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Stella scampered towards Weston with her bangs fluttering in the air. When she finally got to him, her hair was a cluttered mess.

"This place is like a maze," said Weston, calmly smoothing Stella's hair back in place with his fingers. "I was worried that you'd get lost."

"Lost?" Stella laughed. "How could anyone get lost in a tiny place like this?" Weston grabbed her hands. He noticed that they were bone dry, and his eyes turned gloomy. Stella, however, failed to notice this subtle change of his, and merely felt that he was clutching her hands a little too tightly. "It hurts!" she complained, frowning.

Weston loosened his grip on Stella's hands. She quickly drew them back, and he saw red marks on the back of her hands.

"Sorry," Weston muttered. He glanced at the prints he left on Stella's hands before walking away, leaving Stella to wonder what she had done wrong.

Weston went to Xavier and told him, "That's it for today. We're leaving."

"You're leaving?" Xavier stood up straight. "What's the rush? I haven't even introduced you to my new girlfriend!"

"Another one?" Weston asked, rubbing his temples. "So soon?"

Xavier chuckled and playfully lifted the chin of the svelte woman next to him. "Come on. I'll introduce her to you!"

Xavier's taste in women had never changed – he had always loved the hottest celebrities. Weston had never been able to tell any of his girlfriends apart, neither did he have any interest in them.

"Wait for me in the car," he told Stella, not even giving the woman a second look.

"Aww, why did you have to send Ella away?" Xavier grumbled. "She should get to know my girlfriend, that way, it'll be more fun the next time we're out together!" Those words sounded friendly, even polite, but even the woman beside Xavier knew that it was nothing but a lot of hot air. Xavier was never with the same woman for more than a week, and he was notorious for it. Everybody knew that.

Weston's frown deepened. His impatience was plain to see. "Okay, okay," said Xavier. He understood perfectly that his nephew didn't like him comparing Ella to his countless

girlfriends. "I won't say things like that again, I promise. But why are you still here? Why didn't you leave with your dearest sweetheart over there?"

"Go get the manager," Weston instructed him. "I want to see the surveillance video of the hallway."

Meanwhile, Stella was waiting for Weston inside the car. She had been looking out anxiously, terrified that Weston had just noticed something.

She felt like she had been waiting forever when she finally spotted a familiar figure in the distance approaching the car. Her gaze was fixed on Weston as he swiftly strode over, opened the door, and got into the car.

She stared silently at him, not knowing what to say. "Drive," Weston ordered the driver. 'Yes, sir." The car drove off. The club receded into the distance behind them. Stella chewed over how to broach the subject in her mind again and again before finally speaking up. "So... What were you doing back there?" "Are you going to start meddling in my private life now?" Weston countered. "Isn't it a bit too early for that?" "I don't care about your private life!" Stella responded. She looked down and was quiet for a while, then remembered something. "Do you often go to Lowe Garden?" she asked. She had learned from Justin that Weston had another kept woman in Lowe Garden. She didn't think much of it then, nor was she upset about it. With the way things were now, she had no right to question him about these things anyway. Besides, she had no desire to ask him about it because she genuinely didn't care. But now that she suddenly brought up the subject like that, Weston really thought that she was jealous. "Who told you that?" he asked, his eyes squinted as he scrutinized her. He cupped her chin in place so he wouldn't miss a single trace of expression on her face. "It doesn't matter who told me that!" Stella replied, clenching her fists nervously. "Is it true?" If there was one thing that Weston couldn't stand, it was being interrogated by a woman. Yet, for some reason, when it was Stella doing it, he was oddly pleased. The dark cloud that had been hanging over him just simply vanished. Weston put his arms around Stella and pulled her onto his lap. He then leaned over and kissed her lips. "It's not what you think," he murmured between his kisses. He held her there and sucked the nectar from her lips with rare tenderness. "You're my only woman, okay?"

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His only woman?

Stella could barely contain her derision. Did Weston really think that she'd believe that? If she was his only woman, then how did Guinevere's child come about?

Not only was Weston disrespecting her, he really took her for a fool. "I have no intention to interfere with your private affairs," she told him, looking straight into his eyes. "You

can have however many women as you please, so... can you please not interfere with my work?"

As soon as she said that, the atmosphere grew tense. The remaining warmth on Weston's face disappeared completely and his eyes turned icy cold.

"Did you bring this whole thing up just so I would agree to let you work?" he asked, his voice brimming with threats. "Yes," Stella admitted, bracing for the worst.

