

Mr. Ford Is Jealous by Boat of Peaches Chapter 161

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Stella finally understood what he meant. "You want me to cook for you?" Weston leaned against the glass door frame beside him, not answering Stella's question.

"No problem." Stella nodded.

Weston's silence clearly did not faze her.

"What would you like to eat?" she asked as she walked into the kitchen.

Weston gazed at Stella as she walked away. Her long hair cascaded down her back, almost reaching her waist. He remembered how much shorter it was when they first got married. Every night, she would lie on their bed, her shiny black hair forming a stark contrast with the white sheets. Now every time he saw the clashing colors of black and white, it would remind him of Stella in bed and he would lose control of himself for a moment.

Weston set his wandering thoughts aside and his eyes darkened. "Surely you know exactly what I like to eat?" he replied.

In fact, not even his own parents knew his exact preferences. Growing up, he had always had the best of everything served up to him on a silver plate- the best food ingredients, the best chefs-so no matter what was served up they were all consistently excellent. Weston did not even understand why people had preferences to a certain kind of food because he was so used to being given the best all the time.

But that was not how Stella saw things. After they got married, she would always ask Weston what his preferences were, what he usually liked to eat or use or do. At the time, Weston thought she was just wasting her time. He completely ignored all the efforts that she made with disdain. To him, it meant nothing at all whether or not Stella was good at cooking. Why should he care, when he could get the best chefs in the world to cook anything he wanted for him at the snap of a finger?

In fact, he did try to get other people to cook for him after they separated. But strangely enough, even the world's top chefs could not recreate the taste of the food that Stella made for him.

Meanwhile in the kitchen, Stella walked to the fridge leisurely and opened it. She was surprised to find it filled with various ingredients to cook with-anything from the freshest fruits and vegetables to frozen imported meat and seafood was there. She stood in front of the fridge for a good few seconds, lost in thought. It looked like Weston had prepared for her arrival. Stella was reminded of how, in order to please Weston, she used to learn how to make new dishes every day so she could find out what he liked to eat. Even if he

always ended up showing no interest whatsoever in her food, she still persisted. Sometimes she would work so hard in the kitchen that she would get blisters in her hands, but if the food didn't suit Weston's taste, he would not even give it a second look, much less finish it.

She found it incredibly ironic that Weston suddenly showed interest in her cooking now, when she had neither her past enthusiasm nor even a slight interest to please him. She snorted at the thought as she nonchalantly grabbed a few simple ingredients from the fridge and tossed them in the sink

She knew her way around the kitchen very well. It was a familiar place for her. No matter how hard she tried to forget her bitter past, she still ended up here, where she used to be

Stella glanced at the glinting edge of the knife on the cutting board. For a brief moment, a most vicious thought flashed across her mind...

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Stella quickly squashed the crazy idea. She couldn't possibly put Roger in a position where his only living relative was a criminal.

The clinking and clanking noise arose from the kitchen when Stella started cooking. Weston was sitting on the sofa in the living room. The news was playing on the television, but he wasn't paying any attention to that. He was more interested in the noise that came from the kitchen.

Weston realized that he had always taken all these little details for granted in the past. He wondered how many precious moments he'd lost forever.

Stella did not put as much thought into the cooking as she did in the past, because she no longer had any interest to please Weston. All she wanted to do now was complete a chore that she was assigned. With that, she made a bowl of very simple chicken noodle soup and brought it out to the table. She noticed that it was looking a little too plain, so she quickly chopped up some scallions and garnished it on the soup. The little green bits on top made it look much more appetizing, though it was still plain to see that not a lot of effort was put into the making of this soup.

Just as Stella brought the soup out to the table, Weston himself just came out of the shower. He'd changed into more comfortable clothes. The gray t shirt softened his usually intimidating aura significantly, but his dark eyes were still as icy and piercing as always, the pitch blackness of his pupils was like a stonewall that rendered his thoughts and feelings completely inscrutable. Weston's black hair was still dripping wet. He

tossed a towel onto Stella's head and sat down on the chair in front of her with his eyes fixed on her face,

Stella took a deep breath. "The soup is getting cold," she told him. "There's no rush," he replied, glancing at the bowl of soup on the table. "Dry my hair with that towel."

