

# **Lost Me, Gained Regret (Jane and Bryant Ferguson)**

## **Chapter 421**

The mood was decidedly awkward.

Edith Ford was still in a daze, "Added? When did I add you? No, I didn't!"

I shot back, "No? Really?"

"I... um..."

Clearing her throat and casting a glance towards Gregory, Edith's lips twitched, "Did I... add you?"

Gregory nodded, firm as a rock, "You did."

"I did?"

"Yes, you did."

"Right, I did."

Suddenly enlightened, Edith flashed a smile at me, "I'm so sorry, my memory is just terrible. Yes, I did add you..."

Turning to Gregory, she asked, "When did I do it again?"

"At dinner, remember?" Gregory raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, right."

Edith smacked her forehead, "Yes, yes, I even asked Greg for your contact then. It was about his knee pain!"

Then, uncertain again, she asked Gregory, "That was it, right?"

Gregory just gave her a look.

Edith, with a meaningful smile, turned to me, "That was my backup account, I barely use it. How about we add each other again?"

"Sure."

We shared a knowing smile.

After exchanging contacts, I left the Ford residence, heading to the nursing home.

Back in her apartment, Edith pivoted from the elevator and assessed Gregory leisurely.

"What are you staring at? Got something on my face?" Gregory frowned.

"No, no, no."

Shaking her head thoughtfully, Edith opened her banking app. "I've had my eyes on this handbag, not too pricey, just a cool two million. Mind covering it for me, Greg?" Gregory scowled, "Why don't you just rob a bank?"

"Oh." Nodding, Edith fiddled with her phone. "I'll quickly clear things up with your friend about that account, wouldn't want her getting scammed or anything... right?" Gregory gritted his teeth, "The money."

"Such a big spender, bro."

Without hesitation, Edith forwarded the account details to him, grinning, "I'll have the SA hold it for me."

Her phone pinged with a notification-a deposit of five million.

Gregory was usually a man of careful planning, known for being pretty stingy. He was proudly saving up for what he called a "wife fund."

To his sisters, this just meant he was downright stingy. Aside from holidays, getting anything out of him was like pulling teeth.

After the laughter subsided, Edith's spine tingled with suspicion, "Since when have you been so generous?"

"Hush money."

Gregory shot her a sidelong glance, "Also, doesn't your bestie know Bella Taylor? The one whose daughter popped up out of nowhere last year? Find out what that's about." Relieved, Edith realized his true intentions, patting her chest, "Leave it to me."

Then, with a raised eyebrow, "What, getting restless now? Switching from playing hard to get to playing the victim?"

Gregory deadpanned, "Give me back the money."

Edith glared, "You could've just said so. Forget it."

"About time you headed back to Vista Town, don't you think? Maybe bring Ike back with you?" Gregory changed the subject.

"Yeah."

Mentioning her son made Edith feel a twinge of guilt, "I'll pick him up tomorrow, perfect for the weekend."

After the divorce, that her ex-husband gave her custody without a fight was a blessing in itself.

Gregory nodded, "You're busy dating, I'll take care of him."

"You???"

Edith was flabbergasted.

Gregory was notoriously impatient, especially with kids.

After losing Lilliana Myers as a child, just seeing kids made him anxious.

Edith touched his forehead, "You sick?"

Gregory dodged her hand, "Isn't it said, women love kids?"

She got his implication, laughing, "Oh, so you want my son to help you woo your lady?"

"Why not?"

"I guess..."

Extending her hand, Edith smirked, "But he's the Taylor family's prized jewel. It'll cost you. How much are you thinking?" Her marriage had been more of a business deal.

But she and that old-fashioned Taylor couldn't compromise, with neither willing to budge.

Just a few years her senior, yet so uptight. She wears a sexy nightdress, and he wraps her in a robe utterly clueless.

She endured until she couldn't, then walked away.

Gregory agreed easily, "No problem. Bring Ike over, and whatever he wants, he gets."

"Your word?"

Edith was skeptical, "You're not playing me?"

Gregory's eyes twinkled, "Why would I?"

Kids are easy to please.

Ask them to choose between a million bucks or an action figure, they'd choose the toy in a heartbeat.

Adults might not believe in simplicity, but kids do, without a doubt.

Gregory wheeled himself to the window, blending into the night with his gaze fixed outside.

He didn't believe in empty promises, just in Lilliana, or maybe in Jane Webster-the Jane she was now.

## Chapter 422

When I got back to the nursing home, Ramona had already turned in for the night. I tucked in the corners of her blanket a little tighter and gave a few instructions to the caregiver before I headed out. I made a beeline for the hotel to check in.