She then heard Weston's cold, mirthless laugh.

"Go on, then," he said. "Tell me what sort of work this is, that you've risked everything for."

Stella had wanted to hide the truth for a little longer, but she could tell from his expressions that he must've already found out about it. If that were the case, it would be better if she come clean now to minimize the chances of him getting too angry about it.

"I've gone for an audition with Bradley Lane," she confessed to him. "And I've been accepted too. I want to work with them starting tomorrow."

Weston tugged at his collar and scoffed. It really was as he had surmised.

He knew all along that Stella had lied to him about going to the restroom. He assumed that it must've been an excuse to find a secret place to contact someone he didn't want her in contact with. Hence, once she got into the car, he had the club's manager show him the surveillance video.

Stella's voice in the video was almost inaudible, but Weston could read lips and he could roughly guess what she was saying. That was when he realized that he'd been fooled by her all this time. She'd been telling him that she was going out to meet Roger at the university, but she'd actually been at a film set all along.

"I have to say that was pretty impressive of you," he jeered. "You've been pulling the wool over my eyes for so long!"

"I didn't mean to deceive you," Stella defended herself. "If I did, I wouldn't have told you about it just now, would I?"

"You only told me because you realized that it's impossible to hide it from me any longer," he argued. "Don't think for a second that I don't know what's on your mind right now!" At that moment, Weston hated his ability to see through people's minds. He fixed his stare at

the woman in front of him. He still saw the same pair of crystal clear eyes, but there was no longer any love or affection for him as there used to be. "You've been doing what I've

explicitly told you not to, haven't you, hmm?" Stella wanted to shove Weston's hands away, but when faced with those rage-filled eyes of his, she couldn't help but stay still and close her eyes. She braced herself and reached up to plant a light kiss between his brows. "I really didn't mean to deceive you," she murmured. "I just couldn't find the right time to tell you."

This sudden bold move of hers stunned him for a moment.

He was just about to explode in fury, yet a little kiss was all it took to extinguish his boiling rage.

He couldn't possibly let her off so easily, though.

"Did you think that you can get away just by doing that?" he asked, the embers in his eyes still glowing red.

But Stella was not done. She pulled his collar toward her, leaned over till she almost brushed against his lips, and kissed his chin. Then she moved down to his neck, planting little butterfly kisses along the way, tenderly stimulating his pleasure. They'd done things like this countless times when they were married, but it had always been Weston who started it and Stella at the receiving end. She might have responded eagerly sometimes, but it was nowhere near enough to satiate his appetite.

He was more accustomed to pinning her down, having his way with her. Yet now, each movement of hers drove him insane. She had never been this way before.

Weston realized that his feelings were hanging by a thread, one that had its other end tied around Stella's finger. The slightest gesture from her could ignite the flame of desire that burned in his whole body. "Don't try to distract me," he muttered in a hoarse voice.

Weston tried to push her away, but Stella wrapped her arms around him as if she was made of jelly

"All I want to do is to give it a try," she purred. "Bradley Lane told me that I have some potential in acting. I just want to see how well I can do. Please?"

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"I just want to give this a try, that's all." Stella's gaze fixated on Weston. Her moist gleaming eyes made her look innocent and pitiful. Weston knew that she had made herself look this way on purpose, but that did not stop his heart from softening. "So you... really want to be an actress that much?" he asked. "Mm-hmm," she nodded. "Besides, I'll have nothing to do once the training center closes down." "You can stay by my side and be my companion." "But you can't stay with me the whole day!" she

argued. For some reason, this sentence pleased Weston very much. The rigid iciness in his countenance thawed completely and he loosened his grip on her body. "But apart from the time I spend working," he said, lovingly caressing her cheek, "I've devoted all of my time to be with you. Isn't that enough?" "No," she shook her head. "It's not enough."

She rested her head on his shoulder. It suddenly dawned upon her that she knew exactly what to say to get through to him... which was also the best way to persuade him and get him to do what she wanted.

He wanted her to be just as she was when they were married, didn't he? "Back then," she grumbled, "I used to wait for you to come home every day. I was all alone in a big empty house, just staring at the wall for endless hours. It felt nothing less than awful!" Weston's body stiffened. He was completely under her spell, as his mind was dragged back to the past. The fact that Stella would bring up their past took him completely by surprise. He was no longer sure if this woman in his arms was the defiant Ella Steele or the sweet Stella Sealey from the past. "Did you..." he lifted her chin to see her more clearly. "Did you really wait for me to come home every day?" "Mm-hmm," she nodded, looking deep into his eyes. "Every day." "But sometimes," she continued, "you didn't come home at all, so I'd wait for you the entire night."

