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Chapter 170 Miracle

I couldn't get away from Iris fast enough.

She probably felt I was being very rude. Vaguely, from somewhere far away, a little voice in my head told me that this episode wasn't going to be great for my relationship with her. But I had to get somewhere private right away regardless.

I just needed a moment to breathe. To be by myself and think about what she'd just told me.

I played out in my mind the scenario she described. Over and over. Many times.

I could see it vividly. I don't know if it's because I was holding Iris's hand while she told me the story, or if it was just... so familiar... the words and actions of this person...

She was calm when she told me the story, too. I believed that she was being truthful.

But she misheard part of that conversation that preceded her shooting. Iris thought Scarlet inexplicably said, "Red."

The whole thing made a lot more sense if what she really said was, "Reg." To the blue-eyed man that then shot an innocent bystander in an impulsive act of violence, after being triggered into an extreme rage.

"I said, don't call me that name!" – I heard those words so many times over the years.

That was my father's consistent, insane reaction when people called him by his legal first name, the one he shared with Grandfather and my great-grandfather as well. Reginald. Or Reg, if you really, really wanted to make him mad.

I have no idea how or why my father and Scarlet ever came to be acquainted. How or why he would have gotten involved in an assassination plot. But that strange little sequence of events that Iris recalled... it only made sense if my father was the man in question.

Scarlet, with Iris's unwitting assistance, poisoned Alexandra.

And my father, her ally, helped cover it up. Shot the witness in the head, and left her somewhere for dead.

I thought that I'd been numbed to the fact that the man who raised me was a criminal.

But I was discovering now that I'd always believed there was a line. A line he wouldn't cross. A level of bad he wouldn't stoop to. I thought my father was a scoundrel, a shady character, and I knew he had little regard for the law. But I didn't know he was capable of killing.

Ten years ago, when this happened, I was thirteen and living in my father's home. Had he returned to our house that night with Iris's blood on his hands? Or Alexandra's?

I could never have known then. But now I knew. That my father was guilty of crimes more severe than I thought him capable of.

Alexander's mother was dead, and he'd spent the past decade in agony over it. My father may have not been the only culprit involved in her killing, but he was there. He shouldered blame. And he pulled the trigger on a gun while it was pressed against a young woman's head.

And I had foolishly defended him. Told Alexander he'd been lazy in his investigation and prejudiced against my family.

I felt terrible.

When I returned from my interview with Iris, I found my husband reclined on our bed, cradling Lexi in the crook of one arm. She was asleep, and he was just gazing down at her. Admiring her while she snoozed peacefully. I wondered how long he'd been like this.

My Alpha was such a big man, and so adorably sweet and careful with our little baby girl. I loved to watch him with her.

When he saw me in the doorway he mouthed "hey" and got up slowly. He took the baby into the nursery and put her down in the crib so she could keep sleeping while we talked.

"You okay?" he asked after slowly, carefully closing the door behind him. His voice was conscientiously quiet, though not quite a whisper, and he had the baby monitor in his hand. I watched him double check that the volume was up all the way, and appreciated that.

"Well, not really, Alex. I need to tell you something."

"What's wrong, sweetheart? It didn't go well with Iris? What did she do?"

"That's not it. She was actually very compliant. And she told me all about your mother's death, Alex. And her shooting. She told me everything."

I needed to sit down. I moved to the bed and sat on the edge, patting the spot beside me to ask my husband to come and join me.

I could hear his heart racing as he sat. It was like a drumbeat. But Alexander just blinked at me silently and waited for me to continue.

I started with my perception of Iris's energy and emotions, when she and I first met up. And then talked him through every part of our interaction. Ending with the story, and how I interpreted what Iris called the part that "didn't make sense."

"You were right, Alex. You were right about my father all along. The other day, I shouldn't have accused you of targeting him without reason. I guess I just never imagined him capable of this level of violence. I thought perhaps he was implicated in the plot

by way of shady business dealings, or something, but... to actually be the one who pulled the trigger on an innocent witness. I just didn't know he could do that."

Alexander had been looking away while I spoke. When finally he turned to look at me, his honey-gold eyes were soft.

"And you're sure she's telling the truth? And remembering this all correctly?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know if I could be sure. But believe it." I nodded sadly. "And, Alex, I'm so sorry."

Alexander

There was something hollow and anticlimactic about this moment.

What should have been a satisfying revelation turned out to be only a heartbreaking confirmation of something I'd pretty much already known. And the culprits implicated were either missing or dead already.

And, worst of all, it was just one more thing that was hurting Fiona.

"You don't need to apologize." I took hold of both her hands. "You're not responsible for your father's actions, Fi. You are innocent in this."

She nodded. "I know that. But I understand it now. And Alex, nothing I can say or do could ever undo the pain he caused. But I'm sorry, my love. I may not have been involved, but I still must apologize on my family's behalf. I'm so deeply sorry for what he did to you and yours."

This heartfelt apology from Fiona, though she should not have been the one to make it... it did something unexpected to me.

It gave me an immediate, intense feeling of closure.

"I owe you an apology, too. Your father's guilt still doesn't justify my uncle's actions. Or my own. It was still wrong to kill him. All that did was hurt you and put us all at risk. I'm so sorry too, baby."

"I know you are." She smiled and squeezed my hands. "I accept your apology. But, as you say, we're not responsible for our family member's actions. It was wrong of me to blame you for Conrad."

I leaned in to give my Luna a kiss. "I love you," I whispered into her mouth.

She stroked the side of my face and pulled back an inch to give me the most beautiful, heart-melting look of adoration, said "I love you too," and then gratefully returned her sweet, minty lips to mine.

The second that I moved closer to Fiona, put a hand on her thigh and began to run it up her body, Lexi started crying.

Our daughter had a special talent for interrupting moments like that.

"I'll get her." I gave Fiona a kiss on the forehead as I stood up.

Lexi was wailing, but only until I touched her. She began to quiet down as soon as I picked her up, making gentle shushing noises and bringing her in close to my chest. She just wanted to be held.

Soon the baby was soothed, and I repositioned her in my arms. Cradled her in the crook of my elbow so I could look down at her sweet face.

Those eyes. I felt like they saw right through me.

It was just so strange. So strange and so unlikely that it would all turn out this way.

Fiona's father killed my mother. And then my uncle killed her father.

But then, along came Alexis.

With my mother's pale blonde hair, and Fiona's father's pale blue eyes.

Her existence was so unlikely.

And she was an angel. She was better than all of us.

She was a miracle.