The next morning, after getting ready, I was about to leave for the nursing home to visit Ramona when I got a call from Dr. Andrews' assistant. I stepped out of my room, phone to ear.

On the other end, the assistant sounded a bit frustrated, "Ms. Webster, did you not inform your family that Dr. Andrews would be taking over Ramona's treatment today?"

"What?" I paused, puzzled. "Is there a problem?"

The assistant sighed, "We had barely arrived when your relatives showed up, insisting they didn't want Dr. Andrews to handle Ramona's treatment."

"My relatives?" I was momentarily confused, then it clicked. "You mean the Myers?"

"Yes, looks like Ramona's daughter-in-law and granddaughter."

My gaze hardened. "I'll be right there. Please apologize to Dr. Andrews for me; I've caused him unnecessary trouble."

No sooner had the doctor arrived than Dorothy Myers and her daughter became restless. They were scared of Ramona's passing, fearing a certain mysterious will might come to light. And even more terrified that if Ramona regained consciousness, the Myers estate might fall into my hands, leaving no room for them.

I rushed to the nursing home, finding Dr. Andrews effectively barred from entering the room. Containing my anger, I first apologized to Dr. Andrews, "Professor, I'm sorry. I'll sort this out right away."

"It's okay, go ahead and deal with it. I'll grab some breakfast in the meantime." Dr. Andrews was understanding; it was just another unsightly drama, after all. Having been in the medical field for decades, family disputes over inheritance were nothing new to him.

Once Dr. Andrews had left, I knocked on the door. "Dorothy, open the door."

"So, you're the one who found a doctor for Ramona," Dorothy flung open the door, feigning ignorance, then added, "That doctor, he didn't look professional at all. Who knows if he might make Ramona's condition worse!"

Two years hadn't changed her domineering attitude. I smirked, countering, "Are you worried he'll make Ramona's condition worse, or are you afraid she might actually recover?"

"What am I afraid of?" She glared. "Besides, for the past two years, it's been us taking care of Ramona. You've been off in RiverCity, playing the affluent lady, and now you want to step in? Who do you think you are?"

"At least I'm Ramona's blood granddaughter, am I not?" I met her gaze unflinchingly. "And you, what right do you have to prevent me from seeking medical help for my own grandma?"

These past two years, unable to take over the Myers estate due to Bryant Ferguson's suppression, she must have been desperate. Of course, she wouldn't willingly let me return to the Myers fold. Especially not with Ramona fully conscious.

Dorothy was momentarily speechless. "I..."

"And what about me?" Susan emerged from behind her, the very picture of matriarchal authority. "Do I not have the right to make decisions for Ramona? Jane, remember your place. You're still a Webster, not a Myers."

I couldn't help but laugh. "My last name doesn't change the fact that I'm Ramona's blood granddaughter. Susan Myers, why are you so afraid of me coming back to the Myers? Protecting your adopted daughter at every turn, what are you so scared of?"

## Chapter 423

The moment I spoke, I casually let my gaze fall on her. "Don't tell me your relationship with her is more than just a simple foster mother and daughter?"

It was only a wild guess meant to get under her skin.

Unexpectedly, her face darkened immediately, and she began to defend herself in a hurry. "Jane, what nonsense are you spouting?! I'm good to Dorothy because she's sensible and caring, unlike you, who's just unbearable!!"

She slammed the hospital room door shut and lowered her voice to warn me, "And let me make this clear-you better give up any thoughts of returning to the Myers family!" "Why should I?"

I replied calmly, "Just so you know, since I've returned to Vista Town, I never planned on neglecting Ramona. This time, I must find a way to cure her."

Susan glared at me coldly. "Well, try if you must! Don't think Bryant will always be there to help you!!"

"And, does Dad know about you and Dorothy?"

I said with a smirk, intentionally changing the subject, catching her off guard with that question.

Of course, calling him 'Dad' wasn't sincere. It was just a temporary title.

Susan attempted to slap me. "Jane, you're absolutely slanderous!!"

I quickly grabbed her arm, pushed it away, and dusted off my hands. "Oh, seems like he doesn't know then."

I was uncertain before, but now, I was convinced. Their relationship must be more than it seems.

I smiled slightly. "Don't rush to deny or hit me; the more you do, the more desperate you seem. If you keep preventing the doctors from treating Ramona, I'm not sure if I might just start looking into things, or maybe, just tell Dad directly."

"Look into it? With what capability do you think..."

"Of course not me. Didn't you say it? Bryant will help me."

I was merely using Bryant to intimidate her, chuckling lightly. "I might not find anything, but what about him? After all, where there's smoke, there's fire. With a little digging, who knows what might come up!"