Stella paused and smiled at him before adding, "Didn't you notice that the lights were always on every time you came home?" Weston held her closer and tighter. Then he leaned over and kissed her eyes, moving along the contours of her face until he finally reached her chin. He smooched her all the way with a ferocity that almost melted Stella.

"...why didn't you tell me?" Weston asked in a husky voice.

"I was worried that it might disturb your work," she replied, smiling wryly. "You told me yourself, didn't you, that I shouldn't disturb you while you're working unless there's an emergency?" Weston remembered that he did, indeed, say that in the past. "...from now on," he stated with an impenetrable expression, "you can come and find me anytime for whatever reason at all. More importantly, you are absolutely not allowed to contact Justin Hall, understood?"

Stella nodded.

"I really enjoyed acting," she added. "I promised you that if you let me do this, I will never cause you any trouble. Besides, filming is usually done during the day, so I'll be home waiting for you by the time you return. So please let me do this, hmm?"

Her eyes, her looks, and her attitude all started to resemble those of the old Stella from the past. Weston, unable to take his eyes off her, was tongue-tied for a good while. That knot of complex feelings had begun to rise up in him once more. All manner of contradicting emotions tangled up with each other, flooding his senses in a giant, incontrollable wave.

It was that old feeling again. Weston had always found himself on the verge of losing all control when he faced Stella. This time was no exception. It didn't matter that he was usually a perfectly rational person. When it came to Stella, he was always helpless and compromising. With one hand pressed against the nape of her neck, he went in and gave her a deep, passionate kiss. He bit into her lower lip, wishing to taste the saltiness of her blood.

They kissed for a very long time, until Weston finally let her go, letting out a breathless sigh with his breath brushing against her ear. "...you always get your way, don't you?" he whispered to her in a feeble voice. Weston had always done that, Stella thought. He had always acted as if she was the mistress of his heart, body, and soul.

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Stella appeared calm and complying, but her heart was filled with debilitating sorrow.

If she could really always get her way, she wouldn't be here with Weston, practically imprisoned by him.

Though Weston did not explicitly agree to let her act in the movie, she could guess from his actions that he would condone it, at least for the time being.

The next morning, Stella got up and sent Weston off to work as usual. She then quickly got to the film set afterward.

Because she'd delayed the filming progress yesterday, Bradley Lane was a little nasty when he saw her coming

"It was your first day yesterday and you've already asked for a leave," he sneered. "That was pretty bold of you, don't you think?".

"I'm so sorry," Stella bowed humbly, feeling very guilty. "I really am! Something came up and I absolutely couldn't make it here yesterday. I'm terribly sorry! I'll try my best to catch up with the schedule from now on."

Bradley could tell that she was being sincere, so he didn't say anything more about it and just waved her away.

"The acting coach is over there," he told her. "Go through your lines with him and once you've memorized most of them, come back to me. I'll give you some directions."

"I've already memorized all of my lines," Stella guickly said.

Bradley paused.

"So you've come prepared," he commended.

"I've already caused some delays yesterday," she said with obvious guilt. "So I don't want to waste any more of everyone's time."

Bradley said nothing to that, merely adding, "Go on, come back to me once they've taught you the moves in your scene."

Stella nodded.

She then found out that she would be working with the same acting coach as before. Since they were already familiar, the process went smoothly and swiftly. The cameras and the mise-en scene were already all set up too, only waiting for Stella and the actor to arrive.

The other actor who would be acting in the same scene as Stella was a young actor of moderate popularity. He had been cast in numerous dramas and his acting skills were quite outstanding among his peers, but they were nothing to write home about when compared to the seasoned veterans with more experience. He had never been interested in catching trends or getting involved in massively popular projects, so his popularity remained average.

Still, he had the looks, talents, and connections, and with the will to work hard, he managed to build a strong fanbase and a respectable reputation in the entertainment circle for himself. For this reason, although he'd rarely taken on the male lead role or been very popular, directors were still eager to cast him in their films. Often, he would play the role of lovesick heartthrobs, and that was basically what he was known for now.

"Hello, there!" Caspian greeted Stella with the same warmth and friendliness when they met on set, though she was an absolute newcomer and a nobody. "I'm your senior!"

