

Chapter 49 Call The Midwife

Moana

After I hung up with Ethan, I felt a bit lighter with the prospect of enjoying dinner with a friend. I met Ella out in the foyer after that, and we went over to the farmers' market.

“Come on, Moana!” Ella yelled excitedly, pulling on my hand as we crossed the street to the park that was bustling with people.

She looked absolutely adorable in her little blue and white checkered sundress and her big, floppy sun hat with the blue ribbon that wiggled when she moved her head.

The stone pathway around the park was lined with various vendor stalls as we entered. Much of it was produce and canned goods, but there were also stalls with soft pretzels, face painting for children, handmade toys and clothing, and more. I had just deposited my first paycheck from Edrick, and had some money put aside after paying off a large chunk of my student loans. I double checked before we left the penthouse this time to make sure that I had my wallet, in order to avoid a repeat of the theme park.

As the morning marched on, Ella and I slowly made our way around to all of the stalls. I bought us both soft pretzels to eat on a bench together, smiling as I watched Ella happily swinging her legs next to me, then took her to get her face painted. After that, we stopped at the stalls with the

handmade toys and clothing, where I bought Ella a little handmade stuffed duck. At this stall, there was a rack of womens' dresses for sale.

Ella reached out her little hands and tugged on one of the dresses. It was a long, flowy dress in a sky blue color.

“Moana, this is so pretty!” she said, pointing. “You could match me!”

“I take it that blue is someone's favorite color?” the attendant asked, looking at Ella with a big smile.

Ella nodded matter-of-factly. “Mhm. I love blue.”

“I'll tell you what,” the attendant said, standing and coming over to check the price on the tag before looking at me. “If you want to try it on, I'll give you a twenty-five percent discount. I think this color would be lovely on you.”

“Oh, I don't know,” I replied, feeling my face get red. “I don't really have anywhere to wear something like that.”

“It's just a cotton dress,” the attendant chimed in with a wink. “Besides, a pretty girl like you probably goes on plenty of dates with your husband.”

I didn't feel like correcting the attendant, and between her affectatious smile and Ella's pleading look, I finally agreed. “Okay,” I said, to which Ella squealed excitedly. “I'll try it on.”

The attendant grinned and took the dress off of the rack, then led me over to the back of the tent, where there was a curtain in the corner. She pulled the curtain aside to reveal a tiny makeshift dressing room with a standing mirror.

“Wait here, Ella,” I said, stepping inside and closing the curtain. I sighed once I was inside and held the dress up to myself; it was a pretty color, and the shape was nice. Maybe I could dress it down a bit to wear as an everyday dress, or to go out for lunch on my little crepe dates with Ella... Or, perhaps, I could wear it to my date with Ethan.

I quickly slipped off my own plain dress and slipped on the blue one. My eyes widened as I looked at myself in the mirror; it really was beautiful on me. It reached down to my ankles and the skirt flowed when I moved, but the waist fit snugly to show off my curves. It had two thin straps that tied on my shoulders with soft, silky ribbons.

I stepped out of the dressing room and twirled.

“What do you think?” I asked.

“Oh, it looks lovely on you!” the attendant said as she clasped her hands together. Meanwhile, Ella squealed again in delight.

“Will you wear it today?” Ella asked, jumping up and down. “Please? I want to match!”

I looked down at myself, wondering if I looked out of place with nothing else on but my tote bag, my sandals, and my sun hat, but decided that it was worth it to make Ella happy.

When we arrived back at the penthouse, I began to feel ill on the elevator. I hardly made it to the bathroom before I began to retch. When I was finished, I stood and leaned over the sink, taking deep breaths to soothe my nerves as the feeling of nausea lingered and the pounding in my head intensified.

Suddenly, I heard someone clear their throat. I jumped and whirled around on my feet to see Selina standing in the doorway.

“Oh, g-good morning, Selina,” I said, my voice shaking slightly from the recent vomiting spell in combination with the shock of seeing her standing there.

Without speaking, she suddenly walked toward me and brusquely cupped my breast in her hand with her brow furrowed.

“Hey!” I shouted, jumping back and smacking her hand away as my face went bright red. “What are you doing?”

Selina frowned. “Your breasts are heavy. Are you sure you’re not pregnant?”

My heart raced. I shook my head vigorously. “I already told you I have food poisoning. Why do you keep fixating on it?”

Selina’s frown deepened even more and she narrowed her eyes. “I was a midwife for many years, you know,” she said. “I know a pregnant woman when I see one. But if you want to continue to lie to everyone, that’s your choice.”

Without another word, Selina turned on her heel and left my room.

I scoffed incredulously at the old woman’s forthright attitude. Of course she was correct, but I couldn’t bring myself to admit the truth... Especially not now that Edrick had been so blatantly cruel to me over the past several days. I still wasn’t sure whether I wanted to bring a child into a situation like that, where it would no doubt be treated just as cruelly by its own father, and I didn’t want to tell anyone about the pregnancy if I was just going to have an abortion.

After rinsing out my mouth with mouthwash, I walked back out to my bedroom and paused in front of the mirror. The blue dress really was beautiful. I turned this way and that in the mirror, admiring how the bodice fit so perfectly and how the skirt twirled when I moved — and then, without thinking, I turned to the side to look at my belly, and I imagined how it would look and feel eight months from now.

I ran my hands over my belly and closed my eyes, imagining the feeling of the little one inside of me. I wondered if it would be a little girl like Ella, or a little boy. I wondered if the child would have red hair like me.

I had always wanted children. Just... not like this.

But I didn't know if I could bring myself to end the pregnancy.

Later that night, after dinner, I put Ella to bed and returned to my room. I took off my dress and hung it in the closet, then walked over to the bathroom to shower and get ready for bed.

As I passed the bathroom sink, however, I did a double take and furrowed my brow.

Someone — likely Selina — had placed a box of pregnancy tests on the sink.

Part of me was somewhat annoyed at the housekeeper's blunt way of doing things, but I couldn't deny the fact that there was another, larger, part of me that was moved by her caring nature.

Just then, for the first time in days, I felt Mina's presence coming out much more strongly. While I had felt her here and there over the past few days, she had only come and gone briefly with few words, if any. Now, she seemed stronger and more able to talk.

"It's his baby," she said, matter-of-factly.

"Yes," I replied out loud, keeping my voice low. "It's definitely his."

"Are you going to keep it?" Mina asked.

I paused for a moment, biting my lip thoughtfully before finally answering. "I... I don't know, honestly," I replied. "I want to. I've always wanted a little one of my own, but it's just... It's not the best situation to bring a child into."

Now, Mina was silent for a moment. I could feel an ache in my chest, and I couldn't tell if it was more my pain or hers. Maybe both.

"I'd like you to keep it," she said. "But I understand that he might not accept the baby, or treat it well. Ultimately, it's your decision, I suppose."

That, however, was precisely the problem. It was my decision, and the truth was that I didn't know which decision to make. I knew that I couldn't go on hiding this pregnancy forever. Selina already figured it out, and others would soon start to notice my belly growing.

"Will you be mad at me if I decide not to keep it?" I asked Mina. She didn't answer. In fact, while I was thinking to myself, I hadn't realized that her presence had faded away at all.

I realized one thing, though: I would have to make a decision as soon as possible.