Swapping a Broken Heart for a New Start

Chapter 10

Camila Davis had bought tickets for her and her daughter, Lillian, to try out the new "Enchanted Forest Quest" at the amusement park. The attraction was set up like a whimsical cartoon forest, complete with upbeat music, scattered props, and hidden clues leading to a treasure.

Camila picked this activity because she wanted to help Lillian build confidence and sharpen her problem-solving skills.

The two of them entered, hand-in-hand. At first, Lillian was shy, shrinking back from the unfamiliar sights and sounds. But Camila stayed close, encouraging her gently. Gradually, Lillian began to relax, her curiosity taking over.

After a while, Camila started hanging back, letting Lillian take the lead in finding the clues. She kept a watchful eye, never too far away, but just enough to let her daughter explore on her own.

Inside the "castle" section of the forest, there were other kids laughing and searching for clues. Two girls about Lillian's age spotted her—they thought she looked like a doll, with her big eyes and sweet face. They ran over with beaming smiles.

"Hey there! Want to team up? If we find any clues, we'll let you have them. Deal?"

"You're so cute! What's your name? Can we be friends?"

At first, Lillian froze, unsure how to respond to their enthusiasm. But as the minutes passed, she realized they meant no harm. The girls were kind and welcoming, so she gradually opened up and joined their little group.

Camila watched from a distance, relieved. These kids were like little angels—nothing like Sandra Taylor's bratty son from the neighborhood.

With her new friends beside her, Lillian got better and faster at finding clues. Soon, they reached the next stage: the clue was tied to the top of a climbing net.

The two other girls dashed up the ropes with the agility of squirrels. When it was Lillian's turn, Camila felt a pang of nerves. The net wasn't really high, and there were soft mats below, but still—she was a mom.

A few paces away, a tall, dignified man stood watching. He wore a crisp white shirt, black slacks, and a long black coat. Gold-rimmed glasses rested on his nose, a delicate chain glinting at the sides. His eyes, deep and calm, seemed to hold all the quiet of a winter

night. On his wrist, a string of polished wooden beads added a touch of understated elegance.

He didn't move, giving off an air of "don't come near." His assistant, Aaron, was used to it by now. Every time his boss finished a session with one of his patients, he'd come to places like this. The darkness of his patients' stories needed to be balanced by the light and laughter of children.

Aaron stood nearby, silently observing. His gaze followed the little girl climbing the net.

With her friends cheering her on, Lillian started up the ropes. She wasn't fast, but she was steady. Camila's heart finally settled.

But then, one of the other kids slipped and tumbled onto the mat, wailing. Camila hurried over to help, just for a second.

In that same moment, Lillian's foot slipped. Suddenly, she lost her grip and fell from halfway up the net.

"Watch out!" Aaron yelled instinctively.

But the tall man was already moving. In a flash, he caught Lillian, cradling her gently before she could hit the ground.

Lillian's face was pale, her eyes wide with shock.

"It's okay. You're safe," the man said softly. His voice was cool, almost distant, but there was something reassuring in the way he spoke.

Lillian's big brown eyes gazed up at him, still trembling but clearly comforted.

The man smiled, set her down carefully, and handed her the clue card she'd been trying to grab. "Be more careful next time," he said, his tone gentle but firm.

Then he turned and walked away, his coat swirling behind him.

It was only then that Camila realized what had happened. Her heart raced as she rushed over, but all she caught was the glimpse of a tall figure disappearing into the crowd.