



Chapter 45

Duncan's mischievous smile stretched across his face like a flicker of devilish delight. His eyes sparkled with a wicked glint as he surveyed the stunned expressions of his family members in the dining room. After his audacious statement, he reveled in the chaos he had incited.

While Zinnia stood frozen, her face having a mixture of shock and indignation. She struggled to find the right words to express her outrage at Duncan's demeaning remark, her mouth opening and closing like a fish out of water. But before she could utter a single word, her mother, Laila, stepped forward to defend her honor.

"How dare you, you miserable, worthless thing," Laila's voice trembled with a mix of anger and disbelief. "Does my daughter look like a househelp? You'll forever serve this family despite being a part of it, you insignificant fool!"

The room fell silent, everyone waiting for Ma'am Luna, the family's matriarch, to intervene. Ma'am Luna with her regal posture and commanding presence, observed the commotion with a measured gaze. Her expression gave nothing away, leaving her family members on edge.

Finally, ma'am Luna's voice cut through the tension like a sharp knife. "Zinnia will clean for a week," she declared, her tone carrying an unexpected determination. Her words left the room in stunned silence as if the air had been sucked out of it. Duncan's mischievous smile remained, now transformed into a triumphant smirk.

At that moment, Duncan's plan had succeeded. He had managed to provoke a reaction from his family, stirring the pot and asserting his control. The mischievous gleam in his eyes deepened, relishing the

power he had momentarily seized.

"Mother, how can you say that?" Laila cried.

"Why won't I? They made a deal so she should stick to the consequences of it," Ma'am Luna said with no tone of reconsideration. Then she asked with a stern expression, "You made a deal, right, Zinnia?"

Knowing things wouldn't fall in her daughter's favor if she acknowledged making a deal with Duncan, Laila decided to counter Duncan's claim even before Zinnia could think of it.

"Mother, it's a lie. Don't tell me you believe this worthless man, Duncan. I'm sure he's happy about my daughter's misfortune and he wants to torment her the more by claiming they had a stupid deal. He thought it out well and wants to exercise his right on her as her husband by making her do the filthy chores in the house."

"Why would I do something like that, mother-in-law?" Duncan asked, pulling a soft expression. "I've been the one cleaning the house and doing the other things since my grandfather-in-law died, It has become my work in the house, and I never complained. Now, I just want Zinnia to do the cleaning for a week since she didn't get the deal."

"Shut up your nonsense mouth. What proof do you have that you both made a deal?"

"Exactly, mother, ask the fool. He's talking nonsense now," Zinnia scoffed, eyeing Duncan.

"Hey, Aunt Laila, Zinnia, I was there when Duncan and Zinnia made the deal yesterday morning," Lisa claimed.

"Me too," Bella added.

And Marcus who wanted to see how his sister would look doing cleaning supported. "I saw them too."

Laila was mesmerized that Marcus would say that. She gave him an unbelievable look and he simply shrugged.

"So, who's now lying, Zinnia? Three people said they saw you and you are denying it? Ridiculous."

"But, grandmother, L..."

"My decision is final. You'll start cleaning the house from today for 7 good days." With that, Ma'am Luna left the dining room.

Duncan was amazed that Bella, Lisa, and especially Marcus supported his true claim. He felt it was going to be great to make the family turn against each other.

Zinnia, unable to control her anger, groaned as she slammed the table, causing clatters of the food wares before jerking up to her feet and stomping out of the room.

She thrashed the steel vases on the stools by the sides of the hallway as she headed to her room and instinctively stopped when she sensed someone was following her. It was actually Duncan and when he burst into laughter, she turned to glare at him.

"Why are you so angry, my wife?" Duncan asked, making his way through the hall, a smug grin still etched upon his face. As he approached Zinnia, he could practically feel the waves of anger emanating from her. The sheer intensity of her rage only served to increase his own satisfaction.

"What is it, wife?" Duncan taunted, his voice laced with a mix of condescension and amusement. "Too bad you lost the deal, but now you'll have to suffer the consequences. From now on, you'll be doing all the cleanings. Consider it a lesson for crossing me. And the first order of business? Go and wash every single toilet in this house."

Zinnia's eyes blazed with fury and disbelief. How dare he subject me to such humiliation? Unable to contain her rage, she unleashed her anger upon him, her open palm connecting with his cheek in a resounding slap. But Duncan's reaction was not one of pain or shock; instead, he responded with a sly smile, relishing in the chaos he had created.

"Ah, your slap doesn't stink like you," Duncan taunted, his voice dripping with derision. He rubbed his cheek mockingly as if her strike had done nothing to diminish his satisfaction. The twisted delight in his eyes only fueled Zinnia's fury further, and she seethed with anger and frustration.

Duncan reveled in the power he held over Zinnia, knowing that his presence alone could amplify her anger to new heights. He took perverse pleasure in the control he wielded, his twisted mind finding amusement in the chaos and emotional turmoil he had orchestrated.

Zinnia, consumed by a fiery rage, couldn't resist the impulse to strike Duncan once more. She drew her hand back, ready to deliver another resounding slap, but before her palm could make contact with his face, Duncan swiftly intercepted her. He grabbed her hand with a vice-like grip and twisted it behind her back, turning her back to face him.

"Don't you dare think of slapping me again," Duncan warned, his voice cold and menacing. The threat in his tone sent shivers down Zinnia's spine, her body tensing with a mixture of fear and anger. She felt

trapped, both physically and emotionally, as his grip tightened around her hand.

