

Once Cast 140

Chapter 140 Bastard Child

Tyrone kept his mouth shut. So did she.

As the Winters' heir—the first family in Vleka—very few women could call him “Tyrone” in public. His mother, Virginia, was one. Not many others.

So, when Zera used his name that intimately, right there in front of everyone, it didn't matter that Aella stood beside him as a shield. It didn't matter if neither of them admitted anything. People drew their own conclusions.

Tyrone left Zera hanging, and she was so embarrassed she didn't know what to do with herself.

She'd burned every favor to get into the Leadverse gala, planning to face him on her own merits and make him see her differently.

Instead, he acted like she didn't exist.

Her

gaze flicked to Aella—calculation flashing, then gone.

She lifted her chin and walked up to Aella with a warm smile. “Mrs. Winter, what a coincidence

Aella stood coolly at Tyrone's side and refused to bite.

She felt his fingers on hers tighten without him noticing.

She tried to free her hand discreetly, without making a scene.

Side by side, hand in hand, they looked picture–perfect. Under the surface, they were tugging hard.

Aella knew his cold shoulder to Zera was meant to shield her.

Zera’s eagerness to perform was her way of rushing a public reveal.

A love that runs both ways is rare–and enviable.

Aella decided to help them along.

She asked, “Miss, you call my husband that intimately–are you very close with him?”

Zera snuck a look at Tyrone’s face and blanched at how dark he’d gone.

She rushed to deny it. “I’m sorry, Mrs. Winter–you must have misheard.”

Aella tilted her head toward Tyrone. “Hubby, did I mishear?”

He watched every flicker in Aella’s expression

He said, “If you think she’s wrong, then she’s wrong.

The guests around them couldn’t help it; laughs slipped out, and the looks they gave Zera turned scornful.

Zera stood there, swallowing it, too humiliated to speak.

Usually, when she asked, Tyrone always came through.

Tonight, in front of a crowd, he chose his wife—let everyone laugh at Zera.

She bowed her head and made herself small. “I’m sorry, Mrs. Winter. I’ll watch my words. I won’t make you misunderstand again.”

Before Aella could reply, Zera turned to leave.

She’d barely taken two steps when Brad blocked her.

Brad’s eyes swept her up and down, contempt plain. “Mr. Townsend, since when did Leadverse drop its standards?”

Without waiting for a response, Brad added, “Even a minor internet celeb can get in? I thought I’d walked into the wrong place.”

Matthew snapped to it and signaled his staff. “What are you waiting for? Show this woman out.

Zera’s instincts sent her straight toward Tyrone for cover.

Seeing her angle in, Aella deliberately shifted aside to make room next to Tyrone.

Tyrone’s arm slid around Aella’s waist, locking her to his side. He cut her a warning glance.

Aella caught Tyrone’s warning and didn’t dare make another move.

Zera stopped short when she reached them—Tyrone’s hand snug at Aella’s waist, his eyes fixed

on his wife.

With no choice, Zera introduced herself.

She said, "Mr. Townsend, I'm Jenny's friend. She invited me."

A tall, striking woman stepped in. "Dad, I invited Zera."

Jenny Townsend.

She was Matthew's favorite illegitimate daughter.

She was beautiful, polished, and doing decently in entertainment.

Brad's smile was sharp as a blade. "Ms. Townsend, even if you can't fit in with the real rich girls, you don't have to lower yourself to befriend a small influencer."

Brad's words hit two people at once.

He reminded everyone Jenny was a bastard child—and told them Zera was a nobody.

Zera knew her place and kept quiet.

Jenny didn't. "We're all born equal. We all earn our money on our own. Why do you think you're better, Mr. Keller?"

Brad made it deliberately ugly. "Because I carry my father's name."

That hit Jenny right where it hurt.

She was about to explode when Matthew cut in. "Take your friend and leave. Now."

Jenny spun on her heel and stormed off.

Zera, mortified, slunk after her.

She'd worked so hard to get near a room like this—only to be out before the gala even began.

She came from an ordinary family.

But Aella's side had gone bankrupt; not so different.

Besides, Zera was standing on her own two feet without asking Tyrone for a dime.

The Reids? Parasites, all of them—living off Tyrone.