

THE EX-WIFE'S BURNING ELEGANCE

Chapter 10

Haynes furrowed his brow and asked, "What are you doing here?"

Antoney, Stella's childhood friend, was someone Haynes had seen numerous times. Stella often spoke about Antoney, detailing his life story to him.

Stella had told him that Antoney had lost his parents at a young age and lived with his grandparents. By middle school, his grandparents had passed away, too, leaving Antoney all alone.

Stella's mom discovered Antoney's musical talents and took him under her wing during that period. But Antoney was a withdrawn and melancholic boy and ignored everyone around him.

It took Stella three years to break through his shell and become his friend.

Yet, for some reason, Haynes couldn't shake the feeling of dislike he felt towards Antoney from their very first meeting.

"You can meet your ex-girlfriend, so why is it strange for Star to dine with her childhood friend?" Antoney's voice was calm, yet each word was sharp, dripping with sarcasm.

He had effectively ripped away the facade Haynes and Rachel had been hiding.

Haynes' face darkened, his handsome features set in a stern expression. "Stella, go home with me."

Stella responded coldly and indifferently, "No, I haven't finished my dinner with Antoney."

Haynes' voice took on an icy edge. "Stella, this is the last time I'm asking. Come with me."

Stella recognized it as a sign of his rising anger. If Stella didn't relent immediately, it would lead to a confrontation far beyond a silent standoff. He had his ways of making her submit.

She would always remember that stormy night-soaked and desperate, kneeling at his feet as she begged him to return Keen to her.

He had looked down at her, asking, "Do you realize your mistake?"

Her tears had been endless, and she was forced to apologize for something she hadn't done. Haynes always had a way to get to her.

With this thought, a silent, knowing smile played on Stella's lips as she softly spoke, "No."

Haynes' gaze hardened as his lips pressed. "Stella, think about the consequences."

Stella sneered, "Mr. O'Brien, do whatever you think you must."

Her vulnerability had always been Keen. But she was ready to give up even that, leaving Haynes with nothing to hold over her.

Turning to Antoney, Stella said, "Antoney, let's find another place to eat. The air here isn't quite to my liking."

Antoney paused momentarily, then nodded gently. "Alright."

Without looking back at the group, Stella grabbed her purse and got ready to leave.

From behind, Keen's stubborn voice called out, "Mom, aren't you going to apologize to Rachel?"

Stella's step paused before she continued walking away without looking back.

Haynes watched Stella's retreating figure, his eyes growing colder and more intense.

Even Keen was watching Stella leave, a confused expression on his little face. Mom seemed different somehow.

Seeing both their gazes fixed on Stella, a deep chill passed through Rachel's eyes. Suddenly, she gasped aloud, "Ah!"

Instantly, Haynes and Keen's attention snapped back to Rachel. Her face was ashen, and she looked as if she might faint any moment.

Haynes' expression shifted, and he quickly swept Rachel into his arms.