

## Chapter 8 I'll Pick You Up Myself

Meredith continued enjoying her meal, her silence contrasting with the tension in the room.

Old Mrs. Kane pushed her fork and spoon away, her appetite suddenly gone.

She watched Meredith devour her food with gusto, finishing every morsel like a famished beggar. Unable to suppress her disdain, she remarked, "Slow down, or you'll choke yourself to death."

"It's okay, Grandma. Meredith probably hasn't had food this good in the mountains. It's her first time, so it's understandable she's going all out. She can take a walk later to burn it off," Myra explained.

While Myra's words sounded like a defense, a closer listen hinted at a sly critique, implying Meredith's rough upbringing made her unfit for such a high-class lifestyle.

Tom, who had initially felt more favorable towards Meredith due to her captivating looks, was repulsed by her behavior. His eyes once again reflected undisguised disdain.

"So, the school matter is settled then," he declared, standing up and preparing to leave.

Meredith finished the last morsel of her food and placed her utensils down. Gracefully wiping the corners of her mouth with a napkin, she said, "I don't like wasting food."

Tom froze in his tracks.

The Kane Group had a modest start, but their operations hadn't been all that great.

The company had been running in the red, and just when they managed to turn a profit, the competition in the industry intensified, leading to thinner profit margins.

In recent years, if it weren't for the Hale family providing crucial business support, they wouldn't be able to enjoy their current comfortable lifestyle.

Making money was no cakewalk, and while Tom hadn't insisted on the family being frugal, he had often emphasized the importance of avoiding unnecessary waste.

"Well, that's a commendable habit," Myra remarked sweetly. In her heart, she thought, *'Sure, keep pretending! Let's see how long you can maintain this act!'*

Meredith ignored Myra's sarcasm and stood up. "I'm going to Quantum. If you can't get me in, don't bother," she declared.

With that, she turned around and headed back to her guest room.

"Did you not hear what I've just said?!" Tom shouted after her.

"Dad, don't get so worked up. Maybe she's just excited about joining me at the same school." Myra hurriedly tried to calm him down.

"Who does she think she is? Acting as if she can just waltz into Quantum! Can she pass the entrance assessment with her grades from the backwoods? Is she trying to embarrass our family?" Tom scolded.

"But Dad, if Meredith never tries, how would we know if she couldn't do it?" Myra countered softly as if genuinely advocating for Meredith,

"Myra's right. If we don't let her try, we'll never know her true potential," Old Mrs. Kane nodded in agreement.

"If she wants to go to Quantum, then let her. From an outsider's perspective, even though she's adopted, we've treated her equally and fulfilled her every need. But whether she can get into Quantum is her own problem."

The idea appealed to Tom, as it allowed him to maintain the Kane family's candor image while squarely placing the responsibility for Meredith's academic success on her shoulders.

If she failed the entrance exam, he could claim that the Kane family had supported her desire, that Quantum Academy had made the best decision based on her qualifications, and then Northerndale First High School would be the only option left. She would have to accept it without complaint.

But if she succeeded, they could bask in the reflected glory of her achievement.

"Myra, you're such a sensible and thoughtful girl," Tom said, patting her shoulder approvingly. "Just make sure you keep the Hale connection strong. When you get hitched, I'll throw you the biggest, fanciest wedding this town has ever seen."

"Thank you, Dad," Myra replied sweetly.

Myra's gaze drifted towards the guest room door where Meredith was staying, inwardly sneered, *'Forget about blood relations. I'll always be the rightful daughter to the Kane family!'*

Meanwhile, Meredith opened WhatsApp in her room and searched for "Whiny Billie."

Due to his persistent nature, Billie, the principal of Quantum Academy, had earned the nickname "Whiny Billie" from Meredith. She even muted his messages to escape the constant barrage of notifications.

Scrolling back through the message history, she found a message from two years ago.

**Whiny Billie:** Hey, Merry, the educational resources in the mountains are limited. Have you considered transferring to Quantum Academy?

**Meredith:** No, thanks.

**Whiny Billie:** Why not? Is it because you don't think our educational resources at Quantum are good enough for you? (Insert a pitiful emoji)

**Meredith:** No reason, and I'm too lazy to come up with one.

**Whiny Billie:** (Insert crying emoji)

Three months later.

**Whiny Billie:** Hello! The fall semester is about to begin in September. Are you considering Quantum yet? If not, I'll ask again tomorrow.

The next day.

**Whiny Billie:** Merry, the fall semester is here. Consider Quantum, would you? If not, I'll ask again in two days.

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For the next two years, Meredith was inundated with similar messages from "Whiny Billie," who constantly pestered her to enroll at Quantum Academy.

Finally, she replied with just one word: Okay.

As soon as the message was sent, Billie responded instantly.

**Whiny Billie:** That's great! I've been waiting for you to say that for two years! I'll send a car to pick you up on the first day of school! No, no, no, I'll personally come to pick you up myself!