"...Bitch!"

Susan glared at me fiercely, then, as if thinking of something, let out a cold laugh. "I'll let you off this time. We'll see how long you can keep this up."

With that, she dragged Dorothy away.

I entered the room, turned to the nurse. "You can leave now, your payment will be settled as per the contract."

This nurse, arranged by Mark for Ramona, was tonight's shift worker. She was one of the Myers family's own.

I had endured it for a long time, and finally, it was time for a change.

After settling her pay, just as I was about to check on Ramona, I heard the sound of footsteps.

Looking back and down, I met Gregory's mocking eyes.

I was a bit surprised. "What brings you here?"

Gregory replied, "To see Ramona."

As I was about to speak, a little toddler peeked out from behind the wheelchair, blinked his big eyes at me for a few seconds, then suddenly ran over and hugged my leg, saying in a sweet, childlike voice, "Auntie! You must be my auntie!"

## Chapter 424

Little Ike looked to be around three or four years old, dressed in trendy clothes, and with a face so adorably sculpted it could melt hearts. He looked up at me with those big, innocent eyes, and I couldn't help

but feel a tug at my heartstrings.

I was slightly puzzled and gently patted his tiny head, "Auntie?"

"Yes, Auntie! My name's Ike Taylor. You can just call me Ike!"

The little guy introduced himself with a soft, youthful voice, looking every bit the picture of sweetness.

I couldn't help but chuckle softly, squatting down to his level and saying gently, "Alright, Ike, but..."

I paused, turning to Gregory, "Ike is your nephew?"

"Edith's son."

Gregory lazily lifted his gaze, speaking in an indifferent tone, "She's off to Europe for a trip tonight. Ike has school, so I'm stuck looking after him for a while."

"Really?" I glanced at his legs, questioning, "Are you sure... you can handle a kid?"

Ike then hugged my neck, peppering my face with kisses, his voice muffled, "Auntie, you can play with me!"

I must admit, I was completely won over by his charm, but still, I turned to Gregory, asking again, "Auntie?"

Gregory seemed unfazed, "Kids, they like to say whatever."

I held Ike's tiny shoulders, correcting him, "Ike, can you call me 'Jane'? Auntie is not something you can just call someone." He tilted his head, confused, "Why?"

"Well..."

I pondered how to explain this in the simplest terms, "Auntie is like your uncle's future wife. Your uncle and I are just..."

"I get it now!"

Before I could choose my words carefully, Ike jumped up excitedly, clapping his chubby hands, "Then you are Auntie! Mommy said if two people like each other very, very



much, they can become husband and wife. So, that means Uncle really, really likes you..."

He was cut off mid-sentence by Gregory, who quickly covered his mouth.

"Kid, what do you know about liking someone?"

Ike glared at him, "Uncle, I know!"

Gregory chuckled, "Oh yeah? Explain."

"Like, Ike really, really doesn't like you!"

Saying so, Ike cuddled into me like a koala, pleading softly, "Auntie, I like you. Can I go home with you?"

My heart melted, but it didn't seem right to take someone else's child home.

I thought for a moment, then declined gently, "Sweetie, I'm staying in a hotel right now. It's not as convenient as a home, you know."

Gregory frowned, "Why don't you stay at the Elmwood Villas apartment?"

I made up an excuse on the spot, "Forgot the password."

The Elmwood Villas apartment, the one he gifted me two years ago.

Because of what happened two years ago, there's been a distance between us, and I felt guilty.

Therefore, coming to Vista Town this time, I never considered staying there.

Gregory snorted, "You forgot your own birthday too?"

I coughed lightly, admitting, "It's more like, I thought it wouldn't be appropriate for me to stay there."

Gregory smirked, "What's inappropriate? Any of the gifts you've given me before wouldn't be cheaper than that apartment."

That reminded me of old times.

Whenever I found something nice, I'd share it with him first.

Not to mention his birthdays or the holidays, I'd always empty my piggy bank and even ask Ramona for some extra cash.

With that thought, I suddenly felt justified. He owed me, after all.

Before I could respond, he mocked again, "Or is it that you have too much money and insist on staying at a hotel? Give me the excess cash; I'll spend it for you."

"In your dreams."

I glared at him, then pinched Ike's chubby cheek, "You can come and play at my place. It's just below your uncle's house. I'll move there this afternoon, and you're welcome anytime!" Ike planted a kiss on my cheek, chirping, "Okay, pretty lady!"

Gregory's face darkened as he gritted his teeth, "Ike!"

Ike looked baffled, "What's wrong, Uncle?"

Gregory frowned, schooling him, "Who taught you to keep kissing girls? That's not allowed!"

