



203 Your card was denied.



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Arwen paused at the familiar voice, a flicker of surprise crossing her features as she turned around. "Emily!" 1

The woman with curly brunette hair beamed as she crossed the distance between them, her bright smile radiating enthusiasm. "Oh, see I guessed it, right?"

But as Emily came closer, her expression shifted, softening with a tinge of sadness. Reaching out, she clasped Arwen's hands in hers. "I heard what happened between you and Ryan," she said empathetically. "It's really sad. I was looking forward to your wedding with him, but I never expected you two would break up instead."

Arwen's smile faltered slightly, becoming a touch more forced, and she didn't even care to hide it.

Emily Brown was her cousin on her father's side. Although Arwen didn't hate her, she had always been aware of the envy Emily harbored. Ryan had been one of the many reasons for that jealousy, casting a darker shade on their already tense relationship.



Arwen knew Emily's words, though sympathetic on the surface, carried no genuine concern. Her cousin wasn't even a fraction of a percent upset about her broken engagement. If anything, Emily was likely enjoying the turn of events.

But was Arwen hating it? Definitely not.

More than anyone, she was happy about her broken engagement. On which Alden came as a brownie, making her happier.

"We weren't meant to be together," Arwen said evenly. "So, this was something that would have happened eventually. You don't have to be so upset about it."

Emily's expression flickered, and the barest hint of smug satisfaction showed in her eyes which she tried hard to hide. "Ah, I see. But I thought you were very sure about him. After all, Ryan has always been the most eligible bachelor in the town — handsome, charming and successful. Almost every girl dreams about him."

Arwen's lips curved up into a faint smile, but there was steel behind her words. "That may be true, but even the most charming facade can hide flaws. Besides dreams often lose their allure when reality sets in."



Emily blinked, momentarily thrown off by Arwen's poised response. But she recovered quickly, her voice taking on a snobbish tone. "Well, I suppose it's for the best then. Anyway, it's not easy to keep with someone Ryan anyway. He needs a certain kind of woman by his side."

Arwen couldn't help but smile at that. Nodding, she didn't hesitate in agreeing to her. "Indeed, you are right," she said, her smile unwavering. "And I have realized I am not the type to stand in anyone's shadow. I prefer walking my own path."

"Arwen, you —"

"It's fine Emily, that's my thought and it's not a compulsion for you to follow the same. Since Ryan is back to his bachelorette days, why don't you give it a try," Arwen reached out to place a hand on her shoulder in encouragement. "You might have been lucky last time since I was there in the picture. But now that I have happily given up, maybe you find your chance with him."

Emily's fingers clenched and she was about to formulate a reply, but the sales representative from before appeared again, interrupting their conversation. "Ma'am!"



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Arwen turned to her and asked with a smile, "Oh is it done?" The attendant expression showed slight hesitance, noticing which Arwen asked again. "What's wrong?"

"Your card was denied." The attendant spoke, keeping her attitude polite. She didn't dare doubt Arwen's identity. Maybe there was some issue with the card. Just because of some misunderstanding, she didn't want to offend someone whom she couldn't afford.

Emily, however, couldn't suppress a chuckle. Her eyes gleamed with barely concealed delight. It was as though she had been waiting for Arwen to falter somewhere so that she could let her see her position. And fortunately, the chance came just in time.

"Oh Arwen, I didn't mean to laugh. Please don't mind me," she said, feigning concern. "I am really sorry. I really didn't think it could be true. Mom mentioned Aunt Catrin kicked you out of the family, but I told her Aunt Catrin loved you too much to ever do that."

Arwen didn't flinch. She accepted back the declined card from the attendant with calm composure and handed her another one. "I am sorry for the inconvenience. Can you try with this one?"



The attendant nodded with a smile before leaving with the card.

Arwen then turned back to Emily, her smile polite but unwavering.

"It's fine, Arwen," Emily continued, her voice dripping with false concern. "It must be getting tough on you right now. If you want I can talk to my mom. I am sure she can make Aunt Catrin understand you. You don't have to —"

"There will be no such need, Emily," Arwen interrupted, shaking her head. Her tone was nonchalant, but her words came sharp. "Thanks for your concern but let's not involve your mother in this. You know as well as I do that Mrs. Quinn isn't someone to trifle with." She then looked at her head to toe, adding, "I can see you are having a nice day. Why ruin it by poking your nose in the matters you shouldn't. What if your family's allowance gets denied for the next month? You won't be able to live the same lavish life easily."

"You —"

"Ma'am."

Right on cue, the same attendant returned, her face now bright with relief. "The transaction was successful. Here is your card and your



jewellery."

Arwen smiled graciously, accepting the card. "Thank you. Sorry for the earlier confusion; I must have handed you the wrong card." She glanced at the bag and added, "Actually, I am here or something else. Could you keep this aside for me? I will pick it up on my way out."

"Of course, Ma'am!" the attendant replied with a polite nod before leaving.

Arwen turned back to Emily, her gaze steady. "Anything else you wanted to say, Emily?"

Emily's cheeks flushed. She just wanted to embarrass Arwen, but instead got embarrassed herself. "No ... nothing. I was just trying to help," she muttered.

Arwen gave her a sweet smile, her tone turning too polite suddenly. "O I truly appreciate that, but unfortunately, I didn't need your help. But anyways, thanks."

Saying that, she was about to bid goodbye when Emily suddenly asked, "Did you really married someone?"



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