Caspian's role in this period drama was that of Stella's senior. Both playing disciples of the same martial arts master, they would share many scenes together. Later in the drama, Caspian's character would fall in love with the heroine of the story and would completely neglect Stella's character no thanks to this infatuation. Towards the end, he even turned against Stella's character because they eventually became enemies with the heroine.

In Stella's character's eyes, Caspian's character was nothing but a scumbag, but to Caspian's character, he was only doing everything he could to protect the woman he loved. In the very end, though, Caspian's character would turn evil because of his obsessive love for the female lead, just as Stella's character would turn evil because of him. The only difference was that Stella's character was much more skilled than him.

These two were clearly similar people who should've gotten along well, but inevitable circumstances made them turn against each other, bringing about a tragic end. This

would be Stella's first time filming for real. She was more than a little nervous. So far, she had been practicing her lines alone, and with great effort, managed to overcome that awkwardness of having to act out a dramatic scene.

But now she would be facing a real person. It did not feel as relaxed as it did when she was rehearsing alone. They both went through their lines together once, and then Bradley shouted, "Action!"

Stella took a deep breath, trying to get herself into character. "...I heard that Master just brought back his old disciple who went missing a long time ago! Shall we go take a look?" "Whatever for? Didn't I tell you we'll be practicing sword fighting near the mountains later?"

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Caspian's acting skills were not bad, but they were far from inspiring. Now that he was working with a rookie like Stella, he couldn't help but feel a little overwhelmed.

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With neither inspiring the other, the acting came out hackneyed.

Caspian and Stella just stood there like robots once they'd said all their lines. They were both at a loss of what to do.

Bradley kept the camera rolling while he stared coldly at the monitor. Stella kept pinching herself out of nervousness. Her face was gradually turning red. She knew that her performance was nothing less than terrible, yet Bradley just wouldn't stop filming, inexplicably prolonging this scene. Each passing second felt like fresh torture to her.

After what felt like forever to Stella, Bradley massaged his temples and finally yelled, "Cut!"

Stella's shoulders relaxed instantly, as if a weight had been lifted off of her. She looked at the camera and saw Bradley sternly gesturing for them to go to him.

"Get over here!" he shouted.

It was obvious at a glance that they were about to be upbraided. Stella and Caspian slowly walked toward the director. Just as expected, the moment they both stopped in front of him, Bradley immediately started bellowing "Are you both corpses?! What were

you doing just standing there? Even school children show more emotions while reciting texts than your stiff masquerade! You!"

He pointed at Stella.

"Didn't you tell me that you've memorized all your lines?! You've been doing pretty well off camera, so why did you stutter so much during filming?"

He paused and turned to Caspian. "And you! You're supposed to be the more experienced actor here! You've been in so many films now! Why were you so off with your positioning?! I didn't even see you on camera at all! How could you still be making such a rookie mistake?!" "Sorry, Director Yates..." "I'm so sorry, Director..." Both Caspian and Stella admitted their mistakes humbly, but Bradley was so angry that he couldn't even look at them.

"D*mn it all to hell! We'll shoot the next scene for now! As for you both, just get out of my sight! Come back once I'm done shooting these scenes. If you're still as lousy as you were back there, then just pack up your things and leave before I beat your *ss!"

Caspian was used to Bradley's explosive temper. He knew that Bradley liked to threaten to fire people when he got angry, but he would never really come through with it. Stella did not know any of this, though. Her face turned frighteningly pale at the thought of

getting fired. She simply couldn't allow this hard-earned opportunity to just slip through her fingers!

Caspian sighed and walked toward his manager. Stella stared at him and summoned up all her courage to call out to him.

"Caspian! Hello! Would you mind rehearsing this scene with me please?" The moment she finished her sentence, Caspian's manager rushed over and blocked Stella from approaching Caspian. "Where's your manager?" he asked, glaring at Stella. "I, uh..." Stella was thrown off by the question. "I haven't got a manager yet..." "Which scene do you want to rehearse?" the manager asked again in a particularly accusing tone.

The manager couldn't help but be cautious. The entertainment industry is a particularly treacherous one. There was no telling if this woman's intentions were pure. She could be attempting a free ride to stardom on Caspian's coattails and that would be troublesome. Everyone in the industry had their own way of making it in this field. For Caspian, what worked best for him was to dedicate all his energy on the work itself while keeping a low profile. Ever since his debut many years ago, he had yet to be involved in any scandals, especially not with any other actresses. This had been possible because he'd always kept a healthy distance from his co-stars. But Stella knew nothing of this industry's twists and turns. She was stunned by the manager's reaction. She assumed that her performance earlier must've been so terrible that it affected Caspian

"I'm sorry," she quickly said. "I didn't mean to disturb you. I'll just go rehearse on my own."

