attention to Zachary’s conversation.

“My mom roped me into it,” Zane admitted. “Have you hit Pine Ridge yet? I just did.”

“Almost there.” **After** a smattering of final goodbyes, Zachary pocketed his phone, severing

the connection.

A shadow of thought passed over Annie’s face. Zachary’s friends were a rare breed—few and far between—and lately, a pint-sized newcomer seemed to have found his way into the fold. She recognized his voice from the call.

If he competed too, that would make things doubly interesting – two birds, one stone!

The grass at the base of Pine Ridge still bore the morning’s frost upon their arrival. Parents chaperoning eager kids fluttered around the starting line, excited chatter melting into the event organizers’ announcements.

The latter were emissaries of a tech toy company using the climbing competition **as a** marketing gambit for their new line of robots. The challenge involved a straightforward race against time—reaching the summit, planting the flag, and conquering the mountain.

Zachary quickly spotted Zane in **the** midst of the crowd as he exited the car. He walked purposefully through the crowd, weaving his way to his young friend. “You’re up early. Where’s your mom?” Zachary cast a sweeping glance behind Zane, but Jane was conspicuously absent.

“Mom’s tied up,

up, **so** I flew solo.” Zane had actually conned his way into the competition, **his eyes** on the robot prize for Zoe. If **he’d** looped his mom in, she would’ve barred him from what she’d **call** a ‘dangerous’ **event**.

“**I might as well** have come **alone, then.**” Zachary’s gaze flitted **to the** figure trailing Zane, her **eyes** frosty.

“Let’s snag a flag **before they’re all snapped** up. **If** we dawdle, **they** might run out.”

Zane **disregarded** Annie, **tugging Zachary towards** the flag **station**.

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Their triumph was short—

lived, however, as **the** organizers **redirected them** towards a different peak once they’d secured their flags. A different path, a different mountain, but the game remained the same.

Something about the new route sparked a flicker of doubt in Zane, but before he could voice his concern, a gunshot echoed, signaling the start of the competition. Annie prodded them onward from the sidelines.

“**Zac,** the race is on. Time to hustle.”

Determined to score the coveted robot, Zachary led Zane onto the path, their sneakers crunching against the gravel as they ascended.

As they paused, sucking in lungfuls of crisp mountain air, Zane and Zachary discovered they had left the vibrant thrum of the crowd far behind them. The base was a distant, untraceable memory swallowed by the verdant expanse of towering trees surrounding them. The only orchestra in this untamed wilderness was the rhythmic chorus of cicadas. and insects, their melodies punctuated by the kaleidoscope of sunlight spilling through the arboreal canopy, painting the forest floor with mottled speckles of brilliance.

Zane furrowed his brows, his voice a whisper amongst the verdant stillness, “How come we haven’t bumped into any staff?” Their pace had gradually slowed to a leisurely amble, his question hanging in the air like an uninvited guest.

Logically, they should have crossed paths with the competition's staff. After all, the participants were merely children. Although the rules had been clear about parents not accompanying them, some personnel should have been present to ensure their safety during the trek.

Yet, not a single staff member had crossed their path.

Lost in thoughts of becoming the champion and winning the prized robot toy, Zachary remained blissfully unaware of this anomaly.

Even the quiet observer, Zane was the first to sense the undercurrent of something amiss. His voice held an edge of wariness, "I think something's off. We should head back."

"Head back? And miss out on the robot?" Zachary's protest was immediate and definite.

"But..."

"What? Scared?" Zachary smirked, standing a step higher, looking down at Zane, his eyes gleaming with challenge, "How about a race then? Let's see who gets there first."

Zane's ego took the bait. **He** wouldn't retreat from a challenge, especially from a child born out of wedlock to a rogue and another woman.

Fueled by the competitive **spark**, Zane gave chase, and their shared laughter echoed in the mountain's solitude as **they** ascended, ignoring **the** shadow of unease.

Yet, as the sun dipped below **the** horizon, casting a veil of darkness around them, **Zac and Zane's** excitement diminished. The **expected** destination, the triumphant peak, remained out **of** reach. Looking back at the winding **path of** stone **steps, they** faced a **disheartening reality** – **they** had lost **their** way.

The cheerful **facade faded from Zachary's** face as he registered **the** predicament. **Just as he** was about to fish out his phone or watch to call for help, Zane broke **the silence**.