

## Chapter 9 Ashton, Who Exactly Are You?

Freya refrained from asking questions, likely out of respect for Matilda's presence.

Sensing Freya's curiosity, Ashton quickly diverted her attention by guiding her to see the actual Radiant Lotus and Meteor Tears on display.

In the crystal case, these pieces exceeded their promotional posters by tenfold in beauty. He was also awestruck by their breathtaking allure. In contrast, she was captivated and couldn't take her eyes off them.

Her fascination mirrored that of many other women present, who were similarly captivated by the Radiant Lotus and Meteor Tears. They looked at them without blinking.

At that moment, several exhibition staff members, accompanied by a group of fully armed security personnel, approached.

One of them spoke up. "Excuse us, everyone. These two pendants have been purchased by a mysterious tycoon. We need to take them out and hand them over to the buyer now."

Upon hearing that, the crowd reluctantly turned away.

While Freya was somewhat disappointed, she knew she couldn't afford them and that they would be sold eventually.

However, Matilda pouted. She was visibly upset. "It's so frustrating that the blue pendant was sold. Now Daddy can't buy it for you."

Freya smiled wryly.

Ashton smiled affectionately. "Don't worry, Matilda. I'll get her that blue pendant for her birthday. How does that sound?"

"Really?" Matilda's eyes sparkled as she looked up at him with wide eyes. "I knew you'd never disappoint Mommy and me." She added, "Her birthday is the day after tomorrow. She'll be so happy then."

Freya shook her head slightly, not taking his words seriously. She figured he was just trying to cheer up Matilda. At most, he might buy some random blue pendant to make her happy.

There was no reason to linger since the Radiant Lotus and Meteor Tears were sold. So, they wandered around for a while, and soon it was noon.

"Daddy, I'm hungry. Can we get something to eat?" Matilda said while rubbing her belly.

He nodded. "Let's go home and cook something."

"No!" She quickly shook her head and glanced at Freya before whispering, "Mommy's cooking isn't very good."

Freya blushed.

Ashton couldn't help bursting into laughter since it was rare to see her looking so embarrassed.

She glared at him as he tried to stifle his laughter. "Don't worry, Matilda. Daddy will be cooking today, and it'll be delicious."

A quick flash of calculation crossed his eyes. As long as he could keep them accustomed to his cooking, even if she suspected his identity and wanted to terminate him, she might find it hard to follow through.

After grocery shopping, they returned to Freya's place. Ashton took the groceries straight to the kitchen. While he was washing vegetables, she suddenly stood at the kitchen door.

"Freya, I've got this. Go keep Matilda company," he insisted.

But she didn't budge. She looked at him and asked, "Ashton, who exactly are you?" It was the question she'd been holding back.

"I'm your husband and Matilda's dad. Plus, didn't I already explain my background?" Ashton replied with a smile.

Freya's face turned serious. "You know that's not what I mean. Last time, you made a single phone call and got the news channel to clear things up for me. You said it was through a friend, and I believed you. But this time? You must know who Everly is. If you're just a retired soldier, why is she so respectful to you?"

He rubbed his nose. "Can I just say I've only met her once? I have no idea why she's being so nice to me."

He had only met Everly once, and yesterday, she wasn't nice to him. He had no idea why she'd had such a sudden change of heart overnight.

Freya studied his eyes. They were clear and honest, with no sign of deceit. She frowned slightly. Could she be overthinking things?

"Daddy, I want to help. Can I help you wash the vegetables?" Matilda's voice echoed from the living room, and she hurried into the kitchen.

Freya wanted to inquire further, but time was pressing. She warned, "I don't care who you are. But if you ever hurt Matilda, I will never forgive you."

Ashton sighed deeply. "I can't even protect you properly. How could I ever imagine hurting you?"

Her heart fluttered slightly.

Just then, Matilda arrived in the kitchen.

"Matilda, let's help Daddy wash the vegetables," Freya said, quickly composing herself and smiling.

The three of them happily pitched in together in the kitchen. Soon, a delicious lunch was ready.

"Wow! It smells so good." Matilda looked at the three dishes and a soup on the table. She eagerly picked up her fork, took a bite, and her eyes widened with delight. Then, she took another big bite and filled her mouth.

"Slow down, Matilda." Freya handed her daughter a glass of water to avoid choking.

"Sorry, but Daddy's cooking is just too delicious," Matilda mumbled with her mouth full. "It beats even fancy restaurant food."

"Really?" Freya skeptically picked up her fork and took a bite. Her eyes lit up with surprise. It was just a simple homemade dish, but in Ashton's hands, it was delicious.

Without any hesitation, she dug in as well. Soon, the three of them had polished off every dish on the table, not leaving a drop of sauce behind.

Matilda patted her full belly and said, "Daddy's cooking is the best. I want to eat his food daily from now on, okay?"

Freya looked at him with hopeful eyes. Her previous doubts about him were completely erased.

Ashton smiled warmly at them. "Of course." He was willing to do anything for his beloved woman and precious daughter, even cook daily.

After a short rest, they took Matilda to the amusement park for the afternoon.

That evening, Matilda looked up at him with big, hopeful eyes. "Daddy, can you stay tonight and sleep with Mommy and me?"

Ashton and Freya exchanged surprised glances. They didn't expect Matilda to bring it up again.

"Matilda, your daddy..." Freya began cautiously.

But Matilda interrupted, and her eyes welled up with tears. "I don't care. I want Daddy to hold me to sleep." She clung to his arm and refused to let go. "All the other kids get to sleep with their parents every night. Why can't I?"

Ashton's heart ached. He knew he owed his daughter a lot, but this decision was up to Freya.

Freya hesitated. She was torn between not wanting to refuse her daughter and being cautious. After all, she had only known him for two days. While he seemed nice, she wasn't sure if letting him stay overnight and share the same bed was safe.

After a moment, Freya made up her mind. "Don't cry, Matilda. Daddy will stay and sleep with us tonight."