

Chapter 712 Rootless Orphan

Elliana told the Hendersons everything about Maxine.

The Henderson family members listened with heavy hearts, sighing now and then in disbelief. Who would have thought? All their suffering, all the pain, it wasn't by chance. It traced back to one romantic debt Cameron never repaid. And since Cameron was long gone, there was no one left to answer for it.

Yet, even in their sorrow, there was comfort. Barbara was cured, and Cutler had finally been found back. Their family was whole once more. They owed it all to Elliana. To them, she was nothing less than a savior.

But Elliana brushed aside their gratitude. Once everything was clear, she said softly, "Let's go to Jules. I have a few questions for him."

The night before, Elliana had drugged Jules into a deep sleep, and he'd only stirred until morning. To keep him from slipping away, Adah had locked a shackle around his ankle and shut him in the basement.

Everyone had thought he would resist, but the moment he learned he was in Stellara's home, he quieted down. He ate what they brought him, drank without hesitation, and even asked when Stellara might come back. Of course, his questions were ignored.

When Adah told him he might be the Hendersons' long-lost son and needed to give blood for a test, he had cooperated. From then on, he asked again and again if the results had come.

When Elliana and the Henderson family stepped into the basement, they found Jules leaning on the headboard, twiddling his thumbs.

The iron door groaned open, and he shot upright. "Is Stellara back?" he asked quickly.

Then, his eyes fell on Elliana. For a moment, he stared, stunned. Then, a goofy grin stretched across his face. "You really came back."

Elliana's lips curved faintly. "Funny, isn't it? The man who swore he'd kill me is actually my biggest fan. Small world."

Jules didn't notice the group behind Elliana, not the tears running down Gatlin's and Eloisa's faces. His eyes were fixed only on Elliana. Grinning, he nudged the shackle on his ankle. "Think you could take this thing off? It's starting to rub."

Elliana ignored the request. Instead, she extended a document. "The results are back. See for yourself."

A spark lit in his eyes. He snatched the report and read it over and over. The words hit him like thunder. He was Cutler Henderson. His face lit with joy. "This... This is real?"

"I have no reason to lie," Elliana answered evenly.

At her reply, the spark in him blazed into fire. "So I'm not an orphan? I wasn't thrown away? I have parents! A family!"

By the last word, his voice broke, and tears streamed freely. He had been only two when Maxine stole him. At that age, his real name and his parents' faces had slipped from memory. When others mocked him as a "rootless orphan," he had been left with no defense.

Maxine had raised him under her will, teaching him he was Jules, destined to marry Katrina and continue the Griffiths bloodline. He had donned a mask of carelessness all his life, but inside, he was hollow. What child didn't ache to know where they came from?

He'd grown up at Maxine's side, and many assumed Maxine favored him. But they never knew his true pain. She was cruel and fickle. Gentle one day, vicious the next. Her temper could twist into such hatred that she would torture him within an inch of death. He grew up trembling, living in fear.

Whenever Maxine punished him, he would lie awake, staring at the stars, imagining his parents' faces, wondering where home might be.

He dreamed of it countless nights but never believed he would see it. Yet, here it was, real before his eyes. He was a Henderson. His true name was Cutler. From this day on, Jules was gone. He was Cutler.

Clutching the report, his voice shook. "Where are my parents? Can I see them?"

"Cutler!" Eloisa cried all of a sudden. She had feared he wouldn't acknowledge her, but the moment he spoke, all her fears dissolved. Her son longed to come home.

Cutler's eyes drifted past Elliana at last. He saw them—his family—standing with tears glistening. The woman who had called his name was sobbing hardest of all.

He studied her face, and deep inside, a memory stirred. He saw himself as a toddler chasing bubbles, laughing, and running toward a woman, calling "Mommy" again and again. "Mommy!" he cried, the word bursting out of him.

Eloisa rushed forward, wrapping him in her arms, weeping without end.

Gatlin, Charles, and Barbara gathered close, and together the family clung to one another, their tears washing away years of pain.