She then turned and left.

The manager snickered.

"Don't think that you can fool me with that pure and innocent look!" he sneered. "I've seen enough women like you to know what you really want!"

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"That's enough," Caspian told his manager. "Find me a quiet place to cool off. Bradley yelled his head off at me just now..."

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about that, Caspian!" the manager consoled. "You know Bradley yells at everyone. Your acting just now was perfectly fine. I'm sure he was angry at something else..." Meanwhile, Stella was leafing through the script alone in a deserted corner. She'd been through her lines a few times now, trying her hardest to get into character. The problem was that none of the scenes that she would be filming today were emotional. On the surface, it would seem that there was no need to get in the zone to film these scenes, but in fact, it was mundane scenes like these that were the greatest test of an actor's skills. She had to look, sound, and act natural, and couldn't appear as though she was performing in front of a camera. This was no mean feat for a new actor. Soon afterward, Bradley was done shooting two scenes and sent his assistant over to get Stella. Her heart pounded with anxiety, and just as she was about to go, the assistant stopped her.

"Just hurry up and get these scenes over with," he whispered to her. "Guinevere Cohen will be coming soon. Her previous scenes have all been shot, and if she finds out now that one of the supporting roles hasn't been filled yet, who knows how furious she'll be!" "When is she shooting again?" Stella asked. "Oh, you didn't know? She suddenly decided to show up on set, earlier than expected. She said she wants to see our progress, which is why Bradley's been in a hellish mood today. If your performance isn't up to par and you get fired for it, Bradley will have to scramble and find another actress to take your place. We're already in a rush as it is. We might not even make it before the Spring Film Festival starts. I can't imagine how much money we'd lose if there are more delays!"

At that point, all of the actors had been paid, especially a top actress like Guinevere, who got the money as soon as she finished filming. Guinevere held immense fame, status, and fortune. Although it was a good thing that a film had someone like that in the cast, all the pressure to perform at the box office was basically borne by the director, Bradley Lane, alone. Since Guinevere had an impressive repertoire, nobody would

blame her if the film ended up a flop. Instead, rumors would start about how washed-out of a director Bradley Lane was,

That was mainly why Bradley had been under such intense stress lately. "If I ever decide to work with these superstars again, I must be the king of fools!" Stella overheard Bradley grumbling bitterly when she walked past him.

He had initially chosen to cast Guinevere in this film because he'd been impressed with her acting in previous films. Little did he know how fastidious and demanding she was!

Bradley himself had always been a scrupulous man who was hard to please, so him and Guinevere working together was like a clash of titans. The assistant was quite fond of Stella, so he felt the urge to give her a fair warning.

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"Never forget this," he reminded her. "In this film set, there are two people that you must never offend: One is Bradley Lane, and the other, Guinevere Cohen." "Okay..." Stella nodded. She had performed with Caspian once, so even if they didn't rehearse together just now, she'd gained enough experience to make great improvements the second time around. As the performance was going well, Bradley's expressions warmed up considerably too. The shooting went on till noon. Stella managed to get through it rather swimmingly. She didn't have any more scenes to shoot in the afternoon, so Bradley sent her home and told her to get a good rest and get ready because there would be more shooting the next day. It just so happened that Stella had one last class to teach at the training center, so she quickly packed up her things and rushed there as fast as she could. Yvonne was quite busy that day, so she would only be there later in the afternoon. Stella had just changed her clothes when she bumped into Joyce Duxton. "Oh... do you still have a class today?" Joyce asked, her eyes looking very shifty. Stella merely nodded and walked into the dancing classroom, not bothering to talk to Joyce. "You arrogant b***h!" Joyce hissed through gritted teeth once Stella was gone. "I can't wait to see that smug look getting wiped off of your face!"

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The class schedule on weekends was much more hectic than the weekdays. Many students had their last class today, it seemed, turning the training center into a bustling beehive of activity and a chance for Stella to meet many colleagues for the last time.

Once her class was over, a few of her students came up to her personally to say their goodbyes. Stella was immensely touched by this. She kneeled down and spoke fondly with them, imparting some final advice before they parted ways. The moving and poignant scene was suddenly interrupted when an earsplitting voice cut through the atmosphere

"Who is Ella Steele?!"