Stella could hardly believe his audacity, but what could she say? Resigned to her fate, she went to stand behind him and did what she was told.

Weston was a very tall man. There was a huge difference between their heights, so even as Weston was sitting down while Stella was standing up, he still managed to stir a sense of intimidation inside her.

Stella placed the towel on Weston's head and started rubbing his hair neither gently nor too roughly, pretending that Weston was Roger. Weston could sense her unwillingness, but he let her shove his head this way and that way without saying anything about it. Not long after, Stella stopped and put the towel down. "I think it'd be better if you blow it with a hair dryer," she suggested.

"You know where the hair dryer is," he replied without looking up. "Go get it." Stella paused, but stayed silent. She then turned around and left Weston to get the hair dryer. She knew her way in the mansion very well, not just where the rooms were, but down to even where the smallest objects were. How could she not, since she was the one who put them there?

She remembered how she loved to tidy up the house. She loved seeing the whole place in spick -and-span condition. She also loved seeing her little personal touches everywhere around the house. She remembered how happy she used to be here and it broke her heart. Every familiar corner was like a little blade that cut through her heart, reminding her of how foolish she had been in the past.

It took Stella a long time that evening to serve Weston before he would let her go and start eating. When he finally turned his attention to the soup, he stared at the plain bowl of chicken noodle soup and frowned. "I hate scallions," he complained.

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Although Weston didn't have any favorite food, he was still a very fussy eater. As someone who never particularly liked anything yet hated many things, he was indeed a hard man to please. Stella had gone through hell in the past just to appease him. She remembered now that Weston didn't like heavily seasoned food or anything that had a strong taste like garlic, onion, ginger, and scallions. She used to make sure not to include any of those ingredients in her cooking.

Without saying a word, Stella marched into the kitchen and returned with a tiny bowl. She then sat down opposite Weston and began to scoop out the bits of scallions from

his soup. Seeing this, Weston's expressions warmed up a little. When Stella saw that he was done eating, she didn't even bother to ask him how he liked the food but just went ahead and cleaned up the table. Weston's eyes were fixed on her. He remembered that in the past, when he finished the food, Stella would shyly ask him in the softest voice if he liked the food, her eyes wide with anticipation.

But now all she did was calmly pick up the bowl and the cutleries, not even bothering to look at him.

Weston drummed his fingers on the table. He waited till Stella was done cleaning up and when she passed by his side, he grabbed her wrists and pulled her into his arms.

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Stella was startled at first, but she quickly regained her composure. "Are we starting now?" she asked. Stella's words might sound vague, but Weston knew exactly what she meant. The desire that had cropped up in him just now completely dissipated in a moment. "I don't have the mood now even if you begged for it!" he snapped, shoving Stella away.

Weston then dashed back into the bedroom and slammed the door shut.

Stella stared at the closed door silently with disbelief. The night was still young. The television in the living room was still on. Stella walked towards the sofa and was about to sit down when a commercial starring Guinevere Cohen came up. The sight incited a complicated mix of feelings in Stella's heart. Her eyes were glued on the woman on the screen. Scenes from the past flashed across her eyes.

Stella leaned against the backrest, grabbed a pillow, and curled up on the sofa. She was wearing a long white cotton dress. Her long hair fell softly on her shoulders. The moonlight that shone on her dainty face made her skin look translucent. She was utterly perplexed. Weston had treated her so cruelly because of Guinevere in the past, so why would he lock Stella up in their former home and not allow her to leave now?

Could it be that he really missed those days when they were married?

Stella snorted at the thought. She picked up the remote and turned off the television then lay down on the sofa and closed her eyes.

It was now past midnight.

Weston stared at his bedroom door that was closed shut. There had been no movements there at all the whole night. He did not lock the door, but Stella didn't even try to come in.

Weston's face was glum. He grew impatient and tossed the blanket aside, got up from his bed and stomped into the living room where he saw the wispy figure of a woman lying on the sofa

Stella was all curled up on the sofa, fast asleep. Weston walked over to her, his tall frame cast a long shadow across Stella's body as if she was covered by a blanket. Stella suddenly frowned and tossed and turned in her sleep. She scrunched up her nose like a tiny creature that was braving the cold. She didn't even have a blanket on her, only a small pillow that was hugging tightly. The burning anger inside him frittered away at the sight of her fragile figure. He knelt down in front of her and caressed her face with his long fingers, sympathetically, then wailed aloud every time he saw her. The skin under

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veins under her skin very visible. She looked pale and fragile, yet she surprisingly possessed incredible tenacity. Weston felt that perhaps there was nothing wrong with them going on like this. Stella might disagree now, but anything could change with time. He was a patient hunter who now had his prey right in his trap, what was wrong with letting her struggle for a little while? She wouldn't be able to escape now anyway.

