

## 175 This time she will have the chance.

Beca was about to shake her head to say that she didn't need to know. As long as it was someone Arwen had chosen, she would accept. "Ryan —" But before she could say anything, Ryan interjected to reveal. 1

"She has married a man who is even older than Dad, Mom." He said, his tone mixed with rage and sarcastic humor. "Do you really think she has moved on, Mom? Or will be happy with a man who is not twice but thrice her age?" 1

The weight of Ryan's words stuck Beca like a hammer. Her lips parted, but no sound came as she tried to process it for a moment. Arwen married an old man, thrice her age? Nope, how can that be possible?

Catrin, however, was quicker to recover. She was already against Arwen's decision and this revelation made her frown more. Her brows furrowed deeply, and her voice cut through the silence like a whip. "What do you mean, Ryan? Did you see him?"

Ryan shook his head. "I asked someone to look into the Winslow name and even though not much can be found about him, I got to know the

basics —like he is an old man in his seventies who has returned back to the country and has started a new business. Arwen might just been a pawn he must have agreed to gain the favour and connections of the Quinns." 2

"Presumptuous!" Catrin snapped. "How dare he use my daughter as a pawn?"

Beca shook her head. "Catrin, I think there is some kind of misunderstanding here. Arwen wouldn't be reckless to marry some old man." 1

"She married a stranger, Beca" Catrin countered, "How more reckless can she be?"

Beca couldn't bring herself to believe it. The last time she had seen Arwen, she might not have gotten a good look at the man accompanying her, be he couldn't be an old man. The charisma and spark in those brown eyes were far too strong to belong to someone in his seventies. Furthermore, the air of authority the secretary carried was far too intense for someone whose boss was supposedly dependent on pawns to make a living.

"Catrin, I would still suggest you clarify it with Arwen. Don't assume it based on someone's false reports." Beca's words were firm, though her heart still wavered under the weight of Ryan's revelation. She couldn't fathom Arwen making such a choice. Arwen has always been

strong-willed, thoughtful and deliberate. This simply didn't add up. 1

Catrin crossed her arms, her frustration barely contained. "There is nothing that I need to clarify with Arwen, Beca. But there is something I need to confirm with you."

Beca's brows knitted as she stared at her. "What are getting at, Catrin?"

"Beca, tell me clearly are you belittling Arwen because she married someone else? Is that why you are opposing Arwen to be with Ryan?" 1

"Catrin, how could you even think that?" Beca's pupils dilated as if she couldn't believe her friend would think of her like that. "I have always taken Arwen as my daughter. There is no way, I would belittle her at any instance." 1

"Then does that mean if tomorrow she agrees to reconcile with Ryan, you will be fine with it?" Catrin's voice was sharp, almost accusing, as if daring Beca to deny it. 1

Beca inhaled deeply. She glanced at Ryan, willing to still bring him the best. But then she dreaded what if he continued the same mistake. Will she be able to look at herself in the mirror, ever? She wouldn't. Turning back to Catrin, she spoke with calm deliberation, "Arwen was never a choice for me, Catrin. She was it — the one I always had in

mind for my son. So don't belittle her asking if I would still accept her or not."

"Beca —"

"Wait, Catrin. I haven't finished yet," Beca interrupted, adding carefully. "If tomorrow Arwen were to choose Ryan again, no one would be happier than me. I wouldn't stand in her way. But dear," she leaned forward, her gaze unwavering. "I would only support it if I truly believed it would make her happy. And right now, I don't see that happening. She seemed very happy when she visited me last time."

Ryan's face twisted in frustration. "Mom, you don't understand. She is doing all this to get back at me. How can she be happy with —"

"I understand perfectly, Ryan," Beca interrupted, her voice unyielding. "Do you think I won't? I have spent far more time with her than any of you have. Not even Catrin could match up." She then turned back to Catrin as if reminding her of something she might have forgotten. 3

Over the years, Beca has always been on the side of Arwen whenever she needed her mother. While Catrin had remained busy in her words and missed most of Arwen's important events, Beca has turned up to not make Arwen feel the void of her mother. Maybe her intention to grow close to Arwen had been to solidify the future

< 175 This time she will have the chance. 🔔

relationship with her daughter-in-law, yet this has always brought them close —close enough to make Beca consider Arwen almost as her own daughter. 2

Catrin couldn't refute it. And seeing her agree to it, Beca turned back to look at her son to add, her voice firm, not leaving any room for argument. "You had your chance, son, and you let her down. This time she would have a chance, a choice —to choose you again, or to leave you, just as you left her —for someone else." 1

The thought alone sent a shiver of fear through Ryan. Shaking his head vehemently, he said, "Mom, Arwen wouldn't leave me. Not for that old man? Do you think he is worth it?"

"Love doesn't calculate worth, son. It defines it," Beca replied, her expression softening into a small smile. "You might not understand it now, but once you truly experience it, you will understand. And I have no doubt that day will come soon enough." 6



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