"Uncle, haven't you ever kissed a pretty lady?"

Both Gregory and I felt a bit awkward at that moment.

Thankfully, Ramona chose that moment to come out. Despite her age and occasional confusion, she always maintained an air of elegance.

Just out of bed, her hair was meticulously done, and she wore a hand-stitched dress that seemed to defy time itself.

It seemed she could always recognize Gregory and me, greeting us warmly, "Lilliana, you're here. And Greg, what brings you here so early?" "Just checking in on you."

Gregory patted Ike's head, instructing him, "Say hi to great-grandma."

"Great-grandma!" Ike, far from shy, greeted her loudly, immediately making himself endearing.

Ramona smiled kindly, "Ah, such a sweet boy!"

Gregory then explained, "He's Edith's kid."

"Edith?" Ramona had forgotten.

But Gregory didn't want to burden her with memories, instead focusing on her well-being, "How have you been these past few days?" "Just fine, just fine."

Seeing both of us there made Ramona very happy. "Lilliana even found a doctor to help with my health."

After a bit more conversation, Ramona suddenly turned to Gregory, "Greg, when are you planning to marry our Lilliana?"

## Chapter 425

Gregory and I, once again, found ourselves in an awkward situation without even planning it.

I tugged at Ramona's arm, "Ramona, about this..."

"Soon."

Gregory cut me off mid-sentence, but his tone softened when he spoke to Ramona, "Don't worry, Ramona. I'll marry her soon. Just focus on getting better. We can't have a wedding until you're back on your feet."

I must've looked utterly baffled.

The guy talking didn't even glance my way, as if what he was saying had nothing to do with me.

Ramona's eyes lit up, "Really?"

"Really," Gregory answered with a smile.

I changed the subject, "Ramona, let's have breakfast. Dr. Andrews will be here soon."

Judging by the time, Dr. Andrews should be finishing his breakfast any minute now.

Right after Dorothy and her daughter left, I messaged Dr. Andrews' assistant to let them know everything was settled.

My timing wasn't off. Just as Ramona finished her breakfast, Dr. Andrews and his team arrived.

Dr. Andrews was about to start his treatment, and it didn't seem right for me to stick around, so I decided to head back to the hotel to pack up my things.

Staying at Elmwood Villas felt more like home than any hotel ever could.

I never expected that the moment I stepped out of the elevator, I'd be greeted by a duo waiting at my doorstep.

One standing, one sitting.

I was taken aback, "Waiting for me?"

Gregory didn't say anything, but Ike scampered over with his little legs and nodded vigorously, "Yeah! Pretty lady, Uncle Gregory brought me to your place!"

"And what about your uncle?"

"He's leaving soon!"

Gregory gave him a sideways glance. "Who told you that?"

"So, you're not leaving?"

"I am."

After saying that in his usual calm tone, Gregory pinched Ike's cheek and gave me a look, "I've got a meeting to attend. He's your responsibility now. If he starts acting up, feel free to set him straight." "Don't worry, I'm not violent."

"Oh, and,"

He looked at me intently, out of the blue, he said, "I still need an answer to the question Edith interrupted last night. I'll ask again when I come to pick up Ike."

I thought handling a kid Ike's size would be a hassle.

But it turned out to be surprisingly peaceful.

Once inside, I noticed Gregory had arranged for cleaners to come regularly, so the place was spotless.

As I unpacked, Ike buzzed around me non-stop.

But when I got my drawing board ready to work, he grabbed his puzzle and started working on it with serious concentration.

Feeling my gaze on him, he looked up with his big eyes, "What's up, pretty lady?"

"I think you're awesome. You have great focus."

"Uncle says if you can't focus on one thing, you'll end up being a player in love, and spend your life forever alone!"

I couldn't help but laugh, "Do you even know what forever alone means?"

"Yep!" He nodded vigorously. "Like Uncle, forever alone!"

Later that evening, there was a knock on the door.

Expecting Gregory to come for Ike, I was surprised to see Edith instead.

I was slightly confused, "Edith, aren't you supposed to be traveling abroad?"

"There's still some time left."

She smiled, her lips curving gently. "May I come in for a bit?"

"Of course."

As soon as I said that, Ike, hearing his mom's voice, dashed over and hugged her. "Mommy! Ike missed you!" "How about going abroad with me?"

"No!"

The little guy shook his head, "I have important things to do!"

Edith chuckled, "What important things?"

Ike's eyes darted around, his lips pursed in feigned mystery. "I promised Uncle I wouldn't tell."

"Alright, go play then."

Edith gently nudged him towards a spare room I hardly used.

I opened the fridge, asking her, "Water, or juice?"

