

DON'T MESS WITH THE GIRL WITH CANDY

Chapter 3

Outside the car window, a girl stood under the eaves, staring blankly into the distance. She was soaked to the bone, leaning listlessly against a wall, her face drained of all color. She looked like a lost, homeless kitten.

"Isn't that the fake heiress the Sherwins just kicked out?" Flint, in the passenger seat, recognized her immediately. That face was too memorable to forget.-

"Fake heiress?" Shanley narrowed his eyes, taking a drag from his cigarette. The emotion in his gaze was unreadable.

"Yes, sir. While we were tracking Specter, I saw them throw her out," Flint replied respectfully. "The whole family was ganging up on her. It was pretty pathetic."

"Is that so?" Shanley's long fingers tapped ash from his cigarette onto the car's window ledge. He watched the girl, his gaze deepening.

After staring into space for a few moments, the pitiful-looking girl pulled her gaze back. She took a small, clear bottle from her backpack, then rolled up her right sleeve to reveal a gash so deep it exposed the bone.

Her expression remained unchanged. She casually wiped away the blood, uncapped the bottle with her teeth, and without a moment's hesitation, poured the entire contents of the antiseptic onto the wound. Blood and disinfectant dripped down her arm, forming a crimson puddle on the ground.

"Holy-!" Flint nearly lost his grip on the steering wheel, his eyes wide with disbelief.

"She's tough as nails!" he muttered, wincing in sympathy.

Even hardened men like them, who had been through hell and back, would scream like banshees while cleaning a wound like that.

But she acted as if she couldn't feel a thing, her expression perfectly calm. She even popped a piece of hard candy into her mouth midway through.

A car horn blared nearby. Juniper glanced up, and her eyes met a pair of deep, piercing ones. She paused for a second, realizing the man was looking directly at her.

"Felton," Shanley said, extinguishing his cigarette as he met the girl's confused gaze. "Go ask if she needs any help."

She looked so young. He didn't want her to fall into the wrong hands.

"Yes, sir."

But before Felton could move, Juniper had finished tending to her injury. She looked away and turned to leave.

After a few steps, however, she suddenly stopped and turned back. With her hands in her pockets and her chin tilted up, she said coolly, "Your fuel tank's housing, seven o'clock position. It's compromised."

It was the anniversary of her grandfather's death; she didn't want any bloodshed. Besides, she'd overheard the man's earlier conversation. This was her way of repaying a small kindness.

"The fuel tank?" Felton and Flint immediately got out to check and, sure enough, found the problem. If it hadn't been caught, friction during travel could have caused a fire, leading to an explosion.

"The tank on this model is well-hidden. How did she even spot that?" Flint marveled. Even a specialized mechanic would have had to dismantle it to find the damage.

Watching her retreating figure, Shanley's Adam's apple bobbed slightly, and the corner of his mouth curved into an almost imperceptible smile.

A fake heiress? Interesting.

"Hello? Hello!" Hannah's voice squawked from the phone. After talking to herself for half a minute with no response, she was fuming. "You brat, are you trying to give me a heart attack? Just give me a straight answer, boy or girl!"

"Grandma," Shanley said, closing the file. A faint, roguish smile played on his lips. "Your grandson's preferences... are perfectly normal."

Two hours later, Juniper found herself in Moultslands, a remote and impoverished corner of Eclara City. Countless dilapidated houses were crammed together along muddy, rutted roads. Under the hazy moonlight, the entire village seemed gray and desolate, as if cut off from the rest of the world, giving it an eerie, unsettling feel.

Following the map on her phone, Juniper navigated the winding alleys and finally stopped in front of a modest house.

This was, technically, her relatives' home. According to the Sherwins, this relative was a distant relation on her mother's side. She was supposed to call her 'aunt.'

In truth, they weren't blood-related at all. When she was three, her family had been in a shipwreck. Her parents had used their last bit of strength to toss her, their youngest child, onto a small fishing boat skippered by a woman named Saskia Payne. That was how she had survived.