

Chapter 20

Megan thought about her relationship with the Lakes. If anything happened because of the kidnapping, she would be the one to bear most of the brunt!

At first, the engagement between the Lake and the Yard Families happened because the Yards' fashion chains were still popular in Astoria. However, the tide had turned when her family's business went downhill in recent years. In contrast, the Lakes' business was growing and overtook the Yards.

As the engagement was publicly announced early on, the Lakes and the Yards did not plan to call it off. When Meredith became the fiancée of Pierre Fowler, Megan and Finneas's engagement finally took shape as well, for the Lakes wanted to be connected to the Fowlers through the Yard sisters' marriages.

The fact that Megan's marriage hinged on Meredith's was the reason she agreed to Meredith's plan to get rid of Juniper.

But the two young masters of the Fowler Family had to save Juniper, and the cat would be out of the bag soon. Meredith's engagement to Pierre would be precarious, not to mention Megan's own engagement to Finneas.

"Why are you panicking? Don't scare yourself for nothing."
Soon, Meredith calmed down.

"But Merry..."

"Answer me: where were we this entire afternoon?"

Meredith placed a hand on her sister's shoulder.

"We were at the beauty salon." Megan pointed at the salon behind them.

"Yeah. What is there to worry about?" Meredith chuckled with a twinkle in her eye.

Megan finally realized the reason behind Meredith's ostensible superstar display today—she had wanted to create an alibi!

"But Merry, what if those men rat on you? You must know Pierre Fowler's character very well. He's brutal, and everyone nicknamed him 'Satan' for a reason!"

When Meredith heard Megan talking bad about Pierre, she felt quite upset. "Of course, I understand him well. Yes, he saved that little girl, but so what? The most he would do is to send her to the police. He will not be interested in people who are not related to him. By the way, stop calling him 'Satan' in front of me. As for the men I hired, they will not give me away."

"How could you be sure?"

To that, Meredith merely smirked in silence.

At home, Selena stayed beside Juniper all the time, including bedtime. Around midnight, she was woken up from Juniper's intense struggle, and she quickly pulled her

daughter into a hug.

"Mommy's here! Mommy's here!" She could only repeat the sentence in hopes of calming her daughter.

It took a long time before Juniper drifted to sleep again.

Tears rolled down Selena's cheeks at the sight of her daughter's internal struggle. She sobbed quietly in the bed in order not to wake Juniper up.

She dared not imagine what had happened to Juniper in the few hours of abduction.

I only have myself to blame! I shouldn't have gone to the restroom and left Juniper alone at the bakery.

In the next three days, Juniper still did not utter a word. Apart from eating her three meals, she mostly slept her way through the day. Selena tried different methods to cheer her up, but none worked.

Left with no choice, she could only enroll the help of a psychologist as she believed that Juniper needed some counseling.

After the session, the psychologist exited the bedroom and sat with Selena on the sofa.

"Doctor, how is my daughter?"

"Miss Yard, based on your description and my interaction with the child, I have gotten a better idea of the situation. There's nothing wrong with your daughter."

"But she doesn't talk and interact with me. She only sleeps." Selena stared at the doctor anxiously.

"The kidnapping definitely traumatized her, and she's using sleep as an escape. Coping with issues by escaping is a prevalent behavior after traumatic events; the method differs from one to another. Your daughter apparently prefers sleeping as an escape."

"What should I do now?"

"Based on my observation, her condition is not too bad. At this point, she needs her parents the most. You need to provide her with warmth and a sense of security. Psychologically, your daughter is now at an age where a father figure would provide a better sense of security. I suggest that the father spends more time with her."

After the doctor's speech, Selena felt troubled because Juniper did not have a father.

"By the way, if she dislikes interacting with adults, you can introduce her to other children. Kids usually open up easily to other kids. Perhaps, when she starts playing with her peers, she will forget about the trauma."

The psychologist dispensed more advice to Selena and left.

Next, Selena went into the bedroom, where Juniper was still curled up under the blanket as if she was sleeping. Selena sighed deeply and closed the door to leave her daughter alone.

When Selena was gone, Juniper slowly opened her eyes. She had been sleeping a lot for the past few days, but most of the time, she had trouble falling asleep.

"You're nothing but a fatherless child! Your mommy was a very wild woman; I don't know how many men she has slept with! You're the product of her dirty affair with some random man!" Megan's words crushed Juniper's heart.

Before this, Juniper only knew that her father passed away, but that did not stop her from repeatedly imagining what he looked like.

The man who was perfect for Mommy must be handsome, cool, and swag! He probably looked fierce but was very gentle in real life. He had broad shoulders and a warm hug. When he was angry, everyone was scared of him, but he must have been the best dad in the world!

These imaginations crossed Juniper's mind before, but Megan's insult had mercilessly crushed her little world alongside all her imaginations about her late father.

When Juniper was turning and tossing in bed, Selena was sitting on the sofa in the living room, clutching her phone.

Juniper does not have a father. Where should I get a father figure for her? Putting Astoria aside, when they were back in Springvale, Juniper did not have many friends to start with. There were not many opportunities to meet children of the same age.

In the middle of her headache, she suddenly thought of someone. Then, she quickly texted Pierre. 'Juniper is not feeling well. Do you mind keeping her company? Best if you could bring your sons over too.'

She could only think of the Fowlers now—they were the closest people to Juniper.

When Pierre received the text from Selena, he instantly recalled Juniper's pitiful little face. For some reason, he developed an affinity for the young girl.

"Bring the two boys over." Pierre quickly made a call to the Fowler Residence. Next, he changed his clothes in the dressing room. When he was done, Niall happened to enter his office.

"Ah, you arrived at the right moment. Cancel all the meetings this afternoon."

Niall was taken aback because the afternoon meeting was of great importance. It took a month to plan the meeting, and the agenda involved the discussion of a project worth a few billion. A sudden cancelation sounded ridiculous and rash.

"Cut the nonsense!" Pierre appeared displeased. Niall knew that his words would not sway his boss's decision. So, he jumped to another topic. "President Fowler, the investigation you called has produced results."

Pierre finally paused and ordered him, "Tell me."

"Uh, I'm afraid this incident has to do with Miss Yard."

"Which Miss Yard are you referring to?"

"Miss Meredith Yard."