

THE EX-WIFE'S BURNING ELEGANCE

Chapter 13

The implication was clear. These weren't things Keen could have picked up on his

own.

Haynes stayed silent, but the tight line of his lips and the sudden chill in the room spoke volumes about his displeasure.

As a perceptive child, Keen sensed Haynes' unhappiness even though he hadn't said anything. He opened his mouth, instinctively wanting to explain.

"It wasn't Mom who said it. It was..."

Before he could finish, Rachel interrupted him. "Keen, I understand. These aren't things Ms. Cameron would say. It must've been some stranger talking nonsense, right?"

Keen didn't quite catch the subtle hint in Rachel's words. He thought she was incredibly perceptive, nodding earnestly. "Yeah, I overheard it at the diner. Some people at the next table were talking."

Rachel's voice was gentle as she said, "Keen, I believe you."

As Keen was about to smile, a thought crossed his mind, and his expression turned serious. He looked at Rachel sitting in the front passenger seat, stubbornly seeking an answer.

"Ms. Pearce, would you become the other woman?"

Haynes frowned and was about to speak when Rachel stopped him with a gentle shake. She turned to Keen and said, "Keen, remember? I only have a little time left, no more than six months."

Usually, Keen would call her Rachel. His sudden formal address as Ms. Pearce sent a ripple of concern through Rachel's heart. Though only five, this child couldn't be treated like an ordinary kid.

Keen paused as if remembering this fact. He didn't know why he'd asked such a question. Regret and frustration ate away at him. Rachel was always so kind and gentle; how could he ever doubt her? Moreover, she didn't have much time left.

Despite being bright for his age, Keen was still just five years old and didn't realize that Rachel never gave him a straightforward answer. He bit his lip instinctively and apologized, "Ms. Pearce, I'm sorry."

Rachel smiled warmly. "It's okay. Let's not talk about it anymore. Think about what you want to eat later, and I'll take you out for something delicious."

Keen quickly forgot the awkward moment and joyfully chatted with Rachel about food.

"Rachel, I want some fried chicken today!"

Rachel agreed without hesitation, "Sure thing."

But Haynes interrupted, "Rachel, remember the doctor advised eating light food."

"It's okay if it's not often." She glanced back at Keen, "Besides, Keen wants it. Life's too short to always play by the rules. A little indulgence makes it fun."

Keen thought about how his mom, Stella, always forbade these things and suddenly felt grateful. Rachel got him. Moms just liked to enforce rules.

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The following morning, as Keen came downstairs, Haynes was reading the newspaper at the dining table. Seeing Keen rub his eyes, still full of sleep, Haynes

frowned. "Keen, why aren't you at kindergarten yet?"

Keen looked down. "No one woke me up, so I overslept."

Just then, Maisie came out of the kitchen with breakfast. Haynes shot her an annoyed look. "Why didn't you wake Keen up?"

Maisie was surprised to see Keen still home and awkwardly tried to explain. "Mr. O'Brien, it's usually Mrs. O'Brien who wakes him."

Haynes' expression turned icy. "She makes the breakfast. She wakes Keen up. Then what am I paying you all for?"