"I'm fine, thanks."

Edith smiled again, "I just want to talk for a bit, then I have to catch a flight."

I nodded, leading her to the living room to sit down.

Straight to the point, Edith asked, "What are your plans with Gregory?"

It wasn't like I hadn't thought about it, but I hadn't come to any conclusions yet.

"I'm still thinking, but no decisions yet."

The years had changed me drastically, and the distance between Gregory and me wasn't just about the physical space but the years and misunderstandings that lay between us.

Edith wasn't surprised by my response, "Take your time. I came here mainly to ask you to look after my son. Gregory's temper has been a bit off these past two years..."

"I'll take care of him. Gregory's temper isn't that bad..."

"The explosion. It damaged his sight, leaving him blind for a long stretch."

Edith paused, her lips pressed together, "And his legs, as you've seen. To him, that's worse than death. He refused treatment at first, became angry and irritable. Do you know what made him agree to treatment?"

"Why?"

"I told him if he gave up or died, I'd make sure you'd join him."

Edith's gaze softened apologetically, "Don't mind that. I was desperate. And the way you left back then really hit him hard. As his sister, I wasn't fond of you."

I remained silent, my voice barely a whisper, "And then?"

"He started cooperating with the doctors." Edith seemed still in disbelief. "Did you know? He was diagnosed with bipolar disorder back then. But for you, he endured both mental and physical torture and pulled through."

Bipolar disorder is a condition that combines episodes of depression and mania.

I clenched my fists, asking. "When was he diagnosed?"

"Shortly after you went back to Bryant."

## **Chapter 426**

Edith, always straightforward, couldn't help but express her concern, "These past couple of years must have been tough for you, huh?"

I was taken aback, "How did you know?"

"Just a guess."

She offered a sympathetic smile, like a wise older sister. "Even though we haven't spent much time together, I can tell you're not the type to play the field."

"Leaving him was probably a last resort, right?" Her question was phrased with such certainty.

It didn't surprise me she could see through it.

Edith had that laid-back vibe but was incredibly observant and thoughtful underneath.

In short, the Ford family had a knack for reading people.

I saw no point in denying it, so I nodded, "Yes, Gregory's dad came to see me. And then, Bryant... he promised me that if I went back with him, he'd help Gregory." "That must have been tough."

Edith sighed, a mix of admiration and pity in her tone, "It's a shame Palmer Ford played dirty, almost capsized Greg's ship. Well, he did capsize it, but Greg managed to right it again on his own." Hearing this, I couldn't help but smile, "Yeah, he's always been sharp."

As kids, he always seemed a step ahead of the rest of us, the most clever and bold.

Ramona always thought I was fearless, but in reality, it was Gregory who had instilled that in me, telling me to go ahead and make mistakes because he'd be there to catch me if I fell.

He nurtured my wild, unrestrained nature, much like a vibrant sunflower thriving in the sun.

Edith seemed surprised, "You remembered everything?"

"Yeah."

I handed her a bottle of water, "A couple of years ago, I had an accident that somehow brought everything back."

She was quick, "Because of Greg?"

"Not exactly."

It felt like my whole being was already at its breaking point, struggling with mental health issues.

Then Gregory's crisis happened.

It's just that it happened to be his crisis that triggered it. If it had been Ramona, or Christine, even Mark, I might have collapsed just the same.

So, placing the blame on Gregory doesn't quite fit.

Edith unscrewed the bottle cap, "These last two years, being by Bryant's side..."

"I wasn't in RiverCity."

With her, it felt easier to be open, "After the accident, I went to France. It's just that the news was kept under wraps."

Edith frowned, "Then how come Molly called you, and Bryant picked up?"

"Ah?" I paused, then realized. "The night of the accident, when I left the Ferguson Mansion, I forgot to take my phone."

Waking up later, all I wanted was a fresh start.

Eager to cut all ties with Bryant, I never bothered to retrieve my phone.

Nowadays, a phone is like an adult's lifeline. Without it, it felt like I could truly start over.

Edith nodded in understanding, "So why haven't you explained any of this to Greg?"

"I was depressed."

I licked my lips, "Given Gregory's nature, he'd want to know everything. Why I went to France, why I didn't reach out to him. And sooner or later, he'd find out about my depression." He'd feel guilty, responsible.

Edith's expression grew tense. "No wonder... no wonder you haven't explained what happened two years ago to Greg. You were afraid he'd blame himself..."

I couldn't have explained it before.

And now, it was even harder to find the words.

Telling him would only add to his burden.

Before I could respond, Edith sighed, "I owe you thanks for being so considerate towards him. It's definitely not the right time to bring this up. Don't worry, he's been faithfully following his treatment, and since you've come back, his symptoms have noticeably improved."



