

## Chapter 12 Missing

### Moana

I felt my heart sink into the pit of my stomach at the attendant's words.

"She left quite a while ago. Did you not pick her up?"

"Hold on," I replied, walking away briskly and trying to stay calm as I dialed the penthouse phone number into my cell phone and asked the concierge to direct me to Edrick's suite. This had to be some misunderstanding. Surely Ella was safely home. Maybe Amy or Lily got confused with the schedule and picked her up without letting me know.

"Hello?" Selina's voice said on the other line after a few rings.

"Selina," I said, trying to sound as calm and collected as possible, "did Amy or Lily pick up Ella from her training?"

Selina was silent for a few moments before responding. "No. That's your job." Her voice sounded stern and cold, but I could sense a hint of fear behind it as she seemed to put two and two together. I knew that Selina cared for Ella just as much as I did, and the last thing she would ever want would be for something bad to happen to Ella.

"f\*\*k," I whispered.

"Excuse me?" Selina growled, irritated by my choice of language.

"I'm sorry," I responded. "I got stuck in traffic when I was coming back to pick Ella up, and... She's gone."

I could hear Selina gasp audibly on the other end of the line. “You weren’t there for her when she was finished with her training?”

I felt a knot form in my stomach. “I’m sorry, I just thought—”

“No excuses,” Selina said, her voice quivering with anger. “Find her.”

Before I could say anything else, Selina abruptly hung up the phone. The room spun around me as I stared down at my phone screen, but I knew I had to act quickly for Ella’s sake. Collecting myself as best I could, I ran out of the training facility and sprinted up to the car where the driver was waiting, climbing into the passenger seat.

“Took you long eno— Are you alright? Where’s Ella?” he asked, looking at me confusedly.

“She took off while I was gone,” I said hastily as tears streamed down my cheeks, trying to rack my brain as to where Ella might have run off to. Before I had left, I had mentioned to her that I was going to be at the orphanage...

“Take me to the orphanage in the Waterside District,” I said to the driver. “I have a feeling she went there to look for me.”

Nodding solemnly, and with an angry look on his face, the driver stepped on the gas and peeled away from the curb. I quickly buckled my seatbelt and held onto the door handle for dear life as he sped down the road, passing other vehicles at dangerous speeds. As we flew down the city streets, all I could think of was Ella. Would I get to her in time?

All of a sudden as we were speeding through the city streets, I saw a familiar little head of blonde hair walking at an intersection a little ways away, all by herself... And at the same time, I saw a black sports car with tinted windows barreling down the road at breakneck speeds, swerving this way and that as a drunk girl stood through the sunroof, hooting and hollering like a maniac.

“Ella!” I screamed, pointing. The driver slammed on the brakes and came to a screeching halt. Without thinking, I leaped out of the car and started running toward Ella.

Everything moved in slow motion. I found myself running faster than I ever had before. I lunged into the street, my arms outstretched for Ella as she stood frozen in the middle of the crosswalk just as the sports car was headed directly for her...

I felt an impact. I shut my eyes as my body slammed into Ella's, and together we tumbled to the other side of the street.

I opened my eyes, panting, and looked down at Ella in my arms.

We were safe. Somehow, I had managed to get both of us out of the way of the speeding sports car, which continued to careen down the city street as though they hadn't just been about to hit a little girl.

“Mina, was it YOU?”

“Yea...I tried...” It took Mina a while to answer, and she seemed to be so exhausted.

“That was... incredible.”

Our driver came running as passersby stood murmuring to each other on the sidewalk, pulling out their phones to snap pictures.

“Are you two alright?” the driver asked, helping me stand as I held the crying Ella in my arms. Without a word as I was too stunned and relieved to speak, I nodded and followed him back to the car.

...

Edrick was furious when we got back to the penthouse. He came running into the lobby as we arrived and ripped Ella out of my arms, who only cried harder.

“You should’ve stayed there for the duration of her training!” he shouted in front of the lobby staff. “I should fire you on the spot!”

Ella’s wails grew in volume as tears streamed down my own cheeks. “I’m sorry, Edrick,” I sobbed. “I didn’t know—”

“Please don’t be mad at Moana!” Ella cried, wrapping her small arms around her father’s neck and tugging on him. “It wasn’t her fault! I didn’t listen and I left! I got lost, but then Moana came and saved me like a superhero!”

Edrick’s icy stare softened at his daughter’s words, but I could tell that he was still furious, as he had every right to be after his daughter almost got kidnapped.

Once we were back upstairs in the penthouse and Ella was passed out asleep in bed after the ordeal, I hesitantly walked over to Edrick’s study as I feared the worst. If he was going to yell at me again like he did in the lobby, I considered quitting. It was an honest mistake, and I thought that I at least deserved to be treated with some basic decency since the situation had turned out alright in the long run.

“Where did you go?” he snarled through his teeth when I entered the study. “Why weren’t you there when she was finished with training?”

“I went to the orphanage,” I admitted quietly, omitting the complete reason why I was there. “I’m sorry. I just wanted to visit, and I thought Ella would be safe.”

Edrick raised an eyebrow. “The orphanage?”

I nodded. “I grew up there,” I responded. “I like to visit the children sometimes.”

Edrick was silent for a few moments before responding. “Don’t let it happen again.” His voice was cold, but at least he wasn’t yelling at me any longer.

“If you are going to the orphanage again, make sure Ella has someone with her.”

I nodded, a little surprised by how Edrick became forgiving. “I will. I’m so sorry, Edrick.”

Edrick said nothing else. I watched as he silently turned his back to me, and took that as my cue to leave. As I left the study, I felt hot tears prick at the backs of my eyes — but at the same time, I was just relieved to have found Ella in time, and that I still had my job.