

## Chapter 7 Return to the Hatcher Mansion

Debbie clutched a toy rabbit belonging to Lilly. "Don't worry, Dad, Mum. Lilly left her toy rabbit at home. I'm sure she'll come and get it back."

Only Debbie understood the significance of the rabbit. It was the only present Jean had left her daughter. As a result, Lilly hugged it every day; even as she was nearly beaten to death, she could not bear to let go. Debbie remembered Lilly did not cry despite her constant pinching and yelling. Yet, when she grabbed the bunny and cut off an ear, the little girl immediately burst into tears.

"Are you sure she'll be back?" Stephen looked at the tattered toy and asked skeptically. He did not see any value in the dirty toy rabbit.

Debbie smiled and said confidently, "You wouldn't know this was her favorite toy since you didn't spend much time with Lilly, Stephen. It holds a special place in her heart because her mom left this for her."

Paula pondered for a moment before agreeing with Debbie's analysis. She remembered Lilly always brought the rabbit everywhere she went, including the restroom.

"That's great! I hope she'll be back!" Paula said in exhilaration. She was confident of her abilities to coax a little girl.

Debbie's eyes flickered as she thought, *Lilly will return for the rabbit and the parrot. I'm not certain who owns the parrot, but it resides in the forest behind the Hatcher Mansion. No one can get close to it except for Lilly. Hence, she'll personally return to fetch the parrot. It's impossible to ask anyone to collect it on her behalf.*

"I've already stitched and cleaned the rabbit just now. Lilly will be overjoyed to see it in a good state," Debbie shared.

Stephen hugged his wife and said merrily, "Debbie, you're the best! You're so nice to Lilly, even though she has caused you so much pain. You not only forgave her, but you also fixed her rabbit. I'll repay your kindness when the Hatchers regain our former glory."

Debbie leaned on the man and pretended to be overjoyed. "I wish to help you in any way I can, Stephen."

"Hurry, tidy the place!" Paula instructed Debbie. The servants were dismissed from the mansion after the Hatchers went bankrupt. Hence, there was no one left to instruct except for Debbie. Even though she did as she was told, the woman's eyes flashed with hatred when no one was looking.

A few black Maybachs pulled up outside the porch of Hatcher Mansion. Anyone would be taken aback by the eight charming young men alongside the mighty Hugh Crawford alighting from the cars. And yet, all of this commotion was to retrieve a toy rabbit.

Debbie, on the other hand, chose to stay on the third floor and observe the events from the balcony. She felt envious when she saw the eight Crawford brothers and was thinking how her life would change if she could win one of the men's hearts.

Debbie's heart stopped when she saw the man wearing a black silk shirt. He pushed his golden-rimmed spectacles on his nose bridge while looking around the room with one hand in his pocket. The man with the badass attitude was none other than Jonas Crawford!

Debbie was ecstatic to see the man of her dreams. Jonas was one of the most famous actors in the country. It was the first time she saw him up close. She covered her mouth to muffle her screams; her heart raced rapidly, and her face reddened in excitement.

The Hatchers hurried to the gate to greet the Crawfords right away.

"Greetings, my in-laws. Welcome, Mr. Anthony!" Stephen called out warmly and extended his hand for a handshake. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm was met with a lukewarm response as Anthony gave him a side glance and kept his hands in his pockets.

"Is this your first time visiting the South City? I was wondering why the weather is excellent today. It must be because you have decided to visit our city. Come on in!" Richard said to Hugh gleefully.

"The weather is great indeed. It's cold enough to send my granddaughter to the hospital. The Hatchers are indeed one-of-a-kind," Hugh hissed in response.

While Richard was still trying to recover from his embarrassment, Paula laughed and said, "You're a funny man, Mr. Crawford. We have always been taking good care of Lilly. She was throwing a tantrum and argued with Debbie the other day. Her father decided to teach her a lesson so that she will mind her manners." She turned to look at Lilly lovingly, "Give Grandma a hug, will you? I haven't seen you for days. I miss you so much!" The little girl bit her lower lip and clutched Gilbert's shirt.

"Don't you think it's an odd way to teach manners? You caused my granddaughter to have broken bones and forced her to kneel in the snow with her pajamas," Hugh hissed.

The Hatchers wore fearful expressions like they were even afraid to breathe. They felt they had received their just punishments now that they were bankrupt, and Stephen was brutally attacked.

"Please, come in! In any case, Stephen is Lilly's father. A child needs to have a fatherly presence while growing up." Richard nudged Hugh into the house as he spoke, having recognized the importance of maintaining a cordial relationship with their in-laws.

Stephen caught on the elderly man's signal and added, "That's right. I'm sorry for hurting you, Lilly. Will you forgive Daddy? I shouldn't have been so harsh even when you made a mistake." As he approached Lilly, he wore a guilty and pained expression. The bodyguards, however, stopped him before he could even get close.

The little girl kept her eyes on Gilbert and refused to look at Stephen. The latter thought in exasperation, *what the hell is wrong with her? Doesn't she know how important this meeting is for the Hatcher family? Why is she throwing a tantrum?*

"Lilly," Stephen said in a deep voice. She always followed his instructions when he used a threatening tone. The little girl trembled slightly when she heard the familiar tone.

The Crawford brothers' resentment grew as they witnessed Lilly's fear. They chided themselves for showing Stephen mercy the other day.

"There's no need to discuss this further. We're here to pick up some things," Gilbert said.

Hugh tightened his grip on the walking cane and said coldly, "Where's Lilly's rabbit?"

Paula nodded. "It's here. However, it was damaged when it was thrown into the snow. Luckily, Lilly's aunt picked it up and fixed it for her. Why don't we all come in and take a seat!"

A few men in black barged into the house after Anthony raised his hand. Stephen's first instinct was to cover his head, fearful of being beaten again. However, he looked up awkwardly when he realized the men were entering the house.

"Are you afraid?" Anthony challenged. The man did not display such fear when he punished Lilly.

"It's my fault. All of this is my fault. Lilly, shall we speak inside?" Stephen coaxed.

Just as Gilbert was about to reject his offer, Lilly tugged his sleeve and said, "Uncle Gilbert..." She looked into the house forlornly as she thought about her parrot.

The Hatchers were overjoyed to see her response because they had assumed she had given in. *She's just a little girl and this is her home. How can she disown her father and refuse to return home?*

"Come on in. Welcome to the Hatcher Mansion!" Paula and Richard said enthusiastically, excited to welcome the Crawfords.

Anthony looked at Lilly, perplexed as to why she wanted to return to the Hatcher Mansion. But, whatever the case may be, he would wholeheartedly support her decision.

Even though the Hatchers' mansion was quite large and well-furnished, the affluent Crawfords thought it was subpar. They entered the house with a look of disgust as they thought about how Lilly had spent her days at the worn-down place.

The bodyguard searched through the house and brought all the toys to the ground floor. Lilly broke free from Gilbert's arms and ran to pick up the dirtiest rabbit toy in the pile.

*I'm here for you, Bunny. I'll never abandon you.* Lilly smiled as she looked lovingly at her toy. Apart from the toy rabbit, she had another good friend - Polly.

Lilly dashed to the backyard, but stopped halfway and returned to grab Gilbert's hand.

Debbie hid in the backyard, patiently awaiting Lilly's arrival. She knew the little girl would go out of her way to find the parrot because it was afraid of strangers. As a result, all she needed was Lilly to appear in order to carry out her plan...