

NEVER MISTAKE A QUEEN FOR A LAPDOG

Yes-man 2

Even though she had spent the whole day mentally preparing herself, Noreen still couldn't keep the nerves at bay when the moment finally arrived.

She stood outside the door, struggling to steady her breathing, rubbing her trembling hands in an attempt to calm herself.

What if, the moment she walked in, she choked up and couldn't even recite the engagement vows she'd practiced a thousand times?

Inside, the party was in full swing. Laughter and conversation drifted through the doorway, voices overlapping.

"Seth, are you still in touch with Bianca Lowell?"

"Bianca? Wasn't she Seth's first love? Why bring her up all of a sudden?"

"I heard Bianca's coming back to the States."

"Well, doesn't that mean Seth gets another shot at his first love?"

Noreen's hands, already trembling from anticipation, froze mid-motion.

"Honestly, Bianca's dad has made quite a name for himself these past few years. If Seth married her, it would be a huge boost for him—and for the Aurelion Group. Power couple, perfect match."

"Plus, she's his first love. He'd have it all, both romance and success."

The one saying this was Jude Wilder, Seth's childhood friend. He liked to joke that he and Seth grew up sharing everything, so he spoke, with the confidence of someone who assumed he knew all the secrets.

First love? Seth... has a first love?

A sharp pain seized Noreen's heart, catching her completely off guard.

"So, what about Noreen?" someone asked Seth, curiosity in their voice. "She's stuck by you for years. Even if she hasn't achieved much, she's certainly paid her dues."

Jude shrugged it off. "Just give her some money and send her on her way."

"Or hey, if you really like her, keep her around after the wedding. Happens all the time—wife at home, fun on the side."

Noreen's fingers clenched so tightly that she could *no* longer feel her own hands.

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She needed Seth's answer—desperately.

She wanted him to speak up right away, to tell everyone, loud and clear.

That he loved Noreen. That she was the one he wanted *to* marry.

But all she heard, after a long pause, was his cool, dismissive voice: "When did you guys get so nosy?"

No denial. No objection.

If anything, it sounded like he was admitting to everything.

"Yeah, yeah, let's talk about something juicy for once—it's a party, after all. I'm about to fall asleep over here," Jude said, springing up from the sofa to liven things up.

Jude was a notorious player, cycling through girlfriends faster than most people changed their socks. He was the king of party games, always bringing up something wild. Tonight, he proposed a round of confessions.

"Everyone, share the wildest thing you've ever done."

Someone blurted out, “Hooked up in a car.”

Jude scoffed. “That’s your idea of wild?”

The guy shot back, “On a train.”

The whole room burst into laughter and shouts. “Now that’s next–level!”

Jude turned to Seth, who looked bored out of his mind. “What about you, Seth? Ever do anything wild?”

Seth seemed to think for a moment before answering, “I became the other man for love.”

The whole room exploded.

This was Seth—the heir to one of Rivercrest City’s most powerful families. He could have any woman he wanted. If he did something like that, it had to be for real love.

Jude was the most dramatic of all, his voice rising so loud Noreen could hear every word through the door.

“It was Bianca, wasn’t it? I knew you still loved her! Back then, you were into Bianca, but she was into Dylan Wilder, so you became the other man for love! Seth, you’re unbelievable—a true romantic hero!”

Their laughter crashed over Noreen like buckets of ice water, freezing her to the

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core.

Her stomach twisted painfully. She slid down, crouching by the door, fighting the urge to be sick.

Jude was still going, his voice carrying over the noise. “Come on, Seth, be honest. On October tenth, did you meet up with Bianca?”

Seth replied, “How’d you know about that?”

“She posted on Instagram that day—something about ‘reunions being the most romantic thing in the world.’ I just knew it had to be you!”

“So, how’d it go? Sparks flying? Did you pick up where you left off?”