## Chapter 427

Her eyes softened a bit. "And you? How's your depression?"

"I'm off the meds now."

I offered a smile, "A friend in France recommended a psychologist, and I've been working with them for the past couple of years. It's been pretty effective."

At least now, even when I recall the past or encounter people from those days, I don't panic, tremble, or think about suicide anymore. Back in RiverCity, even after bumping into Bryant at the hotel without any warning, I've managed to keep my sleep pretty decent.

"That's good to hear."

Edith breathed a sigh of relief, glancing at the time, "I should head to the airport soon. I'll find the right moment to explain things to him, give him a heads up."

She stood up, gesturing towards the room where Ike was, with a helpless expression, "As for my son, I'm afraid he's going to be a bit of a bother for you. Gregory just doesn't have the patience." "It's no trouble at all, I like kids."

I chuckled as I walked her to the door, "Ike's still at home, so I'll say goodbye here."

Edith winked at me, "Ike really likes you. If you could become his aunt, he'd be thrilled."

I cleared my throat, not picking up the thread, just saying, "Safe travels, and let me know when you've landed."

She gave me an "OK" sign, then strutted off, pulling her suitcases behind her.

As soon as I closed the door, Ike popped his head out from his room, looking around, "Where's mommy?" "She's left."

I couldn't help but laugh. Edith, always so carefree, didn't even say goodbye to Ike before her trip.

Ike, used to it by now, just shrugged. "She's always like this."

I picked him up, comforting him, "But she'll send us a message when she lands, okay?"

"Okay then, Ike forgives her!"

His voice was soft and cuddly as he nestled into my shoulder, "Jane, are you done with your work? Can you help Ike with the puzzle? The one Uncle got is super complicated." Sitting down on the carpet with him, I glanced at the puzzle instructions.

Wow. An adult puzzle for such a little guy. Talk about lacking patience, even the gifts were so thoughtless.

But Ike, bless him, wasn't bothered at all and had already managed to put together a corner.

I smiled, "Sure, let's do the puzzle together."

The design process for Bella's gown was surprisingly smooth; we weren't in a hurry. Somehow, thinking of designing for her sparked a lot of inspiration in me. Can't quite put my finger on why. Outside, the sunset painted the sky in brilliant colors of a summer evening. Ike and I, in perfect harmony, worked on the puzzle on the carpet.

My phone suddenly rang. I paused, sitting up to check the caller ID, and answered with a smile, "Hey, what's up?"

It was Mark on the line.

With a laugh in his voice, Mark asked warmly, "Are you staying at a hotel or...?"

"You coming to Vista Town?"

I was a bit surprised, then added, "I'm not at a hotel, at home."

Mark sounded puzzled, "You have a place in Vista Town?"

"Yeah, a friend gave it to me."

I didn't elaborate, just asked with a smile, "What's up, you need something?"

Mark chuckled, "Can you send me your location?"

"Sure thing."

I quickly sent him my location along with the apartment number, "When are you arriving in Vista Town?"

"Actually, I've got a surprise for you."

"A surprise? What kind of surprise?"

"You'll see when I get there."

After a brief silence, probably checking his GPS, Mark said, "I'll be there in about twenty minutes."

## Chapter 428

I was taken aback, "That fast? When did you get to Vista Town?"

"Just this afternoon."

Mark chuckled, "So, do you want to grab dinner out or eat at home? Need me to bring anything?"

"Hold on a sec."

I pulled the phone away a bit and asked Ike in a whisper, "Honey, do you want to eat at home tonight, or go out?"

"I wanna eat what Jane makes!"

Ike replied instinctively then seemed to reconsider as if a new thought struck him, and hastily added, "Um, actually, let's not. I don't feel like going out. Can we order takeout instead? I'll treat you, Jane!"

I brought the phone closer, smiling, "You don't need to bring anything, Mark. Just come over."

Mark agreed.

After hanging up, I pinched Ike's chubby cheeks, "I thought you wanted to eat what I made. What's with the change of heart?"

"Uncle warned me."

"Warned you about what?"

"Uncle said..." Ike mumbled, "Not to bother you too much. If I tire you out, he said he'd go and slay Spider-Man!"

"Slay Spider-Man?"

"Yup!" Ike nodded his little head, his eyes rolling around, "Jane, can you protect Spider-Man?"

These two, one's talking nonsense and the other's buying it. Aren't they afraid of leaving some psychological scars on the kid? Seeing me silent, Ike laid his head on my lap, looking up, "Jane, is someone coming over? Who is it?"

"A friend."