An extravagantly dressed middle-aged woman had stomped in, shouting for Ella. Clad in the latest fashionable clothes and holding a limited edition luxury handbag, it was obvious at a glance that she spared no expense on her lavish qutfit. The ostentatious diamond earrings hanging from her earlobes dazzled in the light, as she stood there, haughtily scanning the place with her eyes ablaze.

"I'm Ella Steele," Stella said, standing up in confusion when she heard her name. "Is there a problem?"

"So you're Ella Steele?" the woman squinted and sneered. She then marched toward Stella and raised her hand to slap her!

But Stella's quick reflexes helped her to dodge the slap. "Get security!" Stella shouted. "There's a madwoman here and she's trying to hurt me!" "Madwoman?!" the woman squawked. "You're the madwoman here! You're the one messing around with my husband and you dare call security on me?!"

The woman huffed and continued, "Go ahead, then! Let security come so everyone will see your true colors and that shameless face of yours!"

The woman glanced at the children behind Stella,

"And to think that you're in charge of teaching those precious children..." she hissed. "...you'll be corrupting them for sure! I don't think any parent will stand for it! You despicable piece of trash!"

The woman's voice was so loud that a crowd was beginning to form around them. Stella's colleagues began to stare at her disapprovingly. Joyce was hiding among the crowd, secretly relishing what was happening to Stella.

"Why aren't you saying anything?" the woman shouted, audibly getting angrier when she saw that Stella remained silent. "Or are you playing dumb? Is that how you seduced my husband?" "When did I seduce your husband?" argued Stella. "I don't even know who you are! Are you sure you haven't got the wrong person?"

"Impossible!" the woman replied. She pulled out a phone and waved it in front of Stella. "Look at this! Aren't you this woman who's been chatting with my husband? You're Ella Steele, aren't you? Stop acting dumb! You might've fooled sleazy old men, but I'm not as blind and

stupid as they are!" Stella glanced at the phone. As she read through the vulgar sexual conversations, she noticed that the phone number was very familiar. She pulled out her phone and checked her contacts... ...only to find that it was Mr. Smith, Ruby's father!

"You're completely mistaken, Mrs. Smith!" she said. "I'm just your daughter Ruby's private tutor! I have no other business with Mr. Smith..."

"What?!" the woman shrieked, violently interrupting Stella. "How dare you! So you've been secretly hooking up with my husband behind my daughter's back! You shameless b***h! Women like you are the sçum of the earth! You scheming, lying b***h!"

The woman kept on spitting curses at Stella, her mind completely clouded by rage. Stella turned deathly pale. The people in the crowd were now whispering and pointing at her. Joyce stood in the middle of the crowd with a sardonic grin, reveling in the scene.

"Let's see how smug you can get now, Ella!" she thought.

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Stella saw the security guards approaching, so she shouted, "This woman is trying-to hurt me! Take her away!".

"Go on if you dare!" Mrs. Smith taunted. "I haven't done a single thing! I'm only here to say

my piece!"

She then pointed squarely at Stella and added, "Instead of taking me away, why don't you drag away this vile, shameless, debauched woman who's going around seducing married men?!"

Stella was sure that there must have been some kind of misunderstanding, but being brandished with names as such still drained all the color from her face "...Mrs. Smith," she pleaded. "You can ask your daughter, and she'll tell you I've never had anything to do with your husband. I have only been her tutor! She's the one I spend most of my time with! She'll know if I ever did anything out of line!"

What Stella said made some sense, but Mrs. Smith remained suspicious of her.

"Look," Stella pulled out her phone and showed Mrs. Smith her own phone number. "Why don't you send a text message to that "Ella Steele" on Mr. Smith's phone and see if my phone receives any messages?"

Mrs. Smith hesitated, but she still did as Stella suggested, and sure enough, no text message was sent to Stella's phone. "This must be some sort of a trick!" Mrs. Smith accused. "You probably have another phone!"

"I really don't!" Stella frowned. She suddenly felt that there was something fishy about this whole mess. "Think about it, Mrs. Smith, if your husband is having an affair with another woman, would he have her real name on his phone? Wouldn't he try to hide it somehow and be more secretive?"

As she spoke, Stella noted the phone number of the apparent "Ella Steele" and gave it a call herself. Immediately she heard the sound of a phone ringing amid the crowd…

Everyone began glancing around to see whose phone was ringing. Joyce hurriedly reached her hand into her handbag to reject the call, but she was in such a panic that her fingers turned into jelly, and her phone just kept ringing and ringing...