His callus-covered fingers slid down from her cheeks to her lips. He leaned over slightly and was about to kiss her...

"Weston!" Stella suddenly mumbled in her sleep. "Please believe me..."

"If you save me, Guinevere will be fine. If you save her, I'll die..."

"Believe me, I'll really die..."

"My baby, I'm so sorry..." Weston froze as if he was hit by lightning. His eyes trembled violently, but his body was paralyzed.

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The night was chilly and the room was silent. It was almost two in the morning. Stella had settled into a deep sleep, no longer mumbling or talking.

Weston had been by her side for more than an hour, but she had only just calmed down. But now that she was sound asleep, Weston was still too restless to go to bed.

He was dressed in a long silk nightshirt. The dark blue satin fabric clung to his tall muscular frame. He stepped out onto the balcony and carefully slid the glass door close

so as not to make a sound. For a while, he stood there and gazed through the glass at Stella who was lying on the sofa.

Then he turned around and rested his arms on the railing as he looked down. The courtyard downstairs looked different under the soft illumination of street lamps. The bright green leaves looked dark and gloomy now as they rustled in the night breeze.

The swaying shadows of the trees danced on the balcony, making it look like a scene from another dimension.

Weston pulled out a cigarette, then nonchalantly tossed the cigarette case aside as he played with the lighter. A faint blue flame emerged. It burned the end of the cigarette and the scent of burnt tobacco filled the air. A plume of smoke rose from the cigarette then gently swirled and dissipated.

Weston kept playing with the lighter. The blue flame emerged, vanished, then emerged again. The metal lighter made a clunking noise that cut through the silence of the night, but no one inside could hear it.

The stormy waves in Weston's eyes finally calmed down. He closed them, but now all he could hear was Stella's hoarse painful cries. She was begging him. She was pleading for him to believe her, to save her.

That was the scene in their past that he wished he could shut out forever. He had sometimes been plagued with nightmares after that fateful night, but his strong self-control would never allow him to be tormented by nightmares.

But that baby...

Weston raised a hand to rub his temple.

He had never thought much about the baby. When he first found out that Stella was pregnant, he didn't have any strong reaction to it. To him, a child meant nothing at all. He never cared about such things. Naturally, he thought that the best solution was to not have the baby.

But he'd failed to consider Stella's maternal feelings. To make matters worse, she had the same medical condition as Guinevere, which meant that she could only have one baby her whole life.

So he agreed to Stella's appeal. Weston had never given a thought about having children, but that day when he saw Stella fall down from the top floor clutching at her belly, his heart was torn open and all the feelings

that he'd been suppressing came rushing out in a torrent.

He had never sat down and properly worked out what his real feelings for Stella were. Ever since reuniting with her, he had also been suppressing all the painful memories in the past. But after hearing her crying out his name in distress, pleading with him to save her, he thought it was impossible to hide his feelings any longer.

The tiny red ember at the end of the cigarette burned slowly. He had not taken many puffs from it, but it seemed that the cigarette was fast burning out. In truth, he was not that addicted to smoking, but he'd been constantly surrounded by the smell of smoke this past year.

Stella never liked him to smoke. He had simply ignored it in the past, but now it seemed that he'd been smoking less and less, subconsciously doing what she wanted him to do.

But she wouldn't care about it now. She no longer prioritized him the way she used to do. All she wanted now was to get away from him. Weston put out the cigarette and turned towards the glass door. He leaned back against the railing with his arms resting on it. His tall figure cast an elongated shadow under the pale moonlight.

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Weston stood there gazing at Stella who was sound asleep on the sofa. His disheveled black hair cast a shadow across his eyes, rendering his expression impossible to read.

He stayed that way for so long that he'd forgotten what time it was. It was the cold breeze that finally prompted him to go back inside. He slid the door open, sauntered over to Stella, and picked her up and carried her into the bedroom.

