

Rewritten 18

Chapter 18

“Yes, when our driver went to pick up Miss Jent today, she didn’t come out of the school. I’ve checked all her usual after-school activities, and she didn’t show up anywhere. I’ve already called the police. Mr. Jardin, what do we do? Nothing could’ve happened to her, could it?” Rosario’s voice was steeped in worry.

Zach handled the steering wheel while punching numbers on his phone. “It shouldn’t have. Madelyn called me a little while ago, and I missed her call. I’m going to start by checking out her favorite spots. Once I find her, I’ll let you know.”

“Alright, alright.”

Rosario hung up, and Zach set his phone aside. Jadie, overhearing their conversation, was alarmed. “How could Madelyn just vanish? Do you think something happened to her?”

“Most likely, she’s gone off somewhere without telling anyone. You don’t need to worry. I’ll drop you off first.”

“I can come with you to look for Madelyn, Zach.”

He shook his head, his voice edged with frost. “No need. I might know where she is.”

‘Madelyn with her arrogant and headstrong ways is used to getting what she wants, probably just annoyed that I ignored her call. It won’t be the first time she’s pulled such a stunt,’ Zach thought, irritated by her actions but knowing he would be the one who would have to take the initiative. He was not overly concerned; in fact, a part of him thought her disappearance might be a blessing.

As the length of the night unfurled, the car eased to a stop in front of an upscale high-rise in the city center. Zach got out, carrying shopping bags, walked around the front of the car, and opened the

passenger door. Jadie stepped out, a vision in her light blue floral dress, long hair cascading over her shoulders, a tall and graceful silhouette under the streetlights.

“Zach, you

should go find Madelyn. I can get up to my apartment on my own.”

Zach handed her the shopping bags, not too heavy, filled with the latest designer clothes.” Alright, just remember to get some rest. Don’t wait up for me.”

“I understand, Zach.”

“Go ahead, I’ll watch you go.”

Feeling the heat rising in her cheeks, Jadie turned away under Zach’s gaze. At that moment, her heart felt like a fawn had taken residence, bouncing wildly against her chest. The cool breeze did nothing to quell the warmth on her face. Ever since returning from her recovery abroad, their relationship, save for the intimate parts, felt akin to a normal couple’s—eating meals together, saying goodnight before sleep, and Zach picking her up after work.

‘Zach and I...’

Jadie could not bear to think about it. With Madelyn in the picture, her chances with Zach were

slim.

She was unsure whether her feelings for Zach were out of dependency or genuine affection. Zach had been her only family throughout her life. They had weathered the toughest of times, sleeping rough on the streets, fighting off vagabonds—they had done it all.

‘If... just if, my feelings for Zach are more than friendly... Does Zach feel the same?’

Her steps quickened as if fearing being halted by the man behind her. She could never hide her thoughts from him. They knew each other too well.

Zach watched until the living room light turned on in her apartment. He settled back into his car, activating the Bluetooth, redialing Madelyn's number. He called and called until the line auto-disconnected, over and over, until his patience wore thin. He sent off a series of messages to Madelyn, a dark scowl on his face.

[Enough with the games, answer the damn phone, Madelyn. Not everyone has the patience for this!]

[Call back, Madelyn!]

[Whatever it is, we can talk privately. Don't make us worry!]

[Madelyn, what are you so angry about?]

The messages were dispatched one after another, but she remained silent. Zach drove through the bustling streets, a sharp look in his eyes. Normally, she would respond before he even had to send a fifth message, but now his words fell into a void.

'What are you up to this time, Madelyn?' he wondered.