



179 Not this time, husband.

Beca wanted to refute her son, but it was hard to explain more than she already had. Since Ryan wants to take a hard lesson of rejection, she won't stop him. **1**

Nodding to her son, she said, "If that's what you believe, then go ahead and try. Anyway, you are finding it hard to give up. Maybe a clearer rejection will help you see things for what they are."

Ryan smirked confidently, "Mom, Arwen wouldn't reject me. She has no reason to."

Beca chuckled softly, shaking her head. "Too bad, son, if you think she has got no reason to do that. Or if you think it was just one misunderstanding that caused it all."

"Mom, it was the misunderstanding that caused her the walk away from me," Ryan said, keeping his tone firm. "Otherwise, she never would have. I am sure that once I explain everything to her, she will come back. She will realize there is no good reason to continue that false relationship she started just to get back at me."

"False relationship?" Beca muttered softly but audibly. "What made you so confident that the relationship that she has with her husband is



false? Do people announce their false relationship officially these days?"

Ryan's confidence faltered as he remembered the official booklets that had continuously haunted him at nights. "That ... she did that because I left her no option. I shouldn't have made a statement revealing proposing to Delyth in the past. She was badmouthed online. She must have done it to save herself. Otherwise, she would have never embraced the shame of revealing her relationship with the old man she found randomly."

Old man! Beca wanted to laugh at the absurdity of it. She might have been skeptical for a moment when Ryan claimed that Arwen married an old man thrice her age. But after contemplating things well, she was certain that wasn't the case. She knew Arwen too well —she would never make such a desperate or reckless move, not even under immense pressure.

But then again, explaining her perception to Ryan at the moment would serve little to no purpose. So, shaking her head at her son's stubborn thoughts, she said in deliberate calmness. "Whether she has embraced the shame or chosen the right partner, you will know in the near future, Ryan. But mark my words —if you remain so stubborn to your beliefs, the truth will only become harder for you



to accept." She then smiled and slowly added, "I won't say anymore. You are an adult and I barely hold much of the power on you. Do what you feel is right since anyway you won't heed my advice." 2

Ryan frowned. "Mom!"

"I will go back to my room and sleep. It's already late. You too -don't stay awake till late." With that, Beca turned and walked out of the room, leaving Ryan alone to dwell on his thoughts.

Meanwhile, back at Winslow Residence,

Aiden and Arwen returned back home only to find the house unusually quiet. Typically, the staff rarely wandered around, but still, their absence now was easily noticeable.

Aiden's brows furrowed slightly as he scanned the space, his instincts kicking in. He was about to call Mr. Jones when Arwen's soft yet confident voice stopped him.

"I have asked all of them to retire early. They must all have left by now," her tone calm, but deliberate.

Aiden turned to her, raising a brow, "You did?"

Arwen shrugged. "Well, I am the mistress of the house. I have got all the authority to keep or dismiss people here, by default," she said and



then took a small step closer to him, closing the distance between them, before adding more confidently, "Or, do you want me to believe otherwise?"

The sudden proximity caught Aiden off guard, and the flicker of determination in her eyes made his pulse quicken. He could read her thoughts well. She was up to the challenge of his control, intending to destroy it once and for all. But even knowing her intentions well, he can't help much.

Aiden held her gaze, his brows arching slightly at her. "You have always had the authority, Moon," he said, his voice low. "I never questioned it."

"Really?" Arwen's lips curled into a sly smile as she tilted her head. "Can you tell me what I have authority over?"

"Everything!" he said in a breath without hesitating even for a second.

And though she had expected this answer, the confidence in his tone still made her heart skip a beat.

But calming herself, she continued. "Everything' is a vague word, husband", she said wrapping her arms around his neck. "Can you instead tell me if you are on the list of *everything*, or not?"

As she spoke, she pressed herself further closer



—to the point where only an inch or two remained between them.

Aiden stared down in her eyes. "I stand on the top of that list, Moon. You have complete authority on me and everything related to me."

Though Arwen had been toying with him, his sincerity in his gaze and voice disarmed her.

This was all that she had expected while she was planning it out, yet now when she had it coming from him, it still felt like she hadn't prepared herself for it. Like it was not a plan she crafted, but the lead coursing naturally.

Holding her heart steady, she said, "Good." Her tone came playful but daring. "Since I hold the authority even over you, then I will assume you will follow my lead tonight."

Her words, coupled with the confident gleam in her eyes, sent a jolt through him. She was testing his control, and he could feel it slipping already. Not knowing whether he would be able to hold back later, he tried to take a step back.

But before he could move, Arwen slipped one arm from his neck and grabbed the front of his shirt, tugging him closer until the warmth of her breath ghosted against his lips. "Not this time, husband." Her words came softly but with an unyielding resolve.