The next morning, Stella woke up to find herself in a tight embrace. She felt something hard bolstering her neck. She opened her eyes and saw that it was a man's arm.

"Weston," she muttered without even thinking, trying to push the man away.

But Weston did not get up. With his eyes still closed, he hugged Stella a little tighter. "Let's sleep a little longer," he murmured in her ear. "Okay?" Stella struggled to get up so she could check the time. "I need to go to work," she told him. Weston pinned her body down before she could get away and pulled her back into his arms, not even letting her move. "Let's sleep a little longer," he repeated in an insistent tone.

Stella sighed.

"But I really need to go to work," she said.

She wouldn't be persuaded, so Weston let go of her and turned away with his back towards her. Stella scurried out of bed in a rush and out of habit, reached a hand

towards the nightstand to get her phone where she always placed it, only to find that it wasn't there. She then remembered that she fell asleep on the sofa last night. So how did she end up here?

She glanced at the man who was still in bed with a mixture of complicated feelings. She didn't dwell on it though. She just went ahead and walked out of the room.

She found her phone on the coffee table. She checked the time and found that it was still early, so she took a quick shower, got ready, and was about to leave. Weston was awakened by the noise, so he got out of bed. He glanced at her, then with a vacant face told her, "I've asked the driver to come pick you up." Stella nodded and made no objections. "Aren't you going to work today?" she asked, noticing that he was still in his nightshirt. Before Weston could reply, she heard the sound of a car approaching downstairs, so she dashed towards the door. "I'm leaving now," she said before closing the door behind her, not even looking at Weston to

see his reaction.

She no longer had any curiosity or interest in him now. Everything she said even sounded flat and impassive, like a robot reading out a line of code, completely void of emotions. Weston stared at the door. His eyes were dark and brooding.

Stella asked the driver to stop at the intersection, then she opened the door and stepped out of the car. After walking for a few minutes, she finally reached her workplace. She saw Yvonne cheerfully handing out gifts. Yvonne beamed when she noticed Stella. "It's only been a few days since I last saw you," Yvonne exclaimed, "but I think you've gotten much prettier now!" Stella could clearly see that Yvonne was in a very good mood. She deduced that something good must've happened.

"I think you're the one who's gotten prettier!" she replied. "When I was coming in, I was asking myself who's that lady who's smiling like an angel?". Yvonne knew that Stella was only flattering her, but she was still very pleased by it. Once she was done handing out the gifts, she grabbed Stella's hand and pulled her into her office.

"I've got a special set of skincare products for you!" Yvonne chirped. "Come on and give it a try! Let's see if they suit your skin!"

Before Yvonne closed her office door, Stella felt a gaze directed at her, but when she turned around to see, she saw no one there.

Yvonne didn't notice anything out of the ordinary, so she happily pulled out a small golden jar. She opened it and dipped her fingers in the white cream, but just before she was about to rub it on Stella's skin, she noticed that Stella kept staring at the door. "What's wrong?" she asked.

"Nothing," Stella replied, thinking that she was probably mistaken.

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Yvonne thought nothing of Stella's response, but she did stare at Stella and hesitated whether she should say what was on her mind.

Stella noticed this. Now that she had got her gift, she was sure that Yvonne would have something to say to her. She didn't want Yvonne to feel awkward, so she took the initiative to bring it up herself.

"If you want to ask me anything," she started, "then just ask it. I won't hide anything from you."

Seeing that she was so straightforward about it, Yvonne saw no point in beating around the bush.

"So are you and Weston now..." Yvonne studied Stella's face with seriousness.

Stella said nothing in reply, but merely responded with a smile. It was a joyless smile though and she looked more resigned than happy.

Yvonne immediately understood what Stella was trying to say.

"How dare he!" she snapped.

Stella shook her head repeatedly and grabbed Yvonne's hand. Her face was turning pale. "Please don't worry about this, okay?" Stella begged Yvonne. "I don't want to involve an innocent bystander like you!"

"But how could I not worry?" replied Yvonne. "You're my friend! How could I just watch him push you around wherever he likes without doing anything?"

