

Chapter 18 The Case of the Mystery Earrings

Moana

I finished preparing lunch with the maids and helped them to set the meal out on the dining room table. Although I had already eaten a quick meal in the kitchen earlier as we prepared the food, it was still my duty as Ella's nanny to stay with her and help her if she needed anything. Besides, the grumpy look on Ella's face whenever Kelly was around only softened when I was near her, which made me want to be near her even more as support.

I sat beside Ella for the duration of the lunch, helping her to cut her food, keep her clothes clean, and get her whatever she needed. Edrick, Verona, and Kelly spoke with each other about trivial things as though I wasn't even there, which was fine with me. If they had tried to involve me in their conversation, I likely wouldn't have known the right things to say. I'd never dealt with such wealthy people in my life, let alone tried to have meaningful conversation with them.

Not being personally involved in the conversation also allowed me to be more observant — and one thing that I observed was that Kelly was being much more quiet and reserved now than she had been before. She absentmindedly picked at her salad with her fork, hardly eating anything at all.

“Pour me some more tea, would you?” Kelly said suddenly, shooting me a look out of the corner of her eyes.

“Right away,” I said, standing and walking around the table to pick up the teapot. I noticed that Kelly kept her eyes intensely focused on me the entire time as I walked back to pour her tea, but I pretended that I didn’t see it.

Kelly was silent for a moment as I poured her tea. I felt her gaze focused on the side of my head, burning furiously.

When I sat down, Kelly took a sip of her tea before speaking again, this time looking at Edrick.

“Whose extra daily necessities were in your room earlier, Edrick?” she asked, setting down her teacup with a clatter.

Edrick raised an eyebrow. “Pardon?”

“I saw earrings on your side table,” she said. “I’m assuming they weren’t yours.”

Verona let out a small gasp and instinctively looked at me.

I felt my heart jump up into my throat, resisting the urge to feel my ears to see if I had put my earrings in that morning. As a knot formed in my stomach, I glanced down at my own tea to see in my reflection that I had not, in fact, put my earrings back in.

“Earrings?” Edrick replied after an uncomfortable pause, sounding so nonchalant it made my stomach sick. “I’m not sure. Sometimes Ella likes to play in there.”

Ella slowly turned her head to look up at me, but said nothing.

There was another long silence. I started to wonder if they all knew, and that Kelly would call Edrick out on his bluff and expose our unexplainable sleeping arrangement. Thankfully, she didn’t say anything else about it. Surprisingly, Kelly seemed somewhat pleased by Edrick’s words and didn’t ask again.

“Edrick,” Kelly said after a few more moments of silence, turning toward him in her seat. “Do you remember when we were kids, and we used to drive our training coaches insane? We used to run off into the woods as wolves together and play instead of attending our training.”

“I do remember,” Edrick replied, almost absentmindedly, as he cut his food with his fork and knife.

Kelly turned back to face me and Ella. “I’m sure you misbehave all of the time for your trainers, don’t you?” she said, reaching out to pinch Ella’s cheek.

Ella frowned and pulled away. “Actually, I always do my training,” she said, her little voice flat and cold.

With a slight hmph, Kelly returned to picking at her salad.

As the luncheon continued, I couldn’t help but feel guilty for my arrangement with Edrick after hearing about how he and his childhood sweetheart used to act together. It felt wrong of me to be participating in this agreement if he had love for Kelly...

And for some reason, hearing about Edrick’s escapades with his childhood lover made me admittedly feel incredibly unhappy.

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After lunch, Verona and Kelly stayed for a while. Ella seemed to get sleepy — although I suspected that she just wanted an excuse to be alone — so I took her to her room. When I finished tucking her in for her nap, I returned to the foyer to see Verona and Kelly preparing to leave. Verona and Edrick were talking quietly about something that seemed important, so I turned away to go to the kitchen and give them space.

“Ah! There she is,” Verona said when she saw me, waving me over before I could walk away. I still felt Kelly’s cold gaze on me as I tentatively walked up to Edrick’s mother. Verona, much unlike Kelly, was smiling a bit and seemed a little more open to my presence than the young woman.

“It was a pleasure meeting you, Mrs. Morgan,” I said politely as I approached. “And you as well, Kelly.”

Kelly seemed to open her mouth to say something, but Verona spoke before she could.

“I was just reminding my son about our upcoming annual family dinner,” Verona said. “It seems he’s forgotten... Or, he just thought he could get out of going this year.” Her eyes slid over to Edrick for a moment, who didn’t seem to react at all.

“Anyway,” Verona continued, looking at me again, “Of course, little Miss Ella’s presence is always appreciated at these dinners. So, I thought it would only be appropriate to invite you as well; the dinners are usually reserved for werewolves, but seeing as you’re Ella’s au pair, it simply wouldn’t feel right to exclude you. Miss Ella seems quite attached to you already, and she’ll need you there to help her if she should need it.”

I was a bit taken aback by Edrick’s mother’s generosity and respect.

“I... Thank you, Mrs. Morgan,” I said with a polite smile. “I’ll look forward to it.”

Verona smiled stiffly, but cordially, and turned back toward Edrick. She reached out and squeezed his forearm, pulling him aside to speak to him privately. While they were absorbed in whatever conversation they were having, Kelly quietly sauntered up to me and stood beside me.

“Give me your hand,” she said coldly. Swallowing, I did as I was told.

I felt my heart drop as she held out her hand and dropped my earrings that she had found on Edrick’s nightstand into my palm, then leaned toward me and whispered into my ear.

“Know your place.”

Edrick and Verona finished their conversation and returned just as I closed my hand around the earrings, my eyes wide.

“I’ll see you soon, darling,” Verona said to Edrick as the elevator doors slid open.

I felt so shocked by Kelly’s words that I continued to stand there, motionless, as the two women got onto the elevator. The last thing I saw before the elevator doors closed was Kelly’s icy stare, fixed on me.

As I discreetly slipped my earrings into my pocket, I knew that I couldn’t continue my sleeping arrangement with Edrick... Not when he had a girlfriend.