

THE EX-WIFE'S BURNING ELEGANCE

Chapter 11

Haynes turned to Keen, standing quietly by his side, and said, "Keen, wait for me here for a moment."

Keen nodded obediently, understanding Haynes needed to tend to Rachel first.

When Haynes left, Keen overheard a hushed conversation from the table beside them.

"Eaton, look at that kid," a woman said, "He's even younger than you, and he's already sticking up for his mom and chasing off the other woman."

"When you see that nasty woman again, learn from this little guy. Don't be afraid, okay?"

Keen turned his head to see who was speaking. A woman in her thirties was dining with a young boy, maybe seven or eight.

The boy, Eaton, nodded vigorously at his mom's words. Seeing Keen looking over, he hopped off his chair and approached him.

"Hey, how did you do that?" Eaton asked, eyes wide with admiration. "Can you teach me how to chase away the other woman?"

Keen was stunned. "The other woman?"

Eaton assumed Keen didn't understand and earnestly explained, "The other woman refers to someone who tries to interfere between Mom and Dad. They make Mom and Dad argue and create all kinds of problems. Those women are the worst!" Eaton's face scrunched up in anger. "There's this one woman who keeps bothering my dad. But..."

His face fell, showing a hint of sadness. "But I don't know how to chase this woman away to protect my mom."

He looked up at Keen hopefully and continued, "You were amazing back there! You said a few words, the other woman left, and your dad returned to your mom. Can you teach me how you did it?"

Keen was still processing. "My dad returned to my mom?"

But wasn't it his mom who left?

Eaton looked at him, puzzled. "Didn't you just make the other woman leave? And your dad carried your mom away, right?"

Mom? Eaton must have mistaken Rachel for his mom.

Just then, Eaton's mom came over. She patted Keen on the head and praised him, "You're a good kid, standing by your mom like that. Not like Eaton, swayed by a candy bar to like that awful woman."

Eaton squirmed, embarrassed. "Mom never lets me have candy, and I couldn't resist."

Eaton's mom smiled, "Because I'm trying to save your teeth, Eaton. You can eat all the candy you want When you grow up, but not now."

Eaton hugged his mom's arm, pleading, "I know now, Mom. You're just looking out for me. Please don't be mad."

"You almost got fooled by that woman. Now, you see why I'm right," she said with a fond, exasperated smile.

Eaton chuckled. "Better late than never, right?"

Despite her words, the warmth and love in her eyes were unmistakable.

About half an hour later, Haynes and Rachel returned.

Rachel sighed, "Haynie, I'm fine. It's just a bit of low blood sugar. I don't need to go to the hospital."

Haynes looked serious. "You've fainted a lot more than before. You should get checked out, just to be safe."

Rachel's expression wavered for a moment; she had been calling Haynes more often lately, partly to provoke Stella.

Rachel insisted, "I'm okay. It's getting late, and Keen hasn't eaten yet. Let's have dinner first. I can go to the hospital tomorrow."