"If you do that again, I'll break your hand," he added, his words laced with a chilling certainty. The sheer brutality of his threat hung in the air, leaving Zinnia momentarily paralyzed with a mix of shock and desperation.

After what felt like an eternity, Duncan abruptly released his grip, allowing Zinnia to stumble forward slightly. She watched with a mix of disbelief and indignation as he turned and disappeared down the hall, leaving her behind to process the encounter.

Zinnia's anger intensified, fueled by the audacity of Duncan's actions. How dare he grab my hand and treat me so roughly? The indignation burned within her, and she vowed to herself that she would not allow this behavior to go unpunished.

Gritting her teeth, Zinnia clenched her fists and resolved to get back at him. The encounter had only stoked the flames of her anger, further fueling her determination to come out of her situation and turn the tables around.

With her face contorted with anger and pain, Zinnia snapped her wrist back into place. The aggressive twist Duncan had inflicted upon her arm left her with a lingering ache, but she refused to show weakness or vulnerability. As she adjusted herself, she heard the distinct sound of approaching footsteps. Looking up, she saw Lisa and Bella making their way towards her.

With a glare that could melt steel, Zinnia locked eyes with Lisa and Bella. They had always been a source of additional torment and misery for her, and she knew their arrival could only exacerbate her current

predicament. The anger in her gaze was unyielding, a silent challenge to their presence and the role they often played in her suffering.

Zinnia braced herself, steeling her resolve as she prepared to face whatever trials they were about to subject her to. She refused to let their presence or their actions break her spirit. Instead, she harnessed her anger and pain, using it as fuel to fortify her determination to stand up for herself and fight against the injustices she endured within this family.

"Hey, Zinnia, it seems like the heavens have turned against you today. You lost your position and your husband made you lose your place in this house. Now, you'll be Zinnia, the new cleaner," Lisa said and burst into laughter with her mother before continuing with a repulsive expression. "You were so full of yourself a couple of days ago, weren't you?"

"Oh, dear, she felt like she was the almighty Zinnia who would save the company and become the heiress," Bella said, mockingly. "Now, she'll be a cleaner."

"Aunt Laila was so proud and mocked me when I was suspended, but now look at what has become of her daughter? Zinnia's punishment for losing the deal is even 5 times worse than mine." Lisa giggled. "Isn't it so exciting?"

"Don't feel too happy, Lisa. I will get to the top in no time and toss you away."

"Really? Well, just know that from today onwards, I'm like your boss. You are below, so you'll listen to everything I say."

"Why? Do not feel too great. I'd rather stay away from the company than take orders from you?"

"Why? Will that hurt your ego?" Bella asked.



Zinnia inhaled and folded her arms, looking away.

"You and Marcus boss Lisa around ever since she started working in the company and now look at what you've become. You're just making noise, Zinnia because when it comes to the company now, Lisa is your boss and it won't take much time before my daughter starts bossing you and Marcus too."

"That will never happen!" Laila's voice was heard and Lisa and Bella shifted their gaze to get as she walked up to them.

"I see you both came to taunt my daughter. How dare you both?"

"Come off it, Laila. Your daughter is now the cleaner. You don't have much right in this house now she has lost her position. I think we are equal."

"What? You're joking, Bella! We can never be equaled."

"Okay then." Bella shrugged, chuckling as she left with Lisa.

"Zinnia, why?"

"What is it, mother?"

"Why did you lose the deal?!"

"Please, spare me, mother. I'm not in the mood for your scolding now." Zinnia hissed and entered her room, banging the door closed.

Duncan, with a devious smile playing on his lips, lingered in the shadows behind the corner at the end of the hall before stepping out when Laila headed down to her room. The satisfaction in his heart was palpable as he watched the chaos he had orchestrated.

His wife's betrayal had wounded him deeply, but now he relished the opportunity for revenge. He had taken pleasure in witnessing the confrontation between the four women (Bella, Laila, Lisa, and Zinnia) earlier, relishing every word exchanged and every expression of contempt and regret that adorned their faces.

Duncan's laughter escaped from his lips, echoing through the empty corridor. It was a laughter filled with gratification, a twisted melody of triumph and vindication. He knew that this was just the beginning; Zinnia would pay dearly for her infidelity and deceit.

But Duncan was not one to revel in his victories openly. He quickly scanned the area, ensuring no one was approaching, before reaching into his pocket to retrieve his phone. With swift fingers, he sent a call to Lady Zelda.

"Hello, son," Lady Zelda's warm voice greeted him on the other end of the line, her excitement evident.

"Hello, Mrs. Zelda," Duncan replied, his voice tinged with a mix of satisfaction and anticipation. "I have secured the deal for the company. Our future is looking brighter than ever I can say."

Lady Zelda's joy bubbled over, and she celebrated the news. Duncan ended the call, leaving her to savor the sweet taste of his victory which was also hers too.

In the Lennart mansion, Lady Zelda was in the study room and she couldn't stop herself from screaming in excitement after Duncan ended the call. The next minute the door opened and Luke walked in. 1

"Lady Zelda, the..."

Out of excitement, Zelda interrupted. "My son did it. Duncan got the deal."
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Luke's expression turned bleak as he walked up to the desk and dropped a file on it before nodding.

"Do you still doubt his abilities, Luke?"

"It was just...a mere victory," Luke stated and shrugged, causing her to roll her eyes at him in disbelief