

## Chapter 47 Secret Kindness

Moana

“Wake up, Moana! Wake up!” I awoke the next morning to the sound of Ella’s voice and the feeling of the bed shaking beneath me. The sun was shining blindingly bright through the window, and outside, I could hear the sound of the city bustling below. I could hear the sound of distant music; I had completely forgotten, but there was supposed to be an event in the park across the street today, and Ella was excited to go.

“Come on!” Ella exclaimed as she jumped up and down excitedly on my bed. “Wake up! Let’s go outside!” I groaned, feeling my stomach turn from the bed moving beneath me. If Ella continued her jumping, she would make me throw up.

“Give me a minute, Ella,” I said, but she wasn’t listening. She was too busy jumping and giggling and chattering about getting ice cream at the park.

I didn’t think before I spoke next, and as soon as I did, I realized how my voice sounded. I felt so nauseous from being jostled around that I didn’t consider how I might have come across as being mean. “Ella,” I said firmly, “stop jumping on the bed. Right now.”

Ella suddenly fell silent. Almost as soon as the words escaped my mouth, I knew that I had made a mistake. Without another word, Ella sniffled and

quickly jumped off the bed, running from the room before I could stop her.

“Ella, honey, I’m sorry,” I said, forgetting my nausea as I quickly climbed out of bed and went after her. I walked next door to her room, but when I tried to turn the doorknob, I realized that she had locked herself in.

I sighed and knocked on the door. “Ella?” I called. “I’m really sorry for snapping at you. Please come out.”

Through the door, I heard a snuffle, followed by a muffled “Go away!”

“What’s going on?” Selina’s voice suddenly said from behind me.

I sighed and turned to face the housekeeper. “I wasn’t feeling well and I snapped at Ella for jumping on my bed,” I admitted. “She locked herself in and won’t talk to me now.”

Selina let out a sigh herself. “Children can be so fickle sometimes,” she replied. “She’ll get over it.” I nodded and went to return to my room to get dressed for the day, but Selina stopped me. “Something is going on with you,” she said, lowering her voice. “I can tell.”

I frowned and shook my head. “I’m just sick with food poisoning,” I lied. “Ella jumping on the bed made me nauseous—”

“You’ve only eaten the food I’ve prepared, and I never prepare spoiled food.” Selina’s voice was stern, but not entirely cold. I didn’t know what to say; she was right about the food, but I couldn’t bring myself to admit my pregnancy just yet. If I was being honest, I still wasn’t certain if I would tell anyone, as the possibility of aborting the pregnancy was still on the table.

“I... I had a snack from a food truck the other day,” I lied again. “It probably came from there.”

Selina didn’t seem to believe me. She narrowed her eyes and stared at me for a moment, but didn’t say anything else. With a nod, she turned on her

heel and returned to her work. I let out a sigh of relief before returning to my room to shower and get ready for the day... and to take another anti-nausea pill.

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Ella wound up coming out of her room not long after I was finished getting ready. I apologized for yelling at her and she apologized for disturbing my sleep so unceremoniously, and we went on with our day. I even kept my promise of taking her to the park for ice cream; the fresh air actually helped with my nausea, and we spent the entire day outside without realizing it. By the time we came back, it was already dinnertime, and after we ate I sat with Ella on the floor next to the coffee table and helped her with her coloring.

At some point, however, I must have fallen asleep without realizing it.

I woke up an unknown amount of time later to the feeling of someone watching me. As I cracked my eyes open, I realized that I was laying on the floor. Edrick was standing over me with his arms folded across his chest.

“Wake up,” he said, his voice sounding annoyed. “Why did you fall asleep on the floor? It’s hardly appropriate.”

I groggily pushed myself up onto my palms and started to stand. “I’m so sorry,” I said. “Where is Ella?”

“I already put her to bed.” Edrick sounded even more annoyed now and began to walk away before I could apologize again. Suddenly, as I started to stand, I felt another bout of sickness come over me; this time, it presented itself not only in the form of nausea, but in the form of a pounding headache. I felt myself stumble as I tried to get to my feet.

I started to fall, but Edrick quickly realized what was happening and leaped forward, catching me in his strong arms. I lingered there for a moment, half because I was unable to right myself due to how fast my head was spinning and half because the warmth of his embrace was too comforting for me to want to tear myself away.

My face went red. "I... I'm sorry," I stammered, attempting to stand again as Edrick silently stared down at me with his steely gray eyes. His look of annoyance had changed to one of concern, although I could tell that he was trying to hide it. "I just got a little dizzy..."

As I tried to stand again, however, the dizziness only returned. I felt myself fall into Edrick's arms again, and then I suddenly felt him lift me up as though I weighed nothing.

"Here," he said, walking over to the couch and laying me down. I felt my body relax into the plush pillows, but at the same time, I already missed the feeling of his arms around me.

I started to speak and tried to push myself up to a sitting position, but he shushed me and gently pushed me back down. "It's alright. Just sleep here."

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I wasn't sure exactly how long I was asleep. All I knew was that, almost as soon as Edrick laid me down on the sofa, I found myself slipping into sleep without fuss for the first time in days. The pregnancy must have been exhausting me more than I expected it to.

When I woke up, the living room was dark, illuminated only by the soft glow of the city lights coming in through the window. As I blinked the fogginess out of my eyes, I came to realize that I was lying beneath a

warm blanket with a soft pillow under my head. Had Selina or one of the maids come and tucked me in?

I slowly sat up and looked around, realizing very quickly that it wasn't Selina or either of the maids that had taken such care to make me comfortable...

Because as I looked over at the large armchair across from me, I saw Edrick sleeping soundly.