"I know you're worried about me," Stella said in a hoarse voice with her head hanging low, "and I thank you for it. But with someone like Weston Ford... I really can't get you involved. He'll definitely get you in trouble." "Let's see if he dares!" Yvonne snarled. "My family definitely won't take it lying down!" "Would you really want your family to be at odds with the Ford family just for someone like me?" asked Stella. "It's not worth it, Yvonne." Stella knew that the anger Yvonne felt now was temporary. She was truly grateful for her loyalty to their friendship, but the real world was much too complex to just rely on earnest loyalty.

It was more than good enough that Yvonne genuinely wished to help. Getting her in trouble was the last thing Stella wanted.

Yvonne suddenly felt thirsty, so she went over to the water cooler and got herself a glass of water to drink. Once she'd taken a few sips her anger gradually subsided. "I'm really curious though," Yvonne began speaking again. "Isn't Weston Ford going to marry Guinevere Cohen soon? I recently heard someone in their circle saying that he'd taken her to the doctor to get a premarital medical exam. What on earth is wrong with him? He's

clearly a two-faced hypocrite!"

Stella was silent. Her eyes looked vacant.

The corner of her lips almost lifted slightly when she heard that Weston had taken Guinevere to a premarital medical exam, but it didn't turn into a smile. Just a wry smirk.

What a disgusting man! He pretended to be a sweet lover with Guinevere, yet behind her back, he forced Stella to stay with him in his house.

How could she not realize what a shameless man he was in the past?

Stella closed her eyes. She remembered how fiercely Justin and Tina were arguing in the restaurant yesterday. She remembered their state of sheer panic when they found out that Bryce was missing. She sighed. "Yvonne," she said, "I'd like to resign..." Yvonne's eyes widened. She was stunned into silence for a good few seconds. "No!" she finally replied resolutely. "I won't allow it!"

When Stella got out of Yvonne's office, she bumped into Joyce Duxton. She could see Joyce jumping in shock when she opened the door. But when their eyes met, Joyce haughtily straightened her posture and snapped, "What are you looking at?!" Stella glanced at her coolly and said nothing. Joyce was probably eavesdropping at the door just now, but the walls were thick and soundproofed, so she was sure that Joyce couldn't hear anything they were talking about in Yvonne's office. She had no interest in dealing with Joyce now, so she turned around and walked away. Joyce was offended that Stella completely ignored her, so she chased after Stella with a big frown on her face.

"Didn't you hear that I was talking to you?" she yapped. "Do you have a problem with me? You've always been ignoring me when I'm speaking to you—" Stella halted her steps abruptly before Joyce could finish her sentence. She turned swiftly around and gave Joyce an icy glance. "We're all adults here, Joyce," she began, "so I don't want to put it too bluntly so as to hurt your feelings, but you know exactly what your real intentions are and I won't be a two-faced hypocrite. I don't have the time or the interest to put on an act with you." Stella turned and walked away at once after speaking, leaving Joyce standing there alone, in shock. The image of Stella's cold stare was still stuck in Joyce's mind long after Stella had left.

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But Joyce was not afraid of Stella. She was just taken aback by her look. She'd never seen Stella acting so cold before...

What was going on with her? What had happened in Yvonne's office? Why had she changed so much after that?

Stella had enough time to calm herself down that afternoon. She was a dance teacher, after all. Teaching the children was still the most important thing in her life.

When it was almost time to get off work, Stella checked the time on her phone. It was the first time that she resented leaving work. She couldn't go home now, so she gave her brother a call to tell him that she would be on a business trip for a while.

Yvonne happened to pass by when she was telling Roger she couldn't go home. She stopped and stared at Stella in dismay.

Stella hung up the phone and turned around to leave, only to bump into Yvonne who was looking at her with a strange expression.

Yvonne looked down at her shoes when their eyes met and said nothing. Stella was about to walk away, but Yvonne suddenly spoke. "You know," she whispered in Stella's ear, "If you need me to tell a white lie, just ask. I'll help you."

When she first found out about Stella having an affair with Weston Ford, Yvonne resented her for it. But now that she knew Stella was forced into it by Weston, she had grown sympathetic towards her.

It was plain for anyone to see that a powerful man like Weston Ford could easily squash someone of Stella's social status under his boots any time he wished. Not to mention that Stella had a family too, so even if she managed to escape Weston's grasp, there was no guarantee that her family would be safe. Being by Weston Ford's side was just like walking a tightrope – if you weren't careful, you would fall to your death.

