

## Chapter 102 Why Argue With A Child

Mrs. Reyes let out a shrill scream.

She didn't waste a moment to fix her smudged makeup, immediately rushing forward to help her son, Ted, who was sprawled across the soft lawn.

Her breath hitched as she knelt beside him, her hands quickly yet gently feeling for any signs of injury. "Are you hurt?"

The grass beneath him was more forgiving than anything else, but Ted's flushed face was a storm of anger. His round cheeks, red from either embarrassment or frustration, puffed up as he glared at Alicia. "It's all your fault, you stupid woman!"

Alicia blinked, her eyes widening slightly at the outburst.

Ted was only eight, his face still pudgy, his scowl still childish—yet the sharpness of his words stung.

Mrs. Reyes, who had pulled Ted to his feet by now, turned toward Alicia with a hardened look.

"Alicia, if anything happens to Ted today, I won't let you off the hook so easily," she said, her voice edged with warning.

Alicia met the boy's glare with a slight smile, not one of amusement but a knowing one.

She understood how petty disputes like these could spiral out of control if given the chance.

Instead of fanning the flames, she shifted her gaze to Rachel, the hostess of this gathering. "Mrs. Gray," Alicia began smoothly, her tone deliberately calm, "surely you can tell me—did I do anything wrong here?"

Rachel, ever serene, let out a soft sigh, her expression one of gentle reproach.

"Ms. Bennett," she said, her voice lilting like the wind brushing through the trees, "why bicker with a child?"

Alicia faltered, her smile stiffening as Rachel glided past her, reaching out to smooth Ted's ruffled hair with a motherly tenderness.

"He was just playing with you," Rachel continued lightly. "Why didn't you humor him? Do you really think a child could hurt you?"

Alicia's smile vanished, replaced by a shadow of disappointment that crossed her features.

She studied Rachel for a moment, hoping for some flicker of understanding, but Rachel's attention had already drifted elsewhere.

Rachel knelt down and gently invited Ted to play with the other children.

Ted, before running off to join the others, flashed Alicia a devilish grin and flipped her off.

"Just you wait," his eyes seemed to say.

Rachel, playing the peacemaker, dismissed the tension with a gentle pat on Alicia's hand.

"Ms. Bennett, don't let such a small thing dampen your spirits, okay? The child didn't mean anything by it."

Alicia subtly pulled her hand away, her voice soft yet firm. "If you say so, Mrs. Gray."

There had been a time when Alicia felt a twinge of pity for Rachel, but now, she could see that Rachel was the one who trapped herself in this web of shallow courtesies.

Sensing Alicia's withdrawal, Rachel's face tightened ever so slightly.

Alicia's aloofness, in her eyes, was nothing but arrogance.

They were from different worlds, after all. Alicia was beneath her in

every way. Even after Alicia humiliated Randolph, Rachel had let it slide. Yet here Alicia stood, still looking down on her.

Under Rachel's skillful mediation, the tension in the air started to melt away as everyone slowly returned to their previous activities.

However, Mrs. Reyes's makeup was running down her face, making her look like a drenched rat. Rachel, ever the gracious hostess, guided her inside the house to fix it.

Seething, Mrs. Reyes gritted her teeth. "No wonder no man wants her. With that attitude, she deserves everything that comes her way!"

Rachel hummed softly, her fingers deftly working on Mrs. Reyes's face. "Do you want to teach her a lesson?"

A sharp gleam lit Mrs. Reyes's eyes as she caught the hint in Rachel's tone. She wasn't alone in her disdain.

"Got any clever ideas?"

Rachel's lips curved into a subtle smile. "Oh, I do. But unlike her, we won't lower ourselves to crude antics. We have class."

Later, with time to kill before dinner, Rachel arranged a few tables for cards, the perfect diversion.

She deliberately coaxed Alicia to join Mrs. Reyes and the others, as if the earlier spat had never occurred.

With a warm smile, Rachel invited her over. "Ms. Bennett, do you play cards?"

Alicia immediately sensed the trap, having anticipated this moment.

Now, already seated at the table, there was no way for her to exit gracefully.

"No," Alicia replied coolly, unwilling to be led into their game.

Rachel's eyes sparkled with faux delight. "Perfect! Mrs. Reyes can show you the ropes. It's just a friendly game."

Alicia remained silent, inwardly sighing.

Fine.

She now understood why older men often complained about being roped into things they had no desire for, because she was standing in their shoes now.

She felt trapped, powerless against a force that left her with no easy way out.

The minutes ticked by, creeping past ten o'clock.

She glanced at her watch. Was Caden coming or not?

Mrs. Reyes, sensing Alicia's uneasiness, leaned back in her chair, her smile almost predatory. "What's wrong, Ms. Bennett? Are you afraid to play with me?"

Alicia's gaze sharpened as she met the challenge head-on. "Mrs. Reyes, how much do you want to play for?"

Mrs. Reyes smirked. "Not much. Just three thousand dollars."

The corners of Alicia's mouth twitched.

Three thousand dollars?

She should have expected as much.

Alicia had been around enough high-stakes games to know the rules of the table: one bad round, and you could lose tens of thousands in an instant.

And these women—smirking behind their perfectly manicured facades—were pros at exploiting her weaknesses.

Mrs. Reyes's eyes gleamed when Alicia stayed silent, her laughter laced with cruelty. "What's the matter, Ms. Bennett? Is it getting too much for you? I thought Mr. Yates would've left you plenty of money after the divorce. Surely you can spare a little for some entertainment?"

Alicia's expression remained cool, her voice steady. "Then you must



teach me how to play, Mrs. Reyes."

Mrs. Reyes's lips curled in a mocking smile. "Oh, no trouble. I'll be more than happy to teach you again."

As the cards were shuffled with a soft rustle, Alicia discreetly reached for her phone under the table, typing out a message to Caden with swift precision.

"Where are you? You'd better get your ass over here now! I'm in trouble!"

Meanwhile, Caden was still at the airport.

He had been expecting to be at the Gray family estate by nine, but fate had other plans. Just as he was about to leave, a call from his butler threw his evening into disarray.

Apparently, Clara had suddenly arrived in Warrington and insisted that Caden personally fetch her.

It was her first time in the city, and despite the inconvenience, Caden couldn't deny the elderly woman's request.

Glancing down at Alicia's message, he rubbed his thumb across the screen, a frown creasing his brow. He turned to Hank beside him. "How long is the flight delayed?"

"About half an hour," Hank replied.

"Still don't know when it will arrive?"

Hank, sensing his boss's agitation, quickly made a call to check the status.


When he returned, his expression had darkened. "Mr. Ward, the flight never took off due to weather issues. Mrs. Ward's plane is still grounded, and they're not sure when she'll be in the air."

Caden let out a frustrated breath, his patience wearing thin.

"I thought they said she was about to land."

Hank gave a helpless shrug. "Mrs. Ward isn't always... accurate."

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 +120 Points at most

Still, Caden couldn't stay angry at Ciara.

Despite her unpredictability, he always treated her with a gentleness that few others saw. Even now, his face softened at the thought of the old lady.

He stood, his voice a low command. "Get the car. We're leaving."




Just then, his phone chirped.

Caden checked it, seeing Alicia's name flash across the screen.

Her message was brief but cutting. "Forget it. Now I know what kind of person you really are, Mr. Ward. I swear, we'll never cooperate again."

Caden stared at the words, his mind racing for a response, but for the first time in a long while, he found himself at a loss.



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