

## Chapter 28 Rival Brothers

### Moana

Ethan dropped Ella and I off at the penthouse. As I stood on the sidewalk, I had just promised Ethan that I would go to his art exhibit... But now, as I looked over my shoulder to see Edrick standing in the doorway, I wished that I hadn't.

Edrick stormed toward us and took Ella by the hand, shooting me an angry look before stooping down to glare at Ethan through the car window.

“How many times do I have to tell you to stop coming to my home?” Edrick growled. Before Ethan could respond, Edrick turned on his heel and stormed inside with Ella jogging behind him to keep up on her tiny legs.

“Edrick, what's the matter?” I called, running after him. “The usual driver got stuck in traffic. You can't seriously be that angry—”

The elevator doors open. Edrick stepped in with Ella, and I followed. I could feel him avoiding my gaze as he pushed the button that would take us back up to the penthouse.

“What were you doing with him to begin with?” Edrick snarled, quietly so as not to frighten Ella.

“I saw him at the orphanage. He volunteers there sometimes.”

“So you intentionally lied to me in order to go see him?”

I took a step back, shaking my head. “No. It was just a coincidence.”

All of a sudden, just as Edrick was opening his mouth to say something else, Ella chimed in. "Please don't be mad, daddy," she pleaded, tugging on Edrick's pant leg. He took a deep breath, shutting his eyes for a moment, before stooping down and scooping her up into his arms. As he did, I could see the tension in his shoulders start to slip away.

"It's alright, Princess," he said, although there was still a hint of icy sharpness in his voice and in his gaze as his eyes flickered up to me.

The elevator doors slid open again into the penthouse with a ding. I lingered for a few moments, my heart pulsating as I watched Edrick carry Ella into the living room. He set her down and whispered something to her, to which she nodded and walked off to her room, before he turned back to face me.

"My office. Now."

Reluctantly, I followed Edrick to his office. I could feel the prying eyes of the maids and Selina on my back as I walked behind him, but I tried my best to ignore them. Once the door was shut behind us, I watched as Edrick stormed over to the window; his shoulders were tense once more as he glared out at the view of the city below.

"All I ask is for you to listen to me," Edrick said, his voice low and controlled. "I've done everything I can to make you comfortable in this place. I even allowed you to attend a personal family gathering, and for some reason, you latch onto Ethan like your life depends on it."

"You're overthinking things," I replied. I took a few steps toward Edrick, but stopped in the middle of the room as he turned around to face me with fury in his eyes. "I never intended on seeing Ethan today. It really was a coincidence; you can ask Sophia, the director there, if you really don't believe me. I spent an hour with the children today before Ethan ever showed up."

Edrick scoffed. “You claim that seeing him today was only a coincidence, but then you pull up to my home with him in the driver’s seat. Why couldn’t you have just waited for the driver to come to you?”

“Because I was afraid that you would lose trust in me again if I showed up late with Ella after what happened last time,” I replied.

“And what sort of trust do you think you would gain by going directly against my wishes and spending private time with Ethan?”

I was silent for a moment as I chose my words carefully, feeling Edrick’s cold gaze boring a hole through my head. Finally, I spoke. “Ethan is a kind and compassionate man who goes out of his way on a regular basis to donate his time to disadvantaged people. Anyone would applaud their brother for being so generous and down to earth, but not you. Are you jealous that people like him or something? Is that what it is?”

Now, it was Edrick who fell silent. He turned back to face the window again as an attempt to hide his anger, but I could see his shoulders trembling with rage as he stood in front of me.

“Maybe you should consider being compassionate for once, and then people will like you,” I said, lowering my voice as I tried to quell my anger.

Edrick scoffed again. “Compassion for disadvantaged people is a waste of time, and you’re a prime example of that.”

I took a step back, feeling tears well up in my eyes. “Once again,” I said, taking another step back toward the door, “you feel the need to reduce me to a charity case. Don’t forget that you’re seemingly incapable of even sleeping without me — which, after the way you’ve spoken to me today, is not happening tonight.”

I turned around, swinging the study door open.

My body froze as I heard the next string of words that came out of Edrick’s mouth.

“You don’t get to decide that.”

...

It seemed that I did, indeed, have no choice but to sleep with Edrick that night. I made sure to stuff two pillows between us, and the following morning, I got up quickly to start my day without so much as looking in Edrick’s direction. I was relieved a little while later when he left for work without a word.

“Is daddy still mad about Uncle Ethan?” Ella asked, looking up from her breakfast of toast and sunny side up eggs to stare wistfully at the door.

“No,” I lied. “He’s just tired.”

“Oh.”

I watched as Ella poked at her eggs with her fork for a bit before pushing the plate away and hopping off of her chair.

“Ella,” I said, peering over the table at her plate, “you hardly ate your breakfast.”

Ella shrugged. Instead of answering, she merely said, “Can I watch some TV?”

I sighed, standing, and reluctantly nodded. Ella skipped off toward the living room; as I cleaned up her half-eaten meal, I heard the TV click on. It sounded like the news... And there was a familiar voice coming from the television.

“I really cannot stress how much Mr. Morgan’s kind donation will mean to these children,” Sophia’s voice said. “This generosity will help see that the children are fed throughout the winter.”

I paused as I scraped the half-eaten eggs off of the plate, as did Amy, Lily, and Selina.

“Are they talking about our Mr. Morgan?” Lily asked.

Selina said something in response, but her voice faded away as I found myself walking toward the living room as if in a trance. Indeed, Sophia, the director of the orphanage, was standing on screen being interviewed by a man in a suit. At the bottom of the screen was text that read, “WERECORP CEO DONATES HEFTY SUM TO LOCAL ORPHANAGE”.

My eyes widened as Edrick’s picture appeared on the screen.