"Thank you, Yvonne," said Stella with a grateful smile. "If you don't mind," Stella continued after a pause, "Could you tell my brother that I'm on a business trip and that I won't be able to go home for a while?"

"Sure!" Yvonne nodded. "Thank you!" "Don't mention it." Yvonne paused again and sighed. "If you need any help," she continued, "Just ask me, okay?"

Not long after that, Stella received a text message from Weston, telling her that he'd sent the driver to pick her up. Stella thought for a while and replied saying she had a

private tutoring class so she might be going back a little later. This was not exactly a lie. In fact, Weston had checked Stella's schedule and he knew that she really was hired as a private tutor, so he made no objections and just told her to tell the driver when her work was done.

Stella was a little nervous when she got to Mr. Smith's house because she thought she might meet Justin there again. She was greatly relieved when she found out that Justin would not be

there that day.

Mr. Smith himself was not at home either. Only a few nannies were with Ruby there. Ruby liked Stella very much. She was usually headstrong and naughty, but with Stella, Ruby became inexplicably obedient and affectionate. "Miss Steele," Ruby said after her dance class, "My dad will be taking me to a movie set for an audition later. Do you think I'll be a movie star one day, Miss Steele?" "I'm sure you will, Ruby!" Stella replied, pinching Ruby's cherubic cheek. "Since you're such a pretty girl!" But soon afterward one of the nannies dashed into the room and told Stella, "I'm sorry, Miss Steele, but it seems that Mr. Smith can't make it home in time. The audition couldn't be postponed either, so Mr. Smith asked if you could take Miss Ruby to the movie set?" Stella thought about it and almost instantly agreed. She didn't want to go back to that place anyway, so why not?

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Although Mr. Smith couldn't make it back home in time to take Ruby to the audition, he'd made all the necessary preparations beforehand. All Ruby needed was an adult to accompany her there, since she was still a child.

The driver was already waiting downstairs, so once Ruby and Stella got into the car, they headed straight to the movie set.

Stella had never been to a place like this. From afar she could see countless different equipment all set up in a wide area. There was a stage in the center of it all where the lights were focused on. Someone was on that stage holding a walkie-talkie and giving out commands to the large crew.

Ruby, on the other hand, seemed to be familiar with the place. It was obviously not her first time on a film set.

"Miss Steele," the girl said when they arrived, "I think you should contact the director's assistant. Everytime I'm here, Daddy would take me straight to him."

Stella nodded and followed the procedure that the nanny instructed her earlier. She was already informed that everything could be handed over to this assistant once they got there.

When the director's assistant saw that Ruby was with Stella, he hesitated then asked, "Isn't Mr. Smith coming today?"

"No," Stella replied, "He's a little busy today."

The man was indeed the director's assistant as Ruby mentioned. He was clad in a pair of light gray overalls. He had been scrambling everywhere all day as the director had been assigning a thousand tasks to him. He looked at Stella up and down with inquisitive eyes.

"May I ask if you are Mr. Smith's..."

To him, Ruby was no longer a newcomer. Although she might be very young, she had always been involved in the entertainment industry since she was little and had in fact been in two commercials. So even if she wasn't exactly a child star, she was still quite experienced.

Ruby's father, Mr. Smith, did not have a very good reputation in this circle, though. He was a local rich man who liked to spoil his daughter. Ruby's talents weren't exactly spectacular, but she made it this far because her father spared no expense on her.

Mr. Smith was just like many other rich middle-aged men. No matter how messy his own private life was, he would always make sure that none of it would ever affect his daughter. Ruby was his only daughter, after all. Because Mr. Smith lived such a wild life in his younger years, he'd lost his fertility and couldn't have any other children after Ruby, so naturally she was the absolute apple of his eye. He'd never let any of his mistresses see his daughter, much less be with her.

...and yet here was this woman, accompanying Ruby Smith to the audition alone. Who could she be?

Stella knew at a glance that the director's assistant was misunderstanding who she was so she

quickly made an explanation. "I'm Ruby's private tutor," she told him. "I was teaching her today and was told that Mr. Smith was too busy to take her here, so I stood in for him."

