

“I will, Nana.”

Serenity casually responded.

Although Grandma May was nice to her, Zachary was her blood relative while Serenity was only related to the family by marriage. Serenity found it hard to believe that the Yorks would stand by Serenity during a conflict between her and Zachary.

Such was the case with her sister’s parents-in-law.

Before marriage, the in-laws were nothing but good to Serenity’s sister to the point their birth daughter was jealous.

It was a different story after the wedding. Every time Serenity’s sister got into a disagreement with the husband, her mother-in-law would get on Serenity’s sister’s case about being a bad wife.

In short, the son was always family while the daughter-in-law remained as an outsider.

“You must be heading to work, so I should get out of your hair. I’ll get Zack to get you home for dinner tonight.”

“Nana, I’m closing the shop pretty late at night. I probably won’t be able to make it. Can we reschedule for the weekend?”

The school was off on weekends. Since the bookshop’s livelihood depended on students, business was slow on days when school was out. She would have time and no need to set up shop during such occasions.

“Sure.”

Grandma May thoughtfully added, “The weekend, it is. Go on with your work then.”

The old lady hung up the call.

Instead of heading straight to the shop, Serenity sent a text message to her best friend, Jasmine Sox, that she would make it back before the last school bell rang.

With one major milestone ticked off her list, Serenity had to let her sister know and move out of her place.

About ten minutes later, Serenity arrived at her sister’s home.

Her brother-in-law had gone to work while her sister was hanging clothes out to dry on the balcony. Seeing that Serenity was home, her sister expressed her concern. “Why are you back at this hour, Seren? Is the shop closed today?”

“I’ll go when it’s busy in the afternoon. Is Sonny awake yet?”

Sonny was Serenity’s nephew. The boy was currently in his Terrible Twos.

“Not yet. The house won’t be this quiet if he’s awake.”

Serenity asked about last night as she helped with the laundry.

“Seren, your brother-in-law isn’t trying to kick you out. He’s simply under a lot of stress. It’s not like I’m working.”

Liberty clarified for her husband.

Serenity kept to herself, knowing well that it was her brother-in-law’s covert attempt to throw her out.

Her brother-in-law earned a lot as a manager in a firm. Liberty met him in college and was working in the same firm. When they got married, the man lovingly said to Liberty, “I’ll take care of you. Just stay at home and rest. I need you rested and healthy if we’re going to have a baby.”

Believing she had found the right man, Liberty quit her job and became a housewife. She gave birth to a lovely son a year into the marriage and had no time to dress up between caring for a child and managing housework. Liberty paid no thought to watch her figure, nor could she break free from her routine and return to the workplace.

Fast forward three years, Liberty went from a young and beautiful woman to an overweight and unkempt housewife with no time to spare for herself.

Serenity was five years younger than her sister. Their parents passed away from a car accident when Serenity was ten. Since then, Serenity and Liberty only had each other.

The compensation from their parents’ accident would have been enough for the sisters to complete their studies, but the grandparents from both sides of the family wanted a piece of it. With what was left, the sisters had to scrimp and save to pull through college.

Since the grandparents proceeded to hog the family home, Serenity and her sister resorted to renting. Their renting days were finally over when Liberty walked down the aisle.

Liberty absolutely adored Serenity and talked to her then husband-to-be about living with Serenity after marriage. The man was quick to say yes about taking Liberty and Serenity as a one-package deal, but his resentment was beginning to rear its ugly head.

“I’m sorry, Liberty. I’m a burden to you.”

“No, Seren. Don’t think that way. Mom and Dad left us too soon. I’m all you got.”

Serenity was deeply moved. As a child, Serenity could always count on her sister, but now it was her turn to be Liberty’s rock.

After a brief silence, Serenity took out the marriage license and showed it to Liberty. She said, “I’m married, Liberty. I just signed the papers and came back to let you know. I’ll be packing up and moving out in a bit.”

“You got married?!”

Liberty’s voice turned high pitch, almost to a screech.

Staring at Serenity in disbelief, Liberty snatched the marriage license for a closer inspection. There was her sister’s name alongside a stranger’s name on the papers. Attached was a photo of the newlyweds.

“What’s this about, Serenity? I thought you didn’t even have a boyfriend.”

The man in the photo was good-looking, but his piercing eyes and callous lines along his facial features were telltale signs that he would not be the easiest person to get along with.

While on the way back, Serenity had a story all thought out. She answered, “I have been in a relationship for quite some time. His name is Zachary. He was always busy with work, so he could never make time to come meet you.

“He proposed, and I said yes. Then, we went to get our marriage license at City Hall. He’s a great man, Liberty. He’s good to me. Don’t worry. I’ll have my happily-ever-after.”

Liberty had a hard time buying the story.

She had never heard of a boyfriend in Serenity's life. Yet, the latter was telling her now that she got a ring on her finger.

Serenity must have overheard the fight last night. Upset, Liberty teared up and remarked, "Seren, I told your brother-in-law you paid for groceries. Feel free to stay with us.

"There's no need to rush to marry or move out."

Liberty bet Serenity had not known her boyfriend for long. Otherwise, Serenity would not have waited until now to tell her.

The sudden decision to get a marriage license was because Liberty's husband believed Serenity overstayed her welcome. Serenity was in a hurry to give herself away before Liberty's marriage was on the rocks.

With a smile, Serenity comforted her sister. "Liberty, you got nothing to do with it. My relationship with Zachary is very strong. I got my happy ending. You should be happy for me."

Liberty could not stop the tears from rolling down her cheeks.

Serenity helplessly embraced her sister until Liberty cried her heart out and calmed down. Serenity made a promise to Liberty. "I'll visit you often, Liberty. Zachary's house is in Brynfield, not far from yours. It takes me ten minutes on the e-bike."

"What's the situation with his family?"

As the marriage was sealed, Liberty had no choice but to accept it. She went on to dig further about her new brother-in-law.

Serenity did not know much about the Yorks. Although she had known Grandma May for three months, Serenity never pried into the family's private affair and often lent an ear to Grandma May. All she knew was that Zachary was the oldest in the family and had a lot of younger brothers including cousins.

Zachary had a job in one of Wiltspoon's finest companies. He was doing pretty well for himself as he owned a house and car. Serenity told the little information she knew to her sister.

Having heard that Zachary had no debt on the house, Liberty asked, “That’s his prenuptial property. Seren, can you get him to add your name to the title deed?”

At least, Serenity would be covered if her name was on the deed.