



Chapter 8

Ella POV

As we were heading into the building, I heard someone call my name. I turned around to find my parents walking toward us.

Not far behind them were David's parents and even Amanda's family with all of her siblings. It seemed this opening was a far bigger event than I had realized.

We now had quite a large group heading in to check out the shopping center together, but I couldn't have been happier. I wanted to savor this time with my parents since I had a chance to do things over and keep my good relationship with them.

Amanda seemed more than a little annoyed that her siblings were here, which I found funny. She always seemed so jealous that I was an only child; she often made comments about how lucky I was to have so much attention.

She had two older brothers, an older sister, and a younger sister, and I'm sure it did make her feel terrible to get lost in the mix sometimes. But Amanda was spoiled in her own way—I just don't think she realized it. Maybe if she did, things would have been different.

We headed inside and started making our way through the clothing stores—there were a lot of them. As I was walking around the racks, running my hand along some of the clothes to see if anything caught my eye, my father asked, "What exactly are we looking for?"

"I want something to wear to the council meeting," I said.

My father's face lit up with that proud smile again. "You're coming to the

meeting?" he said in surprise.

I nodded. "It seems very important to you, and I feel like now that I'm engaged, it's important for me to start taking my duties more seriously."

My mother and father exchanged a look, and I could tell this was something they had been discussing between themselves. My mother looked just as surprised as my father was.

I found it a little funny but also sad that I couldn't talk to them about how much I had learned in the time since I married David. None of that had happened for them—they would think I was crazy if I started talking about things that would happen in the future and things that, hopefully, I could stop from happening.

I just had to pretend like nothing strange was going on and do my best not to waste this second chance.

We didn't find anything in the first store, so we went to another. Amanda was making an effort to stay away from her siblings, who seemed intent on either talking her ear off or teasing her. She looked absolutely furious about it, and I kept catching David glancing at her sympathetically.

By the time we were heading into the third store, I could see that Amanda was completely agitated—her face was beginning to turn red from her anger. I didn't want her to cause a scene, so I approached her siblings and smiled at her oldest sister.

If there was one thing I knew about her family, it was that her siblings were always hungry. If anyone ever commented on it, Amanda would just smirk and say they were lucky enough to have high metabolisms.

"I hear the food court here is amazing," I said.

"I am hungry," she replied, looking over her shoulder at her brothers. "Should we take a break and get some food?"

"Heck yeah!" they said in unison.

"I've barely eaten all day," their younger sister added.

Amanda rolled her eyes at all of them. "Go on ahead," she said. "I'll meet up with you later." Without argument, all of her siblings hurried off toward the smell of popcorn and pretzels.

Amanda took a deep breath and, looking at me reluctantly, said, "Thanks."

"No problem," I replied. "After all, I need you to be able to focus on helping me find the perfect dress, right?"

She smirked a little and nodded. "Absolutely."

With that out of the way, we headed into the third store. I had a good feeling about this one—the colors I could see on the racks were a little less flashy, and it seemed there were more business-casual outfits. Hopefully, I would be able to find something appropriate.

"So boring," Amanda said as we walked by a rack of pantsuits. I paused and started to flip through the jackets thoughtfully. They weren't boring; I actually thought the cut was very stylish while still being business-appropriate.