

## Chapter 575 You've Returned

Milton's voice softened as he spoke. "Elliana, if that's what you've chosen, I'll respect it. I trust that you know how to live your life, and no matter what path you take, I'll stand behind you."

Gratitude welled up in her eyes as Elliana answered, "Thank you."

Then, Elliana turned her gaze toward Arthur.

Arthur stayed quiet for a while, his brows pressed together in thought. At last, he released a heavy sigh. "I'll accept your decision as well. But hear me out, Elliana. You're my daughter, and I won't let you walk into harm's way. If Cole ever fails you, I'll bring you home right away, no matter what it takes."

A radiant smile spread across Elliana's face. "Thank you, Dad. I swear I'll find happiness."

With everything out in the open and her relationship with Cole finally blessed by her father and brother, Elliana felt a wave of pure joy wash over her.

Because the time wasn't right to announce Elliana as the long-lost Campbell daughter, she remained upstairs. Later that evening, once Milton's arrangements were in place, she quietly slipped out of Harmony Estate.

Knowing Eva had spies watching, Elliana wound her way through side streets and back roads once she left Harmony Estate. Only when she was certain she had shaken off any tails did she finally head back to Rosewood Villa.

When her car reached the gates, another vehicle slowed to a stop right beside hers at the same moment.

Jason climbed out, tall and composed, his presence impossible to miss. Through her open window, he offered a faint smile.

From her seat, Elliana studied him closely. The face before her stirred no memory she could place. She pushed her door open after a pause, stepping out.

Jason walked closer until only a few feet separated them. His eyes held hers as he said warmly, "You've returned."

The instant he spoke, Elliana's confusion gave way to sudden recognition. It was Jason. He was standing before her without his signature mask.

Recognizing him only deepened her puzzlement. Her new identity as Lilah had nothing to do with him—so why had he appeared here now? That look in his eyes, overflowing with affection, sent a wave of unease through her. How had "Lilah" inspired such feelings from him?

Before she could untangle her thoughts, Jason spoke once more, his smile faint but deliberate. "What's the matter? Have you been accustomed to my mask that I'm a stranger without it?"

Her bewilderment deepened. "Lilah" was a disguise she had only recently adopted, yet Jason acted as though they shared years of history.

Then, without warning, he introduced himself, "Jason Evans." Then, his expression turned playful. "Should I call you Death Thorn? I'm grateful you traveled all the way to Ublento just to find me. You wouldn't believe how long I've hoped to see you."

Death Thorn? The name landed with a shock that left her cold inside. Discovery of her secret was the last thing she'd expected. How did he figure it out? And since Jason knew she was Death Thorn, could he have uncovered her real identity as Elliana?

But that couldn't be true. All he'd ever shown Elliana was contempt, doing everything possible to shut her out of the Evans family. He would never look at her with admiration, not in a million years. Now, realization swept over her—his longing was directed solely at Death Thorn, not Elliana.

Her thoughts racing, Elliana mentally retraced every encounter she'd had with Jason as Death Thorn. The time in Podgend surfaced in her mind. Maybe that was when he'd caught a glimpse of her true face, and she'd tossed out that flirty comment without thinking. Clearly, he'd taken her words to heart. Now he believed Death Thorn loved him so profoundly

that she'd come all this way to Ublento for him.

A quiet panic bubbled up. The urge to slam her forehead against the nearest tree nearly overwhelmed her. It all started because she'd tried to annoy Cole, never once imagining that her little lie in Podgend would come back like this.

This had to stop. If things carried on like this, her life would spiral out of control. If she ever wanted a future with Cole, she couldn't let Jason cling to this fantasy. It would be an absolute nightmare living under the same roof otherwise.

Having settled on her next move, Elliana let a playful grin brighten her face. "Jason!" she called out, her tone measuredly warm and inviting.

A moment of confusion flickered across Jason's features. The way she said his name, the way she looked at him—none of it matched the Death Thorn he thought he knew, yet something tugged at the edge of his memory. He found himself questioning his own sanity. Was it really possible that this captivating woman could remind him, even in passing, of the ugly Elliana he'd always dismissed?

Elliana's gaze sparkled with mischief as she broke the silence. "Why don't you come inside?" she suggested, her voice light.

Without waiting for his answer, she set off toward the front entrance of the villa.

Her approach triggered the security system. The gates parted with a soft mechanical sigh, responding to her presence.

Jason paused for the briefest moment and then pushed himself to move after her as she stepped indoors.

Moments after the two vanished from sight, the quiet street welcomed another arrival. Taylor parked some distance away from Rosewood Villa, choosing the safety of a shadowy tree as his lookout, unwilling to risk being discovered.

Seeing Jason stroll into the villa with Lilah stoked a surge of anger so fierce that Taylor could barely contain it. He glared at the entrance and muttered to himself, "Unbelievable. Jason tells me to stay away from Lilah with some lame excuse of a safety threat, but then he shows up,

wooing her? The hypocrite! The snake!"

A sudden blur of white zipped across his line of vision. The cat, its snowy fur nearly glowing, squeezed through the gate's iron bars and slipped into the yard.

Taylor froze. Wasn't that the same cat Jeff had been doting on all afternoon? So why was it wandering around here?

He was still trying to make sense of it when a second car rolled to a stop nearby. Lance had arrived.

With all three cousins now standing face-to-face, a sharp gleam flickered in Taylor's eyes. "Lance, Jeff! Don't tell me you also caught Jason in the middle of his pathetic stunt—and came here ready to call him out?"