

THE EX-WIFE'S BURNING ELEGANCE

Chapter 9

Stella turned her head to see Keen trailing behind Haynes. Although he was talking to Stella, his worried gaze was on Rachel.

In the past, any slight problem with Rachel would send Haynes and Keen into a tizzy.

One time, all four of them went to the park. No one knew if Rachel got sunstroke or if one of her sudden illnesses acted up.

Whatever it was, Rachel suddenly looked like she was about to faint. Haynes and Keen rushed to her side. Haynes, in his panic, even knocked her down.

Oddly, no one seemed to notice. The irony was that when Haynes saw her bandaged hand, he asked her how she got hurt.

A weak voice snapped Stella out of her thoughts.

"Keen, I wasn't standing properly. It wasn't your mom's fault," Rachel said, shaking her head at Keen, tears slipping down her cheeks, making her look pitiful. "It's my own body. It's just too frail..."

Keen pouted. "But I saw, with my own eyes, Mom pushed you."

Then he turned to Stella, his face serious. "Mom, you've always taught me to admit my mistakes. You're an adult. You won't go back on your word, are you?"

Stella had gone to great lengths to ensure Keen's health, but she rarely needed to be concerned about his studies.

At five, Keen had mastered three languages, his eloquence unmatched. Even at such a young age, he could often leave adults at a loss for words. Haynes' mother always said Keen's intelligence was just like Haynes' when he was little.

And then, Keen was turning the tables on her for Rachel.

As an adult and Keen's mother, Stella knew she had to set an example. How could she ask her child to do something she couldn't do? If she went back on her word, how could she continue to teach him right from wrong?

Stella looked at the two figures, large and small, gathered around Rachel. Suddenly, she felt like they were more of a family than she was with them. Even though she'd long since given up on the father and son, Keen's attitude still stung her heart.

She looked down into Keen's eyes. "You're right. I did tell you that you should apologize when you make a mistake. But..."

Stella paused, emphasizing each word, "I didn't make a mistake, so why should I apologize?"

In the past, Stella would have compromised for Keen. But today, she didn't.

Keen instinctively replied, "I saw you push Rachel."

Stella didn't argue and smiled. "Who says pushing her means I was wrong?"

"But, Mom, you said hitting people was wrong..."

Stella's voice was calm. "I also said we shouldn't bully others but should never let others walk all over us. If someone keeps crossing your line, you shouldn't hold back."

Despite being clever, Keen was still only five years old. He hadn't anticipated Stella's response and was momentarily speechless.

Just then, Antoney's voice came from the side. "Keen, you shouldn't speak to your mother like that."

Hearing Antoney's voice, Haynes and Keen turned to him as if only noticing him. Keen said, wide-eyed, "Mr. Watson?"