"A friend??" Some radar in Ike went off, he suddenly perked up, asking, "What kind of friend, like my uncle, or like my dad?"

"What's the difference?"

"The difference between old and not old."

I couldn't help but laugh. "Your dad's old?"

"Hmm... not really old." Ike answered seriously, "It's just that mom often calls him a relic, a remnant of feudal times."

I burst out laughing. I had no idea Edith had such a sharp tongue, on par with Gregory. She didn't hold back when it came to her husband, either.

Ike didn't forget the main question, speaking crisply, "Jane, you haven't answered my question!"

"Ah, he's not old, more like your uncle kind of friend."

Little Ike scrambled off my lap, marching out with his tiny legs, his slippers flying off one foot.

"Where are you off to?"

"I suddenly need to pee!"

"We have a bathroom here..."

"No, Jane, I... I..."

I scooped him up, assuming the kid was just shy, "Is it because you can't undo your pants by yourself?"

"No!"

"Then go ahead, call me if you need help."

I put him in the bathroom, but his face was the picture of despair. "I... I suddenly don't need to pee anymore."

I was skeptical. "Really?"

"Yup! For real!" The little guy walked out of the bathroom, looking up at me with a gloomy expression, "Jane, can I play on your phone for a bit?" "No, phones hurt your eyes, they can affect your eyesight."

"Please!" He clutched at my skirt, gently tugging, "Please, just for a little bit?"

My heart melted, and I handed him the phone, "Alright."

He joyously grabbed the phone and scurried up to the couch, nestling into a corner to play. But his little eyebrows were furrowed in concentration. Curious, I asked, "What's wrong?" Most kids would dive straight into watching cartoons. But there he was, quietly switching to his own messages.

## Chapter 429

Ike looked up at me, his face scrunched in concentration. "Jane, how do you spell 'uncle'?"

"U-N-C-L-E," I spelled out.

"Got it!"

But soon after, he was looking up again. "How about 'family'?"

"F-A-M-I-L-Y."

Just then, the doorbell rang.

I got up to answer it and was immediately struck by a wave of surprise and joy. "Snowy!"

"Bark, bark, bark! Awooo~"

A fluffy white Samoyed leaped into my arms, snuggling up a storm.

I was over the moon, turning to Mark, "I was just wondering how I'd get Snowy back home, and here you are, bringing him to me."

"It's good for you to have him around. Helps with your mood."

"Thank you so much!"

I looked at him gratefully. "I wouldn't have bounced back this fast without your help."

He teased, "Aren't you going to invite me in?"

"Of course, come in!"

I stepped back, letting him in, with Snowy not leaving my side, showing how much he missed me.

As I led Mark to the living room, I noticed Ike's absence from the couch.

After a brief search, I found myself at the bathroom door, hearing some mumbling from inside. Knocking gently, I called out, "Ike?"

"Jane, I'm peeing!" The little guy responded, continuing his babble, sounding quite earnest.

Kids do have a habit of talking to themselves in the bathroom.

I chuckled, advising, "Take your time, buddy. Don't rush."

Back in the living room, I made Mark a cup of coffee.

Sitting down, with Snowy contently nestled by my knee, I said, "Really, you went out of your way for Snowy. Thanks a lot." "It's no bother."

Mark smiled warmly. "I was in Vista Town for some work anyway. Bringing Snowy along was easy."

I sighed. "You always make it sound so simple."

He always tried to ease my mind, finding excuses like "it was on the way" or "no trouble at all."

Ike emerged from the bathroom and upon seeing Mark, immediately greeted him with an enthusiastic, "Uncle!"

Mark, a bit puzzled, politely responded and glanced at me for an explanation.

"Gregory's cousin's kid. I'm looking after him for a bit."

"Gregory?"

Mark's expression froze for a moment, then relaxed in surprise. "You've seen Gregory? He came to see you?"

I paused, "You knew Gregory wasn't gone?"

We had only speculated about Gregory's fate, never certain.

To most, Gregory was a memory.

Mark's eyes softened, a smile returning. "Of course not. I'm just surprised he's still around and that you've met. I'm happy for you." Relieved, I saw Ike settling on my other side, his child's voice chiming in, "Sir, you think my uncle and Jane make a good match, right?" Mark, caught off guard, replied, "Well, that's really up to Jane."

"Well, sir, are you married? If you're single, I could introduce you to my mom!"

I couldn't help but laugh, while Mark choked on his coffee, "Cough... No, I'm not considering that right now."

"Oh! So you probably wouldn't consider Jane either."

Ike squirmed closer, whispering, "Jane, this sir doesn't like you, but my uncle really likes you!"

