

THE EX-WIFE'S BURNING ELEGANCE

Chapter 5

Upon seeing Haynes and Rachel, Abby couldn't help but furrow her brows, her eyes brimming with a profound distaste.

With a voice as cold as a winter morning, she declared, "The violin is not for sale."

Rachel's eyebrows twitched as her gaze swiftly shifted toward Stella, who stood beside Abby.

Unlike Rachel's delicate charm, embodying an innocent young girl's allure, Stella had a more poised and sophisticated aura. With a classic oval face and eyes that seemed to shimmer with life, she could have stepped right out of a portrait.

When Rachel laid eyes on Stella, a flicker of intrigue flashed over.

Rachel quickly approached Stella, her face tinged with a plea. "Ms. Cameron, is this 'Nocturne Stella' your friend's violin? Could you ask your friend to lend it to me for a while?"

"I first connected with Haynie through the violin," she explained sincerely. "I would practice in the garden, and he was attracted to the music. That's how we bonded. He always enjoyed listening to me play. Ms. Cameron, I'm not sure how much time I have left or if I'll ever get to perform again. But I want to give it one last try."

Whether by accident or design, Rachel tilted her head slightly, revealing a familiar necklace around her neck. The overhead lights caught on the necklace, sending a flash of brilliance into Stella's eyes, momentarily blinding her.

Stella's tone became cold as she responded, "The world is filled with people facing their ends every day. Am I supposed to cater to each and every one of them?"

As if struck by the harsh words, Rachel had tears welling in her eyes, ready to spill over.

Haynes' expression hardened. "Stella, it's just a violin. There's no need to be so harsh. If you want, I'll get you another one."

Stella met his gaze with steely resolve. "Yeah, it's just a violin. If she wants one, get her another. Why insist on taking mine?"

Rachel pleaded softly, "Ms. Cameron, what will it take for you to lend me the violin? If there's a condition, name it."

She talked like Haynes wouldn't ultimately pay any condition she set.

Stella's lips curled into a silent, knowing smile. "Ms. Pearce, you seem fond of my mother's possessions. First, it was my mother's necklace. And now, it's her violin." Rachel looked genuinely puzzled, "I'm not sure what you mean, Ms. Cameron." Seeing Rachel's feigned ignorance, Stella's mind filled with a cold amusement. "This Nocturne Stella was my mother's violin. And that necklace around your neck? My mother left that to me as well."

Rachel's face turned pale. "I'm sorry, Ms. Cameron. I didn't know they belonged to your mother. Keen handed me a gift box with the necklace inside

last night. I thought Haynie had given it to me, so I wore it, not realizing it belonged to your mother..."

Stella chuckled softly, saying, "Well, now that you know, could you return it to me?"

Rachel's fingers brushed over the necklace, and she bit her lip, looking tearfully at Haynes.

"Haynie, since Ms. Cameron has asked, maybe we should let her have the necklace? It's not worth upsetting her over something so small."

'Let her have it,' she said, not 'return it.' Her choice of words implied that it wasn't Stella's even if the necklace was her mother's. It was because Stella had asked for it that Rachel magnanimously 'let' her have it.