

BYWafADA Chapter 541

Chapter 541 The Real Reason

“What do you mean?” Toby narrowed his eyes. What did my father go through back in the day? What did she mean by that?

It was as if life drained out of Jean as soon as she brought up Homer. There was sadness in her eyes as she held onto the armrest of the sofa and sat down. She looked hollow, no longer as frigid as she always had been, and if it weren't for the trace of guilt that highlighted her expression, one might think she was at peace with the world.

“When your father and I got married over ten years ago, we didn't receive your run-of-the-mill blessings, and what we got instead were merciless teasing and snide remarks, but I won't go into that. All you need to know is that I was not welcome in the circle, and your father became the butt of the joke because he married me, a woman who was neither of good breeding or culture. I was basically good at nothing.”

As Jean said this, she worried at the band on her ring finger like it would give her comfort. The ring was made of white gold, but it was dull and unpolished. It looked ancient, and at first glance, one could tell that she had not taken it off for years, not even to get it cleaned at the jeweler's.

The band also looked a little tight on her ring finger, which swelled up around the band like it was constricted instead of decorated.

Even so, she didn't appear to have taken the band off over the years, and it was obvious that the band meant a lot to her.

Presently, she gazed down at the wedding band on her ring finger—the very one Homer had given to her when they exchanged their vows—and mused sorrowfully, “Your father was once the greatest man in the circle, the very same circle that shunned him and cast him out when he married me. They thought your father was a fool for bringing me into the upper-class society, claiming that my lowly status would hurt the image of the elite. So they mocked him for it, and they set me up to fail on many occasions in order to humiliate your father.”

Having said all this, Jean clenched her plump fist, and her smooth expression began to twist into a grimace. Her eyes grew red as she went on to say, “But those weren't the worst of it. The nightmare came when those vicious women in the circle took advantage of my being a philistine and decided to gang up on me. They sweet-talked me into giving them several important contracts that Fuller Group was working on so that they could let their husbands take a look and collaborate with the company afterward. They told me it was a way to let Fuller Group expand its horizons.”

“And you did what they asked you to?” Toby asked, raising his brows.

She nodded numbly. “Of course I did. I knew nothing back then, but I only wanted to help your father and become one of those corporate wives who helped their husbands with their business. Little did I know that I would end up jeopardizing instead of helping your father and Fuller Group; your father lost important contracts, and the company went through unimaginable turmoil that year.”

"I've heard about this," Tom interjected as he adjusted his spectacles. "Fuller Group took a heavy blow that year, and if Old Mrs. Fuller hadn't stepped in and lent her aid, then that could have been the end of the business. I heard that Old Mrs. Fuller even fired Mr. Fuller from his position as the president."

Toby parted his lips and added, "Father lost those important contracts and caused the company to go into turmoil. Grandma had to fire him, or she'd have a hard time dealing with the shareholders."

Riddled with self-blame, Jean said mournfully, "That's right, so for a long time, your father spiraled into depression. He started to get into drinking, and eventually, even your grandmother couldn't stand it any longer and suggested that your father go on a business trip abroad. She said something about negotiating for a deal with some international tycoon, which, if the deal was concluded, would make the shareholders change their minds about your father. That way, she could reinstate him as the president of the company again. But..."

She buried her face in her hands, finally losing her composure as she broke down sobbing.

At the sight of this, Toby clenched his fists and said hoarsely, "But no one expected Father to die at the hotel he was staying at while abroad."

Unable to form coherent words, Jean could only sob and nod to confirm what Toby had said.

Signaling Tom to wheel him closer to the coffee table, Toby then took out a few tissues and handed them to Jean, saying, "I understand now why you think Sonia isn't meant to be part of our family. The Reed Family has fallen from grace and, by extension, out of rank with the other elite families. You think that Sonia would only drag me and Fuller Group down, that she wouldn't be able to offer any real help; you're afraid that I would end up like Father and become the laughingstock of the industry."

"Yes," Jean mumbled in a wobbling voice as she looked up to meet his gaze. "That's exactly what I meant to tell you. I practically walked your father into his death, Toby, and I don't want you to go down the same path he did."

That was the real reason why she had not treated Tina with the same hostility as she had Sonia. Unlike the Reed Family, the Gray Family was still within the elite circle, and with Titus backing Tina up, she would make a much better contender than Sonia.

More importantly, Tina had been the only daughter in the Gray Family, which meant she stood to inherit every penny of the family fortune once Titus passed on. When that happened, Toby would have access to the same fortune, and Fuller Group could once again expand its growth. Jean had seen this as the only way to ease her own guilt and for her to shake off her past.

However, Jean hadn't expected Tina to turn out to be more trouble than she was worth.

"Mom, thank you for worrying about me and being so considerate of me," Toby said now, his expression gentle as he shoved tissues into her hand.

Regardless of all that had happened, Jean's enmity toward Sonia and her objections against Toby and Sonia's relationship had all been for his best interests.

He could not deny her good intentions, but that didn't mean he could accept her stance, either. As such, he gazed upon her steadily and said with utmost seriousness, "But I will still choose to be together with Sonia."

"What?" Jean's eyes widened as she demanded, "How could you say that even after all that I've told you?" She had given him insight on all her reasons, and she even brought up the devastating past she had kept hidden for so long in hopes that she might change his mind about Sonia. Alas, she failed in persuading him to give up on the idea of remarrying Sonia and only seemed to have spurred him on. Did I tell him all that for nothing?

"Yes," Toby answered firmly now. "Sonia and I will never go through what you and Father did because Sonia is different from you."

"How is she any different from me?" Jean sputtered cynically. Admittedly, Sonia was born into a much better family than hers, but the Reed Family was no longer part of the elite circle, even though Paradigm Co. still stood as proof of their glory days.

That being said, even Jean could tell that Paradigm Co. was not profiting, and she didn't need a business degree to know that at the end of the day, Sonia was as good as broke.

That just means that Sonia is no more different from I was in the past!

"She's entirely different." Toby shoved his hand into his pocket and felt for the Ocean's Heart, then elaborated, "Sonia might not have anything now, but she is ambitious and talented in running a business. With her in charge, Paradigm Co. will eventually find success, so it'll only be a matter of time before the Reed Family rejoins the elite. Also—"

He paused, and a small smile played on his lips as he thought of something. "If others dare to even say a single snide remark to her face or mock her, she would fight back instead of taking the abuse in silence. She has always known how to stand up for herself, and on that point alone, she's much stronger than you were, Mom. If you had defended yourself back in the day, then maybe you and Father wouldn't have ended up in such a sorry state. Moreover, I'd like to think I've done a superb job in expanding Fuller Group, and it's a much more powerful company than when Father ran it. As things stand, our family doesn't need an arranged marriage to strengthen our alliances or our standing in the industry. My prowess is the reason why Fuller Group has its success and glory now."

"Doesn't need..." she mumbled in confusion. Why wouldn't we need an arranged marriage? Throughout these years, all she knew was that blue-blood families relied on arranged marriages to strengthen their ties and social standing.

He kept his gaze on her and explained, "Yes, our family doesn't need an arranged marriage to maintain a certain social standing. Something like that is only done by those who aren't strong enough in the first place. Mom, our family isn't how it used to be. I want you to think about it, and I hope you'll really change your mind about Sonia. I don't want to have to choose between you and her, but if I'm forced to, then you should know that I definitely won't give her up."

Upon hearing this, Jean stiffened. She felt as if someone had thrown a bucket of ice water over her. If he won't give Sonia up, then that means I'll be the one he leaves behind in the end!

At that moment, she froze in her seat, and all the color drained out of her face.