Mark, trying to maintain some decorum, countered, "That's not true. If one day, Jane wanted to be with me, I would definitely-" "Ding-dong-"

The doorbell interrupted us.

## Chapter 430

Ike was the quickest to react, nimbly sliding off the couch and scurrying to the door, exclaiming, "Uncle...no, thanks, sir!"

It was the delivery I had ordered.

I went over, took the delivery, closed the door again, and patted Ike's little head. "Missing Uncle?"

"Ah... no."

Ike shook his head. "Not missing Uncle, just want to be with you. Jane, can I sleep with you tonight?"

"Only if your uncle agrees."

I took his hand and headed to the dining room, looking over at Mark. "Hey, I ordered from this local diner in Vista Town. You've gotta try it."

"Sure."

Mark wasn't picky; he'd eat anything.

He came over, intending to sit next to me, but Ike climbed onto the chair behind him, gently tapping his waist. "Sir, can you sit across? I wanna sit next to Jane."

Mark looked down at him and pinched his cheek. "Alright."

Dinner was a relaxed affair with five dishes and a soup.

Ike was well-behaved, handling his own bowl and spoon with ease.

Whenever he needed help serving food, he'd call me.

"Jane, what about my uncle's dinner?"

Suddenly, Ike remembered something mid-meal, his big eyes filled with concern looking at me. "Uncle must be so sad, he can't cook by himself..." "He can order delivery too."

I chuckled, trying to steer the conversation. "Besides, we have a guest, and guests come first, right?"

"Right, Uncle's family!"

Ike beamed, waving his little spoon. "We don't have to worry about him!"

Mark seemed momentarily taken aback. "You and Gregory are... together?"

"No."

I smiled, explaining, "He just lives in the same building."

Mark nodded thoughtfully, then smiled. "Looks like he's got the upper hand being so close."

"Hey,"



I started to say something when the doorbell rang again.

Ike wiggled, eager to open the door, but I held him back. "You keep eating, I'll get it."

It must be Gregory coming to pick up Ike.

I went to the door and, sure enough, was met with a pair of slightly annoyed and scrutinizing hazel eyes.

Gregory leaned back in his wheelchair, looking up at me. "Push me in."

"You can control it yourself..."

His wheelchair was electric.

Gregory yawned and said nonchalantly, "I twisted my hand; it hurts a bit." "Alright."

I moved behind him, pushing him inside. "Ike's still eating. Do you want to join..."

"Yes."

His tone was ambiguous. "I'm starving. I thought you'd call me for dinner."

There was a hint of accusation.

As if I was some faithless lover, neglecting to invite him to dinner.

I sighed. "You said you had a meeting..."

He smiled slightly. "So you did think of calling me?"

"I did." I answered truthfully.

His eyes sparkled with amusement, and Ike, sitting at the dining table with his little legs swinging, exclaimed, "Uncle, you're finally here!" Gregory responded lightly, and suddenly, Ike hopped down from his chair, eagerly making room for him.

"Uncle, sit here and eat with her!"

Mark raised an eyebrow but didn't comment.

The atmosphere turned somewhat strange.

Gregory casually commented on the food. "This is from that diner I took you to, right?"

"Yeah, the delivery came, and it still tastes good."

Gregory nodded. "It's decent, good for hosting."

Mark's lips thinned. "Mr. Ford, the Fords, would they approve of you marrying Jane?"

"The Fords?"

Gregory laughed mockingly, but his response chilled the room. "You think I'm like you, needing to please my family?"

Mark's expression turned stoic. "If it wasn't for family approval, your legs wouldn't be like this, right?"

"Hey!"

I sharply cut him off. "His legs aren't as bad as you think. He'll be able to walk again eventually."

Mark looked frustrated. "Jane, if it wasn't serious, he wouldn't still be in a wheelchair after two years..."

"Exactly."

Gregory didn't seem bothered, his lazy smile unfazed. "But Mark, your legs are fine, and yet she didn't choose you. Buddy, you gotta know your boundaries and not meddle too much." Mark's grip on his utensils tightened, his fingertips turning white. "Gregory, you know what the biggest difference between us is?"

Gregory didn't respond, merely gestured for him to continue.

Mark set down his utensils, straightened his shirt cuffs, and stood up, his gaze cold yet firm. "When Jane needed someone the most, I was always there for her."

"Just that alone means you have no say in our relationship."

After speaking, Mark looked at me softly. "Enjoy your meal. I've got to head back to RiverCity. I'll take my leave now."

"Hey..."

I stood up, intending to see him to the elevator.

But a strong hand clutched my wrist, silently conveying his wish.

I looked at Gregory, whispering, "I'll just see him out and be right back."

"Don't go."

