

## Chapter 39 Making Him Even More Exhausted

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His secretary informed him that Alicia had not come by.

Joshua's expression darkened.

"No?"

Despite the major scandal, Alicia remained remarkably calm.

Still, how long could she maintain her composure?

"Keep a close eye on her. Don't allow anyone to assist her," Joshua commanded.

After the call, a car drove into the driveway.

The vehicle hadn't even stopped when the window rolled down. A middle-aged woman with curly hair smiled warmly and called out, "Joshua."

Joshua immediately stepped forward and opened the car door.

"Mother, what brings you here?" he asked.

The woman, Shelia Yates—the mother of Joshua—wore an elegant short-sleeved traditional dress. A faint smile lit up her well-maintained face, giving her a radiant appearance.

She held up a container of food. "I prepared some nourishing soup for Lilliana myself."

Joshua maintained a neutral expression. "There's no need for you to go out of your way. Lilliana and I aren't officially married yet. Besides, the Green family has everything she needs."

She didn't seem bothered by it.

"If I'm kind to Lilliana, she'll be kind to you. It's no loss for me." She looked at him with concern. "You look exhausted, Joshua. Haven't you been resting well lately?"

Joshua brushed off her concern. "It's just how things are. Nothing unusual."

"This doesn't compare to what you faced two years ago," Sheila remarked. "Back then, your father underestimated you. You built everything from scratch, working tirelessly day and night. Yet I never saw you this worn out."

Her words left Joshua momentarily lost in thought.

Two years ago, he had nothing and had worked even harder than he did now.

But every night he came home, Alicia was there to ease his worries and fatigue.

Despite the increased value Lilliana brought into his life, Joshua didn't feel any happier.

He questioned why the joy he had been longing for was missing.

Weary thoughts and tangled memories filled his mind, leaving him even more drained.

Joshua couldn't remember the last time a genuine smile crossed his face. "Go inside, Mom. I have some things to handle," he said softly.

A pang of concern touched Shelia. "Come back early. I cooked a lot of nourishing soup. You should have some too!"

Lilliana remained courteous to Shelia, who was soon to be her mother-in-law.

However, when she noticed the soup, a wave of pregnancy-induced nausea made her wrinkle her nose in disgust.

Shelia observed her strong reaction. "Is something wrong, Lilliana? Don't you like it?" she asked.

Forcing a smile, Lilliana replied, "No, I just ate and don't have an appetite. Leave it here. I'll drink it later."

Shelia remained persistent, refusing to let the matter go.

She poured soup into a bowl and handed it to Lilliana. "Lilliana, I simmered this for hours. Please try some. It's your first pregnancy, and you might not know everything. Don't be picky. Nourish your body so the baby can grow healthy."

Irritation surged within Lilliana.

Shelia ignored her earlier words and openly mentioned the baby, treating her like a mere vessel for childbirth.

With a heavier tone, Lilliana pushed the bowl away. "I said I'll drink it later."

Shelia stopped in her tracks.

She was an experienced woman, so she could tell that Lilliana was angry.

Lilliana held a high status. Shelia had to endure, even if she felt wronged. She gently placed the bowl down. "Alright, remember to ask the maid to warm it up later."

Lilliana felt no appreciation for Shelia's concern.

Shelia was the mother of Joshua, but she came from a humble background. Jerald had an affair during his marriage, impregnated Shelia, and brought her into the family home.

It was rumored that Jerald and Shelia first met in a nightclub.

Lilliana closed her eyes. "I'm tired, Shelia. You should leave," she said.

Shelia didn't want to bother her any further.

"If you'd like something to eat, please let me know. I can prepare it for you," she offered.

"There's no need. I have a maid here," Lilliana replied.

Shelia wondered if Lilliana was subtly insulting her, implying that she was no more than a servant.

Without saying anything else, Shelia turned and left.

Later on, Joshua returned home. He saw the maid carrying out the food container and emptying its contents into the pet dog's bowl.

He frowned deeply.

Upon taking a closer look, it was indeed the container Shelia had brought earlier.

The maid looked surprised to see him. She greeted him awkwardly, "Mr. Yates."

Joshua maintained a stern expression.

"Who instructed you to feed this to the dog?" he demanded.

The maid feared he would blame her. She explained, "Miss Green said she can't eat greasy food. It would spoil if left out..."

Anger surged within Joshua as he clenched his fists.

During the two years of marriage to Alicia, she always went out of her way to cook for Shelia.

Shelia never accepted those gestures, not even once.

Now, Lilliana refused the soup from Shelia, and the pet dog was eating it.

His frustration reached a breaking point, and he kicked the dog away.

He pointed at the bowl on the ground. "Drink it yourself," he commanded.

The maid's eyes widened in horror. She shook her head frantically. "Mr. Yates, I can't!"

"Drink it or you're dismissed," he demanded. "Make your choice."

Feeling humiliated by how she was treated, the maid decided to complain directly to Lilliana.

Lilliana listened but showed no interest in the maid's concerns.

She approached Joshua with a smile. "Is something bothering you? You promised when you proposed that you'd love me even if I'm unreasonable. I didn't like the soup, so I threw it away. Is that a problem?"

Joshua set the cake down, struggling to control his growing anger.

"My mother put a lot of effort into making that soup," he said.

"It's just a bowl of soup," Lilliana replied dismissively. "If you're so concerned, I'll have someone buy another and send it back to her."

Joshua looked at her, feeling his frustration intensify.

Lilliana's affection toward Joshua depended entirely on her mood. When pleased, she showed him kindness; when displeased, she viewed him as disposable.

Her arrogance stemmed from this capricious behavior.

Joshua stared at her, struggling to control the anger rising within him. He reached out and gently touched her cheek.

"Fine," he said in a flat voice. "If you don't want it, I'll ask my mother not to send anything again."

Lilliana felt content after that.

Soon after, her agent called with troubling news.

"Someone is suppressing the trending topic about Alicia," the agent informed her.

"Who is doing this?" Lilliana asked with annoyance in her voice.

