My Great Escape Led Me to You

Chapter 9

"Emily, Isabella's here. Come with me to say hello, will you?"

Emily Blair let out a cold, mirthless laugh.

Of course she wanted to meet her.

She wanted to see that woman pay for everything she'd done, and she intended to make it happen herself.

Standing in the living room, Emily watched as Andrew Lane rolled in Isabella Austin's pale pink suitcase. His dark, deep-set eyes lingered silently, almost gently, on Isabella, who was already racing into Amelia Lane's arms.

Isabella took the gift bag from Andrew, handing it to Amelia and to Grandpa Kevin.

"Amelia, I brought these gifts for you and Grandpa Kevin. I hope you'll like them."

Amelia squealed, her face alight with delight. "Isabella! How did you know I've been wanting this necklace forever?"

Isabella smiled softly, brushing Amelia's hair from her face with a sisterly touch.

Grandpa Kevin glanced at the package of vitamins inside the bag. "Since you're here, make yourself at home. I've got things to take care of, so I'll leave you all to it."

Isabella gave him a shy, grateful smile. "Thank you, Grandpa Kevin."

Then, standing at Andrew Lane's side, Isabella slipped her arm through his, as if she'd only just noticed Emily standing there. She offered a polite, distant smile.

"I'm sorry, Ms. Blair. I didn't get a gift for you-I hope you're not upset."

Emily met her gaze steadily, not bothering to answer the question. “If there's nothing else, I'll head upstairs."

Before Isabella could react, Emily caught the flicker of darkness in Andrew Lane's eyes.

Amelia Lane scoffed, marching up to Emily. "What's your problem, Emily? Isabella's a guest in our home. Is this how you treat people?”

Emily's voice was calm, almost indifferent. “No problem. She's welcome here."

Amelia sneered. "Drop the act."

"Amelia," Isabella said quietly, a hint of discomfort in her gentle voice. "It's fine. Ms. Blair is part of the Lane family. She has every right to go where she wants."

She turned to Emily, her expression contrite, and squeezed Andrew's arm. "I should apologize, actually. I was just so eager to see Andrew that I came by without letting anyone know. I hope you don't mind, Ms. Blair?"

Amelia smirked. “She's hardly family. She should be grateful Grandpa lets her stay here at all. No one else cares what she thinks."

She took Isabella's hand. “Don't let her bother you. Make yourself at home. Don't waste time on a jealous woman like her."

Isabella lowered her eyes, a faint, inscrutable smile playing on her lips as she leaned closer to Andrew. Her voice dropped to a whisper. “Isn't that a bit much?"

Amelia tossed her hair with pride. "She'd better learn her place, or I'll see to it she leaves for good."

She watched Emily's impassive face, searching for a hint of hurt or humiliation. But Emily remained perfectly composed, her expression unreadable, as if Amelia's words barely registered.

Amelia seethed, determined to see Emily's composure crack.

"I just want you and Isabella to get along. Anyone who tries to ruin your relationship will answer to me. Isn't that fair?"

For some reason, Emily glanced at Andrew.

But Andrew wouldn't meet her eyes. He looked away, resting a hand on Isabella's shoulder, his voice low and smooth.

"I'll show you to your room."

He hadn't answered Amelia, but that silence spoke volumes. He wouldn't let Emily challenge Isabella. The message was clear.

A triumphant smile spread across Amelia's face.

Isabella's lips curled into a satisfied smile. "Thank you."

Emily barely noticed. She'd grown numb to Andrew's reactions long ago.

Without a word, she turned away and climbed the stairs.

Andrew paused, watching her go.

Isabella's voice was soft. "Something wrong?"

For a second, Andrew's eyes grew cold, but his tone remained gentle. "It's nothing.

Let's go."