Now, all eyes were on her... "Isn't that your phone, Joyce?" someone pointed it out to her. Joyce turned as pale as a ghost. She fumbled frantically, trying to get her phone out of her bag. When she finally got it out, she immediately put it on silent mode.

"Excuse me... I'll answer the call somewhere else!"

Joyce's lips were trembling as she spoke. Anybody could tell that she was acting very weird. But while everyone else was just staring at her, Stella squinted and noticed that Joyce was trying to run away. She swiftly pushed through the crowd and grabbed Joyce's arms to stop her.

"Give me your phone!" Stella demanded.

"Wh- Why would I do that?!" Joyce rebuked as she tried to struggle her way out. She never thought that Stella would catch up to her before she could escape.

Stella said nothing. She quickly grabbed Joyce's wrist and snatched her phone away. She glanced at the screen and, sure enough, saw that Mr. Smith's number had just called her. Stella drew a deep breath and glared coldly at Joyce before shoving her hand away. She quickly strode back to Mrs. Smith and showed her Joyce's phone.

"Take a look at this!" she told her.

Mrs. Smith was completely flabbergasted by this turn of events. Mouth agape, she took Joyce's phone from Stella and glanced at it. After a long pause, she made another call from her husband's phone... and Joyce's phone rang again.

The crisp noise of the ringtone was like a slap on her face. Her face, reddened by anger just moments ago, was now sickly green.

It was all clear to her now.

When Mrs. Smith regained her senses, she became even more enraged than before, now that

she found out someone had tricked her and played her for a fool.

She darted towards Joyce and smacked her right across her face before Joyce could react.

"You vile, revolting b***h!" she cussed. "How dare you make a fool out of me!"

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Chapter 299

"You even planned to push all the blame on your colleague?! I've really underestimated you!" Unprepared for all of this, Joyce was sent into a daze as Mrs. Smith slapped her, causing her to lose her balance and fall to the floor. "Ahh!" she screamed in pain. Stella watched quietly on the sidelines. In her hand was Joyce's phone, which she was looking through. She discovered that not only was Joyce badmouthing her with Mr. Smith, but she was also pestering him about when he was going to get a divorce. She really had no idea when Joyce started hooking up with Mr. Smith, even though she had been Ruby's private tutor all this time. Who knew she'd been sneaking around with Ruby's father all along? The slap clearly did little to satisfy Mrs. Smith, because she was still furious that Joyce had just played a trick on her. "You are a plucky one," she spat. "I'll give you that! No one dares to mess with me! Don't you know who I am? Well, I'll teach you a lesson today!" Joyce was just about to get up, but Mrs. Smith struck her again. Not only that, she went down, sat on top of her, and started hitting her repeatedly. "Help! Help!" Joyce shouted. "Security! Hurry up! Drag this woman away!" The security guards stepped closer, but they were at a loss of what to do, seeing that they were both women. "Ella!" Joyce pleaded helplessly, her face now scratched up and filled with red blotches. "Help me, please! Ella!"

"You have the gall to call for her help?!" yelled Mrs. Smith. "Surely, even you couldn't be that shameless! You changed your name and photo on my husband's phone to hers so she would be the scapegoat! And now you're asking for her help? You're not just shameless. You're a vicious snake!"

Stella watched quietly, not bothering to lift a finger or say anything. It now made sense why Joyce had been acting weirdly around her. She was probably planning to throw all the blame on her.

Joyce had assumed that her brilliant plan would enable her to escape unscathed if Mrs. Smith found out about the affair, besides teaching the haughty Ella Steele a lesson or two at the same time. Yet things had not turned out the way she expected.

The crowd was still watching too. Many of them even pulled out their phones and recorded the scene. Seeing that the crowd was growing in size, Stella thought it best to leave. But as she turned around, she bumped into Yvonne, who had just arrived.

"What's going on here?" Yvonne asked.

Stella plainly regurgitated what had just happened to her. Yvonne's countenance instantly darkened, and she glared sternly at Joyce Duxton,

"...I can't believe that she's such a conniving liar!" she exclaimed.

Still, Yvonne was in charge of this place, so she couldn't just let such a scandalous scene go on without doing anything. She instructed the security guards to break up the fight and get Mrs. Smith away from Joyce for the time being. Only with Yvonne's instruction did the guards dare to touch Mrs. Smith. Once they'd removed Mrs. Smith away from Joyce, she gradually calmed down, and her anger subsided a little. "I'm sorry, Yvonné," she said. "I didn't mean to cause you any trouble. I just can't stand how shameless this woman has been, sneaking around trying to seduce my husband, so I had to come and teach her a lesson or two!" Yvonne and Mrs. Smith were acquaintances, so Mrs. Smith had to treat her with some respect. Yvonne herself recognized Mrs. Smith from the start. She had known Mrs. Smith to be the kind of woman with only two things on her mind-shopping, and chasing women away from her husband.

