

Chapter 3 She Left Two Hours Ago

As the car sped away, Tom, the man occupying the backseat, cleared his throat. "Meredith, there's something important I need to tell you."

He paused, letting his words sink in before continuing, "Once we're back in Northerndale, we'll host a press conference announcing that you're officially the adopted daughter of the Kane family."

This was news to her, something that hadn't been mentioned before. Meredith's gaze was deep and impenetrable, creating an aura of mystery and detachment that made it difficult for anyone to get close to her.

She seemed completely different from the compliant girl she had been just moments ago.

Tom felt a twinge of discomfort under her sharp gaze. Of course, Meredith hadn't been under his guardianship all this time, hence a perpetual distance between them.

Forcing down his unease, he explained, "The Kane family's success has always been heavily dependent on the support of the Hale family. That's how we've managed to reach where we are today. The Hale family's son has taken a fancy to Myra, and they've been engaged for quite some time. To protect the interests and reputation of both families, we've decided to make this arrangement with you."

His biggest fear was that if the Hale family found out the truth and realized that their biological daughter was a country bumpkin, their alliance would crumble.

"Sure," Meredith replied nonchalantly.

She pulled out her phone from her bag, opened a game, and started playing, acting like the conversation was not her concern.

Tom felt a wave of relief wash over him when he saw she didn't raise any objections. He figured that being raised in the country meant she was docile and easily manipulated.

If it weren't for Beulah's constant nagging and the fear that someone might uncover Meredith's identity, which would tarnish the Kane family's reputation, he wouldn't have bothered going to bring her back.

He glanced at Meredith, slumped against the backseat, engrossed in her game. Her thumbs danced across the screen with practiced ease, indicating she was a frequent player.

Tom frowned and glanced at the game, his expression souring as he realized she was playing a no-brainer matching game. His initial goodwill towards his newfound daughter evaporated instantly.

He regretted his decision to bring her back to the Kane family, given her rude behavior and obsession with trivial things. He couldn't help but worry that she would embarrass the Kane family if she went out in public.

But there was more to this game than met the eye. Meredith wasn't just playing some mindless time-waster; she was engaged in a memory-matching challenge. The game shuffled ninety-nine pairs of identical icons, revealed them for one minute, and flipped them over. Meredith had to rely on her impressive memory to recall the positions of the cards and eliminate two identical pairs.

In this particular level, she memorized the cards in just ten seconds. She eliminated all the pairs in forty-eight seconds, with an error rate of only one percent. Despite this impressive feat, she wasn't satisfied with her speed and immediately refreshed the level to start again.

The car pulled up to the airport, and they boarded the plane. Two hours later, they landed at the airport in Northerndale.

Apart from eating, Meredith spent most of the plane ride refreshing the memory-matching game level, determined to break the record.

And she did. Her final attempt took three seconds to memorize, twenty-seven seconds to eliminate all the pairs and had a zero-error rate.

Out of nowhere, a slew of WhatsApp messages popped up.

Piglet: Hey, Raven, are you serious about not accepting any orders?

Piglet: Someone's offering three times your usual rate for a gig. Are you really not considering it?! It's three times! THREE TIMES!!

Meredith clicked her tongue in annoyance and shot back with a word: Nope.

Piglet: Skipping an eight-digit gig? What's your game plan?

Raven: Taking a break.

Piglet: How long then? I need to answer to someone.

Raven: Depending on my mood.

Piglet: Rebellious Raven!

Tom watched Meredith glued to her phone, thinking of her as this internet-addicted girl.

Compared to Myra, who engrossed in study on the plane, they were on different wavelengths.

Tom thought, keeping Meredith's identity under wraps to spare the Kane family from future embarrassment was, without a doubt, the right move.

At the mountain hut, Old Mrs. Reign was busy sun-drying tomatoes in the yard when two men dressed in combat suits approached her from beyond the fence.

The leader, with his chiseled features and imposing physique, seemed like a work of art sculpted by the hands of a divine artisan.

However, a bloodstain on his right chest hinted at a recent injury that had already been treated. Following closely behind was a man with a youthful appearance.

"Excuse me, ma'am," the leader, Zenon, addressed Old Mrs. Reign, retrieving a bloodstained piece of cloth strip from his pocket.

The cloth instantly triggered a sense of caution in Old Mrs. Reign. The embroidery on the cloth was her handiwork!

Recalling Meredith's appearance when she returned that morning and then glancing at the bloodstain on Zenon's chest, she inquired,

"Who are you..."

Zenon noticed the change in Old Mrs. Reign's demeanor and promptly explained gently, "We're part of the country's special forces, currently on a classified mission. This girl helped us capture a criminal and even saved my life. The team needs her to return with us for a mission report, and I also wish to express my gratitude in person."

"Unfortunately, you're late," Old Mrs. Reign's guard eased. "She left two hours ago and won't be back again."

Zenon's brow furrowed slightly. "Where did she go?"

After hesitating, Old Mrs. Reign finally revealed, "She's gone to the Kane family in Northerndale."

"Thank you very much," Zenon acknowledged and turned to leave.

Dalton, catching up with Zenon, asked with a playful grin, "Boss, have you been away from the army for too long? Or is your memory slipping? Since when did the team require a report after completing a mission?"

"Just a minute ago," Zenon replied curtly.

Dalton was left speechless by his retort.

Zenon handed the bloodstained cloth to Dalton and instructed, "Clean it up and bring me the girl's address tomorrow."