The director's assistant warmed up a little when he heard this, but he was still a little skeptical

"You two come with me," he said. "You'll go backstage to get Ruby's makeup done. Then you'll wait there until you get called..." "Have you practiced your lines?" he asked. "Yup!" Ruby nodded. Stella was now relieved. It really seemed that she didn't have to do anything else apart from accompanying Ruby. She was starting to feel at ease there. Once the assistant was gone, Ruby sat down and pulled out a small notebook from her backpack. Stella looked at her with fascination, curious to see what she was going to do next. It turned out that she was practicing her lines.

"Miss Steele!" cried Ruby, handing Stella a copy of her lines. "This is going to be my first audition! I've been in commercials before, but I've never been in a movie yet!" "Oh." Stella nodded and asked, "So is this a movie set?" "Yeah!" Ruby nodded frantically. "Don't you know that director? He's really cool and famous! There are loads of superstars in the movies he made!"

"Oh!" Ruby exclaimed after a pause. "Do you know Guinevere Cohen, Miss Steele?" Stella froze momentarily, but she quickly regained her composure. Because Ruby was very young, she did not notice anything wrong and just went on talking excitedly. "When I grow up, I want to be a famous actress just like Guinevere Cohen!" Stella pursed her lips and rubbed her temples but said nothing.

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Stella was reminded of Weston again.

The thought made her palms a little sweaty. She needed to get some fresh air, but she couldn't possibly leave Ruby here alone.

About half an hour later, it was finally Ruby's turn. The assistant hurried over to get Ruby and brought her to the stage.

Stella stood under the stage, watching Ruby nervously stepping under the spotlight. There were quite a number of people around her. It must have really been a large set. No one was paying any attention to them since they arrived. This only changed when Ruby got up on stage.

Stella had presumed that with Mr. Smith's wealth, Ruby would be treated like a princess in this place. But apparently she was mistaken. Though he might be rich, Mr. Smith was nearly a nobody in the entertainment industry, since there were many more who were a thousand times richer and more powerful than him here.

Perhaps only people with Weston Ford's stature could enjoy special treatment wherever he went.

Ruby was a young girl, so naturally her role was a certain character's daughter. She didn't have many lines, but apart from the lines needing to showcase the liveliness of the character, it was also a period drama, so the lines were quite difficult to learn. For such a young girl, Ruby would have to memorize her lines really well for her to be able to perform naturally.

When they were backstage earlier, Ruby had gone through her lines with Stella once. Yet although all was going well at first, she probably got stage fright and fumbled her lines the longer she went on. She even forgot huge chunks of her lines, which gravely affected her whole performance. "Stop! Stop! Stop!" yelled the director, frowning with frustration. "Where did this child come from? She doesn't suit the character of a noble girl at all! A noble girl should be flamboyant and haughty! Not a shy stuttering girl like that!" Ruby stood there like a doll after getting yelled at by the director. At a loss, she turned to Stella. The director was still fuming with anger. He took off his earphones and tossed them violently on his desk. "This whole thing is pointless!" he shouted.

Everyone else looked at each other nervously now that the director had lost his temper. Stella was stunned too. She'd never been in such a situation before. But more importantly, she was worried about Ruby.

Tears were welling up in Ruby's eyes.

"Don't worry," the assistant whispered in Stella's ear. "Ruby's performance wasn't that bad. With some improvements, she'll do just fine. The director is mad at someone else..."

Sure enough, Stella would soon hear something which proved that the assistant was not lying.

"How many demands exactly does Guinevere Cohen have, anyway?" she heard the director complain when he returned after taking a short break. "At this point I'm not sure who's the

director – is it her or me?!" "Forget it," the assistant director persuaded him in a whisper, "The investors insisted on having her, so there's nothing we can do!" Besides, Guinevere Cohen was a bona fide superstar, so she had a certain power to make demands.

But what really got on the director's nerves was that not only did Guinevere make demands about her own role, she even demanded him to replace an actress that he'd already chosen!

Guinevere was the movie's main lead, naturally the role was tailor-made for her. But there were other female characters in supporting roles too, but Guinevere decided that she didn't like one of the actresses, so she demanded that he get someone else

instead. The director had no choice but to do as she bid. He definitely wasn't pleased about it, though.

Stella said nothing as she listened to the assistant's explanation. But then her phone suddenly rang. She glanced over at Ruby who was still standing on stage, then quietly slipped out of the set and found a quiet corner to take the call.