"I understand, Mrs. Smith," Yvonne replied. "I don't want to butt into your private disputes, but my training center is going to close soon, and she's no longer my employee, so I hope you can resolve this matter elsewhere."

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"Yes, of course!" Mrs. Smith smoothed her messy hair with her fingers and turned to Joyce." Just you wait! I'm definitely not done with you! I won't let you get away for playing tricks on

me!"

She seemed like another person when addressing Joyce, compared to the polite and friendly face she put on when speaking with Yvonne. Then her eyes turned to Stella, and she looked a little embarrassed. "I'm... sorry I misunderstood you," she said stiffly.

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Chapter 300

Stella nodded at Mrs. Smith without showing any emotions. Mrs. Smith felt awkward, but she said nothing. She swept a glance over the crowd and quickly dragged Joyce away. The crowd soon dispersed, leaving only Yvonne and Stella there.

"Are you okay?" Yvonne asked Stella with concern. "I'm okay," Stella replied with a smile. "I just feel bad for causing you such huge trouble on the last day…"

"But none of this is your fault!" Yvonne interrupted her, frowning. "But I really can't believe that Joyce would sneak behind my back and hook up with Mr. Smith! I thought Mr. Smith was especially close with that secretary of his!"

If Mr. Smith hadn't been so fond of hiring pretty women who were only good in bed and not at their job, Stella wouldn't have been mistakenly called to Lowe Garden. If that incident hadn't happened, Yvonne wouldn't have made a special arrangement to get Stella to work as Ruby's private tutor.

It was precisely this special treatment that triggered Joyce's resentment for Stella. She had always been bitter over Yvonne favoring Stella, granting her priority when a great opportunity was available.

Everyone wanted to be a private tutor, so why was Stella given a chance to get the job before everyone else? This resentment soon grew into a grudge. Joyce thought that since she couldn't compete with Stella fair and square, she would secretly hook up with Mr. Smith instead. She knew what sort of man Mr. Smith was-he would never turn away any young woman willing to go to bed with him.

At first, because Joyce was still new and exciting to Mr. Smith, he seemed head over heels with her and was completely at her beck and call. She really did believe at the time that Mr. Smith would leave his wife and be with her instead.

But it turned out that it was nothing more than a passing fancy. Joyce quickly realized that Mr. Smith would never get a divorce. Nonetheless, Mr. Smith's honeyed words managed to convince her to stay with him, even though she was terrified that Mrs. Smith would discover the affair.

Hence, she had an idea to save herself.

She would use the name Ella Steele when she was with Mr. Smith. That way, she'd be safe even if Mrs. Smith learned about the affair.

Meanwhile, as long as Mrs. Smith remained in the dark about the affair, being with Mr. Smith meant she could easily make a small fortune without doing much work at all.

But she had completely underestimated Ella Steele.

Ella had always seemed so meek and complying in the past that Joyce was stunned by her swift and shrewd response when she was in trouble. She had even prepared a set of lies to defend

herself should the suspicion fall on her, yet before she could utter a word, Ella had managed to destroy all her plans. "Thank God you could think on your feet and respond quickly just now!" Yvonne exclaimed as she watched the surveillance recording of what just happened. She couldn't help but feel anxious for her friend. "Otherwise, Joyce

would've deflected all the blame to you, and you'd die in the hands of Mrs. Smith!" she added. "You've always been so nonchalant about the way people treat you. Even when they're whispering behind your back, you do nothing but just laugh it off! But this time, you were not like that at all!" Stella watched the surveillance video quietly without a trace of emotion on her face. Then she turned to Yvonne and smiled helplessly at her. "Well, what else should I do?" she asked. "I'm made of flesh and blood, after all. I can't just let people walk all over me without doing anything!" Yvonne realized then that Stella was much tougher than she seemed. "Have you... found another job?" Yvonne asked.

Everyone else had already said their goodbyes and left the training center. There were only the two of them left now. They both knew this might be the last time they saw each other. Yvonne had planned to come back to the training center briefly to lock all the doors, but when she saw Stella, she felt reluctant to part ways with her, so she stayed back a little longer so they could have a chat.