

## DON'T MESS WITH THE GIRL WITH CANDY

### Chapter 5

"I promised my grandfather." Juniper's lips thinned, and her expression darkened. His dying wishes were for her to go to college and find her family. He'd told her: 'College will teach you to think for yourself, to know how to take care of yourself. And if you find your family, you'll have even more people to love you.'

"Alright, then," Luella said, sensing the shift in tone. She dropped the teasing and got down to business. "I've got a lead on that bracelet you were looking for. I sent the details to your email."

"Got it," Juniper acknowledged. Just before hanging up, she added, "I need you to do one more thing for me."

"Anything for you, boss," Luella purred, swirling a glass of wine.

"Buy a building in the city center and trade it for the land in northern Moultilands. We'll be moving there soon."

"Cough, cough—what?" Luella nearly choked on her wine. Trade a downtown property worth hundreds of millions for a plot of land in a godforsaken place like Moultilands?

She took a few deep breaths to calm herself. "Leaving aside the whole building thing for a second, what on earth are you going to do with land in Moultilands?"

Juniper wiped her grandfather's photo frame clean and replied without a second thought, "Plant cilantro, I guess. I like cilantro."

Luella's jaw dropped, her beautiful face a canvas of disbelief. Spend hundreds of millions on a piece of land... to grow a demonic weed like cilantro? Fine! This is how rich people have fun, apparently!

At six the next morning, Saskia was peeling an egg for Juniper.

"Which school do you go to?" she asked gently. "I'll take you after breakfast."

"I'm not in school," Juniper replied calmly, stirring her soup. "I've been on a break for over a year."

When she was younger, the Sherwins couldn't stand her. Whenever her grandfather was away at a religious retreat, they would find ways to make her life miserable. When her grandfather found out, he started taking her with him. She attended a school near the sanctuary and also trained with a master to build her strength. But just after her first year of high school, her grandfather fell gravely ill, and she returned with him to Eclara City for treatment. When her second year began, she got a lead on the rare herb and took a leave of absence to find it.

The Sherwins, however, lied and claimed she had dropped out because she hated school, and they officially withdrew her. The tuition refund was used by Yolanda to buy designer clothes for her dog.

After that, her grandfather's condition worsened, and she was too busy caring for him to think about school. By her calculations, she should be in her senior year now.

"You've been out of school?" Saskia was so shocked she nearly dropped her fork. Juniper was only eighteen. Could the rumors about her being a delinquent be true?

She looked at the quiet, well-mannered girl across from her and shook her head. It didn't seem possible.

"She's in my grade," Janet said, her cheeks puffed out with a bite of her sandwich. "The college entrance exams are in three months. We need to find you a school quickly."

"Don't worry, I'll figure something out," Saskia said, her expression determined.

Eclara City didn't allow students to repeat a grade, so Juniper would have to enroll as a senior. It would be tough for her to catch up. But whether it was a four-year university or a community college, it didn't matter. It was always good for a girl to have an education.

"Mmm-hmm," Janet nodded, peeling her own egg and placing it in Juniper's bowl. "Don't worry, Juniper. I'll help you catch up on all the lessons you've missed."

Janet's family wasn't well-off, but she was a brilliant and hardworking student who had earned her spot at Eclara High School, one of the best in the city.

"Saskia, actually....." Juniper began, not wanting to burden the kind mother and daughter. "You don't have to find a school for me. I'll be fine for the entrance exams. I can just study on my own."

What? Study on her own for the college exams? The mother and daughter stared at each other, completely dumbfounded.

After breakfast, Saskia and Janet left for work and school. Juniper changed into a black hoodie, put on a baseball cap and a mask, and headed out with her earbuds in.

"Are you sure you don't want me to come with you?" Luella's voice came through the earbuds. She was clearly at a casino, and the sound of her casually tossing chips onto a table was followed by the squeals of admiring girls.

"Worried I can't handle myself?" Juniper asked, riding a rental bike to a garage. There, among a fleet of luxury cars, she found her own electric scooter tucked away in a corner.

"Of course I'm worried! You're worth a fortune, boss!" Luella said, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "I heard some people from Sigma Network are looking for you. If anything happens, those old geezers at the base will lose their minds!"