"Hello?"

"When will you be back?" asked the man on the other end of the line in a calm, deep voice. "I'm already home."

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Chapter 170

Because it was extremely quiet on Weston's end of the line, he could clearly hear the background noise on Stella's end.

Weston was sitting on the sofa. The black genuine leather felt cold against his skin. The rest of the room was just as cool and serene.

"Where are you?" he asked Stella. Stella explained exactly what happened. There was only silence when she finished speaking, as Weston made no reply. "Can I... go home a little later today?" Stella hesitantly asked. Weston glanced at the time,

"How late is a little later?"

Stella pursed her lips and looked around the set. Things seemed to be in an uproar, with people shouting and hurrying around. Even as she stood there in a relatively quiet corner, she was still in someone's way from time to time.

"I don't know how long this'll take," she replied. "Once I'm done, I'll let the driver know."

Weston remained silent.

Stella's heart was pounding as she awaited his answer. She could never guess Weston's mood or temper. She was also afraid that he might do something to her if he was unhappy.

Stella didn't know how long Weston just stayed silent like that, not saying a single word, until he finally just hung up the phone.

Stella sighed in relief when she heard the beeping tone. She knew, of course, that he was possibly a little disgruntled, but at least it was a sign he agreed that she could

remain on the film set for the time being, albeit reluctantly, otherwise he would've had someone come over and forcibly take her away.

Stella put her phone away and rushed back towards the stage. Ruby was still there as her part was not over yet. The assistant frowned when he noticed Stella walking in.

"Where have you been?" he demanded.

"Just there," replied Stella, pointing at the quiet corner.

The assistant was about to lose his temper, but when his eyes met Stella's, he suddenly found his anger subsiding for some reason. "Fine..." he muttered. "But next time please tell me before you wander off somewhere. You're the only accompanying Ruby here today. Mr. Smith is my old acquaintance, so I could help you keep an eye on Ruby, but I wouldn't want anything bad to happen to you or Ruby."

He was getting a little irritated just now when he found that Stella was suddenly missing. He'd thought that she had sneaked away somewhere. But now that he'd heard Stella's explanation, he realized that he might've been overreacting.

But Stella had always been very patient, so she merely replied with a smile.

"We should've been able to wrap things up a long time ago," he continued, now feeling a little embarrassed for losing his temper, "if it hadn't been for Guinevere Co—".

The assistant stopped himself short of finishing his sentence before continuing again.

"I mean, it would be unfair to put the blame on any particular actress though..." He realized that he'd been speaking too much. He shouldn't have leaked any information about any actor or actress like that to an outsider. This was basic professional ethics. "There's been a slight problem," he explained, "so now everything's delayed. Everyone's under immense stress, so please don't take anything to heart." "Don't worry about it," replied Stella, flattered that the assistant felt he owed her an explanation. "I totally understand."

Ruby couldn't remember all of her lines, so her performance had not gone very well. She was already upset about this, but when she saw her dance teacher chatting away cheerfully nearby instead of paying attention to her, she lost her temper immediately and started a tantrum. "I... I can't remember my lines!" she yelled red-faced at the director. "I've forgotten it all! I don't remember anything!"

The director sprang up onto his feet. He was already in a thunderous mood before that, but now that this child started acting up too, he just couldn't take it anymore. "Don't think that I'd go easy on you just because you're a kid!" he shouted, pointing at Ruby.

Ruby pouted and started sobbing. "But I honestly don't remember my lines!" she cried, rubbing her tears away with the back of her hands before wailing even louder.

Everyone on set was now looking at Ruby. The director's patience was wearing extremely thin.

"This is a crucial scene," he bellowed. "If you can't do it, then I'll get someone else to replace

you!"

"Sir," the assistant director quickly whispered in his ear, "She's the only one here today. There've been some glitches so the others didn't make it. If we don't finish filming this scene today, the subsequent filming schedules would be delayed too. If that happens, Guinevere Cohen will definitely raise hell!"

The director took a long deep breath to steady himself. He rubbed the bridge of his nose between his brows and tried his best to keep it together. "Come on," he told Ruby in a much gentler voice this time, "Clear your mind and try to remember. This is your chance to be a star! Just try to remember your lines!"